

[講演]

## **RITUAL YEAR IN BULGARIA AND RUSSIA: TRADITIONS AND MODERNITY<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

The aim of my presentation is to outline in a comparative light the recent changes in the calendar ritual years of Bulgaria and Russia. After the break-up of the socialist camp and the Soviet Union, especially during the last 10-20 years, the official calendars of the two countries are subject to constant changes: restructuring, restoring, renaming, re-inventing and even inventing (in terms of the classical study by E. Hobsbawm). Discussing the holidays is an important part of the political and mass media discourse. So although the modern festivals are a topical subject, a comparative study of the two ritual systems has not yet been done.

Apart from official restructuring of the festive time, people in the two countries are developing new attitudes to the ideas of how and what to celebrate and commemorate, since the system of values and the ideology have been altered: the ideologemes and mythologemes the people used to live with have changed, sometimes to the contrary of what came before. In Russia, which had exemplified aggressive atheism during the Soviet times, the Russian Orthodox Church is regaining its power and is very much involved in the political and public life. Bulgaria, which used to be very close to the Soviet Union and pre-revolutionary Russia, is leaning away from this bias and has found a new political orientation: the EU. There are other important changes which influence the run of the ritual years and which I will discuss below.

I will focus on the major trends of change evident in the festive rituals throughout the year, and trace their beginnings. To illustrate these developments, I will analyze several Bulgarian and Russian holidays and will touch upon their significance as seen by the government and the people. In my role as an ethnolinguist, I normally investigate the Slavic and Balkan languages within traditional cultural and archaic rituals, however in this study I am expanding my scope somewhat to research several social, economic (commercialism is an important trend in post-socialist states) and even political issues in the present reconstruction of festive calendars. The scale of present-day changes is so vast that every single sphere of life and respective academic subject is involved. Nowadays the post-socialist countries are

open to Western and Eastern influences and many foreign holidays are becoming popular (St Valentine's day, St Patrick's day, Halloween). People travel more, both outside and inside the country. In this article I will also touch upon the ritual year in the light of the anthropology of tourism<sup>2</sup>, as festivals play an important role in the creation of local attractions and, at the same time, give rise to provincial brands in Russian and Bulgarian cities and villages.

### **I.1. Time and Festivals as Political Values.**

It is essential to start by stressing the importance of the notion of time, of the calendar and particularly of festive time for a state, for its citizens and for every person. The set of holidays celebrated in a country tells us a great deal about its political system, the attitude towards history and the hierarchy of values. In the same way we can say about a person: "Tell me what holiday are you celebrating and I will tell you who you are".

Each era, each drastic historical change in the state ideology and its constitution, political system, religion, membership in unions, systems of values, generate a specific notion of time and the ritual year. There are many old and new examples of the changing cultural and ideological perception of time (we know the French revolutionary calendar with new names for the months). During recent times striking examples have come from some former republics of the USSR. In 2002, the President (Turkmenbas) of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov, changed the names of the months (January was renamed Turkmenbasi in his honour, April was called after his mother Gurbansoltan, etc) and the names of the days of the week. He introduced new holidays: his birthday was declared the national holiday and the day of Independence. 2008 brought a new president, Mr Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, and the Niyazov system was changed to the old traditional Turk system.

On the topic of festive time, it must be added that even without drastic changes in state politics, the calendar is being adjusted according to the contemporary world and the modern way of life. New historical events (be they joyful or tragic) are incorporated into the run of the festive year as commemorative or somber dates, like the September 11<sup>th</sup> in the USA and so on. A new festival – that of Apple Day in London (October 21<sup>st</sup>) is growing into a big national ecological celebration and calendar charity campaign. Many new holidays are being created in provincial cities to develop and support the local patriotic feelings of the citizens, to identify the place and to attract tourists, as I mentioned above.

In Japan, as far as I know, in the third millennium the ritual year is subject to modification. I am talking about the coming of age day, which since 2000 is celebrated on a "lucky" Monday in January; the renaming and rebranding of April 29<sup>th</sup> – as the birthday of the Emperor Hirohito till 1989, when this day was declared the day of greenery, and since 2007 as

Shōwa Day.

## **I.2. Russia and Bulgaria: similar and different.**

I have moved far from Bulgaria and Russia, but these examples are significant for the transformation of calendars especially in post-socialist calendars.

To remind you, one of the first Soviet Decrees published in February 1918 was aimed at conformity with the European Calendar, moving from the Julian to Gregorian system. This caused confusion in dates (the October revolution of 1917 was even celebrated in November and the holiday is known as such), especially as the Russian Orthodox Church kept the Julian calendar, 13 days behind the secular one. After 1989, another drastic change took place: all the former socialist countries initiated the process of rejecting the ideological ritual year and started designing a new pattern.

In Bulgaria and Russia, the major tendencies are similar as they are aimed at constructing a new state ideology and new identity, a new sense of patriotism, accepting integration into the open globalised world; there is also the challenge of taking on new developments and technology.

There are many differences between the apparently similar Slavic countries of Russia and Bulgaria. The distinction lays in the depth of the cultural tradition, history, geography, religiosity and mutual relations between the two countries. I imagine that Russia (and the Soviet Union in the past) might be more familiar to the readers, so I will write more about Bulgaria. This is a small country in the Balkan peninsula with a long history and, what can be called, historical mythology. For Russian (and Soviet) people, Bulgaria has been and remains an “easy” and yet enigmatic country, often difficult to understand. This is partly due to its membership in linguistic, ideological, geographical, political and economic associations. In my article<sup>3</sup>, I argued that at various historical stages **unification, union, integration** have been and still are the key words for Bulgarian society. This idea is reflected in the state logo of the country and has played an important role during the last centuries up to the recent membership in the European Union. *Съединението прави силата* “Unification makes strength”.

When comparing the Bulgarian and Russian ritual systems it is essential to note that, owing to the particular features of its language and geography, Bulgaria belongs to at least two linguistic and cultural systems: Slavic and Balkan. Russia and Bulgaria are sisters in the Slavic family of languages and archaic cultural systems, with Bulgaria as the elder sister. It became a Christian country a century before Russia. The place and historical role of Bulgarian language and culture in the development of the Slavic linguistic union is well known. In Bulgaria, the brothers Sts Cyril and Methodius are regarded as great Bulgarians who, having

created the Slavic ABC and initiated the translation of the Holy Script into old-Bulgarian (in Bulgarian linguistic terminology), are unique figures in the Slavic world<sup>4</sup>. This is important for the topic of this article because the day of Sts Cyril and Methodius – May 24<sup>th</sup> is a great Bulgarian festival<sup>5</sup>.

The difference between the Bulgarian and Russian languages are numerous, partly because Bulgaria shares many features of the Balkan linguistic and cultural union. Not to mention the way the head is moved in the opposite direction for ‘Yes’ and ‘No’, which impresses Russians (and other European peoples) and occasionally ruins communication. The Balkan characteristics make Bulgarian very different from Russian language but aligns it with other languages of the Balkan peninsula: Greek, Albanian, Romanian, Serbian and Macedonian. We must also keep in mind the 5 hundred years spent under the Ottoman yoke, which saw the assimilation of many Turkish words into the Bulgarian vocabulary, the multi-lingual situation in Bulgaria, close relations with neighbouring Balkan countries due to migration patterns, etc. Turkisms (every 60<sup>th</sup> word in Bulgarian speech is not Slavic<sup>6</sup>) and syntactic peculiarities make the Bulgarian language difficult to understand, as is reported by many Russians residing now in Black Sea resorts<sup>7</sup> in Bulgaria.

