

# EthnoScripts

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR AKTUELLE  
ETHNOLOGISCHE STUDIEN

Tradition, performance and identity  
politics in European festivals



## Impressum

Jahrgang 20 Heft 1

### Herausgeber:

Universität Hamburg  
Institut für Ethnologie  
Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1 (West)  
D-20146 Hamburg  
Tel.: 040 42838 4182  
E-Mail: IfE@uni-hamburg.de  
<http://www.ethnologie.uni-hamburg.de>

### Redaktionsleitung:

Ann Wand

### Redaktion:

Mijal Gandelsman-Trier, Michael Pröpper, Astrid Wonneberger

### Schlussredaktion:

Rosemarie Oesselmann, Mijal Gandelsman-Trier

Layout: Mijal Gandelsman-Trier

Titelbild: Ann Wand

eISSN: 2199-7942

# Inhalt

## EDITORIAL

- 5 Ann Wand  
Introduction: The (re)invention of tradition and identity politics  
in four European case studies

## THEMA:

### TRADITION, PERFORMANCE AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN EUROPEAN FESTIVALS

- 16 Richard D. G. Irvine  
Following the Bear: The revival of Plough Monday traditions  
and the performance of rural identity in the East Anglian  
fenlands
- 35 Matthäus Rest and Gertraud Seiser  
The Krampus in Austria: A Case of Booming Identity Politics
- 58 Venetia Johannes  
*El calendari gastronòmic*: Culinary nationalism in Catalan  
festivals
- 79 Safet HadžiMuhamedović  
Syncretic debris: from shared Bosnian saints to the ICTY  
courtroom
- 110 Robert Parkin  
Afterword

## REZENSION

- 119 Tabea Häberlein  
Beer, Bettina, Hans Fischer und Julia Pauli (Hg.) (2017)  
*Ethnologie. Einführung in die Erforschung kultureller Vielfalt*.  
Berlin: Reimer, neunte Auflage – Erweiterte und aktualisierte  
Neufassung



## Introduction: The (re)invention of tradition and identity politics in four European case studies

Ann Wand

The idea for this special issue of *Ethnoscripts* initially started as a result of preliminary fieldwork in the German-speaking province of South Tyrol, Italy, in September 2016. At the time, I was working on a research proposal under the direction of Dr Nicolette Makovicky of the School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies, University of Oxford, as part of a team research assignment with Dr Robin Smith, now of the University of Leiden, Dr Gareth Hamilton, University of Latvia, and Dr Dimitra Kofti, Max Plank Institute of Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany. Since our project revolved around identity politics in borderland communities as expressed through European festivals, I visited Vipiteno (Sterzing), Italy, on the Austrian-Italian border to learn more about male associations and their involvement in the yearly Krampus festival (5th December). I was particularly interested in their use of ‘black face’ as a way of expressing a local, masculine and predominately German-speaking identity.

As a result of our preliminary research into European festivals, such as the Zvoncari in Croatia, the ‘Krampus runs’ in Styria, Austria, and the Merio performance in Sochos, Greece, we started to notice a series of themes that kept cropping up across the various border performances (for example, gender, [white] nationalism, masculinity and immigration issues, to name but a few). In addition, we observed a noticeable disconnect between the classical anthropological literature on ritual, tradition and performance, which focuses primarily on non-European case studies (see van Gennep’s *The rites of passage* 1960 [1909]; Victor Turner’s *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure* 1969; and Huntington and Metcalf’s *Celebrations of death: the anthropology of mortuary ritual* 1979), when compared to the more recent studies in the anthropology of Europe. Indeed, a quarter of a century ago, Cohen pointed out that, while ‘[m]any studies of urban religious and ethnic movements have been published in recent years [...] the structure and significance of seemingly frivolous, playful cultural movements like carnivals, fairs and festivals, have been relatively little explored’ (1993: 1).

Therefore, in March 2017 I decided to expand our research into European festivals by organizing a conference on ‘Winter Festivals and Traditions’ through the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography at the University of Oxford. The series of papers in this special issue focus on four main case studies, two of which are a direct result of that conference: the Krampus

festival in Salzburg, Austria (Matthäus Rest and Gertraud Seiser), the Plough Monday traditions of the East Anglian fenlands (Richard D.G. Irvine), culinary nationalism in Catalan festivals (Venetia Johannes) and the feasts of St George and St Elijah in Bosnia (Safet HadžiMuhamedović).

As the anthropology of Europe continues to establish itself firmly in the wider discipline, an uneasy divide has emerged between the classical literature and the study of Europe today. While anthropologists such as Cesare Poppi have tried to incorporate Hobsbawm and Ranger's notion of the 'invention of tradition' into their work – in Poppi's case, his work on the Ladin-speaking community of northern Italy (1992) – limited references to European case studies in classical anthropological literature suggest the need to merge classical themes and comparisons with non-European material with the anthropology of Europe in order to avoid the Occidentalising 'west versus the rest' dilemma, which can be found in some aspects of the discipline, as Irvine has pointed out in previous personal discussions. In order to fill this lacuna, this issue sets out to focus on two main themes: the (re)invention of tradition, an idea first mooted by Hobsbawm and Ranger ([1983] 1992), and its relationship with identity politics.

As van Gennep's (1960/1909) and Victor Turner's (1969) concepts of liminality and *communitas* play a central role in the construction of many European festivals, it is this ritualized communal response to social 'structure' (through the lens of identity politics) by the 'unstructured [...] or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders' (Turner 1969: 96) that is prevalent during the liminal phase of some rites of passage. While Turner refers to religious beliefs and practices in the social sciences 'coming to be seen as decisive keys to the understanding of how people think and feel about [economic, political and social] relationships, and about the natural and social environments in which they operate' (1969: 6), the same could also be said of secular and religious festivals and the traditions incorporated within them.

Festival performers' reactions to social structure (whether positive or negative) can be found in historically male group associations, such as those that participate in the Krampus and Plough Monday festivities through the actions of their participants. In addition, when examining HadžiMuhamedović's research on the Bosnian feast days of St George and St Elijah in response to the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, I noticed that his work mirrors Delamont's (1995: 155) observations that '[t]he social structure of saints reflects the social structure of society' in the minds of the individuals who revere them, while culinary feast days, like the seasonal food stuffs of Catalonia, demonstrate nationalism in response to Spanish territoriality, as Catalans use food to celebrate themselves in order to preserve their regional-cum-national identity.<sup>1</sup>

1 Turner argues that 'when a social group whether it be a family, clan, village, nation, congregation or church celebrates a particular event or occasion, such as a birth, harvest, or national independence, it also "celebrates itself"' (1982: 16).

Yet, despite these festivals' attempts to encourage a shared or diverse identity in order to 'remove tensions arising in the process of maintaining social structure' (see Rancane 2011: 366), performers' interpretations of supposedly historically 'accurate' carnivalesque practices raise questions over whether certain traditions performed today are still reflexive of social concerns and political issues. In addition, performers' identities are also brought to the fore, as some masked and unmasked performances provide vehicles with which to express larger concerns regarding immigration and identities, whether ethno-religious, nationalist or rural. This special issue's focus on the performer, alongside the festivals' participants, also functions as a means to fully recognise and account for the complex and ambiguous ways in which performers are made sense of in certain political settings, while also allowing the authors of this special issue to move beyond the boundaries of Hobsbawm and Ranger's work in order to add to the growing body of literature in the anthropology of Europe.

### The (re)invention of tradition

The (re)invention of tradition goes well beyond the confines of secular European festivals, as I discovered while teaching an anthropology tutorial at the University of Oxford on neo-paganism in Britain. The late Margot Adler, reporter for America's National Public Radio (NPR), was a self-proclaimed pagan practitioner who was drawn to the neo-pagan movement because it '[searched] in the ashes'<sup>2</sup> of pre-Christian traditions, which had been destroyed over the course of two millennia. Neo-pagans, it was discovered, were re-creating these traditions by searching for songs and ancient lullabies to invent vibrant traditions that were at home with their 'intellectual integrity' (ibid.) and aligned with their ethics and ideals.<sup>3</sup>

While 'invented traditions' are designed to 'establish continuity with a suitable historic past', Hobsbawm and Ranger argue that this connection with history 'need not be lengthy [...] into the assumed mists of time' ([1983] 1992: 1-2). Although the neo-pagan movement tends to associate itself with a very distant part of history (see Adler 1986 for more information), the East Anglian fenlands' Plough Monday traditions were revived starting in the 1980s. Moreover, it should be stressed that these invented traditions and their link with history are 'factitious', as 'they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations'. In addition, they 'attempt to structure at least some parts of social life' through unchanging ritual repetition in response to social change (see Hobsbawm and Ranger [1983] 1992: 2).

2 See Talarski 2014.

3 More information on Margot Adler's work on the neo-pagan movement can be found in her revised edition of *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-worshippers, and other Pagans in America Today* (1986).

The Krampus festival in Austria and South Tyrol is one such example. During fieldwork I was constantly reminded that these rituals and traditions were historically ‘Christian’, however regardless of conflicting research which indicates the contrary (see Raedisch 2016), Rest and Seiser found that some Krampus practitioners use their traditions to reinforce a white male identity in reaction to social changes like non-European immigration and female emancipation.

Catalonia, on the other hand, and its gastronomic calendar provide a unique alternative to the invention of tradition in the form of what Johannes calls ‘gastronationalism’, a term coined by Michaela DeSoucey (2010). The use of food to promote national identity encourages social cohesion just as much as the use of flags or anthems to personify the idea of ‘the nation’.<sup>4</sup>

Beyond the use of cultural symbols, Cesare Poppi argues that, ‘These invented traditions are sometimes used to reconstruct a unified national and ethnic identity in order to receive group recognition and distinction from surrounding neighbours’ (1992: 113). Conversely, in Safet HadžiMuhamedović’s study of Bosnian saints and the courtroom of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the nationalist agenda of certain former Yugoslav politicians resulted in what the author calls an ‘*invention of the absence of shared tradition*’ in order to ‘unimagine’ (my word) the shared lives of Serbs, Croats and Roma and reinforce Bosnia’s diverse identities.

This supports comments made by Hobsbawm and Ranger to the effect that the use of invented traditions could be an indicator of much wider social problems (see 1992: 12). With Creed (2011) and Howell (2013) showing how the survival of festivals and devotion to them are able to provide a window into socio-economic and political concerns, ‘tradition’ is no longer merely a representation of culture, it also becomes a response to outside groups, factors, (nation) states and changes to society and the environment.

## Identity politics

According to Abner Cohen in his *Masquerade Politics: Explorations in the Structure of Urban Cultural Movements*, ‘[a] cultural movement is *ipso facto* also a political movement. Carnival may [...] appear to be a pure cultural performance, but it is inevitably political from the start’ (1993: 154). When Gerald Creed conducted fieldwork in rural regions of Bulgaria, his study of the Kukeri festival showed how its ‘unique national character’ was used ‘to protect and maintain a Bulgarian essence’ (2011: 18). Just as my doctoral research in South Tyrol showed how German-speakers try to preserve their identity through German culture and education (Wand 2016, 2017), for some individuals the continuing of tradition reinforces their sense of self and thus

4 For information on the use of ‘new symbols’ to promote ‘national movements and states’, see Hobsbawm and Ranger [1983] 1992: 7.



promotes their identity. In addition, certain customs emphasize one's sense of place by indicating where practitioners come from.

When Melody Cox conducted ethnographic fieldwork on the Mamoiada festival in Sardinia, her research on the use of masks by Mamuthones and Issohadores practitioners perpetuated the 'physical, biological and cultural boundaries linking local people to [the village of] Mamoiada as a place'. Moreover, Cox states that Mamoiada identity is connected to one's attachment to the land (2015: 82).

In her research on the *Festa del Badalisc*, an epiphany festival in an Italian mountain village in Lombardy, Francesca Howell discusses the importance of land as an agent that can impact and influence those who inhabit it (2013: 2). In the *Badalisc* festival, the *Badalisc* (or woodland serpent):

*is a symbol of the land and is a connection to nature. He is the Man/Animal. He comes from the land and is captured by peasants, so it's all from nature. As far as sense of place, well, if the Badalisc<sup>5</sup> were missing, the festival would have no meaning [...] it's the symbolism that makes [the festival] special and that gives it meaning. The Badalisc makes it! He gives it all the sense of place. (interview [with] F.C. Howell, Andrista, 5 January 2009). (Howell 2013: 7)*

This idea of a 'festival' as connected to the land helps us to understand the festival's importance in that it not only reflects one's personal identity but also provides a connection to one's roots and one's neighbours. In research on the Bosnian feast days of St Elijah and St George, Safet HadžiMuhamedović found that the Field of Gacko was a space for Orthodox Christians and Muslims to jointly celebrate the saints' seasonal festivals. Before the Yugoslav war of the 1990s, these feast days emphasized a shared identity that was expressed in food, competitions and arranged marriages, despite the 'nationalist destruction' of the war's aftermath. This joint attachment to 'place', whether cognisant or not, is also reflexive of the German concept of *Heimat* (homeland), the place where one is born and where one comes from, which provides a 'sentiment of belonging and of territorial identification' (Giudiceandrea 2007: 138). While not always 'politically loaded', *Heimat* represents a 'precious love' or private asset reminding locals to protect their region from things that are foreign and obscure to it (ibid.; see Fait 2011: 104; Zoderer 1999). This may explain why some members of Rest and Seiser's Krampus troupes are anti-Islamic in their ethnocentric viewpoints.

As for the nationalistic component in some European festivals, nationalism has been called a 'traditionalistic ideology' used to glorify folklore and mythological traditions (Eriksen 1993: 100), even though these traditions may simply consist of re-created falsehoods. While Kavanagh argues that

5 My emphasis.

'All identity [...] is constructed in the double sense of similarity and difference with respect to "Others"' (1994: 76), Lanthaler claims that '[g]lobalisation has not spared provincial and remote rural areas and whoever feels overexposed [from looking] for identification with his/her own small group' (2007: 230). This can be compared with Johannes' work in that Catalan identity is made manifest through an 'imagined community' (see Anderson [1983] 2006), where Catalan's gastronomic calendar, through the region's 'shared consumption of the same foods', connects the individual or 'small group' (my words) to the 'greater Catalan nation'.

Finally, despite the many components of identity, which are expressed throughout this collection's four case studies (for example, rural identity, gender, ritual and communal violence, ethnicity, resistance, national, regional and border identity), the concept of racism and the use of 'black face' is evident in some communal activities. While in some instances 'black face' is also accompanied by violence (see Creed 2011; personal preliminary fieldwork in September 2016), this masked performance can also shift identity, as 'Masks enable individuals in varied ways to transcend their everyday, commonplace roles and conventions' (Honigmann 1977: 270) to provide anonymity (*ibid.*; also Raedisch 2016). However, like the Straw Bear festival during the Plough Monday festivities, controversies have erupted over the years, as Dutch performers at the 'Black Pete' festival have debated whether to 'blacken up' performers in response to racist allegations (see Millington 2013; BBC 2016). Even though Creed's informants in Bulgaria insist that the black skin is 'just a disguise', it suggests 'racist interpretations' to those arriving from other countries (2011: 199). As for Richard D.G. Irvine's work, the use of 'black face' for the Plough Monday festivities has resulted in mixed political responses, performers being concerned over whether or not to use 'black face' in order to avoid associations with racism. Other Fenland residents find that the allegations of racism represent 'double standards' and are 'bloody stupid', fearing that 'political correctness' might interfere with the preservation of English culture and rural identity.

Therefore, the following case studies function as a broad image of how identity and politics coincide when people navigate their way through social concerns by means of performance and 'traditional' festivities.

### The four European case studies

As mentioned above, this special issue is divided into four European case studies. While the March 2017 conference hosted at the University of Oxford concentrated on winter festivals, this issue plans to discuss seasonal festivals throughout the year by representing a variety of interpretations of performers' political ideologies as expressed through European traditions.

The first two articles concentrate primarily on mumming<sup>6</sup> festivals and masked parades where the performers wear masks or express themselves in 'black face' as part of their costume attire. Both festivals are known for their violence, real or symbolic, especially after dark, provoking discussions on the margins of the role of misconduct as a response to 'appropriate' social behaviour.

Starting with Richard D.G. Irvine's paper on the Plough Monday festivities in Britain's East Anglian fenlands, the winter Straw Bear festival is traditionally designed to commence the 'new agricultural year'. Part of the Plough Monday celebrations, in the early twentieth century it was suppressed by local officials due to cadging, only for it to be revived as part of the British folk revival in Whittlesey in 1980 and in Ramsey in 2009. While historically the traditions were connected to the agricultural landscape and labour on the land, the shift to mechanised arable farming and the decline of farm labour does nothing to undermine the importance of locals' relationship with the land. Instead, what has developed is a rural identity that has been transformed in the light of social and economic changes. In its stead is a tradition that promotes local identity through modes of 'anti-structure' (see Turner 1969) in two East Anglian communities.

The Krampus festival in rural Austria brings with it a variety of emotions, from its violent overtones to its use of exotic demonic masks, which can be threatening when performers scare onlookers. In addition, Matthäus Rest and Gertraud Seiser state that Krampus troupes reflect the performers' identity by re-establishing the role of the male figure in society through their masculine and disruptive behaviour. Furthermore, as the women maintain subordinate roles in supporting and feeding the Krampus troupes, gendered demarcations are made evident in this festival through one's place (and agency) being indicated in the performance.

In the following article, Venetia Johannes focuses on nationalism as represented through food festivals. In her research concerning Catalonia's gastronomic calendar, Johannes concentrates on how food can function as an identity marker in the wake of Catalonia's secessionist politics. As the Catalan government and the Spanish state have historically been in opposition, the recent independence referendum in October 2017 has increased regional tensions, resulting in a serious political crisis in Spain. But moreover, this referendum has highlighted the importance of a pro-Catalan identity, with Catalans divided over whether to remain a part of Spain or to go for independence. By examining the foods available on three national holidays (St George's Day, St John's Eve and Catalonia's national day), as well as through Catalonia's 'anti-festival', Johannes explores how certain Catalan foods have become emblematic of a pro-Catalan identity.

6 According to Gerald Creed, 'Mumming is a generic term for masked rituals of apparent European provenance commonly performed at Christmas and New Year, but also around Shrovetide and All Saints Day' (2011: 16).

The final article discusses Christian, Muslim and Roma relationships before the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, showing how the two seasonal feast days of St George and St Elijah demonstrate previous multicultural unity. Despite evidence placed before the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) indicating that these three groups have always been divided, Safet HadžiMuhamedović searches through the ‘debris’ of the Tribunal’s legal documents for evidence of a shared identity. Moreover, he also questions expert witnesses at the Tribunal, one of them a leading anthropologist, who described intergroup relations as historically contentious by examining the prosecutors’ informant interviews and comparing them to his own ethnographic research.

The special issue concludes with an Afterword on ritual, conflict and identity written by Robert Parkin who provides the reader with a general discussion of classic interpretations of liminality and *communitas*. In addition, he explores how contexts of hostility are expressed outside festival performances, questioning Durkheim’s claim that rituals necessarily convey notions of harmony and unity to their participants or congregations; in fact, hostility and difference may also be represented, though it is important to distinguish between what happens in the actual ritual performance from external circumstances that may have more to do with identity politics. He also examines how human agency is involved in the invention of tradition, arguing that it is up to the performers to decide which rituals are ‘authentic’ and relevant in the present.

By gathering these articles around the issues of the (re)invention of tradition and identity politics in Europe, we seek to open a lively discussion concerning the merging of European ethnography with the classic literature in the anthropology of ritual, tradition and performance so that we may contribute towards genuine comparativism in social and cultural anthropology.

*Acknowledgements:* First, I would like to thank the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography at the University of Oxford for funding the ‘Winter Festivals and Traditions’ conference in March 2017. Without this financial support, this issue might not have been possible. I would also like to thank the editors of *Ethnoscripts*, Dr Michael Pröpper and Mijal Gandelsman-Trier, for their considerable patience and guidance during the course of this special issue. Their encouragement was greatly appreciated. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the copy-editor, Dr Robert Parkin, and anonymous peer reviewers for their diligent work and valuable feedback, along with the authors

of this special issue, Dr Venetia Johannes, Dr Richard D.G. Irvine, Dr Matthäus Rest, Gertraud Seiser and Dr Safet HadžiMuhamedović, for their excellent contributions and openness to receiving feedback, despite their very busy schedules. Finally, I would like to thank Dr Nicolette Makovicky, Dr Dimitra Kofti, Dr Gareth Hamilton and Dr Robin Smith for encouraging me to progress further with this project. The research they have conducted thus far on masculinity, nationalism and mumming in Europe has been invaluable.

## References

- Adler, Margot (1986) *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Anderson, Benedict (2006) [1983] *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, New York: Verso.
- BBC (2016) *The Changing Face of Black Pete in the Netherlands*. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-38204388> [accessed: 31 January 2018].
- Boissevain, Jeremy (1992) *Revitalizing European Rituals*. London: Routledge.
- Cohen, Abner (1993) *Masquerade Politics: Explorations in the Structure of Urban Cultural Movements*. Oxford: Berg.
- Cox, Melody (2015) *Masks and Museums: the Creation and Performance of Identity in a Highland Sardinian village*. University of Oxford. Unpublished doctoral thesis.
- Creed, Gerald (2011) *Masquerade and Post-Socialism: Ritual and Cultural Dispossession in Bulgaria*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Delamont, Sara (1995) *Appetites and Identities: an Introduction to the Social Anthropology of Western Europe*. London and New York: Routledge.
- DeSoucey, Michaela (2010) *Gastronationalism: Food Traditions and Authenticity Politics in The European Union*. *American Sociological Review* 75 (3): pp. 432-455.
- Eriksen, Thomas (1993) *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press.
- Fait, Stefano (2011) *A Gemütlich Segregation: Multiculturalism and the Ice-man's Curse in Italy*. In: Hasmath, Reza (ed.) *Managing Ethnic Diversity: Meanings and Practices from an International Perspective*. London and New York: Routledge: p. 104.
- Giudiceandrea, Lucio (2007) *Spaesati: Italiani in Südtirol*. Bolzano: Edition Raetia.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) (1992) [1983] *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Honigmann, John, J. (1977) *The Masked Face*, *Ethos* 5 (3): pp. 263-280.

- Howell, Francesca, C. (2013) Sense of Place, Heterotopias, and Community: Performing Land and Folding Time in the Badalisc Festival of Northern Italy. *Folklore* 124 (1): pp. 45-63.
- Huntington, Richard and Peter Metcalf (1979) *Celebrations of Death: the Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kavanagh, William (1994) Symbolic Boundaries and 'Real' Borders on the Portuguese-Spanish frontier. In: Donnan, Hastings and Thomas M. Wilson (eds.) *Border Approaches: Anthropological Perspectives on Frontiers*. Lanham: University Press of America: p. 76.
- Lanthaler, Franz (2007) The German Language in South Tyrol – Some Sociolinguistic Aspects. In: Abel, Andrea, Mathias Stuflesser and Leonhard Voltmer (eds.) *Aspects of Multilingualism in European Border Regions: Insights and Views from Alsace, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, the Lublin Voivodeship and South Tyrol*. Bozen-Bolzano: EURAC research: pp. 220- 234.
- Millington, Karen (2013) Zwarte Piet: Is 'Black Pete' a Racist Dutch Custom? <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/0/24744499> [accessed: 31 January 2018].
- Poppi, Cesare (1992) Building Difference: the Political Economy of Tradition in the Ladin Carnival of the Val di Fassa. In: Boissevain, Jeremy (ed.) *Revitalizing Europe Rituals*. London: Routledge: p. 113.
- Raedisch, Linda (2016) *The Old Magic of Christmas: Yuletide Traditions for the Darkest Days of the Year*. Woodbury, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications.
- Rancane, Aida (2011) Silver Plough and Earth: on Fertility and Sexuality in Masked Processions in Latvia. In: Kezich, Giovanni and Antonella Mott (eds.) *Carnival King of Europe 2007-2009*. SM Annali di San Michele: pp. 345- 366.
- Talarski, Catie (2014) Margot Adler on Being a Wiccan and NPR Discrimination. <http://wnpr.org/post/margot-adler-being-wiccan-and-npr-discrimination#stream/0> [accessed: 31 January 2018].
- Turner, Victor (1969) *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, Victor (1982) *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Van Gennep, Arnold (1960) [1909] *The Rites of Passage*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Wand, Ann (2016) *Half Spaghetti-Half Knödel: Cultural Division through the Lens of Language Learning*. University of Oxford. Unpublished doctoral thesis.
- Wand, Ann (2017) Should We Speak (Good) German, Dialect or Italian? German Language Preservation in a Multilingual Province. Workshop: European Experiences of 'Good' Language, 'Bad Language', and (the) Standard Language Ideology in Multilingual Communities, Past and Present. University of Nottingham, 6-7 July 2017.

Zoderer, Joseph (1999) A Proposito di 'Heimat'. In: Gramegna, Barbara and Rosetta I. Fronza (eds.) *La Curiosità Linguistica: Contributi all'Educazione Bilingue*. Bolzano: Frasnelli Keitsch Editrice.

---

Dr Ann Wand is a Research Associate in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography at the University of Oxford. Her doctoral research and consequent monograph focuses on linguistic segregation in education between German- and Italian-speaking students in the predominantly German-speaking province of South Tyrol, Italy. She is also the Guest Editor of this special issue on *Tradition, Performance and Identity Politics in European Festivals*.

## Following the Bear

### The revival of Plough Monday traditions and the performance of rural identity in the East Anglian fenlands

Richard D.G. Irvine

#### Marking the New Year

The bear dances, a stomping, spinning mass of straw, as the melodeon squeezes out its tune. People watch with pints of beer in hand. The bear's keeper, wearing a bowler hat and carrying a brass-topped walking cane, stands ready to lead him through the streets; children follow behind, scrabbling to collect the lucky pieces of straw shed in the course of the bear's exertions.

This is a scene from early January in the market town of Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire. The straw bear festival is a modern-day manifestation of the midwinter revelry that once occurred in varied forms throughout the East Anglian fens around the time of 'Plough Monday' – the Monday following the Epiphany,<sup>1</sup> traditionally marking the first day of the new agricultural year. What place does such tradition have in the lives of a population which today appears largely disconnected from the agricultural labour that gave Plough Monday customs their significance? Indeed, given that the event is a resuscitation of practices that had fallen into abeyance, are we then to treat such a revival as an invention of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), and what does it actually mean to do so?

Grounded in ethnographic research in the region from 2011 onwards, this paper explores the social dynamics of the fenland Plough Monday festivities and their revival, focussing in particular on the revival of the Straw Bear in Whittlesey (since 1980) and Ramsey (since 2009). What do they tell us about changing social and economic norms in rural England? From this perspective, the celebrations act as a vantage point from which to understand the cultivation of rural identity in contemporary Britain, allowing us to ask what it means to live in, belong to, and act within an East Anglian Anthropocene landscape completely transformed in the service of mechanised arable farming (Irvine 2017). Following Cohen (1993) in his attention to the relationship between symbolic potential and political power within the carnivalesque, I trace in particular the way that revived traditions become deployed and read in the context of contemporary 'culture wars', for example in commentaries on the role of 'blacking up' in folk dancing associated with the festivities and

---

1 The feast of the Epiphany is celebrated on the 6<sup>th</sup> January, and commemorates the visit of the three magi to Christ. It marks the end of the Christmas season.



popular understandings of the effects of political correctness on culture. Yet this does not exhaust our understanding of midwinter celebrations as a space for the inversion of normative ways of being: the paper therefore returns to the classic theme of the interaction between structure and anti-structure (Turner 1969), misrule and its routinisation. Indeed, in Whittlesey we see that in spite of the designs of folk revivalist organisers, who are required to give assurances to authorities about the safe management of the event, the Straw Bear can easily become a space of license and joyful unruliness – generating anew the very characteristics that had led to officials working to shut them down in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

By way of introducing the history of the Straw Bear, the account opens with a critical reading of Frazer (1912), who documented the fenland Plough Monday practices, but in so doing reveals a problematic distinction between the true meaning of the ritual and the apparent ‘ignorance’ of participants. Taking this reflection on Frazer as my starting point, and moving through a documentation of the practices in their revived forms, what I attempt to explore are the very different kinds of festivity which are braided together in the act of ‘following the bear’. Following the bear is a folk revival activity, with its exhibition of social history and ‘traditional’ culture, and attendant concerts. Following the bear is also a premise for midwinter conviviality, partying and a longed for night out. This paper explores the different facets of this modern custom, treating not as dichotomies but as contemporary elements of the Plough Monday phenomenon in dynamic tension: as heritage and as night of joy in the cold of winter; as cultural spectacle and as people throwing up in the streets; as continuation and as invention.

### Origin stories

The present-day celebrations ground themselves in the antiquity of Plough Monday practices: Frampton (1989: 4) points to records of pre-reformation votive offerings for the agricultural year ahead, with the suggestion that Plough Monday dances derived from collecting ‘light money’ for the purpose. While such early records are sporadic, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century we see extensive documentation of fenland ‘ploughboys’ disguising themselves by various means, including blacking up their faces and wearing costumes, then taking a plough through the streets, sometimes dancing, and requesting money (with the threat that they would plough up your front step if money is not forthcoming). They would then spend the day, and the money collected, in revelry.

The emergence of the Straw Bear can be seen in this context of disguise and revelry, as part of a competitive push for ever more outlandish costumes. It appears to have been localised to the market towns of Whittlesey and Ramsey. But there is a lack of clear evidence that it necessarily formed a continu-

ous tradition; the practice of dressing a ploughboy up as a Straw Bear to be led through the streets by his ‘keeper’ may have occurred sporadically rather than year after year (Frampton 1989: 11).

The practice was documented and interpreted by Frazer in *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, Part 5 Volume 2 of the third (and most exhaustive) edition of *The Golden Bough*. Considering the Plough Monday festivities more widely, he treats the ploughboys’ activities as an instance of sympathetic magic, suggesting that the object of the actions, mimicking the ploughing of the land (by taking a plough through the streets) and the growth of the plants (by leaping high) is probably to ensure a good crop in the coming year.

*The clue to the meaning of these curious rites is probably furnished by the dances or rather jumps of the men who wore bunches of corn in their hats... the original notion, we may suppose, was that the corn would grow that year just as high as the dancers leaped. If that was so, we need not wonder at the agility displayed on these occasions by the yokels... What stronger incentive could they have to exert themselves than the belief that the higher they leaped into the air the higher would sprout the corn-stalks? (Frazer 1912: 330-331)*

Having rooted the significance of Plough Monday practices in the desire to ensure the fertility of the land, he turns to the Bears themselves, noting their similarity to a wider phenomenon of ‘representations of the corn-spirit conceived in animal shape’ (Frazer 1912: 325). Here he adopts wholesale the view of the 19<sup>th</sup> century folklorist Wilhelm Mannhardt who had extensively catalogued farming rites, believing them to be contemporary survivals of Indo-European concepts of a vegetation spirit, or divinity indwelling in the growing crops, with the intention of ensuring the fertility of the land by way of honouring the divinity.<sup>2</sup>

*If such was the real meaning of the ritual of Plough Monday, we may the more confidently assume that the Straw-bear who makes his appearance at Whittlesey... represents indeed the corn-spirit. What could be more appropriate than for that beneficent being to manifest himself from house to house... after a magical ceremony had been performed to quicken the growth of the corn? (Frazer 1912: 331)*

In his account, Frazer draws on a description provided by G.C. Moore Smith of Sheffield: ‘While I was at Whittlesey (Cambridgeshire) yesterday, (Jan. 12th 1909), I had the pleasure of meeting a “straw-bear,” if not two, in the street. I had not been at Whittlesey on the day for nearly forty years, and

2 See Ackerman (1991: 48) for an account of the significance of Mannhardt to Frazer’s theory, allowing him to claim an ancient basis for the systems of thought expressed in existing customs.

feared the custom had died out' (Moore Smith 1909: 202). This encounter is described as taking place on the day after Plough Monday, with 'Straw-Bear Tuesday' treated a continuation of the previous day's festivities. Moore Smith continues, 'In my boyhood the "straw-bear" was a man completely swathed in straw, led by a string by another, and made to dance in front of people's houses, in return for which money was expected.' We then see from his account that the appreciation of such customs was far from universal, and in particular practices such as the Straw Bear could be an object of suspicion to the authorities.

*I was told that two years ago a zealous inspector of police had forbidden 'straw-bears,' as a form of cadging, and my informant said that he thought that in many places they had been stopped by the police. He also said that at Whittlesey the police had prevented the people on Plough-Monday from taking round the plough, as they always did when I was a boy. It seems a great pity that primitive customs should be suppressed by Bumbledom, and the thought occurred to me that a representation by lovers of folklore, addressed to County Councils, would be a means of preventing such action in future. (Moore Smith 1909: 202)*

Where Moore Smith and Frazer saw ancient ritual significance, some clearly only saw anti-social behaviour; custom as an excuse for begging.

