

WHO SPEAKS BELARUSIAN? THE LANGUAGE SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

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The article presents the current situation of the Belarusian language and of its speakers. The analysis is based on empirical material collected with the use of ethnographic methods during the period from 1998 to 2005 and 2010, as well as on information found in the professional literature on this subject and on the Internet. The article explains why Belarusian is seen not only as a communication code, but also as a stigma and a manifestation of political views, and how this situation shapes the attitudes towards the language. Additionally, the article presents efforts focused on the promotion of Belarusian language and culture undertaken by informal groups, such as *Spajemstvo* or “Let’s Be Belarusians!” The article also shows the difference between the perceived and real use of Belarusian in everyday life.

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Artykuł poświęcony jest współczesnej sytuacji języka białoruskiego i jego użytkownikom. Źródłem analiz są materiały empiryczne zebrane metodą etnograficzną, podczas badań prowadzonych od 1998 do 2005 i w 2010 roku, literatura tematu oraz dane, pochodzące z Internetu. Wyjaśnia z czego wynika zróżnicowane postrzeganie języka białoruskiego – jako kodu komunikowania, stygmatu, manifestacji poglądów politycznych i jaki ma to wpływ na stosunek do tego języka. Opisane zostały także działania na rzecz białoruszczyzny i kształtowania środowiska białoruskojęzycznego, podejmowane przez nieformalne grupy, takie jak *Spajemstvo* (lata 90. XX wieku), czy kampanię „Bądźmy Białorusinami!” – funkcjonującą od 2008 roku w Internecie i w rzeczywistości. Ważnym wątkiem artykułu jest zwrócenie uwagi na to, komu przypisywane jest posługiwanie się językiem białoruskim, a kto rzeczywiście z niego korzysta w codziennym życiu.

Keywords: Belarus, bilingualism, grass root movement, national identity, social activism, social organisation, *Trasianka*, vulnerable language

“A person is defined by the language they speak”¹ (KW. Archives. Interview 20). This is what I heard during one of the first conversations I recorded during the ethnological

¹ Orig. “Čalavek es’c’ tym, na âkoj move ën razmaŭlâe”. All quotations are from recorded and transcribed conversations. The original quotations in Belarusian and the information about the interlocutors (limited to gender, age, place and the year the conversation was recorded) are provided in the footnotes. The entire material collected during research in Belarus is held in the author’s archives.

research I conducted in the Republic of Belarus². At first I thought that these words pertained to me as the researcher, who, not fluent in Belarusian, was asking questions by mixing Polish, Russian and Belarusian words. However, remembering the rule that one should use the language of the researched community, I did not give up and with time, my questions became clearer and the conversations started to flow naturally. It was then that I understood what the above comment about the defining properties of language meant. It referred to the relationship between language and national identity, which was very meaningful in the Belarusian context.

The fall of the USSR and the creation of the Republic of Belarus in place of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) raised many questions for the citizens of this country. One of the questions pertained to language, understood in national and communication terms. However, the answers varied and they depended on the context and the interlocutor. The same was not only true for average citizens, but also for the intellectual elite and power holders.

With this in mind, the objective of this article is to present the current situation of the Belarusian language and to identify and describe its users and the contexts in which the language is being used³. The activities shaping Belarusian culture will also be described.

A FEW NUMBERS

According to the 2009 national census⁴, the population of Belarus is 9,503,807 people, including 7,957,252 (83.7%) Belarusians, 785,084 (8.3%) Russians, and 761,471 (8%) from other nationalities⁵. The language data included in the 2009 census is divided into two categories: the declared language for home communication and the declared language for general communication. Belarusian for home communication was declared by 4,841,319 (approximately 61%) people and 2,073,853 (approximately 26%) declared they use Belarusian for general communication. By contrast, 2,943,817 (approximately 37%) indicated Russian as the language of home communication and

² The research was conducted from 1998 to 2005, and in 2010 in Minsk and the surrounding areas, with the use of ethnographic methodology (conversational interview), and several conversations per person. There were 95 subjects, 80 of them declared themselves to Belarusian. Out of the 15 non-Belarusians, 11 were Russians. Conversations were conducted in Belarusian, Russian and occasionally in *Trasianka*, a popular language mix in Belarus.

³ The article does not deal with issues related to the use of the Belarusian language in religious institutions (including the Roman Catholic Church). This subject requires a separate, detailed discussion.

⁴ The 2009 census was the most recent national survey in the Republic of Belarus. The next is planned for 2019.

⁵ Nacional'nyj statističeskij komitet Respubliki Belarus. http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/perepic/2009/vihod_tables/5.8-0.pdf, access: 23.01.2014. See also: <http://census.belstat.gov.by/pdf/PopulationNation-ru-RU.pdf>.

5,551,527 (approximately 70%) as the language of general communication. Bilingualism was declared by 2,216,374 (approximately 28%) of Belarusians⁶.

Analysis of data from the 1999 and 2009 census indicates a decline in the use of Belarusian, both for home and general communication. In 1999, 85.6% of Belarusians declared Belarusian as the language of home communication and 41.3% as the language of general communication⁷.

In March 2012, a social organization “Let’s Be Belarusians!” and the Laboratory for Axiometrical Research NOVAK, conducted a survey called *Belarusian, the Language of the Elite and the Opposition*⁸. In this survey, 57.2% declared Belarusian and 78.7% Russian as their language of communication. The total number indicated that 35% of the surveyed population were bilingual. The survey also aimed to assess the number of people, who “know” Belarusian and those who “actually use it”. The results indicated that 23.4% know the language, but only 3.9% use it. The comparison of the 2012 and 2009 data showed a decrease of 10% in the ‘know’ group and of 2% in the “use” group.

Additionally in 2007, the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies conducted a survey pertaining to the use of Belarusian by the President of Belarus. The results indicated that 34.3% did not see the need for the President to speak Belarusian, 34.1% thought that the President should address citizens in Belarusian on special occasions, such as national holidays, and 29.7% wanted the President to use Belarusian in daily communication (Eberhardt 2008, 25).

On the one hand, the above noted examples indicate the decline in the number of users declaring Belarusian as the language they know and use and, on the other hand, they signal an ambivalent attitude to this language. As the result, an application to declare Belarusian as an endangered language was filed and the language was designated as ‘vulnerable’ in the UNESCO Interactive Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger, on 30 May 2013⁹.

THE SITUATION OF THE BELARUSIAN LANGUAGE AND ITS USE

The data presented in the first section of the paper, although important, does not explain the causes of the vulnerable position of the Belarusian language. Therefore, the collected narrations provide additional information on the current situation of this

⁶ Nacional’nyj statističeskij komitet Respubliki Belarus. http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/perepic/2009/vihod_tables/5.8-0.pdf, access: 23.01.2014.

⁷ Nacional’nyj statističeskij komitet Respubliki Belarus. http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/perepic/2009/vihod_tables/5.8-0.pdf, access: 23.01.2014.

⁸ Vyniki sacyâlagičnaj apytany: belaruskâ mova – mova èlity cì apazyčy. <http://www.tbm-mova.by/monitoring17.html>, access: 23.01.2014.

⁹ UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap/language-id-335.html>, access: 04.02.2014.

language. Almost all conversations pertaining to this subject started with an assessment that the language issue is difficult. As justification, people often added that “Belarusians do not speak Belarusian not because they do not want to, but because they forgot how to”¹⁰ (KW. Archives. Interview 16). They also tried to explain the causes that led to this situation. Many historical facts, memories, and stories of personal experiences appeared in the collected narrations. The events mentioned in the interviews went back to the 19th century and included, for example, the ban imposed by the Tsar on speaking Belarusian in public places¹¹, but also to the concerted efforts to develop Belarusian language and culture, called Belarussification¹², which took place during the 1920s and 1930s, or to the repressions imposed by the Soviet authorities on Belarusian intellectuals in the 1930s. Most of the interviewees knew about these events from books and the fact that they recalled them during the interviews indicates that the state of the Belarusian language has long been ambivalent.

Other events recalled by the interviewees took place in the 20th century, and hence had been witnessed by some of them. People evoked the time of World War II¹³ and the post war period, when the Soviet nation was shaped. The Soviet nation building process included tactics such as the strengthening of the pro-Russian administration¹⁴, repatriations¹⁵, increasing the membership of the Communist Party¹⁶, and an increased Russification¹⁷. Out of all the tools used in the process of building the Soviet nation Russification was the most significant as it followed the directive of Nikita Khrushchev, who during the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the BSSR in Minsk said that “the sooner we all start speaking Russian, the sooner we will build

¹⁰ Orig. “Belarusy ne razmaŭláuć na belaruskaj move ne tamu što ne hoćuć, a prosta âny zabyli âe”.

¹¹ It refers to the 1830s ban on sermons in Belarusian, connected to the revocation of resolutions of the 1596 Union of Brest, which established the Greek Catholic Church in Belarus (Szybieka 2002, 77).

¹² In Belarusian historiography, Belarussification denotes the period of Belarusian language and culture development.

¹³ During World War II approximately 2,700,000 of Belarusians were killed (on in four people). A memorial in Khatyn commemorates the lives lost and all towns and villages that were burnt entirely at the time.

¹⁴ From 1945 to 1955, approximately a million Belarusians (cultural and professional elite) were deported and replaced with Russians. Russians were also placed in the positions of power in the national and local administration (Mironowicz 1999, 183).

¹⁵ From 1947 to 1953, approximately 90.000 Belarusian workers left their homeland and were replaced by Russians (Szybieka 2002, 371).

¹⁶ After 1945, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus adhered to the resolution of shaping the society in the spirit of the Soviet patriotism, and in hatred towards the German invaders (Szybieka 2002, 372–373).

¹⁷ Russification intensified after the 1945 toast by Joseph Stalin, in which he called the Russian nation the leading power of the Soviet Union (Szybieka 2002, 372). In 1951 censorship of literature was imposed and the number of Belarusian newspapers and periodicals was reduced. In the 1960s the majority of cultural institutions used Russian as the official language (Mironowicz 1999, 188–189, 211).

communism”¹⁸ (Szybieka 2002, 375). The implementation of this postulate was visible in the public and private sphere and most of all in education¹⁹. The ubiquitous Russian popularized Communist propaganda while pushing national Belarusian messages to the level of ethnography and folklore (Radzik 2000, 76). These concerted efforts contributed to the “progress of denationalization and de-Belarusification” (Lucèvič 2010, 236). Moreover, the Soviet propaganda of that time promised benefits resulting from using Russian. One of the interviewees recalled:

“At the time I was more keen to use Russian, but it was my parents’ fault, because they decided for me. They thought that speaking Russian was more prestigious”²⁰ (KW. Archives. Interview 27).

The spread of education in Russian²¹, to the detriment of Belarusian schools, was a sign of those times. In that period, Belarusian schools kept functioning only in smaller towns and villages. All city schools were Russian. They offered classes in Belarusian, but only as an elective subject. Additionally, a rule allowing exemption from learning Belarusian on the grounds of a doctor’s note and parents’ request was introduced (Dubànecki 1997, 45, Trusau 2007, 115). One of the interviewees spoke about it:

“When I started school, you did not have to study Belarusian. Parents provided all kinds of excuses, be it health reasons or family problems. Any reason was good to get an exemption from Belarusian class”²² (KW. Archives. Interview 58).

At the end of the 1960s, a division had occurred with respect to the use of language. Russian became the language of cities and Belarusian the language of rural areas. Hence, the city was associated with Russian, education, social advancement, and with the elites while the country was equated with Belarusian, lack of education, backwardness and lack of culture. This issue was strongly emphasized in the interviews:

¹⁸ This was a paraphrase of the 1956 Tashkent resolution stating that ‘Russian should become the second official language for all nations belonging to the Soviet Union and it should be the source of lexical enrichment for their native languages’ (Mironowicz 1999, 210).

¹⁹ From 1949 to 1951, a seven-year primary education was mandatory and it was extended to eleven years after 1959. Due to the initial lack of Belarusian teaching staff, Russian teachers were brought in. Later, local Belarusian teaching staff was trained, but the teachers’ education was in Russian. Initially, it led to bilingualism at schools. After 1951, Belarusian was no longer obligatory as the language of instruction or examination. Beginning in the 1970s, the programs of study were designed in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) (Szybieka 2002, 375, 400).

²⁰ Orig. “À bol’s aryentavašà na ruskuù movu, u gètym vinavatyâ mae bac’kì – àny zrabili takì vybar, tamu što ruski àzyk ličylsà znač’ bol’s prèstyžna”.

²¹ All institutions of higher education provided instruction in Russian (with the exception of the Departments of Philology, where one could specialize in Russian or Belarusian).

²² Orig. “Kagda à pastupìla ù školu bylo tak, što nas asvabadžali ad belaruskava àzyka, to est’ po kakìm- liba pryčynam: to po sastaàn’ni zdaroviâ, to es’li ù kago-ta nepalnacènnaâ sâm`â. Lùbaâ pryčyna padhodžila dlâ tavo štoby asvabadzič’ rebënka ad belaruskava àzyka”.

“When I arrived in Minsk in 1981, I felt strange, but I knew that in the cities people did not speak Belarusian. My cousins, who went to the city to study, told me about it. They had adopted the Russian lifestyle and they spoke Russian, so I also tried to speak Russian, when I moved there”²³ (KW. Archives. Interview 94).

With time, terms such as, “the language of the country”, “rural language”, “farmer’s language”, “futureless language”, “dirty language”, and “broken Russian” became equated with Belarusian, while terms such as, “high language”, “language of education”, and “language of intelligent people” became to denote Russian.

The first significant signs of change occurred in the 1980s and were brought about by protests organized in defence of Belarusian. The protests included letters²⁴ written by Belarusian intellectuals to Mikhail Gorbachev and an underground publication *Mother Tongue and the Moral-Aesthetic Progress*²⁵ by Aleg Bembel (1985)²⁶. These efforts resulted in small incremental changes in the attitude towards the Belarusian language and its speakers. It showed that also educated people speak Belarusian. Subsequent changes occurred after the fall of the Soviet Union, when the independent Republic of Belarus was being formed. The beginning of the 1990s was the time of concerted efforts in rebuilding the prestige of the Belarusian language, which was established as the official language of the Republic²⁷. The assessment of these changes by the interviewees was ambivalent, although no one doubted that Belarusians should speak “their language”, that is Belarusian. However, the interlocutors remarked that the return of Belarusian to official status stemmed from the political agenda rather than from the actual need to use Belarusian²⁸. Moreover, the protagonists who had earlier been

²³ Orig. “Kali â pryehala ũ 1981 godze u Minsk, mne bylo dziŭna, ale â ũžo vedala, što ũ goradah ne gavorač’ pa-belarusku. Mne gëta kazali mae svaâki âkiâ ũžo vučylisâ ũ goradze j perajšli na ruski lad i gavaryli pa-rusku, tamu j â staralasâ ũ goradze gavaryč’ pa-rusku”.