The socialist period saw in yet a new stage in the development of relations and greatly influenced the way the festive ritual year evolved. For over 40 years Bulgaria was a member of the vast ideological union under Soviet (Russian) domination<sup>8</sup>. This union developed its own language and rituals, which reflected the official ideology and influenced the languages and ritual systems of all the members of the socialist camp. The shift in the Russian language towards “newspeak” by the end of the 40s when Bulgaria joined the socialist camp was remarkable. Countries affiliated after the Second World War as well as receiving the doctrine, atheism, social values, etc., also absorbed ideological clichés and symbols “ready” for usage and copying. Bulgaria seemed to be one of the most loyal socialist countries having accepted the very language (in a broad sense) of the governing ideology and having constructed a new, socialist ritual calendar.

After the break-up of the socialist camp, Bulgaria was almost the first country to exit it, taking French leave (without saying “Good bye”). It was then quick to oppose the seemingly friendly USSR and break off all ties with the Russian language, culture, economics etc. Bulgaria saw the start of a search for a new partnership and new sociocultural orientation – that of the EU. The process of leaving the former friendship had started, but even now, in the 21 century, there are still many people who do miss the socialist regime in Bulgaria and the relationship with the USSR<sup>9</sup>.

Needless to say that in Bulgaria as well as in Russia society is ideologically divided into

those who appreciate the socialist system, remember and value it and those who cannot stand it. The situation is much more complicated than just having two groups. In Bulgaria we can talk about Sovietophiles and Sovietophobes as well as about Russophiles and Russophobes. Occasionally one can read a message such as “We are not against Russia, we are against communism which is still present in our country”<sup>10</sup>, but still in many spheres it is difficult or just impossible to draw a line between the Russian and the Soviet. For many Bulgarians Russian is now a synonym for Soviet and socialism. This is obvious from contemporary political oppositional discourse. The famous Bulgarian politician Sergey Stanishev (half-Russian, half-Bulgarian) is accused of being pro-Russian and pro-Communist<sup>11</sup>. We won’t discuss this question here because of its ambiguity<sup>12</sup>. In our case, the official ritual system of the USSR gives us “pure examples” of the Soviet holidays.

## **II. Soviet and Bulgarian calendar of 1980s**

Before Perestroika and the beginning of drastic changes in the festivals the official calendar in the USSR looked this way:

### **State holidays (days-off)**

- January 1, 2 – New Year
- February 23 – Soviet Army and Navy Day
- March 8 – International Women’s Day
- May 1 – International Workers’ Day
- May 9 – Victory Day
- November 7 – Day of October Socialist Revolution

### **Red-lettered days (selected)**

- April 12 – Cosmonauts’ Day
- April 22 – Vladimir I. Lenin’s birthday
- May 19 – Pioneers’ Day
- June 22 – Beginning of WW2

The list of red-letter days to celebrate included the dates in the biography of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (his birthday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, his death January 24<sup>th</sup>, etc), other historical dates: June 22<sup>nd</sup> the beginning of WW2, the day of pioneers May 19<sup>th</sup>, etc. These days organized the life of the

society and the run of the year, composing a “new religion”, opposed the Christian calendar and the feasts<sup>13</sup>. Of course, it was an official scheme which in various circles was enhanced by secret or at least covert celebrations. Religious people would follow the Christian Orthodox calendar of feasts, the intelligentsia, let’s say had its own festive days, such as October 19<sup>th</sup> – the day closely connected with Aleksandr Pushkin. In the villages the agrarian calendar with many non-official calendar feasts was still alive. In the former republics with their national cultural specific customs there was even more variety.

### **Bulgarian holidays of 1980s**

During socialist times the Soviet ritual year was a way-mark for Bulgaria and other socialist countries. The ritual calendar of Bulgaria was secondary and derivative from the one officially declared in the USSR. The Soviet Day of the October Revolution was officially celebrated as a red letter day. Apart from the Soviet holidays there was a set of red letter or memorial days which alluded to Socialist or revolutionary history of the country. In the 1980s it looked this way:

#### **State holidays (days-off)**

January 1, 2 – New Year

March 3 – Liberation Day (1878)

May 1 – International Workers’ Day

May 24 – Day of Bulgarian education and culture and Slavonic alphabet

September 9, 10 – Day of the Socialist Revolution

#### **Socialist red-letter days**

March 8 – International Women’s Day

April 12 – Cosmonauts’ Day

May 9 – Victory Day

November 7 – Day of October Socialist Revolution

#### **Other festivals (selected)**

January 19 – Day of Obstetrics (Midwives’ Day)

February 14 – Winegrowers’ Day (St Trifon Day, the guardian of vineyards)

March 1 – Spring Day (Baba Marta)

May 6 – Livestock Farmers’ Day (St George Day)

June, 3 – Day of martyrs in the struggle against Ottoman yoke, fascism and capitalism (Khristo

Botev's Day)

December 8 – Students' Day

As we see several dates from the Bulgarian national history have been given an ideological flavor. For example, June 3<sup>rd</sup> the day of the Bulgarian hero of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hristo Botev was celebrated as the memorial date of those who were killed not only in the struggle against Ottoman yoke, but against fascism and capitalism.

### **Differences in the socialist Soviet and Bulgarian calendars**

The Soviet Union was dominant in the socialist camp and it was repressive inside as well as out. It had a longer history of dominating socialism and was more experienced in the struggle against Christianity and folk traditions. In 1930s Stalin declared that before 1937 the very name of Lord must be forgotten<sup>14</sup>, Khrushchev's active anti-religious campaign is also well-known and described. In Bulgaria, atheism and repression of folk customs and holidays were not as severe. Another difference concerns the mostly patriarchal and agrarian way of life in less urbanized Bulgaria. The urban centers, even the capital of Sofia, had strong ties with the villages and the local traditions. Many citizens in Sofia and other big cities were born in the villages, and have kept strong ties with members of families in provincial and rural regions. Even during socialism Bulgarians had nice season festivals which were not official but really popular. March 1<sup>st</sup> marked the beginning of Spring and it was a must to exchange red and white threads plaited together in a beautiful pattern and wish others a prosperous and healthy year. At the end of March these threads were tied to the fruit trees and the ritual proved to be very important (see below on the modern way of celebrating March 1<sup>st</sup>). Other customs and festivals were not forbidden or persecuted. During Socialist times the General Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party Todor Zhivkov praised the folk New Year ritual *soorvakane* and every year pioneers would perform this custom at his residence. This ritual was shown in TV programs. This ritual is for a healthy and fruitful year. The children take cornel branches and gently beat the person with a rhyme, wishing him/her health and prosperity. This ritual, having survived during socialist times, is still alive in Bulgaria.

Compared to the Bulgarian calendar, the Soviet one seems much more militarized and ideologically centered. And less festive, too! There was almost no place for seemingly humane family feasts, besides the New Year, which did give this feeling of a cozy home gathering<sup>15</sup>. Still, it was interrupted at midnight by a speech from the Communist leader with heroic and demagogic content and promises of the bright future. There was a very intimate Old New Year

celebration (January 13<sup>th</sup>), according to the old Julian calendar, with no official intrusion at all. Victory Day was another point in the calendar which apart from the official celebrations appealed to the collective and individual memory (every family had victims or veterans) and therefore united people in sort of a patriotic way. Life-cycle holidays, especially birthdays, were always very important dates in the family calendar, probably compensating for the desire to share positive emotions, as a real festival should do, according to many anthropologists and sociologists<sup>16</sup>.