Yet one might argue that both Frazer and the forces of law and order – or 'Bumbledom', as Moore Smith memorably puts it – in their different ways approach the festivities as a *debased* ritual. If the police might have had their suspicions over the motives of the Straw Bear and his handler, Frazer says little to suggest that the 'yokels' sincerely understood the 'true' (that is, the magical) significance of their actions. He does not appear to credit those performing as grasping the purpose of their costumes and dances, but rather sees them as a survival of form whose meaning has been lost. It appears Frazer is only interested in ritual as an aspect of magic towards a particular efficacious end (Quack and Töbelmann 2010: 14). As a result, in pursuing his analysis Frazer moves towards meanings of which the participants would not be conscious, but can only be grasped through the comparative method and the recognition of the rites as primitive survival. He points to related rites throughout Europe, and to sources in classical Greece where the sacrificial animals were treated as embodiments of the corn-spirit, arguing, 'these rites still practised by the peasantry at opposite ends of Europe, no doubt date from an extremely early age in the history of agriculture' (Frazer 1912: 335). Thus neither the ploughboys nor the police who seek to suppress their festivities know what is truly at stake: such a vantage point is only available to the anthropologist. The problem with such an approach, of course, is that in

reaching towards hidden (unconscious) motives, the symbolic elements are given a life of their own at the expense of the social dynamics of the festivities as they actually occurred. Both Frazer and the police seek to subordinate the revelry to laws – albeit somewhat different laws. The end result of both cases is that the celebrations themselves are silenced.

When the practice itself ceased is unclear; the last newspaper account of the Straw Bear comes from 1913 (Frampton 1989: 14), leading to the suggestion that the loss of young men during the Great War and the consequent break in cultural continuity finished off the already beleaguered traditions. Yet this was not a final ending.

### Rattlebones and Ploughjack: the revival at Whittlesey

The revival of the Straw Bear at Whittlesey can be understood in the context of a wider English folk music revival;<sup>3</sup> or more precisely, the ‘second revival’, which took place from the 1950s onwards, gaining traction through the spread of folk clubs and folk festivals. A number of influences intersected to create the conditions for the rebirth. The first was the revival of interest in, and performance of, Molly Dancing (Bradtke 1999), the form of dance associated with the Plough Monday festivities, involving several disguised dancers (traditionally these dancers were men, with one dressed as a woman). The research of the folklorist Russell Wortley, including interviews with those who remembered the dances, led to a public performance of Molly Dancing by the Cambridge Morris Men on Plough Monday in 1977 (Frampton 1989: 19), believed to be the first since in the 1930s.<sup>4</sup> Around the same time a group from Kent, the ‘Seven Champions’, also began to perform Molly Dances, generating wider interest; many contemporary manifestations of Molly Dancing take their cue from the dances pioneered by the Seven Champions (Bradtke 1999: 8).

---

3 The term ‘English folk revival’ does not cover a single discrete period, but rather covers a range of activities from the end of the 19th century onwards. The so-called ‘first revival’, from the end of the 19th century to around 1920 (and thus taking place at a time contemporary to Frazer and Moore Smith’s work of folklore preservation, described above) was led by a number of scholars and collectors who set out to record and preserve traditional English music and dance to be disseminated through publication and teaching in schools (see Boyes [1993] for an account of this period). A later ‘second revival’ in the 1950s and 60s saw the expansion of interest in traditional practices through the spread of folk clubs, giving birth to the career of popular folk performers as well as a widespread familiarity with folk music treated as a particular ‘genre’ (for accounts of this period see Brocken 2003; Bean 2014). It is this second revival which is of most relevance to the rebirth of the Straw Bear.

4 For an account of Molly Dancing from around the time that it was believed to have fallen into abeyance, see Needham and Peck (1933).

A second influence, less obvious but nonetheless crucial, was the rise of folk-rock. The popular consumption of revived 'traditional' music had been driven by the proliferation of folk clubs and folk festivals throughout the 1960s. As Brocken (2003) records, this revival was counter-cultural in focus, drawing on the resources of traditional music as a source from which to critique contemporary culture and loss of identity, seeking an 'authentic' voice of British working-class life which had been displaced by social and economic change. Such idealisation of historic forms and contexts of musical production can generate tensions. As Livingston (1999: 71) has argued with regards to folk music revivals, the 'preservationist' instinct of those idealising folk traditions can be difficult to balance with desires for innovation in performance. The sense of preserving cultural purity pegged to a fixed point in the past sits uneasily with the ideal that what is being performed constitutes a living tradition.

One outcome of these tensions was the emergence of folk-rock as a form of popular music, charting alongside other forms of pop and rock and thus gaining considerable airtime on national television and radio. Folk-rock combined traditional material with electric instruments and rock music rhythms (see Young [2010] for an extensive documentation of its history and inspirations). One of its key champions was Ashley Hutchings, whose work in three of the most commercially successful folk-rock bands (Fairport Convention, Steeleye Span, and The Albion Band) fused revival material circulating among more traditionally-minded participants in folk clubs, as well as material he had researched himself from archival collections, with a rock sound. Hutchings' fame and commercial success are crucial as it was through this route that the memory of the Straw Bear was reawakened. In 1976, Hutchings released the LP *Rattlebones and Ploughjack*, an audio documentary on British Morris dancing traditions. 'Although its significance could hardly be gauged at that time, the record... laid the foundations for the Whittlesey Straw Bear revival' (Frampton 1989: 19). Crucially, it included a reading of the testimony by G.C. Moore Smith (1909) as seen above, bringing it out from the pages of an obscure journal to a wider audience. This audience included Brian Kell, who had only very recently moved from the north-east of England to Whittlesey, and, owning a copy of *Rattlebones and Ploughjack* and having an interest in folk traditions, music, and dance borne out of the folk revival, petitioned the local historical society to revive the custom: 'Although a stranger to the area... I would like to revive the Straw Bear, and am looking for the sanction of the people of Whittlesey to do so' (Frampton 1989: 21).

This permission was granted, with the first revived dance of the Straw Bear in 1980. A crucial point to make here is that the revived form was based on written records of the practice; primarily Moore Smith, as encountered via Hutchings' LP. The existence of the practice had not been entirely forgotten in Whittlesey – its persistence in the town's cultural memory can be

shown by the fact that when in 1975 a pub opened as part of new housing development on the edge of the town, a competition was run to find a name for the pub and the winning name was 'The Straw Bear'. Yet memory of its existence is not the same as memory of its form; and while some idea of the Bear as part of the town's heritage persisted, it seems that the time having elapsed made it difficult to find living sources whose memories of the day could be called upon. When I met with Brian Kell, he explained that he had managed to find one old resident who remembered the bear from when he was a boy – but all he could recall clearly was that it terrified him. What we are discussing, then, is a revival based on published records of what the practice would have been like, with innovated elements (see the discussion of the culmination on Sunday below) added by the organisers. The style of the costume itself, while taking inspiration from historic photos of the straw bear, was again developed by the organisers themselves by trial and error, using locally sourced wheat straw. Today the straw used is from a nearby farm where new varieties of wheat are researched and tested, and this straw is affixed in bundles to a base costume of overalls, a jacket, and a frame of metal tubing.

As word of the revival spread, more folk revival dance teams came to Whittlesey for the weekend to join in, 'following the bear' and dancing around the town. In the years to come, a pattern emerged for the Straw Bear Festival, which is still recognisable at the time of writing. The festival takes place on the Saturday nearest to Plough Monday. The day begins at 10.30 in the morning with a procession into the centre of the town, led by the bear and his handler and musicians, followed by a group of young men with blacked-up faces reviving the practice of the 'ploughgang' by pulling an antique plough through the streets, and then followed by all of the dance teams who have come from across the country to take part in the festival. In 2017, 42 different teams followed the bear, representing not only Molly Dancing, but revived styles of Morris and other traditional dance from all parts of England. Over the course of the day, the bear then moves through the town, dancing in front of each pub to the tune which Ashley Hutchings had chosen to include in *Rattlestones and Ploughjack* as the music to follow on from G.C. Moore Smith's description of the Straw Bear. Dance teams perform throughout the town – again, primarily outside the packed pubs, from which an audience, consisting of locals from Whittlesey and the surrounding villages and towns as well as folk revival enthusiasts from across the country, watch with plastic pint glasses in hand. The dancing ends around 3.30 in the afternoon, but revellers remain in the town's pubs long into the night.

The following day, people gather at the local Community College, at first in the hall to watch a programme of dances by the different visiting dance teams. Though a bar is close at hand, in contrast to the Saturday conviviality of dancing in the streets while the revellers crowd around with drinks in

their hands, this Sunday performance for a seated audience has the more formal character of a concert or exhibition. However, this then leads into the finale of the weekend. The gathered audience troops outside. The straw bear (presumably no longer containing a dancer) waits in the grounds of the school. As the musicians surround the bear and begin to play his tune, the straw creature is set alight. The music becomes slower and more ponderous as the flames spread through the straw. Then, once the bear is consumed by the flames, the music ends, and the assembled crowd all shout ‘happy new year!’ Straw taken from the bear prior to burning is handed out to the assembled onlookers to take away for luck in the year ahead, and the crowd disperses.

It is a scene which Frazer would have surely found noteworthy: here, according to his logic, is the pretence of killing the corn spirit, only for it to be reborn anew each agricultural year, as the crops will surely grow again after the winter (Frazer 1912: 328). Yet it is an innovation of the revival, taking shape after the first few years of the festival as the organisers sought a more dramatic end point than simply sending the costume to the tip.

#### A hole in my stocking and a hole in my shoe: the revival at Ramsey

I will return to Whittlesey shortly. However, first I want to turn to the more recent, and rather different, reinstitution of the Straw Bear at Ramsey to further explore some of the characteristics we might associate with ‘revival’.

Compared to the better documented Whittlesey bear, there are only sparse records of the Ramsey Straw Bear. The best known account comes from Sybil Marshall’s *Fenland Chronicle* in which she records the childhood recollections of her mother, who lived in the fens north of Ramsey:

*A party of men would choose one of their gang to be ‘straw bear’ and they’d start a-dressing him in the morning ready for their travels round the fen at night. They saves some o’ the straightest, cleanest and shiniest oat straw and bound it all over the man until he seemed to be made of straw from head to foot... When night came they’d set out from pub to pub and house to house, leading the straw bear on a chain. When they were asked in, the bear would go down on his hands and knees and caper about and sing and so on. (Marshall 1967: 201)*

The Ramsey Straw Bear was revived in 2009 as part of ‘Cambridgeshire Roots’, a heritage project funded by money raised through the National Lottery. The goal of this project, led by Gordon Philips and Nicky Stockman of the Ouse Washes Molly dancing team, was to work with 14 primary schools across the county to introduce the children to the historic rural customs – primarily dance customs – documented in Cambridgeshire. In Ramsey, in-

spiration was taken from the account in *Fenland Chronicle* to recreate the Straw Bear on Plough Monday, and the schools have continued with the Straw Bear celebrations every year since.

As Livingston (1999: 73) notes, folk revivals often have a strong pedagogical component. A key characteristic of the first English folk revival, for example, was the promotion of a national folk culture through songbooks for schools, such as Cecil Sharp and Sabine Baring-Gould's *English Folk-Songs for Schools* (see Boyes 1993 for a discussion of this work and its significance). In this way, elements of informal social life become formalised and reconstituted as part of the formation of a national character within the educational curriculum. What is striking here is the shift in respectability as once-denigrated practices become 'traditional' and part of a repertoire of identity.<sup>5</sup> This is well illustrated within the pedagogical revival of the Ramsey Straw Bear.

To see children encouraged to take part in Plough Monday revelry as a school activity is, from an historical point of view, a remarkable reversal. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, children were discouraged from participating in Plough Monday. The entry from Swaffham Bulbeck school logbook for Plough Monday 1874 reveals the attitude of the head teacher: 'About 20 boys absent today to sing about the streets, thus keeping up an absurd custom which prevails in this locality.'<sup>6</sup> That which was once considered absurd by teachers and others in authority is now encouraged by their present-day equivalents, as a way of learning about local social history and developing civic identity.

The children follow the bear through the streets of Ramsey. Following the description in *Fenland Chronicle* of 'plough-witching' (Marshall 1967: 201-202), where children disguised themselves and passed through the streets singing and collecting money, the schoolchildren blacken their faces and wear flamboyant costumes. Processing through the town, they sing a Plough Monday song taught to the school by two women who recalled it from their childhood in Ramsey during the 1950s:

*A hole in my stocking and a hole in my shoe  
Please won't you give me a penny or two  
If you haven't got a penny then a ha'penny will do  
If you haven't got a ha'penny then God bless you<sup>7</sup>*

Given that Straw Bear customs were considered a form of anti-social behaviour by the police precisely because they were a form of 'cadging' (Moore

5 See also Cornish (2016) on the role of folk festivities in Padstow, Cornwall, as markers of history, identity, and belonging.

6 This and other logbook entries for Plough Monday from Cambridgeshire schools have been made available by Cambridgeshire Roots organisers Nicky Stockman and Gordon Philips on their website at <http://ploughmonday.co.uk/>

7 These words are also recalled by Sybil Marshall's mother in *Fenland Chronicle* (1967: 202).



Smith 1909: 202), the fact that words which once would have been associated with begging are now taught to children for them to sing with impunity as they pass through the streets is a powerful demonstration of how the practice has shifted in respectability. (Money is indeed collected by the plough-witches, though for charity rather than for the children to spend themselves.) Far from being a disreputable practice, the Plough Monday customs are re-awoken as a wholesome activity and a fun way of bringing history to life.

The bear and the plough-witches make their way to the green of the ruined Ramsey Abbey. Here, they gather around a plough, which is blessed by the Rector of the Parish Church: 'God speed the plough: the plough and the ploughman, the farm and the farmer, machine, and beast, and man.' This prayer is part of the Anglican service for Plough Sunday (that is, the Sunday after the Epiphany), which is celebrated in some churches within the fens and other rural communities in England. In some ways, Plough Sunday itself, with its focus on the church rather than the streets, and formal prayers rather than dancing, might be seen as an institutionalisation of the spirit of Plough Monday; yet what is significant here is that in this revived custom, church ceremony is not in opposition to revelry, but rather incorporates it. And so the blessing is followed by Molly Dancing performed by the children.

The plough which is blessed is sometimes an antique plough, brought from the collection of the Ramsey Rural Museum; other times, modern tractor-drawn ploughs have been blessed. This variation reveals something about the relationship between modern revived Plough Monday practices and the working landscape of the fens. A plough sourced from the museum would appear to root the celebrations in the region's history; yet to what extent is there continuity with this history? Although English rural landscapes continue to be characterised by the preponderance of farmland, the number employed in the agricultural sector has declined dramatically in the last half century (Zayad 2016). In the East Anglian fens, agriculture accounts for only 1.8% of the workforce (above the national average of 1.5%), compared to around 25% in 1950. As Livingston (1999: 75) remarks, the 'folk' in folk revivals often seem to be people living in a land and time far removed from society; and from one perspective, even here in an apparently rural setting, the revival seems to focus on a rurality which is distant in imagination rather than close at hand. Like the plough, one might conclude it is a museum piece. Yet this would be to ignore the significance of the working landscape in the geographies of those who dwell in the fens. Here, after all, is a landscape dominated by agriculture, transformed in the service of arable farming (Irvine 2017): agricultural land accounts for 86% of the land use, and the very shape of the terrain, with its wide open character cut across with ditches and traversed by long straight raised roads, is defined by the work of drainage to produce fertile land for crops.

The blessing of a modern working plough, then, signifies this ongoing importance of the arable landscape. What we see is an invention of tradition which serves to celebrate a rural fenland culture and identity rooted in a relationship with the agricultural land at a time of disconnection from agricultural labour.

### Order and disorder

Boyes (1993) describes the public and somewhat acrimonious difference of opinion between two pioneers of the first English folk revival: Mary Neal, founder of the Guild of Morris Dancers in 1904, and Cecil Sharp, founder of the English Folk Dance society in 1911. I would argue that these differences reveal 'ideal types' within folk revivalists' motivations that help us to understand tensions between formality and informality within revived practices such as the Straw Bear. While both sought the preservation and dissemination of traditional forms of music and dance among the general population, they differed markedly on how this should be approached. Not only did Sharp favour a strict pedagogy of traditional styles, with formal examinations, he also felt that the dances were deserving of dignity, even solemnity, and should be performed with gravitas. Folk culture was not to be the frivolous counterpoint to high culture, but was just as deserving of seriousness. For Neal, the focus was more on recapturing the joyful revelry and exuberance of the occasions on which the dances had been originally performed.

In considering the restoration of the Straw Bear as a later revival, to what extent does it confirm to one or another of these competing points of view, considered as ideal types? At first appearances, one might well say that it is Neal's approach that has been triumphant. In Ramsey, while the children clearly practice their dances and work hard to make the day a success, the focus is very much on the fun of the occasion. In Whittlesey, the emergence of the revived Straw Bear from the folk-rock movement and the eclectic nature of the occasion make plain that this is not a formal and dignified re-enactment, but an attempt to rekindle the spirit of midwinter celebration. In the words of one Molly Dancer from a local team, relaxing between dances in full costume in the warmth of St Mary's church, Whittlesey (where hot soup is served throughout the Saturday of the Straw Bear festival), 'We're all here to have a bit of fun, nobody's here to take themselves seriously, come on, don't tell me anyone would dress themselves up like this if they wanted to be taken seriously!' Nevertheless, the two rival visions presented in Boyes' account of the history of revival point to an important duality, also evident in the contrast between the street dancing and the school hall 'exhibition' of dancing: Straw Bear is simultaneously a formally organised occasion with clear pedagogical goals and an attempt to revive the informal exuberance glimpsed in historic records of Plough Monday.

The organiser Brian Kell, in conversation with me, specifically noted that upon his arrival in the East Anglian fens he was surprised to find it a ‘desert’ of folk song; indeed, at the time of the revival a lot of people didn’t even know what a Morris dancer was. With this in mind, he considered the festival to be a process of ‘re-education’. Yet at the same time he was clear that, in no uncertain terms, the festival was ‘a load of nonsense’.

These different elements – education and nonsense – point to a complex relationship here between the source of the festival in misrule and its modern-day institutionalised nature. One participant in the festival – a Cambridgeshire resident not associated with any of the dance teams, but who likes to play in the informal music sessions that take place in the pubs on the Saturday – suggested there was always going to be an inevitable tension between the formally organised events ‘which need to be run like a machine otherwise you have the council come down on them like a tonne of bricks’ and the informal events that happen ‘around the fringes’ like the tune and singing sessions he enjoyed. He pointed to a particular instance of this tension in recent years, when the Yorkshire dance group ‘Mr Fox’ who specialise in evening fire dancing and the use of pyrotechnics were told in no uncertain terms that their ‘raids’ – impromptu dances at the time of the festival which gain their impact from the element of surprise – were not welcome at the Straw Bear. The musician explained,

*What Mr Fox do isn't exactly my sort of thing, I'm a traddy<sup>8</sup> as you can see, and I absolutely get where [the Straw Bear] organisers are coming from, they need to work with the licensing authorities, the council, whatever, all the health and safety of the weekend that's their responsibility, otherwise no more Straw Bear. But at the same time, it did strike me a bit ironic that here's a festival that's meant to be all about misrule and yet anything that looks like a bit of disorder gets pounced upon.*

The more the event becomes ‘stage-managed’ the greater the risk people become ‘rigid’ about it, ‘and then it’s not Straw Bear anymore is it?’

This resonates with Victor Turner’s classic approach to the relationship between liminality and institutionalisation. In *The Ritual Process* – a book written at a time when counter-cultural movements had been growing in prominence in Europe and America – Turner (1969) offers an account of the anti-structural potential of ‘Liminal entities’ which ‘are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial’ (1969: 95). The liminal characteristics of Plough Monday celebrations are apparent: disguise (including face-blackening, gender-switching, and, of course, the Straw Bear costume) and the

8 A folk musician favouring the preservation traditional tunes, songs, and instruments over modern materials and innovations.

freedom which the disguise makes possible, disrupts the routine and the everyday. That such celebrations were held in suspicion by authorities is testament to their being beyond the pale of accepted law and formal ceremonial. As Bradtke (1999: 21) notes, the workers involved in Plough Monday activities were frequently disparaged as 'truculent rustics'. Turner's argument is that such a position outside of the accepted social order is full of generative potential: here is a space of celebration not broken down by the dividing lines of the routine world, but which opens up a sense of human potential which transcends structure and emphasises fundamental characteristics. Standing outside the social order, we become 'a member of the whole community of persons' (Turner 1969: 105).

Given that revivals themselves are often counter-cultural movements (Livingston 1999), presenting a 'traditional' way of life as critique of a society which has apparently lost such traditions and the values they represent, the liminal character of Plough Monday and such festivals of misrule sit well with revival's oppositional stance. Yet as Turner rightly points out, disruptions of the everyday become routinised and institutionalised. The spontaneous impulse is brought within the social order where 'time and history... bring structure into their social life and legalism into their cultural output' (Turner 1969: 153-154).

This dynamic of liminality and routinisation is evident in the celebration of the Straw Bear festival. Indeed, at Whittlesey, it is possible to speak of two parallel, entwined festivities. What we have described above shows the well-organised, planned nature of the folk revival celebrations bringing musicians and dancers from across the country into the town. Yet it is not only folk revivalists who follow the bear. In the wake of the pageantry, thousands descend upon the town, the pubs and clubs are jammed with customers, and for young people of the region, in particular, it is a festival which breaks the monotony of winter. (In the words of one young woman trying to obtain some money for the day from her mother, 'Come on, you wouldn't want your daughter to be sober for Straw Bear, would you?') Of course, one should not be too quick to divide those who follow the bear into two separate constituencies. The relationship between those actively involved in the folk music and dance and those who come to take part primarily by drinking is generally playful and there is no rigid distinction between participants. The movements of the bear and the dancers, after all, give focus to the weekend, lifting it out of the ordinary. The unique character of the festival is a source of pride to many of the locally based revellers, and some act in ways that draw on and take for themselves the practices of the folk revivalists; for example; wearing 'lucky straw' from the bear, bringing pewter tankards to drink rather than plastic pint glasses, or ambushing friends to smear shoe-polish over their faces, jokingly blacking them up in the manner of the Molly Dancers.

By Saturday evening, the revelry occasioned by the bear has no further need for folk revival activities as the partying driven by the local youth gains an energy of its own. While this might be treated as evidence of what Victor Turner (in an article on the Rio Carnival) sees as the potential of the liminal space for 'Dionysiac abandonment' (Turner 1983: 122) – a playful mood in which 'repression must be lifted' (1983: 123) – in the context of the routinisation of the Straw Bear and the need for the approval of the authorities for its continued existence, it is not surprising that some folk revivalists criticise the late night revellers for 'taking it too far' by binge drinking, pointing to the state of the streets the next morning. In the telling words of one visiting member of a dance team, 'as far as I'm concerned the Straw Bear goes on until the late afternoon, and then the evening is something else, a bit of a no-go zone really', suggesting that things often turn 'a bit feral'. Seen this way, there is an inevitable tension between the license of the midwinter festivity and licensing law: as a festival organiser explained, 'in the words of the licensing officer, the Straw Bear Festival is the catalyst of all things that happen over the week end whether we like it or not', and for this reason people who do not know how to behave risk 'spoiling it for everyone'. History shows that the authorities have had to put a stop to the Straw Bear before, after all.

### Contestation and controversy

It would be misleading, then, to follow Turner too simplistically in suggesting that the anti-structural potential of liminality to generate commonness of feeling leads to the dissolution of social difference. Just as Eade and Sallnow (1991) critiqued the Turners' emphasis on the anti-structural character of pilgrimage (Turner and Turner 1978) – noting that in fact an ethnographic perspective on pilgrimage reveals contestation between pilgrims and religious authorities, differentiation between different groups of pilgrims, and competition between pilgrims themselves – so too should we note that an analysis of apparently 'liminal' midwinter festivity reveals contestation. We have seen above that folk revivalists and the mass of evening revellers drawn largely from the local population can have a somewhat different idea about what constitutes an 'appropriate' celebration of the Straw Bear. There is a shared core symbol – all are following the bear – but as Cohen (1993) has noted in the context of his analysis of the Notting Hill carnival and other festivals, the ambiguity of symbols of celebration means that they are not subject to fixed meaning defined by a single group. Rather, they are in a dynamic state of flux, taken up, modified, mobilised, and critiqued by various individuals and groups.

Abner Cohen's perspective here is invaluable in showing us how the contestation surrounding potent symbols is an important site for the shaping and reshaping of political identity; a two dimensional movement, involving

a continual interplay between cultural forms and political relations (Cohen 1974). This is well illustrated by the contestation which surrounds another core symbol of Plough Monday: the practice of ‘blacking up’.

The significance of blacking up is linked to the wider idea of the day being, in the words of the organiser Brian Kell, ‘out of the normal’. He noted that when he had been the one wearing the bear costume in the early years he had, in fact, blacked up his face (even though behind the straw this would not have been particularly visible) because he ‘wanted to be different on the day’. As he remarked, this desire to do something ‘out of the normal’ manifests itself in different ways in many of the groups of people, unconnected with the dance teams or the organisers, who come to follow the bear in ‘marvellous’ costumes – one such group comes each year dressed as cartoon characters; another as kings and queens.

Historical explanations of the role of blacking up in Molly Dancing, Plough-Witching and other Plough Monday festivities, focus on its function as a disguise (see for example, Marshall [1967: 201]: ‘We dressed up in anything we could find and blacked our faces with soot from the chimney to disguise ourselves’). Bradtke (1999: 13) offers the following explanation:

*[...] a simple, easily obtained disguise, blacking up was useful to anyone bent on public mischief. When used in association with Molly dancing, black-face allowed the dancers some level of anonymity and freedom to participate in activities on the fringes of social acceptability.*

Yet from a contemporary perspective, such explanations can sit uncomfortably with wider presumptions that blacking up is inevitably a racialised practice, adjacent to the theatrical ‘blackface’ of minstrel shows from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, in which white performers wore makeup in derogatory imitation of black African-Americans. Cornish (2016) describes clearly the tensions surrounding blacking up at the Padstow midwinter Mummings Day (or ‘Darkie Day’ as it was formerly known). Keegan-Phipps (2017) describes the furious response in 2014 to David Cameron, UK Prime Minister at the time, being photographed with a group of Morris Dancers at Banbury Folk Festival who were wearing black face paint. The bulk of this reportage directly associated such blacking up with racist minstrelsy blackface, and expressed an ‘underlying disbelief that such a thing could still be happening in an enlightened modern society’ (Keegan-Phipps 2017: 3).

The Straw Bear festivities at Whittlesey in 2017 took place against the backdrop of this ongoing controversy. A number of incidents in the previous year had directly affected other events and the dancers in attendance. In August 2016 Shrewsbury Folk Festival had announced that from the following year, they would no longer book dance teams who blacked their faces, following the threat of legal action by the local equality group ‘Fairness and Racial

Equality in Shropshire'. Then, days before the Straw Bear, a group of Morris Dancers in Birmingham City Centre abandoned their performance after being heckled by onlookers for their use of black face paint.

These events prompted some indignant responses, including in the local fenland press. On the week of the festival the *Wisbech Standard* published an article with the headline 'Fenland residents say it's ludicrous 'blacked-up' Morris Dancers in Birmingham received abuse for being racist'.<sup>9</sup> Reporting on concerns that the events would affect the Straw Bear celebrations, the article states that 'Fenland residents hit out at shoppers who called Plough Day dancers in Birmingham racist for blacking up their faces', quoting the opinions of locals who thought the accusation 'bloody stupid': 'This is ludicrous! What kind of ignorance do people hold to have to constantly wave this racism flag?', before concluding with an official statement from the Straw Bear festival organisers, stating that:

*The Festival operates an equal opportunity policy with no prejudices against Colour, Creed or Gender. When inviting performers to their programmed events their policy is to provide the general public a broad spectrum of art forms based on British Heritage. They do not interfere with the diverse art forms these invited groups represent, in particular, their costume. The Festival has in the past and will in the future, resist any external organisation, individual or body who attempts to impose their will or ideology on the festival's invitation policy.*

Blacking up is far from being a universal practice among Molly Dancers at the festival. While some sides approximate a smearing of soot over the face in the manner described in historical documentation of the Plough Monday dancers, a number of dance teams approach the question of disguise with different styles of face paint. While some explain their decision to use other facepaint styles as a means of avoiding unintentionally causing offence due to connotations of 'blackface', among several teams the decision has been made primarily to create a unique signature look: the members of Gog Magog Molly, for example, paint their faces all manner of bright colours, while Pig Dyke Molly adopt striking black and white designs in apparent imitation of the rock band Kiss. At Whittlesey in 2017, the decisions made by the various teams and followers to black up, or not, were unchanged from previous years. Yet this backdrop of controversy inevitably had an impact on the festival. In conversation in the pubs, several of the participants expressed relief that there had been no scenes like those of the previous week in Birmingham. For

9 *Wisbech Standard* 10 January 2017 <http://www.wisbechstandard.co.uk/news/fenland-residents-say-it-s-ludicrous-blacked-up-morris-dancers-in-birmingham-received-abuse-for-being-racist-on-eve-of-the-straw-bear-festival-in-whittlesey-1-4843484>

some, there was clear concern about the risk of causing offence. Others, however, saw the continuation of the custom of blacking up as a form of defiance in the face of the denigration of English culture: in the words of one resident who told me he attends the Straw Bear festivities every year ‘our culture is being sacrificed because people are looking for ways to take offence, while other cultures make no compromise whatsoever’, linking this to wider concerns about ‘double standards’ and the rise of ‘political correctness’.

Whatever the question of the ‘original meaning’ of blacking up – and as we have seen above, the question of original meaning of practices is a difficult one – we see here how the ambiguity of symbols, as noted by Abner Cohen, becomes a site of contestation. Keegan-Phipps (2017) notes the convergence of several contexts which cause the relationship between cultural forms and political relations to be in a particularly acute state of flux. In particular, we see the context of the rising significance of questions of ‘English’ identity in the wake of the Scottish independence referendum of 2014, as well as the 2016 vote for Britain to leave the European Union. In this context, controversy surrounding the symbolism of Plough Monday becomes a site for the expression of dissonance about cultural and ethnic relations in the UK – both from the perspective of critiquing the overwhelming whiteness of participation in the English folk revival (see Keegan-Phipps 2017: 14), as well as a perspective critical of the way in which the concerns of a perceived liberal urban elite are apparently forced onto a reluctant population away from the metropolitan centre. Once again, misrule and the way in which such misrule is interpreted becomes a site of potent significance for the question of rural identity.

### Taming the bear?

In the revival of the customs, we see a striking social inversion; that which was previously considered a form of social disorder and begging becomes an honoured tradition and a respectable expression of the history of the region. The absurd re-emerges as heritage. This cementing of celebrations originally associated with the agricultural year into the identity of the contemporary fenland community is particularly striking as we consider the context of this revival in the face of a radical decline in the percentage of the population directly engaged in agriculture.

So what significance can Plough Monday, as a calendrical festival rooted in agricultural labour, have for the contemporary East Anglian fens? The very scale of the social and economic changes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that led to the apparent falling away of Plough Monday practices may, at the same time, help us to explain the urgent need to find means of asserting continuity in the face of such rupture: the rediscovery of rural customs as a performative grounding for identity.



However, the evidence presented in this paper suggests that an emphasis on continuity may draw us away from the very characteristics that lend the festivities their potency. It is not my intention, then, to follow Frazer in claiming Plough Monday and the Straw Bear as ‘survivals’. Rather, they serve as temporal disturbance; marking time as a disruption of the routine and the everyday, and injecting the calendar with an occasion for contestation amidst the cold dark winter days.

Can the Straw Bear ever be tamed? It is certainly true that he is managed by committee. As Victor Turner has argued, that which was liminal becomes routinized; yet it retains its potential for anti-structure. As the afternoon proceeds, the pubs become louder, the folk music becomes impossible to hear, and the Plough Monday festivities become again a space of license and joyful misrule – the very characteristics that led to officials shutting them down in the early 20th century. Official pageantry gives way to the unofficial anti-social sociality.

## References

- Ackerman, Robert (1991) *The Myth and Ritual School: J.G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists*. New York: Garland.
- Bean, J.P. (2014) *Singing from the Floor: A History of British Folk Clubs*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Boyes, Georgina (1993) *The Imagined village: Culture, Ideology, and the English folk Revival*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bradtke, Elaine (1999) *Molly Dancing in East Anglia Before 1940*. London: The Folklore Society, University College London.
- Brocken, Michael (2003) *The British Folk Revival, 1944-2002*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Cohen, Abner (1974) *Two Dimensional Man*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Cohen, Abner (1993) *Masquerade Politics: Explorations in the Structure of Urban Cultural Movements*. Oxford: Berg.
- Cornish, Helen (2016) Not All Singing and Dancing: Padstow, Folk Festivals and Belonging. *Ethnos* 81 (4): pp. 631-647.
- Eade, John and Michael J. Sallnow (1991) Introduction. In: Eade, John and Michael J. Sallnow (eds.) *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*. London: Routledge: pp. 1-29.
- Frampton, George (1989) *Whittlesey Straw Bear, with Notes on the Celebration of Plough Monday in the Area*. Peterborough: Cambridgeshire Library Publications.
- Frazer, J.G. (1912) *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*. London: Macmillan.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) (1983) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Irvine, Richard D.G. (2017) Anthropocene East Anglia. *The Sociological Review* 65 (S1): pp. 154-170.

- Keegan-Phipps, Simon (2017) Identifying the English: Essentialism and Multiculturalism in Contemporary English Folk Music. *Ethnomusicology Forum* 26 (1): pp. 3-25.
- Livingston, Tamara E. (1999) Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory. *Ethnomusicology* 43 (1): pp. 66-85.
- Marshall, Sybil (1967) *Fenland Chronicle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moore Smith, G.C. (1909) Straw-Bear Tuesday. *Folklore* 20 (2): pp. 202-203.
- Needham, Joseph and Arthur L. Peck (1933) Molly Dancing in East Anglia. *Journal of the Folk Dance and Song Society* 1 (2): pp. 79-85.
- Quack, Johannes and Paul Töbelmann (2010) Questioning “Ritual Efficacy”. *Journal of Ritual Studies* 24 (1): pp. 13-28.
- Turner, Victor (1969) *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, Victor (1983) Carnival in Rio: Dionysian Drama in an Industrializing Society. In: Manning, Frank E. (ed.) *The Celebration of Society: Perspectives on Contemporary Cultural Performance*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Press: pp. 103-124.
- Turner, Victor and Edith Turner (1978) *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Young, Rob (2010) *Electric Eden: Unearthing Britain’s Visionary Music*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Zayad, Yago (2016) *Agriculture: historical statistics*. House of Commons Library, Briefing Paper No. 03339.