²⁴ It refers to the letters written in 1986 and 1987 and signed by 28 and 134 renowned writers, scientists, journalists and artists, respectively.

²⁵ Orig. *Rodnae slova i maral’na-ëstëtyčny pragrës*.

²⁶ Similar protests also took place earlier. Already in 1956, Bronislav Rževuski, Professor at the Pedagogical Institute in Grodno wrote a letter to the BSSR authorities in defence of the Belarusian language. In 1957, Lavon and Michas Bely posted fliers all over Minsk, informing the public about this letter. The same year, an article by Barys Sačanka entitled *Šanavac’ rodnuju movu* was published in the periodical *Literatura i Mastactva*. In 1968, students from the Public Belarusian University demonstrated against the Russification. Finally, in 1977, an anonymous at the time author (in fact Alâksej Kauka) published a letter entitled *To My Russian Friend* (Szybieka 2002, 389–415).

²⁷ Article 17 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, dated 15 March 1994 establishes Belarusian as the official language. The Constitution also guarantees freedom of communication in Russian, which is regarded as the language of international communication.

²⁸ Nelli Bekus has noted that, at the time, the language policy centred around the ethno-linguistic project of Belarusification, which focused on the Belarusian language, while rejecting everything that was related to the Soviet times and the Russian language. She deemed it a mistake of the Belarusian patriotic opposition, because in her opinion, the Belarusian nation was shaped under the rule of the Soviet Union, together with the modernization of the society. Therefore, the idea of the Belarusian nation is not in

involved in eradicating Belarusian became its biggest supporters and propagators in the new Republic, which resulted in an inconsistent message:

“If someone steps up on a podium and says that it is our duty to speak Belarusian and then you visit them in their home and their children speak Russian, then you ask a question: Who is he preaching to? Why do you tell others that Belarusian is important, but you and your family do not have it in high regard? When I notice this, I do not believe you anymore and I will not do as you tell me”²⁹ (KW. Archives. Interview 5).

Moreover, the fast pace of re-Belarusification often felt as the language was being forced on the speakers. However, the interviewees also talked about the positive sides of the process, such as the return of Belarusian as the language of instruction in schools and the idea of a 10% salary bonus for those that spoke Belarusian. Overall, the interlocutors admitted that communicating in Belarusian was important, but that it should not have been forced.

The language issues reappeared when Alexander Lukashenko became the President of Belarus in 1994. The interviewees emphasized that this event marked the return to the policy of Russification³⁰. One of the signs of this policy was the referendum of 14 May 1995 asking citizens whether Russian should also have the status of the official language in Belarus. 83.3% of voters supported this option³¹, which resulted in an amendment to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, proclaiming two official languages, Belarusian and Russian. This amendment was added to the Act of 26 January 1990 on Languages in the Republic of Belarus³². It is important to note how the regulation pertaining to the use of Russian and Belarusian was formulated, especially how the conjunctions ‘and’, and ‘or’ were applied in the text of the document. The first conjunction is inclusive while the second one is exclusive³³, which impacts the interpretation of the language regulation. The conjunction “and” was used in the article sanctioning two official languages. However, the conjunction “or” was used in the articles pertaining to the use of language in the following areas of public life:

opposition to the Soviet experience and the Russian language is not perceived as a foreign language, but rather it is an integral part of the Belarusian cultural heritage (Bekus 2011, 120–122).

²⁹ Orig. “Kali čalavek vyhodzič’ na trybunu ì gavoryč’ što trëba kab byla belaruskâ mova, a pryhodziš da âgonaj haty, a âgo dzeci razmaïlâûc’ pa-rasejsku. Dyk dlâ kago ž ty gëtyâ lozungi kidaû? čamu ty gavaryš inšamu, što gëta êš’c’ kaštoûnas’c’ a sam gëtaga ne ûûlâeš sabe ì svačej sâm`i? Ì kali â adzin raz zlavil çabe na gëtym, to â bolš tabe ne veru. Â ne budu rabič’ tak âk ty kažaš”.

³⁰ However, analysts assess the situation differently. Mainly, they notice the populist character of A. Łukaszenko’s actions and they see it as a part of his strategy to ensure the continuation of the language policy from the times of the BSSR (cf. Bekus 2011, 122).

³¹ The reported participation rate in this referendum (approximately 80%) was very controversial and doubts were voiced with respect to the accuracy of the reporting.

³² The most recent changes to this Act were introduced in July 2011. See the webpage of: *Zakon Rëspubliki Belarus, 26 studzenâ 1990 g. N 3094-XI, Ab Movah U Rëspubliki Belarus*. http://tbn-mova.by/laws1_8.html, access: 23.01.2014.

³³ Sometimes the conjunction ‘or’ is inclusive or clarifying.

technical documentation, democratic rights (voting), courts (including civil, administrative, criminal, and notarial)³⁴, public services (transportation, communication, health care, and commerce), education (although detailed regulations also make use of the conjunction “and/or”), research, cartography, and trademarks. On the other hand, the conjunction “and/or” is used in articles pertaining to public administration and its documentation (including personal identity documents), academia (meetings and conferences), culture, media, military, international agreements, adverts and commercials. The conjunction “or” appears once in the article pertaining to the provision of legal protection. Average citizens do not notice these nuances, because they are convinced that the law ensures them the right to both languages, which is guaranteed by their equal official status. However, in reality the Russian language has a privileged position³⁵.

Other activities confirming Russification, mentioned by the interviewees, included: limited use of Belarusian in the media, closing of Belarusian periodicals, a decreasing number of books published in Belarusian, and closing of Belarusian schools. All these issues are highlighted by the Tavarystva belaruskaj movy imâ F. Skaryny (TBM)³⁶, which is lobbying for changes in the actual status of the Belarusian language³⁷. One of the ongoing campaigns of TBM is filing official requests with the authorities and publishing the replies on the TBM’s website³⁸. One such reply to the inquiry pertaining to school closures reads that the issue is not the number of schools, but the number of children who attend them. On 12 January 2009, the Ministry of Education released information that a total of 91,290 children started school in 2008/2009, including 73,579 (83.3%) children enrolled in Russian language schools and 14,712 (16.7%) in

³⁴ An interesting article on the use of official languages in the legal system of Belarus and the requirement for document translation is available on the webpage of: <http://www.tbm-mova.by/pubs28.html>, access: 23.01.2014.

³⁵ I was able to confirm this during my visit to Minsk in 2010. As a foreigner temporarily living in Belarus, I had to register my place of residence with the local authorities. The registration form I was given was only in Russian. I was told that the equivalent form in Belarusian did not exist. Other examples include instructions for computer use provided to the participants of the 5th International Congress of Belarusian Studies or signs posted around the city, such as notices about conservation works (despite the fact that the name of the company performing the work was in Belarusian, *Minska spadčynâ* [*Heritage of Minsk*]), etc.

³⁶ The F. Skaryna Belarusian Language Society was established in 1989. Its objectives are to defend the language rights of Belarusians and to support the development of Belarusian language and culture. More information is available at the TBM website: <http://www.tbm-mova.by>, access: 23.01.2014, also 29.04.2018.

³⁷ These objectives are included in the TBM’s document *Strategy of the Belarusian Language Society. The Belarusian Language Development in the 21st Century* prepared by Zaprudski S., Anisim A., Koščanka U., Kručkou S., Maldzis A., Tabolič A., and Cychun G., available at the TBM’s website: <http://www.tbm-mova.by/mova.html>, access: 23.01.2014.

³⁸ In 2015, the idea of sending requests to the national and local authorities and to various institutions took on a form of monitoring the ease of access and the freedom to use the Belarusian language in various areas of life. The published reports indicate how and where the law on the equal status of the Belarusian and the Russian languages is upheld. See: <http://www.tbm-mova.by/monitoring.html>, access: 29.04.2018.

Belarusian language schools³⁹. These numbers confirm the low status of Belarusian, although the choice of education in Russian is not surprising. Taking into consideration that education in Russian has been mandatory since the 1930s, attending schools with the Russian language has become “natural” for many people. It might be why

“Belarus is the only country in the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS) without a *Russkiy Mir* Centre [an institution for the promotion of Russian language and culture], while there are eight such centres in the neighbouring Ukraine” (Wierzbowska-Miazga 2013, 28).

This indicates that Russian has a strong position in Belarus, while Belarusian and attitudes towards Belarusian are determined by the environment. When Belarusian is used for challenging the authorities, it becomes the synonym of opposition and is viewed negatively. Outside this context, it is just another means of communication.

As the result, Belarusians function in a system of two languages, Belarusian and Russian, and in the increasingly popular *Trasianka*⁴⁰. *Trasianka*, as the communication code, is created by mixing Belarusian and Russian, although more languages may be included in the mix. The choice of languages and the percentage of elements from each language in *Trasianka* depend on the region. For example, *Trasianka* spoken near the Russian border would include more Russian elements, while spoken near the Polish border would include more Polish words. Some of the interviewees were convinced that *Trasianka* is mostly used by people from rural areas while linguists claim that

“*Trasianka* is more often used by people holding administrative and technical positions in rural areas and also by the inhabitants of small and medium towns than by uneducated rural population” (Smuřkowa 2000, 92).

Finally, we need to ask how different spheres of life impact the use of the above noted languages. The interviewees stressed that the choice varies and depends on the context (the situation, places, people involved in the conversation, but also the ability to communicate – an ease in code switching is noticeable in these situations). However, some regularities in the use of language can be established. The majority of interlocutors mentioned the use of *Trasianka* in the home environment. Very few people declared the use of pure Belarusian or Russian in those circumstances. The mixed language also dominates in informal situations (for example during breaks at schools or on the street). However, at school and at work (and in other formal situations) Russian is the dominant language while Belarusian is rarely used. On the other hand, Belarusian has become “an export language” of sorts, because people who travel⁴¹ (mostly to Western countries) try to speak Belarusian (if it is required).

³⁹ List Miñiŝtėrŝtva adukacyi Rėspubliki Belarus ad 12.01.2009 No 06–17/7231/ds. <http://tbn-mova.by/pubst18.html>, access: 23.01.2014.

⁴⁰ The word *Trasianka* is derived from the word *trėsci* meaning “to chop” or “to mix” (Sudnik and Kryũko. eds. 1999, 666).

⁴¹ Obviously, apart from speaking foreign languages, mostly English.

THE USE OF BELARUSIAN

Looking at the speakers of Belarusian in the above-noted context, the interviewees distinguished two groups. The first group includes people from rural areas, but also blue-collar workers, who as the first generation have moved to the city, and older people who have left their villages to move in with their children living in the city. This shows that city dwellers can also speak Belarusian, assuming they come from the country⁴². Hence, speaking Belarusian determines membership of a social group, which follows the stereotype instilled during the times of the BSSR (Belarusian is the language of rural areas and Russian is the language of the cities). The second group of Belarusian speakers includes people with higher education, especially intellectuals with a background in humanities⁴³. Thus, the group includes Belarusian philologists, who often teach Belarusian, writers, and artists. The fact that this group was singled out by the interviewees may be seen as the continuation of the view instilled at the times of the BSSR, that the only form of Belarusian spoken in the cities is professional jargon. On the other hand, the interlocutors claimed, those intellectuals constitute a group especially interested in literature, history, art and broadly understood culture. Moreover since 2000, teenagers and young adults are increasingly counted amongst the speakers of Belarusian. One of the interlocutors noted that:

“there is a noticeable tendency amongst the youth to speak Belarusian, because it brings them prestige”⁴⁴ (KW. Archives. Interview 5).

Another interviewee added:

“Young people who see their future in the independent Belarus, begin to be interested in the Belarusian language”⁴⁵ (KW. Archives. Interview 72).

Andrej Dyńko, editor in chief of *Nasza Niwa*, a Belarusian weekly, made similar observations:

“Belarusian is no longer the rural language of the kolkhoz [collective farm in the Soviet Union] and of [local] broadcasting. It is the language of young people, artists, and intellectuals. It is the language of protest, nonconformism, punk, challenges, and of western way of thinking” (2007, 62).

⁴² The dominant view is that all Belarusians come from a rural background.

⁴³ It is important to note that science background is not in opposition to an interest in humanities. For example, Professor Jury Hadyka, who initiated research on Belarusian culture, is a physicist and a philosopher of religion.

⁴⁴ Orig. “Užo sârod moladzî vidac’ tëndencyû razmaŭlác’ pa-belarusku. Gëta dlâ ãe præstyżna”.

⁴⁵ Orig. “Da belaruskaj movy pryhodziç’ moladz’ ãkaâ z’vâzyvæ svaŭ buduçynŭ z suverënnaj krainaj”.

Hence, small changes are visible in the attitudes of the speakers of Belarusian⁴⁶ as well as in attitudes towards the speakers themselves. The environment plays a significant role in this process. The creation of a Belarusian-friendly environment is not easy, yet not impossible. The activities of informal groups such as *Spajemstvo*, NGOs such as the World Association of Belarusians *Bačkouščyna* or of independent institutions of culture, such as the art gallery “Ū” in Minsk are a proof that it is possible.

Spajemstvo was established in 1996 in Minsk⁴⁷. Its founder, a psychoanalyst, wanted to create a space, where people who wished to communicate in their mother tongue (Belarusian) but had no opportunity to do so at home or at work, could come together. At first the group met at the clinic, then at the offices of the Minsk branch of the Belarusian National Front (BNF) and finally at the building of the Belarusian Language Society. In principle, anyone could become a *spajemnik*, however, meeting notices were published in *Naše Slovo*, a Belarusian newspaper, which indicates a specific readership. In general, new members were introduced to the group by the old members. Members of the group included people of various educational and professional backgrounds. What brought them together was the need to speak Belarusian. One of them said:

“Today, a person who is interested in speaking Belarusian is alone and needs a group of people with similar interests”⁴⁸ (KW. Archives. Interview 40).

Another person added:

“I work in an international environment and I miss the warm Belarusian support network, I miss someone that I could talk to ... I need close friends”⁴⁹ (KW. Archives. Interview 44).

Membership of the *Spajemstvo* varied, although there was a core group of about ten to twelve people who attended the meetings regularly. Although the form of the meetings and objectives of the group⁵⁰ resembled therapy sessions, the meetings meant much more to the participants. They provided an opportunity to meet friends and some people continued their friendship outside of the formal group meetings. Soon, the group began to organize other activities, such as bonfires, trips around Belarus, and staged a play by Janek Kupała, entitled *Paŭlinka*. The group continues to meet

⁴⁶ It is especially visible on the Internet, where an increasing number of comments come from people who use Belarusian. This group includes public figures, such as Mikita Najdzionau, the leader of the band HURMA. See: Mikita Najdzionau: W twórczości jestem całkiem białoruski. <http://eastbook.eu/2014/01/country/belarus/mikita-najdzionau>, access: 22.06. 2014.