### **The Christian calendar during Soviet times**

As mentioned above, the Christian calendar was forbidden and for several decades most of the people even forgot (if they at all knew) the names, dates and the content of the feasts, all the more so considering that religious books, Christian calendars and the Testament were not allowed in the country. Anyone owning a Holy Script would have been persecuted. (What a contrast to these days when the day starts with radio programs on the Christian holidays celebrated and the list of the saints who are venerated on that day; advertising, commercials make heavy use of the calendric religious holidays and organize pilgrimages, etc.).

In the USSR, Christians were not allowed to observe the feasts openly; they avoided baptizing their children in the church since they could be immediately fired from their work or college. Many Russian traditions were destroyed, so as to create a new personality – a Soviet man without confession or even nationality (to a certain extent). Still, some religious feasts were remembered and celebrated by the people, even in Moscow and even by the communists.

Shrovetide with the pancakes and Easter with obligatory eggs and the cake (even in the shops at this season there were on sale these cakes under the name of a “Spring cake”) did not wane off. So the culinary part of the holidays is very important, sometimes it serves as a dominant feature of the celebration. Calendric commemoration of the dead and visiting the graves on certain dates was also not forgotten. Old people kept the traditions and passed them on to the younger generations, their grandchildren, even if this was scorned upon by the communist views of the working generation in the family. In particular it was typical for the rural regions where the religious life (at home, not in the churches which were destroyed) still went on and folk customs were observed. We found a lot of unique old beliefs and rituals and put them down during the field research in Brezhnev’s time of stagnation.

In Bulgaria, as I said, the atheistic campaign was not that tough. But Bulgarian society does not belong to a very religious one. This phrase is a common place in many studies, but it has not been studied profoundly, but I argue that the attitude of Bulgarians to the Church, to feastdays and to priests has been and still is not very respectful and cannot be compared to



that in Russia<sup>17</sup>. Meantime the folk religiosity and the system of folk beliefs has been and still is very lively. It led to the fact that several folk feasts have been included into the official calendar under altered names but with the same content. Thus January 21<sup>st</sup>, the official day of Obstetrics, in the folk tradition was (and still is) *Babinden*, the day when the village midwife was honoured by the women who gave birth during the preceding year. February 14<sup>th</sup>, The Day of the Winegrower is the day of folk veneration of St Trifon, the guardian of grapes. May 7<sup>th</sup> the Day of the Livestock Farmer is actually St George Day. Another big religious and folk festival that is of Shrovetide which was famous for the masquerade and carnival was also in favour. Since 1966 Carnival festivals have been organized in the small town of Pernik, where they have now become a major international attraction of this location.

### **III. Transition to the new Ritual Years**

What happened when communist ideology with its calendar and symbols had to give place to something new? Nobody had any idea what ritual calendar to move to, and how to do this. Should it be just the mirror reflection of the pre-revolutionary calendar? Would it be enough to give up the ideological Soviet calendar? These and many other questions arose and still arise from the both sides – government and society.

Changes to festive time on this scale do not happen overnight and are introduced to society slowly, since there were and still are people who share the communist ideology and live with socialist holidays and Soviet symbols. Building a new calendar should reduce tension in society, and suit all generations with various backgrounds. This is the reason we are still witnessing the construction of the new ritual calendars in post-socialist countries, and the final versions are still to come.

The official ‘constructing’ of time involves manipulating the calendar and the ritual year so as to avoid tension and meanwhile filling in the gaps after the depreciation of the communist ideology. Analyzing the new official holidays in Russia and Bulgaria, we can see similar aims in creating the ritual year(s), among which are to develop the national identity through celebrating modern and historical events and to build the image of the country<sup>18</sup>. Since Orthodoxy is thought nowadays one of the major Russian fundamental characteristics, the intention of the government is to give a new appraisal of religious (mostly Christian Orthodox) festivals. Bearing in mind the inertia of post-socialist society, it is necessary to partly keep and correct the existing Soviet celebrations, leaving the same date but renaming the holiday<sup>19</sup>. It is also important to keep the schedule of the festive days, for which reason the date for a

new holiday is close to the former Socialist festival. In doing this, the government is trying to follow European and world systems of festivities<sup>20</sup>. Last but not least, the commercial part of the ritual year is gaining more and more significance, due to the new age of consumerism and the tourist boom.

In Russia, the first step in changing the run of the festival calendar was to reconstruct the pre-revolutionary Christian holidays. When it came to designing the Russian identity and new image of the country severe problems were encountered<sup>21</sup>. The inertia is still very strong, being born and brought up as a Soviet citizen and then to find out that you are Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Chechen is not a simple process.

This is how the Russian official calendar looks in 2013:

### **The Russian State Festive Calendar of 2013 (official days-off)**

January 1 – New Year

January 2-6 – New Year Vacations

January 7 – Russian Orthodox Christmas

February 23 – Defender of the Fatherland Day

March 8 – International Women’s Day

May 1 – Spring and Labour Day

May 2-5 – May Vacations

May 9 – Victory Day

June 12 – Day of Russia (“Independence” Day)

November 4 – Day of People’s Unity (Day of Accord and Reconciliation)

As we see, the calendar consists of new state and ‘old’ Soviet holidays and officially re-introduced Christian feast days. It was difficult to re-introduce the Christian calendar festivities, since their meaning, religious activity and even dates almost completely disappeared from public discourse in the USSR. An even more difficult task was and still is to choose and set up new state holidays, while giving up the socialist ones. There are two new state holidays which are designed to reflect Russian patriotic feelings and identity (June 12<sup>th</sup> Day of Russia, November 4<sup>th</sup> Day of National Unity)<sup>22</sup>. I will shortly describe these celebrations which are not popular in the society; people do not know the correct name or meaning of them, even more so they get confused when it comes to what and how should they celebrate<sup>23</sup>.

June 12<sup>th</sup>, the Day of Russia, under this name was officially declared a state holiday and day-off in 2002 by President Vladimir Putin after almost 10 years of discussions and changing the name and status of it. This holiday was first mentioned as such in 1992 as the Declaration

of Sovereignty Day, one year after the Declaration was signed. In 1998, Boris Yeltsin suggested on the TV that it should be given a shorter name: the Day of Russia. I can share one story which actually started my interest in the new state holidays. Back in 2006, June 12, at the airport of Orlando (Sweden) in the line to Aeroflot I overheard a conversation between two Russian ladies which went as follows: “When we arrive in Moscow the shops may be closed.” – “Why?” – “Today is a day off.” – “Why?” – “Today is an official state holiday.” – “Which one?” – “The Day of Independence.” – “What sort of independence?” – “The day when we realize that nothing depends on us any more.” Independence is probably the key notion which makes people doubt the content of this holiday – what sort of independence and whether this independence was for the best. The ambiguity of the figure of Yeltsin, who declared the Sovereignty of Russia, increases feelings of reluctance about this holiday, depriving it of a joyful mood and feelings of pride.

This information is quoted by the experts of Levada-Center for Social Studies, Moscow. Since 1997, sociologists have been publishing data from polls on the correct name of the new holiday and the attitude to it. 50% (1997) compared 44% (2011) named the holiday “The Day of Independence of Russia” and 0% (1997) compared to 40% (2011) “Day of Russia”; 25% (1997) compared to 11% (2011) did not know about the holiday at all; 11% (1997) compared to 3% (2011) did not consider it a festival at all. We see the dynamics: society is becoming familiar with and used to this day, but the pace is really slow.