---

Richard D.G. Irvine is a research fellow in the Department of Religious Studies at the Open University, having recently completed work on the project “Pathways to Understanding the Changing Climate” at the Division of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge. He is interested in the moral and temporal dimensions of humans’ relationships with their environments, and he carries out fieldwork across three sites: Orkney and East Anglia, UK, and Tuv aimag, Mongolia.

## The Krampus in Austria A Case of Booming Identity Politics

Matthäus Rest and Gertraud Seiser

### Introduction

‘Krampuses are very very very wild. And Krampuses are very beautiful’, an eight-year-old pupil from Dorfgastein in Austria wrote in her school essay on Saint Nicholas’s Day in 2011. She is not alone in her ambivalence regarding its attractiveness for her. Confronted with the Krampus, hardly anyone remains indifferent. Tourists produce their cameras, children roam the streets to tease them or hide in the attic gripped by panic. At the bar of a pub in Dorfgastein, elderly locals shake their heads out of concern and complain about the decline of the ‘true Krampus tradition’ when asked about changing customs, especially when they talk about the ‘excesses’ they encounter when they travel beyond the valley. To them, a Krampus is a young local man dressed in a wooden mask with at least three pairs of goat- and ram-horns, a long fur coat, a belt from which three to four large, loud bells hang and a switch in his hands. In groups of four to eight, they accompany Saint Nicholas and walk from house to house in early December. But take a thirty-minute drive to a similar pub in a similar small town, and people’s imagination of the ‘true’ Krampus might be very different.



Fig. 1. ‘De Entrischn’, a Krampus troupe on the streets of Dorfgastein, 6.12.2011.  
Photo: Matthäus Rest

Austria has seen a tremendous increase in Krampus events since the turn of the millennium (Ebner 2018; Rest and Seiser 2016; Ridenour 2016). Today there are hundreds of them every autumn all over the country. Many active Krampuses insist that ‘their’ custom is hundreds or even thousands of years old, and they often use such words as ‘pagan’, ‘pre-Christian’, ‘Celtic’ or ‘Germanic’ (Müller and Müller 1999: 458; Berger 2007: 121). However, there is no written evidence for the practice before 1582 (Schuhladen 1992: 24). In the mid-nineteenth century we know of only a few villages scattered across the Austrian and Bavarian Alps where groups of young, unmarried men dressed up in horned wooden masks, fur suits and cow bells in an attempt to impersonate the devil. The majority of these towns are on the fringes of the former Prince-Archbishopric of Salzburg.<sup>1</sup> A first wave of expansion and consolidation of the custom occurred in the four decades before the outbreak of the First World War, an era that Eric Hobsbawm (1983: 263 ff.) has aptly described as one of ‘mass-producing traditions’. This expansion links the Krampus to many other ‘invented traditions’ all over Europe, such as the pageantry of the British royal family or the introduction of personifications of nations like ‘Germania’.

In 2014 in the Gastein valley alone, there were 97 ‘*Passen*’ (Krampus groups) (Hochwarter 2014). The valley is about an hour’s drive south of Salzburg and has a population of 13,000 inhabitants divided into the three municipalities of Bad Gastein, Bad Hofgastein and Dorfgastein. Each ‘*Pass*’ comprises of Saint Nicholas; the ‘basket carrier’, whose large basket is filled with small bags of sweets to be left in people’s homes; sometimes one or two (female) angels; and four to eight Krampuses. On 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December only the Krampus groups walk from house to house to reward good children and punish naughty ones. In most other regions, the Krampus season stretches from early November until Christmas. Many of these troupes do not include a Saint Nicholas and only visit houses by prior arrangement, with most people encountering them exclusively during a specially organized event most commonly referred to as *Krampuslauf*, that is, a Krampus run.

In the old town of Salzburg, these events are the highlights of Christmas tourism. There, the groups are hand-picked ‘according to custom’. They provide spectacular performances in compliance with all safety regulations, yet are always ready for a selfie with the excited crowd of tourists. In stark contrast to these tame tourist performances are the Krampus events in the suburbs and rural towns. Also, they have various security arrangements. Sometimes, Krampuses and onlookers are separated by barriers and a large contingent of security personnel. At other times, only loose ropes separate

1 From the Late Middle Ages until the Napoleonic Wars, the Archbishopric of Salzburg was an ecclesiastical principality and state of the Holy Roman Empire. Its territory was larger than the present-day state of Salzburg. Both the region/state and its capital are called Salzburg.

onlookers from the performers or there are no boundaries at all. In the annual parade in Sankt Johann im Pongau, halfway between Salzburg and Gastein, a thousand Krampuses divided into eighty troupes move along a designated, marked route. Thousands of spectators fight for spots in the first row to witness the morbid vitality. Here, the troupes look much more diverse than at the tourist events. While some follow the ‘traditional’ aesthetics,<sup>2</sup> others display so-called ‘future’ masks<sup>3</sup> that are inspired by contemporary splatter and fantasy movies. In addition, the ambiance is more direct, aggressive and emotional at these events, which are intended for a ‘local’ audience with fewer cameras, more action and increased adrenaline.



Fig. 2. Tourists at a Krampus event in front of Salzburg Cathedral, 5.12.2013.  
Photo: Matthäus Rest

When we look at the literature, however, the substantial increase in Krampus events and the diversification of aesthetics and performative possibilities have hardly been taken into account.<sup>4</sup> Instead, Krampus is described as a custom with ‘pagan roots’, originally confined to remote mountain val-

2 Starting in the 1930s, both in the Gastein valley and in Matriei professionally trained woodcarvers began to develop new types of Krampus masks. These masks were discovered by early folklorists, and collected and exhibited in museums. Consequentially, two distinct mask styles developed, making these two regions the historical centres of ‘traditional’ masks (Koenig 1983; Grieshofer 1992).

3 People use the English word.

4 With the notable exception of Johannes Ebner (2018), whose findings in many respects mirror our own. For a recent and comprehensive English discussion, see Ridenour (2016).

leys, whose aim was to cast out winter and its evil spirits (see El-Monir et al. 2006). Johannes Ebner (2018: 33) rightly observes that this ‘mythological interpretation’ remains the hegemonic origin story of the Krampus, despite the clear lack of supporting evidence. Under the influence of tourism, so this traditionalist line of argumentation continues, the ‘original custom’ has been ‘sanitized’ and become meaningless public entertainment. We believe that this explanation hides more than it reveals. In the Austrian media, on the other hand, the Krampus is often connected to sexualized violence, alcoholism, atavism, rural backwardness, low levels of education and right-wing nationalism (Schnöller forthcoming). However, just looking at the scale and diversity of the Krampus shows that both the ‘mythological’ and the ‘atavistic’ explanations fall short of explaining the phenomenon.

The aim of this article, then, is to make sense of the Krampus as a multi-layered masculine youth culture that navigates between appropriation and boundary-making with respect to the custom and its custodians. For this, we have engaged with the people who become Krampuses every year to show how contradictory their interpretations can be. After five years and three periods of fieldwork in Salzburg and Tyrol,<sup>5</sup> we are convinced that the Krampus offers a unique opportunity to think through contemporary social and political configurations in Austria and beyond. Despite the fact that there is now a small but growing number of women becoming Krampuses, the overwhelming majority of active participants are men between the ages of sixteen and thirty. This age range, we believe, is one important reason why the Krampus is so strongly (and arbitrarily) associated with both children and sexuality. Male participants enter the scene when they are on the cusp between childhood and adolescence, and they leave when they become fathers. Therefore, as Lisa Kolb and Nele Meier (2016) have argued, becoming a Krampus can be understood as an extended rite of passage in which young men move in and out of liminality for only a few days every year for a decade or even longer. They also come from rather uniform socio-economic backgrounds. Active Krampuses predominantly grow up in rural or suburban middle-class households without a migration background. The Krampus in Austria, therefore, is very male and white. And while feminism, emancipation and immigration have so far not substantially changed these characteristics, many Krampuses still feel that their practice is coming under threat from these three developments. Therefore, the discourse around the history and origin of the Krampus has developed into a highly politicized field, with the Krampus becom-

---

5 We have observed and documented Krampus events over several years. In 2011 (in Gastein), 2013 (in Salzburg) and 2016 (in Matrei), we conducted extensive fieldwork involving a total of thirty students who participated in field schools of three weeks. The outcome of this collaborative work is presented in Rest and Seiser (2016).

ing one important element in the discussion surrounding white male identity politics.<sup>6</sup>

Let us stress right at the outset that contemporary Krampus practice in Austria is violent on many levels. Through the aesthetics of his mask, his switch, his way of performing and his actual practice of attacking people, he represents and exerts both physical and symbolic violence in the public sphere.<sup>7</sup> Beginning in the 1970s, physical violence or the threat of it against women and children has become increasingly unacceptable and subject to legal sanctions in Austria. However, no matter how ‘friendly’ an individual Krampus might behave, his presence is always considered to carry a threat of violence that constitutes a transgression of common sense and decency. We will argue that this is one of the main reasons for his recent rise to global popularity.



Fig. 3. Krampuses tearing down the crowd control barriers, Sankt Johann im Pongau, 6.12.2013. Photo: Matthäus Rest

- 
- 6 In using the words ‘male’ and ‘white’, we are referring to the majoritarian imagination we encountered during fieldwork. Maleness here refers to an unambiguous and naturalized identity position of heteronormative cis-masculinity. Whiteness is not a concept frequently used by our informants, but nonetheless it exists as a taken-for-granted assumption of race and ethnicity. We employ it here as an umbrella term for numerous ways of expressing and enacting cultural, ethnic or racial difference.
- 7 For vivid descriptions of these practices, see Röhms (2016: 56-62).

### Framing the Krampus: methodological and theoretical considerations

Krampus events can take very diverse forms and are embedded in a wide and complex discursive field. It is by no means a uniform ‘custom’, but a whole conglomerate of often conflicting performances that span a wide spectrum: for instance, while some are specifically intended to be consumed by a tourist audience, others are decidedly anti-tourist. During fieldwork we were strongly confronted with questions of identity, belonging and the politics emanating from these topics. In an attempt to deal with these (at times) confusingly entangled threads, we here adopt a layered analysis as proposed by Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann (2007). In their work on property and care in complex contemporary state societies, they distinguish between different layers of social organization, ‘which allows the analysis of the interrelations between those layers’ (Benda-Beckmann and Benda-Beckmann 2007: 36). As a methodological and heuristic tool, they suggest at least four separate layers: first, the cultural and religious ideals and ideological dimensions of a phenomenon expressed through norms and discursive formations; second, official legal and institutional regulations; third, the social relations in which practices are embedded; and fourth, the social practices themselves in which the effects of all the four layers meet (*ibid.*: 36 ff.).

In our case, the ideological layer is made up most importantly of arguments about the historical origins and the ‘true’ meaning of the Krampus phenomenon. Folklorists and representatives of organized folklore are heavily engaged in differentiating the allegedly ‘authentic’ and ‘true’ custom from perceived processes of commodification. Here the place and meaning of violence constitute a heavily contested topic. Secondly, legal and institutional regulations affect Krampus performances and direct concrete practices in different ways. Among these we include the self-prescribed rules of active Krampuses, as well as regulations ‘from above’ made by state and other authorities.

We see the third layer in the social relations into which these social practices are embedded. Identity and belonging are especially strongly mobilized here. In most cases, the members of a troupe are bound by ties of friendship, kinship and spatial proximity. There are whole groups of family members behind the scenes who support and steer the practice. The social composition and the power relations in these groups, each of which consists of between seven and a hundred individuals, are highly diverse and show different facets of identity politics. These three layers are internally structured by a multitude of processes that, taken together, affect the fourth layer, that of the practices of the actors. It is only in these practices that Krampus customs are reproduced and transformed.

Since the 1970s, identity and belonging have been important topics, and they have been diversely conceptualized and empirically investigated in socio-cultural anthropology. The term ‘identity’ originated in 1950s psy-



choanalytic theory, where it referred to something deeply rooted in the unconscious of the individual ‘as a durable and persistent sense of sameness of the self’ (Byron 1996: 292). In anthropology, personal identity was seen as having strong connections to social and cultural surroundings. The main disciplinary focus was on collective identities of various kinds of groups as a foundation of community building. The collective identity of ethnic belonging was an important point of departure. Initially, anthropologists tried to describe ethnic identity through the idea of a cultural ‘core’ unique to each ‘culture’. When a group of people believe they belong together, what is it that makes them the same? Through Fredrik Barth’s formative contribution to ‘ethnic groups and boundaries’ (1969), this perspective shifted fundamentally. In his understanding, ethnicity was not defined through essential interior sameness or a form of cultural inventory, but through differentiation from an exterior ‘other’. Also, the feminist debates on the category ‘woman’ in the early 1990s showed that ‘woman’ is not a uniform identity position but multiply intersects with class, race and religion.

Martin Sökefeld (2012: 47-48) therefore defines individual and collective identities through three aspects: difference, plurality and intersectionality. Difference here relates to the fact that individuals or groups define or describe themselves in contradistinction to others. Krampuses in the Gastein valley, for instance, differentiate themselves from all Krampuses outside the valley as the only ‘true’ and traditional ones. And every ‘*Pass*’ (Krampus troupe) can give reasons for setting them apart from the neighbouring troupe in the village, others within the region or troupes further afield. Each *Pass*’s positioning in relation to history, social markers, gender politics or the specific equipment they carry, along with their own point of view, comprises a multifaceted mix of factors that are different from any ‘other’ they compare themselves with. Identity is never grounded on one single difference factor, like origin, age or gender. This multiplicity of difference is the precondition for intersectionality: every human embodies a multiplicity of identities that influence one another in complex ways. Sökefeld (1999) calls on us to take these intersections seriously, instead of investigating categories of identity separately from one another.

Yet identity is more than an anti-essentialist approach in socio-cultural anthropology and other social sciences. In the second half of the twentieth century, many of the subjects and groups social scientists had been working with and about started to use the term for their own purposes (Leve 2011; Sökefeld 2004). Identities were actively created by ethnic or religious groups, by LGBTQI movements and so on, and mobilized in multiple ways to help their diverse agendas. The precondition for these forms of identity politics is almost always an understanding of identity as an essentialist and positive valuation of one’s own position (Fillitz 2003). This ethical valuation actualizes identity politics and makes diverse ideas of essential interior sameness

exploitable for purposes of nationalistic or religious emotionalization (Sökefeld 2004).

In acting out identity politics, the relationship between selfing and othering can be modelled in different ways. Following Gerd Baumann (2004: 19), from a structuralist perspective, three ‘grammars of us and them’ are in use: 1) the grammar of orientalizing or reverse mirror-imaging; 2) the segmentary grammar of contextual fission and fusion; and 3) the grammar of encompassment by hierarchical subsumption. The first means that ‘the other’ can be construed either positively or negatively when held up as a reflection of one’s ‘own’ self. The aim is to improve ‘the own’, while it is relatively unimportant whether one’s projection of ‘the other’ is accurate or not. In segmentary grammar, people come together to differentiate themselves from others: my town against the neighbouring town, our valley against the next, and so on. Within the third grammar, people attempt to incorporate ‘the other’ by categorizing it as inferior. A certain level of difference is granted, but only as a variation, a subaltern position within the all-encompassing self. The actors know these different grammars of selfing and othering, and they choose from them according to their intentions and aims (ibid.: 27). Therefore, belonging, which is an intense feeling of being part of a group, is strongly dependent on identity.

Lauren Leve (2011) points out the close relationship between the diffusion of identity politics and the often-violent implantation of liberal democracy in the global South in concert with the spread of neoliberal capitalism. As a result, conflicts over resources and among social groups have been discursively transformed from questions of economic justice into identity issues over which essentialized cultural, religious or ethnic differences ‘clash’. As Jean and John Comaroff (2009) showed convincingly, (ethnic) identities have become a global industry and are now being traded like commodities. Cultural heritage – one major source of identity for many Krampus troupes – has long been commodified and turned into a heritage industry (Bendix et al. 2012). Juxtaposing these considerations on identity and belonging to the layers of the social fabric enables us to analyse the complexity of the Krampus without denying the ambiguity inscribed in its diverse practices. Furthermore, this engagement mitigates the widespread risk of slippage into highly normative discussions of whether recent forms of the custom are an ‘abomination’ of the ‘authentic’ tradition. Instead, it enables us to describe contemporary Krampus practices as highly political negotiations of identity politics in gendered and racialised fields of discourse.

### The ideological dimension or the origins of the myth

How are identity and belonging expressed in accordance with the layers of analysis mentioned above? Starting with its cultural and ideological dimensions, one fundamental aspect of the Krampus identity is to anchor oneself

to history. The mythological explanation imagines the origin of Krampus as an ancient pagan fertility rite that was performed to chase out the winter and revive the reproductive power of nature and humans. In many cases, the origins of Krampus were the first topic that came up after we introduced ourselves as anthropologists to Krampus performers. Often our interlocutors would assume that we were most interested in solving the mystery of the origins of this seemingly ancient tradition and accordingly they would explain its roots to us. These explanations, while in many ways contradictory, tended to agree that the origins of Krampus predate the advent of Christianity at around 700 CE. On other occasions, our informants assumed we were historians and would ask us questions such as, ‘Is Krampus a Germanic or a Celtic tradition? And how did Saint Nicholas get involved?’ It soon became clear that we would have to engage with the available historical scholarship on the topic in order to take part in these discussions.

By assessing the existing literature, we soon realized that the active Krampuses’ convictions about the pre-Christian roots of this custom resulted not from locally passed down knowledge, but from an origin story deliberately disseminated by folklorists in the early twentieth century. According to recent scholarship (Ebner 2018: 33-43; Bockhorn 1994), they were motivated by a clear political agenda. Inspired by the proto-fascist ideology of German nationalism, ethnologists such as Viktor von Geramb, Richard Wolfram and others were convinced that the masked rites were the remnant of a Germanic custom that had been ‘moulded’ (*überformt*) by Christianity. One of the main aims of National Socialist folk studies, then, was to remove this imagined Christian layer. The frequent attempts to ban the custom by the archbishops of Salzburg and other religious institutions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries served as a convenient confirmation of this line of argument. In 1940, one of the largest weeklies in Nazi Germany published a photo essay of the Gastein ‘*Perchtenumzug*’ with a convoluted caption reading, ‘The ancient custom, frequently banned for its pagan roots, has kept as a precious inheritance its belief in the always recurring spring of peasant *Volkskraft* [people’s strength]’ (Rübelt 1940: 78-79; all German quotes translated by the authors).

This right-wing agenda was never backed up by serious historical research, and even after the fall of Nazi Germany it took decades for this to happen. Only in the 1980s did the ethnologist Hans Schuhladen start to work systematically through the historical records. He found no ‘pagan’ origins, and his earliest source is clearly modern: in 1582, in the Bavarian town of Diessen, those who had ‘hunted the *Percht*’ received a monetary reward. Unfortunately, there are no details of the sequence of the rite or the costumes (Schuhladen 1992: 24). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, reports from Bavaria, Tyrol and Salzburg abounded; however, the word *Krampus* is absent from all of these historical sources, which all use *Percht* instead to name the practice.

The word *Percht* is commonly associated with the old deity Perchta, but the similarity between the two words is the only clear connection between pre-Christian religious belief and the Krampus. So far, nobody has found a historical source linking the masked parades to any form of cultic or religious practice surrounding the deity. Also, the numerous bans on the practice were not intended to eradicate superstition or pagan traditions but imposed because the authorities saw them as a threat to public order, in the form of young masked people roaming the streets at night, drinking, dancing and fighting. Even more troubling was the fact that girls and boys engaged in these shenanigans together. Until around 1800, there were many of these bans, but hardly any accounts of the custom being banned. Only with the advent of Romanticism and its different attitude towards the peasantry and its culture did descriptions begin to appear (Schuhladen 1992: 26; Kammerhofer-Aggermann and Dohle 2002; Kammerhofer-Aggermann 2010). Judging from these sources, we believe that the most convincing interpretation of the old *Perchten* runs is that they were carnival parades (Kammerhofer-Aggermann 2007: 121). In the months between Advent and Candlemas there was comparatively little work to do in the Alpine peasant economy, so young people gathered in the main households in the villages and the pantries were full. In this vein, in 1841, Ignaz Kürsinger wrote that the *Perchten* customs 'belong to the winter joys of the highlander, comparable to the balls and theatre performances of the city dwellers' (Schuhladen 1992: 28).

These sources, however, do not explain how the strange collaboration between the Krampus and Saint Nicholas came about. Ulrike Kammerhofer-Aggermann (2002: 11) refers to the Bavarian and Tyrolean Nicholas plays that emerged from the Jesuit plays of the Counter-Reformation, arguing that in the nineteenth century these often escalated into wild parades that were only called *Perchten* runs later. In addition, she mentions the so-called 'moving theatre' in Tyrol, where small groups, mostly comprising Nicholas, a devil, *Buttenmandl*<sup>8</sup> and an angel, went from house to house and performed small theatrical pieces with blessings (Kammerhofer-Aggermann 2010). This reference to the Counter-Reformation is important for two reasons. First, there is ample evidence that the depiction of the devil in the Jesuit theatre was a direct predecessor of the Krampus (Schuhladen 1984). Secondly, it was in the aftermath of the Counter-Reformation, in the 1730s, that Archbishop Leopold Anton von Firmian of Salzburg expelled the remaining Protestant population from his territory. In the Gastein valley, this affected a third of the population (Zimburg 1948: 166 ff.). The vacated farms and miners' houses were taken over by Catholic migrants from Tyrol, thus reinforcing the influence of the Tyrolean Nicholas customs in the archbishopric (Kammerhofer-Aggermann and Dohle 2002: 16).

---

8 *Buttenmandl* wear costumes made from straw somewhat similar to British straw bears.

With the simultaneous invention of tradition and folk studies in the second half of the nineteenth century, we for the first time find detailed accounts of masked customs. This is also the time when ideas about their pagan origins first started to appear. It was the folklorists who came up with these theories and implanted this origin myth in the collective imagination of the active Krampuses. The word *Krampus* only rose to popularity in the late nineteenth century in connection with a media phenomenon that emerged in Vienna, which soon spread to many other German-speaking cities through the introduction of the postcard in Austria-Hungary in 1897. People began to send each other red postcards in the weeks leading up to Christmas that depicted the Krampus, often with a short poem and the tagline 'Greetings from Krampus'. Most of the postcards depicting Krampus fall into two categories: children and sex. Either the Krampus is engaged in punishing mischievous children, or he himself is mischief personified and often accompanied by a scantily clad young woman in a clearly erotic pose (Seiser and Rest 2016: 24-26). As a result, we believe that children and sex remain central to understanding the current practice of becoming Krampus in the Alps.

Consequently, this brings us back to the Krampus as a contemporary youth culture and the question: why the recent boom? These days, the first order of business for many newly founded Krampus troupes in small rural towns is to register a website and work on their social media presence. The website is then advertised through large online communities such as *Krampusmania.at* to ensure traffic and – eventually – brand recognition. We think this is not dissimilar to the Krampus craze around the year 1900, as the postcard of those days has much in common with social media in the last decade. Both are social forms that reshaped communication and profoundly changed the relationship between the private and public spheres. However, our research suggests that there is more to the recent boom than a new and disruptive technology.

### On legal and institutional regulations

Krampus practice in Austria today is highly regulated, both internally by the groups themselves and by the state. These regulations, however, vary greatly between different regions. Two of our main field sites over the past five years are considered the regions with the longest continuous Krampus tradition: the Gastein valley, and Matrei, a town in eastern Tyrol. Despite important differences in the way the custom is conducted in these two regions, the legal framework for both is very similar. The code of conduct among Krampuses and between them and other community members is mostly implicit and passed down orally from generation to generation (although currently a process of written codification is under way). The state authorities keep their regulatory role to a minimum; police and ambulance services do their

normal night shifts. The Krampus troupes are not even required to register officially as clubs. In Mauterndorf, as in the three towns in the Gastein valley, the Krampus groups roam the streets freely; there is no official parade, no boundaries and no safe spaces. Whoever leaves their house on those early December nights knows they might encounter the Krampus. At the same time, these are very social nights, and misdemeanours are subject to sanctioning by the local population. In the days following the Krampus events, public opinion in town will determine whether specific actions warrant sanctions beyond naming and shaming.

In both regions, the custom is an important source of pride for local elites, and politicians, teachers and amateur historians strongly support it. Local museums showcase the custom and exhibit historical masks; folklorists – and the occasional anthropologist – are invited to symposia and to observe the custom; woodcarvers are very well respected. Together with students and colleagues, well-known scholars such as the late ethologist Otto Koenig (1983) or the sociologist Roland Girtler (2001) have spent the Krampus season in Mauterndorf for decades. Mayors, woodcarvers and proponents of the custom in both regions have told us in interviews that they alone own the scientifically certified ‘true’ tradition. From an early age, children are socialized into the tradition; for example, thirteen-year-old teenagers told us that being hit with the Krampus’ switch results in fertility (Schnöller 2016). By the time sixteen-year-old boys, supported by whole networks of relatives, establish new troupes, they have already fully embodied the rules and interpretations. Furthermore, in terms of Baumann’s grammars of identities, we see here an active form of encompassment, as all Krampus events beyond these two centres are dismissed as inferior and cheap copies.

The public parades we found in all our other field sites require very different forms of security management. At these events, questions of liability are much more pressing, as here spectators and performers are more separated, both socially and spatially, than in the tight-knit communities of Gastein and Mauterndorf. Many of the organizers ask performers to bring along friends to help as stewards and accompany the Krampuses during the parade. Elsewhere, local associations, such as the volunteer fire brigade, help out, while for the few really large parades professional security is hired. Recently, some organizers have started to hand out number badges in order to trace individual performers who misbehave, and many have clear regulations on which forms of switches are allowed. Sometimes, Krampuses are prohibited from using any at all.

In addition, these parades are a very different social form from the Krampus performances in Gastein and Mauterndorf. In most cases spectators want to remain spectators and prefer to be involved only symbolically. Rather than being something to be proud of and to show off to one’s girlfriends at school the next day, bruises may be a cause for a formal complaint. A torn jacket

is not part of the game but a potential insurance claim. The security measures taken regulate the interaction between Krampuses and the audience. Furthermore, increasing public exposure through videography, the Internet and social media have had a tremendous influence on the troupes' performances, their masks and accessories over the past few years. At the major parades, troupes now feel they have to 'out-compete' each other. They develop visual and performative identities to differentiate themselves, as they will be remembered only if they look truly special or do something unique. The institutional conditions of the public in the age of social media result in an ever-increasing role for the segmentary grammar of selfing and othering between different troupes. This is rapidly transforming and multiplying their practices and aesthetics.



Fig. 4. Two Krampuses simulating sexual activity, Sankt Johann im Pongau, 6.12.2014.  
Photo: Gertraud Seiser.

### Gendered social relations while *doing* the Krampus

Gender relations are at the core of contemporary Krampus practices. While in Dorfgastein, at least, we heard of several women who, up until the 1970s, became Nicholas's and led troupes from house to house, neither in Gastein nor in Matrei was there a single female Krampus during our fieldwork. When asked about the reasons for this gender divide, both men and women in the valleys agreed that it was because 'women are too weak to carry the heavy gear'. Often these comments naturalized women's weakness to the point

where one of our male informants told us, ‘I could also say: I want to be emancipated, I want to have children, but this just doesn’t work.’ Therefore, the only available role for women is the rather dull one of the angel. This does not mean that Krampus practice is possible without the invisible reproductive labour of women. They help their sons, boyfriends, husbands and brothers to prepare the bags of sweets that troupes leave at all the houses and often do the last-minute mending of costumes. During the Krampus season they keep the performers fed and hydrated, restock the baskets with sweets every few hours and pick up the exhausted men after ten hours of running and drinking to guide them safely to their beds (Grabmaier 2013).



Fig. 5. A woman offering food to a Krampus troupe while they are resting in a carport, Dorfgastein, 6.12.2014. Photo: Matthäus Rest

This invisibility of female labour, of course, is nothing exceptional. But beyond that, the Krampus needs women not just for his reproduction, but as one of the main reasons for his performance. After all, it is mostly women between the ages of fifteen and thirty who attract his interest. While his official *raison d'être* is to punish naughty children, in reality he is often much more interested in chasing young women in the streets or snatching them from behind a kitchen table. In most cases, the attraction is mutual. To many young women, the Krampus season is a highly social time that offers excitement and a chance to figure out how interesting they are to the young men in the community. In Gastein, being caught by a Krampus is normally a rather violent affair. They carry birch switches that they use to deliberately lash at people’s thighs. When there is snow, they also like to knock people over and rub snow in their faces. The most reasonable thing, therefore, would be to



wear long underwear and padded skiing pants. Still, most of the young women we encountered wore skinny jeans or even leggings. Some of them told us that, in the following days, they compare their bruises, and wear them with pride. While at first glance this seems to reproduce very stereotypical gender roles of male predators and female prey, things are more complex. For young women 'chasing Krampuses' is clearly a form of asserting agency and claiming space in a highly masculine custom (see Grabmaier 2013; Grabmaier and Scheiber 2016).

Elderly men who perceive themselves as the custodians of the Krampus tradition told us, on numerous occasions, that they were not happy with the fact that young women roam the streets these days, or, if less courageous, drive around the valley to experience the action from the safety of their cars. In their opinion, women's place is within the confines of the home, where they are supposed to take care of smaller children and wait for the troupes to call on them.

Outside the Krampus tradition, things are very different. A lack of qualified work and child care, combined with the better education of young women compared to their male classmates, leads to greater levels of out-migration by young women. Teenage boys in rural Austria generally have more diverse job options than girls. Therefore, after compulsory schooling girls tend to progress to secondary schools, unlike most boys, who are more likely to start an apprenticeship. This results in higher levels of education for women, who are then often unable to find jobs locally that match their qualifications. As a result, more women than men leave to study at university (Larcher et al. 2014). Men who do get university degrees tend to return to the countryside, as they are more likely to inherit property than their sisters.

The Gastein valley, for instance, has a long history of tourism due to its hot springs, which were already famous in the Middle Ages. With the rise of ski tourism in the twentieth century, it has become a popular year-round destination. Many local men work in tourism as mountain guides, ski instructors, lift attendants or masseurs to supplement their incomes from part-time farming. The service staff in hotels and restaurants, on the other hand, almost exclusively consists of migrant workers from Central and Eastern Europe who are predominantly female. Because of the low pay and long hours of work, the local population moved out of this profession about a generation ago. These economic and social conditions were a constant point of reference during our fieldwork. Informants who were critical of the Krampus in particular insisted that we should abandon our folkloristic research project and instead deal with the region's 'real' problems. The Krampus season falls right at the start of the winter, when the locals are preparing for the annual 'foreign invasion'. During this brief interlude, with only locals around, there is no need to perform professional friendliness, consideration and politeness towards anybody. We therefore suggest that the Krampus performance is a

kind of acting out of the regions' contemporary problems, as we see here a specific intersection of identity positions or factors of difference (in this case gender, ethnicity, age and local identity) that is clearly distinct from the more urban Salzburg. Women, as well as men, see their involvement in the custom as a service to the community, and hardly anyone questions the gendered division of labour. During those weeks, gender roles suddenly seem unambiguous, with the women relegated to supporting roles as 'in the good old days'.

This is not to say that younger Krampuses in and around Salzburg have embraced the agenda of women's emancipation. Most troupes we encountered in our work were highly masculine social systems that mirrored the multi-layered hierarchies of exclusion that are so central to Krampus traditions throughout Austria. We found a paradigmatic example of this on the outskirts of Salzburg, where a couple of troupes have existed since the 1960s and 1970s. In contrast to the Gastein valley, where in most cases a *Pass* consists of a peer group of five to ten male teenagers who start becoming Krampuses in their late teens, remain a troupe for around five to fifteen years and then disband, as they lack any formal legal status, in the Salzburg area the troupes are registered societies and often have dozens of members of various ages. Contrary to the egalitarian ethics of *Passen* in Gastein, in one of the long-established Salzburg troupes we found a highly hierarchical structure reminiscent of fraternities or other male secret societies. In addition, the core group of active Krampuses are men between sixteen and thirty years of age. The men involved participate in a highly liminal stage that allows them to disassociate themselves from their normal social interactions. During the two weeks leading up to the troupe's major event – a choreographed acrobatic performance – they take time off work to prepare the venue for the event. The evenings are spent drinking and partying together in a basement (aptly called 'the crypt'), where most of them also sleep for those two weeks. They call this time 'the fifth season' during which they do not feel bound by the social conventions they adhere to during the rest of the year. For instance, monogamy is suspended during that time. Consequently, their girlfriends and wives are explicitly prohibited from entering the crypt; other women, however, are allowed to enter when invited (Meyer 2016).

However, participant observation showed that the main form of sexuality performed in this space was not so much extramarital heterosexual intercourse, but rather a very intense form of male bonding with strong homoerotic overtones. Especially during those boozy evenings, we observed a lot of physical and erotic interaction between the men. It often started with verbal teasing, then moved on to tactile show fights, often ending in a tender and loving embrace. At the same time, as much as the troupe's internal discourse constantly reaffirms their exclusion of women, they also strongly perform their antipathy to homosexuality, with someone or something being 'gay' qualifying as the central and most frequently used derogatory term.