⁴⁷ My attendance of “Spajemstvo” meetings made me aware of the existence of other groups of this kind. I learned that there were a few of them in Minsk and also in other cities, e.g. in Maladzyechna and Grodno.

⁴⁸ Orig. “U naša vřemâ kali čalavek incerësuecca belaruskim žykom, èta značyc’ što èn sam i àmu patrëba adnadumcaŭ.”

⁴⁹ Orig. “Maâ praca absalûtna ìnternacyânal’naâ i mne brak ščyraga plâča belaruskaga, z kim možna spakojna pagavaryc’ (...) mne trëba lûdzej blizkih”.

⁵⁰ Objectives included: improvement of language skills, learning about Belarusian culture, finding people with similar views, self-improvement, and the development of Belarusian patriotism.

today, although the deciding factor nowadays is a long-lasting friendship rather than the need to speak Belarusian.

Another example of shaping the Belarusian-speaking community is the “Let’s Be Belarusians!” campaign initiated and organized by the World Association of Belarusians *Bačkouščyna* in 2008. The campaign is conducted both online and on the ground⁵¹. The objectives of the campaign include educating the public about the value of Belarusian language and history. The name of the campaign is very telling as it calls for the creation of a community by organizing social and cultural events aimed at all inhabitants of Belarus, regardless of their language, national identity or political views (Garoška 2009, 4). The campaign encourages consistent use of Belarusian in all its activities and is characterized by a high level of professionalism, cultural acumen and artistic quality. Some of the projects include: a postcard series entitled “We are Different!”⁵², the production of music albums of new bands singing in Belarusian, computer keyboard stickers enabling typing in Belarusian on keyboards with Latin alphabet, an animated film about the history of Belarus⁵³, and a series of short films showcasing places of historical importance all over Belarus and encouraging travel around the country⁵⁴. Another educational series, employing elements of fantasy has the same objectives⁵⁵. Moreover, the “Let’s Be Belarusians!” campaign supports the organization of many cultural events⁵⁶ and provides current information about these events on its website. An increasing number of people participate in this wide range of activities. Consequently, more people realise that “culture improves the quality of life” and that “speaking Belarusian is modern and provides a good foundation for the future”⁵⁷ as the slogans of the campaign say. Undoubtedly, the activities of “Let’s Be Belarusians!” help to increase the number of Belarusian speakers and help to promote the status of Belarusian as the language of public communication.

The third example of promoting Belarusian and supporting creativity is the art gallery “Ū”⁵⁸, established in 2009 in Minsk. The main objective of the gallery is to shape an active artistic community, but also to provide a space for various cultural, educational, and social events. Since the beginning of 2014, the gallery has been offering free Bela-

⁵¹ Organisation’s webpage: Budz’ma belarusami!. <http://budzma.org/>, access: 22.06.2014.

⁵² Eight postcards present symbols of Belarusian identity. They include renowned Belarusians, such as Francysk Skaryna (philosopher, writer and printer), Józef Drozdowicz (painter), Stefania Staniouta (actress), Borys Kita (mathematician), Pesnary (a folk-rock band) and cultural symbols such as the kontusz sash, manufactured in Slutsk, Hussar wings, and the letter “Ū”.

⁵³ Available at: http://files.budzma.org/video/mult/BUDZMA_BELARUSAMI_H264.mp4, access: 22.06.2014.

⁵⁴ Available at: Kraj BY. <http://budzma.by/category/kraj-by>, access: 22.06.2014.

⁵⁵ Example: In the Land of the Dragon, available at: U pošukah cmoka!. <http://budzma.by/country/cmok.html>, access: 22.06.2014.

⁵⁶ For example the annual Festival of Belarusian Advertising and Communication “Ad.Nak!”

⁵⁷ See: About Us. <http://budzma.by/about>, access: 22.06.2014.

⁵⁸ Gallery webpage: Galerëa súčasnaga mastactva “Ū”. <http://ygallery.by/>, access: 22.06.2014.

rusian language lessons under the heading “Language or Coffee”. The lessons are the idea of Kaccâryna Kibał’čyč, a Belarusian journalist working in Moscow, who organised the first free Belarusian lesson there in 2013. Lessons in Minsk are taught by Alesia Litvinouska and Hleb Labadzienka. Students’ are of all ages, come from all walks of life, and are at various levels of Belarusian language proficiency. Their motivation for attending the lessons also varies and includes passion for learning, the need of conversation in Belarusian, finding something to do in their free time or meeting new people. The motivation that brings people to the gallery is not important for the organisers, because the objective is to improve the attitude towards Belarusian and to increase the number of Belarusian speakers⁵⁹. It is worth noting that as early as 2014, these meetings were officially registered as an organization called: “Social and Cultural Institution for the Development of the Belarussian Language and Culture «Mova Nanova»”⁶⁰. Since then, the meetings have been organized as free language courses in Minsk and other cities in Belarus – indeed everywhere where there are people wishing to learn the language and a volunteer teacher, who wants to teach them. People who are learning the language or are speakers of Belarusian can find useful information on a special portal <http://www.movananova.by/>. The portal offers teaching materials, Belarussian literature (written texts and audiobooks), articles on Belarusian issues, Belarusian films and foreign ones translated to Belarusian (for all age groups), theatre plays, and Belarusian pop music, etc. The portal also encourages participation in various initiatives, such as register of people who declare Belarusian as their first language, which was launched in 2016. Although by April 2018, only 1,900 people have registered, the majority of them are young, which may indicate the change in attitudes towards the Belarusian language.

The examples described in this paper are not exhaustive by any means. Moreover, it needs to be emphasised that the majority of these projects are grass root activities and indicate the strengthening of national identity among Belarusians.

IN PLACE OF A SUMMARY – THE BELARUSIAN LANGUAGE AND THE BELARUSIAN IDENTITY

For the past few years, Belarusian intellectuals have been discussing the issue of Belarusian in the context of national identity. However, the passing of time and the challenges of the contemporary world make an increasing number of people accept the bilingual option, providing that Belarusian and Russian have an equal status (as opposed to the current situation described in this paper). One of the proponents of this idea, Piotr Rudkouski, claims that:

⁵⁹ See: Mowa ci kawa. Darmowe lekcje białoruskiego w Mińsku. <http://www.polskieradio.pl/75/921/Artykul/835293,Mowa-ci-Kawa-Darmowe-lekcje-bialoruskiego-w-Minsku>, access: 22.06.2014.

⁶⁰ Orig. “Socyjalna-kulturnaâ ustanova razviccâ belaruskaj movy i kultury «Mova Nanova»”. <http://www.movananova.by/prakursy/>, access: 29.04.2018.

“Bilingualism does not threaten Belarusian identity. Language is a value, but not an absolute value. An abandonment of our language or its rejection would be a serious ethical error. The nation would not disappear, but a certain value, something extremely precious would be lost” (2009, 114).

However, is the Belarusian language treated as something valuable by Belarusians? The stories collected during my research indicate that it is. My interviewees appreciated the importance of the Belarusian language in shaping their national identity and at the same time they refused to treat it as a symbol. Instead, they insisted that Belarusian is a language for communication. On the other hand, the historical language context, especially in the previous century, is the reason why speaking Belarusian is not an essential element of Belarusian national identity. The existing bilingualism (Belarusian-Russian) and an increasing use of *Trasianka* may lead to the weakening of Belarusian national identity or it may create its new (different) quality.

The words of Alexander Lukashenko confirm the ambivalent language situation in Belarus. In his speech of 22 April 2014, he said:

“If we stop speaking Russian, we will lose our mind and if we forget how to speak Belarusian, we will stop being a nation’. At the same time, he declared support for ‘the development of Russian on the level equal to the mother tongue [Belarusian]’⁶¹.

This last sentence was wildly commented on the Internet, showing polarisation of views and the noticeably paradoxical situation of the Belarusian language in Belarus. Moreover, it has proven that the issue of the Belarusian language is vital not only for academics, but for citizens too.

Translated by Zofia Orly

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⁶¹ Lukaŝenko zaŝiŝaet russkij âzyk, no obeŝaet razvivat’ ego naravne s ‘matčynaj movaj, <http://news.tut.by/society/396153.html>, access: 22.04.2014.

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ETHNOLOGY AND SOCIOCULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN KYRGYZSTAN¹

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The article is focused on the state of sociocultural anthropology and ethnology in Kyrgyzstan. It seeks to map the disciplines' intellectual and institutional history in the sociopolitical context in which it has evolved. The material for the study comes from published and internet sources as well as from a series of interviews with Kyrgyz anthropologists/ethnologists and academics from other countries who have worked in Kyrgyzstan. The article aims at placing the discipline in the sociocultural and political contexts of socialism and postsocialism in Kyrgyzstan. By considering power relations and economic relations as factors of the discipline's development, the article refers to broader debates on the social production of anthropological knowledge.

* * *

Artykuł poświęcony jest etnologii i antropologii społeczno-kulturowej w Kirgistanie. Celem tekstu jest naszkicowanie intelektualnej i instytucjonalnej mapy dyscypliny w perspektywie historycznej, z uwzględnieniem kontekstu społeczno-politycznego, w którym się rozwijała. Materiały empiryczne pochodzą z publikacji tradycyjnych i internetowych a także z serii wywiadów z kirgiskimi etnologami i antropologami, a także z uczonymi z innych krajów, którzy prowadzą badania antropologiczne w Kirgistanie. W artykule dążę do umieszczenia dyscypliny w kontekście społeczno-kulturowym i politycznym

¹ The idea for the article stems from a symposium 'Anthropology in Spain and in Europe', where I presented a desk-research based report on the situation of sociocultural anthropology in Central Asia. (See details at: <http://webs.ucm.es/info/antrosim/indexeng.htm>). The symposium was an inspiration for me, and after it had ended I decided to carry out a more in-depth study about anthropology in one of the Central Asian countries, my native Kyrgyzstan. While being a fascinating journey, this project took much longer time to complete than I had initially thought.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the people who shared their knowledge of Kyrgyz anthropology and ethnology with me: Sergey Abashin, Aida Abdykanova, Stephanie Bunn, Aigerim Dyikenbaeva, Jeanne Féaux de la Croix, Peter Finke, Alisher Ilkhamov, Aksana Ismailbekova, Emil Nasritdinov, Ruslan M. Rahimov, Madeleine Reeves, John Schoeberlein and Mucaram Toktogulova. In on-line (skype mediated) interviews and in face-to-face interviews, which I conducted in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, as well as through email exchanges, these scholars have generously provided me with their views and perspectives on the field as well as the valuable comments and corrections to the earlier drafts of the article. It is important to emphasize, however, that the responsibility for the article in its final shape – and for the possible errors and misjudgments it might contain – rests solely on the author.

sojalizmu i post-sojalizmu w Kirgistanie. Jako czynniki rozwoju dyscypliny rozpatruję relacje władzy i stosunki gospodarcze, w ten sposób umieszczam ten tekst w szerszych debatach na temat społecznego konstruowania wiedzy antropologicznej.

K e y w o r d s: Kyrgyzstan, ethnology, sociocultural anthropology, research, teaching, knowledge production

1. KYRGYZ ETHNOGRAPHY² IN THE SOVIET PERIOD: POLITICALLY GUIDED PRACTICE

1.1. The Institutional Landscape

It could be claimed that the development of ethnography in Kyrgyzstan and arguably other Central Asian countries was not much different from the development of the discipline in other Soviet Union republics during the socialist period. Despite the complex interplay of the bottom-up and top-down influences that shaped it, the immense prevalence of central state imperatives over strictly academic and local ones imprinted itself on the discipline's profile.

Soviet rule was established in Kyrgyzstan in 1924 and the status of Soviet Socialist Republic was acquired in 1936³. As well as installing new political and economic institutions, the Soviets launched the building of cultural institutions in the region, notably the academic and educational structures aimed at replacing the previous ones or creating new ones in accordance with their modernization project. The emergence of Soviet Kyrgyz ethnography (as a subdiscipline of history) was one of the many parts of this project⁴. The first ethnographic expeditions in which Kyrgyz researchers took part were

² The term used in the former Soviet Union to denote academic practices roughly similar to socio-cultural anthropology or ethnology in Western countries is "ethnography" (compare: Dunn and Dunn 1962). Since the beginning of the 1990s, the terms ethnography and ethnology has been used interchangeably in Russian, the latter one is more formal however, i.e. it is used in the names of academic institutions etc. The term 'Kyrgyz ethnography' denotes the disciplinary tradition that developed within the territorial and institutional structures of the Kyrgyz SSR.

³ The violence and persecution that were an unalienable part of Soviet expansion, as well as the repressions during Soviet period, are commemorated but have not become the central narrative of the contemporary memory policies in Kyrgyzstan, see: Abashin (2018) for examples and discussion.

⁴ It is difficult to reconstruct the pre-revolutionary history of ethnographic/ethnological knowledge in Kyrgyzstan. In his critical article on the state of Kyrgyz historiography, Tchoroev makes a remark that is relevant to this study: "(...) no Kyrgyz historian who wrote a history of the nation can be identified before the end of the 19th century. Of course, there were many relaters of genealogical legends and stories based mainly on folk heritage. This paucity of indigenous historiography is the reason that Kyrgyz history has been written mainly from external sources in various languages, including Chinese, Arabic, Iranian, Greek, Turkic, Mongolian, and Russian. Kyrgyz historians made their first attempts at publishing histories at the beginning of the 20th century under the influence of the reformist movement known as Jadidism. Some Kyrgyz intellectuals brought out works in Kazan, Ufa, and Orenburg. For example, books by Osmonaaly Sydykuulu were published in Ufa in 1913 and 1915" (Tchoroev 2002, 351).

organized in 1926. Their interests were in the history (B. Soltonoyev, B. Jamgyrchynov), language (B. Junusaliev), social relations and religion (S. Iliasov) of the Kyrgyz. There were also scholars from the centre – i.e. Soviet Russian research institutions – participating in establishing the tradition of Kyrgyz ethnography (e.g., S. Abramzon; compare: Tabyshev 1990). The first expeditions were aimed at collecting materials for the Republic Museum (opened in 1927). In 1928, the Research Institute of Regional Studies affiliated with the Council of National Commissioners of the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Republic was formed. When a Kyrgyz branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences was established in 1943, ethnography found its institutional place within the structures of the Institute of Language, Literature and History and, from 1954, was part of the History Institute of the Kyrgyz Republic Academy of Sciences. In 1966, the Chair of Ethnography was created, which was ‘promoted’ to the status of a division in 1989. Though the ethnography unit in the History Institute existed at the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences from its inception in 1954, the institutionalization of ethnography as a university discipline took place much later. The Chair of Archaeology and Ethnology in the History Department of Kyrgyz State University was founded in 1978.