The 4<sup>th</sup> of November – the Day of People’s Unity appears to be the substitute festival for the former Day of the October Revolution. In many post-socialist countries after the decay of the USSR and the socialist camp this holiday quickly disappeared from festive calendars<sup>24</sup>. In the Russian Federation, the “October” celebration was kept for a longer time, because a transition period was necessary. After 1992, this holiday was renamed as the Day of Accord and Reconciliation. In 2005, November 7<sup>th</sup> as the major point in the ideological calendar gave way to a new celebration, the Day of People Unity (November 4<sup>th</sup>). The historical background and events which are supposed to be commemorated and evoke patriotic feelings are those rather ambiguous ones of 1612. Minin and Pozharkiy coming from Nizhniy Novgorod fought off the Polish-Lithuanian occupants (and Pseudo-Dmitry) and the ruler became tsar Mikhail Romanov, thus putting an end to the time of turmoil (the key word opposed to President Vladimir Putin’s ‘stability’). Another reason for choosing this date came out later on, in 2006, from the Church authorities, for this is the day of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God. This coincidence of two occasions – historical and Orthodox is very important nowadays for the building of the Russian identity and for an official state celebration of this scale. Many historians insist the date and the reason for celebrating are not correct. Society joins them

in hesitating what and how to celebrate<sup>25</sup>. According to Levada-Center, in 2005, 63% of the informants in the sociological pools were against this day and event becoming a holiday.

The way people have started celebrating this new invention gives us an idea of what the official calendric feasts in Russia today are. The national idea which combines historical events and religious content is at the core of many political performances. In 2006, Nizhnyj Novgorod was chosen as the centre for celebrating this day and the main focus was the square now called the Square of the People's Unity, where the Minin and Pozharskij memorial is erected<sup>26</sup>. The festival program consisted of: laying flowers on the monument by the Vice-President of the Russian Federation, sanctifying a new church dedicated to the Russian St Sergij Radonezhskij, an official demonstration, and a laser show depicting the heroic story of Minin and Pozharskij in the evening. In some "red zones" like Krasnojarsk, the celebration had a Communist aura – the governor himself marched in the streets with rows of workers. The rituals are still to be formulated, because in each location they depend upon ideological issues.

Again, according to Levada-Center research, many people still are not sure what to call this holiday and what is it dedicated to. As far as the name is concerned, 33% (2005) and 25% (2010) people called this holiday the Day of Accord and Reconciliation, while 8% (2005) and 36% (2010) called it the Day of People's Unity. 51% (2005) and 29% (2010) answered that it was difficult for them to say what historical events this festival is commemorating.

From the very beginning this festival has been heavily associated with nationalist organizations and the famous rally "Russian March". In 2013, in Moscow, bloggers commented that the nationalists have privatized and misused this festival.

Quite opposite to the two official holidays I have briefly described above is a very new state festival (but not an official day-off). This is the Day of Family, Love and Fidelity declared in 2008 and found immediate support of the Russian society. This is an example of how one local church celebrations can develop into a popular state holiday. July 8<sup>th</sup> is the day of the saints of Peter and Fevronia (beatified in 1547) of the small city of Murom (Vladimir region) which is now a big state celebration.

Before this holiday was introduced, the city of Murom was famous as a sightseeing place for pilgrimage and rest. In 2000-2007, I used to regularly receive spam letters from tourist agencies such as:

*We invite you to the ancient Murom.*

*You will be welcomed by the hero of the folklore bylinas Ilya Muromets, who will tell you the old legends of Murom. You will hear the story of the patrons of the family Sts Peter and*

*Fevronija and will see their relics in the monastery. Thousands of people come here looking for a real miracle. You will be surprised yourselves to find out that the atmosphere in your family has changed to the better; love and understanding will return to your house. Somebody will return with his/her“ second half”<sup>27</sup>.*

The idea for this celebration was dreamed up in the Russian state Duma (the lower house of the Russian Parliament), while the scenario for the festival was officially launched by Svetlana Medvedeva (the Russian First Lady) with huge support from mass media and governmental structures. To understand why this holiday turned into a very popular one, we need to know more about the figures of the saints that are at the centre of this new holiday<sup>28</sup>. The venerable Peter and Fevronia of Murom are claimed to be the traditional patrons of family and spouses in Russia, the saints who “demonstrated by their lives the very crucial spiritual values and ideals of the Russians”. The medieval legend tells us how Prince Peter, lying at death’s door after being wounded by a dragon, was magically cured by a girl, not of noble origin but the daughter of beekeepers. Peter promised Fevronia he would marry her. She doubted whether he would do this. She healed the prince, but she left a small wound on his body, so the disease might return if he went back on his promise. This is exactly what happened – having recovered, Peter gave up the idea of marrying Fevronia. The disease returned to him. This scenario had place twice. After a third try the prince married Fevronia and was entirely cured. Their married life was very happy, but they did not have offspring. In old age Peter (taking the name of David) became a monk and Fevronia (as Eufrosinia) became a nun. They died on the same day and at the same hour, as they had previously agreed to do. Peter twice sent to announce that he was dying, while Fevronia was not yet ready – she was busy beading an icon. On the third occasion she had finished her work on the icon. She put it aside, lay down and passed away. Peter and Fevronia were buried separately, but on the next day the monks found their bodies lying together. This was repeated three times, so in the end they were buried together and now their relics are kept in one shrine. Peter and Fevronia were beatified in 1547. The canonic text of their lives (“The story of Peter and Fevronia”), written by Ermolaj-Erasm in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was based on a popular legend of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. There are doubts whether this text depicts the saints as patrons of the family or as a model of fidelity. The last sentence of their hagiography tells us that sick people who touched their relics might be healed.

In spite of such a dubious story with cheating and betrayal the story has a very prudent and happy end. The modern interest in religion, especially in its “folk faith” version is really huge. Another point is that this holiday has a Russian flavor, and as such counters the Western celebrations of St Valentine’s day, still very popular in Russia. St Valentine’s day is

complementing the other “gender holidays” of Soviet origin – Defender of Fatherland Day (February 23<sup>rd</sup>) and the International Women’s Day (March 8<sup>th</sup>), which has lost its ideological contexts and turned into commercial celebrations of love and romance. The new holiday should be regarded in the context of a series of other meaningful oppositions: Catholic/Russian Orthodox”, “somebody else’s, imported” as opposed to “our own”, “new/ traditional”, partnership/family, etc. This is not a bank holiday, but the mass-media made it very popular all over Russian territory.

The scale of the official celebration is large. Monuments of Sts Peter and Fevronia are being erected in many Russian cities (and will be erected much more), marking new urban spaces for celebrations and performances. To these monuments new-weds come, medals bearing the images of the Saints are specially issued to couples who have lived together for 50 years by municipal authorities in front of these figures, etc.

A very successful addition to this celebration is the symbol: a daisy – and this flower is everywhere on this day (on the TV, on huge street posters, even on the icons of Sts Peter and Fevronia). There are many comments on the Internet and in the mass-media that the daisy is the traditional flower of love, which is not precisely true (the petals of the flower are used for a divination with the rhyme “He loves me, he loves me not...?”, but no more). There are also speculations that the daisy symbolizes Russia, but Ukraine (and some other countries) claim that this flower symbolizes their country, too.

Since this festival is closely connected to the key values of family, love and fidelity, many young people like to choose this date for their wedding. This aspect, it seems, was not thoroughly worked out during the PR-campaign for the “Day of the Family, Love and Fidelity”. The 8<sup>th</sup> of July, when the Sts Peter and Fevronia are commemorated, always falls on a day during the St Peter Fast. So Orthodox Christians are not allowed to get married on the day that they think would ensure a good start for a stable family relationship.