The Krampus of this well-educated upper-middle-class setting is not about threatening women with violence. The goal of the *Pass* is to display a shared acrobatic and organizational excellence that is admired by an audience of the same class. Close physical intimacy reduces the risk of injury in acrobatic stunts; their production is made possible by an identity based on a strict dissociation from homosexuality.

This is not to say that all long-established Krampus groups in the city of Salzburg perform gender relations in this way. Another troupe that has been active since the 1960s, for instance, organizes some of the largest events in town and comprises of a few closely interconnected family groups. They are proud of their traditional masks and their maintenance of the custom, which they also perform outside Salzburg. For instance, in 2014 they sent representatives to Los Angeles, and in 2017 they performed in Munich (in both cases observed by members of our research group). In this family-based association women can take on all roles, including the Krampus.

### Imagined Muslim attacks on the Krampus

Another central theme of the Krampus in contemporary Austria surrounds questions of immigration and integration. Every autumn since 2006 proponents of the right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ) have claimed that Saint Nicholas is banned from public nursery schools in Vienna, despite the fact that this allegation is completely unfounded. In their narrative, the reason for the imagined ban is that the authorities do not want to upset Muslim parents by holding Christian festivals. The controversy is therefore similar to the frequently alleged 'war on Christmas' in the United States. Through the imagination of an 'attack on our culture', populist movements can construct an image of the West under siege. Their xenophobic demands thus come to be reframed as a legitimate form of cultural self-defence.

The trope of the Krampus under attack is also mobilized in a more immediate way. During our fieldwork in Salzburg in 2013, several times we heard the story of a knife attack. People told us that a Turk had stabbed a Krampus to death at a parade, or alternatively that he survived with severe injuries. The story had all the ingredients of an urban legend. None of our informants had witnessed the incident, but 'a friend of a friend' had. An extensive search in the archives of the Austria Press Agency yielded no results, so we can be certain that this did not happen in the past twenty years.

That is not to say that there are no clashes at parades. Both performers and spectators have told us stories of aggressive migrant teenagers who attack Krampuses, allegedly because 'they don't know the custom and how to engage with a Krampus'. When we accompanied a troupe to a parade in Hallein, however, we noticed the opposite: strong aggression directed at Muslims and Islam in general by the Krampus performers. Hallein is an old

mining and industrial town on the outskirts of Salzburg. The members of the Krampus troupe referred to the town as ‘Little Istanbul’ because of the large number of inhabitants with Turkish roots. In their opinion, it was only a matter of time before a minaret would be built, followed by a muezzin calling for prayer. If you were to stay in Hallein any longer, they continued, you would risk forgetting your German. They told us there were hardly any ‘native’ children left in local schools. Before their performance at the parade, our informants gathered at a mulled wine stall to drink, banter and mingle with members of other troupes. Migrants were referred to as ‘disturbing elements’ that do not belong in a Krampus parade. With every glass of wine the derogatory comments increased. Before the parade, all the Krampus groups gathered at the ‘starting line’, which, incidentally, was directly in front of a mosque. Our interlocutors had to wait for two hours; before long they noticed the building and started to ridicule it. They insisted on us taking their picture in full Krampus attire in front of the mosque and started to pose shouting ‘Muschi! Muschi!’<sup>9</sup> Members of the other troupes thought it was amusing. After the parade, and upon returning to the troupe’s home town, we ended the evening at the Krampuses’ favourite haunt, where we met some of their friends from a different troupe. When they learned that our informants had just returned from Hallein, they immediately asked whether they could still speak German and whether they now owned a headscarf (Rest and Sartori 2016).

As these examples show, the Krampus is often mobilized to undergird what Baumann’s typology identifies as grammars of orientalization. Muslims are imagined as aggressive enemies of the custom who refuse to conform and instead want to change the culture of white Europeans. What is rendered invisible in this narrative is the large number of Muslim immigrants who enjoy the parades as much as their non-Muslim neighbours and the increased interest from migrants in also becoming active Krampuses.

In the Gastein valley, there are still only a handful of performers with a migration background. But there we learned of another surprising ‘Turkish connection’ that makes us wonder how ‘local’ the traditional Gastein Krampuses are. Elderly men told us almost unanimously that everything that is needed to sustain the Krampus tradition should be locally sourced, if possible from within the valley. Thus the African antelope horns seen at parades outside the valley would never be accepted there. The sheepskins for the coats, the pinewood and the ram- and goat-horns for the masks should all originate from the region. After a few glasses of schnapps, however, a man in his sixties from Bad Hofgastein told us about one of his great youthful adventures in the late 1970s. With the increasing shift to cattle-farming, long and impressive goat horns had become rare, so when a Turkish colleague told him about the abundance of goats in his home country, he and a friend decided

9 *Muschi* means ‘pussy’. The word for mosque in German is *Moschee*.

to see for themselves. They travelled all the way to the villages around Izmir in his VW Beetle. Once there, they filled up the whole car with goat horns and triumphantly drove them back to Gastein. After finishing his story, our interlocutor grinned sarcastically and contemplated how many of the priceless ‘historical masks’ that were said to represent local identity had Turkish horns. This, of course, is nothing new. As with many of the masked winter customs in the region, even in the early modern era long-distance connections were the norm rather than the exception, as Ulrike Kammerhofer-Aggermann has convincingly argued (2015). Her historical research shows that the carnival in Venice was a significant point of reference, and places like Gastein or Matri are located along important trade routes connecting southern Germany with Venice.



Fig. 6. A Krampus attacking spectators at a Krampus party, Dorfgastein, 3.12.2011.  
Photo: Gertraud Seiser

## Conclusion

As our examples have shown, the Krampus in Austria is an important site for the production and reproduction of identities. Especially for the performers, becoming a Krampus gives them a unique way of exploring relations of gender and race. Therefore, we see the Krampus as a prime site in which to explore white male identity politics in Austria and beyond. As the example of the wrongly proclaimed ban of Saint Nicholas in Viennese nurseries demonstrates, the Krampus’s influence is not limited to his mostly rural range. Our empirical work reveals the remarkable diversity of opinions and identities performed through becoming a Krampus. Working through different aspects

of this so-called custom, we have shown that all three grammars of identity and alterity postulated by Gerd Baumann can be found in the often contradictory practices subsumed under the label 'Krampus'.

However, this is not to say that all three grammars impact on processes of identity formation in a symmetrical way. After hundreds of interviews, we are certain that the main allure in becoming Krampus for young white men in rural Austria today is indeed nostalgia for a form of unambiguous, confident, heteronormative masculinity in an ethnically homogenous society that is far from their everyday experience. The increasing emancipation of women, the increasing precarity of the labour market and the growing presence and influence of immigrants are processes that attack classic male white identities all over the region. For many young men, becoming Krampus is a way to 'stand their ground' in these ongoing and emerging conflicts over resource allocation. If we think about other recent examples from around the planet, we cannot help but observe a strong tendency among young men in times of uncertainty to resort to violence that warrants further ethnographic research. Given the widespread feeling of growing uncertainty in Austria, especially after the arrival of a substantial number of refugees over the past few years, we are sure that the Krampus boom has only just begun.

## References

- Barth, Fredrik (1969) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*. Long Grove: Waveland.
- Baumann, Gerd (2004) *Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach*. In: Baumann, Gerd and Andre Gingrich (eds.) *Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn: pp. 18-50.
- Benda-Beckmann, Franz von and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann (2007) *Social Security between Past and Future: Ambonese Networks of Care and Support*. Berlin: LIT.
- Bendix, Regina, Aditya Eggert and Arnika Peselmann (eds.) (2012) *Heritage Regimes and the State*. Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen.
- Berger, Karl (2007) *Heidnische Rituale in modernen Zeiten? Eine volkskundliche Skizze über gegenwärtige Tendenzen bei Krampusbräuchen in Tirol*. *Tiroler Heimatblätter* 82 (4): pp. 120-125.
- Bockhorn, Olaf (1994) "Mit all seinen völkischen Kräften Deutsch": Germanisch-deutsche Volkskunde in Wien. In: Jacobeit, Wolfgang, Hannjost Lixfeld and Olaf Bockhorn (eds.) *Völkische Wissenschaft: Gestalten und Tendenzen der deutschen und österreichischen Volkskunde in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau: pp. 559-575.
- Byron, Reginald (1996) *Identity*. In: Barnard, Alan and Jonathan Spencer (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*. London, New York: Routledge: p. 292.

- Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff (2009) *Ethnicity, Inc.* Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Ebner, Johannes (2018) *Tradition ohne Vergangenheit: Zur sozialen Neudefinition von alpinen Maskenbräuchen.* Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- El-Monir, Karin, Olivia de Fontana and Toni Anzenberger (2006) *Mystische Steiermark: Verborgenes Erbe, heilende Wasser, dunkle Welten.* Graz: Styria.
- Fillitz, Thomas (2003) Zu ethnischer und interkultureller Identität: Eine sozialanthropologische Begriffsklärung. In: Fillitz, Thomas (ed.) *Interkulturelles Lernen: Zwischen institutionellem Rahmen, schulischer Praxis und gesellschaftlichem Kommunikationsprinzip.* Innsbruck/Wien, Studienverlag: pp. 23-31.
- Girtler, Roland (2001) *Gruß vom Krampus: Auferstehung einer teuflischen Kultfigur.* Vienna: Brandstätter.
- Grabmaier, Ilona (2013) *Männlichkeit in der Krise? Die ritualisierte Konstruktion und Reproduktion hegemonialer Männlichkeitsvorstellungen am Beispiel des Krampuslaufes in Dorfgastein.* Vienna; Master's Thesis, University of Vienna.
- Grabmaier, Ilona and Kathrin Scheiber (2016) "Der Krampuslauf ist Männer-sache, und aus!" Zum gar nicht banalen Platz der Frauen in einem exklusiven Männerraum. In: Rest, Matthäus and Gertraud Seiser (eds.) *Wild und Schön: Der Krampus im Salzburger Land.* Vienna: LIT: pp. 197-220.
- Grieshofer, Franz (1992) Die Gestalt der Bercht und ihre Erscheinungsformen in Österreich. In: Hutter, Ernestine (ed.) *Salzburger Perchtenbrauch: Tagungsband zum Salzburger Perchten-Symposium Maske, Mystik, Brauch, Burg Hohenwerfen, 13. bis 15. November.* Salzburg: Salzburger Volkskultur: pp. 49-63.
- Hobsbawm, Eric (1983) Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914. In: Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: pp. 263-307.
- Hochwarter, Franz (ed.) (2014) *Die Gasteiner Passen.* St. Johann im Pongau: Verlag Franz Hochwarter.
- Kammerhofer-Aggermann, Ulrike (2015) Salzburger "Maschkeräläufe" im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert: Alpine Formen des Karnevals an den Fernhandelsrouten zwischen Venedig und Leipzig. In: Ammerer, Gerhard, Ingonda Hanneschläger and Thomas Hochradner (eds.) *Von Venedig nach Salzburg: Spurenlese eines vielschichtigen Transfers.* Vienna: Hollitzer Verlag: pp. 137-183.
- Kammerhofer-Aggermann, Ulrike (2010) *Kramperl, Klaubauf, Kinderfresser.* Salzburger Volkskultur 34 (2): pp. 28-31.
- Kammerhofer-Aggermann, Ulrike (2007) *Lärmende Unordnung: Maskenbräuche in Salzburg.* In: Kreissl, Eva (ed.) *Die Macht der Maske.* Weitra: Verlag publication PN<sup>o</sup>1: pp. 101-130.
- Kammerhofer-Aggermann, Ulrike (2002) *Wie kommt der Nikolaus zum Krampus?* In: Hochwarter, Franz (ed.) *Die Gasteiner Passen.* St. Johann im Pongau: Verlag Franz Hochwarter: pp. 6-13.

- Kammerhofer-Aggermann, Ulrike and Gerda Dohle (2002) Maskenverbote im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. In: Luidold, Lucia and Ulrike Kammerhofer-Aggermann (eds.) *Im Winter und zur Weihnachtszeit. (Bräuche im Salzburger Land. Zeitgeist – Lebenskonzepte – Rituale – Trends – Alternativen. CD-ROM 1)*: pp. 1-21.
- Koenig, Otto (1983) *Klaubauf – Krampus – Nikolaus: Maskenbrauch in Tirol und Salzburg*. Vienna: Edn. Tusch.
- Kolb, Lisa and Nele Meier (2016) Der Krampuslauf im Gasteinertal als männliches Initiationsritual. In: Rest, Matthäus and Gertraud Seiser (eds.) *Wild und Schön: Der Krampus im Salzburger Land*. Vienna: LIT: pp. 181-196.
- Larcher, Manuela, Theresia Oedl-Wieser, Mathilde Schmitt and Gertraud Seiser (eds.) (2014) *Frauen am Land: Potentiale und Perspektiven*. Innsbruck, Wien, Bozen: Studienverlag.
- Leve, Lauren (2011) Identity. *Current Anthropology* 52 (4): pp. 513-515.
- Meyer, Alexandra (2016) “Wir sind eine eingeschworene Gemeinschaft”: Gemeinschaftsbildung und Zusammenhalt unter Männern in einer Salzburger Krampuspass. In: Rest, Matthäus and Gertraud Seiser (eds.) *Wild und Schön: Der Krampus im Salzburger Land*. Vienna: LIT: pp. 221-235.
- Müller, Felix and Ulrich Müller (1999) Percht und Krampus, Kramperl und Schiach-Perchten. In: Müller, Ulrich and Werner Wunderlich (eds.) *Dämonen, Monster und Fabelwesen*. St. Gallen: UVK: pp. 449-460.
- Rest, Matthäus and Martin Sartori (2016) Die Verteidigung des Abendlandes: Der Krampus und der Islam. In: Rest, Matthäus and Gertraud Seiser (eds.) *Wild und Schön: Der Krampus im Salzburger Land*. Vienna: LIT: pp. 169-179.
- Rest, Matthäus and Gertraud Seiser (2016) *Wild und Schön: Der Krampus im Salzburger Land*. Vienna: LIT.
- Ridenour, Al (2016) *The Krampus and the Old, Dark Christmas: Roots and Rebirth of the Folkloric Devil*. Port Townsend: Feral House.
- Röhm, Mona (2016) Nähe und Distanz zum Krampusfell: Eine autoethnographische Betrachtung der Feldforschung. In: Rest, Matthäus and Gertraud Seiser (eds.) *Wild und Schön: Der Krampus im Salzburger Land*. Vienna: LIT: pp. 51-67.
- Rübelt, Lothar (1940) Wie vor tausend Jahren: Die Perchten kommen! In: *Berliner Illustrierte*, 4, 25.01.1940: pp. 78-79.
- Schnöller, Tabitha (forthcoming) *Der Krampus online: Zur Rolle der Medien in der Vermittlung von Tradition und Ritual am Beispiel des alpenländischen Krampus-Brauchtums*. Vienna; Master's Thesis, University of Vienna.
- Schnöller, Tabitha (2016) Bilder vom Krampus: Zur Wahrnehmung der Figur des Krampus im Laufe der Kindheit. In: Rest, Matthäus and Gertraud Seiser (eds.) *Wild und Schön: Der Krampus im Salzburger Land*. Vienna: LIT: pp. 237-255.



- Schuhladen, Hans (1992) Zur Geschichte von Perchtenbräuchen in Salzburg und Nachbargebieten bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts. In: Hutter, Ernestine (ed.) Salzburger Perchtenbrauch: Tagungsband zum Salzburger Perchten-Symposium Maske, Mystik, Brauch, Burg Hohenwerfen, 13. bis 15. November. Salzburg: Salzburger Volkskultur: pp. 22-48.
- Schuhladen, Hans (1984) Die Nikolausspiele des Alpenraumes. Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner.
- Seiser, Gertraud und Matthäus Rest (2016) Wild und Schön: Eine Einleitung. In: Rest, Matthäus and Gertraud Seiser (eds.) Wild und Schön: Der Krampus im Salzburger Land. Vienna: LIT: pp. 13-34.
- Sökefeld, Martin (2012) Identität: ethnologische Perspektiven. In: Petzold, Hilarion (ed.) Identität. Ein Kernthema moderner Psychotherapie: Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven. Wiesbaden: VS: pp. 39-56.
- Sökefeld, Martin (2004) Das Paradigma kultureller Differenz: Zur Forschung und Diskussion über Migranten aus der Türkei in Deutschland. In: Sökefeld, Martin (ed.) Jenseits des Paradigmas kultureller Differenz: Neue Perspektiven auf Einwanderer aus der Türkei in Deutschland. Bielefeld: transcript: pp. 9-33.
- Sökefeld, Martin (1999) Debating Self, Identity, and Culture in Anthropology. *Current Anthropology* 40 (4): pp. 417-448.
- Zimburg, Heinrich von (1948) Die Geschichte Gasteins und des Gasteiner Tales. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Verlag.

---

Matthäus Rest is a social anthropologist interested in infrastructures, milk and the future of peasant life forms. He works at the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in Jena, Germany.

Gertraud Seiser works in the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna. Her main fields of research and teaching are economic anthropology and methods of ethnographic research.

## *El calendari gastronòmic*

### Culinary nationalism in Catalan festivals

Venetia Johannes

#### Introduction

In my research, I study how food is used to express Catalan national identity in the context of the rise in support for secessionist politics in the Catalan Autonomous Community (Catalonia), Spain. Since 2010, there has been a visible strengthening of support for Catalonia's independence as a separate state. It is this development in Catalan identity politics that has catalysed (or perhaps better 'Catalanised') a re-evaluation of expressions of national and cultural symbols in Catalonia in all walks of life. The case of food and cuisine provides a particularly salient means of studying this process in Catalonia, since food is both an everyday reality, and intertwined with other markers of national identity. My focus is on 'gastronationalism', defined by Michaela DeSoucey (2010) as 'a form of claims-making and a project of collective identity', which presumes that 'attacks (symbolic or otherwise) against a nation's food practices are assaults on heritage and culture, not just on the food item itself' (DeSoucey 2010: 433). The data I present here were gathered during fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Catalonia in 2012-2013, and several shorter visits since then. Most of the information presented here is derived from ethnographic observations in the field, or interviews with informants in either Barcelona or my main field site of Vic, a town 70 km north of Barcelona. This includes descriptions of foods associated with festivals and the ways in which these festivals are celebrated. While I describe these activities in the past, they continue to be practised as I saw them today.

The most recent round of confrontations between the Catalan government (*Generalitat*) and the Spanish state in September 2017 was the culmination of a simmering tension that began with protests in the region in 2010. These were the result of a judgement by the Spanish Constitutional Court on the 2006 Catalan Statute of Autonomy. The ruling decided that the most pro-Catalan clauses should be removed, particularly official recognition of Catalonia as a nation, leading to widespread protests and a lingering sense of injustice. Economic disagreements, such as the fiscal deficit between Catalonia and Spain (estimated at 8-10%), have also lent support to pro-independence sentiments. On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017 the *Generalitat* carried out an independence referendum, illegal according to the Spanish Constitution. Though there

was only a 43% voter turnout, and the Spanish government and European Union both condemned it, 90% were in favour of independence (BBC News 2017), leading to a declaration of independence on 27<sup>th</sup> October. Since then, the referendum has triggered a political crisis in Spain, widely regarded as the greatest challenge the country has faced since the return of democracy. It has culminated in the removal of Catalonia's regional autonomy, the arrest of leading Catalan politicians and activists, and the flight of Catalan president Carles Puigdemont to Brussels followed by his arrest in Germany in March. Elections for a new government in December (narrowly won by pro-independentists) did not resolve the deadlock. This crisis has brought out bitter divisions at the heart of Catalan society between supporters of Catalan independence and those who wish Catalonia to remain a part of Spain. The general view is that the population is split roughly equally into each camp, although according to the most recent data 71% would be in favour of a referendum on independence (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió 2017).

Against the backdrop of the political situation, it is essential to remember that Catalan identity is not just political, but also cultural. Food culture is one of many ways of experiencing, practising and sustaining national culture beyond the political sphere, and this article considers that aspect. I will discuss the renewed importance of the gastronomic calendar following the new directions in pro-Catalan identity. The gastronomic calendar is a popular concept in Catalonia that defines certain foods as associated with certain festive days and has been acknowledged in the Catalan gastronomic literature since the early twentieth century (Domènech 1930). Next I will introduce the three national holidays celebrated in the Catalan autonomous community. In an apparent contradiction of the gastronomic calendar, however, two of these national days do not have an associated dish. I will therefore discuss attempts to promote new foods for these days, and the mixed reactions these have received. This discussion will be followed by a description of the role of food, specifically sausages, in Catalonia's 'anti-festival', *Dia de la Hispanitat*, where these are used as symbols to assert Catalan identity in the face of that of Spain. I conclude with a discussion of the presence of gastronomic markets and fairs focused on seasonal foodstuffs, often associated with a specific area. Throughout, I will also consider the relevance of Eric Hobsbawm's (1983) theory of the 'invention of tradition' to the phenomena under discussion.

### The gastronomic calendar

Aside from the three national, Catalan-specific holidays, which I discuss below, other festivities were celebrated, which I observed, almost universally throughout Catalonia. However, these were placed in a different category to Catalan-specific holidays, as they are celebrated throughout the rest of Eu-

rope. These included the festivities connected to Easter (Ash Wednesday, Carnival, Lent, Good Friday and Easter weekend), All Saints Day (1<sup>st</sup> November), Christmas (Christmas Day, St Stephen's Day and Epiphany), and the Catholic feast days celebrated throughout the year.

What made festivities not unique to Catalonia different in the eyes of many Catalans is the way in which they were celebrated in Catalonia itself: through the consumption of particular Catalan foods associated with certain holidays. This means of associating food and time is called the gastronomic calendar (*el calendari gastronòmic*). In fieldwork, the way in which food and festivity were associated was often considered a unique or defining characteristic of Catalan culinary culture. As one informant remarked, 'in no other country do you have a cake or something else for each festival. It's something that we have clearly here'. While similar concepts do in fact exist in other countries (it is not entirely unique to Catalonia), it is important to underline how these gastronomic and culinary associations were particular to Catalonia.

Many of these have come about because of the combined influences of seasonal produce and the religious calendar. For instance, a key part of the celebration of Lent in Catalonia has been the consumption of cod dishes, so much so that the period from February to March was called the *temporada de bacalla* (cod season) in restaurants, markets, media outlets and even in everyday interactions. The origins of this association are found in the historical prohibition on meat at a time when the only fish available in rural areas was dried cod. Another popular food for Lent included *bunyols de Quaresme* (sugared donuts), an energy boost during fasting. In recent decades, Carnival has not been strongly associated with Catalonia, though the once excessive consumption of meat in the run-up to Lent appears in the associated food of 'fat Thursday', *coca de llardons*, a cake decorated with pig rinds. Egg-heavy dishes began to appear from March onwards to take advantage of the natural increase in egg-laying, such as the *crema catalana* (cream custard) on St Joseph's Day on 19<sup>th</sup> March, and the Easter *mona* (a bread decorated with eggs in former times, now made from chocolate). A popular summer festive dish, the *coca*, which I discuss in more detail in the next section, was originally topped with seasonal fruits and nuts such as cherries, strawberries, almonds and hazelnuts.

In the autumn, Catalonia was overtaken by the *temporada de bolets* (mushroom season), when mushrooms became an everyday topic of conversation (more so than the cod season) and weekends were set aside for mushroom hunting. Two emblematic foods for the feast of All Saints (1<sup>st</sup> November) were seasonal chestnuts and *Panellets*, small marzipan-like sweetmeats made from almond flour and sugar. Like the *bunyols de Quaresme*, their high calories provided essential energy as the weather cooled. Pig dishes were also strongly associated with the late autumn and early winter months,

as this was the season of the *matança del porc* (pig-killing) at a time when pigs could not be kept over the winter. Saint Martin's Day (11<sup>th</sup> November) was often the day for the *matança*, an association that has remained to this day. Finally, for Christmas, the universally recognized dish has been the *escudella i carn d'olla*, a rich, calorific hotpot stew made from pig products and winter vegetables, suited to large gatherings and colder weather; the Christmas leftovers were reused on Saint Stevens Day (26<sup>th</sup> December) as the fillings for *canelons*, stuffed pasta rolls, demonstrating a national ideal of thriftiness. Other festive foods were inspired less by seasonality, for instance, a cake in the shape of a ring for the feast of Saint Anthony the Abbot (17<sup>th</sup> January), or a cake with decoration imitating the mountain of Saint Mary of Monserrat on her saint's day (27<sup>th</sup> April).

Today, neither seasonality nor religious prohibitions are as influential on contemporary food habits as they were historically. Most of the above foods were consumed or observed in a secular context, even by anti-religious individuals, because of the 'customary' relationship between the day and the food. Many of the foods consumed today are more a form of reinterpreting past culinary practices. In the context of Hobsbawm (1983), it is hard to place these specifically as 'inventions of tradition'. One could argue that they are 'novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition' (Hobsbawm 1983: 2). Yet Hobsbawm also distinguishes this from 'custom', which he considers to exist only in 'traditional' societies, and does not preclude innovation, and in fact justifies it. He also contrasts 'invented tradition' with 'genuine traditions...Where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived or invented' (ibid.: 8) Catalan society counts as the typical post-industrial society which is likely to have seen the breaking and resultant invention of tradition according to Hobsbawm, but in this instance it is difficult to decide decisively how to categorise many of the foods in the gastronomic calendar, be it as 'inventions' or 'old ways'. All the same, it is undoubtedly true that following the gastronomic calendar is a means of expressing Catalan identity, as it provides a connection with a historical (or historicised) past (essential for 'invented traditions'), when the consumption of seasonal foods and the practice of religious feast days was necessary and normalised.

The gastronomic calendar also perpetuates national identity in another way. When consuming dishes on particular days associated with the festive gastronomic calendar, there was an awareness on an individual level that throughout the rest of Catalonia, other Catalans were eating the same dishes. I saw this clearly with one family I knew well, during a Good Friday meal of *Bacallà de Divendres Sant* (cod with boiled eggs, covered with a pancake). This is one of many such meals that could be eaten at this time, which includes Lenten cod, yet makes use of the copious eggs available in spring. One member of the family, Pep, described what this dish, and the gastronomic

calendar, meant to him: ‘There is a connection at the level of all Catalonia, you feel linked to a culture, we’re all doing the same this Good Friday’. By eating the same (or similar) things that one knows others throughout Catalonia were eating, one could feel a connection with other Catalans. Much like the Catalan language, or the collective celebration of national days, following the gastronomic calendar created a connection between the individual and the ‘imagined community’ (see Anderson 1983) of a greater Catalan nation through the shared consumption of the same foods.



Fig. 1: *Bacallà de Divendres Sant*. Photo: Venetia Johannes

### National days, national foods?

Three national holidays are celebrated in Catalonia. One of these holidays, the *Diada de Sant Joan* (Saint John’s Eve, 23<sup>rd</sup> June), had a very strongly associated food, the *Coca de Sant Joan*. A *coca* is a sweetened flat bread, decorated with a variety of toppings. The decoration for the *Coca de Sant Joan* used to be seasonal fresh fruits and nuts, but this has developed into candied fruits and pine nuts, more suited to mass production. The *coca* was one of the most universally recognized and beloved Catalan festival foods among my informants, as a result of its positive associations with street parties, revelry and summer. In recent years it has become a national symbol due to a combination of its positive associations, its position in the gastronomic calendar and its association with a day celebrating pan-Catalan national identity. A major finding of my research has been that foods like *coca* and Pep’s *Bacallà de Divendres Sant* create a culinary ‘imagined community’: Catalans who con-

sume it on this night do so in the knowledge that other Catalans, across Catalonia, are eating the same food. This is similar to findings of Fajans (2012) in Brazil, who discovered that shared foods are instrumental in creating shared cross-national identity, though without the gastronomic calendar aspect.

The two other celebrations, the *Diada de Sant Jordi* (St George's Day, 23<sup>rd</sup> April) and the *Diada* (Catalonia's national day, 11<sup>th</sup> September), were more a focus of clear Catalan sentiment. *Sant Jordi* celebrated Catalonia's patron saint. Over the last century (according to my informants) it became a Catalan Valentine's Day-come-literary celebration, with the exchange of books and roses between lovers. It was a secular festival (I have never seen reference to its religious nature), characterised by street stalls selling books and roses throughout Catalan cities and towns.

It was widely known in my field site that the September *Diada* celebrated the defeat of Catalonia at the conclusion of the Siege of Barcelona in 1714. Catalans were well aware of the irony, but justified it as the start of the strongest period of Catalan repression in their history. This provided the focus for most militant Catalanism, and in recent years it has become part-festive day, part-political protest.

The anthropologist Josep Llobera (2004) contrasts *Sant Jordi* and the *Diada* in his detailed study of Catalan nationalism, *Foundations of National Identity*. He characterises *Sant Jordi* as popular, universalist, non-heroic, profane and focused on leisure, whereas the *Diada* is official, particularist, heroic, sacred and more emotional, celebrating a culture of resistance, love and grievance. This tallies with my experience of the *Diada* as a focus of large-scale, frenetic and very public political protest, compared with the calmer, familial and apolitical atmosphere of *Sant Jordi*.

It is worthwhile briefly discussing here the seasonal nature of Catalanist sentiment and activism. Roseanne Cecil (1997) has noticed a similar phenomenon in Northern Ireland with the marching season. These two festivals are roughly equidistant in the year, and the six months of warmer weather between them see an increase in political Catalanism, reaching its height around the *Diada*. This heightened Catalanist feeling at the end of the summer and early autumn is something that politicians have taken advantage of in recent years, with the unofficial Catalan independence referendum of 2014 on 9<sup>th</sup> November, the regional election in 2015 on 27<sup>th</sup> September, and most recently, the highly contentious independence referendum of 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2017. By the end of November, with the arrival of cooler weather, there is a distinct decline in activist events as Catalans become more family-focused on Christmas and the New Year. This remains the case until *Sant Jordi*, when the season begins again. It is possible that this seasonal nature of political Catalanism may explain the quietening of the pro-independence lobby in 2017, following Madrid's direct takeover of the Catalan government (that, and arrests of key activists and politicians).

As I have already mentioned, these two national holidays did not have an associated food. My informants sometimes recognised this with embarrassment when I brought it up. The writers of a cookbook dedicated to festival foods (Sano and Clotet 2012: 84) admit that in the case of St. George's Day,

*'This day has remained more marked by cultural and patriotic symbols than by gastronomy. The thing that one cannot miss about today is the rose and the book and the street shared with fellow citizens. In contrast, the menu doesn't have any obligatory or complimentary attachment.'*<sup>1</sup>

Despite this, I saw instances of the association between food and *Sant Jordi* in another way, through deliberate efforts to consume Catalan food. For example, a widow I knew in Barcelona described how she used to celebrate the day with her late husband by having lunch at a Catalan restaurant every year. The same also applies to the *Diada*. Food is one of many cultural items that are used to underscore and celebrate a separate Catalan identity on this holiday.



Fig. 2: The image representing September from Omniun Cultural's gastronomy-themed annual calendar from 2013. Note the *senyera* flag, the *pa de pagés* bread, oil and tomatoes to make *pa amb tomàquet*, and the *purró*, a communal drinking vessel, on the left.

© Christian Inaraja i Genís

1 My translation.



In the words of one individual on a Catalanist Facebook group page on the 2012 *Diada*, ‘I was born... where one eats *mongetes amb botifarra* [sausage and beans], *allioli*, snails, *pa amb tomàquet* [bread rubbed with tomato, oil and salt], where one drinks Cava, Vichy Catalan, water from Montseny’,<sup>2</sup> contextualizing the consumption of certain foods as part of being Catalan. At food-related events on the day itself, there was self-conscious consumption of ‘typical’ Catalan foods, and from 2013 onwards there was a food market in the central arena of the pro-independence gathering area in Barcelona. In 2013, Catalonia’s foremost cultural association, Omnium Cultural’s annual calendar, was centred around gastronomy, and for September, the month of the *Diada*, the theme was popular national dish *pa amb tomàquet* and *purro* (a communal drinking vessel) surrounded by the Catalan national flag.

Yet this apparent anomaly has led to attempts to associate these days with a particular food, in line with the other days in the gastronomic calendar, generally a baked good (the Barcelonan Cake-makers’ Guild has been a driving force). However, most Catalans were quite aware of this contradiction, but did not have an entirely positive attitude to these new-fangled attempts at developing new foods for their national holidays, namely the *Pa de Sant Jordi* (Saint George’s Day Bread) and *Pastís de Sant Jordi* (Saint George’s Day Cake) for St. George’s Day and the *Pastís de la Diada* (Diada Cake) for the *Diada*.

The most obvious new food now associated with St. George’s Day was the *Pa de Sant Jordi* (St. George’s bread). This was a comparatively recent invention created in 1988 by a Barcelona baker, Eduardo Crespo. It was a flat savoury bread, containing nuts, cheese, and *sobrassada* (a spicy Mallorcan sausage). The most obvious characteristic was the four red bars of the *senyera* (the Catalan national flag) emblazoned on the bread. The colouring from the *sobrassada* provides the red colour, and the cheese lent a yellow tinge to the alternating yellow bars in the centre (see Figure 3). This bread spread from its original bakery to most Barcelona bakeries, as well as my field site of Vic.

