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# Svetovi Worlds

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Religion has been the focus of anthropologists, ethnologists and religious scholars for decades. Theories of religion, ritual and magic have been conceived by eminent scholars such as Émile Durkheim, William James, Marcel Mauss, Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski, Clifford Geertz, and Victor Witter Turner, among others. Religion, magic and ritual, along with kinship and family, gender relations, political systems, agriculture and modes of production, and the diverse manifestations of folk culture, belong to the classical research fields of ethnology and sociocultural anthropology. Although it has been decades since the publication of the classic works, religion remains a crucial area of research. Classic themes such as ritual, magic, and supernatural harm still appeal to contemporary scholars studying religion, even when viewed from new theoretical and methodological perspectives. However, recent decades have also brought new research topics in an empirical sense, such as religion in the online space or religion in a postmodern and globalised world. These changes are also reflected by the papers in the 2024 double issue of *Svetovi / Worlds*. While the first issue includes papers based on various types of empirical data, ethnographic or historical, etc., related to the Central European context (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary) and Japan, the second is devoted to the theoretical, methodological and epistemological aspects of the academic study of religion.

This issue, RELIGION IN FLUX I: RESEARCH STRATEGIES, contains the following articles: “Applying the Conceptual Framework of ‘Event Religion’ to Two Hungarian Festivals” (Sára Eszter Heidl), “Sacred Nature: The Role of Shinto in Japanese Environmentalism” (Aljaž Mesner), “Slovak Scholars in Bohemia and Moravia and Czech Scholars in Slovakia Before and After the Battle of Biela Hora (1620)” (Angela Škovierová), and “Tolerance and Cooperation in the Religious Life of a Roman-Catholic Community: A Case Study from the Brno-Country District” (Michal Uhrin, Miroslav Horák, Dorota Vybíralová). The next issue, RELIGION IN FLUX 2: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY, offers a stimulating array of articles: “Making Porosity More Porous: An Open Call for Brainstorming After Tanya Luhmann’s Recent Findings” (Juan Esteban De Jager), “Pop Spirituality: The Application of Popular Culture in Contemporary Esoteric Practices” (Andrej Kapcar), “Cognitive and



Evolutionary Inspirations in the Study of Religion with Emphasis on the Development of Ethnology and Sociocultural Anthropology in Slovakia” (Michal Uhrin), and “Malinowski’s Formative Contribution to American Folklore Studies” (Frank J. Korom).

The articles in this issue are devoted to various perspectives on the ethnographic and historical study of religion and related topics. The first contribution, “Applying the Conceptual Framework of ‘Event Religion’ to Two Hungarian Festivals”, written by Sára Eszter Heidl, presents a comparative analysis of two empirical field studies conducted in Hungary. The author applies the event religion approach to identify those aspects of festivals, regardless of religious affiliation, that can be interpreted with the tools of religious studies as religion-related or religionesque. The two festivals under study are the Lélek festival in Szombathely, Hungary, and the Fekete Zaj festival in Mátrafüred-Gyöngyös, Hungary. These two festivals, as Heidl explains, differ in the following aspects: design, style, programmes and participants. However, along some lines, the aspects of event religion are similar: the special space and time, the liminal nature, the symbolic message of the event, the community building, the relaxation and the break from everyday life, which are the most important aspects of a temporary event. Heidl argues that her analysis shows that the dimensions of event religion are suitable not only for showing whether certain events have a religious aspect or not but also for showing how the religionesque character appears to the participants: the four fundamentally non-religious dimensions have features that can be found in all kinds of events and thus reveal religionesque characteristics. She concludes that her analysis suggests looking at religion from a different angle: not as an institution or a belief in a particular higher power, but as an experience.

In the second contribution, “Sacred Nature: The Role of Shinto in Japanese Environmentalism” Aljaž Mesner examines the influence of Shinto on Japanese ecological consciousness and sheds light on the complex interplay between religion, politics, and environmental attitudes in Japan. The text discusses the complex relationship between Japan’s approach to nature and ecology, and the role of Shinto in shaping these perspectives. Mesner highlights the interconnectedness of nature and culture, and examines the historical role of Shinto in nature conservation through the concept of *Chinju no mori*. The author also emphasizes the role of local shrine priests and grassroots movements in addressing ecological issues and promoting environmental initiatives. In his inspiring analysis, Mesner explores the potential of these movements to have a broader impact through domestic and international cooperation. The author suggests that by addressing broader environmental issues in Japan and advocating for the integration of Shinto values and local knowledge, these movements can promote respect towards ecology and its advocacy. Therefore, Mesner’s text addresses issues connected with research on ecology and religion in contemporary Japanese society.

Angela Škovierová presents a description and historical analysis of the topic of “Slovak Scholars in Bohemia and Moravia and Czech Scholars in Slovakia Before and After the Battle of Biela Hora (1620)”. Škovierová states that in the period before 1621 there existed a large number (more than a hundred) of (mostly) Protestant scholars originating from the territory of today’s Slovakia, who lived, studied, worked, and published in one of the Czech

or Moravian cities. Then, the situation in Bohemia changed a few days after the Battle of Biela Hora. During this period, many Slovak scholars working in Bohemia and Moravia halted their public activities. In the aftermath of these political and religious changes, they applied the following strategies: some converted to Catholicism, and others returned to their original homeland together with the Czech Protestant emigrants who came to the Slovak territory. Škovierová concludes that before the Battle of Biela Hora the Slovaks in Bohemia blended well with the Czech religious environment, and draws a parallel to the Czechs in Slovakia after the battle, who established their lives there and could live according to their religious faith.

In the final contribution, “Tolerance and Cooperation in the Religious Life of a Roman-Catholic Community: A Case Study from the Brno-Country District”, a trio of authors – Michal Uhrin, Miroslav Horák, and Dorota Vybíralová – addresses the topic of religious tolerance and cooperation. Their research of the specific aspects of religious life in a small local community utilised the qualitative methods of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The data analysis revealed that religion is a vital factor in many aspects of life in small rural communities. The ethnographic research showed that religious tolerance is an essential aspect of religious life and that cooperation and religion are two areas that are inextricably intertwined. The residents in the research site cooperate in various domains, including daily activities and exceptional circumstances. The cooperation encompasses activities related to religion, as well as those that are not explicitly linked to it. Data on cooperation, tolerance and religion also hint at potentially high levels of social cohesion. The research confirmed that despite the widespread perception of the inhabitants of the Czech Republic as being among “the most atheist in Europe”, religion plays an important role in their lives.

The articles in this issue illustrate the stimulating theoretical and methodological diversity present in contemporary empirical research on religion. As editors, we believe that we cannot restrict ourselves to one approach when it comes to comprehensive explorations of a multidimensional phenomenon such as religion. If we want to shed light on the various roles of religion in any society, we need a diverse methodology. As the articles in this issue demonstrate, different methods might help reveal distinct aspects of religion and its role in people’s lives.

Religija je že desetletja v središču pozornosti antropologov, etnologov in verskih učenjakov. Teorije o religiji, obredih in magiji so med drugim zasnovali ugledni učenjaki, kot so Émile Durkheim, William James, Marcel Mauss, Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski, Clifford Geertz in Victor Witter Turner. Religija, magija in rituali skupaj s sorodstvenimi in družinskimi odnosi, odnosi med spoloma, političnimi sistemi, kmetijstvom in načini proizvodnje ter raznolikimi manifestacijami ljudske kulture sodijo med klasična raziskovalna področja etnologije in sociokulturne antropologije. Čeprav so minila desetletja od objave klasičnih del, religija ostaja ključno področje raziskovanja. Klasične teme, kot so obredi, magija in nadnaravno škodovanje, so še vedno privlačne za sodobne učenjake, tudi če jih gledamo z novih teoretičnih in metodoloških perspektiv. Zadnja desetletja pa so prinesla tudi nove raziskovalne teme v empiričnem smislu, kot sta religija v spletnem prostoru ali religija v post-modernem in globaliziranem svetu. Te spremembe odražajo tudi prispevki v dvojni številki *Svetov* 2024. Medtem ko prva številka prinaša prispevke, ki temeljijo na različnih vrstah empiričnih, etnografskih ali zgodovinskih podatkov, povezanih s srednjeevropskim kontekstom (Češka, Slovaška, Madžarska) in Japonsko, je druga posvečena teoretskim, metodološkim in epistemološkim vidikom akademskega študija religije.

Ta številka, RELIGIJA V TOKU 1: RAZISKOVALNE STRATEGIJE, vsebuje naslednje prispevke: »Applying the Conceptual Framework of ‘Event Religion’ to Two Hungarian Festivals« (Uporaba konceptualnega okvira ‘dogodkovne religije’ na dveh madžarskih festivalih) Sára Eszter Heidl, »Sacred Nature: The Role of Shinto on Japanese Ecological Consciousness« (Sveta narava: vpliv šintoizma na japonsko ekološko zavest) Aljaža Mesnerja, »Slovak scholars in Bohemia and Moravia and Czech scholars in Slovakia before and after the Battle of Biela Hora (1620)« (Slovaški učenjaki v Bohemiji in Moravski ter češki učenjaki na Slovaškem pred bitko pri Bieli Hori (1620) in po njej) Angele Škovierové ter »Tolerance and Cooperation in the Religious Life of a Roman-Catholic Community: A Case Study from the Brno-Country District« (Strpnost in sodelovanje v verskem življenju rimskokatoliške skupnosti: raziskava iz okrožja Brno) Michala Uhrina, Miroslava Horáka in Dorote Vybíralové.

Druga številka, RELIGIJA V TOKU 2: TEORIJA IN METODOLOGIJA, ponuja drugačno paleto člankov: »Making Porosity More Porous: An Open Call for Brainstorming After Tanya Luhrmann's Recent Findings« (Narediti poroznost bolj porozno: odprt poziv k razmišljanju po nedavnih ugotovitvah Tanye Luhrmann) avtorja Juana Estebana De Jagra, »Pop Spirituality: The Application of Popular Culture in Contemporary Esoteric Practices« (Pop spiritualnost: uporaba popularne kulture v sodobnih ezoteričnih praksah) Andreja Kapcarja, »Cognitive and Evolutionary Inspirations in the Study of Religion with Emphasis on the Development of Ethnology and Sociocultural Anthropology in Slovakia« (Spoznavni in evolucijski navdih pri študiju religije s poudarkom na razvoju etnologije in sociokulturne antropologije na Slovaškem) Michala Uhrina ter »Malinowski's Formative Contribution to American Folklore Studies« (Formativni prispevek Malinowskega k ameriški folkloristiki) Franka J. Koroma.

Članki v tej številki so posvečeni empiričnim in zgodovinskim vidikom študija religije in sorodnih tem. Prvi prispevek, »Applying the Conceptual Framework of 'Event Religion' to Two Hungarian Festivals« avtorice Sára Eszter Heidl, predstavlja primerjalno analizo dveh empiričnih terenskih raziskav, izvedenih na Madžarskem. Avtorica uporablja dogodkovni religijski pristop za identifikacijo vidikov praznikov, ki jih je mogoče z rojdi verskih študijev interpretirati kot verske ali religiozne. Dva proučevana festivala sta festival Lélek v Sombotelu na Madžarskem in festival Fekete Zaj v Mátrafüredu v Gyöngyösu na Madžarskem. Ta dva festivala se, kot pojasnjuje Heidl, razlikujeta v naslednjih vidikih: zasnovi, slogu, programu in udeležencih; vendar pa so si vidiki religije dogodka v nekaterih pogledih podobni: poseben prostor in čas, mejna narava, simbolično sporočilo dogodka, izgradnja skupnosti, sprostitvev in odmik od vsakdanjega življenja. Heidl trdi, da njena analiza kaže, da so spoznanja dogodkovne religije primerna za razumevanje, ali imajo določeni dogodki religiozni vidik ali ne, pa tudi za prikaz, kako religiozni značaj dojemajo udeleženci sami. Štiri bistveno nereligiozne razsežnosti imajo lastnosti, ki jih lahko najdemo pri vseh vrstah dogodkov, in tako razkrivajo religiozne značilnosti. Sklene, da njena analiza nakazuje pogled na vero z drugega zornega kota: ne kot na institucijo ali vero v določeno višjo silo, ampak kot na izkušnjo.

V drugi študiji, »Sacred Nature: The Role of Shinto on Japanese ecological consciousness«, Aljaž Mesner proučuje vpliv šintoizma na japonsko ekološko zavest in osvetljuje kompleksen preplet religije, politike in okoljskih odnosov na Japonskem. Besedilo obravnava razmerja med japonskim pristopom do narave in ekologije ter vlogo šintoizma pri oblikovanju teh perspektiv. Mesner izpostavlja medsebojno povezanost narave in kulture ter proučuje zgodovinsko vlogo šintoizma pri ohranjanju narave skozi koncept *Chinju no mori*. Avtor poudarja tudi vlogo duhovnikov lokalnih svetišč in civilnih gibanj pri reševanju ekoloških vprašanj ter spodbujanju okoljskih dejavnosti. V svoji navdihujoči analizi Mesner raziskuje širši domači in mednarodni potencial teh gibanj. Avtor nakazuje, da lahko ta gibanja z obravnavo širših okoljskih vprašanj na Japonskem ter zagovarjanjem integracije šintoističnih vrednot in lokalnega znanja spodbujajo ekološko zavest in delovanje.

Angela Škovierová predstavlja opis in zgodovinsko analizo tematike slovaških učnjakov na Češkem in Moravskem ter čeških učnjakov na Slovaškem pred bitko pri Beli

gori (1620) in po njej. Škovierová navaja, da je v obdobju pred letom 1621 obstajalo veliko število, več kot sto, večinoma protestantskih učenjakov, ki so izvirali z ozemlja današnje Slovaške, živeli, študirali, delali in objavljali pa so v enem od čeških oziroma moravskih mest. Nato so se razmere po bitki pri Beli gori na Češkem spremenile. V tem obdobju so številni slovaški učenjaki, ki so delovali na Češkem in Moravskem, prenehali z javnim delovanjem. Po teh političnih in verskih spremembah so uporabili naslednje strategije: nekateri so prestopili v katolištvo, drugi pa so se skupaj s češkimi protestantskimi izseljenci vrnili v svojo domovino. Škovierová ugotavlja, da so se Slovaki na Češkem pred bitko pri Beli gori dobro zlili s češkim religioznim okoljem, Čehi pa so lahko po njej na Slovaškem svobodno živeli in izpovedovali svojo religijo.

Zadnja študija, »Tolerance and Cooperation in the Religious Life of a Roman-Catholic Community: A Case Study from Brno-Country District« avtorjev Michala Uhrina, Miroslava Horáka in Dorote Vybíralové, obravnava temo verske tolerance in sodelovanja. Za raziskovanje specifičnih vidikov verskega življenja v majhni lokalni skupnosti so uporabili kvalitativne metode opazovanja in polstrukturiranega intervjuja. Raziskovalci so sodelovali na različnih področjih družbenega življenja, vključno z vsakodnevnimi aktivnostmi in izjemnimi okoliščinami. Analiza podatkov je pokazala, da je vera pomemben dejavnik v mnogih vidikih življenja majhnih podeželskih skupnosti. Verska strpnost je bistveni vidik verskega življenja. Sodelovanje in vera sta dve neločljivo povezani področji. Sodelovanje obsega dejavnosti, povezane z vero, pa tudi tiste, ki z njo niso izrecno povezane. Podatki o sodelovanju, strpnosti in veri namigujejo na potencialno visoko stopnjo socialne kohezije. Raziskava je potrdila, da ima vera pomembno vlogo v življenju češki podeželskih skupnosti, kljub razširjeni percepciji o »najbolj ateistični deželi v Evropi«.

Članki v tej številki ponazarjajo spodbudno teoretsko in metodološko raznolikost v sodobnih empiričnih raziskavah religije. Urednika verjameva, da se za celovito raziskovanje večdimenzionalnega pojava, kot je religija, ne moremo omejiti na en pristop. Če želimo osvetliti različne vloge religije v kateri koli družbi, potrebujemo raznoliko metodologijo. Kot potrjujejo študije v tej številki, lahko različne metode pomagajo razkriti različne vidike religije in njene vloge v življenju ljudi.

# Applying the Conceptual Framework of “Event Religion” to Two Hungarian Festivals<sup>1</sup>



Uporaba konceptualnega okvira ‘dogodkovne religije’ na dveh madžarskih festivalih

Sára Eszter Heidl

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## ABSTRACT

The event religion framework has been developed to enable the study of event experience using the tools of sociology, ethnography and religious studies, independently of the religious affiliation of the event participants or the events themselves. It examines event experience along four dimensions: spatiotemporality, symbols, community, and inward experience. This paper examines the event religion dimensions at a Catholic and a rock-metal music event in Hungary in order to draw attention to similarities and differences in participant experiences at a religious and a non-religious festival.

KEYWORDS: event, religion, spirituality, religionesque, festivals, empirical fieldwork

## IZVLEČEK

Okvir dogodkovne religije je bil razvit za proučevanje izkušnje dogodka z uporabo orodij sociologije, etnografije in religijskih študijev, ne glede na religioznost tako udeležencev dogodka kot tudi dogodka samega. Raziskuje izkušnjo dogodka čez štiri dimenzije: prostor-čas, simboli, skupnost in notranja izkušnja. Prispevek raziskuje dimenzije dogodkovne religije na katoliškem in metalsko-rockovskem glasbenem dogodku na Madžarskem, z namenom prikazati podobnosti in razlike v izkušnji udeležencev religioznega in nereligioznega festivala.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: dogodek, religija, duhovnost, religionesknost, festivali, empirično terensko delo

### 1

Partly presented at the Contemporary Spirituality Conference, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 6–7 October 2023, under the title “The Event Religion Phenomenon”.

The study of festivals from a religious studies perspective is popular worldwide (Lloyd 2020; Lucia 2020; Nita and Kidwell 2022; Pike 2022; Povedák 2014; Povedák 2022; Sherry and Kozinets 2004; St John and Gauthier 2015; Testa 2019, 2023b; Vitos, Graham and Gauthier 2022). Approaches to festival communities and cultures have given rise to different concepts, such as event communities (Kirchner 2011) or event cultures (St John and Gauthier 2015). In addition to the many themes explored in festivals, such as their liminal nature, community-building and transformative power and the role of the experience, other topics have emerged, such as cultural and religious tourism (Kasim 2011), consumerism and authenticity (Gauthier 2021), and marketing (Bowman 1999; Gauthier 2014). Most of the research mentioned above has involved empirical fieldwork, with the scholars' interest focused on the experiences of participants.