In 2013, this situation was corrected. A new day of veneration of the Sts Peter and Fevronia has been added to the church calendar. The date had been thoroughly thought of with correlation to church weddings. The new date is movable, and always falls on the Sunday closest to September 19<sup>th</sup><sup>29</sup>. Thus the church has adjusted the calendar to suit the desire of couples to have the opportunity to get married in church on the day of the saints whose marital life symbolizes the most pious and successful marriage.

Now I will give a brief account of most impressive changes in the bigger Christian celebrations, some of which have become very fashionable and popular. A good example is the Epiphany, the day when the waters are blessed: there are huge lines for the blessed waters

in the churches. On this day in Russian ritual practice there is a custom of bathing in ice water called the Jordan. The bather enters a pool of water cut out from the ice in the shape of a cross. During recent years this has become a booming “industry” and also a tourist attraction (some monasteries offer a private hole in the ice and certificate about the bath on Epiphany). Some estate agencies in the country-side advertise their property emphasizing the opportunity to celebrate this seasonal festival<sup>30</sup>.

Thanks to the mass-media and the Internet this winter traditional celebration with swimming in the iced water is attracting more and more people and in every city. The place of the swimming is announced in advance and is now safe-guarded with medical help because of the number of past accidents. Rules are put up: no vodka before, hot tea afterwards, etc. All over the country there are natural places (lakes, rivers) for water blessing and artificial as well. Lines of people are waiting to get into the water, believing their sins will be purified, other think that they will get immunity for the next year. The numbers of swimmers are truly impressive. According to official statistics, in Moscow 27 000 people bathed in such a way. Even in Yakutia, with freezing temperatures down to -65 C, there are outside public water blessings and bathing. The first bathing was performed in 2005, several dozen people joined the priest. In 2013, in the city of Yakutsk only, according to official statistics, 8 000 people bathed in the outside church water reservoir<sup>31</sup>.

In Moscow, one Jordan reservoir is placed near Red Square, near the monument to Karl Marx, and politicians and deputies go and bathe there. The religious idea of purification is taken very directly, as we can see from the many comments on TV and radio. “You should dive three times with your head under, because the devils are in your head, especially in the hair” – this and other comments show the prevalence of superstitions in this ritual act of bathing.

An important comment on this and other Russian Orthodox celebrations is that non-believers and even Muslims, or Buddhists participate in them or at least do not mind such holidays. Here I will add that we cannot argue that Muslim celebrations in the places with Christianity as the dominant religion are welcome or even tolerated. In Moscow, for example there are many heated discussions about celebration of Kurban Bairam in the streets.

To continue with the popularity of Russian church celebrations we need to have a brief look at traditional folk customs, connected with the Orthodox calendar. I will give a short overview of one of the most “Russian” holidays in the ritual year, Shrovetide, Russian Maslenitsa. This is a combination of Pre-Christian and Christian customs, as for the believers it is the week of preparation for the Great Lent. A week of bright colours and masquerades, eating pancakes, performances with fire, games, songs and dances lead to the Sunday of Forgiveness.

Now Shrovetide is widely celebrated everywhere; it is heavily advertised and supported officially and so to say “touristically”. It is also a family celebration with pancakes as a must. In 2012, I studied the ways of celebrating this holiday in Modern Russia. I observed a seasonal entertainment in the streets of Moscow with costumed actors performing, singing and dancing, and a commercial one with pancakes, tea and performance. I was amazed to observe an authentic Shrovetide performance in the very center of Moscow on Povarskaya street. A folklore ensemble which for 20 years has been going to remote villages and took down the ritual folklore organized a Shrovetide performance.

In addition, I followed a tourist advertisement and went to the city of Pereslavl' Zalesskiy where a special interactive program was prepared. Two months before Shrovetide I started to receive several dozen of tourist spam letters, inviting me to the Emperor's Shrovetide in St Peterburg, an ecological one near Tambov, with Tchaikovsky music near Klin, the native place of the composer, to a Shrovetide of the fairytale Baba Yaga at Kukoboj – the village which has won the brand as the “native place” of this personage, etc. The carnival gives the tourist entrepreneurs a very good opportunity to attract visitors: each tour includes some specific local form of the feast, mostly entertaining, interactive, while pancakes, fires, games and songs are the main point of attraction.

I accepted the invitation of a spam letter and went as a tourist to Pereslavl' Zalesskiy to take part in such a performance. I took a combined tour with excursions to two monasteries and three churches, to the lake of Pleshcheevo, where Peter the Great tested his first fleet, and to the Blue Stone surrounded by many local legends, magic practice and beliefs. The major attraction was the Carnival performance in a specially constructed “house of Berendei”<sup>32</sup>. The performance consisted of very traditional ritual acts and entertainment compiled by experts in folklore and performed by professional actors and some local people. We had games, listened to the spring calendar songs, danced and finally burned the figure of the Carnival (Maslenitsa). Some didactic elements were included into the performance, like explaining the terms and ritual acts of each day of Pancake week, teaching some games, etc. This is an important issue for such ethnographic tourism, since the Russian urban culture has forgotten the traditional feasts, and not only children, but their parents and even grandparent have (and are eager) to study folklore heritage.

Now we move to the modern Bulgarian ritual year which looks as follows:

### **Bulgarian State Festive Calendar of 2013**

January 1, 2 – New Year



March 3 – Liberation Day  
May 5 (2013) – Easter  
May 1 – International day of Labour  
May 7 – St George Day  
May 24 – St Cyril and Methodius Day  
September 6 – Unification Day  
September 22 – Independence Day  
December 24, 25 – Christmas

We can see that the holiday of March 3 – The Day of Liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman rule in 1878 is still celebrated as the national holiday of Bulgaria. As many respondents note, it alludes to Socialist national discourse, based on the portentous motto “Russia and Bulgaria are sisters”. The First of May is also here; St George has got the status of a national holiday of Bulgarian Army (apart from being a very important religious feast) and is a day-off. Easter and Christmas have turned into national and state festivals<sup>33</sup>.

Officially, there is no revolutionary date of September 9<sup>th</sup> but there are two new holidays in September, both commemorating Bulgarian history at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since 1998, September 6<sup>th</sup> (Day of Unification) commemorated the date of Unification the Principality of Bulgaria with Eastern Rumelia, 1885, and September 22<sup>nd</sup> (Day of Independence) commemorates the Manifesto of Independence of the Principality of Bulgaria, 1908.

The Day of Independence is rather alien to Bulgarians. People wonder about the date, the name and the content of the holiday. In Bulgarian Internet discourse there is the same game with words about Independence as in Russian. As I mentioned above: “Независимост – значи, нищо не зависи от нас” (“Independence means that nothing depends on us”). For many Bulgarians Independence Day is associated with the world-wide famous holiday of the USA. In 2008, 10 years after the holiday was introduced, professor Georgi Markov noted in his interview for the “Focus” edition, that the Day of Independence was still not realized and accepted by many Bulgarians. The first reaction of the people when they hear of this celebration is the Independence Day of the USA: “I wanted to write about the today’s holiday. The Day of Independence. An American thing, I thought at first. Then I watched the news and discovered, that we also have had such a holiday!”.

In Bulgaria and Russia, the reluctance to celebrate state holidays is explained by a socialist past when civil values were demagogically declared and false, and by the not successful beginnings of democracy when aspirations were let down.

Still, as far as I can see from the outside, Bulgarians are fond of their national flag and gladly take part in many official celebrations, but not the new ones. On May 24<sup>th</sup> 2013, in Sofia I was watching crowds of people of all ages with national flags and flowers, children in folk costumes celebrating St Cyril and Methodius day. In Bulgaria, even during 2012-2013 protest rallies the national flags are in favour, while in Russia the situation is different. I would argue that nowadays, when emigration from Bulgaria is enormous, the festivals connected with Bulgarian history and culture, prominent figures are winning more and more popularity. For example, in 2013, November 1<sup>st</sup>, the Day of the great Bulgarian Enlighteners (“Buditeli”) developed into a huge celebration. The examples of the tendency can be multiplied.