The promotion of *Pa de Sant Jordi* could be found in newspapers and magazines. According to an article for Catalonia’s foremost food magazine, *Cuina* (Cuina.cat 2013),

*‘To each celebration, [there is] food. The Catalan calendar is full of festivities that are celebrated with acts, traditions and something to content the palate and the stomach. St. George’s Day*

2 *Mongetes amb botifarra* are sausage and beans, a popular national dish. *Allioli* is one of the most important sauces in Catalan cuisine. Within Spain, Catalans are popularly identified as consumers of snails and *pa amb tomàquet*, bread rubbed with tomato, oil and salt. The rest are drinks brands. Cava is a sparkling wine from a particular region within Catalonia, and Vichy Catalan and Montseny are bottled water brands.

cannot be an exception... *A roundel decorated with the four bars of the senyera, [pa de Sant Jordi] has become a classic of the festival.* [my emphasis and translation]

The article demonstrates that attaching food to festivals was viewed as a central element in the celebration of a principal feast day in Catalonia. Any possibility that there is now not a food associated with a festive day was denied in order to make the festival into a total sensory experience of national identity.



Fig. 3: *Pans de Sant Jordi* (left) and a *Pastís de Sant Jordi* with a *senyera* (right) in a Barcelona bakery. Similar cakes are made for the *Diada*. Photo: Venetia Johannes

I observed that *Pans de Sant Jordi* were sold in most bakeries, as well as in main thoroughfares alongside the bookstalls set out to commemorate Sant Jordi. This type of food was more a street food, highly portable, resembling the *Coca de Sant Joan* in this respect, as both are festivals that mostly take place in the street. In cake makers and bakeries, alongside the *Pans* and *Pastissos de Sant Jordi*, one could find cakes in the shape of books ('edible books' according to the Barcelona Cake-makers' Guild), or simple cream and sponge cakes popular throughout the year, decorated with *senyeres* for the day.

The origin of these cakes is less clear than the *Pans*, though they were certainly older. That said, there is reference to them in an important work on Catalan cuisine, *L'Art de Menjar a Catalunya* (Vázquez Montalbán 1977), published at the end of the Franco dictatorship, where they are described as 'a rectangular cake, on a thin sponge cake base with butter filling. Topped

with crushed sugar, a glaze, or coco powder, bearing in the middle a stencil of the glorious silhouette of the saint, and red roses' (Vázquez Montalbán 1977: 206).<sup>3</sup> This suggests that these cakes have been around for forty years. Yet they were still to develop a widely recognised connectedness with the day. Most of my informants did not see them as a 'traditional' food, nor spoke of them with the affection reserved for other foods to be found in the gastronomic calendar.

Moving on to the *Diada*, in September, the basic form of the *Pastissos de la Diada* were almost identical to many *Pastissos de Sant Jordi*, although the *senyera* was the main decoration, and there were no references to books or St. George. *Pans de Sant Jordi* were sometimes sold for the *Diada* since the national flag is also the main part of the design. I found that the attempts to develop the *Pastissos de la Diada* for Catalonia's national day met with more friction than the *Pastissos de Sant Jordi*. This may be because large cakes of this type were associated with family gatherings that take place within the home, whereas the *Diada* is a celebration that takes place entirely in the street. This is compounded by the view that the *Pastís de la Diada* was promoted for commercial interests to take advantage of Catalanist sentiment (I discuss my informant's comments in the next section). Many of my informants linked the appearance of these cakes to the rise of the pro-independence movement, whereas before they were much less apparent. Additionally, my informants were largely dismissive of them, a gimmick to take advantage of a contemporary trend. I sometimes caught a sense that there was something immoral, even sacrilegious, in taking advantage of this increased Catalanist sentiment for financial gain, although I did not hear this view expressed outright.

The *Pastís de la Diada* had little significance for the festivities in Barcelona, less than the *Pans* and *Pastissos de Sant Jordi*, and far less than the *Coca de Sant Joan*. Some bakeries remained closed for the annual holiday from August to mid-September. Others made no reference to the *Diada* aside from showing *senyeres* in their windows, and perhaps the calendar from the Barcelona Cake-makers' Guild showing the *Pastís de la Diada*. From my observations, a few adapted their current cakes on offer by placing a *senyera* top. However, there were still a substantial number that sold a variation on the *Pastís de la Diada*. Attitudes in the bakeries themselves were mixed: some I spoke with were proud to contain Catalanist products, while others considered it 'something fun', not an expression of die-hard Catalanism. In the 2014 *Diada*, I noticed that *Pastissos de la Diada* were more prevalent in areas around the central festivities and the protest march. The first recorded instance of a *Pastís de la Diada* was on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1977, when a group of members of the Barcelona Cakemaker's Guild presented a cake decorated with a *senyera* to Josep Tarradellas, President in exile of the Generalitat (Cuina.cat 2015). One Barcelona baker recalled them from his childhood

3 My translation.

forty years ago. Still, his comments and their origin, may support another assertion I heard from my informants, namely that these cakes were from Barcelona. This is significant because Barcelona was perceived to be a place with a less concentrated Catalan identity, one that does not support independence, and a source of new inventions as opposed to older 'traditions'. It is interesting to point out that the baker I spoke with had begun to present cakes with the pro-independence flag, in line with the demands of an increasingly pro-independence market. This backs up some of the assertions in my previous paragraph about the commodification of pro-independence sentiment, as savvy business owners take advantage of cultural and political movements.



Fig. 4: A bakery and cake makers shop in Barcelona for the *Diada* in 2013, showing the national flag (*senyera*) and examples of *Pastissos de la Diada*. Note the image from the calendar of the Cake-makers Guild in the top right. Photo: Venetia Johannes

### Reactions to the invention of national foods

I would now like to discuss the reactions to these foods together, to reveal subtle differences in attitude. The most obvious visual feature of all of these new foods has been the presence of the Catalan national flag, the *senyera*, along with the pro-independence flag, the *estellada* (a *senyera* overlaid with a blue or red pennant and white star), suggesting obvious nationalist associations. When I first noted the presence of these foods, I expected that they would be held in great affection by Catalans, as the flags are revered as one of Catalonia's foremost patriotic symbols. A testament to the growing support for pro-independence Catalanism in my field site was the increasingly frequent appearance of the *senyera* and the *estellada* in the public sphere,

hanging from town halls, balconies and windows, painted on walls, or placed in shop windows. However, I found that foods emblazoned with the national flag received a mixed response.

For instance, Berta, a language teacher in her thirties, called the newly developed foods ‘very consumerist’ and ‘a recent invention’. When asked if she liked the *Pastissos de la Diada*, she said, ‘I really like everything around the *Diada*, but this is an exaggeration. I wouldn’t buy it. It’s a business thing’. Irene, an informant in her twenties, remarked: ‘I’ve seen that thing with the four bars for a few years [*Pans de Sant Jordi*], but it’s not very well known’. In another conversation with her and her family, they agreed ‘this is new... something that the cake-makers do to make money now. It’s all marketing, invented. Cake-makers and bakers want to sell, so they do this. It’s not traditional’.

I received an almost identical reaction from a group interview with Catalan activists (part of the *Assemblea cultural* group). These were all older than Berta and Irene, but their attitudes were notably similar. One remarked, ‘You might want to eat a cake like this one day, but it has no tradition at all’, and others contrasted it with better-established foods in the gastronomic calendar, such as Lent *bunyols*. Another participant, Joan, a retiree who organised popular culture events, said dismissively that these foods were ‘invented...an attempt to add a cake to the festival because it didn’t have one’.

Another activist, Marta (late fifties) also made a comparison with the Easter *mona* (which she characterised as ‘traditional’) with *Pastís de la Diada*, which she claimed was ‘total marketing’ and ‘invented’. This is ironic considering the *mona*’s history, since the chocolate egg *mones*, to which she was referring, only came into widespread popularity in the 1930s and superseded a much older version of the *mona*. Eighty years on, this style of *mona* has now been naturalised as ‘traditional’ (although a fashionable Barcelona bakery has now started to recreate the old-style *mona*, with eggs baked into the dough). It should be clear that this contrast with ‘traditional’ and ‘invented’ was regularly used when discussing these new national foods. Although my informants were unaware of Hobsbawm’s (1983) ‘invented traditions’, these new foods, and the *mona*, are perhaps the best examples of culinary invented traditions under discussion in this article.

They perfectly match Hobsbawm’s description of inventing traditions as ‘a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition’ (Hobsbawm 1983: 4). These foods are coalescing around particular forms (formalisation), consumed on certain days in the year and in certain contexts (ritualisation), and placed in a context of the gastronomic calendar, which itself exists by the imposition of repetition. The historic past also need not be lengthy, as in the case of the *mona*. However, the *Sant Jordi* and *Diada* foods have still to ‘establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition’ (ibid.: 2).

Despite these views, the fact that these foods continued to be sold suggests that there was a market for these products. When I hunted round Barcelona's bakeries at the end of the *Diada* in 2013 and 2014, I found that most had been sold already. Likewise, there were very few of the *Pastissos* and *Pans de Sant Jordi* left in bakeries on 24<sup>th</sup> April. I had a good example of the context in which these cakes are likely to be eaten from a young Barcelonan, Eloi (early to mid-twenties), who admitted that, like most informants, he was fond of the *Pastissos de la Diada* because of the appearance of the *senyeres* ('it makes me really happy, all the *senyeres*, it's nice'). However, he did not see these foods as signifiers of his national identity through food. His father, on the other hand, disliked *Pastissos de la Diada* since he considered them too new and untraditional (my informant took care to point out that his father is very pro-independence and took upholding Catalan traditions very seriously). However, his mother will always try and buy a *Pastís de la Diada* as a nod to the national day, which his father will grudgingly eat.

This final informant's experience shows a difference between the experience in Barcelona and that of my field site of Vic. Several of my local informants associated these new 'inventions' with Barcelona, in line with the prevailing view of the capital as consumerist, cosmopolitan and the point of origin of new trends. Similarly, when I showed a *Pa de Sant Jordi* I had brought from Barcelona to informants in my field site, they saw it as something from Barcelona, even though it was sold locally. Once again, they saw the *Pans* as a good moneymaking scheme for bakers, and therefore more a symbol of the perceived over-commercialization of festivals than strongly representative of gastronomic identity.

Nonetheless, as with my Barcelonan informant Eloi, the reaction of my local informants was not entirely negative. As I suggested earlier, the obvious presence of the *senyera*, a national symbol of deep emotional resonance, means that my informants found it difficult to dismiss these foods entirely, as it would suggest a dismissal of the national flag. As I have also already suggested, despite their mixed reception, their continued presence year after year suggests that bakeries made money from them.

While there is proof that some of these foods have been in Catalonia for a generation or more, it seemed that they have not yet entered popular consciousness as a 'tradition', possibly because some of the population could remember a time without them. It was interesting that these attitudes were present amongst all age groups. Even younger Catalans who had grown up with them are possibly influenced by elders who viewed them as something new. It is not '*de tota la vida*' ('from all of one's life'), a common marker of something legitimated by tradition. However, the increased Catalan awareness of recent years has developed a demand for Catalanist products and memorabilia, and these foods could be seen as an answer to that demand. While they might once have been a side point to the national holidays, the

days themselves have also taken on greater significance as a focus of Catalan identity expression. Therefore items associated with these days have likewise come under much greater scrutiny, hence their apparent ‘newness’, as bakeries and cake-makers have seen an opportunity to promote them following the rise of pro-independence Catalanism. At the time of writing, the *Pans* and *Pastissos de Sant Jordi*, and the *Pastissos de la Diada* continue to be bought. There is nothing to suggest they will disappear in the future.

Two informants also made the point that there was one circumstance in which they would come to accept a *Pastís de la Diada*, and that was with the arrival of independence. Both informants were interviewed in separate contexts, but both were strongly pro-independence. One of the Assemblea group remarked in passing: ‘Once we are independent, then we’ll have to have a cake to celebrate’. Another activist, Marta, added, ‘Of course, the day we proclaim independence, we will have to do an independence day cake’, but not yet. The cake would therefore be acceptable if it were to celebrate a momentous event, since an appropriate foodstuff would be required for the proper celebration of an independence day. It will be interesting to see modulations in these views following the events of October 2017, especially the abortive declaration of independence on 27<sup>th</sup> October.

The power of the flag as a symbol of national identity is undeniable, and when emblazoned on foods, it gave them a certain appeal. Just as Catalan foodstuffs packaged for export or tourism include a *senyera* to show their origin and highlight their role as Catalanist symbols (or vicariously represent the nation), so these *Pastissos de la Diada/de Sant Jordi* and *Pans de Sant Jordi* are connected to Catalan identity in a less subtle manner. Even when informants criticised these foods for being new and not ‘traditional’, others still admitted a grudging liking for the presence of the national flag.

#### ‘Fent la botifarra al Dia de la Hispanitat’: Catalonia’s anti-festival and sausages

One can see that Catalonia’s three principal national holidays (*Sant Jordi*, *Sant Joan* and the *Diada*) are clear celebrations of Catalan identity. However, there is another extraordinary holiday that deserves attention, which Catalans ‘celebrated’, but in such a way as to undermine its nature as a festive holiday. This is Spain’s National Day, the *Dia de la Hispanitat*, on 12<sup>th</sup> October, which celebrated the anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s arrival in the Americas. Since this day celebrated Spanish identity, among Catalanists this has been transformed into a day on which anti-Spanish sentiment is focused.

One of the most visible ways that Catalanists marked this cross-national Spanish event is by insisting on working during that day. In 2012, both the Assemblea and Omnium Cultural (civil-society cultural organizations) made announcements that their offices would remain open, just as on normal

weekdays, to show the irrelevance of Spanish festivals to Catalonia. Around Vic, shops were open as usual for the morning, and most remained open for the afternoon too. Many of the shop windows remained decked out in the Catalan flags and displays of the *Diada* from the month before.

Despite the refusal to recognise the day as a holiday, the day has been marked throughout Catalonia by pro-Catalan events, generally of a political and pro-independence nature. And like the other national days, food as an identifiable symbol of Catalan identity was brought into play. As of 2012, 12<sup>th</sup> October had become the day of the *botifarrada*, or *botiflerada*, one of Catalonia's many '-ades' (dining events focused on one particular food), designated here for the communal eating of sausages.

The consumption and association of sausages with this day is heavy with significance. Aside from their privileged position as a food particularly associated with Catalonia, to *fer la botifarra* is a gesture with vulgar and insulting connotations throughout the Mediterranean. It involves placing the left hand on the crook of the elbow, and then bending it up, so that the forearm and fist stand vertically. The Catalan name for this is the *botifarra de pagès* ('peasant sausage', due to its obvious resemblance), but the name can also be applied to certain varieties of sausage. Yet by its name, the *botifarra de pagès* is not just a confrontation, it is also profoundly associated with the countryside, the *casa de pagès* (peasant house) and the food produced there, which produces powerful images in Catalan national identity discourse (though it is hardly unique to Catalonia – see Gellner 1983; Smith 1988; Yotova 2014). On the *Diada* in 2012, on one of the most prominent thoroughfares of the afternoon protest march was a huge sign of a sausage with the words 'A Catalunya, fem botifarra' (literally 'in Catalonia, we make sausage'). This was a clever play on words, meaning both to make the gesture and to make sausages. Such a simple phrase and visual cue not only represented the mobilisation of a cultural fact and a shared symbol, it was also a blatant insult to opponents of Catalan nationhood.

Returning to the *Dia de la Hispanitat*, it should be clear that eating this food on Spain's National Day and publicising the fact became a means of expressing Catalan identity on a day when Spanish identity should have been celebrated. A 'Botiflerada' I attended in 2012, organised by Omnium Cultural, was a typical type of event. The day began with a talk on the future of Catalonia as a state, followed by lunch consisting of *mongetes del ganxet amb botifarra* (a type of haricot beans, and sausage). Both these foods are products particular to Catalonia, and the *mongetes del ganxet* has European Protected Denomination of Origin status. In this context, the emphasis on the local nature of the foodstuffs placed in a Catalanist festival shows well how such foodstuffs act as bearers of national identity. They were also called *productes de la terra* ('products of the land'). This was again a popular phrase in Catalonia in these contexts that emphasises the connection between foods,



land and, by extension, the nation. At the event itself, participants and organizers referred to this meal as ‘a folkloric act’, ‘a Catalan dish’ and ‘a poor dish’. In the latter case, this referred not to its meagreness, but to the way pork products, like sausages, are used to conserve meat and thriftily use all parts of the pig – a classic example of the application of national behavioural ideals to food. Participants also discussed and idealised the rural context of this kind of food, once more emphasising *botifarra* as something that is *de pagès* (of the peasant).

### The market as national space

I would like to discuss here a different kind of festive event, that of food markets. The market space in Catalonia has acted as a nexus for past and present identities, and a centre of social interaction, through its role as a source of food (Congdon 2015). While foods that are not in season or from the local area can now be bought in markets, these locales have been viewed as the ideal location to see seasonality in action through purchasing Catalan-specific produce and varieties, and interacting with local growers. These markets were also seen as a holdover of the weekly markets held in towns and villages in the past.

These markets have also inspired a newer type of market (that is, developed since the 1970s), a gastronomic market that occurs as part of a food fair, or festival. Today, most such markets have been based around a single food product, particular to the region and the season. Examples include mushroom or pig-based produce fairs in the autumn and winter months, chestnut fairs for All Saints, citrus fairs (mainly in the south of Catalonia) for December, olive-oil picking and pressing from October to March, and over the spring and summer months fairs celebrating a wide variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables (favourites include strawberries, cherries, honey and herbs). Other festivals celebrated specific varieties of products associated with an area, such as the February *calçotada* (eating spring onions with a spicy sauce) in the city of Valls (the capital of the region where this dish originated). I was unable to collect accurate figures on the number of such food festivals throughout Catalonia, though certainly there were well over five hundred during fieldwork. Some have lasted for over three decades, whilst others have proved more ephemeral, not lasting beyond the third or fourth year. Simultaneously, local restaurateurs sometimes co-operated with festival organisers to run *jornades gastronòmiques* (gastronomic open days) alongside these events, providing menus and dishes inspired by the festival.

Most of today’s gastronomic fairs and similar events dated from after the end of the Franco period (post 1977). However, their origin can be traced to an event that occurred in 1975, while Franco was still alive, called the ‘Catalan Gastronomic Assortment’. The aim of the event was to give prominence

to Catalan cuisine, which was difficult to find in restaurants at that time. The day itself was a moment not just to promote Catalan cuisine, but one when other aspects of Catalan culture could be presented and celebrated, albeit in a controlled sense. The event was a classic example of how a seemingly innocuous demonstration of Catalan culture (in this case cuisine) was monopolised to provide a form of covert resistance, which included *sardana* dancing (the Catalan national dance), traditional music and a *senyera* in flowers on the stage at the front of the event. While the regime allowed such ‘folkloric’ demonstrations, for the organizers and participants this was a covert way of flouting the regime and expressing a forbidden identity. A festival celebrating food was the instrument through which this could be done.

In the 1980s, there was an explosion of Catalan cultural events. Somewhat inspired by the 1975 event, in 1981 the *Generalitat*’s Department of Tourism developed a year-long, Catalan-wide *Congrés Català de la Cuina* (Catalan Cuisine Convention), which took place in different parts of Catalonia. These concerted events acted as the inspiration and foundation for the food-centred festivals that developed in the years afterwards. Some annual events were even established during the Convention, such as the *Valls Calçotada* I mentioned earlier and wine-related festivals in the Penedés and Garraf Cava regions. As a result, the background and origin of these food fairs and markets was clearly motivated by expressions of Catalan identity, which developed during the post-Franco period.

Municipalities also have taken advantage of markets’ touristic potential. Due to its busy schedule of markets and fairs throughout the year, my fieldwork site of Vic was sometimes called the ‘City of Markets’, a name promoted by the city itself. Historically, the city’s physical location was important for the development of markets, halfway between the Pyrenees and Barcelona. There are two weekly markets in Vic, on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Other markets also continue to be held throughout the year. The most important is undoubtedly the *Mercat de Rams* (Palm Market) held during the weekend of Palm Sunday, and the *Mercat Medieval* (Medieval Market) in December. The former is a livestock fair, which also includes an extensive food market, and a market to sell Easter palm leaves (‘Rams’) after which the market is named. This fair has been referred to by name since the mid-nineteenth century, but there have been similar annual fairs in Vic since 1316 (Ponce and Ramisa 2006).

The *Mercat Medieval* in December, on the other hand, came into existence only in 1995 as part of the post-Franco festival renaissance. The intention was to ‘re-create’ the medieval Christmas fairs recorded in Vic in the Middle Ages, or what Boissevain (1992) has termed a ‘resumption’, or a ‘resurrected’ festival (the *Mercat de Rams* bears some resemblance to a ‘revitalized’ festival). The market I experienced included costumed stallholders (to anyone familiar with Columbian exchange, the sight of chain-smoking,

chocolate-eating medieval peasants is somewhat surreal), medieval-themed meals and an enclosure that sought to recreate an authentic medieval market (even down to medieval coinage). My informants saw it as a descendent of past markets, despite its relatively recent inception, suggesting some characteristics of Hobsbawm's 'invention of tradition' (1983), but without the ritualised or formalised structures. The *Mercat Medieval* in particular shows how the market is used as a space of connectedness with the past. Both fairs were popular with tourists from other parts of Catalonia as spaces where they can interact with other Catalans in a festive and convivial atmosphere.

Moreover, it is important to emphasise that Catalan markets are spaces of commensality. Both fairs demonstrate well that, even in festivals where food is not the main subject, food and its consumption play key roles. A feature shared by the *Mercat Medieval* and the *Mercat del Ram* was the sheer number of food-related stalls, which took over a large part of the old quarter of Vic and accounted for about three quarters of the stalls present. In both markets it also became clear that a central part of the experience is buying and eating street food in the company of other attendees, as is drinking from *purrons* (communal drinking vessels that do not touch the lips) left in various parts of the market. Eating and drinking in the street was therefore a central experience of the social participation of these markets.

Another centre of commensality at many annual food fairs I visited was the dining area. Most food fairs and festival organizers provided a meal, often one that allowed visitors to taste the product that is the subject of the event. The food provided always included a large slab of *pa de pagès* (peasant bread), with a tomato to rub into the bread to make *pa amb tomàquet*. Unless the meal is the focus of the event itself (for example, the *calçotada*, or spring-onion eating), popular dishes at such events generally revolved around popular 'traditional' Catalan staples: *botifarra amb mongetes* (sausage and beans), a selection of barbecued meats and sausages, *escudella i carn d'olla* (a meat stew), or rice- and pasta-based meals.

These meals took place at long dining tables and benches that could hold large groups. Such meals were originally associated with *Festa Major*, the annual feast day particular to each town and village, which has also contributed to the more recently developed festivals. The *Festa Major* was idealized as another manifestation of the past (many do in fact have their origins on patron saints' days), and the continued celebration of these events was seen as an expression of past identities. While the religious element of many of these events has been toned down, the presence of Catalan symbols, such as the *senyera* and/or *estellada*, *sardana* and the *gegants* (large wooden figures), were common. Yet the most prominent feature of such events was usually food, so much so that there has been a class of dishes sometimes called the 'Dishes of the *Festa Major*' (these include more elaborate version of dishes I listed in the last paragraph). Several informants emphasised how important

the *Festa Major* was in the development of Catalan cuisine. While many of these dishes were no longer cooked at *Festa Majors* for reasons of cost and time, communal eating remained a strong part of the festive experience.

In closing, I should add that my informants rarely visited fairs alone, but often as part of a group of family or friends, and chose to visit a particular market because of the social ties in that locale. The long tables were highly conducive to commensality, since they required different groups of people to sit together and interact. From my experience, conversation with strangers came easily once seated at the long tables crowded with diners, *purrons* and food. I also noticed how these forms of communal dining were very present at pro-independence and political gatherings, such as those on the *Diada* in September and *Festa de la Hispanitat* in October. This is another example of how a ‘traditional’ method of commensality and conversation, associated with Catalan festive events like the *Festa Major*, has been formalized (Hobsbawm 1983) into more politicised expressions of national identity, such as at the *Diada*.



Fig. 5: A view of the festive meal organised by Omnim Cultural for *Diada* in 2012. Many political and cultural organisations arrange their own dinner in Barcelona on this day. Note the long tables and crowded, convivial atmosphere. Photo: Venetia Johannes

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented a strongly ethnographic overview of the way in which festive and gastronomic events throughout the year provide an opportunity to express Catalan national identity. The concept of Hobsbawm’s

'invention of tradition' has been discussed throughout this article, in particular the importance of a connectedness with a historic past (real or imagined). Yet it has sometimes been unclear at what point certain elements of Catalan culinary culture (in particular the gastronomic calendar) are truly 'invented traditions', as 'the peculiarity of "invented" traditions is that the continuity with [the past] is largely factitious' (Hobsbawm 1983: 2). Food markets, on the other hand, are closer to Hobsbawm's definition of invented traditions as something that establishes continuity with the past. Central to their success is their ability to tap into the emotional connections many Catalans have with a recreation of the past (or at least, an attempt to do so), solidifying an image of permanence in Catalan culinary culture. Yet in both these instances, while some claims to past continuity are fictitious and imagined, one should not dismiss any continuity with the past entirely.

Perhaps the best examples of invented traditions so far discussed are the creation of new foods associated with *Sant Jordi* and the *Diada*, which provide an example of a potential 'tradition' in the process of being legitimised. What is interesting is that my informants were aware that this process was taking place for recently 'invented' foods. However, they discounted the possibility that many of the 'traditional' foods had also at one time been 'invented', or that their contemporary form rarely resembled a 'past' form (for instance, the *mona*, which is perhaps the best example of an 'invented [culinary] tradition'). Even more recent additions to the gastronomic calendar, such as the *botifarrada* on the *Dia de la Hispanitat*, are couched in terms of 'tradition' and rurality. Perhaps in several decades, another anthropologist will come to Catalonia and find their informants describing *Pans de Sant Jordi* and *Pastissos de la Diada* as a 'traditional food'.

## References

- Anderson, Benedict (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London New York: Verso.
- BBC News (2017) *Catalonia Crisis: Spain Plans for Elections as Independence Row Grows*. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-41693318> [accessed: 15 December 2017].
- Boissevain, Jeremy (1992) *Introduction: Revitalizing European Rituals*. In: Boissevain, Jeremy (ed.) *Revitalizing European Rituals*. London: Routledge: pp. 1-19.
- Cecil, Roseanne (1997) *The Marching Season in Northern Ireland: An Expression of Politico-Religious Identity*. In: Macdonald, Sharon (ed.) *Inside European Identities*. Oxford and New York: Berg: pp. 146-166.
- Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (2017) *Press Report: Political Opinion Barometer, 41 2nd Wave 2017*. <http://ceo.gencat.cat/ceop/AppJava/pages/home/fitxaEstudi.html?colId=6288&lastTitle=Bar%F2metre+d%27Opini%F3+Pol%EDtica.+2a+onada+2017> [accessed: 16 November 2017].

- Congdon, Venetia (2015) Catalan Markets: Constructing National Cuisine and Space through the Market Scene. In: McWilliams, Mark (ed.) Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery: Food and Markets, 11-13 July 2014, Oxford. London: Prospect Books: pp. 104-113.
- Cuina.cat (2013) Llibres i roses comestibles per Sant Jordi. 19 April. Cuina.cat [online]. Available from: [http://www.cuina.cat/actualitat/llibres-i-roses-comestibles-per-sant-jordi\\_102096\\_102.html](http://www.cuina.cat/actualitat/llibres-i-roses-comestibles-per-sant-jordi_102096_102.html) [accessed: 15 April 2018]
- Cuina.cat (2015) Una Diada per llepar-se els dits. 9 September. [online] Available from: [http://www.cuina.cat/actualitat/una-diada-per-llepar-se-els-dits\\_104065\\_102.html](http://www.cuina.cat/actualitat/una-diada-per-llepar-se-els-dits_104065_102.html) [accessed: 17 April 2018]
- DeSoucey, Michaela (2010) Gastronationalism: Food Traditions and Authenticity Politics in the European Union. *American Sociological Review* 75 (3): pp. 432-455.
- Domènech, Ignasi (1930) *Àpats: Magnífic manual de cuina pràctica catalana, adequada a tots els gustos i el més variat i seleccionat de Catalunya*. 1<sup>st</sup> edn. [Place and publisher unknown].
- Fajans, Jane (2012) *Brazilian Food: Race, Class and Identity in Regional Cuisines*. London, New York: Berg.
- Gellner, Ernst (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hobsbawm, Eric (1983) Introduction: Inventing Tradition. In: Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: pp. 1-14.
- Llobera, Josep (2004), *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe*, New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Ponce, Santi and Maties Ramisa (2006) *El Mercat del Ram, la fira de la ciutat de Vic*. Vic: Ajuntament de Vic.
- Sano, Kazuko and Narcís Clotet (2012) *Cuina Catalana per a festes i tradicions*. 3rd edition. Grata Lectura: Muval, Solsona.
- Smith, Anthony D. (1988) *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Vázquez Montalbán, Manuel (1977) *L'art del menjar a Catalunya*. Barcelona: Edicions 62 s/a.
- Yotova, Maria (2014) Reflecting Authenticity: 'Grandmother's Yoghurt' between Bulgaria and Japan. In: Domingos, Nuno, José Maria Sobral and Harry G. West (eds.) *Food between the Country and the City: Ethnographies of a Changing Global Foodscape*. London, New York: Bloomsbury: pp. 175-190.

---

I completed my DPhil in Anthropology at the University of Oxford in October 2015, where I also completed a MSc in Social Anthropology in 2011. The title of my doctoral thesis was 'Nourishing the Nation: Manifestations of Catalan Identity through Food', where I studied how Catalans use food and cuisine as a means of expressing their national identity. Previously I studied business management at the Royal Agricultural University (2007-2010), and I have worked in finance and marketing research. I am currently a research associate with the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography at the University of Oxford.

## Syncretic debris: from shared Bosnian saints to the ICTY courtroom

Safet HadžiMuhamedović

*An epitaph to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (1993-2017)*

Debris is the displaced scattering of something broken or carelessly discarded. Usually manifold, its destinations might seem haphazard. However, the trajectories of debris are primarily determined by the original impact. Roofs are ripped out by hurricanes; they move until the whirlwinds come to some kind of halt. Tidal movements regurgitate the litter of global disregard onto the coasts of unwilling beneficiaries. From use to refuse. Volcanic debris displaces communities and draws flights to a stop. Pollutants sink from the air into lungs, soil and water. Looking at such particles, through the rubbles and their fragments, it is difficult to recognise some provenance. The pieces are dislodged from their usual temporal and spatial positions (where they never were pieces). These unlovely remnants hardly remind us of personal belongings anymore. If there are to be projects of restoration, debris has to be dealt with, ordered, cleared away from where it landed. The places of origin also remain affected. However, for them, the impact does not produce a pile of unrecognisable fragments, but rather enunciates absences of something that used to be *whole*. So, debris acts as a material connection between a place of origin and a destination – two nodes coupled through the moment of impact. They are separated by the difference between fragments and a fragmented relation.<sup>1</sup>

This article considers the *impact* of nationalist destruction on the traditional calendar in Bosnia and the peculiar post-life of shared traditions in the courtrooms of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The Tribunal was established by UN Security Council Resolution 827 (1993), with the aim of bringing war crimes to an end and ‘redressing’ certain violations. In crude, general terms, the kind of impacts to be halted and redressed included the over two hundred thousand people killed; the two million displaced; the flattened urban and rural landscapes; the systematic destruction of over one thousand mosques, hundreds of churches, monasteries,

1 I would like to thank Dr Vanja Hamzić for our many conversations on this article and his astute readings, which undoubtedly helped shape my arguments. I also thank Dr Ann Wand and the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable and constructive comments.

libraries, archives and museums, the remains of which were sometimes removed and concealed; mass rape and countless discovered and undiscovered mass graves, which were moved to secondary and tertiary sites in pursuit of impunity (see ICRC Report 1999: ii; Riedlmayer 2002; Stiglmayer 1993; Jugo and Wastell 2015).

Upon such impact, attempting to ‘redress’ the debris of sociality reminds me of those Sarajevans who collected half-burnt pages of manuscripts flying around the City Library torched by shelling in 1992. Instead of redressing, I offer here an assemblage of some flight paths and undeveloped afterlives. I focus on the feasts of two saints, George and Elijah, the main protagonists of the warm seasons and the agricultural and pastoral cosmologies in Bosnia. Shared by Catholic and Orthodox Christians, Muslims and Roma, and invoking a plethora of ‘pre-Christian’ Slavic deities, Christian saints and Muslim prophets, these ‘syncretic’ characters have been increasingly rendered unfitting to the image of the ethno-religious boundaries of nationalist projects. To understand the intricate social and political lives of George and Elijah after the 1990s war in Bosnia, this article builds on my long-term, multi-sited fieldwork in Bosnia (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018), as well as my analysis of the legal archives produced by the ICTY. It reads like an extended case study in which the two festive events provide a starting point for a discussion of large-scale political changes.

I trace the making of difference and ideas of historical ethno-religious antagonisms in Bosnia from *fin-de-siècle* travelogues and nationalist attempts to appropriate the shared feasts to the scholarly debates and expert testimonies before the ICTY. Finally, I also look at the particles of shared and syncretic landscapes in the narratives of other, ‘ordinary’ witnesses called to testify for either the prosecution or the defence. Records of conversations from the ICTY courtrooms are a dark, uncomfortable and, at times, farcical vortex. Parts of testimonies are redacted for public use, forming absences in what is already a collection of fragments. Between thousand-page long documents on gang rapes and the examples of the defendants’ performative humour, encounters with saints and feasts can be only described as uncanny. Because I know something about those lives before the impact, these particles were not about encountering something strange or unfamiliar. They were uncanny in the sense of Freud’s *unheimlich* (‘unhomely’), ‘that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar’ (1955: 220). The known appears disunited and alienated in its new surroundings. To search for Elijah and George in these archives was to rummage through debris, the dispersed landscapes belonging to this unconventional space only as a consequence of their devastation.