From a religious studies point of view, fieldwork on festivals has shown that the participants' experiences can take on religious – or at least *religionesque* (Heidl 2023d; Testa 2023a) – characteristics,<sup>2</sup> and that these events function as a substitute or complement to religion, a collection point for those who identify as *spiritual, but not religious, believing without belonging* (Burge 2021; Casanova 2020; Erlandson 2000; Fuller 2001; Mercadante 2014) and other similar categories, and are defining parts of lived (Ammerman 2021; McGuire 2008) or vernacular (Primiano 1995) forms of religion.

This work aims to show that these *religionesque* characteristics of the participant experience can happen not only at a religious event (the Catholic Lélek festival, HU) but also at a secular one (the Fekete Zaj music festival, HU). Employing qualitative methods, two case studies will be presented in order to illustrate the differences and similarities between the events. The case studies are follow-up comparative fieldwork of the project “Event Religion” (Heidl 2024). The questions and methods were developed at the Everness mindfulness festival in Hungary and the conceptual framework of “event religion” was created there. The previous fieldwork showed that a festival can generate strong communal and individual experiences that reflect ritualistic and religious behaviour, therefore creating a temporal, religionesque space, time, symbols, community and personal experiences (Heidl 2024). In my earlier work, I have defined “event religion” as a conceptual approach, which describes a phenomenon that:

creates a temporary community through shared activities, forms a quasi-liminal phase, and thereby endows the place, time and symbols present with religionesque significance. During this period, the person shows a high responsiveness to mystical, peak-, resonant and flow experiences, thus gaining a temporary religionesque experience. (Heidl 2023b: 306)

Therefore, event religion is *not* intended to describe *a new form of religion*. It is intended to show that secular, non-traditional religious and spiritual settings have the ability to

## 2

My own term for “religion-like”, that is, similar to religion, or has a religious origin, but actually not religion (Heidl, 2023d).

generate such experiences in the participants that have religious connotations, just as the lived/vernacular religion approaches claim. Therefore, “when the term ‘event religion’ is used, religion itself does not refer to a religious event nor to the fact that the participants in the event would be religious, but rather to their vernacular religious behaviour and beliefs” (Heidl 2024: 38).

Event religion can be examined along four dimensions:

- 1) Spatiotemporality: how the participants perceive the place and time of the event;
- 2) Symbols: how the participants relate to the objects, motifs, symbols, and the symbolic message of the event;
- 3) Community: how visitors form a community through shared programmes and exercises;
- 4) Inward experience: what experiences one lives through during the festival, in community or alone, and what characteristics can describe these experiences.

The four dimensions can reveal the religionesque aspects of the experience without claiming that they are religious. Whether or not they are religious depends on the individual interpretation. Without the interpretation, but with certain characteristics, they stay *religionesque* (Heidl 2023d). This approach was developed at the Everness festival based on repetitive empirical fieldwork and theoretical framework in my earlier works (Heidl 2023c, 2024), where the examination of the four dimensions revealed the conceptual framework was applicable to the event studied. This article summarises the results of applying the event religion approach to two other festivals in Hungary, a Catholic music event (Lélek festival, Szombathely) and a metal-rock music festival (Fekete Zaj, Mátrafüred-Gyöngyös), in order to show the applicability of the event religion approach in other settings.

### INTRODUCING THE FESTIVALS

The Lélek festival was held for the first time on the Pentecost weekend of 3–5 June 2022.<sup>3</sup> The event, which has its roots in Catholicism, has an ecumenical approach and is open to members of all Christian denominations, with a strong influence from the Charismatic Church. The event was organised by a local diocesan youth worker in a Catholic school. The programmes started on Friday afternoon with worship and a concert. On Saturday morning, visitors could attend workshops on religious topics, dance classes, and lectures. In the afternoon, there was a Holy Mass, lectures, concerts, and in the evening a DJ played until 2 am. On Sunday, the whole event was moved to a cinema, where a theologian held a lecture about Pentecostal movements, followed by worship and a concert.

Around 600 people registered for the event. The age distribution of the participants covered a broad range, with larger groups of those around 14 and of young parents (aged

<sup>3</sup>

Lélek means “spirit” and “soul” in Hungarian, referring to the Holy Spirit. Website: <https://lelekesztival.martinus.hu/>.



around 30–40). The reason for this was that the younger age group (14–18-year-olds) consisted mainly of students who came to the festival to receive Confirmation in the Catholic Church. According to observations, there were slightly more women at the event, but no precise data were collected. In addition to the organisers, student volunteers, priests, monks, and nuns were also present. The invited speakers included Christian pop musicians, a poet, and an event organiser.

The Fekete Zaj festival (17–20 August 2022) has been held annually since 2009.<sup>4</sup> It represents an experimental, techno, metal, rock, underground, alternative rock musical line. The festival was attended by 900–1000 visitors per day, with a roughly equal number of men and women (women were over-represented among the respondents). The festival site was a campsite with mobile homes and tents. There were three stages inside the festival area and two stages outside, one on a small island in Lake Sástó and one further into the forest under a lookout tower. As the campsite is located in the Mátra mountain range and is surrounded by forest, there was hardly any data or phone signal in the whole festival area. Many people saw this as a positive thing, helping them to get away from the ‘real’ world, but it certainly made it difficult to communicate with each other.

The programmes started on Wednesday evening with metal concerts. In the following days, the visitors could attend so-called OFF-programmes, which included football, excursions, chess tournaments, boardgames, yoga (including “dark yoga” to metal music), literature and DIY workshops. The concerts started in the afternoon. From Thursday on, many different music genres were featured as indie folk, indie rock, hard rock, and different metal bands performed. The biggest day was Saturday, with mainly metal concerts in the evening.

## METHODOLOGY

The empirical work included moderate participation and observation (Spradley 2016), thick description (Geertz 1973), and semi-structured interviews at both events, ten at the Lélek festival, fifteen at the Fekete Zaj festival. The youngest interviewees at the Lélek festival were fourteen, the oldest was 59 years old. In terms of education, they were in secondary school or had started university education, while older respondents were university graduates with full time employment. The interviewees were locals, from surrounding settlements and from Budapest. The youngest Fekete Zaj interviewees were 27 years old, the oldest were 48. People over the age of 35 mainly came with their families, and there were similar proportions of couples and singles. In terms of education, most of them were university or college graduates. A large number of people lived in Budapest (regardless of their registered address) and in county towns. The participants were mainly people with full-time employment.

### 4

Fekete Zaj means “Black Noise” in English. Black noise means complete silence. It is an ironic name as the concerts at the festival are usually very loud metal or rock performances. It can also refer to the musical genre “noise”, and “black” can refer to the metal and gothic subculture, to the love for the colour black, to the night and darkness, and to the absurd and grotesque. Website: <https://www.feketezaj.hu/>.

All Lélek interviewees were Catholics, while among the Fekete Zaj interviewees – besides one Catholic and one Protestant – there were atheists, spiritual but not religious, non-denominational, or those who refused any religious labels (indicated in the text as *non-religious*). The interview questions had previously been developed and tested in a different environment (Everness mindfulness festival, Siófok-Sóstó (Heidl 2023c, 2024)), therefore the deductive method was used in the settings discussed in this paper.

The interview topics were the following:<sup>5</sup>

1. What does [name of the festival] mean to you?
2. Which areas do you like to visit? (Which ones do you not like?)
3. How do you perceive the festival area?
4. How do you perceive time during the festival?
5. Which objects and motifs do you consider important at the event?
6. How can you connect with others?
7. What experiences and feelings do you have during a practice/concert/during the festival?

## THE RELIGIONESQUE DIMENSIONS OF THE LÉLEK FESTIVAL

### Spatiotemporality

Investigating the event religion dimensions starts with the spatiotemporal aspects. The role of the calendar and the schedule, as well as the repetitive and transient nature are the most important temporary characteristics of an event (Turner 1977; Zerubavel 1981). The participants' experience of time at a festival can reveal ritualistic characteristics. Arriving to a time out of time, and a space out of space, such as a festival, makes it possible to interpret this period as a liminal phase (van Gennep 1960; Turner 1978). This is a common approach in festival studies (Kirchner 2011). Furthermore, the participants' experiences about the different properties, aspects, or dynamics of space (Knott 2005, 2014) can reveal a heterotopic nature (Foucault, 1994). People visit an event in a role similar to tourists or pilgrims – even if the event itself or the people themselves are not religious (Stausberg, 2011). These characteristics can be understood from a religious studies perspective and described as religionesque (Heidl 2024).

The Lélek festival provided a setting where the religious aspect was obvious: the participants belonged to Christian denominations, and the main purpose of the event was to celebrate the Holy Spirit. In this setting, the event religion dimensions do not show whether the religious/religionesque aspects are present, but rather *in what* these aspects are manifested and how their religion is *lived* (Primiano 1995).

Examining how time and space became special for the visitors showed that personal interpretation was more important than institutionalised religious background. The Lélek

#### 5

In the interview excerpts quoted throughout the paper, all the names used are pseudonyms.

festival was organised around the Christian calendar, as it was the celebration of Pentecost, but it was not strictly linked to it. In a festival setting, the Christian holiday is reinterpreted, allowing visitors to experience it more freely and non-traditionally. These events have fewer rules, are more spontaneous, take place *outside* the church (Povedák 2014) and have their own purpose: community-building and event-experience, similarly to non-religious festivals, providing a platform for lived or vernacular religion.

In terms of how the participants perceived the festival area and time, most responses showed that people experienced the event as an escape from everyday worries and work, as a place to relax, rather than as a religious celebration. The religious part was just an added bonus: by attending the event, they were also fulfilling their religious duties.

Q: How do you experience this time period?

A1: You relax and recharge (Gabriella, female, 34, local).

A2: And a Holy Mass is maybe only 3/4 of an hour of your life, but here [...] you really loosen up a little and relax a bit from the weekdays (Alida, female, 55, local).

Besides the event-feeling, this period provided a quasi-liminal phase (Turner and Turner 1978; Stausberg 2011), an occasion that exists in a “time out of time”. The area reinforced this feeling.

I think it's more relaxed and freer here than going to church, so it's not so strict that you have to stay in your place for the whole time, you can walk around, there are no fixed rules. There is a schedule, yes, just like at any other festival, but compared to weekdays, it's actually completely different. (Mira, female, 21, small town, volunteer)

The church building appeared as a more rigid space, with its rules and boundaries. For some people this was important to experience the “sacred space”, while for others it made it harder to experience the specialness. The sense of “sacredness” (or *religionesque nature*) at the Lélek festival was evident regardless of the lack of “church rules”. Whether this was due to the presence of either God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, or something else, was not always clear.

There was a departure from the church, and a constant change and rearrangement of the space, e.g. walking around freely, a DJ in the evening, and dancing until late at night. Dancing, jumping, and singing popular Christian music was part of the event religion experience. It was also special because of the way it brought the church *into* the space: the participants did not go to the cathedral for the Saturday mass, but brought the church into their own religionesque place, as if to prove the “power-fullness” (Knott 2005: 162) of the liminal space. Thus, it is not the “sacred space” (the church) that makes the period special to the participants, but the liminal space that becomes special through the actions and perceptions of the participants.

## Symbols

As symbols, objects, and images usually play a prominent role in Christianity, it was necessary to investigate what motifs and objects were important to the participants at the

Lélek festival. One of these symbols was the cross. In the Catholic tradition, the cross symbolises the death and resurrection of Jesus, and wearing it as an accessory shows the believer's identity, their belonging to the Christian community. Some wear it as a magical object, which shows vernacular religious characteristics (Johanson and Jonuks 2015; Tan 2002).

At the Lélek festival venue, there was no emphasis on religious symbols. As it was held in a Catholic school, there were naturally some Christian motifs, including pictures and a small chapel inside the building. However, the gym was not decorated with religious symbols, there was no cross, and an altar was only placed on the stage during the Holy Mass on Saturday. Most of the participants did not feel the absence of religious symbols. They attributed a material value to the motifs and objects, and emphasised that the religious “vibe” was due to the atmosphere, the programmes and the community.

Here, practically at the moment the programme starts, I think it's different. It already permeates the whole thing, [...] now this room is not a gymnasium, but practically like a large church interior. [...] Maybe there is a cross [missing]. But somehow I absolutely did not miss the cross. [It is special] because of the people and the atmosphere. (Albert, male, 59, local)

Especially for young visitors, the absence of religious semantics created a more open environment than a church building.

It is easier for young people if they see less [symbols] and they don't associate it with all kinds of things, like Christian paintings and pictures. Maybe this way they feel liberated more easily. (Tim, male, 21, local, volunteer)

Some visitors missed a few symbols, for example, the sacrament, but not its materiality, rather its meaning (the presence of the Lord in it). This means that the symbolic *message* of the event was more important than the material objects. Hartmut Rosa explains that rejecting material objects can help to find *resonance* (i.e. a strong connection through a peak-experience with something or someone) with more important things – values, experiences or the subject of belief (Rosa 2019: 228). In such cases, non-material things that are not essentially religious – such as space, time, community – take on religionesque significance (Heidl 2024).

### Community

Most researchers examine the presence of collective effervescence (Durkheim 1964) and *communitas* (Turner 1977) at an event when approaching it from a religious studies perspective. At the Lélek festival, these were evident in the religious ritual that bound people together through the practice of a common faith.

At the beginning of the concert, we pray for the musician. Young people make videos, sing, hold each other's hands during the concert and worship, some of them raising both arms to the sky. (Research diary notes, Lélek festival, 2022)

The free body movements expressing joy, liberation and affection generated the

characteristics of collective effervescence and *communitas*. These programmes helped participants to *immerse* themselves, to “get-drawn-into-something” and “let go” (Schüler 2017: 368), even if it meant stepping out of their comfort zone.

Q: What do you think of the community?

A2: Everyone has a good time. They are participating, clapping and singing. It was good to sing with the others because I don't have a good voice, but here I sing with the crowd all day, so actually... music and singing have a positive effect on everyone, including me. It's a stress reliever (Gabriella, female, 34, local).

A1: It awakens spiritual thoughts in a person. Reassurance, reminiscence (Alida, female, 55, local).

The role of transgression can also be considered at a festival. In the context of the Lélek festival, transgression means deregulation (Steiner 2022: 118), stepping out of traditional church rules, with characteristics such as dancing late into the night, free movement, and breaking the event out of the institutional framework. Spontaneous singing, walking around freely, letting people get close to you and even touching them are all characteristics that are not present in the everyday religious practice of the participants.

It is not only through the shared programmes that someone can have a religion-esque experience. On the one hand, the dancing, singing, and the community of the festival generate religion-esque experiences, and on the other hand, the personal experiences of the individual are reflected in the crowd. The inward experience and the common experience thereby influence each other.

### Inward experience

When talking about inward experiences at a Catholic event, the experience of a connection with the Holy Trinity is the most obvious topic of discussion. However, the presence of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit was mentioned by only a few interviewees. Therefore, if it was not mentioned, I asked directly if they felt a connection with God. There were two types of answers. For some it was obvious that God was present, so they did not mention it, while for others the experiences were simply not God-experiences. One of the interviewees explained this, pointing out that these experiences are uncontrollable (Rosa 2019) and ineffable (James 2008).

Q: Would you say that you also felt a connection with God?

A: Yes. Yes, you know, it's like when you think about something and you don't think about it at the same time. So when I really want it, it's definitely not going to happen... then suddenly it happens and I realise 'oh well, there it is' (Albert, male, 59, local).

Regardless of the divine experience, the role of inner feelings was important at the Lélek festival. The free expression and sharing of inner experiences were encouraged during the praise and worship, especially by members of the Charismatic Church. It was often possible to hear someone shouting or crying freely during a common prayer or concert. Some would cry out the name of God. These experiences could also be shared on stage.

The inward experiences were mostly associated with freedom, joy, strength that can help one cope with the task at hand. These characteristics imply the feeling of *flow*, Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's well-known theory (Csíkszentmihályi, 2009). Csíkszentmihályi, similar to Rosa, described an experience that takes the person into a liminal space, a time out of time, where the person discovers a different, but more real reality. Interestingly, the experiences described by the above scholars reflect the characteristics of William James' *mystical experiences* (James, 2008). This proves that "removing" the experience from the *religious* does not mean that the experience itself is not *religionesque*.

## THE RELIGIONESQUE DIMENSIONS OF THE FEKETE ZAJ FESTIVAL<sup>6</sup>

The Fekete Zaj festival, as a non-religious, primarily music event, provided an appropriate setting for continuing the comparative analysis. The aim of comparing the two festivals is to show that similar experiences can occur at a religious and a non-religious event, which means that *religion* can be interpreted as an *experience*. The lived/vernacular religious approach promotes this idea, and the event religion approach supports it. My aim is to show that regardless of their religious or non-religious interpretation by the participants, the experiences can have religionesque aspects. This does not mean that the experience is religious or that *religion* is present at the event. Rather, it means that the participants encounter religionesque features of the experience, which can result in interpreting them as religious, or describing them with religious semantics, regardless of the participant's own belief or denomination.

### Spatiotemporality

The liminal nature of the festival area and period enables the participants to approach the event as something special. Festival participants enter a temporary space that they experience physically and mentally during the event (Knott 2005). In the research conducted at Fekete Zaj, the interviewees without exception described these few days as a special time. They perceived time differently, the outside world and everyday life did not matter. However, its religionesque nature became evident when the interviewees started to describe it with religious semantics. They compared it to Christmas, describing the festival as sacred, the most important time of the year.

Actually, it's always the highlight of the year. It comes very early... or very late, [laughs] and goes very quickly [laughs]. So for me it's like 'Advent for the whole year' and it culminates here. So, it's such a sacred time for me [laughs]. Time passes differently here. (Erik, male, 34, Budapest, non-religious)

The festival was a special day in the calendar, visitors prepared for it for weeks or months, or even began waiting for the next one as soon as the last one was over. Its liminal nature was recognised by the interviewees:

<sup>6</sup>

Some parts of this subchapter are paraphrases of an already published Hungarian article, Heidl 2023a.

In this period, you are disconnecting, and then there is a space and a time that only exists here.  
(Petra, female, 43, Budapest, non-religious)

For visitors from Budapest in particular, nature played a prominent role. Nature as a space evoking religious feelings is not a unique phenomenon. One of the main elements of religious tourism and pilgrimage is the connection with nature, its meditative character. The placement of man-made buildings and objects into nature means a special point of connection for individuals and the subject of their belief (Mitev, Irimiás and Michalkó 2017; Stausberg 2011). Many interviewees mentioned the spiritual, transcendent power of nature (Heidl 2023a).