The complex interplay between the political and academic fields (to use Pierre Bourdieu’s terminology) in the soviet period can be illustrated by the case of Saul Abramzon’s work that received negative reviews from Kyrgyz party leaders. His first book on Kyrgyz culture published in 1946 was criticized by K. Orozaliev, the Kyrgyz Communist Party Propaganda Secretary, for the underestimation of the positive effects that contact with the Russian revolutionary nation had had for the Kyrgyz (Tabyshev 1990, 8). When the monograph on the ethnogenesis of the Kyrgyz people was first published (Abramzon [1971] 1990), the critical review in the newspaper *Sovetskaya Kirgiziya* by the academics S. Iliasov, A. Zima and K. Orozaliev was followed by a public criticism by the first secretary of the Kyrgyz Communist Party T. Usabaliev who blamed Abramzon for ideological and methodological mistakes. There were two main lines of criticism: 1) allegedly, Abramzon augmented the role of the survival of tribal relations and underestimated the changes that took place after the revolution among the Kyrgyz (compare: Abramzon 1954), and 2) he represented the Kyrgyz people as extremely divided into numerous tribes and moieties, therefore undermining the unity of the Kyrgyz nation (Tabyshev 1990, 9). The negative review was considered by a special committee of the USSR Academy of Sciences and most of the criticism was refuted as unsustainable⁵.

⁵ The outcomes of this incident were relatively mild for Abramzon (although he felt deeply hurt and left Kyrgyzstan where he had spent most of his adult life), while sometimes failure to satisfy the authorities’ expectations resulted in the loss of a job and/or repression as was the case for Sabyr Attokurov, the first head of the Chair of Archeology and Ethnography at Kyrgyz State University, who “was forced to leave the university, [and] students who supported him were nearly expelled from the history faculty” (Tchoroev 2002, 363).

Several tensions seem to manifest themselves in this incident. First, it proves that science was ruled by politics and expected to fulfil a social role ascribed to it⁶. The very possibility of local party leaders formulating criticism in wording like “serious ideological-political mistakes [were made]... that considerably diminish the academic and pedagogic value of the book” (cited Tabyshaliev 1990, 9) is telling in itself: it was the mark of the totalitarian state that subsumed all levels of social life. Second, the role of ethnography – and more broadly, of the humanities – revealed itself as that of serving the political goals of nation building and the creation of the Soviet nation as well as contributing to the national consciousness development of the titular nationalities. Third, the incident gives away the tension between the central and local (republic) level of governance. The affiliations of the actors indicate that scholars and party leaders at the republic level were in opposition to the scholars and party leaders at the central level. It is beyond the scope of this article to evaluate the merit of the argument or to establish what exactly the stakes that produced the tension were, yet this incident demonstrates that neither science nor politics in the former Soviet Union were as conflict-free as it might seem from a contemporary perspective.

1.2. Ideology/Theory Nexus

Some of the institutional traditions, methods and theoretical ideas of imperial Russian ethnology, ethnography and folklore studies were continued during the Soviet period (compare: Bertrand 2002). Yet there were also shifts in the discipline (Azrael 1978; compare: Huttenbach 1990; Knight 1998). The nationality question was recognized as politically significant as early as 1917. The ambiguity of nationality politics lay in the combination of two conflicting imperatives: 1) the declared importance of nationality, especially the nationalities oppressed by imperial Russia as well as the famous Leninist ‘national self-determination’ principle underlining the equality and self-dependency of nationalities, and 2) the need to minimize the political meaning and ‘fission’ potential of any particular national/ethnic group within a newly established multi-ethnic polity. It could be suggested that Soviet ethnography – alongside other disciplines such as history or philosophy – was used as one of the instruments for overcoming the tension between the need to establish nationality as a basis for social ‘fusion’ and the fear of the ‘fission’ potential inherited in it⁷. Among its other uses, the discipline was instrumental

⁶ In fact the Academy of Sciences acted as one of the government bodies in the USSR (compare: Beyler, Kojevnikov, Wang 2005, 31).

⁷ The discipline’s outlook changed largely in response to the state and party politics, e.g. Abashin suggests distinguishing the Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev epochs (Abashin 2009). Similarly Ilkhamov points out that political tendencies directed the development of science in the former Soviet Union (e.g. from the early 1930s the political rationale pushed ethnographers towards the incorporation of some parts of the pre-Soviet legacy). Therefore viewing the whole Soviet era as a monolith period is untenable (Ilkhamov 2009). See also: Sokolovskiy 2017.

in establishing an association of all things national with the past, while the present was supposed to be largely internationalist. Associating ethnic groups' characteristic features with the historical past was a technique for dominating these groups by making them politically irrelevant to the present (compare: Fabian 1983).

Paradoxically, the Soviet state also built many of the institutions that facilitated the emergence of national consciousness before and nation building processes after the collapse of the USSR (Terry 2001; compare: Hirsch 2005). At the same time, the institutionalization of national tradition went side by side with the limitations put on practising ethnic differences in professional and everyday life, e.g., by limiting indigenous language use at work and in public places; by controlling school and university education in native languages; by rationing publishing (the press included) as well as cultural events in indigenous languages and the like.

Yet another contradiction was inherent in the (quasi)federal character of the state. The administrative division of the USSR into the Soviet republics, and a number of autonomous republics and oblasts within the latter, triggered a hierarchical division of nationalities into more and less important, or 'big' and 'small', ones (Tokarev 1953)⁸. The political and social rights of particular ethnic groups were differentiated accordingly. Thus the situation of the titular nationalities of the USSR republics was different from the situation of such ethnic groups as Crimean Tatars, Jews or the Uyghur.

The often arbitrarily drawn administrative borders of the republics – arguably – required legitimization not only through coercion but also through consent. Legitimization could be partially provided through finding the scientific proof of a titular nationality 'rootedness' in an assigned territory. Especially, but not exclusively, in the case of nomadic peoples such as the Kyrgyz this required 'inventing traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). It also resulted in a particular rigidity of nationality (*ethnos*) as a salient classificatory (and ideological) category in postwar ethnography, especially in the 1960s when the theory of ethnos was created by Bromley (1979)⁹. Nationality was thus considered as a relatively stable set of cultural features maintained over time; the theory of ethnos can thus be called primordialist. It must be

⁸ The terms *natsia*, *natsionalnost'* and *narodnost'* reflected this hierarchy (e.g. Hirsch 2005).

⁹ Importantly, the term *ethnos* did not have the same status during the whole Soviet period. For instance, in the 1930s during the times of repression *ethnos* was regarded as an almost 'reactionary' term (Abashin 2009). Moreover, there were two *ethnos* theories, the first developed by Yuri Bromley (1979) and presenting an evolutionist and Marxist-Leninist view of nations (i.e. that presenting historical stages of development and stressing socio-economic relations, for more details see: Sokolovskiy 2017); the second was developed by Lev Gumilev (1989) who perceived *ethnos* as a natural cosmic phenomenon. The latter theory was not considered 'scientific' during the Soviet period but gained wide followership among national political elites and the public in the post-Soviet period, notably in Kazakhstan. Sergey Abashin suggests that its attractiveness for post-Soviet Central Asian countries might also stem from Gumilev's positive evaluation of the Golden Horde and Turkic legacy that was in contrast to Soviet historiography (private communication).

added that primordialist conceptions were by no means unique to Soviet ethnology – e.g. they were developed in German ethnology in the nineteenth century (compare: Eidson 2017) – yet, they gained a lot of currency in the Soviet (and ironically post-Soviet) period and therefore are often associated with Soviet ethnography. In contemporary discussions on the legacy of Soviet ethnography, the concept of ‘primordialism’ acquired a heavily value laden (negative) meaning, which will be discussed in the next section of the article.

At the same time, not all ethnographers dealt exclusively with nationality issues – research was undertaken on material culture, everyday life (*byt*), family relations, food, shamanism, economic relations and other topics (e.g. Antipina 1962; Makhova 1959; Iliasov 1953; Mambetalieva 1963). This was partly due to shifts in the ‘social order’ (*социальный заказ*) for themes, like the interest in new forms of production and the associated forms of everyday life and social relations that generated a number of ‘kolkhoz monographs’ in the 1950s and 1960s (compare: Abashin 2009) or ethnic sociology from 1970 to 1990 (Drobizheva 1998)¹⁰, but also partly to the fact that the search for topics outside party interests was a search for a degree of academic freedom, which could only be achieved to an extent, since research topics had to be approved by centralized academic institutions.

The fourth aspect of the interplay between political and academic fields lies in the theoretical underpinnings of Soviet science. Congruent with but not identical to the previous three was the enlightenment (or positivist) project of Soviet science, ethnography included. Science was juxtaposed with ‘local knowledge systems’ (religion, medicine etc.) and, in the case of ethnology in particular, this meant waging a war on all *perezhitki* [survivals] (outdated, outlived practices, compare: DeWeese 2009): religious beliefs, ‘backward’ customs (such as bride kidnapping, *kalym* etc.). Materialist and atheist theory required firm identification of these practices with the past (with the practical goal of bringing them to an end).

Therefore in Soviet Kyrgyz ethnography the issues related to *ethnos* constituted the core of ethnology’s research interests¹¹: national history, culture, kinship and belief systems were meticulously studied (Kochkunov 2002). Additionally, in Kyrgyz ethnology the studies of ‘other’ groups or cultures were far less prominent than the studies of one’s ‘own’ group, although there was some research on the Uzbeks, Tajiks, Dungans, Germans and Russians. Expeditions (often centrally organized) were the core mode of ethnographic investigation; they were carried out collectively and usu-

¹⁰ In Kyrgyzstan, the ethnosociological tradition was developed by A. Aksakanov and his students, some of them from Osh University (Aksakanov 2004).

¹¹ In Soviet Russian ethnology, this tendency was also strong but was somewhat diverted in the 1970s and 80s, when ethnographers began to undertake research on contemporarily relevant topics such as ethnic conflict (Sokolovskiy 2017). Yet, in Central Asian republics this tendency was much weaker and the scholarly interests inherited from 1940–60 continued well into the 1980s.

ally included representatives of several disciplines, such as linguists, archaeologists, historians and ethnologists.

As for the theoretical outlook of the discipline, it was enclosed in the framework of dialectic materialism or Marxism as a grand theory as well as Bromley's ethnos theory as a middle range theory of the discipline¹². The alleged theoretical paucity of Soviet era ethnography – or its inability to produce an alternative grand theory to Marxism such as the structuralism of Levi-Strauss or interpretative anthropology of Clifford Geertz – is currently referred to as the 'descriptive' character of the ethnography practised by anthropologists/ethnologists in the region. The advantages of doing ethnography differently than in the Soviet period are seen, among other things, in the introduction of interpretations and theoretical conceptualizations (compare: Reeves 2014). Interestingly, this very juxtaposition was used by Saul Abramzon when he assessed the contribution of his pre-revolutionary predecessors:

"The ethnographic study of the Kyrgyz nation in the pre-revolutionary period can be considered primarily as a period of accumulating factual material (...) [after the 1917 revolution] the researchers do not limit themselves to observations and simple registering the facts, but aim at generalisations and interpretations" (Abramzon [1971] 1990, 12–13).

His usage of the descriptive/theoretical dichotomy is almost identical to the contemporary criticism of Soviet era ethnography (compare: Durand 1995). It appears that criticism goes round in circles and as such it is largely ideological, i.e. it does not clearly define the actual weak and strong points of the respective traditions but merely provides simple categories for the negative labelling of the Others' academic practice and praising of one's own. The side effect of this criticism – that is often put in evolutionist terms – is a view of knowledge accumulation in which the stage of collecting material precedes that of building theory and therefore the scholarly practice of collecting material is denigrated. This issue will be dealt with further in the following section.

2. ETHNOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY IN KYRGYZSTAN IN THE POST-SOVIET PERIOD: DECENTRALIZED POLITICIZATION

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the establishment of independent states in Central Asia, post-Soviet science in the region started undergoing rapid changes as far as ideological incentives as well as the economic and institutional conditions of its functioning were concerned. In the following section of the article, the attempt is made to demonstrate the impact of the transformation period on Kyrgyz

¹² Yet denigrating Soviet Marxism as just one stream of (dogmatic) thought is perhaps an oversimplification. As some research has demonstrated, there were attempts at 'creating a space to ask new, intellectually challenging questions about processes of historical change and mechanisms of social inequality' (Luehrmann 2005, 851) within this stream.

ethnography as a discipline. Both the continuity with the discipline's traditions developed in the Soviet period as well as current and potential tendencies and directions of (paradigmatic) change will be reflected upon.

2.1. Institutional Developments in Ethnology and Anthropology in Kyrgyzstan

After 1991, academic institutions in Kyrgyzstan found themselves in a state of crisis due not only to a radical decrease in funding¹³ but also to the diversification of the sources of funding and significant changes in the ideological landscape that affected the position of science in society.

The institutional situation of ethnology in the **Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences (KAS)** – the fundamental research institution – is an illustration of the demise of centralized state-sponsored research in the post-Soviet period (compare: Sokolovskiy 2017). After 1991, the number of academic positions available at the KAS diminished fivefold. Libraries stopped being regularly supplied with new books and periodicals from Russia, not to mention publications from other parts of the world. The lack of funding made it impossible for ethnologists to rely on their institutions for research development and travel costs. Very few doctoral theses were defended in the 'ethnology' speciality during the 27 years after gaining independence, and the degrees are conferred outside of Kyrgyzstan (for the good overview of the PhD theses in sociocultural anthropology by Kyrgyz scholars, as well as western scholars working in and on Kyrgyzstan, see: Reeves 2014). The Academy leaders encouraged applied research as a remedy to poor state funding. Recently some new initiatives have been introduced in the Academy of Sciences, e.g., a special programme in history (including social anthropology) supported by the French Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and the EHESS aimed at junior scholars working at the KAS. Yet the precarious financial as well as political situation¹⁴ does not make it possible to be optimistic about state supported academic ethnographic research prospects.

The situation at **universities** is perhaps slightly better thanks to the liberalization of the higher education system. At least the mushrooming of universities across the country, especially in Bishkek, creates an impression of development.¹⁵ However,

¹³ Independent Kyrgyzstan is a rather poor country, and science is far from being privileged in the state budget, although education (including schools) receives about 20% of government spending. According to the CIA World Factbook, in 2017 gross domestic product per capita in Kyrgyzstan was estimated at 3,700 US dollars (compare: Kazakhstan – 26,100; Russia – 27,900 and the EU taken as a whole – 39,200).

¹⁴ There were two violent uprisings in the republic, two presidents were ousted in the space of 5 years between 2005 and 2010, thousands of people lost their lives and many more their homes or belongings, especially in the 2010 conflict in the Osh region.