The folk calendar in Bosnia officially begins with Annunciation (*Blagovijest*) on the seventh of April. However, this is just a prelude; the actual commencement is not until the sixth of May, George’s Day (*Đurđevdan/Jurjevo*)



according to the Julian calendar, when the land completely emerges from under the snow blanket. Historically, Gurbeti Roma would arrive slightly before the festivities at the Field of Gacko in south-eastern Bosnia, set up their camps and prepare the George's Day feast. For subsistence, they relied on tinning copper dishes for Muslims and Christians. On George's Eve, they would welcome these neighbours to their fair and to a circular dance around a bonfire. Unfortunately, these meetings have not occurred since the beginning of the war, as the Gurbeti never returned. George's Day is a festival of fertility, and its numerous rituals, some of which I describe later in this article, focus especially on women and girls. Depending on the place, it is a more or less collective affair, but one always acknowledged to be shared by Christians, Muslims and Roma. The Bosnian George is also an inheritor of Jarilo, the Proto-Slavic deity of spring and sometimes synonymous with Hidr (or Khidr), the 'Green one', better known in Sufi circles. Around the Mediterranean, Khidr merges with Elijah in the festival of *Hidrellez*.<sup>2</sup> Haddad (1969: 27) considered George, Khidr and Elijah under the common denominator of 'georgic saints', whose powers relate to fertility and the continuity of life.

In Bosnia, the warm season between George's and Elijah's days was occupied by hard work in the fields. Diversion arrived only with Elijah's feast day (*Ilindan/Alidun*) on the second of August. In the Field of Gacko, this was the central event for the local Orthodox Christians and Muslims. People arrived from across the region to attend the grand fair. Stalls with food and drinks would be set up, villagers would perform the traditional Dinaric types of polyphonic songs (*bećarac* and *ganga*), organise athletic competitions and arrange marriages. Because the Christian feast (*Ilindan*) occurred around the Church of St Elijah in the late morning and the Muslim one (*Alidun*) next to the spring of Sopot and the mosque in Kula in the early afternoon, this tradition came to be expressed in a proverb, which says, '*Do podne Ilija, od podne Alija*', 'Until noon – Ilija, after noon – Alija'. Ilija and Alija are two names for the same Elijah. These words acknowledged the consonance of sameness and difference. Ilija and Alija were also the typical Christian and Muslim men's names in Bosnia, so the meaning of the saying was extended to designate the relations between persons and communities.

After Elijah's Day was over, everyone would start making plans for the next one. My interlocutors described it as the most important day of the year. 'Until Elijah by dust, after Elijah by mud', they would say to indicate the change of weather after the feast.<sup>3</sup> By Demetrius Day (*Mitrovdan/Kasum*), on the eighth of November, all preparations for the harsh winter needed to

2 There are numerous variations of this name, which are usually a compound of Khidr and Elijah (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018: 204-220).

3 In the Bosnian original: '*Do Aliduna po prahu, od Aliduna po kalu*'. Elijah is the Biblical thunderer, but also the successor to the Proto-Slavic thunder-god Perun. He can strike the shed or the haystack and destroy the harvest (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018: 220-221)

be completed. The Field of Gacko was devastated during the 1990s war. Its Muslims and Gurbeti Roma went into exile. Those few Muslims who have returned since 1998 envisage the recuperation of the landscape and its sociality through the restoration of the shared Elijah's Day feast.

### Bosnian festivals and the invention of absence

At the beginning of the 1990s war, traditional feasts came to be increasingly employed for political purposes. One noticeable pattern in both my ethnographic information and the ICTY archival material is the use of festivals for the establishment of local branches of nationalist parties and the organisation of their political rallies. As the biggest social event after the harvest, Elijah's Day was found to be exceptionally convenient for such incursions. Described by one of my interlocutors as 'the day that depicts one place of people' (*jedno mjesto ljudi*), it was a moment of condensed social intercourse. Before the heavy winter snows isolated the households, the feast was an expressive affirmation of the Gacko community: thousands would gather at the temporal and spatial nodes of great symbolic importance to eat, drink, dance, sing, engage in athletic competitions, arrange marriages and business deals, and so on. The attempted appropriation of Elijah's Day by the nationalists was a recognition of its social centrality. In 2011 and 2012, during my fieldwork in Gacko, the day included an assortment of nationalist emblems and declamations. However, after this 'formal' introduction – the speeches, the circumnavigation of the church with flags and the participation of local political figures in the Divine Liturgy – the folk festivity would begin. Most participants understood the latter rejoicing to be the more salient part of the day. The priests, though they sometimes did not like the uncontrolled celebrations 'fuelled by alcohol', were not capable of preventing the revelry.

I noticed that this 'folk refusal' constituted a significant regulation of institutional intervention. For example, when I attempted to organise a workshop and showcase some of my research findings during an Elijah's Day feast in Gacko, the presentations of the panellists were methodically drowned out by loud conversation, despite our microphone and large speakers. This rejection of the 'academic intervention' may be seen as part of the wider strategy of resistance to the external codifications of customs, summarised in the proverb my interlocutors repeated as they were attempting to restore life in their ravaged landscape: 'Customs are more important than the village' (*Običaji su važniji od sela*).<sup>4</sup> This 'folk wisdom' suggests that, whilst the structures can be rebuilt, the end of the community begins with the disappearance of its habitual ways of life. The insistence on the restoration of Elijah's Day was, for the returnees, an attempt to revive (not invent) the community so expressively epitomised in the feast.

4 Their resistance relates to the history of academic expertise discussed later in this article.

As Hobsbawm (2000b: 282-288) noted, the *fin-de-siècle* nationalist and political religious movements were fully aware of the importance of ritual and myth. He describes the assimilation of the International Workers' Day with May Day, the symbolically charged juncture in the agricultural calendar. As a time of renewal, growth, hope and joy, the festival was conveniently woven into the messages and iconography of the movement (ibid.: 284-285). Yugoslav socialism likewise made use of the May Day feast (*prvomajski teferič* or *uranak*), which is still a widespread practice in Bosnia. Apart from the traditional feast, it often also included the hilltop bonfires more characteristic of the slightly earlier Annunciation. Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin (1990: 29) has argued that the socialist calendar in Yugoslavia adopted the rhythm of the traditional festivals, but also intervened in it 'by anticipating or postponing' the important moments. Socialist Yugoslavia, however, tolerated most of the traditional feasts (*teferič*) due to their 'secular appearance' (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018: 42-45).

The Nazis, Hobsbawm (2000a: 9) pointed out, took advantage of May Day and similar events 'with liturgical sophistication and zeal and a conscious manipulation of symbols'. In like manner, the nationalists in Gacko and elsewhere in Bosnia made use of the existing symbolic repertoire. Their programmes were articulated primarily in terms of identities and traditions that 'needed to be defended' from an always imminent threat. However, novel paraphernalia were gradually grafted onto the existing customs. The construction work in the Field of Gacko is an apt elaboration of the 'invention of tradition' thesis. The old Church of Saint Elijah in the village of Nadanići is the traditional locus of Orthodox Christian Elijah's Day festivities. This is where the participants would gather (inclusive of the politicians since the 1990s). The village, however, was understood to be too marginal in the post-war constellation, so a new, much more monumental Church of Holy Trinity was constructed in the 'ethnically cleansed' town centre, metres away from the site of the destroyed mosque. Stylistically, the new church was designed to resemble the mediaeval monastery of Gračanica in Kosovo, thus establishing a material link to the much wider discursive claim about the 'heartland' of the Serb people. To embed this new site in people's emotional maps, the city council organised the St Trinity Day parade when the politicians, the clergy and the townsfolk circumnavigated the new building, prior to a set of sacro-political communiqués in front of it.

The space where the new church sits is still known as *Tenis* (the locals tell that the Austro-Hungarian soldiers built the first tennis courts there after the occupation of Bosnia in 1878). Perhaps oblivious to this toponym, the Orthodox Bishop Grigorije proclaimed, during the St Trinity Day celebrations in 2009, that this was in fact an 'elevated place', 'liberated from the oppressor', with the new church, 'surely the most beautiful in recent Serb history' (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018: 200). As this newly concocted locus

of emotional centrality was being fused with the traditional calendar, the returnees worked on the reconstruction of the central town mosque. Together with all other mosques in the area, this one had been razed to the ground in 1992. The reconstruction of the mosques, like the restoration of the feasts, complicates the ‘invention of tradition’ argument. Hobsbawm noted:

*‘On the other hand, the strength and adaptability of genuine traditions is not to be confused with the “invention of tradition”. Where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented.’ (2000a: 8)*

The Gacko returnees thought that the ‘old ways’ needed to be revived if they were to endure as a community. Embracing the adage that ‘customs are more important than the village’, they made use of various inventive strategies in their struggles for continuity. They moved the date of Elijah’s feast to accommodate the diasporic attendance (often agreed over social media) and turned their daily conversations towards the Christian-Muslim-Roma shared pastoral calendar of the past to argue against nationalist inventions of ethno-religious partitions. However, although very much alive in their bodies, most traditions could not simply be revived. For example, George’s Day rituals, which involved particularly the participation of young women and children, would have been a futile enterprise in the returnee community, where only the elderly resided and only a single child had been born after the war. Thus, they focused their aspirations on Elijah’s Day, when the other refugees would come back for a day, awaiting the revival of their past communal life.

Read through the Bosnian case, *The Invention of Tradition* (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2000) is still highly applicable. On the whole, the book offers a wide-ranging critique of nationalist claims to historical foundations and continuity, as well as the legitimisation of political programmes through new and appropriated rituals. The volume’s focus – the invention of ‘time-honoured’ social scripts – encapsulates the long twentieth century, which was, for the most part, the violent aftermath and the malign, tardy proliferation of the nineteenth-century national myths of origins. The importance of tradition was, for the nationalists, about the consolidation of the political and territorial body, a body effectively naturalised through perpetual symbolic encroachment upon the human body and its habitual domains (land, kinship, language and religion in particular). The national question in Bosnia was, then, a process of inventing (imagining and effecting) the boundaries of such political bodies, conveniently latching on to the feasts and slowly reappropriating them. *The Invention of Tradition* (ibid.) considered the delineation of social boundaries in terms of their temporal extensions, from the present into the past. However, as ethno-national entities were being historically situated, their spatial (relational) boundaries were synchronously charted. For such programmes, the spatial and the temporal in(ter)ventions

were, and continue to be, part and parcel of the same objective – to elicit the political body. People from ex-Yugoslavia still joke about the ‘differentiation-dictionaries’ (*razlikovni rječnici*) that appeared in the early 1990s to help Croatian speakers steer away from Serbian (the two languages are basically the same, fully mutually intelligible, with slight regional variations that do not at all follow the nation-state borderlines). For the military campaigns of ethnic cleansing, religiously plural spaces and blurred boundaries became the primary intended target.

This article considers one effective and continued political strategy pertaining to Bosnia in which the nationalist invention of tradition was also a steady programme of unimagining the shared life and blurry boundaries between religious groups, as well as the insertion of these identities into new, solidly chiselled, ethno-national machinations. This process, which started in the nineteenth century, was also an *invention of the absence of shared tradition*. The crux of this invention, whether it appeared in academic publications, political speeches or the cross-examinations of the ICTY, was the same: Bosnia did not and cannot exist as a religiously plural space. It was fundamentally an anti-syncretic invention.

Palmisano and Pannofino (2017) differentiate between ‘invented’ and ‘inventive’ traditions; the latter ‘rediscover and innovatively reformulate pre-existent material through which they establish plausible continuity in order to appear credible and legitimate’ (ibid.: 14). This distinction, however, does not capture Bosnia’s political complexities, as both the nationalist programmes and the returnees’ efforts may fit into the above description – both claim possession over certain past customs, yet towards different aims. Zanetta (2017: 32-33), in her contribution to the same volume, argued that Hobsbawm’s and Ranger’s ‘invention of tradition’ is past-oriented, whereas the ‘inventive tradition’ is future-oriented. I would rather argue, through the case of Gacko, that both the nationalist and the anti-nationalist claims are fashioned with the past and the future of the community as their prerogative. Both are ‘inventive’, yet their crucial asymmetry lies in the measure of ‘invention’; whereas the nationalists employ the ‘old ways’ to legitimise the new social constellations, affixing new material and symbolic elements along the way, the returnees reside in the past in order to frustrate the nationalist progression.

### Syncretic debris

Discussions of sharing, syncretism and mixture do not make sense without some defined boundaries. These are certainly complex and problematic vocabularies (Stewart 2011: 48). As Shaw and Stewart (1994: 7) argued, because all religions are syncretic, we should rather consider the processes of religious synthesis and discourses of syncretism and anti-syncretism. It is precisely in

this antagonism to religious synthesis that I locate shared lives in the ICTY archives. The ethnic cleansing of the 1990s was a climax of boundary-making and efforts in pursuit of nationalist purifications that began more than a century earlier. Syncretic debris was the product of these deep lacerations in the relational fabric, of the cavernous charting of otherness, of the violent unmaking of the world.

Yael Navaro (see 2009) has developed an anthropology of ruination, questioning and sensing the affective potentialities of remnants, residues, shards and debris. This work was crystallised through her approach to the disarticulated landscapes of Northern Cyprus. ‘By “ruination”’, she notes, ‘I refer to the material remains or artefacts of destruction and violation, but also to the subjectivities and residual affects that linger, like a hangover, in the aftermath of war or violence’ (ibid.: 5). Yet, to think of remnants is to establish a relation, to affiliate the pieces to a place of prior belonging, which thus gains durability (they are vestiges *of something*). In the ICTY archives, Bosnian saints seem suspended, uninvited, misplaced, unheard. Therefore, I resort to ‘debris’ – particles that end up where they do not belong.

Ann Laura Stoler’s (2013) project focused on imperial debris, the persistent material, conceptual and affective traces of colonial enterprises. Their durability is active, although not always visible or at a predictable destination. Whereas the debris in her discussion is about the afterlives of ‘imperial formations’ – relations of force – syncretic debris is about unintended trajectories and uneasy emplacements of shared life (or just life) after relations are forced into scales of difference and diversity. Part of Stoler’s project (see 2009) considers colonial archives and what, for various reasons, remains unrecorded. She distinguishes ‘between what was “unwritten” because it could go without saying and “everyone knew it”, what was unwritten because it could not yet be articulated, and what was unwritten because it could not be said’ (ibid.: 3). An archive may thus be seen as a ‘system of expectation’ (Stoler 2002). To ‘read along the archival grain’ is to look at the architecture of the ontological, what expectations it effectuates (Stoler 2009: 3-4). Systems of expectations inevitably produce silences or gloss over the unexpected. Users may also be guided into archives’ expectations. To read ‘against the grain’ is to approach archives through more than what they contain, through their ‘outside’ (see Zeitlyn 2012: 464).

Both are forms of subversive reading, of course, and this article makes a modest attempt at each. What comes across through Bosnian syncretic debris is that reading ICTY records ‘against its grain’ requires intimacy, which in turn involves temporal and spatial proximity. I have also read these archives against the grain of alienation, at times being able to conjure up images of landscapes hidden behind witness protection anonymity and rhythms of expectant cross-examinations. At those times, for me, displaced utterances were no longer a matter of debris, but signals of something *elsewhere*.

Debris is an image of disarticulation. Yet, its seeming disarray is also an outcome of articulated orientations. Debris is synthesised, *articulated as debris*, through the force of impact (and the subsequent impossibility or refusal to recognise what precedes fragmentation). The digging up of mass graves and their (sometimes repeated) relocation to conceal the initial crimes have further crumbled and shuffled the matter designated as refuse. The fusion of fragments in these nationalist assemblages reveals the orientation of the impact. In several instances, destroyed Bosnian sacral architecture was piled over the corpses in mass graves (see Walasek 2015: 37-39). The remnants of George and Elijah, as well as of the plural sacral landscapes they signalled, then belong to these wider accumulations of manufactured organic and social detritus, by way of the calculated dispersal they collectively suffered.

With a different kind of orientation, remnants may be disarticulated as debris and *articulated into coherence*; ‘fragments’ may demand emplacement into the wholeness of a body/landscape/relation. For example, when faced with bodily pieces of their family members discovered in mass graves, survivors continually petitioned for the ‘complete person’ (see Jugo and Wastell 2015: 152).<sup>5</sup> Religious institutions have likewise stipulated the treatment of incomplete remains ‘as if they were complete’ (ibid: 163). In hope for completeness, graves continue to be reopened to unite new-found fragments with the interred remains. Similarly, fragments of destroyed architectural heritage have been used in post-war reconstruction, situated in re-validated wholes. Narratives about shared lives and the attempts to restore the syncretic feasts of George and Elijah belong to the same kind of orientation, against the disintegration of the social body. So, debris is ultimately a matter of displacement, whereas the thought of remnants prompts different kinds of emplacement.

### Making difference: from keen travellers to expert witnesses

The nature of shared life and syncretic religion in Bosnia has been a contentious issue for over a century. Since *fin-de-siècle* Orientalist travelogues, it usually appeared as a peculiarity of Ottoman and post-Ottoman mixtures. As a result of a growing interest in the ‘Eastern Question’, the British travel literature on Bosnia had a noticeably political character (Berber 2010: xiii-xv). Religion was used as the ostensible reasoning and the ‘most natural’ way to advance the new foreign policies (Allcock and Young 2000: xxiii-xxiv). The construction of this discursive image has had a durable existence. Bosnia was seen as standing on the frontier of two ‘civilisations’ – Christendom and Islamdom – never fully articulated in either of them (ibid.). These days, tourist guides in Sarajevo take visitors to the exact spot where ‘East and West meet’,

5 Jugo and Wastell (2015: 152) cite the remark of one person from Srebrenica: ‘I did not marry a man without hands or a head. I did not give birth to sons without hands or a head. But I buried them that way’.

a section of the boulevard between the Ottoman-era town centre (*čaršija*) and taller Austro-Hungarian buildings. The city council was quick to capitalise on this narrative, embedding an actual compass into the pavement along with a reminder which reads ‘Sarajevo: meeting of cultures’ (see Figure 1). This aged civilisation talk had long-lasting consequences. From its vantage point, Bosnian life was implicitly fragmented by religious difference, or into ‘nations’, as they were sometimes referred to in early travelogues (see Mackenzie and Irby 1877).



Fig. 1. Pavement orientations in Sarajevo, July 2017. Photo: S. HadžiMuhamedović.

In their 1877 *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe*, two Victorian ‘keen travellers’, Georgina Muir Mackenzie and Adeline Paulina Irby, described some of these differences. They saw Bosnia as a rude, barbaric frontier, a society not yet evolved into Europe; Bosnian Muslims were racialised and primarily understood as the feudalist oppressor, whereas the Bosnian Christians and their struggle attracted some sympathies (Hadžiselimović 2000). Irby and MacKenzie did mention, however cursorily, some ‘shared’ religious elements. On a mountain above Sarajevo they noticed the Muslim festive gatherings on John’s Day, Elijah’s Day and George’s Day, ‘bright with red turbans and jackets and groups of women in white veils’ (1877: 8). Muslims, according to them, also celebrated another shared feast, their family patron saint (*slava*) (ibid.: 9), nowadays understood as primarily an Orthodox Christian tradition.



The famous English archaeologist Arthur Evans also ventured through Ottoman Bosnia. Upon visiting the Catholic pilgrimage in Komušina, he described its large fair, an ‘elegant’ *kolo* circle dance, and ‘cherry bonfires’, ‘round which the peasants clustered in social circles’ (Evans 1876: 133-134). This pilgrimage, better known as *Kondžilo*, is active to this day and focuses on the miraculous painting of the Virgin flanked by St John the Baptist and St Roch. The Catholic icon was also revered by Orthodox Christians and Muslims, and its narrative of origins is tied to a local Muslim family (see Katić 2010). For Evans (1876: 133), however, it seemed pathetic that the ‘influence of Islam seemed to have infected’ Christian rituals. He found it difficult to distinguish between the members of religious communities in terms of their garments and because ‘they grovelled in the ground and kissed the earth, as in a mosque’ (ibid.). His *a priori* conclusion that these were exclusively Christian pilgrims and his desire to differentiate between ‘religions’ provide but a glimpse into the wider and persistent fragmentation of Bosnian religiosity along the lines of the Occident-Orient binary.

In a similar fashion, Roy Trevor’s (1911) travelogue includes descriptions of St John’s Day apotropaic rituals near the town of Jajce, where the Catholic chapel of St John was ‘overflowing with Moslems and Christians, men and women, who rolled upon the ground gnashing their teeth, tearing their hair and rending their clothes’ (ibid.: 47). A number of other researchers since the second half of the nineteenth century have offered glimpses into Bosnian syncretic religiosity, which was usually considered in terms of ‘trans-Slavic’ ethnology or as part of Serb and Croat folklore.<sup>6</sup>

Rebecca West’s two-volume account is likely the most puzzling and politically disposed of the existing travelogues. In her *Black Lamb and Gray Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* (1946a; 1946b), she dedicated two chapters to a syncretic George’s Day feast in Macedonia, which she energetically rejected on moral grounds. The inclusion of sacrifice in the fertility ritual repelled her; she saw it as ‘shameful’, ‘a conscious cheat’, noting:

*‘Women do not get children by adding to the normal act of copulation the slaughter of a lamb, the breaking of a jar, the decapitation of a cock, the stretching of wool through blood and grease. If there was a woman whose womb could be unsealed by witnessing a petty and pointless act of violence, by seeing a jet of blood fall from a lamb’s throat on a rock wet with stale and stinking blood, her fertility would be the reverse of motherhood, she would have children for the purpose of hating them.’ (1946b: 204)*

6 Hadžijahić and Purivatra (1990: 186–87) have compiled a bibliography on these academic arguments over the national definition of folklore in Bosnia.

West also saw traces of shared religion as a testament to certain concessions that the Christians had to make under the ‘Turks’. Even if the ‘Moslems had no objection to worshipping in Christian churches’ (1946a: 308), this was, for her, primarily a form of strategic crypto-Christianity. Reasserting the Orientalist dichotomy of the psyche, she observed:

*‘There could be no two races more antipathetic than the Slavs, with their infinite capacity for enquiry and speculation, and the Turks, who had no word in their language to express the idea of being interested in anything, and who were therefore content in abandonment to the tropism of a militarist system.’ (1946a: 307)*

Her cavernous manuscript experienced a sudden, renewed interest with the advent of the 1990s war. Hall (1996) describes how West’s arguments about historical enmities between Serbs, Croats and ‘the Turks’ reinforced anti-interventionist U.S. policies in the Balkans. American author Robert Kaplan was captivated by West’s work, which he referenced throughout his own political travelogue *Balkan Ghosts* (2005 [1993]). He reiterated her stance on the endurance of ancient enmities and saw Bosnia as a ‘violent ethnic cauldron’ (Kaplan 2005 [1993]: xii; see also Hall 1996). Citing the Bosnian novelist Ivo Andrić, Kaplan suggested that ‘peaceful intercommunal tradition’ and ‘ethnic harmony’ have ‘often been balanced on a knife’s edge’ (2005 [1993]: xi).<sup>7</sup> In particular, he argued that Bosnian villages ‘were full of savage hatreds’, so the ‘fact that the most horrifying violence – during both World War II and the 1990s – occurred in Bosnia was no accident’ (ibid.: 22).

Was the war primarily religious and ethnic, a product of long histories of conflict and irreconcilable differences, or rather incongruous with the abundance of shared practices and inter-religious proximities? This question, revived in scholarship and journalism during the 1990s war in Bosnia, was interwoven with the political destiny of the state. The answers are often markedly different and ideologically opposed. On the one hand, the war was a ‘betrayal’ of centuries of tolerant coexistence reaching into the Middle Ages (see, for example, Donia and Fine 1994). On the other hand, these religious groups never formed a cohesive community, making the country implicitly ‘impossible’. Bosnia should be partitioned along ethnic lines, as such coexistence and tolerance as did exist were but the fragile dependencies of plural empires, which ultimately erupted into carnage with the break-up of Yugoslavia (see Kecmanović 2007, Hayden 2002a, 2016).

Several authors have produced arguments about the lack of shared life in Bosnia as part of some sort of academic advocacy for the dissolution of the state. I briefly look at the apparent similarity between the arguments made

---

7 On the Orientalisation of the Bosnian Muslim in the work of Ivo Andrić, see Mahmutćehajić (2015).

by the regional nationalist politicians, two regional political scientists and a prominent anthropologist.

The campaign to solidify ethnic cleansing through the complete territorial differentiation of ‘pure’ entities is a central and ubiquitous ingredient of political rhetoric in Bosnia. Milorad Dodik, who, since 1998, has served two terms as President and two terms as Prime Minister of Republika Srpska,<sup>8</sup> articulates most frequently this position by arguing that Bosnia is an ‘impossible country’, whose people do not share a single holiday, for ‘they have always been on different sides of history and marked [the holidays] in different ways; some as a victory, some as a defeat’ (Buka 2015).<sup>9</sup> This became a strikingly methodical mantra, repeated *ad nauseam*. The absence of ‘shared’ religious elements has been taken as strong evidence of the only viable political solution – separation.

Several ‘scholarly’ publications legitimised this idea. Mirjana Kasapović and Nenad Kecmanović, two internationally marginal political scientists, yet prominent through their columns in regional periodicals, have published monographs leaning towards the same conclusion. Kasapović’s (2005) book centred on the proposal for the ‘confederalisation’ of the country into ethnically pure entities. In her opinion, ‘confederalisation’ is necessary as Croats, Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia have no shared experience of history, religion or common culture; they disagree on the basic values and norms of shared life (ibid.: 158-191). Such ‘deep religious and ethnic separation’ is presented as a crucial and rooted historical characteristic of the country (ibid.: 138). She goes even further by suggesting a civilisational divide between religious communities in Bosnia, unsurprisingly making use of the controversial arguments of Samuel Huntington on the ‘clash of civilisations’ (ibid.: 21-22; compare Huntington 1996).

Kasapović does not entertain ‘primitive talk of neighbourliness, shared feasts and get-togethers between Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs through the ages’ (2007: 139). These forms of proximity are not of relevance, perhaps because they stand in stark contrast to her ethno-nationalist political chartings. For Kecmanović, Bosnia is, likewise, an ‘impossible state’, without any consensus on history, divided in all events ‘no matter whether this is about shared victories and pride or shared plight and sorrow’ (2007: 7).<sup>10</sup> He sees

8 Republika Srpska, although usually not translated, means ‘Serb Republic’. Together with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is one of the two ‘entities’ that politically constitute the contemporary state of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the town of Brčko is a district). This division, which largely follows the frontiers of ethnic cleansing, was instituted through the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995.

9 All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

10 Although not considered in this article, the shared past of the World War II Partisan anti-Nazi resistance is likewise routinely obscured by the nationalists.

the dissolution of the state into ethnically cleansed territories (as manufactured in the 1990s) as the only way out of this conundrum.

Another remarkably similar body of work has been produced by the American anthropologist Robert Hayden (see, for example, Hayden 2002a; 2002b; 2007; Bowman 2012). Like Kasapović, he did not take ‘common’ Bosnian life into account, which is remarkable considering the extended argument he is making on precisely that topic. He gathered his information through ‘census data, public opinion polls, voting patterns, and the configurations of the contending military forces, rather than primarily [relying] on more traditional forms of ethnography’ (2007: 107). In a more recent treatise of the same ‘model’, Hayden et al. (2016) mention Hayden’s 1992 fieldwork in India, which was compared to ‘ethnohistorical and historical accounts of South Asian colonialism and Ottoman imperialism in the Balkans, but also with the events taking place in 1992 in Bosnia’ (ibid.: 17). Acknowledging existing criticism of this decision to avoid fieldwork or ‘thick’ description, Hayden et al. argue that their work ‘contrasts with such inherently static and essentialist forms of analysis’ (ibid.: 70). Like others, they resort to several quotations from Andrić’s work. Brief fiction is apparently better positioned than ‘static’ fieldwork to argue for subtle, yet persistent, inter-ethnic antagonisms.

So, what are ‘antagonistic tolerance’ and ‘competitive sharing’ in the work of Robert Hayden? The first concept aims to explain ‘how it happens that peoples of different religions who live peacefully intermingled for generations, and who may develop aspects of syncretism in their religious practices, turn on each other violently, even engaging in what is now called “ethnic cleansing”’ (Hayden et al. 2016: 1). Such ‘peoples’, it is further argued, endured but never embraced each other in Bosnia, so they competed for domination over shared religious sites, and, when the political systems ensuring passive tolerance broke down, they competed violently (Hayden 2002a; Hayden et al. 2016: 7-8). The 1990s war was thus not so much a nationalist project as a matter of reactivated competition.

These antagonistic tolerators, it is repeatedly suggested, discourage intermarriage (Hayden et al. 2016). The notion of ‘intermarriage’, however, is not defined, so the reader is left to wonder about the reasons for its importance in Hayden et al. They do not mention the frequent practices of ‘cross-religious’ sworn kinship (*kumstvo*) or blood brotherhood/sisterhood (*pobratimstvo/posesistrimstvo*), which had a significant role in Bosnian communal and personal relations, often working against the large-scale production of enmities (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018: 128-150). These authors seem to rest their idea of intimacy on an outdated, ‘pre-Schneiderian’ concept of kinship as either descent or affinal alliance. This problem would have been at least visible to the authors had some ‘more traditional’ anthropological interlocutors in Bosnia been encountered.

With the same brush, Hayden (2002b: 161) painted over the much-discussed notion of *komšiluk* or neighbourhood/neighbourliness in Bosnia (see, for example, Sorabji 2008). People of different religions who ‘chanced to live in close proximity’, he argued, only engaged with each other pragmatically and as representatives of groups, yet failed to integrate affectively, as individuals (Hayden 2002b: 161). Following Bougarel, he argued that *komšiluk* may be understood as ‘antithetical’ to the intimacy of marriage because the groups remained ‘unmixable’ (ibid.). The intimacy of marital mixing, it would appear, asserts its sexual connotation here. How else would mutual rhythms of care, socialising, affection, shared religious celebrations and other forms of kinship be irreconcilable with it? Hayden, to my knowledge, also does not note any in-depth research among those Bosnians he would consider ‘inter-married’.

The proposed impact of his argument is relatively tucked away. Given the history of antagonism (with passive tolerance), which was contained only by undemocratic subordination, Hayden notes:

*‘Attempts to impose diversity after a country has been partitioned may well require indefinite occupation to deny power to the nationalists for whom people would vote if given the chance to do so. [...] Clear recognition of this situation might permit decision makers to assist in reconstructions of shattered societies based on what people are willing to accept, even if that means the injustice of partition.’ (2002a: 219)*

Like Kecmanović and Kasapović, if for the most part less directly, Hayden then also points to a certain ‘impossibility’ of Bosnia as a religiously plural society, ultimately doomed to be fragmented into more possible ethnic enclaves constructed through war.

Competition for Hayden et al. (2016) is primarily a negative phenomenon. They are interested in competition between the members of different religious groups. However, this presumption of difference, or of religious difference as more important than other forms of difference, is not unlike the miscalculations of those *fin-de-siècle* Orientalist travellers mentioned earlier. Understanding competition beyond ethno-religious conflict is crucial for Bosnian landscapes. Let me give you some examples (see also HadžiMuhamedović 2018). The religiously plural Bosnian George does not simply defeat the dragon; the two compete for the maiden and the (in)fertility of the world. On George’s Eve, children around Bosnia light fires on hill-tops around their landscapes, competing through the height of their flames. And in the morning the same children chase each other around with stinging nettles, stirring up the blood and awaking the season. Young women go down to river slopes to bathe in the ritual of *omaha* and to collect stems of hyssop. Lads hide to see them undress and later compete to steal the hyssop

arrangements from their windows and front doors. The girls put swings on the branches of old trees and compete to see whose will fly furthest into the air. During the feasts of George or Elijah in south-eastern Bosnia, women compete to become the reputable bachelorette (*namuša*) and men compete to ‘steal’ the girls from others by asking them for a walk. They also compete in song and a wide variety of athletic disciplines (such as ‘rock from the shoulder’ and ‘climbing up a greased pillar’).

Sometimes, during Elijah’s Feast Day in the Field of Gacko and other places, groups of men enter an annual fistfight, which is understood as a release of energy before the winter. On St Peter’s Eve, in the village of Mokro in central Bosnia and elsewhere, children go around with torches (*lile*), trying to get the most sweets from each household.



Fig. 2. St John’s Eve in Kreševo, June 2012. Photo: S. HadžiMuhamedović.

During my 2012 fieldwork, I visited the town of Kreševo in central Bosnia on St John’s Eve. The town was literally divided into two neighbourhood teams, Gornje Čelo and Donje Čelo. Everyone worked strenuously throughout the day collecting wood for the ritual bonfires, which, the children instructed me, ward off evil. Before the flames were lit, one of the teams climbed on to the back of a truck with a large, spray-painted slogan that read ‘Gornje Čelo eats shit’, which rhymes in Bosnian (see Figure 2). As they drove through the neighbourhood of Gornje Čelo, they elicited laughter and some performative resentment. Both teams were Catholic Christian, although this is beside the point. There was no actual ‘winner’ of the competition; one’s own bonfire was, of course, taller.

The main problem of the ‘competitive sharing’ and ‘antagonistic tolerance’ thesis is that it starts with a fallacious assumption of religious difference and its correlating enmity. It conflates the nationalist claims of territorial and racial purity with the communities that nationalisms attempted to instrumentalise.