### Symbols

At a music festival, the focus regarding symbols is on festival merchandise. Previous research has shown that logos, images, and objects (wristbands, cups, bags and other merchandise) used at a festival help create a sense of community and belonging (Kirchner 2011). Festival graphics and design are important for both organisers and participants. Creating a brand for the festival helps with promotion and marketing. Participants are happy to support the event by buying its products, and wearing its symbol gives them a sense of belonging.

The Fekete Zaj logo is unique in that its design changes from year to year. It was originally two squares intertwined to form a circle (Figure 1).

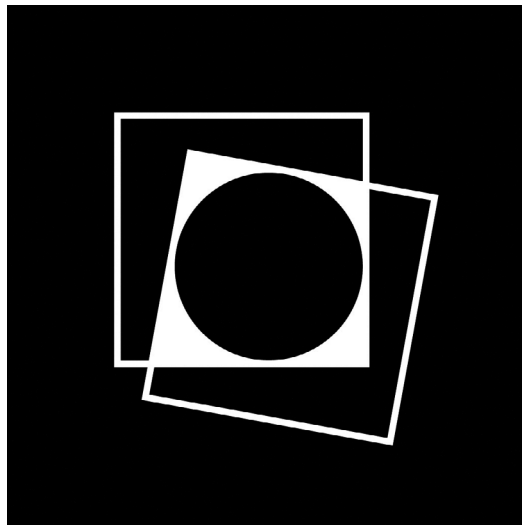


Figure 1: The Fekete Zaj logo. Facebook: Fekete Zaj Fesztivál.

Each year the design incorporates the original image to some extent, but always presents a new visual world and achieves a different effect. The dominant colours are black, white and red, with the addition of green for 2022, symbolising the forest and nature (Heidl 2023a).

Q: And what do you think this symbol means?

A: I always see the moon in it, so the night, geometry, order, but more the calming and self-evident side of all of this, not the scary part of the darkness, but rather its inclusiveness (Cintia, female, 27, Budapest, Protestant).

Many people described *togetherness* as the main meaning of the logo, others the connection of opposites. It essentially meant unity that exists at the event outside everyday life, that is open to everyone, regardless of their appearance, music taste or subculture. These personal interpretations show what Fekete Zaj itself means to the participants, because according to the main organiser, the logo does not really have an original meaning (Heidl 2023b).

Most participants have kept festival merchandise to feel part of the community and the festival has become part of their identity. The identity- and community-forming aspect of the event through its symbolism shows parallels with the functional role of religion (Durkheim 1964) in religious groups, sects, and pseudo-religions (Tillich 1963). The fact that many interviewees had tattoos, clothing, and accessories associated with the event demonstrates this. Religious semantics also appeared here. Cintia said she places the Fekete Zaj objects in her home, which therefore becomes the sanctuary of her “own, private mythology”.

### Community

The most prominent keywords regarding the collective experience were *safety*, *self-identity*, and *community*.

For me, this is the only festival so far where I know that if I have a problem, I can ask anybody for help, I can talk to anybody. (Anna, female, 36, Budapest, non-religious)

During a joint programme, many explained that they had a shared experience with the crowd. Feeling the same energies, unity and immersion came to the fore.

Q: How do you feel when other people are around you during a programme?

A: Well, actually it relaxes me. I think the musical environment is good for you to immerse yourself in and become part of a community. The people around us... actually, if I wanted to over-mystify the question, I could say that at this time the person merges with the energies around them (Benjamin, male, 48, county seat, non-denominational).

The characteristics of immersion, of being drawn into the event and letting go (Schüler 2017), are clearly found in Benjamin's description. Others have highlighted ritualistic characteristics.

That we're moving and dancing to the same music in the same way in such a large unit, just because of the musical experience, it gives me such a tribal atmosphere [feeling]. (Erik, male, 34, Budapest, non-religious)

As can be seen from the interviews above, the shared experience and collective cohesion were felt by most people in the music programmes. Rook explains that aesthetic experi-



ences can often generate ritual behaviour. For him, a heavy metal concert is a less aesthetic situation, but he still recognises its ritual character (Rook 1985: 254). For the Fekete Zaj participants, the heavy metal concerts generated an elevated, even meditative state. They considered this music genre to be the most suitable for experiencing their innermost feelings, which were often accompanied by crying and shouting. The study of this music genre has produced a significant body of literature in sociology and the study of religion (Brown et al. 2016; Granholm 2011; Moberg 2009, 2012; Scott 2012, 2014;). Metal music revolves around the themes of darkness, transgression, rebellion and taboo, not only in its symbolism (for example, the representation of death, which helps to bring out the “dark side” of the individual (Barratt 2016: 228)), but also in its musical style. Crying, screaming and yelling are the very first means of expression that humans use as infants, and later in life they use these tools to release emotions, stress, anger, and trauma. It is no coincidence that fans of the metal music genre often report a sense of liberation and the meditative nature of the music. Listening to metal music is emotionally therapeutic (Vasan 2016: 266, paraphrased from Heidl 2023a).

### Inward experience

As mentioned above, the common experiences influence the inward experiences and vice versa. The inward experiences, similar to the Lélek festival, showed characteristics of James’ mystical experiences (James 2008), Csíkszentmihályi’s flow (Csíkszentmihályi 2009), and Rosa’s resonance (Rosa 2019), regardless of religious belonging. When describing their personal feelings and experiences, the interviewees mainly emphasised feelings of joy, euphoria, liberation, freedom, ecstasy, catharsis, awe, upliftment, gratitude and happiness.

The experience of ecstasy catches you at concerts, that can be good. If I really like the song, I don’t even care if I’m alone at the concert, I’ll fly out of myself. (Kevin, male, 38, county seat, atheist)

Csíkszentmihályi’s theory of flow has become so widespread in everyday life that the term *flow* even appears in individual use, changing its original meaning in some way. In everyday language, the interpretation of the flow experience is closer to the uncontrollable, intangible positive feeling that Rosa and James talk about, as can be seen in the following interview excerpt.

I really like to feel that sense of flow that draws you in and you can really immerse yourself in it. [...] It takes you with it or takes you in such a way [...] that you get a bit lost in time. A good concert is when I don’t... I don’t pay attention to how long it lasts, what is next, what came before, but I can only pay attention to what is going on there. (Petra, female, 43, Budapest, non-religious)

Whether the feeling is described as spiritual or religious is a matter of individual interpretation. However, the characteristics of the experiences are religionesque, regardless of interpretation and denominational affiliation.

Uh, it’s such a feeling of joy, euphoria, so I wouldn’t necessarily call it spiritual, especially not

because I'm a convinced atheist, so eh. I'm reserved when it comes to spiritual things, it's not my world, but still, the power of live music... It gives me something extra. (Kevin, male, 38, county seat, atheist)

What the presence of a “higher power” is manifested in also varies from individual to individual. There were those for whom it meant nature, the universe, energies. Listening to metal music gave Cintia, who is a Protestant, the same feelings as a church ceremony.

Very often I have such sacral feelings and intuitions [...] it's really like I'm at a religious ceremony and then I really feel that [the same feeling] goes through everyone, maybe this is exactly what was called, I don't know, a thousand years ago, the Holy Spirit. (Cintia, female, 27, Budapest, Lutheran)

Cintia's description shows that religion can be interpreted as an *experience*. She believes that everyone has the same experiences, they just refer to them differently.

## CONCLUSION

In this article, event religion was used as a framework to examine the participant experience in the research of festivals and events. The exploration of the meaning of space and time, symbols, collective and personal experiences at the examined festivals show temporary communities that generate religionesque feelings and impressions.

Breaking away from everyday life and crossing boundaries helped individuals find self-identity and relaxation at the events. At the Catholic Lélek festival and the Fekete Zaj music festival I have shown that non-religious features (space, time, community) can take on a religionesque character.

The Lélek festival participants lived through religious experiences not primarily through religious semantics, but through the dimensions examined. At the Fekete Zaj festival, religious semantics were used to describe non-religious features. For example, some participants stated that a metal concert reflects tribal and religious rituals, elements of which also appeared in the personal experience of many visitors. This can be supported by applying theories such as the mystical experience (James 2008), flow (Csíkszentmihályi 2009), and resonance (Rosa 2019) to the experiences described by the interviewees. These theories show the elements and characteristics of religion-related experiences, which I interpret as religionesque experiences.

This comparative analysis showed that these elements can commonly be found in the participants' experience during the festivals studied, regardless of interpretation, traditional religions and denominations. The examination of the four fundamentally non-religious dimensions – spatiotemporality, symbols, community, and inward experience – showed that traces of religion can be found in both events, not only in the context of religious semantics but also in the non-religious context, and thus revealed religionesque characteristics.

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## POVZETEK

Prispevek predstavlja primerjalno analizo dveh empiričnih terenskih raziskav, opravljenih na Madžarskem. Cilj uporabe pristopa dogodkovne religije je prepoznati vidike festivala – ne glede na to, ali je religiozen ali ne – ki so lahko z orodji religijskih študijev interpretirani kot povezani z religijo oziroma religioneskni. V prvem poglavju so na kratko predstavljeni osrednji vidiki razširjenega raziskovanja festivalov v sodobni literaturi, nato so opredeljene štiri dimenzije dogodkovne religije. V drugem poglavju sta predstavljena proučevana festivala na Madžarskem: Lélek v Sombotelu in Fekete Zaj v Mátrafüredu v Gyöngyösu. Dogodka se zelo razlikujeta tako po zasnovi in slogu kot tudi po programu in udeležencih, vidiki dogodkovne religije pa so podobni: poseben čas in prostor, liminalna narava, simbolično sporočilo dogodka, grajenje skupnosti, sprostitvev in odmor od vsakdanjega življenja so najpomembnejši vidiki časovno zamejenega dogodka. Na festivalu Lélek so dimenzije dogodkovne religije pokazale, da religiozni vidiki ne izvirajo nujno iz prisotnosti cerkve, religioznih simbolov ali verskih dejavnosti, temveč iz začasnosti dogodka, možnosti za sprostitvev in skupnostnih programov. Udeleženci niso bili prikrajšani za religiozno semantiko, okoliščine so jim omogočile, da so se povezali med seboj in s svojim predmetom verovanja. Religiozna glasba je nekaterim pomagala doseči višje stanje. Medtem ko nekateri niso zaznavali božje navzočnosti, je bil za druge Bog prisoten tudi ob nereligiozni glasbi in programu. Na festivalu Fekete Zaj, v nereligioznem okolju, so dimenzije pokazale, da so celo nereligiozni udeleženci izkusili vidike dogodka, ki bi jih lahko opisali kot religioneskne. To se je izražalo na primer v dejstvu, da so za opisovanje svojih izkušenj uporabljali religiozno semantiko in poudarjali ritualne, svete in duhovne vidike. Analiza je pokazala, da so dimenzije dogodkovne religije primerne ne le za odkrivanje, ali ima neki dogodek religiozni

vidik, temveč tudi, kako religioneskni značaj dojemajo udeleženci: štiri temeljno nereligiozne dimenzije zajemajo značilnosti, ki jih najdemo pri dogodkih vseh vrst in oblik, ter tako razkrivajo religioneskne karakteristike. Pristop dogodkovne religije lahko osvetli religijo z drugega zornega kota: ne kot institucijo ali vero v določeno višjo moč, ampak kot *izkušnjo*.

# Sacred Nature:

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## The Role of Shinto in

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## Japanese Environmentalism

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Sveta narava: vpliv šintoizma na japonsko ekološko zavest

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Aljaž Mesner

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role of Shinto in Japanese environmentalism. It first presents perceptions of nature in Japan and the historical role of Shinto, then delves into the conservation of sacred shrine forests – *Chinju no mori* – within the Shinto environmentalist discourse. The role of Shinto in politics is demonstrated through the activities of the Association of Shinto Shrines – *Jinja Honcho*. Finally, presenting shrine groves as urban green spaces and community centres shows the potential of Shinto values working together with environmental conservation.

KEYWORDS: Japan, Shinto, environmentalism, nature, Chinju no mori, politics

### IZVLEČEK

Članek raziskuje vlogo šintoizma v japonskem okoljevarstvu. Najprej predstavi percepcije narave na Japonskem in zgodovinsko vlogo šintoizma, nato pa ohranjanje gozdnih svetišč - *Chinju no mori* znotraj šintoističnega okoljskega diskurza. Vloga šintoizma v politiki je prikazana prek dejavnosti združenja šintoističnih svetišč - *Jinja Honcho*. Na koncu so predstavljena svetišča kot urbane zelene površine in skupnostni prostori, kar kaže na potencial povezovanja šintoističnih vrednot z ohranjanjem okolja.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Japonska, šintoizem, okoljevarstvo, narava, Chinju no mori, politika

## INTRODUCTION

My first visit to Japan in November 2023 through the MIRAI exchange programme as part of the “Environment and Green” group was an interesting experience, full of awe. It also made me wonder how religion, namely Shinto, fits into Japanese environmentalism, since during our visits to both government and private institutions this connection was never explicitly mentioned.

The shrines I visited were surrounded by sacred forests and even those in cities had lush vegetation, giving the impression of “urban oases”. The contrast to the grey urban sprawl of Tokyo was immense. Enchanted by the romantic notions of Shinto as a pristine and ancient way of worshipping nature, I was surprised when I discovered diverse cultural, historical, and political components through which a bigger picture started to emerge. In a sense I was disillusioned, yet still fascinated as I believe Shinto, even if intertwined with culture, ideology, and politics, can still provide a useful framework in addressing ecological issues and promoting an environmentalist consciousness, especially in urban areas.

Due to the rigid schedule and nature of the programme, focusing on technological and business practices within environmentalism, I was unable to do much fieldwork. Beyond surface-level impressions of shrines and the natural landscape in Japan, I resorted to studying existing research and literature on the topic and analysing news articles to deepen my understanding and draw conclusions regarding the relationship between Shinto and environmentalism. If given the opportunity to visit Japan in the future, it would surely be interesting to examine these phenomena first-hand through fieldwork and compare them to current findings.

For the purposes of this paper, I will begin by exploring Japanese perceptions of nature and the historical role of Shinto, focusing on sacred shrine forests and their conservation. This evolving environmental discourse plays an important part in contemporary Japanese politics. Examining this connection through the actions of the largest Shinto organisation, *Jinja Honcho*, I wish to show the role of Shinto in Japanese environmentalism. On the opposite end of the spectrum, on a local level, individual shrines and their forests can serve as urban green spaces and community centres. In the conclusion, I point out the potential of local movements to set a foundation for environmental awareness on a greater scale.

## JAPANESE VIEW OF NATURE

Religion has played a pivotal role in Japanese perceptions of nature, strongly influenced by the idea of aesthetics. As Kishimoto Hideo, one of the most prominent Japanese religious scholars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, put it: “In their achievements religious values and aesthetic values are not two different things. Ultimately, they are one for the Japanese” (Kishimoto 1962, as cited in Boyd 1999: 40). This close relationship between the aesthetic and the religious appreciation of nature can be observed in the worldview which posits divinity in natural features while at the same time not making a strict distinction between the “natural” and “manmade” world (Shaw 2009).





Photo 1: Rock tied with *shimenawa* (Author: Aljaž Mesner, 18 November 2023)

These perceptions of nature and the environment – whether “religious” or not – are not merely abstract ideas, “they influence and are influenced by daily life practices, social relations, and ways of using space” (Rots 2015: 211). This can be seen in the cultural landscape of Japan, “where Shinto beliefs and traditional agricultural practices knit together nature and culture, rendering the divide unseen” (Ishizawa 2018).

However, the concepts and discourses of nature and culture in Japan were historically not at all uniform (Bichler 2023). The concept of culture (*bunka*) in Japan is a recent phenomenon, entering popular consciousness only at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Morris-Suzuki 1995: 762) in the context of modernisation processes. In the 1930s it shifted from signifying the advancements brought from the West to representing their uniqueness through *Nihon bunka* – Japanese culture – in the formation of national identity (Morris-Suzuki 1995: 765).

The belief that, despite the social and economic ravages of modernity, Japan has somehow managed to retain an authentic ‘harmony’ with nature has been an attractive narrative, suggesting an ability to maintain a degree of cultural independence and authenticity in the face of modernisation and Westernisation. (Hudson et al. 2022)

With these diverse perceptions of nature and culture in mind, we must critically examine the myth of their love of nature, which has been corrupted by modernisation and

westernisation. This is connected to the claim that “Oriental” and Indigenous religions have fostered greater environmental stewardship than the monotheistic beliefs of the Judaeo-Christian tradition (see White 1967). However, “there is no empirical evidence that religious traditions have had any influence on cumulative anthropogenic impacts over the long term” (Hudson et al. 2022).

Environmental harm was already inherent in premodern Japan and, interestingly, aligned with their concept and understanding of nature. Industrialisation and the adoption of Western technology merely “released the potential for large-scale environmental impact” (Bichler 2023). In medieval Japan, ever-greater demands for timber and firewood led to collateral damage to the environment. Because of this, religious practices “sought to reconcile the ambiguity of revering natural phenomena and simultaneously harming them to meet human needs” (Bichler 2023). In the *Edo* period (1603–1868), agricultural expansion, construction, and mine pollution were accompanied by the proto-scientific study of natural phenomena, which only led to the further commodification of nature. In the *Meiji* period (1868–1912), environmental protection became part of preserving the Japanese identity. These efforts, however, were contradicted by the importing of new technologies for resource extraction and industrial processing as urbanisation and growing commercialisation further affected forest clearance and land use (Hudson et al. 2022).

#### SHINTO RECONSIDERED

This substantial increase in environmental damage in Japan beginning with the industrialisation of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century coincided with Shinto becoming the official state ideology and being valorised as Japan’s nature-friendly “indigenous religion” (Hudson et al. 2022). The romantic notions of Shinto being a prime example of the unique Japanese harmony with nature, a religion of the forest (see Jinja-Honcho 2023b), still dominate the public sphere, as seen in this excerpt from the official website of the biggest Shinto organisation in Japan:

The agricultural society based on rice cultivation, like that in Japan, cannot exist without unification and harmony among all things on this earth: mountains, rivers, the sun, rain, animals, and plants, not to mention the cooperation among people. (Jinja-Honcho 2023a)

The idea that Shinto is an ancient indigenous religion of Japan practised in its current form since ancient times goes against the consensus of research in religious history, as it has undergone huge changes over time. In his seminal work on the history of Shinto, historian Toshio Kuroda explores its reconceptualization, arguing that it was not an independent tradition until the modern period (Kuroda 1981). Shinto became identified as an indigenous form of religion at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, constructed out of the corpus of folk religious practices and distinguished from Buddhism with which it previously syncretised. Through this separation, which was formally completed in the Meiji period, it acquired the features of a primitive religion (Kuroda 1981: 19).