¹⁵ Some commentators draw attention to the fact that the increase of the level of higher education in the country in the post-Soviet period is disproportionately larger than the number of qualified jobs available for people with high qualifications (DeYoung 2008).

ethnology chairs and/or departments in old and new universities occupy a somewhat marginal position and, in the majority of cases, are situated in departments of history. As a consequence, ethnology is still taught in a way that concentrates on material culture and customs of the past rather than on contemporary life. At Kyrgyz State National University (in Bishkek) the Chair of Archaeology and Ethnology has a considerable archaeological bias in research and curriculum. The same is the case for Osh University. At Kyrgyz State Pedagogical University (in Bishkek) there is a Chair of History, Ethnology and Social Education that offers not a full programme but a module in Social Anthropology. Kyrgyz Russian Slavic University (in Bishkek) has established the Department of History, Culturology and Marketing within an interdisciplinary Faculty of Humanities. Some archaeological projects are carried out there, but others – aiming at contemporary cultural problems such as ethnic conflict resolution – are conceptualized as ‘culturology’ (*культурология*). The emphasis on applied research and the departure from an ethnological perspective has been further deepened by the recent introduction of marketing and advertising-related subjects to the curriculum. Students do not normally pursue ethnological careers after graduation and do not even expect to be able to do so.

The American University of Central Asia (AUCA) in Bishkek is a peculiar exception in this picture. It was created from scratch with USA money¹⁶ but primarily by Kyrgyz scholars who used the political change as an opportunity to leave their stamp on the discipline and introduce the classic four-field formula of American anthropology¹⁷ to the university curriculum (Madeleine Reeves, personal communication; compare: Reeves 2014). At the Anthropology Department, apart from the permanent academic staff consisting of linguists, folklorists, social anthropologists and archaeologists, there are also a number of visiting fellows and guest lecturers from Western universities (European and American). In the beginning much teaching was in Russian, currently more teaching is done in English and there are also several courses in Kyrgyz.

The shift from Soviet ethnographic traditions at the Anthropology Department of the AUCA manifests itself in the attempts at engaging in comparative research and moving away from the domination of the ethnos theory and towards theoretical pluralism that includes interpretative and structuralist theories alongside ethnos theories. Additionally, there are courses devoted to studies of the contemporary world: ‘applied anthropology’, ‘medical anthropology’, ‘environmental anthropology’ and ‘political anthropology’. Special emphasis is placed on intensive fieldwork which is a part of the curriculum.

¹⁶ The university is funded by Eurasian Foundation of the U.S. State Department and the George Soros Open Society Foundation.

¹⁷ It has to be emphasized that currently in the USA this formula is considered rather problematic by the representatives of the discipline, since it ‘cracks’ not only theoretically or methodologically but also institutionally, compare: Sylverman 2005.

Although the Anthropology Department has been highly successful in many ways, and can be seen as a *spiritus movens* behind the consolidation of Kyrgyz anthropology and ethnology¹⁸, its institutional role within the AUCA has recently changed into a ‘concertation’ (or program) within a larger Liberal Arts and Sciences Department.

Apart from traditional academic institutions, there are more flexible institutional arrangements that create opportunities for the development of ethnology in the region: **non-government research organizations and international projects**. These include think tanks and research centres (e.g., *Aigine*¹⁹) that incorporate an ethnological component. It has to be emphasized, however, that in most of these projects the discipline is not treated independently but is linked to archaeology, history, sociology, political science, international relations or economics.

International projects indisputably trigger a lot of valuable research initiatives in ethnology and anthropology in Kyrgyzstan, yet they are relatively short-term and, more importantly, they often bring research agendas from outside and do not really allow them to emerge locally in a bottom-up fashion. Despite this reservation, in the economically weak and only moderately politically stable conditions of contemporary Kyrgyzstan, international projects create an alternative to state support of research institutions. There are several types of projects that could be placed in the category of projects with an anthropological component. There are the UNESCO policy-oriented programmes, research projects initiated by Western universities or foundations sponsoring science and also quite specific and valuable projects catering for didactic needs.

A large-scale UNESCO project ‘Integral Studies of Silk Roads – the Roads of Dialogue’ has been functioning in the region since 1987. The project has resulted in a number of initiatives ranging from studies on the situation of women in the region to the organization of an ethnic handicrafts and art festival²⁰. In 1995, the International Institute for Central Asian Studies (*MICAI*) was established in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, by UNESCO. In 2006 *MICAI* organized an interdisciplinary archaeological-ethnographic expedition, ‘The Study of Migration Processes in the Ancient and Medieval history of Central Asian Peoples’, to the Xingjian-Uyghur region of China. It included Kyrgyz ethnologist A. Asankanov (currently at Kyrgyz National Pedagogic University in Bishkek)²¹. Interestingly, in many large-scale projects anthropology/ethnology is not treated independently (and therefore ethnological research questions do not constitute

¹⁸ Between 2014 and 2017 four editions of the national Congress of Anthropologists and Ethnologists took place, with roughly two thirds of the participants representing sociocultural anthropology (the remaining participants represented the field of archaeology) and coming from a number of Kyrgyz universities of Bishkek, Osh, Naryn.

¹⁹ <http://www.aigine.kg/>, access: 10.01.2018.

²⁰ UNESCO CLT/CPD/DIA/2008/PI/68.

²¹ A. Asankanov also participated in an international expedition to Altay, Khakasiya and Tuva in 2003 aimed at archeological research into Kyrgyz presence in the region, joined by S. Alymkulova and O. Karataev; the expedition was supported by the governments of Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

a goal in their own right) but is linked to archaeology, history and literary monument studies as well as to tourism development rationales and practices²².

Since 1991 the George Soros Open Society Foundation (OSF) has contributed significantly to scholars' development in the country through individual grant schemes (CARI grants) as well as publishing projects²³. The latter included a particularly valuable component devoted to translating major ethnological work into Kyrgyz.²⁴ It supported anthropological education in the region, providing funding for the AUCA as well as developing the Regional Seminar for Excellence in Training (ReSet) HESP²⁵ projects, highly relevant to the development of the discipline in Kyrgyzstan: 'Nationhood and Narratives in Central Asia: History, Context, Critique' and 'Building Anthropology in Eurasia'²⁶.

The 'Building Anthropology in Eurasia' project (2007–2010) was aimed at undergraduate university lecturers. The project was hosted by the Aigine Cultural Research Centre, Bishkek (in cooperation with the AUCA and the Programme on Central Asia and the Caucasus at Harvard University, USA). It was aimed at promoting the institutionalization of sociocultural anthropology in the region. The project's mission was the replacement of the old Soviet tradition of ethnography/ethnology with a new one²⁷:

"Anthropology, as known elsewhere in the world, *did not exist in the Soviet Union* [my emphasis – A.H.]²⁸ and has been very slow to develop in post-Soviet space. The Regional Seminar on 'Building Anthropology in Eurasia' 'will undertake to provide a substantial beginning for anthropology to scholars in this new space' (Project's website).

²² To give an example, there is an institution harbouring ethnological/anthropological research worth mentioning: the *Institut français d'études sur l'Asie centrale* opened in 1992 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. It is a part of the Main Office of University Research Cooperation, Department of Archaeology and Social Sciences, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<http://www.ifeac.org/fr/>). It has its branch in Kyrgyzstan, headed by Amantur Zhaparov, an ethnologist specializing in nomadism and migration (e.g. Zhaparov 2007, 2009). The research activities of the Institute are not limited to anthropology, but ethnological/anthropological topics appear in their publications. Since 1996, the Institute has published annually *Les Cahiers d'Asie Centrale*, an interdisciplinary journal in French.

²³ Unlike in Uzbekistan, in Kyrgyzstan OSF has been functioning without any major disturbance (compare: Laruelle 2005; see also: Reeves 2014). Reeves argues that among five post-soviet Central Asian countries Kyrgyzstan is the most welcoming for western researchers.

²⁴ The lack – if not complete absence – of textbooks and monographs in Russian or Kyrgyz that represent a social/cultural anthropology perspective is a predicament for the discipline's teaching practice. Translation work is needed. Sometimes students from urban areas also lack a good working knowledge of Kyrgyz. Some universities try to develop teaching in English, which has its downside in making anthropology studies even more elitist.

²⁵ Higher Education Support Program.

²⁶ <http://www.csen.org/BuildAnthroEurasia/BuildAnthroEurasia.html>, access: 10.01.2018.

²⁷ Elsewhere, the project's initiator John Schoeberlein described Soviet science as dogmatic and ideology-driven thus unable to harbour serious theory development (compare: Schoeberlein 2009).

²⁸ American anthropologists who were engaged in dialogue with Soviet ethnographers in the Soviet period put it more mildly – as a difference of languages and/or scope in the discipline's names in the USSR and USA (Dunn and Dunn 1962, 329).

Despite the patronizing rhetoric of this description which suggests that Kyrgyz (and other post-Soviet) scholars have to be taught how to do things 'properly', the project creates a framework for regular cooperation between scholars from Central Asia, the Caucasus, Western Europe and the USA, who evaluate it very positively as a platform for authentic debates without predetermined answers (private communications with several of the participants). Perhaps, it is the case that demonstrates that the level of rhetoric of academic endeavours and the level of practice are very often discrepant.

International projects and cooperation with individual scholars from the West is an intricate part of the Kyrgyz ethnology/anthropology landscape. Yet cooperation with Western partners is, in principle, problematic and is viewed as such for the simple reason of the immense disparity of power between the different sides in such partnerships (this especially refers to extremely unequal access to economic and academic resources). In the beginning of the 1990s

“(...) there was also a fear that large bodies of rich, original unpublished work might be published by wealthier Western colleagues, possibly without acknowledgement (a genuine fear)” (Stephanie Bunn, private communication).

If direct exploitation was rarely the case, hegemonic relations have been developed in which demotic subjects act according to exogenously rather than endogenously set agendas. I am not suggesting that cooperation should cease, though. Far from it, I am rather calling for more self-reflexivity by all those involved in cooperation. This would be a type of critical reflexivity similar to that exercised with regard to the problem of the unattainable objectivity of knowledge in the humanities.

2.2. Lines of Research in Post-Soviet Kyrgyz Ethnology and Anthropology

Ethnological research in Kyrgyzstan is primarily aimed at the study of ethnic groups, their customs, oral and literary tradition and material culture, including architecture. Among the scholars who have embarked on the tradition of cultural and social anthropology as opposed to ethnography, the anthropology of religion (e.g. beliefs, rituals, shamanism, Islam) is one of the most prominently represented lines of research alongside the studies of ethnic/national identity and history (Aitpaeva, Egemberdieva, Toktogulova 2006; Alymkulov and Ashakeeva 2004; Chotaeva 2004, 2005; Toktogulova 2006, 2007). Relatively new fields of research include the development of political and economic anthropology, with special interest in rural development, urban anthropology, new perspectives in the studies of nomadism (Zhapparov 2007), the nexus of politics and kinship (Ismailbekova 2017) and the anthropology of trade (Nasritdinov and O'Connor 2006; Nasritdinov 2007, 2012) as well as research into the influence of ecological and geographic aspects of the environment on cultural practices and vice versa. Migration has also become an important line of research (e.g., Zhapparov 2009; Fryer, Nasritdinov, Satybaldieva 2014; Nasritdinov 2016). Predictably, there is

also an interest in the theory and methodology of anthropology, though no theoretical framework seems to have been dominant, even if the 'constructivist' approach – the term that often implies Anderson's 'imagined communities' template – is usually considered a viable alternative to the Soviet ethnology theory. At the same time, I have not come across either sustained critique of the Marxist theoretical framework or proposals for engaging in alternative (grand) theories. Rather, ethnologists/anthropologists are more concerned with methodological issues and testing the relative advantages of participant observation as opposed to expedition research. (In the AUCA, Malinowski-type fieldwork is treated as the ideal way to practice anthropology as a discipline; however, in actual fact a lot of research relies on literary and historical sources due to their accessibility and relatively low cost, although staff puts a lot of strenuous effort to secure external funds for fieldwork trips, through research grants or otherwise, and in some cases succeeds). Folklore studies and linguistic anthropology fall within the group of research interests that are a continuation of Soviet ethnological and folklore studies but some new approaches are applied within this subfield e.g. in narrative and travel writing analysis (Dyikanbaeva 2005; Turdaliyeva 2005, 2009). The actual distinction between ethnology and anthropology only appears in certain contexts (e.g. in its strongest form perhaps in ReSet projects and at the AUCA), while in the others both terms are used interchangeably. Moreover, the bulk of research projects undertaken are clearly interdisciplinary in their theoretical and methodological outlook: history, archaeology, ethnology and historical linguistics is one combination, others include anthropology, political science, sociology and international relations. This interdisciplinarity – or syncretism – of humanistic knowledge is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can be destructive for the development of (relatively weakly formed) anthropology. On the other, it might allow for a more innovative outlook in the discipline that would be keener to address the issues relevant to contemporary societies.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Over a period of 65 years (1926–91), ethnography (ethnology) in Kyrgyzstan developed as a discipline under Soviet rule. As a consequence, its character was influenced by Soviet state-building imperatives as well as by the tensions between the centre and periphery inherent (although not always overtly articulated) in the Soviet empire. Kyrgyz ethnographers – the national elite – were educated and socialized in Soviet academic institutions (e.g. S. Iliasov, K. Antipina, T. Bayaliyeva, K. Mambetaliyeva, I. Moldobaev and others). The political and economic transformation in Kyrgyzstan in 1991 unquestionably affected the development of ethnology and anthropology. The pluralization of political pressures since 1991 has allowed opportunities for theoretical and methodological pluralism in anthropology/ethnology to emerge. However, the

paradigmatic shift within the discipline as such is not as dramatic as one might have expected (compare a similar assessment for Russian anthropology by Funk and Nam 2017). The content of disciplinary knowledge has changed (e.g., new historical narratives, positive assessment of national tradition etc.), but the terminological apparatus of Soviet ethnography has been largely preserved. National traditions, national culture and identity (the key topics of ethnographic studies) are most often approached in essentializing terms (despite some attempts to use ‘constructivist’ approaches). The materialization and aesthetization of the concept of culture have been boosted by nation-building objectives and tourism development incentives as well as by a generally positivist view of science, that is ideally expected to bring some ‘hard data’ and not speculations and hypothesizing (Kanef and King 2004; Pelkmans 2005).