### Magister ante portas

Hayden and Hayden et al. make arguments that rest entirely on the presumption of religious difference that turns into conflict, so their ‘competition’ is, first and foremost, a methodological problem. If reweighed, this foregrounded object of analysis – religious difference – would suggest that a reconceptualization of ‘competition’ is likewise needed. Hayden’s contributions have significantly intensified the academic debates on the qualities and structures of relation in Bosnia. Scholarly conundrums, however, also have the attested potential of wider social impact. Just as the oft-quoted novelist Andrić finds himself in a posthumous embrace of the ‘historical enmities’ debate, so too is Hayden’s work cited in the arguments presented before the ICTY. The already mentioned author of the ‘impossible state’ thesis, Nenad Kecmanović, acting as the expert defence witness (see *Prosecutor v. Blagoje Simić et al.* 1), consistently refers to Hayden’s work, including the notion that Bosnia as a state ‘can only be preserved by a regime of permanent occupation’ (ibid: 10809). Kecmanović follows Hayden’s general argument, noting that ‘inter-ethnic antagonisms’ have only culminated in the 1990s in a country that was a ‘corpus separatum’ for almost half a millennium (ibid.).

Hayden was, likewise, an expert defence witness before the ICTY (see, for example, *Prosecutor v. Duško Tadić*). He argued that Croats, Muslims and Serbs in Bosnia have been historically divided by religion, customs, diet and dress, particularly in rural areas (ibid.: 5690). He underscores his ‘antagonistic tolerance’ model of Bosnian history ‘punctuated by violence’ whenever the larger states, which ensured harmonious life, collapsed (ibid.: 5708). Judge Ninian Stephen was slightly confused by this argument:

*‘There were two questions I would like to ask you, Professor. The first one is we have heard a great deal from individual witnesses about contentedly living together of different ethnic groups, to the extent to which “my best friend is a Serb” or “I am godfather to a Croat”. Contrasted with that is the fact that we find that in villages in the opstina Prijedor they seem to be very clearly designated and understood by everyone as being Muslim villages or Serbian villages or Croat villages. How do you, if you do, reconcile those two views?’ (ibid.: 5715-5716)*

Hayden responded, not through the ‘antagonistic tolerance’ model, but by arguing that ‘intermingling’ was much less common in rural areas and that nationalism did not originate in mixed areas (ibid.: 5715-5717). This also requires some unpacking. The rural/urban binary was a common representation of the 1990s war. Nationalism was seen as produced in the villages and encroaching upon the ‘mixed and tolerant’ cities. As Bougarel (1999) noted, this discourse is firstly an academic one. We can trace its origins in the racial typologies of the Serbian geographer and ethnologist Jovan Cvijić (1922 and 1931), Croatian sociologist Dinko Tomašić (1993) and several other academics during and after the 1990s war.<sup>11</sup> They took Dinaric villages, with their tradition of *gusle* epics, to be an exemplar of nationalism.<sup>12</sup> For Cvijić, the ‘Dinaric man’, burning with national desires, is the best breed in the Balkans. For Tomašić, however, these were aggressive criminals whose psychological traits can only be understood as contrary to ‘Western European civilization’.

The Field of Gacko, where I did most of my fieldwork, lies along the Dinaric Mountains. Perceiving a lack of ‘mixture’ in this space is a fallacy generated by a lack of historical and ethnographic knowledge about it. Gacko’s Orthodox Christians, Muslims and Roma shared exactly what Hayden seems to deny them: ‘religion, customs, diet and dress, particularly in rural areas’. They shared their pastoral economy, the feasts of George and Elijah, Procopius’ Day and Demetrius’ Day. Orthodox Christians and Muslims regularly entered sworn kinship (*kumstvo*), which Judge Stephen was rightly concerned about. Whilst they seldom ‘intermarried’ in Hayden’s terms, *kumstvo* was an enduring form of relatedness, sometimes kept up between households for over a century. Muslim women did not wear veils when meeting their Christian male sworn kin, which was a conduct reserved only for the closest family members. In fact, proverbs remind us that sworn kin were held more important than brothers. Christians and Muslims in Gacko also shared the *gusle* epic tradition, visited each other’s homes (including for Eid, Christmas and Easter), helped each other out during the harvest (in group field work, so-called *mobe*), worked together in factories, etc. Approaching their shared lives primarily in ethno-religious terms is likewise problematic. We might forget that these are actual people with different trajectories and life histories. It was often the neighbourly ritual of shared coffee, as in the case of Mila and Fata from Cernica, that formed lasting alliances and affections. When

11 See, for example, Bogdanović’s discussion of the ‘archetypal fear of the city’ and the ‘restless epic man’ (2008: 37, 128), or Zulfikarpašić’s comments about the tolerant ‘natives of the city’ and the ‘semisavage’ nonurban population (Đilas and Gaće 1994: 71).

12 *Gusle* is a single-stringed instrument that usually accompanies epic songs in the Dinarides. These songs are yet another shared tradition that was gradually purified and imbued with a nationalist ethos. For a wider discussion of *gusle* epics and nationalism, see HadžiMuhamedović (2018: 46-48, 153-65, 200-201).



Hayden makes the argument in the courtroom that he is not a historian but a cultural anthropologist who ‘deals with people as they exist now’ (*Prosecutor v. Duško Tadić*: 5777), this begs the question whether these people are only ever allowed to exist as exemplars of ethno-religious principles.

Another defence expert witness, sociologist Stjepan Meštrović, reiterated cultural and ethnic differences in Bosnia (see *Prosecutor v. Dario Kordić, Mario Čerkez*). He also employed Huntington’s concept, arguing that Islam and the West were engaged in a cultural war and that there was no historical co-existence between different religious groups in Bosnia. He adamantly opposed Donia’s arguments about shared life, and his expert report even included a chapter on the ‘rebuttal of Robert Donia’s testimony’. Like Hayden, he held that ethnic tolerance did not prevent ethnic violence. Both geographically and culturally, Meštrović notes, Serbs, Muslims and Croats lived separate social lives (*ibid.*: 17591).

In his own expert report for the prosecution, historian Robert Donia problematised the ‘myth of ancient tribal hatreds’, arguing that there is little historical evidence to support such claims (see *Prosecutor v. Blagoje Šimić et al.* 2). In his view, the national or ethnic conflict is a modern occurrence typically instigated by foreign invaders. In addition, he held that the notion of historical enmities, promoted by diplomats and journalists in the 1990s, forestalled the possibility of international intervention during the war (*ibid.*: 9965).

### Shared life and Bosnian saints: ICTY archival patterns

After impact, debris scatters into multiple directions. For its recipients, it is not exactly a vestige of something that used to be complete. Not knowing its prior vitality and social significance, the recipients will likely see it as a waste, should they see it at all. ICTY conversations revolve around an assortment of terms of art, which include categories of ethno-religious distinction. By accepting the logic of strictly delineated ethnic groups, Sari Wastell has argued that ‘the criminal prosecution of wartime atrocity produces a naturalised continuation of the conflict’s overarching project’<sup>13</sup> Through the exercise of divisions that were the very object of war, Wastell continues, ‘law also reifies these distinctions, enshrines them in its politico-juridical structuring and re-telling of the conflict, and reiterates the ultimate violence of the acts themselves’<sup>14</sup> Beyond this legal paradigm, the difference-*cum*-sameness of Bosnian communities remains essentially undetectable. ICTY maintains a particular notion of ethno-religious diversity-as-difference. The witnesses (both expert and non-expert), as well as the wider intended audiences of the

13 Sari Wastell mounts this weighty critique in her forthcoming article ‘Scales of Justice for the Former Yugoslavia: Calibrating Culpability for Wartime Atrocity’ (on file with author).

14 See previous footnote.

Tribunal, are then invited into this system of expectations. The dissemination of this, now legally legitimised, rendition of relations has powerful political consequences and, perhaps unwittingly, further crumbles and shuffles the debris of lives encapsulated by George and Elijah.

The problem is similar to that of ICTY's reliance on the idea of gendered bodies and actions (see Campbell 2007), which is vividly illustrated when a witness from Foča is repeatedly asked what she means by rape (see *Prosecutor v. Radovan Stanković*). Witness 95 replies by breaking it down etymologically: *silovanje* (rape) is related to the word *сила* (force). She continues:

*'So they used force, power, strength to bring me there, and that means everything. Everything I went through, as well as the other girls, occurred not through my will or my acquiescence but by the use of force, power and strength.'* (*ibid.*: 2422-2423).

*Silovanje* is, for her, not disconnected from the 'non-sexual' torture she went through. The questioner, however, needs to approximate this to legal horizons: 'Does that mean [that they] put their penises into your mouth, or vagina, or anus?' (*ibid.*). ICTY thus employs international law to maintain 'normal science' in the Kuhnian sense, where 'those that will not fit the box are often not seen at all' (Kuhn 1970: 24). Witness 95 made an intervention that was not acknowledged.

This legal and political problem is ultimately an ontological one. The witness speaks, but the listener does not hear – the speaker's world is simply not conceptually mapped out in that of the listener. The same applies to the ethno-religious conceptions of Bosnian communities. Life is refashioned as 'diversity', 'intermingling', 'intermarriage', (*inter-life!*); it becomes 'co-existence', which, as the poet Abdullah Sidran once remarked, is the assassination of existence (2011). Diversity, Sari Wastell argues, is always a matter of scale. It becomes through the act of measurement:

*'Or perhaps better put, diversity is not something that is 'already out there', waiting to be described and ordered. It is made by systems which operate through the estimation, valuation and proportion of entities – as apprehended by the system itself.'* (2001: 186)

Even before it manifests in the courtroom, the detail of Bosnian life has found a fixed place in the project of measurement. Therefore, the debris of one world enters another scalar system.

Another witness (186) from Gacko is asked about the moment she was taken from a transit camp set up in a school in Kalinovik, transferred into a refrigerator truck with eight other underage girls and gang-raped in different locations. She noted that it happened on the second of August.

*'Q: And the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, how come you know this date so well? Was it a special day?*

*A: Yes. The Serbs were celebrating Ilinden and the Muslims were celebrating Alidza.'* (Prosecutor v. Radovan Stanković: 2929)

What she means, of course, are the shared celebrations of Elijah's Day, which is glossed over. Both names for the feast, *Aliđun* and *Ilindan*, are misspelled in the records. The general diversity of spelling has made it extremely difficult to engage with immense ICTY archives while looking for the debris of shared lives. The court cannot understand the sociality that Elijah's Day prompts, nor its centrality in Gacko, where the witness is from. Remembering that something occurred on Elijah's Day, particularly when that something is so diametrically opposed to the ethos of the celebration, is otherwise only logical. So, the question is rehearsed with witness 191, also from Gacko, who was subjected to the same trajectory of violence as witness 186:

*'Q: The 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, is that a specific day in the calendar?*

*A: The 2<sup>nd</sup> of August was, until noon, Alidjun, and in the afternoon, Ilinden, a special day for Serbs and Muslims.'* (*ibid.*: 3130)

The reply is transcribed using a slightly different spelling this time. What witness 191 is referring to is a saying all people from Gacko and most Bosnians know well: *Do podne Ilija, od podne Alija* ('Until noon – Ilija, after noon – Alija').<sup>15</sup> It is a microcosm of relations in her landscape. These utterances are interventions. Even if unacknowledged in the courtroom, they offer a reading against the grain of the archives.

Elijah is stripped of his shared qualities in various testimonies. Hard-liner Vojislav Šešelj, whilst indicted for war crimes, defended organising a nationalist demonstration in 1990 with reference to the fact that it was a 'great Serb holiday' (*Prosecutor v. Šešelj*: 17502). He organised another rally on George's Day (*Prosecutor v. Ratko Mladić*: 3250). One paramilitary unit was even named St George (*Prosecutor v. Galić*: 18510). The use of saints and feasts for nationalist rallies is a common thread in ICTY records. The assemblies which formed the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) were held on Elijah's Day in the town of Bosanski Šamac (*Prosecutor v. Simić et al.* 3: 9002-9009). Another local branch of the party was formed in Gacko on Elijah's Day, near the church that was traditionally central to this occasion in the village of Nadanići. In the words of witness B-1122, the traditional festival of Elijah's Day 'was used to set up' SDS (*Prosecutor v. Milošević* 1: 27773).

The nationalists thus knew very well the size of the congregations and the significance of the feast, which they used to promote their programmes at odds with the shared qualities of the celebration. Similarly, witness Nusret

---

15 Witness 196 gives this in reverse.

Sivac described the choice of venue for the Četnik paramilitary rallies in the village of Marićka:

*'Your Honour, you are referring to the rally held in the village of Maricka in front of one of the oldest Orthodox churches in the area. This took place in August 1990 on a great Serbian holiday, Ilindan, Saint Eligus' feast day. Maricka was not selected by chance.'* (Prosecutor v. Stakić: 6796)

The emotional centrality of specific times and places related to Bosnian saints was thus understood to be a convenient vehicle for nationalism.

Another feast-related theme is their use for temporal orientation. They used to be, first and foremost, seasonal markers of agricultural and pastoral calendars. During the war, however, saint days often recorded a chronology of destruction, exile and executions. I mentioned how the girls abducted for rape remembered the beginnings of their agony through Elijah's Day. Witness Dragomir Mladinović remembered expulsions and the beginning of war through George's Day and a murder by way of Elijah's Day (Prosecutor v. Orić: 2951-2953). Likewise, witness C-017 was certain that an attack on the city of Mostar occurred on George's Day (Prosecutor v. Milošević 3: 22100). The habitual orientational function of the feasts was thus extended, by both the perpetrators and the victims, to register the unmaking of communities.

The same connections appear in the cases of religious architecture destroyed during the feasts. Witness DD recounted how the Aladža mosque, in the centre of the town of Foča, had been blown up on Elijah's Day (Prosecutor v. Kunarac et al.: 5178-5192). Near the town of Doboj, a similar programme of destruction was executed on George's Day, as noted by expert prosecution witness Andras Riedlmayer:

*'They described how a Yugoslav army transporter had come up the hill on Djurdjevdan, the feast of St. George, a Serb holiday, how the soldiers had strung explosives inside the mosque, how the men operating the plunger had taken the Imam ceremonial hat with the turban and put it on his head as he blew up the minaret, and how they had driven down the hill in the mostly Muslim neighbourhood, still wearing the same hat, and singing anti-Muslim songs.'* (Prosecutor v. Milošević 2: 32822)

I have recorded at length the use of saint days to measure time in the south-eastern Bosnian highlands (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018). Their use for recording displacement and ruination is apparently not a new occurrence. Đula Dizdarević, interviewed in 1935 as part of a study of epic poetry, recalled how people had to flee from Gacko into the mountains at the beginning of World War I in 1914. They descended the mountain on Elijah's Day (see Vidan 2003).

The third pattern in the archival material of the ICTY are references to shared religious celebrations. Witnesses usually employed them to describe the disparity of life before the war and the nationalism that ensued. Asked about pre-war relations between Christians and Muslims in Gacko, Asim Bašić noted that, before the paramilitary formations arrived, such bonds were excellent: ‘we socialized, we celebrated our religious holidays together’ (*Prosecutor v. Stanišić and Župljanin*: 5983). Witness Sulejman Crnčalo described the same sudden change in Pale:

*‘Sir, it wasn’t just St. George’s Day that was celebrated but many other religious holidays. Before the political parties were organised, people of different religions invited their friends to their religious holidays to celebrate the Bajram and Christmas and other holidays. The situation was quite a good one. Once the political parties took over, all of the things that we are discussing now and all of the things because of which I am here now started happening.’ (Prosecutor v. Ratko Mladić: 3253-3254)*

Similarly, witness Sulejman Tihčić told the court how he visited Serbs and Croats for Christmas and Easter in Bosanski Šamac and went to the Orthodox Church for Easter, whereas they would visit him for *Bajram* (Eid) (*Prosecutor v. Blagoje Simić et al.* 4: 1239-1240). Such were the relations in the town of Vitez until the nationalist violence erupted (*Prosecutor v. Kupreškić et al.*).

One of the most succinct descriptions of shared celebrations is to be found in the cross-examination of Radomir Kezunović. Radovan Karadžić, found guilty of genocide in 2016, was examining the witness, as he was acting in his own defence. The question was posed here to establish the improbability of a nationalist rally during a George’s Day gathering.

*‘Q. You said it was a tradition. Let me remind you. Do you agree that the tradition of early-morning gatherings on St George’s Day is something that exists for centuries, attended by Muslims and Serbs and especially the Roma of all religions? Is that a century-old holiday or something that we introduced in 1991?’*

*A. You’re completely right. It’s a tradition respected by everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially the Roma, Serbs and Muslims. It’s an old tradition.’ (Prosecutor v. Karadžić and Mladić 1: 13922-13923)*

What detail about shared feasts gets to surface, in which occasion and from whom, is not necessarily clear. After the original impact, debris continues to wander and becomes more easily subjected to novel displacements. Among the many farcical details from the ICTY records is a conversation between Radovan Karadžić and Judge Iaian Bonomy (*Prosecutor v. Karadžić and*

*Mladić 2*: 190). As it was George's Day, Karadžić decided to congratulate it to Roma and Serbs, but also to the Scots, thus hinting at Bonomy's national identity. The judge replied that he was shocked to hear Karadžić's sympathies for St George, but that he understands them nevertheless. Was he thinking of the Crusaders or English nationalists? Perhaps, though less likely, he was shocked by the nationalist's recourse to the shared saint? Nevertheless, he instructed Karadžić that his invocation is not particularly apt, as St Andrew is the Scottish protector.

### Conclusion: a different kind of saint

Debris... scattered in all directions. Worlds that used to be personal belongings brush against the surfaces of law that does not know what to do with them. Living bodies, dead bodies, saints and seasonal cycles glance through the structured expectations of cross-examination as they become an archive.

Anna L. Tsing (2004: 2) has argued for the study of 'friction', 'the sticky materiality of practical encounters' to help bridge the traps of abstraction and particularity. In the archives, the scapes of seasonal rituals and shared saints encounter not only the paradigms of international law, but also the advocates and executioners of ethnic demarcation. At this intersection, some discrepancy is suddenly made manifest – worlds measured differently reveal each other – in the 'sticky' moments of a repeated question, surprise, confusion and disregard in the courtroom. This friction goes 'against the grain' as archives are produced. However cursory, the intrusions of George, Elijah and their landscapes into these records seem to invite a conversation on the rendition of social relations. They offer themselves as ontological obstacles to the political projects of appropriation and annihilation.

Anthropological fieldwork disrupts the incompleteness of the archive, and this is especially true of ICTY records. I have attempted to demonstrate briefly how the argument of historical religious enmities poured, in a sustained fashion, into the ICTY records through expert witnesses who often reiterated much older Orientalist conceptions of civilizational divides. Their claims contrast with the Bosnian plurality expressed in the feasts of the warm season. The shared lives around which George and Elijah focused made a strange, unannounced entrance into these records, as debris washed onto the shores of another world. At the same time, I have shown how the people in Gacko and elsewhere in Bosnia inventively counter the nationalist *invention of the absence of shared tradition*. This invention of absence, I have argued, is itself becoming a sort of a tradition, now over a century old, inherited and reproduced by political and academic actors and infiltrating courtroom conversations.

As I write this, the Tribunal has come to an end, after twenty-four years of existence and 161 indictments. It concluded with two high-profile sentenc-

es, to Ratko Mladić for genocide, *inter alia*, and six Croatian military officers in the *Prlić et al.* case, for crimes against humanity, again *inter alia*. On the eve of the latter judgement a Catholic liturgical service for a ‘just’ verdict was held in Mostar. During the pronouncement of the judgment, one of the six, Slobodan Praljak, stood up, rejected the sentence and the Tribunal, and took a quick sip of potassium cyanide from a small vial he managed to smuggle into the courtroom. Several thousands attended his commemoration in Zagreb, whilst others lit candles and held his photos on the main square (see Radio Free Europe 2017). Memorabilia with Mladić’s image has been widely available in Bosnia and Serbia for much longer. Short of beatification, these icons of nationalist martyrdom constitute a new kind of saint, one antithetical to the shared lives of George and Elijah.

## References

- Allcock, John B. and Antonia Young (2000) Black Lambs and Grey Falcons: Outward and Inward Frontiers. In: Allcock, John. B. and Antonia Young (eds.) Black Lambs and Grey Falcons: Women Travellers in the Balkans. New York: Berghahn: pp. xxi-xxxiii.
- Berber, Neval (2010) Unveiling Bosnia-Herzegovina in British Travel Literature (1844–1912). Pisa: Pisa University Press.
- Bogdanović, Bogdan (2008) Tri ratne knjige: Grad i smrt, Srpska utopija, Grad i budućnost. Novi Sad: Mediterran Publishing.
- Bougarel, Xavier (1999) Yugoslav Wars: The ‘Revenge of the Countryside’ Between Sociological Reality and Nationalist Myth. *East European Quarterly* 33 (2): pp. 157-75.
- Bowman, Glenn (2012) Introduction: Sharing the Sacra. In: Bowman, Glenn (ed.) Sharing the Sacra: The Politics and Pragmatics of Inter-Communal Relations. New York: Berghahn Books: pp. 1–10.
- Buka (2015) Dodik o 1. martu: Nijedan zajednički praznik koji slave tri naroda u Bosni i Hercegovini nije moguć. [http://www.6yka.com/novost/75830/dodik\\_o\\_1.\\_martu:\\_nijedan\\_zajednicki\\_praznik\\_koji\\_slave\\_tri\\_naroda\\_u\\_bosni\\_i\\_hercegovini\\_nije\\_mogu](http://www.6yka.com/novost/75830/dodik_o_1._martu:_nijedan_zajednicki_praznik_koji_slave_tri_naroda_u_bosni_i_hercegovini_nije_mogu) [accessed: 12 January 2017].
- Campbell, Kirsten (2007) The Gender of Transitional Justice: Law, Sexual Violence and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1 (3): pp. 411-432.
- Cvijić, Jovan (1922) *Balkansko poluostrvo i Južnoslovenske zemlje: Volume 1: Osnovi antropogeografije*. Zagreb: Hrvatski štamparski zavod.
- Cvijić, Jovan (1931) *Balkansko poluostrvo i Južnoslovenske zemlje: Volume 2: Osnovi antropogeografije*. Zagreb: Hrvatski štamparski zavod.
- Đilas, Milovan and Nadežda Gaće (1994) *Bošnjak*: Adil Zulfikarpašić. Zürich: Bošnjački Institut.

- Donia, Robert and John Fine (1994) *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Evans, Arthur (1876) *Through Bosnia and the Herzegovina on Foot During the Insurrection, August and September 1875; With an Historical Review of Bosnia, and a Glimpse at the Croats, Slavonians, and the Ancient Republic of Ragusa*. London: Longmans, Green and Co.
- Freud, Sigmund (1955) The 'Uncanny'. In: Strachey, James (ed.) *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume XVII (1917–1919)*. London: The Hogarth Press: pp. 219-52.
- Haddad, Hassan S. (1969) 'Georgic' Cults and Saints of the Levant. *Numen* 16 (1): pp. 21-39.
- Hadžijahić, Muhamed and Atif Purivatra (1990) *ABC Muslimana*. Sarajevo: Bosna/Muslimanska Biblioteka.
- HadžiMuhamedović, Safet (2018) *Waiting for Elijah: Time and Encounter in a Bosnian Landscape*. New York: Berghahn.
- Hadžiselimović, Omer (2000) Two Victorian Ladies and Bosnian Realities, 1862-1875: G. M. MacKenzie and A. P. Irby. In: Allcock, John B. and Antonia Young (eds.) *Black Lambs and Grey Falcons: Women Travelers in the Balkans*. New York: Berghahn: pp. 1-7.
- Hall, Brian (15 April 1996) Rebecca West's War. *New Yorker*.
- Hayden, Robert M. (2002a) Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites in South Asia and the Balkans. *Current Anthropology* 43 (2): pp. 205-31.
- Hayden, Robert M. (2002b) Intolerant Sovereignties and 'Multi-Multi' Protectorates: Competition over Religious Sites and (In)Tolerance in the Balkans. In Hann, Chris (ed.) *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*. London: Routledge: pp. 159-79.
- Hayden, Robert M. (2007) Moral Vision and Impaired Insight: The Imagining of Other Peoples' Communities in Bosnia. *Current Anthropology* 148 (1): pp. 105-17.
- Hayden, Robert M., Aykan Erdemir, Tugba Tanyeri-Erdemir, Timothy D. Walker, Devika Rangachari, Manuel Aguilar Moreno, Enrique López-Hurtado and Milica Bakic-Hayden (2016) *Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites and Spaces*. London: Routledge.
- Hobsbawm, Eric (2000a) Introduction: Inventing Traditions. In: Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: pp. 1-14.
- Hobsbawm, Eric (2000b) Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914. In: Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: pp. 263-307.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) (2000) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huntington, Samuel (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (1999) *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Country Report*. Geneva.



- Jugo, Admir and Sari Wastell (2015) *Disassembling the Pieces, Reassembling the Social: The Forensic and Political Lives of Secondary Mass Graves in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. In: Anstett, Élisabeth and Jean-Marc Dreyfus (eds.) *Human Remains and Identification: Mass Violence, Genocide, and the 'Forensic Turn'*. Manchester: Manchester University Press: pp. 142-174.
- Kaplan, Robert D. (2005) [1993] *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*. New York: Picador.
- Kasapović, Mirjana (2005) *Bosna i Hercegovina: podijeljeno društvo i nestabilna država*. Zagreb: Politička kultura.
- Kasapović, Mirjana (2007) *Metodološki problemi kritike konsocijacijske demokratije u Bosni i Hercegovini*. Status: Magazin za političku kulturu i društvena pitanja 12: pp. 136-143.
- Katić, Mario (2010) *Tekstualna konstrukcija svetog mjesta na primjeru predaje o slici Gospe s Kondžila*. Godišnjak Centra za balkanološka ispitivanja ANU BiH 39: pp. 219-39.
- Kecmanović, Nenand (2007) *Nemoguća država: Bosna i Hercegovina*. Belgrade: Filip Višnjić.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. (1970) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2nd edn. enlarged). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mackenzie, Georgina Muir and Adelina Paulina Irby (1877) *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe*. Volume 1. London: Daldy, Isbister and Co.
- Mahmutćehajić, Rusmir (2015) *Andrićevstvo: protiv etike sjećanja*. Belgrade: Clio.
- Navaro, Yael (2009) *Affective Spaces, Melancholic Objects: Ruination and the Production of Anthropological Knowledge*. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (1): pp. 1-18.
- Palmisano, Stefania and Nicola Pannofino (2017) *Changing the Sacred: Creative Paths of Religious Experience*. In: Palmisano, Stefania and Nicola Pannofino (eds.) *Invention of Tradition and Syncretism in Contemporary Religions: Sacred Creativity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: pp. 1-28.
- RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty (2017) *Croatian Ceremony Honors Convicted War Criminal Praljak*. <https://www.rferl.org/a/croatia-bosnian-croat-war-criminal-praljak-honored/28910360.html> [accessed: 14 December 2017].
- Riedlmayer, Andras J. (2002) *From the Ashes: The Past and Future of Bosnia's Cultural Heritage*. In: Shatzmiller, Maya (ed.) *Islam and Bosnia: Conflict Resolution and Foreign Policy in Multi-Ethnic States*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press: pp. 98-135
- Rihtman-Auguštin, Dunja (1990) *Metamorforza socijalističkih praznika*. *Narodna Umjetnost* 27: pp. 21-32.
- Shaw, Rosalind and Charles Stewart (1994) *Introduction: Problematizing Syncretism*. In: Shaw, Rosalind and Charles Stewart (eds.) *Syncretism/Anti-syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis*. London: Routledge: pp. 1-26.

- Sidran, Abdulah (2011) Interview by Maja Hrgović: Abdulah Sidran: Suživot je atentat na život. <http://www.novolist.hr/Kultura/Knjizevnost/Abdulah-Sidran-Suzivot-je-atentat-na-zivot> [accessed: 7 May 2013].
- Sorabji, Cornelia (2008) Bosnian Neighbourhoods Revisited: Tolerance, Commitment and Komšilik in Sarajevo. In Pine, Frances and João de Pina-Cabral (eds.) *On the Margins of Religion*. New York: Berghahn Books: pp. 97-112.
- Stewart, Charles (2011) Hybridity, Syncretism, Mixture. *Portuguese Studies* 27 (1): pp. 48-55.
- Stiglmayer, Alexandra (1993) The War in the Former Yugoslavia. In: Stiglmayer, Alexandra (ed.) *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press: pp. 1-34.
- Stoler, Ann Laura (2002) Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance. *Archival Science* 2 (1-2): pp. 87-109.
- Stoler, Ann Laura (2009) *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Stoler, Ann Laura (ed.) (2013) *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Tomašić, Dinko (1993) Plemenska kultura i njeni današnji ostaci. *Društvena istraživanja* 8 (6): pp. 889-906.
- Trevor, Roy (1911) *My Balkan Tour: An Account of Some Journeyings and Adventures in the Near East Together with a Descriptive and Historical Account of Bosnia & Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Croatia & the Kingdom of Montenegro*. London: John Lane the Bodley Head.
- Tsing, Anna L. (2004) *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Vidan, Aida (2003) Zlatom veze, a biserje niže: Tradicionalne pjesme bosanskih žena: excerpts. [http://www.gacko.net/dr\\_\\_aida\\_vidan\\_9.htm](http://www.gacko.net/dr__aida_vidan_9.htm) [accessed: 21 June 2014].
- Walasek, Helen (2015) Destruction of the Cultural Heritage in Bosnia-Herzegovina: An Overview. In: Walasek, Helen, with contributions by Richard Carlton, Amra Hadžimuhamedović, Valery Perry and Tina Wik, *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage*. London: Routledge: pp. 23-142.
- Wastell, Sari (2001) Presuming Scale, Making Diversity: On the Mischief of Measurement and the Global: Local Metonym in Theories of Law and Culture. *Critique of Anthropology* 21 (2): pp. 185-210.
- West, Rebecca (1946a) *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Record of Journey through Yugoslavia in 1937, Volume 1*. London: Macmillan and co.
- West, Rebecca (1946b) *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Record of Journey through Yugoslavia in 1937, Volume 2*. London: Macmillan and co.
- Zanetta, Marianna (2017) The *Itako* of Tōhoku: Between Tradition and Change. In: Palmisano, Stefania and Nicola Pannofino (eds.) *Invention of Tradition and Syncretism in Contemporary Religions: Sacred Creativity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: pp. 29-50.
- Zeitlyn, David (2012) Anthropology in and of the Archives: Possible Futures and Contingent Pasts. *Archives as Anthropological Surrogates. Annual Review of Anthropology*. 41 (1): pp. 461-480.

## Legal documents

- Prosecutor v. Blagoje Simić et al.* 1 (Filing of Prof. Nenad Kecmanovic, PhD, Expert witness opinion pursuant to rule 94 bis), IT-95-9-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 19 September 2002, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Witness/NotIndexable/IT-95-9/MS2417R0000032555.tif> [accessed 12 December 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Blagoje Simić et al.* 2 (Statement of expert witness presented to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia under rule 94 bis), IT-95-9-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 05 September 2001, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Witness/NotIndexable/IT-95-9/MS2213R0000029732.tif> [accessed 25 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Blagoje Simić et al.* 3 (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-95-9-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 6 June 2002, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-95-9/TRS4228R0000167285.doc> [accessed 20 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Blagoje Simić et al.* 4 (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-95-9-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 13 September 2001, available at: <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/simic/trans/en/010913IT.htm> [accessed 22 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Dario Kordić, Mario Čerkez* (Expert testimony of Dr. Stepjan G. Mestrovic), IT-95-14/2-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 04 May 2000, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Witness/NotIndexable/IT-95-14%232/MS1867R0000024812.TIF> [accessed 20 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Duško Tadić* (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-94-1-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 11 October 1996, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-94-1/TRS4131R0000166838.DOC> [accessed 3 December 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Galić* (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-98-29-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 29 January 2003, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-98-29/TRS575R0000044567.doc> [accessed 24 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Karadžić and Mladić* 1. (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-95-5/18, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 31 May 2011, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-95-5%2318/TRS9743R0000335099.doc> [accessed 24 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Karadžić and Mladić* 2. (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-95-5/18, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 6 May 2009, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-95-5%2318/TRS8283R2000309268.doc> [accessed 27 November 2017]

- Prosecutor v. Kunarac et al.* (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-96-23-T & IT-96-23/1-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 24 July 2000, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-96-23%2323%231/TRS5301R2000218685.doc> [accessed 26 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Kupreškić et al.* (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-95-16-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 5 March 1999, available at: <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/kupreskic/trans/en/990305it.htm> [accessed 24 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Milošević 1.* (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-02-54-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 21 October 2003, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-02-54/TRS1080R0000062548.doc> [accessed 24 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Milošević 2.* (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-02-54-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 8 July 2003, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-02-54/TRS306R0000037233.doc> [accessed 25 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Milošević 3.* (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-02-54-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 11 June 2003, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-02-54/TRS261R0000219741.doc> [accessed 25 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Orić* (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-03-68-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 10 December 2004, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-03-68/TRS1971R0000113409.doc> [accessed 23 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Radovan Stanković* (Annexes B-C to ‘Prosecutor’s motion seeking leave to amend the amended indictment’), IT-96-23-PT, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 20 November 2002, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Submission/NotIndexable/IT-96-23%232/IND38R0000004474.TIF> [accessed 12 December 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Ratko Mladić* (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-09-92-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 28 September 2012, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-09-92/TRS10311R0000362039.doc> [accessed 22 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Šešelj* (Defence Closing Statement, Continued, Open Session), IT-03-67-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 20 March 2012, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-03-67/TRS10189R0000355958.doc> [accessed 22 November 2017]

- Prosecutor v. Stakić* (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-97-24-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 01 August 2002, available at: <http://icr.icty.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-97-24/TRS1896R0000107380.doc> [accessed 23 November 2017]
- Prosecutor v. Stanišić and Župljanin* (Public Transcript of Hearing), IT-08-91-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 2 February 2010, available at: [http://www.icty.org/x/cases/zupljanin\\_stanisicm/trans/en/100202IT.htm](http://www.icty.org/x/cases/zupljanin_stanisicm/trans/en/100202IT.htm) [accessed 26 November 2017]
- UN Security Council, Security Council resolution 827 (1993) [International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)], 25 May 1993, S/RES/827 (1993), available at: [http://www.icty.org/x/file/Legal%20Library/Statute/statute\\_827\\_1993\\_en.pdf](http://www.icty.org/x/file/Legal%20Library/Statute/statute_827_1993_en.pdf) [accessed 13 December 2017]

---

Dr Safet Hadži Muhamedović currently lectures in anthropology at the University of Bristol. He specialises in the temporality of sacral landscapes, historicity and political agency of ‘nonhuman’ beings, as well as the experiences of home after forced displacement. Since 2009, he has conducted long-term fieldwork in Bosnia and stints of research in Palestine, Israel and the Basque Country. Safet has previously taught at Goldsmiths and SOAS, University of London and Goethe University Frankfurt. He is the co-founder of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research of Visual Culture in Sarajevo and the author of *Waiting for Elijah: Time and Encounter in a Bosnian Landscape* (2018).