[A]lthough traces of earlier myths and traditional ecological knowledge relating to forests may remain—or have been re-imagined—in Japan, concepts like the ‘civilisation of the forest’ are reductionist and ahistorical and can be placed within the trope of the invention of tradition, which has been so pervasive in modern Japan. (Vlastos 1998, as cited in Hudson et al. 2022)

The category of Shinto is still subject to ongoing negotiation, and “conflicting definitions represent different political agendas” (Rots 2015: 211). Most recently it has become a symbol of “important physical, cultural and ethical resources for tackling today’s environmental crisis” (Rots 2017: 19), a discourse which Aike Rots calls the “Shinto environmentalist paradigm” (Rots 2015). Before delving into the contemporary role of Shinto in environmentalism and politics, we should consider its historical influence in transforming the environment into a sacred landscape in which nature and forests were revered. Japanese villages were traditionally surrounded by rice paddies, vegetable fields, and most importantly woodland areas (*satoyama*) used for firewood and grazing (Environment and Ecology 2023). These forests have long been managed by local communities and were not only revered for their natural resources but also sacred places where spirits – *kami* – reside. The independent agency of the *kami* represented by the natural forces and their working resulted in humans trying to appease them by conducting various types of rituals, festivals, and offerings (Suhara 2020).



Photo 2: *Soreisha* at *Kitaguchi Hongu Fuji Sengen Jinja* (Author: Aljaž Mesner, 18 November 2023)

An example of this is the *Aenokoto* festival in Noto during which deities of rice fields are worshipped for prosperous growth and abundant harvest. It “integrates the climate, biodiversity, food security and spirituality, while bringing together the community” (Ishizawa 2018: 15), thus setting an example of a symbiotic relationship where cultural and spiritual practices positively impact biodiversity which in return influences them. This relationship between man and his environment is exemplified in the union of forest and shrine, or as writer Luis Diez del Corral eloquently put it, “the most compressed architectural expression of the forest as the home of the sacred” (Diez del Corral 2016).

#### PRESERVING SACRED SHRINE FORESTS

The forests surrounding shrines, called *Chinju no mori*, were an important part of the landscape and cornerstones of the community. Trees were grown around shrines to protect them, some of which were demarcated as especially sacred, known as *goshinboku* (lit. tree of god) (Kotera 2021). The ever-greater demand for natural resources at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century meant that *Chinju no mori* were an issue to be addressed regarding land management (Environment and Ecology 2023).

Even though some shrines have made attempts to prevent people from logging and gathering natural resources from their lands (Rots 2015: 2012), not all have succeeded. In 1900 the government implemented *jinja seirei*, the “shrine merger policy”, to cut upkeep costs (Kotera 2021) which threatened the groves and opened them up to logging and development. The trees that grew on former shrine grounds were no longer deemed sacred and could be cut down without repercussions. Altogether around 70,000 shrines and the accompanying forests were destroyed.

Understandably, not everyone was in favour of this policy, however. One of its biggest opponents was Minakata Kumagusu, today regarded as the pioneer of ecology in Japan. Scientist, folklorist, environmentalist, and philosopher, he rejected the rigid academism and unquestioning veneration of Western civilisation that was prevalent in Meiji period Japan. In 1906, he entered politics on a crusade against the policy of shrine consolidation (Nakazawa 2017). He wrote two pamphlets in which he proved that the policy would be harmful in the long run, even economically (Kotera 2021), and gave countless speeches. In 1910, the policy was effectively halted before even more damage could be done. Minakata's efforts saved countless forests, some of which, like Kashima Island, have since been declared natural monuments (Nakazawa 2017).

In the 1970s, the *Chinju no mori* discourse resurged, linking Shinto with environmental issues, and it was only then that the first national study of shrine forests was carried out (Ishii 2010). Still, it wasn't until the end of the century that the concept of Shinto as an ecological tradition finally got widespread recognition. Shinto environmentalist behaviour was considered to be embedded in Japanese culture and *Chinju no mori* started to play a part in biodiversity education and conservation efforts (Kotera 2021). This paradigm shift is by no means unique to Japan since in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the preservation and cultivation of



Photo 3: *Goshinboku* (Author: Aljaž Mesner, 18 November 2023)

“sacred groves” as sites of both ecological and cultural importance has seen a resurgence in countries such as India (e.g. Parthasarathy 2019).

The recognition of *Chinju no mori* as heritage sites rich in biodiversity provides powerful incentives to prevent them from being used for other purposes, such as construction or resource exploitation. It also provides local religious actors with new funding opportunities, for instance, from international NGOs (Rots 2015: 217). While sacralisation can be employed as a tactic for environmental advocacy and preventing forest destruction, many *Chinju no mori* have still been destroyed where significant economic and political interests were at stake:

Shinto worldviews can be employed not only to argue for the preservation of particular designated areas but also for legitimizing the exploitation of other, ‘non-sacred’ areas, and for turning a blind eye to abstract environmental issues that transcend local particularities. (Rots 2017: 205)

Those that were not under threat of development or were recognised as having exceptional value have been subjected to conservation and heritagisation (Rots 2015). In this process, they acquired significant ideological potential concerning national identity and became politicised. This was possible since sacred sites possess profound symbolic capital, which can be employed for various purposes (Rots 2017:10). Thus Shinto, through the environmentalist paradigm, entered the mainstream as an attempt to revitalise religious tradition and its political role.

Shinto has had a long and complex history of entanglement with politics. The dominant tradition in the relationship between state and religion, up until the Second World War, was that of *saisei itchi*, “the unity of religion and politics”, in which religious organisations were considered to be of service to the state (Yanagawa 1979: 502). In 1889, the Meiji Constitution introduced the right to religious freedom resulting in a split between State Shinto, a nonreligious civil ritual concerning the imperial family, and vernacular practices corresponding to Folk Shinto (Ugoretz 2022).

After 1945, through Allied (GHQ) directives to the Japanese government, the policy of separation between religion and politics (*seikyō bunri*) was implemented (Yanagawa 1979: 502). With the new constitution, the state was required to refrain from involvement in religious activities and supporting religious organisations. Both constitutions, however, contained a guarantee of religious freedoms and “like other religions, Shinto continued to be involved in Japan’s politics” (Ugoretz 2022).

Through this historical development we can follow the process of discursive secularisation “by which beliefs, practices and institutions previously classified as ‘religion’ are redefined and reconfigured as ‘culture’, ‘tradition’, ‘heritage’, ‘science’ or even ‘nature’; in sum, as non-religion” (Rots 2017: 14).

Shinto shrines reorganised themselves as Shrine Shinto, which was not directly controlled by the state. This was done through the establishment of private organisations such as *Jinja Honcho* (Association of Shinto Shrines) which was founded in 1946 in opposition to postwar policies toward Shinto shrines. It is a central actor of the so called “Shinto establishment”, a concept used to describe several actors devoted to the idea that Shinto is a vital part of Japanese identity (Larsson 2017).

Today *Jinja Honcho* administers about 80,000 shrines throughout Japan (Larsson 2017) and is involved in various activities such as public information services, educational activities, and the training of Shinto priests. However, it should be stressed and emphasised that it does not represent all shrines in Japan and that even the individual shrines under its jurisdiction have a degree of autonomy and can hold independent views, even if they are still prone to being influenced by the wider discourse.

I chose to delve into the political connections of *Jinja Honcho* in greater depth because, despite the existence of other Shinto organisations in Japan, it stands out as the largest and most authoritative one. Although issuing statements concerning the environment (e.g. Machado 2004: 127–129), the organisation is on an environmental level dealing mostly with issues such as the preservation of shrines and the cultivation of timber for them:

Shinto shrine groves have been appropriated as ideological resources by influential conservative and corporate actors, who advocate small-scale forest conservation at selected sites without seriously engaging with more profound environmental challenges. (Rots 2017: 10)

The fact that scholars have expressed “scepticism at the commitment of the shrine establishment to environmental sustainability, other than as a rhetorical device” (Rots 2015: 208) should come as no surprise given its political ties. This can be seen in the 2014 inter-faith conference *Tradition for the Future: Culture, Faith and Values for a Sustainable Planet*, organised by *Jinja Honcho* and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) (Dougill 2014a) which took place at the Ise Grand Shrine.

It is no coincidence that both the 2014 conference and the meeting of G7 leaders in 2016 (Ugoretz 2022) were held at the Ise Shrine. While it is true that “recent years have seen a growing interest not only in religious cosmologies and belief systems as resources for environmental ethics but also in so-called sacred sites as places of ecological importance” (Rots 2017), that is not the only reason for the chosen location. In addition to discussing matters related to religion and environmental sustainability, the participants also collectively paid their respects to the sun goddess *Amaterasu* (Rots 2017: 3). Since both the goddess and the shrine relate to the imperial family and their legitimacy, some expressed concerns about rising nationalism and imperialism (e.g. Dougill 2014b). The Ise Grand Shrine serves as a symbolic centre of the “Shinto right”, a conservative movement that has a large lobbying influence on Japanese politics and strong ties to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) (Institute for Security and Development Policy 2017) and *Nippon Kaigi*, another right-wing nationalist group (Ugoretz 2022).

The association of *Jinja Honcho* with such organisations is one of the reasons why no one is speaking up about the environmental issues at hand. *Jinja Shinpo*, the magazine of *Jinja Honcho*, clearly illustrates current trends in the organisation, featuring strongly pro-imperial articles and a conservative standpoint (Dougill 2014a), while topics regarding ecology and the environment are not represented. In one issue they even urged priests to take a stand in favour of whaling (Chart 2014). While contemporary environmentalism in the West is usually linked with the left, in Japan that is not the case: “Rather than saving the whales, it’s Japan’s ‘special’ traditions that people here want to save” (Rots 2017).

It should be emphasised, however, that nationalist motives are not *a priori* incompatible with a genuine concern for forest conservation and that the Shinto environmentalist discourse is not at all uniform as there are independent actors, namely priests and local shrines, with their own motivations and priorities. Even if they are under *Jinja Honcho*’s jurisdiction and their approaches are not in line with the organisation’s rhetoric, they are not sanctioned since most shrines operate autonomously (Rots 2015).

#### SHINTO SHRINES AS URBAN GREEN SPACES AND LOCAL COMMUNITY CENTRES

Because of their autonomy, shrines are usually embedded into their respective localities and often tended to by the local community. Returning to the concept of *Chinju no mori*, I will present the value of shrines as urban green spaces, with the potential to function as centres for ecosystem conservation in Japanese cities. The study of green space distribution sur-

rounding shrines in Utsunomiya City using satellite imagery has shown that “Shinto shrines in urban areas may be useful for the planning of urban green spaces as a spatial base point of green area distribution” (Takahashi 2018).

Environmentalist Hiroaki Ishii emphasises the importance of incorporating ecological principles into urban planning and landscaping through the utilisation of shrine forests, stressing that a holistic approach, one that integrates both biological and cultural components within the landscape, is required (Ishii 2010: 311). Fragmentation and insufficient vegetation management are two major issues for urban shrine forests, whose management depends on the owners. Largely private ownership is also making it harder to integrate them into the urban green space network. To overcome these issues, positive public recognition of their importance is needed “for the benefit of urban residents as well as to maintain ecosystem integrity of the region” (Ishii 2010: 312).

The 2011 tsunami was a catalyst towards greater recognition of *Chinju no mori*. Shrines with dense forests around them were spared from destruction, proving the value of such natural barriers. Shortly after the disaster, the Morino Project was established under the guidance of Prof. Akira Miyawaki (Namiki 2022). One of the main goals of the project was to grow new *Chinju no mori* by planting potential natural vegetation forests that serve as a dampener in the event of another natural disaster and simultaneously creating self-sustaining ecosystems (Morino Project 2023).

Beyond ecology, *Chinju no mori* are now seen as “local community centres that provide social cohesion and spiritual well-being” (Rots 2015). They serve as a meeting place and centre for cultural and commercial activities while also giving a sense of embeddedness to the residents participating in activities centred around their local shrines.

Usually, the focus of these projects is on small-scale issues and symbolic practices: activities include forest maintenance or reconstruction, tree planting and reforestation, cleaning litter, and various educational projects. (Rots 2015: 222)

For this paper, I only chose to present a few examples that I found interesting and considering the number of Shinto shrines in Japan – in some estimates exceeding 174,000 (Lucas 2023) – there are without a doubt many more. For further reading and detailed cases of shrines implementing green initiatives, see Aike Rots’ doctoral dissertation *The Forests of the Gods* (2013) in which he highlights the grassroots approach many of these initiatives have; a predominantly local orientation and dependence upon individuals such as shrine priests, environmental activists, volunteers, scientists, and school children, all of which are united around the shared symbolic and ecological capital of *Chinju no mori* (Rots 2015). In fact, “the most effective examples of Japanese environmental movements are mostly highly localised” (Rots 2017: 41).

## CONCLUSION

Although these projects contribute to their local environment and provide much value to their respective communities, a paradigmatic shift and development of the national attitude



is necessary to tackle larger issues at hand, such as climate change. The natural environment throughout Japan is degrading and “other countries are suffering as a result of Japanese ecopolitics (or lack thereof)” (Shaw 2009: 23), such as through offshoring.

While academics, religious leaders, forest planters and journalists continue to spread the myth of Japan as a nation of ‘nature lovers’ who can teach the rest of the world how to live in harmony with nature, Japanese state agencies and corporations continue to contribute to widespread construction, (toxic) waste production and large-scale deforestation abroad. (Rots 2017: 204)

The attitude towards ecology and the environment, which proved to work on a local level, would be, however, hard to foster on a wider, national level. Daniel Shaw (2009) believes that national media, combined with integrating values already present in the Shinto tradition, could play a crucial role in this:

It could take the form of a holistic ecological attitude of respect for nature and it would need to be assumed at the individual, communal and national levels in order to be truly effective for the nation. [...] [T]hese values can already be found under the surface of society and if they could be harnessed as a unity and driven forwards together, the result would be one of the easier ways of establishing a quick and acceptable change. (Shaw 2009: 46)

These values are and should be grounded in local knowledge involving heritage holders and local people, who are connected to places with environmental significance in both rural and urban environments. According to Ishizawa, “it is fundamental to look back upon our rural heritage and decelerate the effects of our alienation from what we call nature, to find the way forward with urbanisation” (Ishizawa 2018:17).

Many examples of religious figures and local communities joining forces with activists show that a spiritual connection to the land can go hand in hand with environmental advocacy. This can be seen in the younger generation of Shinto priests, many of whom are interested in environmental activism, and could be potential agents of social change:

Throughout history, shrines have negotiated and resisted central authority in numerous ways. There is no reason why local shrine priests cannot take the initiative in establishing alternative energy communities, preserving local ecosystems and protesting destructive construction projects, if they do so in collaboration with grass-roots citizens’ groups and non-profit organizations, possibly learning from similar initiatives in other countries. (Rots 2017: 205–206)

I have shown that the perceptions of nature among the Japanese are varied and constantly evolving. Their connection to the land through Shinto is best exemplified by the reverence for sacred shrine forests in which nature and religion physically overlap. The evolving discourse on their protection and conservation resulted in the environmentalist paradigm based on Shinto values. As a religion, Shinto has historically been redefined and politicised for nationalistic and ideological purposes, while at the same time inadvertently providing international recognition and empowering many individuals and initiatives to bring positive change to local communities and their environments.

Further research on the possible applications of sacred shrine groves for conserving biodiversity and increasing the quality of life in local communities would be beneficial, perhaps even useful beyond Japan. However, it would be necessary to examine how the framework informed by a specific religion would translate to a non-religious context. As respect and reverence for nature, even if completely secular, are gaining traction worldwide due to the looming environmental crisis, I believe that we can all find our own ways to “worship” nature through our actions and thus contribute towards the environment and our communities.

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## POVZETEK

Prispevek proučuje vpliv šintoizma na japonsko ekološko zavest, pri čemer osvetljuje kompleksen preplet religije, politike in odnosa do okolja na Japonskem. Avtor se je, presenečen nad kontrastom med njihovo občutljivostjo do narave in vse večjo urbanizacijo, odločil raziskati zapleten odnos med japonskim pristopom k naravi in ekologiji ter vlogo šintoizma pri oblikovanju teh perspektiv.

Na podlagi proučevanja japonskih percepcij narave, na katere vplivata kultura in religija, ter z razbijanjem mitov o Japonski pred pozahodenjem prispevek prikazuje, kako se je v procesu razvijanja nacionalne identitete šintoizem izoblikoval v avtohtono japonsko religijo čaščenja narave.

Avtor na podlagi poglobljenega pregleda zgodovinske vloge šintoizma pri ohranjanju narave, izhajajoč iz koncepta *Chinju no mori*, s primeri povezav med šintoistično organizacijo *Jinja Honcho* in različnimi političnimi skupinami prikazuje, kako se je konec 20. stoletja razvila okoljevarstvena paradigma ter bila pozneje politizirana za nacionalistične in ideološke namene.

S primeri pokaže, kako lahko šintoizem s svojimi svetiščnimi gaji pomaga oživiti urbane zelene površine v obliki gozdnih pribežališč in skupnostnih središč. Na koncu prouči še potencial takšnih gibanj za širši vpliv v domačem okolju, s poudarkom na vlogi lokalnih skupnosti in pobud s pristopom od spodaj navzgor. Zunaj Japonske bi lahko takšne prakse dopolnjevale okoljevarstvo, tudi v nereligioznem kontekstu.

# Slovak Scholars in Bohemia and Moravia and Czech Scholars in Slovakia Before and After the Battle of Biela Hora (1620)



Slovaški učenjaki v Bohemiji in Moravski ter češki  
učenjaki na Slovaškem pred bitko pri Bieli Hori  
(1620) in po njej

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1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek  
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## ABSTRACT

During several years of research, we registered a relatively large number of mostly Protestant scholars originating from the territory of today's Slovakia or those who are considered significant in the context of Slovak cultural history, who in the period before the Battle of Biela Hora (1620) lived and worked in one of the Czech or Moravian cities. This was a very diverse group of humanists including clergymen, professors from Charles University, teachers, scribes, authors of extensive works in Latin or in the vernacular, patrons, or owners of interesting book collections. The article introduces this group of scholars in general, and examines more closely their confessional orientation, as well as what influenced it or subsequently prompted it to change. On the other hand, we also want to briefly note several Czech scholars who, as a result of the changed religious situation in Bohemia, came to Slovakia after the Battle of Biela Hora.