The teaching of ethnology/anthropology follows history-bound curriculums in many of the country’s universities, yet there are also examples of the introduction of a four-field American type anthropology to the academic curriculum (AUCA). The economic conditions in which anthropology departments function are not favourable: quite simply, research funds are meagre. Western grant-giving institutions play an important role in supporting anthropological research and teaching, but their capacities cannot be compared to those of long-term state funding of fundamental research (which is much needed but lacking due to the country’s poverty). What is more, their interest in the region is volatile, which is indirectly proven by Madeleine Reeves’ (2014) statement that the funding available to the western scholars who want to do research in Central Asia dwindled over the period between 2004 and 2014. Moreover, the rationale of international projects (i.e. which themes are supported and which approaches promoted) is not often congruent with that or those of Kyrgyz scholars. In a similar fashion, Petric (2005) has argued that the rationale of international NGOs operating in the region is incompatible with local interests and needs (compare: Petric 2015). Due to the misbalance of power between partners, international projects are inherently problematic regardless of their initiators’ and participants’ intentions. The attempts at building sociocultural anthropology from scratch, in sharp opposition to Soviet ethnography, are bringing very interesting research results, yet they also create tensions within the discipline and among the discipline’s practitioners in the country: those anthropologists who fully embark on the discipline’s new project and those who consider that Soviet ethnology should not be totally dismissed are starting to perceive each other as rival camps with the labels of ‘descriptive’, ‘outdated’ or ‘conformist’ easily attached to one or the other.

The ideological uses of ethnology / anthropology and, generally, the politicization of humanistic knowledge are still very prominent trends in the use of science in society today, although – in comparison with the Soviet period – currently political incentives have become more numerous and decentralized and the geography of pressures has significantly changed. The powerful institutions (national and international) are oper-

ating more through economic and symbolic pressures and less (if at all) through direct coercion. For ‘small ethnology’ like that in Kyrgyzstan, this means that the attainment of a (somewhat) equal status in the new global order of a largely Western-centred and hierarchical neoliberal academy is hardly a feasible prospect (compare a diagnosis of a ‘gloomy’ picture for Russian anthropology by Funk and Nam 2017), despite the brave efforts tirelessly undertaken by the discipline’s practitioners in Kyrgyzstan. Many of the Kyrgyz scholars of younger generation are ‘sucked in’ Western academia (the UK, Germany, USA), as the list of PhD theses defended by Central Asian anthropologists and ethnologists made by Reeves (2014) attests. The peripheral position of Kyrgyz ethnology/anthropology largely remains. On a different scale and with a different intensity, similar processes and tensions are emerging in other countries of the former Eastern bloc (compare: Skalník 2002; Buchowski 2017) and seem to be a paradoxical outcome of the large-scale geopolitical change.

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CHINESE TERMS REFERRING TO THE FAMILY AND KINSHIP

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WARSAW

The article is concerned with Chinese terms describing the family and kinship through different periods of Chinese history. On the basis of Chinese classical literature, works of the most famous Chinese anthropologist – Fei Xiaotong during the first half of the XX century and contemporary anthropological studies, it makes summary of most important from them and describe the family and kinship structures to which they refer.

* * *

Tematem niniejszego artykułu są pojęcia używane na określenie rodziny i jej członków w różnych okresach historii chińskiej. Zostały one przeanalizowane na podstawie odwołania do chińskiej literatury klasycznej, badań wsi chińskiej wykonanych w latach trzydziestych i czterdziestych XX wieku przez jednego z najwybitniejszych chińskich uczonych – Fei Xiaotonga oraz ustaleń współczesnych antropologów kulturowych i obserwacji autorki niniejszego tekstu.

Key words: Chinese terms, the family, kinship, 家*jiā*, 宗族*zōngzú*, 家族*jiāzú*, 家庭*jiāting*, 大家庭*dàjiāting*

Chinese kinship structures were a basic of the Chinese society. Like all social institutions they were changing and evolving. Their structure was expressed through multiple terms, whose connotations were changing along with the changes of the society. In my article I made a sketch of most important of them from three perspectives. The first one is Chinese classical literature, the second is the Chinese society as it was presented by Fei Xiaotong's research published in 1930s and 1940s, and the third is their usage in contemporary China as described by contemporary anthropological researchers and my own observations.

It should be noted that the Chinese language in this paper indicates 汉语*hànyǔ* (literal meaning: 汉*Hàn* language), a common language mainly shared by the 汉*Hàn* ethnic groups (who constitute the majority of China's population), widely known as Mandarin language. The Chinese terms which I investigate are originally written in 汉字*hànzì* (literal meaning: 汉*Hàn* characters), the written form of 汉语*hànyǔ*.

Materials in oral form are adopted from 普通话 *pǔtōnghuà*, the spoken language of modern 汉语 *hànyǔ*¹. The descriptions of Chinese society in the article represent the majority of 汉 *Hàn* Chinese community.

TERMS REFERRING TO THE FAMILY
IN ANCIENT LITERATURE

A wide diversity of terms have been used in Chinese language with regard to the family throughout history, until present times. The variety of the terms should not only be taken as a result of language change, but also as a reflection of the changes in dynamics of the family structure as society has undergone change.

家 *jiā*

The word 家 *jiā* was used to refer to a family house or residence, and also applied to name a kinship group with no regard to its scale. In some places, the term was also used as a verb which referred to setting up a home.

1. house

之子于归，宜其家室 *Zhīzǐ yú guī, yí qí jiā shì*

This young lady is going to her future home,

And will order well her chamber and house. (诗经 周南 桃夭 *Shījīng Zhōunán Táoyāo*)

2. the family

四海之内若一家，通达之属莫不从服 *Sìhǎi zhī nèi ruò yījiā, tōngdá zhī shǔ mòbù cóng fú*

If the world will merge into one family, there would be no one who would disobey.

(荀子 儒效 *Xúnzi Rúxiào*)

3. setting at somewhere

平原君为人辩有口，刻廉刚直，家于长安。

Pingyuanjun is skilled in mouth and upright. He lives at Chang'an.

(史记·酈生陆贾列传 *Shǐjì·Lì shēng lù jiǎ lièzhuàn*)

族 *zú*

The term 族 *zú* was generally applied for the lineal kinship.

宫之奇以其族行 *Gōng zhī qí yǐ qí zú xíng*

Gong Zhiqi leads his kin. (左传 僖公 *Zuǒzhuàn Xī gōng*)

¹ A detailed introduction of Hanyu see Künstler 1970.

九族 *jiǔzú* literally means nine 族 *zú*, i.e. nine generations of relatives from great-great-grand father down to great-great-grand son (Qu Tongzu 1961). There are different interpretations of 九族 *jiǔzú* in Chinese history. The 古文说 *Gǔwénshuō* (Older interpretation), defined the nine grades of relation in the paternal line. This is the understanding I am applying in this paper (Qian Hang 2011, 171–179). 今文说 *Jīnwénshuō* (contemporary school of interpretation), defines the nine grades of relations to be four generations from the paternal line, three from the maternal line, and two from the wife's (Qian Hang 2011, 179–192). In this case a signal of bilateralization of the hitherto strict patrilineality can be found. Yet another interpretation suggests that the “nine” figuratively stands for a large number in the Chinese speech and culture. Historically it has been used to denote a collective capital extermination of living kin of a state offender. It was a brutal, but seldom exercised execution of laws (For more explanation of the custom see Qu Tongzu 1961, 16–17).

宗族 *zōngzú*

The term 宗族 *zōngzú* is composed of two terms which are 宗 *zōng* and 族 *zú*. According to 说文解字 *Shuōwénjiězì*, 宗 *zōng* refers to architecture in the use of sacrifice. The character 宗 *zōng* used to write it is a pictogram. It combines two parts, with “a roof” as the upper part, symbolizing an architecture, and “a ritual of sacrifice” as the lower part. As I already mentioned, the term 族 *zú* in Chinese historical context points to patrilineal groups. Together with the term 宗 *zōng*, the form 宗族 *zōngzú*, amplifies the meaning of a patrilineal kinship group to the position of an established social institution. Chinese historian Qian Hang claims that this institution had been gradually formed, starting from the 11th century BC, and its final shape came from the 2nd century BC (Qian 2009, 6). 宗族 *Zōngzú* functioned as the basis of the 宗法 *zōngfǎ* institution². 宗族 *Zōngzú* has been recorded in various sources since ancient times. Qian Hang has attempted to explain the topic. According to him, 尔雅 *Èryǎ*, the oldest surviving Chinese encyclopedia (from about the 3rd century BC), defined the term 宗族 *zōngzú* for the first time. It reads “父之党，为宗族 *Fù zhī dǎng, wèi zōngzú*”, which means that the kinship based on the patrilineal lineage is 宗族 *zōngzú*. Next, forty-six pairs of kinship relations within 宗族 *zōngzú* were systematically listed. All the listed relations can be classed into one lineal group and five collateral groups. It is made clear in his book that 宗族 *zōngzú* is formed according to the patrilineal principle but not necessarily of blood relations. What is more, it also implies the scale – the kinship order – as the limits of a 宗族 *zōngzú* at the time. However, this definition was considered to be insufficient by Qian Hang in the sense that it lacked a crucial

² 宗法 *Zōngfǎ* is a term describing political influence in which the degree of political power is determined by the degree of kinship relations with ruling dynasty.

portion of information about the term. First of all, it did not mention the co-residence form of 宗族 *zōngzú*, which is one of the two core features of the organization. Another deficiency was that it failed to describe the function of the group.

The deficiencies were erased by the great historian Ban Gu (32–92 AD) of the *Donghan* kingdom (25–220 AD). In *Testimonies on the White Tiger Hall* (*Báihǔ tōng* 白虎通, 79 AD), which is a book containing collected interpretation of the Confucian classics made by Confucian scholars of the time, compiled by him, several paragraphs of it were especially dedicated to 宗族 *zōngzú*.

宗者，何谓也？宗者，尊也 为先族主者，宗人之所尊也。

Zōng zhě, héwèi yě? Zōng zhě, zūn yě. Wèi xiān zú zhǔ zhě, zōng rén zhī suǒ zūn yě.

Who is [great] ancestor? [great] ancestor is someone respected. Because he is the head of kin before us. All people respect him. (白虎通疏证 宗族 *Báihǔ tōng shū zhèng Zōngzú*)

Ban Gu not only gave a more comprehensive definition of the term, but he also examined its function. The definition was made in two parts, explaining two components of the term. 宗 *zōng* was interpreted in two ways. One was as the symbol of the deceased patrilineal ancestor as I mentioned above³. To this, Ban Gu had added another interpretation, claiming that the term could also illustrate a level of respect to ancestors. In this sense, the word 宗 *zōng* meant the respect paid to one's deceased ancestors from the patrilineal side. He then continued pointing out the two functions of the term 宗 *zōng*, that is: to cultivate harmony within the 宗族 *zōngzú* and to help administer its members. Thus, the common ancestor offers a common foundation of the identity for members of 宗族 *zōngzú*, which become united as a social entity. Besides this, the 宗族 *zōngzú* contains a prescribed order to determine the lineal distance to the ancestor as well as a social distance to other members of the unit. The shorter the genealogical distance one holds to the ancestor, the higher the status and the more power one has.

While emphasizing the genealogy of the 宗族 *zōngzú*, *Testimonies on the White Tiger Hall* also contains an introduction to the term 族 *zú*. This generally pertains to a group, understood as a form of co-residence, which is customary for the 宗族 *zōngzú* members. Ban Gu did not stop here though. He made a further elaboration of an abstract meaning of 族 *zú*. He argued that the word still had a symbolic meaning as a sort of way (道 *dào*) which guides people living together and arranged around a practical business. That is the concrete life style of the members of the 族 *zú*. For example, they have the wish and obligation to care about each other, obey the hierarchy within the group, and although living separately as a rule, they are expected to assemble and function as one entity when a need arises.

After analyzing the two parts separately, Ban Gu provides us with a comprehensive definition of the term 宗族 *zōngzú*. It is presumably a group formed by people from the

³ Usually in the form of the wood tablets with the name and the birth date of a deceased person.

same patrilineal kinship line, living in a neighborhood, and obliged to certain interactive responsibilities. There is a mutual dependence and help anticipation between the group members. For the 汉 *Hàn* (Chinese) people, 宗族 *zōngzú* has been not only an actual residence form, it also means a life style, an obligation to fulfill a series of social expectations, e.g. unconditional mutual interdependence among the group members subjected to an inner hierarchy⁴.

Summarizing, the ancient Chinese terms, 家 *jiā* is a general word for the family and kinship system. It is equal to terms family and kinship in English but in addition provides prescriptions for behavior, whereas the term 宗族 *zōngzú* refers to the Chinese patriarchal lineage which used to be the dominant form of family institution through much of the Chinese history.

FEI XIAOTONG'S FAMILY STUDIES

Anthropology as a research subject in China started during the 1920s, and the 1940s was the first period of its maturation. After that, because of the political situation, the subject largely remained the same from the beginning of 1950s to the late 1970s, although research was carried out, albeit with varying intensity (Xing 2003, 18). Due to this, the results achieved by researchers in the 1930s and 1940s later have become both important and unique. Learning with the renowned B. Malinowski, he developed his teacher's functional method in his works about rural life in the south of the lower reach of the Yangzi River during the 1930s and 1940s. His most important books are *The peasant life in China* (1939) and *From the soil: The foundations of Chinese society* (1948), both are milestone works in Chinese anthropological studies.

Five terms are commonly applied for the family in Fei's book. They are 家 *jiā*, 家庭 *jiāting*, 大家庭 *dàjiāting*, 家族 *jiāzú*, and 宗族 *zōngzú*. Three traditional terms I have introduced above and two other – 家庭 *jiāting* and 大家庭 *dàjiāting* are the products of the Chinese language modernization movement of the 1920s in China. 家庭 *jiāting* has been used as the counterpart of the family and the term 大家庭 *dàjiāting* is the combination of word “da”, literally meaning large and the word 家庭 *jiāting*. The term 家庭 *jiāting*, 大家庭 *dàjiāting* has been used to point to a Chinese family, which is usually bigger in size than the western nuclear family. Thus, it (imprecisely) equals an extended family.

In his works, Fei tried to search for the real connotation of the terms referring to the family. In his first book in English in 1939, he claims that “the 家 *jiā* is a small kinship group consisting of a family as its nucleus and several dependent relatives” (Fei 1939, 29). He applied the word “expanded” to family to describe such a group. By using the expanded word, he emphasizes that the family is usually bigger than its

⁴ To read more on Zongzu, see Qian Hang 宗族的世系学研究.

English nuclear counterpart. The reason of this enlarged form is the habit that sons usually keep living at their parents' home immediately after their marriage. In the local language, this kind of kinship is also commonly referred as 大家庭 *dà jiātíng*, literally this could be translated as "large family". In his later work, Fei made a correction on this issue; considering the structure of the 家 *jiā* in the Yangtze Valley, he argued that a better term for describing such form of kinship group should be 小家族 *xiǎojiāzú*:

"I suggest this new term because I want to clarify the difference in the structural principles of Chinese and Western "families". The difference between the so-called big and small family is not one of size, not one concerning the number of people who can be included, but one of structure. Structurally, Chinese families are lineages (家族 *jiāzú*) ... I will use the term small lineage (小家族 *xiǎojiāzú*) to indicate a single-lineage social group. Small and large lineages rest on the same structural principles, but they differ in number and in size. That is why I prefer not to use the term large family (大家庭 *dà jiātíng*) to identify a lineage. By using the term small lineage (小家族 *xiǎojiāzú*), I emphasize the structural characteristics of the Chinese family and not just the size" (Fei 1939, 81, 83).