## Afterword

Robert Parkin

### Introduction

Although basically about ritual, the present collection also usefully raises issues of cultural authenticity and who has the right to decide them, as well as allowing us to reflect more extensively on the implications of Hobsbawm and Ranger's notion of 'invented tradition' (1983), so richly cited and discussed in these articles. Then there is the whole question of the significance of rituals, and whether the sorts of festivals the contributors describe are a distinct category of ritual, with differences from, as well as continuities with, for example, life-crisis rites or healing rituals. Finally, there are plenty of examples here of the conflicts that are always likely to arise over the meaning of a rite and/or how it should be conducted, whether it should be conducted at all, and who has the right to conduct it. Such conflicts are nonetheless external to the ritual performance and are to be distinguished from the ways in which different social categories may be confronted with one another as part of the ritual performance itself. As I will argue, all the contributions to this collection can be considered in these terms.

### Festivals as rituals

First, however, I start with the question of whether or not community-wide festivals of the sort discussed here should be treated as a special category of ritual. Probably they all obey Arnold van Gennep's well-known tripartite model (1909), if sometimes in reduced form. However, they can also be distinguished from both life-crisis rites (birth, initiation, marriage, death) and healing rituals by having as their focus not particular individuals or categories of individuals within society, but the whole community, and even outsiders to it. They may therefore be more suitable for expressions of identity politics: a couple getting married or a cohort of initiands may not lend themselves to this role as much as a whole, single-minded community. There is no reason to think that festivals are more prone to external dispute and conflict than any other sorts of ritual. However, they may give more scope for different social categories to be structurally opposed to one another as part of the ritual performance.

### Ritual: focus for harmony and unity, or source of conflict?

The true pioneer in the study of ritual is often identified as Arnold van Gennep, whose proto-structuralist model of the three stages into which all rituals can be divided – separation, liminality and (re)incorporation – has remained influential ever since its original publication in 1909. In and after the 1960s, it was greatly boosted by Victor Turner's adoption (e.g. 1969) of the idea of the liminal as underpinning his notion of formless *communitas*, which he saw as opposed to structured *societas*. However, another early and influential emphasis in the study of ritual, running from Emile Durkheim to Turner himself, was on how rituals allegedly give their participants a sense of themselves as a unity or collectivity, a harmonious community or congregation, thus denying, or at least not emphasising, the social differences and potential conflicts experienced by individual participants in their day-to-day lives. In this context, it was Turner's notion of *communitas* that provided the fulcrum whereby the work of van Gennep (1909) and Durkheim (e.g. 1912), intellectual antagonists in real life, could be brought together and reconciled.

However, the bland picture of harmony and unity proffered by both Durkheim and Turner, as well as many others in between, has long since been criticized as not always corresponding to the facts. Indeed, though he did not stress the point unduly, Robert Hertz, one of Durkheim's own students, drew attention early on to the rivalry between the four Italian villages and one French village involved in the cult of St Besse (a local version of St Lawrence) in the Alps above Turin, Italy. These disputes often involved fighting over which village had the right to hold the saint's festival from year to year (to this day, the *carabinieri* attend the festivities in their official capacity [personal field notes]; see Hertz 1913; also MacClancy and Parkin 1997). As for Turner, one attack on his emphasis on these values of harmony and unity in the context of his study of pilgrimage (especially Turner and Turner 1978) came from John Eade and Michael Sallnow's work on this same issue (2000). For Turner, pilgrimage experiences were confirmatory of these values and of the social conformity they underpinned. For his two critics, however, pilgrimage involved rather the varied and potentially irreconcilable experiences of individuals who, while not always at all hostile to one another, did not necessarily form a ritual community in the Durkheimian sense. This could be the case among themselves, as well as in respect of the authority (e.g. a church) responsible for putting on the ritual, as recent work on Orthodox rituals in Russia has shown (Kormina 2010, Agadjanian and Rousselet 2010). Pilgrims may travel as individuals or groups, but even in the case of the latter they frequently each have a separate, very personal reason for doing so, which they may well also keep to themselves and the divinity that is the target of their pilgrimage.

Indeed, Hertz's example of San Besse (1913) also involved a kind of pilgrimage (a stiff climb up a high and steep mountain path, which I've experi-

enced myself on more than one occasion), however local the pilgrims. Moreover, from my own observations, the pilgrims were clearly divided into two groups. One group, from the French village north of the nearby mountain ridge, celebrated the rite in a distinctly surreptitious manner the night before the official celebration on August 20<sup>th</sup> and left again immediately afterwards. The other group, consisting of those from the Italian villages south of the ridge, stayed overnight drinking and singing songs and took a full part in the festivities the following day. In short, they acted as if they had a right to be there, which the French group were evidently much less confident about. However, this distinction, and any past fighting of the sort Hertz was told about, was clearly external to the ritual performance itself and not a part of it.

#### Ritual and conflict: part of the performance, or extraneous to it?

Most of the present contributions mention disputes, though none appears to involve actual fisticuffs. However, they are clearly external to the ritual performance itself and must be distinguished from situations in which conflict, or at least the representation of structurally opposed social categories, are in fact an intrinsic part of that performance.

This is shown in the articles by Richard D.G. Irvine on the Plough Monday Bear and by Matthäus Rest and Gertraud Seiser on the Krampus rite in Austria. Both rituals pitch mythical characters against members of the same community in an as-if hostile fashion that is nonetheless intrinsic to the ritual performance. However, both examples have also raised controversies over the external circumstances of how they are conducted. Thus in the Krampus case, the recent turn towards using the rite as a platform for the expression of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment has been attacked by others as discriminatory. In the Bear case, though disputes here seem less fierce, there is at least a degree of tension between those who see the ritual as a celebration of local history and identity, and those who allegedly see the occasion as an opportunity to drink heavily and potentially cause public order problems. Venetia Johannes' article on food in Catalonia similarly exposes differences between those who refuse to eat some foods on ritual occasions because they are felt not to be traditional in any sense but new dishes designed as money-making ventures, and those who are more concerned to use any vehicle for the expression of Catalan identity and separateness from Spain. It can therefore be questioned whether these examples have the 'cathartic' functions of the rites of reversal described by Turner and his teacher Max Gluckman in certain African societies. These are held to mark the installation of a king or chief, who is made to suffer psychological and possibly physical abuse from his future subjects in the rite's liminal phase (Turner 1969; Gluckman 1965). Clearly this is an intrinsic part of the ritual performance itself: both chief or



king and subjects are ultimately part of the same ritual community, despite their opposed statuses in the rite. However, these examples are perhaps less a matter of cathartic release than of demonstrating the chaos that would ensue if the chief's authority were to be flouted at all extensively. Another aspect of ritual for Turner and Gluckman is therefore that it confirms the status quo after displaying its destruction symbolically. In other words, in this view, conflict enshrined in the rite itself is reconciled; conflict external to it – over, for example, how it should be held or who has the right to do so – may not be.

### Authenticity and invention

To introduce even the possibility of dispute and contestation into the study of ritual immediately raises questions of authenticity and the right to decide issues concerning it. Connected with this is the notion of at least some rituals as invented, as in Hobsbawm and Ranger's argument dating back to the publication of their classic volume in 1983 – something of an embarrassment to anthropologists and folklorists, incidentally, who had to leave it to a pair of historians to make the point for them! But what are Hobsbawm and Ranger actually saying in their edited work? To my mind their emphasis is not only, or even mainly, on the possibility of invention in general, but on the fact that certain rituals that are claimed to date from time immemorial can actually be proved to be relatively recent on the basis of historical accounts. Thus, as well as Hugh Trevor-Roper's notorious claim (1983) that the Scottish kilt, far from being as old as the Highlands, originated in a benevolent northern English industrialist giving his employees something more comfortable to wear at work, there is a chapter in the same collection on the UK's elaborate royal rituals, which are pregnant with their alleged ancientness, but in fact belong to the still relatively modern Victorian era and later (Cannadine 1983). However, the anthropologist might respond to the notion of invention by saying: 'But of course—what else would one expect?' In fact, in accounting for the origins of rituals there is no very obvious alternative to invention, however old or recent a ritual is or may appear to be. What is obvious is that no ritual just emerges out of thin air. All rituals depend on human agency for their genesis, as well as their interpretation and performance. This is the case however much they may also follow certain basic patterns, as van Genep taught us, as well as certain traits of ritual language, whether literally linguistic or, more usually, symbolic. Hobsbawm and Ranger's arguments about the recency, invention and/or reinvention of certain rituals should not be read as qualifying the authenticity of such rituals when compared to others: ultimately all rituals are invented, and they are very apt to be considered traditional as well.

As for ritual revivals, are they therefore inventions or reinventions? And who is to decide? The anthropologist or historian can hardly do so, though he

or she might be able to point out the inaccuracy or fragility of certain claims to a ritual's origins made by its supporters. However, the danger of leaving it at that is to place not only authenticity but meaning wholly in the past, when what we should be focusing on is their existence in the present, without which no ritual, revived or not, can exist. Thus it is for our informants to tell us what meanings they derive from their participation (or non-participation) in a ritual and what they find, or do not find, authentic about it.

To say 'tradition', of course, necessarily means invoking the past, and it is through the past that a contemporary or recent cultural practice can be 'traditionalized', that is, made to seem older than it really is. Also, the further one goes back into the past, the vaguer it tends to become. This is a definite impediment to the historian, folklorist or anthropologist trying to sort out fact from fiction, but it is of positive benefit to the native informant explaining or defending a particular ritual. This vagueness can be exploited, whether to deviate from known historical facts, to invent such facts, to replace them with others, or to be purposively unclear about any of these. We also know that history can be mythologized and that rituals frequently have their own myths as a 'charter' (to borrow Malinowski's term for a somewhat different set of circumstances; see 1948) for their own performance. Add in identity formation, and a rich tool is created for imaginative purposes.

Ideas about the authenticity of a tradition are therefore certainly one area in which contestation and dispute are likely to arise. However, holding a ritual may also reveal very serious uncertainties about these issues. Thus at one extreme, ritual participants may have no clue as to the meaning of a particular passage in the ritual performance, of a particular ritual item or symbol, which even the officiant holding the ritual may be uncertain about (cf. Leach 1976). At the other extreme, there is the self-appointed expert pontificating about every aspect of the ritual, even if, as one sometimes suspects, that means making it up on the spur of the moment, perhaps in response to the enquirer's questions. Yet even they may have to confront uncertainty: in his work on the Ok of Papua New Guinea, Fredrik Barth (1987) witnessed rituals that were only held every generation or so having to be pieced together from fragmentary information and memories, casting serious doubts over the continuity and consistency of their symbolic contents from occasion to occasion. Ultimately, however, the notion that a ritual has been invented does not of itself undermine the sense of its authenticity for those taking part in it (perhaps 'creation' would be a better word than 'invention'). Nor, incidentally, need the intervention or presence of outsiders: tourist interest may confirm a ritual's validity to its custodians, rather undermining it, as such interest is so often accused of doing (cf. Errington and Gewertz 1989 on the Chambri in Papua New Guinea).

As Johannes' article on food points out, however, those who feel connected with a ritual and the identity issues that may arise from it may themselves

dispute a ritual's meaning and authenticity. As we have seen, too obviously traditionalizing items of Catalan food are dismissed as money-making scams sullyng the currently urgent Catalan identity agenda. Yet in being revived, a ritual can strengthen, even acquire, its own sense of proper authenticity. Thus the Plough Monday Bear festival has gone from being a slightly disreputable hedonistic occasion eventually suppressed by the police as a form of begging to being used as a didactic tool telling schoolchildren about their local traditions and heritage. The very jocularity here is also worth remarking on. Johan Huizinga long ago pointed out (1949) the ludic aspects of social life, of which this is an example, though rituals can also be tedious enough to dull the senses, with long, boring speeches and endless manipulations of ritual paraphernalia for reasons that may be unclear even to those making them. This theme is not really at issue here, though many of the rituals described in this selection clearly have their ludic aspects. However, rituals are more likely to have a serious purpose in the main, as enshrined in the social conformity theories of commentators like Durkheim.

### Ritual and identity

There is yet another context of hostility that may be experienced as and in ritual, which brings us to the identity politics potentially associated with any ritual. In so far as Durkheim (1912) was correct in drawing our attention to the harmony- and unity-inducing aspects of ritual for those taking part, the community or congregation they form may well exploit the ritual to create a boundary around themselves in relation to a possibly hostile rival or the outside world generally. Thus Glenn Bowman showed how, on the Palestinian West Bank, municipal rituals efface distinctions among Palestinians (e.g. Christian versus Muslim) in order to present a united front, at least symbolically, to the Israeli occupier (1993). Attendees at the St Besse celebrations singing 'Siamo Cristiani' throughout much of the night before the festival and implicitly opposing themselves to non-Christians may be seen in the same light (personal field notes), as can modern Krampus participants using their activities to oppose the presence of migrants in Austria, especially Muslim ones. Yet strangers may also be welcomed to attend or take part in such festivals: for example, many attendees at the annual Notting Hill carnival in west London, still seen as an intrinsically West Indian affair, are white (Cohen 1991). Here Gerd Baumann's notion of the 'ritual constituency' is useful (1992: 99, 114), his own main example being how Punjabi Sikhs who have settled elsewhere to the west of London, in Southall and Uxbridge, celebrate the originally white Christian ritual of Christmas, to which they add 'Punjabi' touches, as well as holding birthday parties for their children in a way they would not in the Punjab. In other words, one and the same ritual may attract different groups or 'constituencies' of participants, some perhaps

more 'in' than others, but each group, and potentially even each individual, having its own reason for attending, though sometimes merely as spectators rather than as active ritual performers. A lot of Notting Hill revellers, or those at a Brazilian carnival, are clearly passive spectators in the former sense, not having anything else to do with the floats that are at the heart of both festivals apart, perhaps, from dancing to the music that often accompanies them. Similar remarks can be made of the examples of Krampus and the Bear, where again there is potentially a conceptual distinction between external spectators and those who are part of the community and play the role of, for example, the Krampus's victims from within that community.

There are also cases involving greater mutual participation by those who at first sight seem like outsiders, potentially turning rituals into an occasion for religious synthesis. Thus in India many Hindus visit the shrines of Muslim saints and vice versa (e.g. Jamous 1996). In this collection, a similar situation occurred formerly in Bosnia, though it was seriously impacted by the war there in the 1990s. As Safet HadžiMuhamedović's article on this shows, St George's Day in April and St Elijah's Day in August both drew together members of both the Orthodox Christian and Muslim communities, as well as Roma tinkers on the former occasion. Despite parallelisms (e.g. the two shrines to Elijah/Alija), both festivals were recognized as owned equally by all those attending them.

## Conclusion

Van Gennep's tripartite model of ritual structure has lasted remarkably well for a text that is now well over a century old (1909). By contrast, Durkheim's roughly contemporary insistence (1912) that rituals are overwhelmingly occasions where the day-to-day divisions of society are overcome and ignored in an effervescence of brotherly and sisterly good feeling has been criticized and modified almost out of existence by later writers in a manner that is unlikely ever to be wholly reversed. This is principally because Durkheim tended to ignore the conflicts that can surround rituals, whether externally over their ultimate custody and interpretation, or internally, as a symbolic part of the actual ritual performance. However, I suggest that such criticisms of Durkheim apply less to the latter situation than the former. It is clear that those who play the role of the Krampus or the Plough Monday Bear and those who are their victims combine in forming a ritual community of the sort Durkheim described, regardless of whether or not there are outsiders present (in any case, if any of the latter are present, they might well be drawn into the community while the ritual lasts). The present collection forces us to think further about these and other issues I have discussed here, indicating that ritual is a matter not just of invention but inventiveness, of the exercise of imagination within the basic structural framework suggested by van Gen-

nep. As a result, ritual is bound to continue to fascinate the anthropologist and ritual participant alike.

## References

- Agadjanian, Alexander and Kathy Rousselet (2010) Individual and Collective Identities in Russian Orthodoxy. In: Hann, Chris and Hermann Goltz (eds.) *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective*. Berkeley etc.: University of California Press: pp. 311-328.
- Barth, Fredrik (1987) *Cosmologies in the Making*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baumann, Gerd (1992) Dominant and Demotic Discourses of Culture. Their Relevance to Multi-Ethnic Alliances. In: Werbner, Pnina and Tariq Modood (eds.) *Debating cultural hybridity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: pp. 209-225.
- Bowman, Glenn (1993) Nationalizing the Sacred. Shrines and Shifting Identities in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. *Man* (n.s.) 28 (3): pp. 431-460.
- Cannadine, David (1983) The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual. The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820-1977. In: Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: pp. 101-164.
- Cohen, Abner (1991) Drama and Politics in the Development of a London Carnival. In: Werbner, Pnina and Muhammad Anwar (eds.) *Black and Ethnic Leaderships. The Cultural Dimensions of Political Action*. London and New York: Routledge: pp. 117-138.
- Durkheim, Emile (1912) *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*. Paris: Alcan.
- Eade, John and Michael Sallnow (2000) *Contesting the Sacred. The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Errington, Frederick and Deborah Gewertz (1989) Tourism and Anthropology in a Post-modern World. *Oceania* 60: pp. 37-54.
- Gluckman, Max (1965) *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Hertz, Robert (1913) Saint Besse, étude d'un culte alpestre. *Revue d'Histoire des Religions* 67 (2): pp. 115-180.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) (1983) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huizinga, Johan (1949) *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Jamous, Raymond (1996) The Meo as a Rajput Caste and a Muslim Community. In: Fuller, C.J. (ed.) *Caste Today*. Delhi etc.: Oxford University Press: pp. 180-201.

- Kormina, Jeanne (2010) *Avtobusniki: Russian Orthodox Pilgrims' Longing for Authenticity*. In: Hann, Chris and Hermann Goltz (eds.) *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective*. Berkeley etc.: University of California Press: pp. 267-286.
- Leach, Edmund (1976) *Culture and Communication: The Logic by which Symbols are Connected*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacClancy, Jeremy and Robert Parkin (1997) *Revitalization or Continuity in European Ritual? The Case of San Bessu*. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 3 (1): pp. 61-78.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw (1948) *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*. Glencoe IL: The Free Press.
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh (1983) *Invention of Tradition. The Highland Tradition of Scotland*. In: Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: pp. 15-41.
- Turner, Victor (1969) *The Ritual Process*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Turner, Victor W. and Edith Turner (1978) *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture. Anthropological Perspectives*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Van Gennep, Arnold (1909) *Les rites de passage*. Paris: Nourry.

---

Robert Parkin, now retired, was formerly Departmental Lecturer in Social Anthropology, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford.

Beer, Bettina, Hans Fischer und Julia Pauli (Hg.) (2017)  
Ethnologie. Einführung in die Erforschung kultureller  
Vielfalt. Berlin: Reimer, neunte Auflage –  
Erweiterte und aktualisierte Neufassung.

Tabea Häberlein

Welche\*r Studierende der Ethnologie hatte nicht mindestens einmal das Lehrbuch „Ethnologie. Einführung und Überblick“ (erstmalig von Hans Fischer im Jahr 1983 herausgegeben, seit 2005 in Zusammenarbeit mit Bettina Beer) in der Hand, um damit für Referate oder Klausuren zu lernen? Mittlerweile bin ich selbst Lehrende der Ethnologie und konnte das Buch, das ich selbst als Studentin häufiger in der Hand hielt, zuletzt nicht mehr uneingeschränkt weiterempfehlen. Eine Überarbeitung der in die Tage gekommenen kanonisierten Textsammlung aus der deutschsprachigen Ethnologie war überfällig – Bettina Beer, Hans Fischer und Julia Pauli haben sich 2017 dieser Aufgabe erfolgreich angenommen. Die Herausgeberinnen Beer und Pauli stellen gleich zu Beginn klar, worum es ihrer Meinung nach in der Ethnologie und in der erweiterten und aktualisierten Neufassung des Lehrbuchs geht, nämlich um die Erforschung kultureller Vielfalt. Dies ist neu angesichts früherer Einführungen, die Ethnologie oftmals als die „Wissenschaft vom kulturell Fremden“ (Kohl 2012) definierten.

Vielzählig und vielgestaltig sind auch die mittlerweile insgesamt 25 Beiträge verschiedener deutschsprachiger Autor\*innen, die die Ethnologie in den unterschiedlichsten thematischen Facetten darstellen. Dies ist auch gleichzeitig die Besonderheit des Bandes im Vergleich zu anderen Einführungen, die eher einer Verschriftlichung von Einführungsvorlesungen eines (zumeist männlichen) Lehrenden gleichkommen (zum Beispiel Heidemann 2011, Kohl 2012, Hahn 2013). Der vorliegende Band ist untergliedert in die vier Bereiche Theorien und Methoden, Teilbereiche des Fachs, Querschneidende Themen sowie Spezialthemen. Jede Rubrik umfasst wiederum vier bis sechs Kapitel. Als grundlegende Teilbereiche der Ethnologie werden Wirtschaftsethnologie, Verwandtschaftsethnologie, Politikethnologie und Religionsethnologie angeboten. Somit ist eine ähnliche Struktur vorzufinden, wie sie auch in anderen Lehrbüchern – und europaweit in den durch den Bologna-Prozess kanonisierten Lehrplänen der universitären Lehre wiederzufinden sind. Warum jedoch „querschneidende Themen“ und „Spezialthemen“ voneinander getrennt und damit quasi nicht als basale Teilbereiche

der Ethnologie präsentiert werden, erschließt sich mir nicht in allen Fällen. So werden beispielsweise Rechtsethnologie, Entwicklungsethnologie oder Medizinethnologie in einigen deutschsprachigen Universitäten mittlerweile auch als gleichberechtigte Teilbereiche und nicht mehr als Spezialthemen des Faches Ethnologie gelehrt. Mit dem Band ist es den Herausgeber\*innen insgesamt gelungen, ein wirklich reichhaltiges Portfolio zur Einführung in ethnologische Forschungsthemen zusammenzustellen, was dem Buch als gelungenes Alleinstellungsmerkmal gereicht. Im Folgenden möchte ich vier Fragen beantworten, die ich mir selbst bei der Lektüre des Buches gestellt habe: Was ist neu an der neuen Fassung? Was unterscheidet das Buch von anderen deutschsprachigen Einführungen in die Ethnologie? (Weshalb) Brauchen wir einen deutschsprachigen Kanon? Und schließlich: Würde ich meinen Studierenden das Buch empfehlen?

#### *Was ist neu?*

Die überarbeitete Fassung des Buches gibt sich betont integrativ. Kontroversen oder verschiedene Forschungsansätze und -inhalte werden als fachliche Vielfalt dargestellt, und konträre Positionierungen der Autor\*innen innerhalb des eigenen Fachs Ethnologie somit nivelliert. Im Gegenteil wird die Bandbreite ethnologischer Forschungsthemen noch weiter aufgefächert und ausdifferenziert. Die aktuelle Ethnologie scheint für alle Spezialgebiete und Spezialist\*innen zu haben. Und doch fallen mit der Auswahl in der Fülle manche Themen unter den Tisch oder werden zu impliziten Nebenläufern – so scheint es, als ob mittlerweile die Mehrheit der Ethnolog\*innen in Städten dieser Welt forscht und nicht mehr auf dem Land. Ist die sozial und kulturell definierte Zeitlichkeit (zum Beispiel Lebensalter) in den verschiedenen Gesellschaften dieser Welt nicht auch ein Querschnittsthema, das sich implizit durch alle Ethnographien zieht – insbesondere in der städtischen Jugendforschung, die in den letzten Jahren so *en vogue* war? Während einige wirklich neue Beiträge den Band nicht nur notwendigerweise ergänzen, sondern auch innovativ bereichern (zum Beispiel die Ethnologische Globalisierungsforschung, Migrationsethnologie oder Medienethnologie), finden sich leider auch einige althergebrachte und nur geringfügig aktualisierte Kapitel wieder. An mancher Stelle hätte ich mir einen frischeren und aktuelleren Blick anstatt aus älteren Auflagen übernommene Narrative zu Teilbereichen (zum Beispiel zur Wirtschaftsethnologie) gewünscht. Ferner fehlt mir der Ausweis der Konfliktethnologie oder die Einführung in neuere Forschungsfelder wie zum Beispiel die Emotionsethnologie oder *Science and Technology Studies* (STS). Auf solche, von den Herausgeber\*innen möglicherweise bewusst vernachlässigten Bereiche wird in der vorliegenden Auswahl leider nicht verwiesen.



*Was unterscheidet das Buch von anderen deutschsprachigen Einführungen in die Ethnologie?*

Das Buch richtet sich explizit daran aus, eine Vielfalt an Autor\*innen und Themen aus der deutschsprachigen Ethnologie zu Wort kommen zu lassen. Damit versucht es, verschiedenen Deutungshoheiten integrativ Rechnung zu tragen und über Ansätze einer lokalen Schulen-Bildung hinaus zu gehen. Durch die Verknüpfung von bestimmten Kapitelthemen mit ihren jeweiligen Autor\*innen können sich Studierende bezüglich der Themenschwerpunkte in der deutschsprachigen Universitätslandschaft besser zurechtfinden, die Rubrik „weiterführende Literatur“ am Ende jedes Kapitels soll wiederum den Blick auf andere Spezialist\*innen zum behandelten Themengebiet lenken. Letzteres gelingt den einzelnen Autor\*innen zum Teil erfreulich ausführlich. Während andere Einführungen in die Ethnologie ausführliche Darstellungen und verschieden nuancierte Deutungen zur ethnologischen Theorie- und Fachgeschichte anbieten (Haller 2005, Petermann 2010, Heidemann 2011, Kohl 2012, Hahn 2013), so wird in diesem Band die Fachgeschichte von Hans Fischer (Ethnologie als wissenschaftliche Disziplin) und Heinzpeter Znoj (Geschichte der Ethnologie) verhältnismäßig kurz abgehandelt. Auch die Frage nach dem Kulturbegriff, an der sich andere Einführungen ausführlicher abarbeiten (vgl. Petermann 2010, Heidemann 2011, Lentz 2013), tritt hier eher in den Hintergrund. Der Begriff Kultur wird in den Beiträgen von Bettina Beer (Kultur und Ethnizität) und implizit von Günther Schlee (Interethnische Beziehungen) vor allem in seinen politisierten Nuancen dargestellt. Das Buch ist mit seiner Auswahl und Darstellungsweise von einem Pragmatismus gekennzeichnet, der fachinterne Diskurse und Differenzen aufzulösen versteht. Das ist in der zeitweise hitzigen innerfachlichen Debatte um Deutungshoheiten zwar nachvollziehbar, aber auch schade – so werden konträre Ansichten durch das Tableau der Vielfalt zu einer kanonisierten Einheit und somit irgendwie auch beliebig nebeneinandergestellt. Konsequenterweise ist in dieser Darstellungsweise auch die Auswahl der Masken aus unterschiedlichen kulturellen Kontexten, die den Einband zieren. Sie zeigen Vielfalt als gleichwertige Objekte nebeneinander, ohne sie jedoch zu individualisieren. Repräsentiert diese Vielfalt tatsächlich die gegenwärtige deutschsprachige Ethnologie? Eine Vielfalt von (gleichwertigen) Studiengegenständen und ein unkommentiertes Nebeneinander eher thematisch als ein Eingehen auf theoretisch orientierte Zugänge, wie sie beispielsweise von Kohl 2012 oder Hahn 2013 dargestellt werden? Wo ist die Vielfalt in den theoretischen Betrachtungsweisen geblieben, wo die Vielfalt der Diskurse? Wo wird der Vielfalt von emischen und etischen Betrachtungen Rechnung getragen – und ihrer Reibungen? Auch wenn ich persönlich die Ausrichtung unseres Fachs hin zur Erforschung kultureller Vielfalt anstatt einer Lehre vom kulturell Fremden begrüße, so möchte ich darauf verweisen, dass die Ethnologie als Wissenschaft sich gerade durch eine Vielfalt, Reibung und Re-

flexion der Betrachtungsweisen im Forschungskontext und in der akademischen Diskussion auszeichnet. Letztere werden in den einzelnen Kapiteln oft eher implizit mit einbezogen.

*(Weshalb) brauchen wir einen deutschsprachigen Kanon?*

Ja, wir brauchen trotz aller Einschränkungen ein aktualisiertes deutschsprachiges Nachschlagewerk zu den Themen- und Forschungsschwerpunkten in der aktuellen Ethnologie. Studierende benötigen neben mehreren guten englisch- und deutschsprachigen Einführungen in unser Fach auch ein Exemplar, das verschiedene Schwerpunkte und aktuelle Betrachtungsweisen an Universitäten im deutschsprachigen Raum widerspiegelt. Dies verhilft Studienanfänger\*innen und interessierten Fachfremden dazu, sich thematisch wie auch regional zu orientieren. Somit bietet das Buch mittlerweile nicht nur einen Ausgangspunkt, um sich im Studium auf Prüfungen aller Art vorzubereiten, sondern leistet auch einen thematischen Überblick über aktuelle Forschungsthemen und darüber, wie sie an einigen deutschsprachigen Universitäten gelehrt werden. Dies kann Studierenden helfen, sich im Laufe ihres Studiums gegebenenfalls auch für einen Studienortswechsel zu entscheiden.

*Würde ich meinen Studierenden das Buch empfehlen?*

Absolvent\*innen der Ethnologie verweisen oft auf den spezifisch ethnologischen Blick, der ihnen ermöglicht, mit vorherrschenden kulturellen Differenzen und unterschiedlichen menschlichen Denkmustern in ihren aktuellen Arbeitsfeldern gelassener und offener umgehen zu können als Kolleg\*innen anderer fachlicher Prägung. Gibt der vorliegende Band dazu Denkanstöße? Ja, er tut es unbedingt. Zum Erlernen einer solchen Offenheit und zum Wecken des Interesses an den unterschiedlichsten Themenfeldern der Ethnologie kann der Band sehr hilfreich sein. Doch weist der Band auch auf offene Fragen innerhalb der Ethnologie und aktuelle Diskursarenen hin? Eher weniger. Dies gelingt beispielsweise dem Band „Ethnologie im 21. Jahrhundert“ der Herausgeber\*innen Bierschenk, Krings und Lentz (2013) besser. Meinen Studierenden würde ich den neu überarbeiteten Band „Ethnologie. Einführung in die Erforschung kultureller Vielfalt“ deshalb vor allem empfehlen, um lexikonartig Themen nachzuschlagen und erste inhaltliche Anhaltspunkte zu recherchieren. Aber ich würde gleichzeitig versuchen, sie in Quellenkritik zu schulen und sie explizit auffordern, auch nach alternativen – und in Einzelfällen sogar aktuelleren – Beiträgen zu verschiedenen Themen der Ethnologie zu suchen.

## Literatur

- Bierschenk, Thomas, Matthias Krings und Carola Lentz (Hg.) (2013) Ethnologie im 21. Jahrhundert. Berlin: Reimer.
- Hahn, Hans Peter (2013) Ethnologie. Eine Einführung. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Haller, Dieter (2005) dtv-Atlas Ethnologie. München: dtv.
- Heidemann, Frank (2011) Ethnologie. Eine Einführung. Göttingen: UTB.
- Kohl, Karl-Heinz (2012) Ethnologie – die Wissenschaft vom kulturell Fremden. München: Verlag C.H.Beck.
- Lentz, Carola (2013) Kultur. Ein ethnologisches Konzept zwischen Identitätsdiskursen und Wissenschaftspolitik. In: Bierschenk, Thomas, Matthias Krings und Carola Lentz (Hg.) Ethnologie im 21. Jahrhundert. Berlin: Reimer: S.111-129.
- Petermann, Werner (2010) Anthropologie unserer Zeit. Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag.

---

Dr. Tabea Häberlein ist wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin am Lehrstuhl für Sozialanthropologie der Universität Bayreuth. Ihre Forschungsschwerpunkte liegen in den Bereichen life course-Forschung, Verwandtschafts- und Wirtschaftsethnologie.