KEYWORDS: Slovak and Czech scholars, religion, Protestants, Battle of Biela Hora, history, literature

Na podlagi večletnega raziskovanja smo uspeli sestaviti seznam relativno velikega števila večinoma protestantskih izobražencev, ki so prvotno prihajali z območja današnje Slovaške ali so pomembni v okviru slovaške kulturne zgodovine ter so v obdobju pred bitko na Beli gori (1620) živeli in delali v enem od čeških (bohemskih) ali moravskih mest. Gre za zelo raznoliko skupino humanistov, ki vključuje duhovnike, profesorje s Karlove univerze v Prahi, učitelje, pisarje, avtorje obsežnih del v latinščini ali ljudskem jeziku, mecene in lastnike zanimivih knjižnih zbirk. Članek predstavi to skupino izobražencev in natančneje opredeli njihovo versko pripadnost, kaj je vplivalo nanjo ali pa celo povzročilo, da so jo pozneje spremenili. Hkrati se članek na kratko dotakne tudi čeških izobražencev, ki so se po bitki na Beli gori zaradi spremenjenih versko-političnih okoliščin v Bohemiji preselili na območje današnje Slovaške.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: slovaški in češki izobraženci, religija, protestanti, bitka na Beli gori, zgodovina, književnost

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Religion remains throughout the centuries one of the most important spheres of human life. Religious affiliation was related to an individual's identity, determined the person's social relations, employment, social success, and often also the place where the person lived a greater or lesser part of their life. These facts can be very well illustrated by a group of Protestant humanists originating from the territory of today's Slovakia who spent their active lives in Bohemia or Moravia. During several years of research, I found that in the period before 1621 there also existed a large number (more than a hundred) of (mostly) Protestant scholars originating from the territory of today's Slovakia who lived, studied, worked, and published in one of the Czech or Moravian cities. We currently have very little information about Slovak Catholic educators in Bohemia and Moravia during this period, so I will not pay attention to them in the following lines.

I collected and analysed the biographical data of more than a hundred individuals who studied or worked in one of the Czech or Moravian cities and published at least one work. I obtained data about them based on excerpts from Czech and Slovak biobibliographic literature. The biographical data were subjected to analysis in comparison with the data obtained by the so-called content analysis of the paratextual parts of their work: introductions, dedicatory verses, and a selected sample of texts (Martin Moncovicenus, Juraj Tesák Mošovský, Pavel Kyrmezer, Ondrej Rochotský, Daniel Basilius, Eliáš Berger and others) both in Latin and in the vernacular. I took into account the educational networks to which the occasional verses of humanists active in Bohemia referred and the environment in which these individuals worked.

The mutual influence of religious and cultural traditions can be traced back to the period of the common Great Moravian Empire. Economic, political, and cultural relations between the Czech and Hungarian states were established very early. The rapid economic

and cultural boom in Prague and Bohemia in the 14<sup>th</sup> century also significantly influenced Hungarian conditions. Cultural contacts, especially between western Slovakia and Moravia, represented by the arrival of scribes from Bohemia, mutual contact, and exchange of members of religious orders, and gradually also the arrival of Czech, Moravian, and Silesian Protestant preachers in Slovakia can also be traced back to before the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Pauliny 1965: 30). They settled in the border area, worked here among Slovak evangelicals, and spread Czech religious literature on Slovak territory, which was used in religious ceremonies. In the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Matej Korvín, especially after the annexation of Moravia to Hungary, favourable conditions arose for intensive economic and cultural relations, as well as for the fluctuation of people between Moravia and Slovakia, which also spread to Bohemia under the Jagiellonians (Janek 1961: 41–48). After the Battle of Mohács (1526), the Czech lands and Slovakia became part of the multinational Habsburg monarchy, which created circumstances that enabled mutual Czech-Slovak relations to develop within one co-state, i.e. a union of several states united by the person of the monarch. In the period at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century cultural, literary, and confessional relations are documented by the participation of a relatively large number of Slovak scholars in the formation of Czech cultural, religious, and literary life.

In the case of scholars coming from Royal Hungary, the fact that there was no university on the territory of today's Slovakia was certainly one (but not the only) determining factor for their activity outside their original homeland. *Studium generale* in Bratislava functioned only for a very short time (1467–1491), and the need for education in the humanistic spirit was saturated by the university centres of Krakow and Vienna and, last but not least, by the Protestant universities in Wittenberg and Prague, where our Protestant students mainly studied after completing their studies at gymnasiums and lower schools, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century already abundantly established on the territory of Slovakia. The Kingdom of Hungary was a predominantly Protestant country at this time. Protestants coming from prosperous Upper Hungarian towns mostly chose prestigious schools in cities where they had relatives and acquaintances, or where members of the religious community who they could apply to studied and worked, as their first starting schools for foreign studies.

The Jihlava school was famous and probably one of the most attended Czech city schools with students coming from the territory of today's Slovakia. In 1562, its rector Matej Rakovsky was the brother of the well-known humanist Martin Rakovsky. Among its students we can mention, for example, Jan Pruno Fraštacky, who compiled the bilingual Latin-Slovak catechism printed in Hlohovec in 1585 (*Malý katechizmus* 2018), as well as his classmates Ondrej Tursky and Jan Bizacius, the evangelical priest and educator of Palatine Juraj Thurzo Nikodem Sartorius, the teacher and priest Martin Monkovicenus from Lip-tovský Bobrovec (Maťovčík and Valentovič 1990: 218), or Samuel Ričinsky, who in 1622 represented the rector and co-rector at the school in Banská Bystrica (Szinyei 2018; Kuzmík 1980: 531). Among the future professors of the University of Prague, Slovak scholar Vavrinec Benedikt Nedožersky studied here alongside Martin Bacháček from Nauměřice and Jan Campanus Vodňansky (Kákošová 2004: 45). One of the prominent representatives of

Utraquism was the parish priest and prolific writer Juraj Tesak Mošovský. Among the lesser-known were Gašpar Janoš, Klemens Klein, Štefan Omasta, Juraj Šmidelinus and Matuš Vita (Kuzmík 1980; Ružička 1974).

Another city interesting for Slovak students was Uherský Brod. Already at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there was rich cultural contact between humanists from the territory of today's Slovakia and the educational environment of Uherský Brod. From 1576 the dramatist and religious writer Pavel Kyrmezer was the parish priest and then the dean, while in 1581 his religious theater play *Tobias* was also performed here (Winter 1901: 743). Prominent representatives of evangelicals and representatives of contemporary humanistic writing from Slovakia worked at the higher school in Uherský Brod (*Pamätnica trenčianskeho gymnázia* 1969: 7,147), e.g. in 1586 these included Jeremiaš Parlagius and Pavel Parlagius, whose family origins are probably linked to the Slovak village of Očová (Kuzmík 1980: 599), as well as Peter Berger, a well-known supporter of Slovak students studying in Wittenberg and Prague, who also lived in Uherský Brod – and was the guardian of the prolific humanist author Ondrej Rochotius (Škovierová 2022), who probably also studied here.

Students coming from Royal Hungary then acquired a higher humanistic education at foreign universities, especially at German universities and in Prague, for which they decided, on the one hand, because of its territorial and linguistic proximity, and on the other hand, based on the Protestant orientation of Charles University and the fact that, in the historical context, although most of its students and professors came from Germany (Šmahel 2016, 186–187), in the pre-White Mountain period (i. e. before the Battle of White Mountain – Biela Hora, which took place on November 8, 1620), representatives of the Slavic peoples gained significant representation and influence here.<sup>1</sup> And this despite the fact that they were only assigned to study at the Faculty of Arts (Philosophy), because Charles University was not a full-fledged university including all four faculties from the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (arts, theology, law, and medicine). As far as language proximity is concerned, Czech, which in the case of educated people coming from the territory of today's Slovakia was certainly contaminated with elements of Slovak dialects, became the common language of communication (the so-called *lingua franca*) with supraregional validity from the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

A certain, though smaller number of students coming from Royal Hungary and subsequently working mainly in the territory of Bohemia or Moravia, studied in Wittenberg (e.g. Martin Preys and Jan Silvan).

It was not unusual for a Slovak studying in the Czech countries or returning home from studies at a foreign university through the Czech regions to stay there, find a place, or accept an offer of employment from a Czech school or parish. It was common for educated people to be active producers of literature/poetry, and the production of occasional works

**1**

In 1611, for example, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, V. Benedikt Nedožerský (1555–1615), proposed to restore the old privilege of four votes at the university, three of which were awarded to the Czech nation (including the Czechs, Moravians, Slovaks and Hungarians), and one to the Germans. University officials were also elected accordingly (Frimmová 2014b: 34).



was considered standard. If a former university student was literary active, his works were usually published on Czech territory. A general phenomenon in the life of former Prague students and graduates after their departure from the academic environment was marriage, often multiple times, which helped the former teacher obtain both the status of a full-fledged citizen and a more significant social position in the city.

Based on the prints that people originally from Slovakia published in the Czech countries or contributed to as authors, we can deduce their professional, religious, or political orientation. An important group of humanists active in Bohemia and Moravia consisted of those whose activities were in some way directly connected with Charles University. They worked here as professors, also held the positions of deans and rectors or other positions connected with the administration and activities of the university (e.g. Vavrinec Benedikt Nedožerský, Daniel Basilius, Jan Jessenius, Peter Fradelius, and among the lesser known Juraj Berger, Matyáš Molesynus and Juraj Moller). Some of them, e.g. Peter Fradelius or Jan Jessenius, were actively involved in the resistance of the Czech Protestant estates.

The university had lower schools in central Bohemia under its management, to which it appointed its graduates as rectors and teachers; many of them also continued their master's studies or earned a doctorate, and so many students from Royal Hungary were connected in their professional activities with some Czech school. They usually even alternated between several positions (Matyáš Molesynus, Ondrej Rochotský, Gašpar Sextius and others), and there were also those who worked as tutors in noble families during their studies (Juraj Fabricius, Matej Plorantius, Juraj Michal, Ondrej Rochotius and others). They were often actively involved in social and religious life in the cities where they worked, and in their literary work expressed sympathy for the local representatives of Protestantism.

The second, equally important group consists of clergy. These were mostly originally Royal Hungarian members of the evangelical confession, who after ordination found employment in Bohemia and joined one of the Protestant churches there, such as Pavel Kyrmezer from Banská Štiavnica, who worked in Moravia and became a dean in Uherský Brod in 1575, Matej Plorantius, a Lutheran church administrator from Lipník nad Bečvou, Samuel Rochotský, a spiritual administrator from the Moravian village of Prusinovice, Juraj Tesak Mošovský, an important evangelical church official, who sympathised with ultraquism, Pavel Jessenius, who participated in the translation of the well-known and for the evangelical language environment indispensable *Bible of Kralice*, and was a member of the Unity of Brothers (Jednota Bratská), and Anabaptist Ján Silvan. These educated people fully developed their confessional feelings in the new environment, and some, e.g. Pavel Kyrmezer, who had a long-term enmity with the Unity of Brothers, was also involved in disputes between individual denominations (Škovierová 2001: 90–91). As already mentioned, most Slovak scholars operating in Bohemia and Moravia were literarily active. From the point of view of genre composition, the literary work of Slovak humanists also reflected the variety of contemporary Czech literature. A specific genre aimed at the folk and middle class environment was preaching. In addition to sermons, our authors in Bohemia and Moravia also published various religious and moral tracts, commented on ethical and moral issues, and developed

spiritual poetry in the form of psalms reworked into songs or verses. However, the integration of Slovak scholars into the Czech cultural, social, and confessional environment is reflected the most in small occasional literary genres such as congratulatory, condolence, celebratory, and other verses. The year 1621 is considered a turning point. On 23 June 1621, as a result of the defeat of the Czech estates in the Battle of Biela Hora (White Mountain) on 8 November 1620, 27 rebellious estate leaders were executed in the Old Town Square in Prague. However, the situation in Bohemia had already changed a few days after the Battle of Biela Hora, when King Ferdinand II began to implement a vigorous antireformation policy. When he failed to win over some non-Catholic clergy, voluntarily even under the pretext of allowing the chalice, he in 1621 proceeded to excommunicate all the preachers who subscribed to the Czech Confession, which was the common confession of faith presented by the Czech non-Catholic estates at the Land Assembly in 1575. The so-called *Confessio Bohemica* was also enforced in the period that followed, and in 1609–1620 it was the legal basis of Lutheranism in Bohemia. In 1622, all privileges were taken away from Karolinum (Charles University) in Prague and handed over to the Jesuit University, Klementinum. After the activity of the non-Catholic clergy was made impossible, a campaign against the non-Catholic laity also began. In 1624, a mandate was issued to restore the Catholic faith in cities and in the countryside, with the exception of the nobility. In the royal cities, the emperor ordered that only Catholics could be accepted as burghers, and others were to be allowed burghership only if they became Catholics. In the spirit of this regulation, trade was also restricted in a similar way. In 1626, the marriage of non-Catholics was forbidden, and in 1627, mandates were issued against non-Catholic nobility. If the nobility did not want to change their faith, they could move out. Subjects did not have the right to leave. Religious mandates resulted in the mass departure of the population from the country. The first wave of refugees for purely political reasons in 1620–1621 was followed by numerous Protestant priests in 1621–1622, then refugees from royal cities, and the strongest stream left in 1624–1630 (Daňhelka et al. 1959: 337–338). In Bohemia, not only the political situation and society's attitude towards non-Catholics changed but also the status of Charles University, and many non-Catholic scholars were forced to leave the Czech lands. It was because many of them were followers of the so-called Utraquism (and they referred to themselves as Utraquists/Utraquisti or Kališníci), a Christian confession that arose from the Czech Reformation (or Hussites) and was only suppressed by re-Catholicisation after the Battle of Biela Hora. The name “Utraquism“ itself comes from the Latin expression *sub utraque specie*, that is, under both ways, which refers to the main self-identification of the Utraquists – receiving the Sacrament of the Altar under the method of bread and wine. The Utraquists, based on Hussiteism, also advocated the view that the University of Prague can (and should) take theological positions even on controversial questions of faith. Already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Utraquism was the dominant faith in Bohemia and had a strong presence in Moravia, although the Utraquists were always considered a full-fledged part of the undivided Catholic Church (Gažík 2008: 36). Despite the fact that the non-noble population was not allowed to leave for their faith, members of all classes went into exile. Czech and Moravian Protes-

tants went to the nearest border countries, especially to Saxony, Lusatia, Silesia, and the Kingdom of Hungary (on the territory of today's Slovakia and Hungary). During this period, many of the Slovak scholars working in Bohemia and Moravia ended their public activities. Some converted to Catholicism to save their social position, business or life (e.g. Daniel Basilius, Eliáš Berger (Frimmová 1997: 26; Frimmová 2014a: 394, 399), Juraj Moller)<sup>2</sup> and some of them returned to their original homeland (Samuel Rochotius, Michal Lazius). However, there are also those who lost their lives (e.g. Johan Jessenius) and property or we have no information about their further existence (e.g. Ondrej Rochotius). Jakub Jakobeus mentions in the dedication of his work *Idea mutationum Bohemo evangelicarum in florentissimo regno Bohemiae* (About Transformations Among Czech Evangelicals in the Flourishing Czech Kingdom) (Minárik and Vyvíjalová 1963), allegedly published in 1624 in Amsterdam, that numerous evangelical preachers found refuge on the estate of Gašpar Ilesházy from Ilesház in the Trenčín and Liptov county. Other sources state that many people left Moravia and Bohemia and went to the estate of the Prince of Transylvania, Juraj I. Rakoci, Lednica and Púchov, another to the estate of Count de Thurzo, Lord Count Révay, of the families Nádaždy, Ňári, Viskeleti and others in the area of Myjava, Vrbovce, Lubina, and Stará Turá, as well as to the surroundings of Nitra. Slovakia in general had a special meaning for the Czech emigrant community. The Hungarian nobility led by Gabriel Bethlen supported the Czech uprising, but not very strongly, and Bethlen therefore managed to achieve a favourable peace, thanks to which the Hungarian estates received complete amnesty and the confirmation of religious freedoms. Even though Catholicism was on the rise in Slovakia in the years that followed and the evangelicals did not escape persecution, the Counter-Reformation was never brought to fruition here, and therefore, alongside the Counter-Reformation literature, literature continuing the pre-White Mountain cultural tradition could also develop in the Slovak region. In this way, the Czech cultural continuity was (at least partially) maintained. During the period of the ruling Counter-Reformation, Slovakia was important for Czech religious literature in two ways. On the one hand, Czech Protestant literature printed abroad could be consumed in Slovakia, which reached Czech countries only to a small extent and was therefore practically unknown; on the other hand, Czech emigrants took refuge in Slovakia, not only from neighbouring Moravia but also from Bohemia. Thus, for example, after the publication of the renewed provincial constitution, Jozef Heliades, master of liberal arts, also known as a Latin poet, emigrated to Slovakia (†1639). Heliades was the rector of the school in Český Brod, and later became a wealthy burgher and councillor. He went to Slovakia with his friend Jan Vokal, who worked at a school in Český Brod. Vokal's son Vaclav, who was a printer, then set up a publishing business in Slovakia, first probably in Senica, and later in Trenčín. More Czech non-Catholics took refuge in Trenčín. Even in a new environment, a culturally and religiously homogeneous group is evidenced by e.g. funeral sermons delivered here by Adam Trajan Benešovský over the Czech

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However, many Czech exiles converted to Catholicism only in the second generation.