**Bulgarian Church calendar festivals** as celebrated now also differ from the Russian ones. In modern Russia, the official image of Christian festivals is tightly connected with the statesmen, while in Bulgaria the union between the Church and the state is not that obvious and pompous.

There are other significant distinctions. The two church calendars are based on different calendric systems: on the Gregorian (in Bulgaria, with several exceptions) and on Julian (in Russia) systems respectively, therefore the timing of the feasts does not always coincide. I will briefly mention another important difference which implies distinctions in the very liturgical services<sup>34</sup>. They develop due to many reasons, local traditions, church policy and also due to the differences in geography. The way some Christian feasts (Palm Sunday, Whitsun, Assumption Day, etc.) are celebrated depends on geographical zone and the time of germination and ripening of plants and fruit. This distinction affects the green decoration of the churches and houses, the festive service, acts of blessing and the set of the sacred objects venerated at home.

Last but not least, the Bulgarian Church is rather tolerant towards the folk religious tradition and allows some acts to be performed as part of the service or after it, while the Russian Orthodoxy strongly opposes these practices as “pagan survivals”.

These and other differences in Bulgarian and Russian Church celebrations I would like to show by example of Palm Sunday in Bulgaria. It is called Flower Sunday (*Цветница*), or Willow day (*Връбница*) and the key idea here is the vegetation, mostly shown by praising the name day of the people whose names allude to flora. In Bulgaria, people who are christened with plant (flower, herbs, berries, tree) names and diminutives from them are many. Naming in Bulgaria is a vast subject which I cannot discuss here in full<sup>35</sup>. The main principle is that Bulgarian priests are allowed<sup>36</sup> to baptize the baby with whatever name they choose, a combination of syllables of the personal names of their grandfathers, a geographical name

which sounds attractive and so on. In Russia, there is a strict church recommendation on this: a baby can be christened only with the canonic name which is included in the canon, list of the saints<sup>37</sup>. It makes a huge difference in celebrating calendar names days. In Russia, Christians would be celebrating their name day on the day of veneration the saint who is their patron and who has got same name. In Bulgaria, with so many versions of the names shortened, combined, translated, it is different to say who is the patron of the person. Palm Sunday is celebrated by all the people whose name contains the idea of vegetation and it turned into almost a national holiday. The religious meaning of Entrance of Our Lord Jesus Christ to Jerusalem has submerged and was almost totally replaced by the importance of the name day.

Selectivity is one of the tendencies which is typical of the attitudes of society towards festivals. Some of the holidays as we see are not accepted by the people, and some of them become really popular. I will give another example of a Bulgarian festival which has proved to be very stable through the ages and nowadays is turning into even a bigger celebration with elements of national identity and a touch of “Bulgarianness”.

This is the called Baba Marta festival, or the First of March, the beginning of spring which is a very important date in the Bulgarian calendar. This is one of the most “Bulgarian” holidays, in spite of the fact that many other Balkan people do celebrate it and they also give red and white decorations (Moldavians, Romanians, Greeks). The custom is to exchange the decorations of white and red threads (called in Bulgarian ‘martenitsa’) and wear them on the hand as a bracelet or on the clothes and to wear them until you see the first stork or other spring bird. Then the threads are put on a tree preferably a fruit tree in blossom and in a sacred place (near church or in a monastery garden). Those who travel in Bulgaria can see many red and white threads on fruit trees and bushes, especially in the monasteries and nunneries, but not only. I found hundreds of martenitsa at the quarters of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, in the Tsars garden in the very center of Sofia, around the University and in other places. This ritual was supposed and still is significant for children, unmarried girls and women who want to get pregnant. There are many mythological beliefs, folklore texts and ritual practices connected with the First of March. There is a folklore personage Old Woman Marta (Baba Marta), who marks the border between two seasons – the winter and the spring<sup>38</sup>.

Since socialist times I remember impressive markets in Sofia for selling martenitsa, and performing the ritual exchange of the decorations made of white and red threads. Every Bulgarian correspondent thought it a must to post a martenitsa to a foreign friend, and inside the country, too. Back to 1970s the growing love for martenitsa was noted by the ethnographer Khristo Vakarelsy<sup>39</sup>. Today the custom is present and is even increasing in scale. Now with the development of the Internet on the First of March there are many e-cards and virtual martenitsa

emailed throughout the world to and from Bugarians.

The First of March is gaining new folklore, pragmatics and national-wide meaning. The martenitsa is becoming a national symbol of “Bulgarianness”, although these threads are known to other Balkan peoples. I interviewed Bulgarians about the Martenitsa and received several very typical responses, reflecting the importance of this ritual and the very object: e.g. «It seems to me that I came to the world with a martenitsa». Everybody has memories from childhood and the grandmother or grandfather – the keepers of the tradition.

The narration on the origin of this ritual of exchanging threads goes back to Thracian times Orpheus decorated his lyre with the martenitsa [http://lead.actualno.com/news\\_224185.html](http://lead.actualno.com/news_224185.html). Esoteric ideas, popular in post-socialist countries, are also involved (“March is the month of special energy”, as my correspondents wrote to me), while the Christian symbolism of the red and white colours is also topical (<http://forums.pravoslavie.bg/viewtopic.php?p=544&sid=82d5fa62dce078c0a5b4d291c5c8bbf>). During Soviet times the threads were seasonally manufactured in the schools during home economics class.

All my respondents noticed that “This ritual is our own, unique Bulgarian tradition”, symbol of Bulgaria. A large 860 meter long martenitsa was created for the book of Guinness (<http://baba-marta.vlez.bg/?showpage=20319>). In Bulgaria, all the nations and confessions recognize it, and think of it as typically Bulgarian. Even knowing that in other countries March 1<sup>st</sup> is also celebrated, but it is explained by the fact that compact groups of Bulgarians used to live on these territories ([http://www.mitropolia-varna.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1263](http://www.mitropolia-varna.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1263)).

A new feature is indicative of very important trends in the modern transformation of every holiday. The meaning and form of the celebration are being brought in line with archaic traditions, analogies and new practices. A change in the system of values brought in new semantics and formulae – that is, wishing good luck and money. The array of the objects which receive a martenitsa is growing. Some people put the martenitsa on the neck of their favourite pets, put them on cars and bicycles. White and red threads are seen in the cemeteries on this day<sup>40</sup>. If somebody dies, a martenitsa is put into the coffin as other things traditionally can be put together with the corpse (cigarettes, glasses).

The martenitsa are occasionally seen in churches. In line with the habit of decorating icons with the greenery, on March 1<sup>st</sup> some icons are decorated with red and white threads. Some of the respondents say that it was an Orthodox Christian ritual. Still the mass media and religious discourse on the Internet does not accept it saying it was a pre-Christian survivor <http://forums.pravoslavie.bg/viewtopic.php?p=544&sid=82d5fa62dce078c0a5b4d291c5c8bbf>). People treat the martenitsa as a sacred object. For example, they do not throw it away, they

burn it similarly to old objects taken from the church.

The scale of celebrating March 1<sup>st</sup> in Bulgaria and the commercialization of the holiday is huge. There is an unprecedented scale of industrialization of the martenitsa, the choice of them at markets is huge, there are those with small pictures of pop-stars sportsmen, signs I LOVE YOU (in English, or Bulgarian) and other romantic symbols, to reflect the trends of mass culture. The threads have become a national symbol. The holiday is seriously discussed as the most “Bulgarian” festival. The reasons for such a boom can be traced in the post-socialist search for national and self-identification<sup>41</sup>.