In the time of Fei's studies the average size of the 族 *zú* contained eight families (Fei 1939, 85). However, the range of the term was far from rigorous and is a much more of a ritual group than a fixed group. Fei noticed that during the different anniversary occasions, different 族 *zú* members attended the event, all depending on the intention and the affluence of the host family. There was a social expectation to invite many 族 *zú* kins, but often only the closer kin actually appeared.

He also examined the function of 族 *zú* from the functional aspect. Besides the function of child-bearing and caring, 族 *zú* had other functions which made it a more coherent social organization. They included education, economic cooperation, and ritual obligations, etc. One 族 *zú* often used to own a common property, fields, houses for rent, a school, sacral commemorative compartment, and a cemetery whose aim was to benefit all the members as more complicated affairs needed more people to cooperate. Thus, this is why 族 *zú* connotes a bigger size than even the most extended family in the West.

Observed from the aspect of the structure, one may get an impression that 家庭 *jiātíng* (nuclear family) is either a hidden, independent, or even nonexistent unit. In fact, 家庭 *jiātíng* is included in 家族 *jiāzú*. "The smallest lineage may, in fact is, equal to a nuclear family household" (Fei 2004, 55). No matter the size of the 家族 *jiāzú*, they share the same patriarchal principle. It is worth mentioning that Szykiewicz (1992) argues that a nuclear family did not exist in early times as a separate functional unit, and that the basic family unit was 大家庭 *dàjiātíng*.

Returning to the question of the essence of the Chinese 家 *jiā*, Fei argues that 小家族 *xiǎojiāzú*, instead of 家庭 *jiātíng* 大家庭 *dàjiātíng* could reflect its real structural characteristic (Fei 2004, 53–55). In his work, 族 *zú* and 家族 *jiāzú* are used as equivalent terms and 家 *jiā* stands for the English term "family", while 族 *zú* and 家族 *jiāzú* additionally denote patrilineage.

CONTEMPORARY TERMS REFERRING TO THE FAMILY

Different from ancient Chinese, the terms which refer to the family in contemporary Chinese language are more variable both in numbers and forms. According to my experience as a native Chinese language user, four words are frequently used: 家*jiā*, 家庭*jiātíng*, 大家庭*dàjiātíng* and 家族*jiāzú*. The connotations of these words are to some degree overlapping, but each has its specific use. In common speech, 家*jiā* is generally applied to a normal, small family; 家庭*jiātíng* on official occasions; 大家庭*dàjiātíng* is used to refer to larger families, more numerous than a normal small one; and 家族*jiāzú* is used to refer to lineage, usually seen in scholarly texts and literature. The two last terms tend to develop in a bilateral direction. Certain connections amongst them can be noticed and it is necessary to clarify these in order to identify their meaning.

家*jiā*

Along with its most frequently used ancient connotations which were already mentioned above, the term 家*jiā* is still widely used both in daily communications and written language. In modern Chinese, the sense of the word is much more manifold than before. So far *The Modern Chinese Dictionary* has listed more than ten of its applications, including family, home and residence, a family or a single person engaged in certain trade, specialist in a certain field, school of thought, domestic etc. (*Modern Chinese Dictionary* 现代汉语词典 2009, 653). The dictionary has listed its two senses which relate to the family, that is to say the family, and home and place of residence, which are the two most frequently used meanings out of eleven. The word 家*jiā* in the sense of family or home is used mostly in common speech, while rather rarely used in written language or in formal occasions. This is attested by the research Center For Chinese Linguistics of the Peking University (CCL).

The CCL is a data base of samples from printed literature. The use of 家*jiā* as a keyword suggests that the two meaning items (family and home) constitute a minor share of results when compared with other functions of the term. Thus, it is reasonable to claim that 家*jiā*, in the sense of family, is more likely to be used in oral conversations rather than as a formal word of the same connotation.

Sample sentences used by Chinese users serve as good examples to directly demonstrate how the terms are applied.

1. Family

It has been mentioned above that when applied to the family, the term 家*jiā* does not give an explicit implication of the size of the family, similarly to its ancient usage. According to *Modern Chinese Dictionary* one can simply describe one's family by saying: 他家有五口人 *Tā jiā yǒu wǔ kǒu rén* ["His family has five people"]. Here

家*jiā* is equal to the common understanding of the English word *family*, which usually refers to a small nuclear family. But it should not be any shock if anyone come across such an expression in modern Chinese literature, saying: 张家和王家是亲戚 *Zhāngjiā hé Wángjiā shì qīnqì*⁵ [“The Zhang family and the Wang family are relatives”]. How to understand the family (家*jiā*) in the sentence depends greatly on the context. The 家*jiā* here could be a nuclear family, a stem family or the Zhang’s lineage and Wang’s lineage. All the three forms exist in social structures.

2. Home, the family place of residence

回家 *huíjiā* [“go home”];

我的家在上海 *Wǒ de jiā zài shànghǎi*. [“My home is in Shanghai” or “My family live in Shanghai”].

3. Function as a morpheme

Together with other morphemes, it can be used to construct words meaning family or domestic. In the first category, it is used as an attributive which modifies the noun morpheme after: 家人 *jiārén* [family members]; 家长 *jiāzhǎng* [family head]; 家谱 *jiāpǔ* [a genealogy book].

In the second category of words, 家*jiā* is combined with different words, which all relate to family: 家庭 *jiātíng* [family] where *ting* means the yard or main hall of the family; 家户 *jiāhù* [household in a scholarly context]; 国家 *guójiā* [a country]⁶.

家庭 *jiātíng*

It could be possible that it was the ambiguous meaning of the term 家*jiā* that urged the emergence of the new term. The word 家庭 *jiātíng* is generally applied for the normal small family in more official occasions rather than in common speech where the term 家*jiā* dominates. The term constantly appears in the state laws on the family, and this serves as a good argument for the previous judgement.

Compared with 家*jiā*, the word 家庭 *jiātíng* has a limited range of meanings. Through analyzing the searching results of the term in CCL, it was found that it is generally used in two ways, as an independent word which refers to family, e.g.

国家、社会、学校、家庭，依法保障适龄儿童，不分性别、种族，应当接受规定年限的义务教育。 *Guójiā, shèhuì, xuéxiào, jiātíng, yīfǎ bǎozhàng shìlínɡ ertóng, bù fēn xìngbié, zhǒngzú, yīngdāng jiēshòu guīdìng niánxiàn de yìwù jiàoyù.*

The state, community, school and families shall, in accordance with the law, safeguard the right to compulsory education of school-age children and adolescents. (*Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China* Article 4).

⁵ Both *Zhang* and *Wang* are the most popular surnames in China.

⁶ The formation of the word 国家 *guójiā* is commonly interpreted as a metaphor that a country is like a family for its people.

家庭 *jiāting* is also the term applied by Chinese scholars to define a family: 家庭是以婚姻和血缘关系为纽带的社会生活组织形式 *jiāting shì yì hūnyīn hé xiěyuán guānxì wèi niūdài de shèhuì shēnghuó zǔzhī xíngshì*. Here, the family is a social grouping based on marital union and blood ties (Pan Yunkang 1986).

The other function of the word 家庭 *jiāting* is when applied as an attributive before other nouns, meaning the “family’s...” which are widely applied in official documents e.g.

家庭关系 *jiāting guānxì* family relationship
 家庭财产 *jiāting cáichǎn* family property
 家庭制度 *jiāting zhìdù* family institution

家庭 *jiāting* 大家庭 *dàjiāting*

As stated in the review of Fei’s family studies, 大家庭 *dàjiāting* is used by people in daily life to refer to their kinship beyond the nuclear family. Compared with his research conducted in the 1940s, people now tend to apply the word in a more flexible way.

Generally, two interpretations could be made for this word semantically. One refers to a large sized family, which need not necessary have a complicated family structure, but which does have relatively more numerous members, e.g. families consisting of parents and three, four, or even more children, which are already relatively large in scale among contemporary Chinese families due to restrictions on procreation. The other refers to a group of close kin, which consists of at least a nuclear family and another member. There, the word “big” in the term is applied to account for the complexity of the family structure, whereas, the range of the group varies, greatly depending on individual’s personal feeling and judgement. The latter is of our interest here, in a sense of “the big family” applied for an ambiguous kinship which more or less equals to the western concept of the “extended family” when Chinese people refer to kin clusters in common speech.

My field studies have verified this finding. When asked how many family members do they have, the Chinese informants rarely responded without hesitation. Instead, they would require a clearer range of the family by asking back in return: “you mean *the big family* or *the small family*”? If they were encouraged to give the answer as they like, they would probably offer two versions, with *the small family* almost exactly referring to their nuclear family while answers for the *the big family* remained ambiguous. Generally, the answers for the latter covered grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings, first cousins etc. from either the patrilineal or matrilineal side, but were mostly automatically categorized by the respondents in two systems. A typical pattern to answer the question would be “on my father’s side, there are ... and on my mother’s side...” The answers indicate a growing tendency to adopt the concept of bilateral kinship in contemporary China.

No matter how the term is interpreted, the application of this new word implied the changing concept of the family for Chinese people. That is to say, the small size 家庭 *jiātíng*, i.e. the nuclear family, has become the de facto reference point of understandings of the family for Chinese people. Furthermore, the widely used term 大家庭 *dàjiātíng* is used to describe the family which is over the normal small (nuclear) family size, which also points to a changing idea of the family.

It is widely accepted by scholars that the scale of the traditional Chinese family was limited by its property. This limitation made the big five-generation family only an ideal rather than a fact during most of Chinese history. For example, even though the desire for a big family was a social fact which was highly supported by the social and political institutions in imperial China, the average household was also rarely larger than five people in the 18th century (Wang 2009, 128). However, the term 家 *jiā* at the time was used, above all, in the sense of the big extended family and at the same time the small family had no a particular name. The present appearances of the words 家庭 *jiātíng* and 大家庭 *dàjiātíng* are signals of the changing of the understanding of family structure for Chinese people.

宗族 *zōngzú* and 家族 *jiāzú*

Anthropologists have examined the two groupings, investigating their existing forms and integration with the contemporary social life. Another task of anthropologists when studying the two terms in the Chinese society, regardless of their original intention, lies with the theoretical interests. That is, how the Chinese family system – in terms of a local knowledge – meets or challenges the existing family theories found globally. However, no matter from which aspect, the definitions of the terms are being highly essentialised. It is from here where the differences of the definition emerge and disagreements have materialised.

Generally, 宗族 *zōngzú* is the special term for a Chinese patrilineage institution. The definition of the term is rather clear and stable, and has been over the span of history. Currently, the word is a largely a scholarly term and not used in people's daily speech. The other term, 家族 *jiāzú*, without an explicit historical academic root, as is the case with the word 宗族 *zōngzú*, functions as an ambiguous word which refers to a large Chinese family in a general sense. Thus it has been understood by scholars in a very different way.

Some scholars, e.g. Zhu Fenghan (1990), Zheng Zhenman (1992), Xu Yangjie (1992; 1995) claim that there are no strict differences between 家族 *jiāzú* and 宗族 *zōngzú*, and consequently they used both terms synonymously. Feng Erkang (1994) argues that Chinese 宗族 *zōngzú* or 家族 *jiāzú* should include four elements, the patrilineal relationship among its members, based on families as its basic units, co-residence or relatively stable residence location and being registered under the state family administration.

Other researchers argue that the two terms should be distinguished from the perspective of differing aspects. Xie Jichang (1984) and Qian Hang (1990) argue the two terms represent two ways of generalization of two important types of social relationships. 宗族 *zōngzú* stresses the consanguinity – beyond a genealogical principle, while the term 家族 *jiāzú* stresses the relationship formed by marriage and birth. Translated into English, 宗族 *zōngzú* is the counter-part for “lineage” or “Chinese lineage” while 家族 *jiāzú*, is a counterpart of the family. In this case, it stresses that patrilineage is organized along the lineal principle, while the family includes a new aspect of consanguinity through the wife, that is, there is an affinity.

The second opinion held by researchers like Shi Yilong (2011) is that 家族 *jiāzú* is the branch organization of 宗族 *zōngzú*. During Shi’s anthropological field work in several villages in Fujian province, the region where 宗族 *zōngzú* used to be widely existed, found that the term is applied differently by people in daily life. In general, inside the 宗族 *zōngzú*, two levels of smaller groups could be identified: 房族 *fángzú* and 家族 *jiāzú*.

房族 *Fángzú* and 家族 *jiāzú* are sub-groups within a 宗族 *zōngzú*. If 宗族 *zōngzú* could be translated into English as Chinese patriarchal lineage, then accordingly 房族 *fángzú* and 家族 *jiāzú* could be called sub-lineages or smaller lineages within a bigger lineage, which follow the same patriarchal principle but on a somewhat reduced scale.

The formation of new 宗族 *zōngzú* is usually connected with population movements during history because of, for example, wars, disasters, state organized emigration, or individual choice etc. 宗族 *zōngzú* usually begins from the ancestor who was found, or believed to be, the first person who settled in the place which his descendants recognized as their site of origin. Everyone from the first ancestor to his latest descendants are counted as members of the same 宗族 *zōngzú*.

Generally, 家族 *jiāzú* is counted several generations up and down from the speaker. Thus, it is applied for the social organization formed by most close families or individuals in the sense of a patrilineal relationship. The common ancestor worship rituals in the villages in south China provinces, such as Hunan and Jiangxi etc. embrace five generations starting from the originating adult.

Beyond 家族 *jiāzú*, stemming from the first common ancestor of the whole 宗族 *zōngzú*, there can be several 房族 *fángzú*. Theoretically each new generation after the first ancestor could initiate a separate 房族 *fángzú*. But in practice new 房族 *fángzú* were identified mostly when a branch of the 宗族 *zōngzú* resettled in new location. Such a change in the family history was usually recorded in the genealogical book for the whole 宗族 *zōngzú*. It is worth mentioning that there are usually smaller “房 *fáng*” which are unwritten but exist in people’s minds, particularly in elders⁷.

⁷ It is also worth mentioning that sometimes, above the concept of “房 *fáng*” there remains “房派 *fángpài*”, graded at a higher rank. It consists of several “房 *fáng*” and is used in genealogical books. Essentially, it is a “房 *fáng*” but contains relatively more generations.

In brief summary, 宗族 *zōngzú*, 房族 *fángzú*, and 家族 *jiāzú* are three similar kinship structures based on the patriarchal principle. 家族 *jiāzú* are the most fundamental units, which consist of different scales of 房族 *fángzú* that stem from one 宗族 *zōngzú*. From the speaker's point of view the kin from the same 家族 *jiāzú* are genealogically closer than the kin from the 房族 *fángzú*, while the rest of kin from his or her 宗族 *zōngzú* are yet further removed, though still forming one larger lineage.