exiles. The Czech emigration to Slovakia had a special position because it remained within the boundaries of the monarchy and lived in an environment linguistically and culturally close to the Czech environment. The use of Czech in Slovakia did not automatically (and in full) mean Czech cultural continuity. However, only Lutheran emigration merged with the new environment, similar to how writers of Slovak origin operating in Bohemia and Moravia merged with the Czech evangelical environment before the Battle of Biela Hora. The Czech-Brothers (Unity of Brothers) emigration, on the other hand, isolated itself and merged in later development rather with the Hungarian Calvinists. Juraj Tranovský (Eng. *Tranoscius*; 1542–1637), a native of Těšín, best demonstrates the fusion of Czech Lutheran emigration with the Slovak environment. After his studies in Germany, he worked in Prague, then in Holešov and in Valašské Meziříčí. From there he emigrated to Silesia, where he lived in Bělsko for three years and finally took refuge in Slovakia. He died as a priest in Liptovský Mikuláš. He demonstrated his poetic talent with Latin odes, which he published in print after leaving for Slovakia, but he had composed them earlier in Moravia or in Bělsko. In 1636, he published a large hymnal, *Cithara Sanctorum*, in Levoča. It is an extensive collection containing a set of older Hussite songs, Tranovský's own compositions and songs by his collaborators. This collection, also called "Tranoscius" for short, became the most frequently published hymnal in Slovakia, and is still used among Slovak evangelicals today (It was later also published abroad – in Lubań (Poland) and Pest (Hungary), and newer editions were gradually supplemented) (Škovierová 2002: 240–241). No less important is the Utraquist priest and teacher Jakub Jakobeus, who after arriving in Slovakia profiled himself as a Slovak patriot on the soil of the Hungarian Kingdom with an anti-war orientation (wars in this period represented estate uprisings). His most important work is the epic-reflexive composition *Tears, Sighs and Pleas of the Slovak Nation*, a poetic addition to the missing historical work *Living Description of the Slovak Nation*. In his work, he defined with precision the meaning of the term Slovak nation in the ethnic (but not territorial) sense. Just like the work written in Slovakised Czech, the Latin composition celebrates the national past of the Czechs and Slovaks. Both played an important role in the process of national awareness in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The significance of the Slovak region for the preservation of Czech literary and religious continuity has not yet been properly investigated, but it is already clear today that Slovakia contributed to it in two ways: because Slovak literature written in the so-called biblical Czech language (or also the Czech language used in the *Bible of Kralice*) was still felt in the Czech lands during the Renaissance to be a part of Czech literature, and partly because, thanks to Slovakia, the literary activity of the Czech emigration was maintained. In fact, the emigrant literature was largely based on sales in Slovakia. The fact that it was still in circulation in our country is evidenced by the appearance of emigrant prints in Slovak libraries. Some of these prints have even been preserved as unique items in Slovakia. Czech in its literary form gradually lost its communicative function in Protestant communities in Slovakia, but it remained in use as a *lingua sacra*, the language of worship, and became an identifying mark of Protestants. The questions associated with people originating from the territory of today's Slovakia, active at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Bohemia and Moravia, and in paral-

lel, the origin of Czech educated people working in Slovakia, are very broad and can be viewed from several perspectives. It can be useful research into the history of the book culture of Slovaks in Bohemia and Moravia and Czechs in Slovakia as an integral part of historical research; especially research into the religious, spiritual, and cultural development of these nationalities. For now, it seems most feasible to follow the life and works of selected individuals and then, based on the available secondary information, try to create some kind of “social networks” within which they functioned. When delving into the study of the life and work of individual humanists, new connections emerge that show their diverse cultural, confessional, personal, business, and political connections. At the same time, we can see that the gifted individuals coming from Slovak territory did not get lost, they were able to establish themselves in a culturally close environment, flexibly adapt to the requirements and conditions of their new homeland, establish new beneficial contacts, develop their gifts and talents, and enrich their surroundings with them. It was similar with the Czech exiles in Slovakia.

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## POVZETEK

Na podlagi večletnega raziskovanja smo našli več kot sto (večinoma) protestantskih izobražencev iz obdobja pred letom 1621 našli, ki so prihajali z območja današnje Slovaške, živeli, študirali, delovali in objavljali pa v enem od čeških (bohemskih) ali moravskih mest. Zgodovina vzajemnega delovanja na področju verskega in kulturnega življenja ter ustvarjanja med Čehi in Slovaki sega nazaj do obdobja Velikomoravske in je trajala vse do prehoda v 17. stoletje. Nekaj desetletij pred bitko na Beli gori je mogoče opaziti naraščajoče število protestantov z območja Kraljevine Ogrske (današnje Slovaške) na Karlovi univerzi in šolah nižjih izobrazbenih stopenj. Dejstvo, da na območju današnje Slovaške v tistem času ni bilo univerze, je bilo za izobražence iz Gornje Ogrske zagotovo eden od razlogov, da so se odločili živeti in delovati zunaj svoje prvotne domovine. Po končanem šolanju v Bohemiji (takratni zgodovinski pokrajini Češki; redkeje na Dunaju ali v Wittenbergu) so se izobraženci iz Gornje Ogrske zaposlili v čeških in moravskih mestih kot učitelji, duhovniki ali v službi plemstva. Brez posebnih težav so se lahko prilagodili lokalnemu okolju, saj so tudi sami prihajali iz protestantskega okolja. V Bohemiji in Moravski so se pridružili različnim lokalnim verskim skupnostim – luterancem, anabaptistom, češkim bratom ali utrakvistom. Nekaj dni po bitki na Beli gori je Kralj Ferdinand II. uvedel ostro protireformacijsko politiko (8. november 1620) in situacija v Bohemiji se je spremenila. Številni slovaški intelektualci v Bohemiji in Moravski so v tem obdobju prenehali z javnim delovanjem. Nekateri so se spreobrnil v katolike in tako ohranili svoj družbeni položaj, poslovno dejavnost ali življenje, nekateri pa so se vrnili v svojo domovino skupaj s češkimi protestanti, izseljenci, ki so prišli na območje današnje Slovaške. Nekateri izmed njih, na primer Vaclav Vokal, Juraj Tranovský in Jakub Jakobeus, so tudi pomembno obogatili našo kulturno in literarno zgodovino. Pred bitko na Beli gori so bili Slovaki v Bohemiji dobro umeščeni in povezani s češkim verskim okoljem, in na podoben način so v skladu s svojo veroizpovedjo po bitki zaživel tudi Čehi na območju Slovaške.

# Tolerance and Cooperation in the Religious Life of a Roman-Catholic Community: A Case Study from the Brno- Country District



Strpnost in sodelovanje v verskem življenju  
rimskokatoliške skupnosti: raziskava iz okrožja Brno

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to reveal specific aspects of religious life in a Roman-Catholic community situated in the Brno-Country district. For this purpose, the fieldwork was conducted in one parish for a period of one year from 30 November 2022. The data collection was mainly based on participant observation and semi-structured interviews with ten individuals (three women and seven men; mean age: 36.7 years). Both native-born inhabitants and newcomers of diverse professions were intentionally included in the research sample. The content analysis of semi-structured interviews was performed in [Atlas.ti](#). It was discovered that tolerance and cooperation are among the most important topics discussed by the informants and play a crucial role in their religious life.

KEYWORDS: tolerance, cooperation, religion, local communities, social cohesion

Cilj članka je razkriti specifične vidike verskega življenja v rimskokatoliški lokalni skupnosti iz okrožja Brno - podeželje. S tem namenom je v eni od župnij potekalo enoletno terensko delo, ki se je začelo 30. novembra 2022. Zbiranje podatkov je v glavnem temeljilo na opazovanju z udeležbo in delno strukturiranih intervjujih z desetimi udeleženci (tri ženske in sedem moških; povprečna starost 36,7 leta). V raziskovalni vzorec so bili namerno vključeni tako tam rojeni kot priseljeni prebivalci različnih poklicev. Vsebinska analiza delno strukturiranih intervjujev je bila opravljena s spletnim orodjem [Atlas.ti](https://atlas.ti). Pokazala je, da sta strpnost in sodelovanje med najpomembnejšimi temami, o katerih so govorili udeleženci, ter da imata izjemno pomembno vlogo v njihovem verskem življenju.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: strpnost, sodelovanje, religija, lokalne skupnosti, socialna kohezija

## INTRODUCTION

The study of religion is one of the central subjects in social sciences and humanities. Interestingly, in the panorama of religious studies, the scientific study of atheism has received proportionately less coverage than other beliefs. In recent decades, however, the study of atheism, agnosticism, disbelief, and secularisation has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars from various disciplines, theoretical backgrounds, and methodological approaches (e.g. Bubík, Rimmel and Václavík 2020; Bubík and Václavík 2020; Lanman 2012; Taylor 2007; Turner 1985). Several studies have pointed to the Czech Republic as a country with a growing number of non-believers, atheists, agnostics, or overall citizens without concrete declared religious affiliations or people who refer to the concept of “believing without belonging” (Davie 1990; Tromp, Pless and Houtman 2020). In this regard, various scholars have alluded to a certain uniqueness of the Czech Republic in Central Europe and the post-socialist countries. On the other hand, Václavík, Hamplová and Nešpor (2018: 100–101) point to the fact that several studies published in recent years challenge the widespread notion of the Czech Republic as “the most atheist country in present-day Europe” (for further discussion, see Bubík, Rimmel and Václavík, 2020; Hamplová and Nešpor 2009; Lužný and Nešpor 2008; Nešpor 2010; Václavík 2010).

As Václavík, Hamplová and Nešpor (2018) further argue, comparisons of the religious profiles of the Czech and Slovak Republics within post-communist Central and Eastern Europe are also of particular interest to researchers. From a historical perspective, the contemporary Czech and Slovak Republics are linked by decades of coexistence not only within the socialist bloc but also within federal state systems. In terms of comparison, the Czech Republic tends to be described as a country with a higher number of non-believers compared to the Slovak Republic. In this vein, Slovak sociologist Miroslav Tížik comments on the differences in the religious profile of the two countries during socialism as follows: “In one state with a single legal regime, regulating religion, religious life and the relationship to religion developed in two different ways.” (Tížik 2020: 270). Differences in religious beliefs between



the Czech and Slovak Republics persisted even after the dissolution of the USSR and the creation of two separate republics, and they continue in the present (Bubík and Václavík 2020; Bubík, Rimmel and Václavík; Tížik 2011, 2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2020; Tížik and Sivák 2019).

Based on an extensive meta-analysis, Václavík, Hamplová and Nešpor identified the following five blank spaces, or clusters of issues, in research on contemporary Czech religion and religiosity. These include: the study of religious communities; the study of compactness, differentiation, and distribution of power of individual religious groups; commitment to religious activity; the study of key strategies of religious groups; and the study of Czech atheism (Václavík, Hamplová and Nešpor 2018: 112–113). This article aims to focus on the first “blank space”, namely the study of a particular religious community, while also considering the other issues mentioned by these authors.

In a narrower sense, the following general empirical research question was constructed: What is the role of religion in a small-scale local community concerning cooperation and religious tolerance? Several anthropological studies have shown that religion, as well as religious rituals and feasts, can promote social cohesion, and increase in-group cooperation and prosociality in general (e.g. Norenzayan 2015; Richerson 2013; Sosis 2003; Sosis and Ruffle 2003; Whitehouse 2021; Xygalatas 2022). The topic of religious tolerance and intolerance has been studied for a substantial amount of time. This phenomenon is multifaceted and complex (Lester and Roberts 2006; Newman 1978; Powell and Clarke 2013; Quinn 2001). Studies that explore religious tolerance in the everyday life of religious communities are particularly intriguing for ethnographic research. These studies highlight the multidimensionality of religious tolerance and intolerance in everyday life (Galbraith, Carlisle and White 2020).

The framework of Schiefer and van der Noll (2017) was followed regarding social cohesion. These authors identified three essential features of social cohesion: the quality of social relations, the identification with a social entity (orientation to a social entity may refer specifically to a religious group, ethnic, national, local, professional, or other group), and orientation towards the common good. Each of the three essential qualities includes other properties (Schiefer and van der Noll 2017: 585). Because of the importance of cooperation and religious tolerance in small-scale local communities, we decided to only focus on these two specific aspects in our study.

In the first section of the paper, we provide an overview of the religious landscape in the Czech Republic within the broader context, and we specifically focus on the region where the research was carried out. This is followed by a description of the research setting, the research participants, the research methods employed, and the data processing and analysis techniques, followed by the interpretation of ethnographic data. In the discussion section, we highlight some of the constraints of the research and suggest potential future directions.

## CURRENT SITUATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Currently, the number of Catholics in the world has increased on all continents, except Europe. However, in 2018, there were 39.7 Catholics per 100 inhabitants in Europe. In the

Czech Republic, the Roman Catholic Church represents the largest organised religious group. According to the Czech Bishops' Conference (CBC 2020), the largest accumulation of Catholics is in the regions of South, Central and South-East Moravia.

The Moravian Ecclesiastical Province consists of the Archbishopric of Olomouc, the Bishopric of Brno, and the Bishopric of Ostrava-Opava. In the Diocese of Brno, there are 450 parishes, which are maintained by 332 priests. Table 1 displays the population of the South Moravian Region in 2021 according to religious belief as counted by the Czech Statistical Office (CSA).

	Number			%		
	total	men	women	total	men	women
Inhabitants	1,197,651	589,553	608,098	100	100	100
According to religious beliefs:						
religious – not belonging to any church or religious society	134,443	60,501	73,942	11.2	10.3	12.2
religious – adhering to a church, religious society or movement	230,654	101,734	128,920	19.3	17.3	21.2
of which:				0	0	0
Czechoslovak Hussite Church	3,045	1,236	1,809	0.3	0.2	0.3
Roman Catholic Church	148,598	63,978	84,620	12.4	10.9	13.9
Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren	4,206	1,831	2,375	0.4	0.3	0.4
Jehovah's Witnesses Religious Society	1,034	434	600	0.1	0.1	0.1
Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands	3,636	1,799	1,837	0.3	0.3	0.3
Without religious beliefs	495,772	257,338	238,434	41.4	43.6	39.2
N/A	336,782	169,980	166,802	28.1	28.8	27.4

Table 1: Population of the South Moravian Region in 2021 characterised according to religious belief.  
Source: CSA 2021a; own processing.

The largest part of the population in this region, more than two fifths, is without religious faith – 495.8 thousand people, i.e. 41.4 percent of the total. Believers belonging to a particular church or religious society accounted for 19.3 percent of the population in 2021 with a total of 230.7 thousand. The highest number of believers subscribed to the Roman Catholic Church. The statistics on population by gender and religious belief in the districts of the South Moravian Region in 2021 are included in Table 2.

	Population total	Religious – adhering to a church, religious society or movement		Religious – not adhering to a church, religious society or movement		Without religious beliefs		N/A		Percentage of believers (professing+ non-professing) of those listed
		number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	%
Region total	1,197,651	230,654	19.3	134,443	11.2	495,772	41.4	336,782	28.1	42.4
<i>District:</i>										
Blansko	107,227	23,818	22.2	12,019	11.2	39,876	37.2	31,514	29.4	47.3
Brno- City	398,510	64,817	16.3	47,799	12.0	178,718	44.8	107,176	26.9	38.7
Brno- Country	226,503	42,030	18.6	24,599	10.9	96,325	42.5	63,549	28.1	40.9
Breclav	113,651	22,653	19.9	12,436	10.9	46,609	41.0	31,953	28.1	42.9
Hodonin	147,773	43,839	29.7	17,090	11.6	46,008	31.1	40,836	27.6	57.0
Vyskov	91,578	15,618	17.1	9,033	9.9	39,924	43.6	27,003	29.5	38.2
Znojmo	112,409	17,879	15.9	11,467	10.2	48,312	43.0	34,751	30.9	37.8

Table 2: Population by gender and religious belief in districts of the South Moravian Region in 2021.  
Source: CSA 2021b; own processing.

## METHODS

### Fieldwork

The fieldwork was conducted in a Roman-Catholic community organised in one selected parish in the Brno-Country District, which is dispersed over two municipalities. It was done for a period of one year, starting on 30 November 2022. In the first phase of the research, the results of which are included in this paper, the data collection was mainly based on participant observation and semi-structured interviews with the residents of one municipality only. This village belongs to the oldest and in the past also the largest settlements in the present-day Brno-Country district. The village cadastre includes a church from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and several wayside shrines and crosses that refer to the “Battle of the Three Emperors”. The world-famous Cairn of Peace Memorial is within sight of the village. The village is next to the famous Bene-

dictine Monastery in Rajhrad, with The Museum of Literature in Moravia, which includes the most distinguished regional writers from the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

The current mayor of the village as well as the interlocutors gave their consent to the data collection. The data gathered during the participant observation have been stored in the field diary. The interviews were based on a pre-prepared form containing thirty questions focused on the research topic and the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. These semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and later automatically transcribed using [Transkriptor](#), online transcription software that speeds up the transcription process with state-of-the-art artificial intelligence.

### Research sample

Ten adult research participants of Czech nationality were included in the research sample. All of them have been permanent residents of the municipality and they have been members of the Roman Catholic Church. The research sample was deliberately selected to have as much heterogeneity as possible concerning the age of the informants, their education and profession. In terms of religion, liberal, conservative, and radical traditionalist believers were included in the research sample (Milbank et al., 1999). Regarding the gender of the research participants, our aim was to contact a similar number of men and women.<sup>1</sup> Both

Pseudonym	Age	Marital status	Highest education attained	Length of residence in years	Profession	Newcomer	Number of children
Romana	49	married	tertiary	22	HR manager	1	3
Ivan	50	married	tertiary	22	deputy director of a higher vocational school	1	3
David	45	married	tertiary	19	head of internal services	1	3
Lenka	48	married	tertiary	19	service dispatcher	1	3
Petr	46	married	secondary	18	service engineer	1	3
Roman	42	married	tertiary	8	academic staff	1	4
Jana	23	single	secondary	23	student	0	0
Pavel	21	single	secondary	21	student	0	0
Jan	20	single	secondary	20	student	0	0
Robin	23	single	secondary	20	student	0	0

Table 3: Research sample. Source: own processing.

**1**

Although the aim was to have a balanced sample, in the end the ratio of men to women settled at seven to three. In the next phases of the research, we will try to balance the research sample in this sense. We believe that this was also due to the researcher conducting the interviews identifying himself as male.

native-born inhabitants and newcomers of diverse professions were intentionally included in the research sample. The names of the respondents mentioned in the text do not correspond to their real names. During ethnographic research, the snowball sampling method was utilised. The snowball sampling method is based on asking a few key informants to recommend someone they know who could be interviewed by the ethnographer (Bernard 2006: 192–193). It is one of the standard methods for finding research participants in ethnographic research (see Table 3).

As is displayed in Table 3, there were three women and seven men included in the sample (mean age: 36.7 years). Six of the ten research participants were married newcomers with three or four children who have lived there on average for 19.2 years. One half of them had completed tertiary, the rest of them secondary level education.