March the First is a celebration that could potentially be eligible for the status of a major national holiday. “Let’s revive and save the Bulgarianness” is the motto of many supporters of this holiday.

## **Conclusion**

After a brief and fragmentary analysis of the Bulgarian and Russian (Soviet) ritual years, I would like to stress the dynamics of the way modern new holidays are designed compared to the stagnation and consistency of the festive calendars during socialist times. Two countries are still searching for their national identity, “Russianness” and “Bulgarianness”, and for a national idea which would unify the people and make them believe in it and support it. There are unending discussions of the restructuring of the calendar in the Russian Duma: whether to change the status of the Victory Day (9 of May); which memorial dates to add to the ever growing list of them in Russia. I will quote just one opinion on the state festivals, that of academician Juriy Pivovarov the head of the Institute for scientific information on social sciences (Russian Academy of Sciences), who does not support the tendency of Soviet communist holidays to be adjusted to modern Russia. He suggests searching for a new date to celebrate the Day of the Defender and to choose May 9th which is a great and a sacred holiday. This date as he argues does not have any Soviet flavor, instead it is all-Russian. “And we have forgotten about the day of the start of the First World War”, Pivovarov put in<sup>42</sup>. In Bulgaria, the search for a new paradigm is also rather topical. Same discussions are characteristic of Bulgarian statesmen, scholars and the society. Apart from the above mentioned big celebration of March 1<sup>st</sup>, the Day of the Sts Cyril and Methodius, which alludes historically and culturally to the golden age of Bulgaria, is being suggested as the major Bulgarian national holidays.

Constructing a ritual year has its specific features in each country. The historical dates which are incorporated into the run of the festive year and the political and religious

(including the confession) background differ, as far as the balance between church and secular celebrations, the attitudes towards the European Union are concerned. The speed of change and the establishment of new (old new) values involved is also different. Still, the global processes which we are witnessing now in the development of the states and societies are similar in the development of the festive systems in Russia and Bulgaria. The list of them would include globalisation and “regionalization”, simplicity (of the language, ritual, etc) and yet diversity, desire to enjoy life and celebrate many events (the so called homo feriens with the motto “Celebrate your life”), commercialization of cultural and religious phenomena, the boom of ethnographic tourism, etc.

Last, but not least suggest that more academic attention needs to be paid to the development of new rituals and to the construction of the ritual year. Being so vivid, obvious and well-illustrated, the transformations of the national ritual years, as it seems to me, are underestimated by the scholars in many countries. Probably one of the reasons for this is the similar “simpleness” and availability of ethnological, folklore and sociological data. Traditional folklorists and ethnologists of pre-Internet generations are not used to obtaining research material that easily, close to hand, and to use it for theoretical generalization. Another reason as I see it is the reluctance of the post-socialist societies at this historical stage to follow the decisions of the governments, which in many countries are unpopular and are subject to fierce criticism. Yet a comparative study of the post-socialist festive years in all the former members of the socialist camp is a topical research issue.

### 【Notes】

- <sup>1</sup> This article is based on the lecture I read in February 2013 at a meeting of the Japan Society for the Study of Slavic Languages and Literatures in Waseda University. I am very grateful to the Chair of JSSLL Prof. Naoto Tsuchiya and especially to Prof. Susumu Nagayo, for the kind invitation to give a talk, and to the audience for a very fruitful discussion followed my presentation. I express my deep gratitude to Dr Motoki Nomachi who organized my lecturing tour to Japan on behalf of the Slavic Research Center of Hokkaido University in the framework of Global COE project “Reshaping Japan’s Border Studies.” This visit gave me the opportunity to learn a lot about Slavic studies in Japan, and exchange my ideas and plan our further cooperation with Japanese scholars. Not to mention how happy am I to see the wonderful country of Japan and to experience the fabulous hospitality of the Japanese people.
- <sup>2</sup> This discipline is not well developed in Russia yet, contrary to the Western anthropology, where there are many publications on this topic: Nash, Dennison (ed.). *The Study of Tourism. Anthropological and Sociological Beginnings*. Oxford: Elsevier, 2007; Smith, Laurajane, Waterton, Emma & Steve Watson (Eds.). *The Cultural moment in tourism*: Routledge, 2012 and many other books and articles.

- <sup>3</sup> Sedakova, Irina. From Ideological Union to the European Union: Sociocultural Dimensions of the Bulgarian Regime Changeover. In: *Dynamics of National Identity and Transnational Identities in the Process of European Integration*. Edited by Elena Marushiakova. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008. Pp. 44-55.
- <sup>4</sup> I won't go into an in-depth discussion of the origins of the two brothers, since in this article I am describing this Bulgarian festival and its history from a Bulgarian point of view. Otherwise the distinctions between Russian and Bulgarian academic opinions in this sphere are well known to the specialists.
- <sup>5</sup> It is a state holiday and used to be a red-letter day dedicated to the intellectuals in Bulgaria even in the socialist times. In 1980, Pope John Paul II proclaimed the two brothers patrons of Europe. Soviet people with friends in socialist Bulgaria used to receive postcards for this holiday, but hardly anybody would have known about that day. In contemporary Russia, this day has gained in recognition since Gorbachev's time and especially during the last decade when the Church and the State have announced a sort of union, and church celebrations have acquired a political flavor.
- <sup>6</sup> Стаменов, Максим. *Съдбата на турцизмите в българския език и българската култура*. София, 2011.
- <sup>7</sup> These communications are now very abundant because many Russians have bought real estate in Bulgaria. Bulgarians now need to know Russian for commercial, rather than previous ideological, reasons. Russian has become an official language in some Bulgarian recreational regions (<http://www.tass-press.ru/c4/352704.html>. 15.11.2013). This phenomenon of new Bulgarian-Russian contacts is influencing the development of festivals, at least on a local level, as well.
- <sup>8</sup> For the notion of ideological language union during the Soviet times and the process of its disintegration see Седакова, Ирина. Распад «идеологических» языковых союзов: универсальное и специфическое. In *Сборник докладов российской делегации к XIV съезду славистов*. Москва: Индрик, 2008. С. 429-450.
- <sup>9</sup> My field research in Bulgarian villages and cities prove that most of the older population without higher education is still very fond of the socialist times, festivals, and Soviet realia. This is an interesting phenomenon, which can be explained by several reasons: nostalgic feelings for their younger years, economic problems, migration of their families, the challenges of the new world with its technologies, etc.
- <sup>10</sup> <http://www.plovdiv-online.com/plovdiv/item/49275-m%D0%B0gwosnitz-pr%D0%B0sht%D0%B0t-bsp-v-nebitieto>. 26.07.2013.
- <sup>11</sup> See an “anti-Stanishev” essay alluding to his “Russianness” and affiliation with socialism in a very negative way: <http://www.svobodata.com/page.php?pid=12422&rid=20>.
- <sup>12</sup> The definitions and the very concepts of the Russian and Soviet have been thoroughly studied by academic scholars in many discourses. See, for example, an article published in Japan Kamusella, Tomasz. The Change of the Name of the Russian Language in Russian from Rossiiskii to Russkii: Did Politics Have Anything to Do with It? In *Acta Slavica Iaponica*. Tomus 32. Pp. 73-96. Still, even in Russia *русский* and *российский* remain vague notions.
- <sup>13</sup> Some of the Soviet holidays are rather mysterious, falsified and are a result of long-scale propaganda. The process of forming the Soviet ritual year took a long time because of the urge to destroy the Christian calendar and the development of new attitudes to the new country. Just one example: February 23<sup>rd</sup> celebrated since the first revolutionary years in Soviet Russia – only in 1923 was it given an explanation and reason for celebrating it on this date. (<http://www.istorya.ru/articles/23fevr.php>. 20.01.2013). The history and the process of imposition of each Soviet holiday in any region, or city, or village of the