### Data analysis

The transcripts of ethnographic interviews (14.1 pages on average) were converted to PDF and then content analysis was performed in Atlas.ti. Open coding was done in Atlas.ti Mobile. This way, nineteen codes were created (see Figure 1). The basic unit of analysis was one

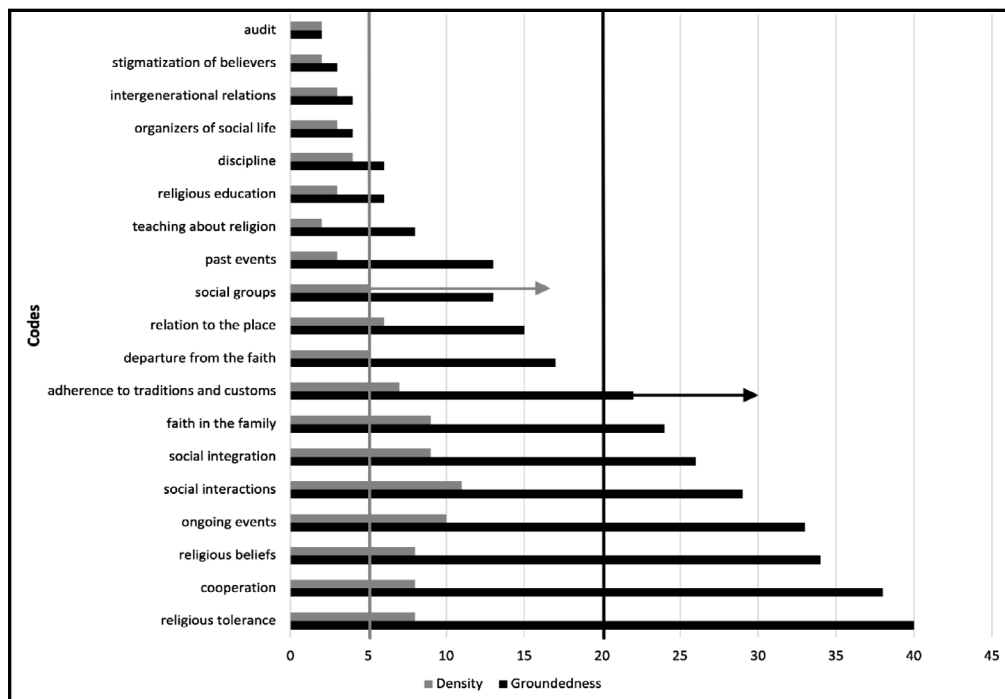


Figure 1: Density and groundedness of codes. Source: own processing.

replica (usually one paragraph in length, which was sometimes split into two pages; in this case, one replica was coded with two codes). Furthermore, the project was exported to a desktop application and there axial and selective coding was implemented considering the density and groundedness of codes. In this context, density reflects links between codes and groundedness serves to confirm the findings. The groundedness represents the number of narratives linked to the code (in other words, the frequency of codes).

Figure 1 displays the codes created during the data analysis. The codes with a density higher than five and groundedness higher than twenty play a significant role in the narratives of the informants. However, in order to focus on the research questions, only religious tolerance and cooperation will be interpreted in the next section.

## RESULTS

This section contains two tables including selected quotations that serve as examples of results found out during the data analysis. Table 4 is linked to religious tolerance and Table 5 to cooperation (see below).

I think that maybe as parents they may have a problem with the fact that their child is dating someone who is not a member of the Catholic Church or is just one of those they consider to be from the different group (Jana 1:12 p. 6).

I remember when my cousin, who lives in England, introduced his girlfriend, a Hindu, to my grandmother who was bedridden. She almost had a stroke. I wouldn't have reacted the way that grandma did, but obviously, I'd probably freak out a bit, though (Romana 2:17 p. 8 – 2:18 p. 9).

I think that Evangelicals are much friendlier. Our kids compare it too. They say that our parish is very cold, that nothing is going on here, that they'll go to the Baptists. My daughter went several times to see the Baptists' Church, and I've told her, "Go wherever you want, as long as it's a Christian church" (Lenka 3:16 p. 8).

Unfortunately, in the 9th grade of primary school, when I once said it out loud, I was even spat on, which kind of threw me off at the time, because I was the only believer or the only practitioner in that class. There were more baptised people there, anyway (Jan 4:6 p. 5 – 4:7 p. 6).

I think that we live a very active life here, a very Christian-social life, that here in the village we are not ashamed of being Christians, in my opinion. [...] There is not such a strong base of atheism here; people who would completely reject it. I think we don't define ourselves against each other here and there is such a nice commonality and belonging (Jan 4:10 p. 7 – 4:11 p. 8).

I think it's very much influenced by the tradition and history that exists here. When I see it in other villages nowadays, where that history and tradition is not there, where those roots are not there, it's getting very hot in those friction areas. Here in our region, I would say, there is no such friction (David 5:7 p. 6).

There are absolutely no problems in this regard. I have thought about this before, and it seems to me that there is a great tolerance (Roman 9:12 p. 8).

Well, our community is incredible. I don't think there are many communities like this. Here, believers and non-believers basically live in symbiosis except for the extremes on both sides. It seems to me that it works well here. In Borderlands, where I come from, the Catholics were completely singled out and were absolutely like they were below the line. They were like subhuman (Petr 10:15 p. 8).

I have a lot of friends amongst non-believers and it's not a problem at all. Among my friends I don't distinguish at all whether they are believers or non-believers, and through my work I have many friends among Evangelicals, to whom I am very close in a religious sense (Ivan 6:15 p. 9). I find it's a big plus that it's sort of easier [when friends are of the same religion]. It's something that brings them together and bonds them (Pavel 7:20 p. 12).

One time I was driving with a friend, and she said something that really made me angry. She said that they were at an evangelical mass and that it didn't count [...]. That struck me as completely bizarre, really (Robin 8:16 p. 11).

Table 4: Exemplary quotations related to religious tolerance. Source: own processing.

Religious tolerance represents a broad umbrella category under which qualitatively different attitudes towards different aspects of religious life have been included. In the broadest sense, religious tolerance may be understood not only as a declared positive attitude of the research participants towards other religions and church members but also as a declared, ambivalent, or negative attitude. We are following a similar approach as Galbraith, Carlisle and White (2020: 91–92), whose study on religious tolerance and intolerance focused on the personal viewpoints of religious individuals and was based on qualitative methodology.

One of the categories that belongs here is religious endogamy. According to several research participants, romantic partnerships and marriages between people of different faiths can be problematic. That is, unions with partners of the same religion are preferred. However, the preference for endogamy may relate to religion, the place of birth of the potential partner, or other characteristics such as social or occupational status (Botiková 2006, 2007; Uhrin 2022b).

Respondents also compared members of the Evangelical faith, Baptists, and members of the Catholic faith — i.e. their group of reference — with each other. One respondent, Lenka, directly mentions how her daughter contrasts social life in the Catholic community with social life in other religious communities. She considers the social life in the Catholic community to be not very active and members of the Catholic community to be reserved or withdrawn. This research participant further declared that her daughter also attends activities related to religious life in the Baptist community. In the opinion of the research participant, it is irrelevant which religious community her daughter is inclined to if the community is Christian.

Despite the multiple religious groups living in the research site, Catholic informants in most cases described interrelationships and interactions between these groups favourably. The research participants attribute the existence of positively reflected relations to “shared history and traditions”, which point to the traditional folk culture shared by adherents of different faiths. In this sense, it may be suggested that it is irrelevant whether this set of practices is linked to the specific practices of traditional folk culture or not. Also, according to the respondents, the absence of this “shared set of traditions” can cause conflicts between people of different faiths living in the same area. The very idea of a shared history and traditions, which transcend individual religious denominations and foster interpersonal interactions, is more important than if this set of ideas really exists (for discussion regarding the concept of tradition see Boyer 1990; Bužeková, Jerotijević and Kanovský 2011; Uhrin 2019).

For example, a small part of the documented cooperation relates to carolling during the Christmas holidays. Carol singing is also linked to the feasting of the carol singers and the socialisation of the individual inhabitants and kinship groups from the village. In this sense, it is not possible to talk directly about cooperation but rather about ritualised display behaviour associated with religious life in the village. Nonetheless, such behaviour, which is abundant in folk culture throughout the year, strengthens social cohesion and group identity.

The research participants attributed several positively perceived characteristics to the community of Catholics living in the village. One of these is “to be proud of our faith.” In conjunction with this statement, there is the inclusion of people who underwent religious conversion on the one hand, and the ostracization of non-believers – symbolically buried separately at the local cemetery – on the other. The informants also highlight that atheism, or the idea of rejecting religion as such, does not have a strong presence in the research site compared to the rest of society. However, most of the informants stated during the interviews that among their friends and acquaintances there are also residents of the village with a different religion, as well as residents without religious affiliation. Nevertheless, according to other research participants, sharing the same faith facilitates mutual interactions and strengthens friendship.

Several research projects have confirmed the above-mentioned tendency of people to prefer interaction and cooperation with members of the same faith. These tendencies and preferences can be explained by the fact that members of the same faith share the same, or at least a similar system of norms, and therefore it is easier to predict their behaviour across various domains (Boyd and Richerson 2002, 2005; Henrich and Henrich 2007; Moya and Henrich 2016).

From what has been presented so far, it appears that research participants consider interpersonal relations with residents of other faiths as mostly positive or neutral. They also emphasize positive relationships not only on a personal but also on a group level, i.e. between Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, and non-believers. The positively perceived symbiosis of intergroup relations is contrasted with previous negative life experiences in other cities and villages in the Czech Republic. One respondent, Petr, perceives this contrast in comparison to his previous place of residence, in the border region of the Czech Republic and Austria, where he believes these relations were considerably negative.



However, some statements in the ethnographic interviews also indicate tensions in personal relations. These tensions were apparent, for example, in Jan's statements when he described an incident that took place at primary school. The respondent recalled how, while openly declaring his religious beliefs at school, an unnamed classmate spat at him. He also points out that several witnesses to this incident among his classmates were baptised. Despite this negative experience, he evaluates inter-religious relations in the research area in a broadly positive manner, so it was probably an isolated incident. Moreover, it took place in a group of teenagers in the puberty period between the ages of fourteen and fifteen, so it is unlikely to be indicative of wider trends. However, confirmation of this assumption requires further in-depth research. Another example from the category of isolated antipathy may be seen in the description of an incident in which his friend, also a Roman Catholic, declared that attending an Evangelical service does not count as legitimate participation in a religious ritual for a person of Roman Catholic faith.

I'd say I know a lot of people here who are nice. And just because of the fact that we meet in the parish and during some of the events that are part of the religious life, I'm not afraid to reach out to them and maybe call them for help if needed (Jana 1:22 p. 9).

Of course, like everywhere, there are also interest groups. [...] There has always been a rivalry between Sokol and Orel, and a very big rivalry still exists, but the edges have been worn down a lot (Lenka 3:20 p. 10 – 3:21 p. 10).

Some people here really don't like each other, but I think that's just like everywhere, except you don't really know that about them [...]. I don't think we are like a different village, that we are somehow better or worse (Lenka 3:25 p. 11).

By the way, during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, which was one of the crises and there was a need for help [...], I think that a lot of people, at least at the beginning, came together, just like in the case of the Ukrainian crisis. It always makes me happy that when a crisis comes, we as a community can somehow come together (Jan 4:25 p. 17).

[People here] help each other out with everyday things, like when you are missing an egg for lunch and your neighbour gives it to you, because, of course, you're not going to go to the mall for such triviality. It's all about those little things like when you need to order something, whether it's food or materials, and maybe you and your neighbour share part of it, you have common transport and you shop together in improved conditions. [...] Otherwise, I think it's also true on a cultural level, where, for example, in our street, when it's Christmas, we meet in front of the house and we just wish each other happy holidays, and the same on New Year's Eve (David 5:19 p. 12).

It also happens during the Three Kings collection, when children go around the village. It has a financial dimension as well. On the other hand, there's a kind of cohesiveness related to it. And the same goes for the cancer flowers. That's the oldest humanitarian collection in this country. [...] You go to get money, you go to ask them to give you some of their wealth, in quotation marks, and the people are very happy that you came. They are grateful to you that you gave them the opportunity to help others (David 5:20 p. 13).

Many people here have good relationships and have many friends in the village. Many just greet each other cordially on the street and meet at various events. So, I think that the neighbourly relations in a broader sense are very good here. But of course, there are also neighbourly disputes (Ivan 6:18 p. 13).

I would say that it's within the realm of possibility, but when I think back to the problem with the former pastor, for example, it was kind of [tense]. [...] I'm not hundred percent sure, but from what I've heard, there was a problem that the pastor didn't want one person to be a churchman, and then it went all the way to the church court (Pavel 7:21 p. 13).

Once we were invited by our neighbours to go with them to the fields to pick potatoes. I thought it was like something from another world that was happening here. I know they do things like that with their friends and relatives all the time. Even the slaughtering of farm animals and the subsequent processing of the meat is a communal thing. Families help each other to build houses for their children, either economically or just materially or even physically by helping with work. They just go there and help (Roman 9:15 p. 10 – 9:16 p. 10).

Among the central events in the cultural life are the feasts, which sort of brings all groups together, all religions, non-believers, and believers, and it's basically like breathing in the same breath, in synchrony, yeah, which I think is nice (Petr 10:20 p. 11).

We are just on the border of a big city and [there is a trend of people moving here] who are not interested in the village as such, but they want to live here to have peace and quiet and not have to listen to the city buses. [...] They just come here to sleep. I say hello to them, of course, but we don't say much to each other (Petr 10:22 p. 12).

Table 5: Exemplary quotations related to cooperation. Source: own processing.

Cooperation, religion, and social cohesion are areas that are inextricably intertwined in the research in social sciences and humanities. Following the work of Joseph and Natalie Henrich (2007), we define cooperation as a behaviour when an individual inflicts a loss or cost on himself to benefit someone else. Boyd and Richerson (2009) operate with a similar definition of cooperation. They consider it as a costly behaviour performed by an individual that benefits others. Costs or costly behaviours may include money, time, labour, food, services, etc. In small groups and pairs, cooperation can take the form of the following activities: babysitting, lending food to a neighbour, providing help with manual labour, preparing a meal for a sick person, etc. Among large groups, cooperation may include participating in elections or neighbourhood watch, recycling, donating to a church or earthquake victims, sharing a meal, paying taxes, etc. In these cases, a larger group of people receives benefits from the costly actions of individuals. Finally, van Schaik and Kappeler (2006) suggest using the word cooperation in its broader sense as an interaction in which the doer and the receiver have gains, or only the receiver has gains.

The interrelationship between religion and cooperation will be discussed further as it is evident in the statements of research participants. First, it is, however, necessary to

outline the domains in which they most often declare cooperation with the rest of the inhabitants of the research site.

Most informants declare cooperation in the domain of everyday activities. This type of cooperation includes borrowing food, helping neighbours out with physically non-strenuous chores, helping with babysitting, shopping for food or construction materials together in a nearby town, picking up postal packages, assisting with car repairs, etc. This domain of cooperation is characterised by high frequency and relatively low-cost regarding time, money or other expenditures.

Another domain of cooperation, on the other hand, is characterised by lower frequency but higher cost. Cooperation in this domain relates, for example, to assistance in seasonal agricultural work, e.g. informants report helping each other with the potato harvest. Another of the domains in which such cooperation occurs is related to the construction work, specifically the building of houses. Specific construction work is carried out by professionals. However, several activities are carried out by close relatives (siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles, godparents, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, siblings of grandparents), neighbours, as well as close and distant friends. Such cooperation is not exclusively related to help with the work but also to financial contributions to the construction (Hulín 2015; Uhrin 2020, 2022a).

Other activities related to cooperation occur during the rearing and slaughtering of livestock, as well as during the subsequent processing of meat. A few informants even identified the slaughtering of pigs, or farm animals in general, as a community affair. There are locally specific rules related to cooperation and reciprocity related to livestock farming and slaughtering. However, cooperation in this activity is not only related to the material and physical assistance – as it is linked to the strengthening of already existing social relationships or the creation of new ones – but also to the acquisition of strategic information regarding the reputation of local inhabitants (Uhrin 2021).

One of the best illustrations of how religion strengthens social cohesion and thus cooperation can be found in Jana's declaration – the first statement in the table above. Jana directly states that belonging to the same parish creates trust between people. She says openly that she would not hesitate to ask parish members for help in case of emergency. Being a member of the same parish in a small-scale local community often indicates close interpersonal or kinship relationships. These relationships are often based on high-frequency interactions that are characterised by mutual trust.

The village's leisure activities mainly revolve around two sports organisations known as Sokol (2024) and Orel (2024). Orel is a Christian sports organisation, whose ideology and worldview are explicitly connected with the religion. On the other hand, Sokol has no declared link to any religious organisation or affiliation. Based on the description of the research participants, the social groups that form around these associations are close-knit, and there is a great deal of rivalry between them in the village, which partly arises due to differences in religious beliefs.

The residents of the village consider Orel, Sokol, and the parish as three main reference groups. Their members organise cultural and social events throughout the year. Apart

from these groups, there are other smaller groups, both formal and informal, such as volunteer firefighters, hunters, the elderly, fishermen, and football players. Members of these groups often build relationships of trust with each other, which results in cooperation and help among them.

Several social events occur throughout the year, organised either by the parish or the municipality. The religious ones can be divided into two broader groups. The first contains various rituals such as services, baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals, schola, and rotaries. The second also included activities somehow related to the religion, but not necessarily of a ritual nature, such as parish café, singing for children, altar boy club and altar boy camp, mothers' prayer fellowship and meetings of the members of the so-called Men's movement.<sup>2</sup>

Municipal events that are not primarily associated with religion include the Clean Up Czech Republic initiative, Children's Day celebrations, the Mothers' Club, and village feasts. However, it should be noted that although feasts are not explicitly linked to religion, religious services are still an important part of them.

The village feasts represent the most significant cultural and social event of the year in the village. According to several people, they are organised by both believers and non-believers. Petr, one of the informants, described them as activities that bring together people from various religious groups, both newcomers and native-born inhabitants, regardless of their differences. He also mentioned that the atmosphere during the feasts is as if everyone was breathing together in synchrony – see the penultimate quote in the table of research participants' statements above.

The feasts are organised each year in June and then on Monday, the Married People's Feast is held in one of the streets in the central part of the village, which takes the form of a mini festival with brass music, dance performances, competitions, and rich refreshments. The Married People's Feast (i.e. a particular feast intended for the married people from the village) is organised by the largest family of native-born inhabitants.

The next phenomenon related to cooperation is migration to the research site. As mentioned in the introduction, the research site is a small village near the regional city of Brno. In line with broader contemporary social trends, migration of Brno residents to the research site occurs. The migrants, according to the research participants, move from Brno mainly to live away from the hustle and bustle of the big city. Several of them participate in the social life of the village and the organisation of cultural and social events. If that is not the case, it is sometimes perceived negatively. Several studies confirm that the participation of newcomers in such activities can act as a signal of trustworthiness, honesty, adherence to local norms or an intention to become a member of the local community. Their absence can thus be interpreted as a signal of disinterest in becoming a member of the group (Andrews 2011, 2015; Power, 2016, 2017, 2018; Uhrin and Bužeková 2022; Uhrin and Horák 2023).

## 2

The so-called Men's movement is an informal community of men who are looking for spiritual experience to identify with and live it with their whole being (Chlapi 2024).

In the ethnographic interviews, there may be noted mentions of worldview clashes between the native-born inhabitants and newcomers. These relate to different aspects of life ranging from religion, political preferences, views on partner life or upbringing, etc.

## INTERPRETATION, DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

As mentioned by Schiefer and van der Noll (2017), social cohesion has three essential features, and each essential quality includes other features. First, the research participants reflected on the quality of social relations in their descriptions regarding the nature of the interpersonal relationships among the inhabitants of the village. It was also notable that the quality of interpersonal relationships is assessed by them in terms of religion. Religious tolerance and the interfaith relationships associated with it are mainly viewed positively, with isolated cases of minor conflicts at the personal level. Similarly, Galbraith, Carlisle and White also found that religion can be a source of tolerance and acceptance in interactions between members of the same faith and between members of different faiths. Their research also pointed to possible tensions in this sense, i.e. to religion as a source of intolerance (Galbraith, Carlisle and White 2020: 93–101), which did not emerge in our research to such an extent. We believe that this difference may be due to the diverse research contexts. While in our study the sample consisted only of respondents identifying themselves as Christians, their research included Muslims and Hindus in addition to respondents of different Christian denominations.

The second essential feature of social cohesion identified by Schiefer and van der Noll (2017) is identification with social entities. This feature was evident in the statements related to the local community, interest and leisure groups, and most importantly, religious groups. The third is the orientation towards the common good, and it is possible to identify it in the descriptions of the behaviour beneficial to the religious or local group (e.g. public and community work such as cleaning and maintaining the church building, organisation of social events either by the parish or the municipality throughout the year). It is well known that participation in social and cultural activities, community events, and religious life is a way of maintaining and strengthening the social cohesion of religious groups (Norenzayan 2015; Richerson 2013; Sosis 2003; Sosis and Ruffle 2003; Whitehouse 2021; Xygalatas 2022).

Based on the analysis of ethnographic data it may be suggested that religion plays a crucial role in the cooperation and social cohesion of small-scale rural communities. Religious rituals and activities related to religious life described above, on the one hand, represent strong factors that not only indicate social cohesion, but on the other also promote prosociality, cooperation, and adherence to social norms. Therefore, they serve as effective mechanisms contributing to intra-group solidarity (Bahna and Talmont-Kaminski 2022; Henrich and Henrich 2007; Norenzayan 2015; Richerson 2013; Sosis 2003; Sosis and Ruffle 2003; Uhrin and Horák 2023).

The empirical analysis of ethnographic data showed that there is a high degree of social cohesion in the village. The indicators of social cohesion include cooperation with family, kin, friends, and neighbours; conduction of community services; organisation of social and

cultural events; and spending leisure time together with kin and ingroups (Avery, Hermsen and Kuhl 2021; Schiefer and van der Noll 2017; Uhrin and Horák 2023). In this context, it is worth mentioning that socio-economic, population, and historical changes over the past century posed a serious challenge to the vitality of cohesion in rural communities (Andrews 2011).

Research in rural communities in the Slovak Republic showed that social cohesion is undermined by a plethora of factors including changes in kinship relations, labour migration, the arrival of new residents, as well as transformation of subsistence strategies, life trajectories and traditions (Gajdoš and Pašiak 2008; Ondrejkoš and Majerčíková 2006; Rochovská and Majo 2013; Rochovská, Majo and Káčerová 2014; Uhrin and Horák 2023). It can be suggested that the same factors could potentially act as disruptors of social cohesion in the rural areas of the Czech Republic. Even though these aspects of social cohesion are not discussed in this paper, it does not mean that the participants did not mention them. For instance, they talked about the arrival of new residents and the level of their involvement in community and religious life in the village. The investigation of factors that can weaken social cohesion could be a valuable area for future research.

From the methodological perspective, it is necessary to draw attention to two similarly looking codes created during the data analysis: “social integration” and “social interaction”. Both codes are closely related to cooperation and religious tolerance. However, “social integration” refers to how people integrate into social life and overcome culture shock, and “social interaction” is linked to the cooperation and socialisation that occurs between neighbours and friends during leisure activities.

Naturally, with a larger and more diverse research sample, it would be possible to identify other domains of cooperation and aspects of religious tolerance. Nevertheless, ethnographic research in the selected field site is still ongoing, so this may be expected to change in the future. Despite this limitation, new topics for the upcoming phases of the investigation have already been found. These include interactions between native-born inhabitants and newcomers, different forms of religious rituals and signals, religious endogamy, norms related to cooperation, and potential punishments resulting from their violation.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, the role of religion in a small-scale rural community has been examined regarding cooperation and social cohesion. The research was done in the Czech Republic, a country frequently described as having a high number of non-religious citizens. Qualitative methods of participant observation and ethnographic interviewing were used to reveal specific aspects of religious life in a local community.

The results of the study seem to be in line with what Hamplová and Nešpor (2009) and Václavík, Hamplová and Nešpor (2018) suggested in terms of the relationship of Czech society to religion. Despite low levels of membership in religious institutions and low levels of participation in religious activities, Czechs are not indifferent to religious and spiritual phenomena. The data analysis revealed that religion is a vital factor in the life of this Czech

community. We assume that religion plays a similar role in other small rural communities, and not only Czech ones, but this assumption will also need to be confirmed by further research.

Ethnographic research showed that religious tolerance is an essential aspect of religious life. Aspects of religious tolerance are evident in attitudes towards partner and marital relationships in people of different faiths, declarable attitudes towards individuals and groups of other faiths, and cooperation and interactions with persons of other faiths.

Cooperation and religion are two areas that are inextricably intertwined. The residents involved in the research sample engage in cooperation in various domains, including both daily activities and exceptional circumstances. This cooperation encompasses activities related to religion, as well as those that are not explicitly linked to it. While most respondents did not express a clear preference for cooperating with individuals of the same faith, some did so. Further research could thus explore whether and in what contexts research participants prefer to cooperate with individuals of the same faith.

Cooperation among members of the same faith is governed by shared norms. At the group level, cooperation is exhibited through the organisation of both religious and secular events. These data on cooperation, tolerance and religion also hint at potentially high levels of social cohesion. However, confirming high social cohesion levels requires further ethnographic research focused on its indicators.

The relationship of the Czech population to religion does not represent a simple research question. Therefore, there is no comprehensive answer included in this text. In any case, the research has clearly confirmed that despite the widespread perception of the inhabitants of the Czech Republic as being “the most atheist in Europe”, religion plays an important role in their lives.

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## POVZETEK

Socialna in kulturna antropologija ter etnologija so prepletene s študijami religij, mitov, magije in ritualov. V panorami študij religij je znanstveno preučevanje ateizma, agnosticizma, nejevere in sekularizacije precej skromno, vendar so ta področja v zadnjih desetletjih deležna vse več pozornosti strokovnjakov različnih disciplin, teoretičnih ozadij in metodoloških pristopov. Medtem ko nekateri namigujejo na nekakšno edinstvenost Češke v Srednji Evropi in med nekdanjimi socialističnimi državami, drugi postavljajo pod vprašaj splošno razširjeno predstavo o Češki kot »najbolj ateistični državi sodobne Evrope«.

Na podlagi obsežne metaanalize so Václavík, Hamplová in Nešpor (2018) identificirali pet praznih prostorov ali skupkov tematskih področij v raziskovanju sodobnih českih religij in verskega prepričanja, in sicer: preučevanje verskih skupnosti; preučevanje zgoščenosti, diferenciacije in porazdelitve vpliva posameznih verskih skupin; predanost verskemu delovanju; preučevanje ključnih strategij verskih skupin; preučevanje ateizma. Članek se osredotoča na prvi »prazen prostor«, preučevanje posamezne verske skupnosti, hkrati pa upošteva tudi preostala štiri področja.

Osrednje empirično raziskovalno vprašanje članka je naslednje: Kakšno vlogo ima religija v manjši skupnosti? Da bi razkrili specifične vidike verskega življenja, so bile uporabljene kvantitativne metode opazovanja z udeležbo in delno strukturirani intervjuji. Analiza podatkov je pokazala, da vera predstavlja bistven dejavnik številnih vidikov življenja v majh-

nih podeželskih skupnostih. Etnografska raziskava je pokazala, da je verska strpnost ključen vidik verskega življenja in da sta sodelovanje in vera področji, ki sta neločljivo povezani.

Člani skupnosti, kjer je potekala raziskava, sodelujejo na različnih področjih, ki obsegajo sodelovanje tako pri vsakodnevnih dejavnostih kot tudi v primeru izjemnih okoliščin. Sodelovanje obsega dejavnosti, ki so povezane z vero, pa tudi tiste, ki niso neposredno povezane z njo. Podatki o sodelovanju, strpnosti in veri nakazujejo tudi potencialno visoko stopnjo socialne kohezije. Kljub razširjenemu mišljenju, da država sodi med najbolj ateistične v Evropi, ima religija, kot je potrdila raziskava, pomembno vlogo v življenju prebivalcev Češke.

# Tu se ne bo nikoli več šivalo: doživljanja izgube dela in propada tovarne, Nina Vodopivec



Simona Kuntarič Zupanc

1.19 Recenzija  
DOI 10.4312/svetovi.2.1.76-77

Knjiga *Tu se ne bo nikoli več šivalo: doživljanja izgube dela in propada tovarne* antropologinje Nine Vodopivec (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2021) opisuje čas propada največje slovenske tekstilne tovarne Mura, ki je »vrh« propadanja doživela leta 2009, ko je bilo iz tovarne odpuščenih 2600 delavk naenkrat.

Monografija je neke vrste arhivski dokument postopnega propadanja tovarne Mura in antropološka študija hkrati. Avtorica je v delu kritična do neoliberalnega ekonomskega modela, ki ga obravnava v kontekstu širših družbeno-političnih preoblikovanj tako sodobnosti kot preteklega socialističnega časa. Vodopivec s svojim dolgotrajnim etnografskim raziskovanjem, ki ga je opravila med letoma 2009 in 2020,

ponudi natančen in bogat pregled dogajanja, občutenja in doživljanja delavk ob postopnem ugašanju Murine tovarne v Prekmurju. Niso je zanimale zgolj ekonomske posledice propada tovarne, pač pa zlasti in predvsem proizvodne delavke ter njihovo doživljanje izgube dela in propada tovarne. Še posebej podrobno se je ukvarjala z vplivom prestrukturiranja dela na čustveno in fizično doživljanje posameznice in z vprašanjem, kaj čustva ob doživljanju izgube dela povedo. Vodopivec zapiše, da »je čustvene pomene treba interpretirati skozi različne vezi in utelešene izkušnje, ki so se oblikovale vrsto let ali celo desetletij« (str. 73).

Etnologija postsocializma se posveča raziskovanju družbenih sprememb, ki so se zgodile in se dogajajo po razpadu sociali-

stičnih sistemov. V enem izmed svojih preteklih del je Vodopivec (2007) preučevala socialni spomin tekstilnih delavk v Predilnici Litija, pri čemer jo je zanimalo, kako delavke reinterpretirajo preteklost v kontekstu sodobnosti. Vendar avtorica opozarja na splošno pomanjkanje študij o izkušnjah in življenju industrijskih delavk v Sloveniji. Te pogosto ostajajo omejene le na muzejske predstavitve, ne da bi delavkam ustrezno priznale njihov ključni prispevek k socialistični industrijski modernizaciji. To pomanjkanje zanimanja nakazuje, da se sodobne raziskave preveč osredotočajo na ekonomske in politične posledice tranzicije, medtem ko spreledujejo pomembne družbene vidike in vloge industrijskih delavk.

Vodopivec je prav tako kritična do naturalizacij, ko sodobne politike, mediji in javni diskurzi industrijske delavke naturalizirajo v socialistične subjekte. Delavke so obravnavane kot tiste, ki se niso aktivirale, niso sprejele imperativa samoodgovornosti in so težje sledile modernizaciji ali pa ji sploh niso zmogle slediti (str. 157), ter so pogosto same oklicane kot odgovorne za izgubo svojega dela. V delu avtorica opozori tudi na pomemben vpliv kapitalizma na fizično in psihično zdravje delavk ter je kritična do zastarelih seznamov poklicnih boleznih v Sloveniji. S temi analizami Vodopivec poudarja potrebo po kritični preučitvi in boljšem razumevanju kompleksnih izkušenj industrijskih delavk ter njihove vloge, ki presegajo okvire preprostih ideoloških ali ekonomskih interpretacij.

V začetku letošnjega januarja so mediji poročali o stečaju še ene tekstilne tovarne v Prekmurju, Mi & Lan v Gornjih Petrovcih. Na nacionalni televiziji smo spet spremljali obraze razočaranih šivilj. Zdelo se je, kot bi

padli v časovni stroj, v obdobje med leti 2008 in 2015, ko so se rušili veliki industrijski sistemi v Sloveniji, ki so jih spremljali isti obrazi delavk, ista jeza, razočaranje in izčrpanost.

Čeprav avtorica v knjigi obravnava obdobje t. i. tranzicije, ki se morda zdi kot preteklost, pa novi primeri stečajev podjetij razkrivajo podobne izkušnje delavk ob izgubi dela tudi danes. S tem, ko obravnava izgubo dela tekstilnih delavk v tovarni Mura, knjiga omogoča vpogled v kontinuiteto izkušenj skozi čas ter omogoča razumevanje doživljanja in občutenja izgube dela tudi danes. Neoliberalni model, ki stremi k privatizaciji, deregulaciji in zmanjševanju socialne varnosti, je pripeljal do tega, da so ljudje postali zgolj »strošek« v izračunih dobička, ne pa ključni deležniki ustvarjanja vrednosti.



# A Report on the International Conference Ethical Dilemmas in Ethnographic Field Research



Tina Ivnik and Petra Hamer

1.25 Drugi sestavni deli  
DOI 10.4312/svetovi.2.1.78-79

On 25 January 2024, Tina Ivnik and Petra Hamer organised an international conference entitled Ethical Dilemmas in Ethnographic Research as one of the events of the ERC project DEAGENCY (№ 101095729). The hybrid conference took place at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology University of Ljubljana and was simultaneously transmitted on Zoom. Twelve presenters talked about the different aspects of ethical dilemmas they have personally faced while conducting fieldwork. The idea for the conference arose from the need to discuss ethical dilemmas more profoundly, exchange ideas and thoughts, provide support and share advice with colleagues and co-workers, who have all experienced different situations in the field.

The conference was divided into five sections, addressing the following topics:

1. The question of reciprocity between the researcher, the interlocutor, and the community

2. How to avoid the politicisation of ethnographic data

3. What does reflexivity mean in practice?

4. Between legitimate and legal

5. What is private and what is public?

Ethical considerations in the visual documentation of fieldwork

In the first section, Csaba Meszaros argued that reciprocity has a strong epistemic value and was an integral part of his fieldwork experiences in three village communities in Yakutia, Russia. Tina Ivnik reflected on her past fieldwork experiences and thoughts about the possibility of establishing a more reciprocal relationship with interlocutors based on her fieldwork in Natisone Valleys. There she used several strategies to 'give back to the community', such as bringing gifts to interlocutors, offering spontaneous assistance whenever needed, publicly presenting the findings of the research, and researching the topic

that the community found relevant. Simona Kuntarič Zupanc emphasised that the anthropologist should not only write about the numerous individuals and institutions that in their various capacities helped the researcher in their fieldwork but also need to share their findings in an accessible way with the community they are studying.

The second section addressed the question of the politicisation of ethnographic data, where Jaka Repič highlighted the concept of the politicisation in/of ethnographic knowledge, saying that the politicisation of ethnographically produced knowledge can be an obstacle to research, but if anticipated and recognised, it can also provide an understanding of negotiating differences and contribute to the debate and action. Petra Hamer argued that in the case of popular music, politicisation is impossible, as music – and art itself – are very political. Based on her fieldwork experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina, she suggested we embrace politicisation and address it critically.

The third section addressed the practical aspects of reflexivity. Uršula Lipovec Čebren discussed how reflexive practices are crucial to all aspects of the research process, from ethical considerations and understanding the researcher's biases and stereotypes to methodological and conceptual decisions. She also addressed the importance of self-reflexivity during one's own research process. In his contribution, Michal Uhrin talked in favour of reflexivity in scientific research on religion, using his own ethnographic research as an example. Juan Esteban de Jager presented two obstacles that might threaten the ways we exercise reflexivity: the dismissal of reflex-

ive dialog and the narcissistic exacerbation of our ethnographic participation.

In the fourth section, Agnes Hesz talked about transparency in anthropological fieldwork, as anthropologists have often been likened to either spies or secret police informers. She emphasised the importance of transparency, but also addressed its limitations. Veronika Zavratnik presented how accepted social practices shape what is considered right and/or legal by focusing on a Carnival practice and reflecting on the role of the researcher and the moral obligation to 'act' based on her experience in Ptuj, Slovenia.

In the last section, Marta Botiková discussed ethical considerations in the visual documentation of fieldwork, focusing on photography at funerals. Visualisation through photography gives a feeling of realness, as photos create a faithful image of reality. She discussed the dilemma involved in taking pictures at funerals, during moments of mourning, as well as taking photos of tombstones. She acknowledged the complex tension between the private and public spheres, as the classification of funeral rituals as either private or public remains ambiguous. Ana Sarah Lunaček Brumen also addressed the role of photography as a valuable methodological tool in ethnographic research as well as a means of presentation. She highlighted the importance of ethical considerations inherent in capturing and publishing photographs, cautioning against potential harm in certain contexts. Furthermore, because the meaning of photography is contextual, she emphasised the ongoing need to consider the relationship between the subject, the researcher, and the viewer.

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