- USSR needs to be investigated in detail. For the example of the city of Izhevsk, see Блинов, Максим. Праздничная культура провинциального города в раннесоветский период (на примере Ижевска). In: *Šventės šiuolaikiniam miestui. Festivals in the Modern City*. Vilnius: Edukologija, Pp. 127-137.
- <sup>14</sup> There is a vast bibliography on this subject. For a detailed analysis see Шкаровский, Михаил. Сталинская религиозная политика и Русская Православная церковь в 1943-1953 годах. In: *Actae Slavica Iaponica*. Tomus 27. 2010. Pp. 1-27.
- <sup>15</sup> See: Душечкина, Елена В. *Русская елка: История, мифология, литература*. Санкт-Петербург: Европейский Университет, 2012.
- <sup>16</sup> A festival as the most concrete expression of collective emotions is defined by Robert Briffaud. Festivals. In: *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931. Vol. 6. Pp.198–201.
- <sup>17</sup> In 2005, the Russian priest Father Aleksander of the St Nicholas “Russian” church in Sofia, told me in an interview that he was shocked by many pagan acts and survivals which Bulgarian priests included in various services, especially in the villages.
- <sup>18</sup> On Bulgarian strategy in constructing the ritual year see: Anastasova, Ekaterina. The National Festive Systems in the Post-Socialist Space – between Past and Present. In: Kõiva, M. (Ed.). *The Ritual Year 6. The Inner and the Outer. The Yearbook of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year*. Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press, 2012. Pp. 159-169.
- <sup>19</sup> E.g. The Day of the Soviet Army and the Navy got the contemporary name “Defenders of the Fatherland Day”.
- <sup>20</sup> This is especially valid for Bulgaria. Since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, Bulgaria has been a member of the EU. Bulgarians had great expectations for quick progress, but it looks that it brought over mostly frustration.
- <sup>21</sup> The problem of building the identity has been studied in depth, and the bibliography is vast. See, for example *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction*. Eds. Franklin, Simon & Emma Widdis. Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- <sup>22</sup> There are new red-letter state memorial dates: The Day of the Constitution (December 12<sup>th</sup>) – we see that it is celebrated close to the previous date that of December 5<sup>th</sup>. The day of the Russian flag is another date introduced after the decay of the USSR. This has been celebrated on August 22<sup>nd</sup> since 1994 in commemoration of the coup d’etat of 1991 and re-introduction of the Russian Flag according to the decree of August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1991.
- <sup>23</sup> For more details see Sedakova, Irina. Inventing the Ritual Year in Modern Russia. *The Ritual Year and History (The Ritual Year 3)*. Stražnice: Lidova kultura, 2008. Pp. 51-58.
- <sup>24</sup> Instead, there appeared Days of Independence (including from the USSR) and memorial days of the Soviet “occupation” (like in Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Georgia, etc).
- <sup>25</sup> See for example a short chronology of the events in 1612 by historian Evgenij Pchelov: Пчелов, Евгений. Хронологический комментарий «Дня народного единства». On [kogni.narod.ru/time4.htm](http://kogni.narod.ru/time4.htm) (January 15, 2013).
- <sup>26</sup> Erecting new memorials and monuments (we shall discuss this further on in the case with Sts Peter and Fevronia), as well as churches is part of the new state policy in constructing the Russian identity.
- <sup>27</sup> An account of spam letters reflecting the constructing of the ritual year in Russian provincial town see in Sedakova, Irina. The Russian Ritual Year and Folklore through Tourist Advertising. In: *The Interplay of performance. Performers, researchers, and heritages*. Ljubljana, 2012. P. 119-136.
- <sup>28</sup> More on this holiday and its romantic content see in Sedakova, Irina. Weddings and the Ritual Year in Modern Russia. In: *The Power of the Mask. The Ritual Year 5*. Kaunas: Vytautas Magnus University, 2013.



Рр. 55-62.

- <sup>29</sup> <http://www.pravmir.ru/osennij-den-semi-lyubvi-i-vernosti/>. 15.09.2013.
- <sup>30</sup> [www.prime.ru/2013/01/18](http://www.prime.ru/2013/01/18).
- <sup>31</sup> Абрамова, Мария. Влияние праздника на сохранение этнокультуры и формирование мультикультурности современного города. In *Šventės šiuolaikiniame mieste. Festivals in the Modern City*. Vilnius: Edukologija, 2013. P. 20.
- <sup>32</sup> Folklorists do not regard Berendei as a hero of Russian mythological pantheon, though he is very popular in literature and modern folklore. See more at <http://dom-berendej.ru/>.
- <sup>33</sup> More on this see in Симеонова, Гатя. *Традиционни празници в състояние на промяна..* София, Академично издателство «Марин Дринов», 2000.
- <sup>34</sup> This subject needs a very thorough study. There are no easily accessed documents which would prescribe some acts performed by the priests during liturgy which could explain the differences in modern Russian and Bulgarian Church services.
- <sup>35</sup> On drastic differences in Bulgarian and Russian naming and celebrating the name day see Седакова, Ирина. Балкански мотиви в езика и културата на българите: Раждане и съдба. София: «Академично издателство “Марин Дринов”», 2013. Chapter 2. Рр. 87-102. (In Bulgarian).
- <sup>36</sup> As Bulgarian and Russian priests commented to me on that difference, there are no published bans on that naming in Bulgarian Church documents. They also approve of one Christian in Bulgaria to celebrate the name day several days a year, on difference holidays and Saints days, see Хаджистоянов, Борис (свящ.). *Българските имена в църковно народната традиция*. София: Зуница, 1989. P. 5.
- <sup>37</sup> Even a smaller difference (one letter) in the passport and church name should not exist in the Church practice of christening, confessing and other acts. If a man is called officially Sergej, his Church name will be Sergij, Artem's Christian name is Artemij, and so on. Same is strictly kept for girls and women: Tatjana's Church name is Tatiana, Angela's is Angelina, etc. If there is no saint with the name given officially to the baby, (s)he is christened with another Church name: Oksana is baptized as Ksenia, Victoria as Nika, etc. Even Jurij and Svetlana were not church names until new saints with these names have been beatified. Before that Jurij had Georgij as his Christian name, and Svetlana's Cristian name was Fotinia.
- <sup>38</sup> The archaic rural practice performed on that day has not been kept in the cities, but survived in villages (typically spring rituals of driving away the snakes from the yards, cleaning the houses, etc.).
- <sup>39</sup> Вакарелски, Христо. *Етнография на България*. София: Наука, 1977. 3. 510.
- <sup>40</sup> In May, 2013, in the Sofia Central Cemetery I found martenitsa on the graves of the famous Bulgarian pop-singers, writers and common people.
- <sup>41</sup> The image of Bulgaria abroad is supported by the idea of this celebration. In Moscow, there is a restaurant called Baba Marta (Old Woman Marta). The owners explain the choice of the name by the extreme popularity of the festival in Bulgaria. They link the idea of the restaurant with entertaining, food, dance, health, good luck and money, typical for this seasonal holiday (<http://clublife.ru/babamarta/>).
- <sup>42</sup> <http://www.pravmir.ru/23-fevralya-mozhno-li-pereformatirovat-sovetskij-prazdnik/>