Accordingly, the following categorization, which demonstrates the existence of the three structures within the kin space among habitants of Fujian, was listed by Shi Yilong. To make it clear, an introduction to another set of terms is necessary.

祠 *Cí* relates to memorial buildings that commemorate ancestors; 谱 *pǔ* means genealogical books; 同.....的 *tóng.....de* applies to people from the same kin group. They are used in creating the following three groups of terms as recorded by Shi:

宗祠 *zōngcí* / 宗谱 *zōng pǔ* / 同宗的 *tóngzōng de*
 房祠 *fáng cí* / 房谱 *fáng pǔ* / 同房的 *tóngfáng de*
 家祠 *jiā cí* / 家谱 *jiā pǔ* / 同家的 *tóng jiā de* (Shi and Chen 2011, 35–43.)

The most common methods are to build common memorial halls, compile genealogical books. The memorial hall dedicated to an ancestor of the whole 宗族 *zōngzú*, which additionally includes several earlier generations, is called 宗祠 *zōngcí*. Similarly, structures erected for ancestors of particular 房族 *fángzú* or of a 家族 *jiāzú* are called by the group's generic term supplemented with *-cí*. The same logic of word formation is followed in the naming of different segments in genealogical books.

Other members of a 宗族 *zōngzú* can also be categorized into different subgroups and named accordingly. Kins from the same 家族 *jiāzú*, 房族 *fángzú* or 宗族 *zōngzú* are thus called 同家的 *tóng jiā de*, 同房的 *tóngfáng de*, or 同宗的 *tóngzōng de*, disregarding particular relationships between individuals and pointing instead to kin groupings within the 宗族 *zōngzú*.

However, 家族 *jiāzú* and 宗族 *zōngzú* are used by scholars in different ways. There are opinions that 家族 *jiāzú* has a wider connotation than 宗族 *zōngzú*. As mentioned above, the Chinese word 族 *zú* means a sort of community, thus here the meaning of 家 *jiā* is extended to something larger than a nuclear family. However, Sun Benwen (1947) produces a historical perspective to argue the point that 家族 *jiāzú* not only includes patrilineal 族 *zú*, but also the mother's 族 *zú* and the wife's 族 *zú*, thus mixing the laterality with affinity. In this case 宗族 *zōngzú* would be a group of the same surname, while 家族 *jiāzú* does not, as it includes spouses. A similar voice also comes from the standpoint of contemporary social reality. Yang Shanhua and Liu Xiaojing have argued that given the fact of the growing importance of kinship practices from the mother's side in rural China, 家族 *jiāzú* should be defined as a patrilineal kinship together with the spouse's (Yang and Liu 2000, 84).

In short, it can be summarised that 宗族 *zōngzú* is the more scholarly term for the Chinese lineage. 家族 *jiāzú* is a term less scholarly, more common, and is interpreted in various ways. The actual meaning of 家族 *jiāzú* is, to a great degree, determined by the perception of individual researchers on the basis of changing term usage (and perhaps of local variations).

In this paper I have mainly focused on the research done by the Chinese scholars, as our crucial goal is to examine how Chinese family terms were, and continue to be interpreted by insiders. However, it should not be ignored that numerous studies dealing with kinship-related matters in both past and present contexts have been made by scholars from outside China (cf. Freedman 1970; Ebrey and Watson 1980; Brandtstädter and Santos 2009). In their works, the Chinese terms referring to the family were also observed and investigated.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have reviewed the frequently used terms in Chinese that refer to the family. I am aware that these terms do not cover all the words that Chinese people apply in describing the family but they are the most typical ones.

Practically all Chinese terms applied for the family have their specific usages. 家 *jiā* is a term which has been used both in ancient times and in contemporary China. With great flexibility, it can include the various forms of family. 家庭 *jiāting* is a relatively new term and it is the official description of the family. It is usually applied for the common small family. The term is less often used by people in daily speech.

大家庭 *dàjiāting* is applied by the Chinese for relatively close kinship around their nuclear family. More and more Chinese intend to define the word from a bilateral perspective. The most difficult term to define is 宗族 *zōngzú*, which is an ancient term referring to the Chinese lineage. The term is rarely used in people's daily communication mostly because lineages disappear. Some scholars argue that 宗族 *zōngzú* as a social institution has barely survived in contemporary China. The current iteration of 宗族 *zōngzú* is a ritual group rather than an economic-oriented cooperating unit as it was before (Yue 1994). Nonetheless, considering that rituals have been restricted to patrilineal kin, it carries a meaning of a descent group with the kind of lineage. At present, the extent of such a lineage may vary greatly, and usage of the term itself is on the wane, despite the continued importance of ritual offerings to ancestors. It appears that the 宗 *zōng* remains the last resort of patrilineal family grouping and has now become only an imagined one. One thing that is certain is that in ancient times it extended to the most removed ancestor, revered by the congregation of those performing the ritual. However, it is not clear how far removed he was. Some researchers point to nine generations, but nine could also be merely an auspicious number rather than a symptomatic one.

Lastly, the term 家族 *jiāzú*, which in recent history generally referred to the smallest patrilineage around an extended form of several closely cooperating nuclear families, each being a separate 家 *jiā*. Along with the transformation that kinship obligations continue to undergo, 家族 *jiāzú* now tends to display a more evident bilateral connotation.

The usages of the new terms e.g. 家庭 *jiāting* and 大家庭 *dàjiāting* and the changing connotation of the traditional Chinese terms referring to the family imply the modernization of the Chinese family. The process can be summed up as the dual tendencies of minimization and bilateralization in Chinese family development.

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RATHA YĀTRĀ OF BAṬUKA MAHĀDEVA AT CHHATRARI: SOME ART HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS ENQUIRIES

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This paper seeks to excavate the relationship between the tenth century *Mukhalinga* and the eighth century main icon of Śakti Devī, both kept in the sanctum sanctorum or the *garbhagrha* of the Śakti Devī (locally called The Śiva-Śakti temple) in Chhatrari, Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh. The former is known as Baṭuka Mahādeva and is taken out of the temple in a holy procession every year, on the last day of the Maṇimaheśa *charī* or *yātrā*. My research is based not only on epigraphic and art historical studies but also on field work conducted in Chhatrari and adjacent sites.

* * *

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest ukazanie związku między XI-wieczną *Mukhalingą* a ikoną Śakti Devī z VIII wieku, które znajdują się w sancto sanctorum, czyli w *garbhaghaha* Śakti Devī (lokalnie zwanej świątynią Śiva-Śakti) w Chhatrari, dystrykt Chamba, stan Himaćal. Pradeś. Ten pierwszy znany jest jako Baṭuka Mahādeva i co roku jest usuwany ze świątyni w uroczystej procesji, w ostatnim dniu Māimaheśa *charī* zwanym *yātrā*. Moje badania opierają się nie tylko na epigraficznych i historycznych badaniach sztuki, ale także na pracach terenowych w Chhatrari i sąsiednich miejscach.

Key words: Chhatrari, Baṭuka Mahādeva, *ratha yātrās*, *mohrās*, *linga*, *mukhalinga*, Maṇimaheśa, Śakti Devī Temple, procession, ritual, performance, pilgrimage, *Purānas*

INTRODUCTION

In the sanctum sanctorum or the *garbhagrha*¹ of the Śakti Devī (locally called the Śiva-Śakti temple) at Chhatrari, Chamba² District, Himachal Pradesh, there are sacred

¹ Methodologically, the use of terminology that is either original or as close to original object or context is desirable, especially in this case where religious contexts, both historical and contemporary, are being discussed. The use of western terminology would imply widely anachronistic and culturally distant meanings. For those readers who are unfamiliar with South Asian or Himalayan contexts I give translated meanings of rare terms in footnotes or in the text.

² Chamba is used to describe a geographical region; the Chamba Valley which covered upper regions of the Buddhal, Ravi, Bairasiul rivers and Sal rivers. Chamba also refers to the historical kingdom of Chamba largely contiguous with the valley. There is also the Chamba town, the main town and capital of the Chamba kingdom. In addition, Chamba is a modern administrative unit, originally a subdivision (*tehsil*) and now a district of the state of Himachal Pradesh.

Hindu icons that include a tenth century statue of *Mukhalinga* (*linga*³ with a face) and an eighth century icon of Śakti Devī. The *Mukhalinga* is known as Baṭuka Mahādeva and is annually taken out of the temple in a *śobhā yātrā*⁴ procession on the last day of the Maṇimaheśa *charī* or *yātrā*. The idea and practice of such a ceremonial procession of an icon is not witnessed elsewhere in the Chamba-Brahmour valley and provides a link with the Siraj Region⁵ of the Western Himalayas⁶ where such *yātrās* with *mohrās*⁷ are the norm. The procession as **ritual and performance** provides certain interesting insights into the religious formations in the upper Ravi valley.

Stylistically, the brass icon of the *Mukhalinga* does not conform with those of Meru Varman–Guggā lineage⁸ and needs to be assessed afresh in terms of its origins, function and influence on other art production in the valley.

THE OBJECT: RE/PLACEMENT AND RE/USE

Chhatrari is the site of the Śakti Devī temple complex that contains not only the eighth century Śakti Devī icon housed in an original cedar/deodar wood temple, but also variegated small and big icons with distinct Śaiva affiliations in the sanctum and smaller shrines; these icons include the Umāśhita Maheśvaramūrti along with a *Śivalinga* to the north of the temple. One of the icons is a bust of Śiva, located to the left of the main Śakti Devī icon (Photo 1) this bust is the only object at Chhatrari which is taken out of the temple in a *yātrā* on a *ratha*⁹ in the tradition of the *mohrās* of the Siraj region of the Western Himalayas.

The main icon, in comparison, is *sthāpita*, immovable, or *achala*. This bust of Śiva is one type of *Śivalinga* that has been described in the *Śiva Purāna* as *cara* or mobile in its

³ *Linga* – the concept comes from Sanskrit and refers to Shiva. One of the elements of the Śiva religiosity is the adoration of *linga*. *Linga* means: the birth (in the sense of the male organ), the attribute, the distinctive sign, the main object of worship in the form of a cylindrical column with a rounded top and an incremental round base (see: Davis 1995, 637–648; Dennis Hudson 1995, 305–320).

⁴ *Yātrā* – a pilgrimage, a procession.

⁵ Siraj is a traditional term used to refer to parts of Mandi and Rampur districts of Himachal Pradesh; it is divided into upper, middle and lower Siraj.

⁶ The term ‘Western Himalayas’ implies a region and a geographical zone rather than altitude. For Chamba, Mandi and many other districts in the region the general term ‘Western Himalayas’ is used from the time of Imperial Gazetteers, in Government of India gazetteers, Survey of India, in all historical literature produced on the subject, and in scientific discourse.

⁷ In the case of this article *mohras* mean various kinds of coverings (cloth, jewellery, and metal faces) mostly imposed on *lingas*, but also on other images of deities.

⁸ Meru Varman was a legendary *raja*, the founder of the Mosuna dynasty, known also as the Meru-Mosuna dynasty, which was the only royal lineage ruled the Chamba state from its inception in the seventh century to April 15, 1948, when Chamba was merged with the Indian Union (Sharma 2009, 38).

⁹ *Ratha yatra* – a festival or public procession with a chariot carrying deity’ images or idols sculptures.



Photo 1. Mukhalinga of Baṭuka Mahādeva set on a slate pedestal, within an assemblage of multi sectarian small brass images. Author: S. Bawa.

list of auspicious *līngas*. The syllable Om (a+u+m) is described as the *Dhvani Līnga*, the *svayambhūlīnga* as *Nāda Līnga*; the *Yantra* (diagrammatic contrivance) as *Bindulīnga*. The ‘M’ syllable is the installed (*pratiṣṭhitita*) *līnga*. The ‘U’ syllable is mobile (*cara*) *Līnga* and the ‘A’ syllable is the *Līnga* of huge form (*Guruvighraha*) (*Śiva Purāna*, Ch. 1. 113–114)¹⁰. A person who worships the *līnga* for eternity is believed to become a liberated soul.

The spatial placement of this bust is interesting insofar as the left side or *vama* is associated with the feminine, which would suggest that in terms of power and status

¹⁰ The *Guruvighraha līnga* is of the kind that is worshipped as Maṇimaheśa in Brahmaur and also at Saho in the Sal valley.

the icon of Devī enjoys a higher and more exalted position than the male deity. Originally, it seems that the bust may have served as the *mūlapratimā*¹¹ in some other temple.

The Śiva visage has generally been dated to the 10th century, about two centuries later than that of the Devī (Postel, Neven, Mankodi 1985, 71). However, an earlier dating of around the middle of the eighth century may be posited on stylistic grounds, and this visage may have been the precursor of the similar Harsar image as well as Kashmir sculptures and may be related to other eighth century images from Brahmaur-Chhatrari as discussed below. Some authorities believe that it has affiliations with the Kashmir style (Postel, Neven, Mankodi 1985, 71) based on its masculine V shaped torso, narrowing waist with a fold in the stomach containing a cross in the navel and somewhat defined chest muscles.

The object under study here is an *ekamukhalinga* made of brass that stands about 48 cms high from the pedestal base to the tip of the crown. The *mohrā – mūrti*¹² represents Baṭuka Mahādeva, which, according to a priest, the *pujāri* of the temple, is supposed to be the *bhakta* (a devotee- of the Devī) form of Śiva. This identification is not given in the short description of the Chhatrari *Melā*¹³ in a village survey of 1961 (*Census of India 1961* 1964, 50–1). There is however a photograph of the image, which has just been labelled ‘The Deity’; in addition, a similar image of the bust can be seen in the background of a photograph, however this image is now not available.

The bust is set against the *linga* on a *yoni pitha*¹⁴ made of uneven slate stone (see photo 1). The figure is two-armed, with the arms emerging from the pedestal itself. It has the following attributes: In the right hand is an *akṣamālā*, a rosary necklace made of beads or seeds used for keeping track of prayer and mantras. Śaivite *akṣamālā* are generally made of *rudrākṣa*¹⁵. In this case there are approximately 27–28 beads in the rosary. Tantric practitioners, instead, use small skulls carved of ivory. Many *akṣamālās* have either 50 beads to correspond to the number of letters in the alphabet or 108 which is viewed as an auspicious number (Jones and Ryan 2006, 22)¹⁶. In the other hand the figure keeps a *matalunga* (a fruit rich in seeds or citron), *bīja*¹⁷

¹¹ *Mūla* literally means a root, and *pratimā* – a differentiated image.

¹² *Mūrti* – literally means any form, embodiment or solid object, and typically refers to an image, statue or idol of a deity or person in Indian culture (Monier-Williams 2011, 824; Acharya 1946, 426).

¹³ *Melā* – feast, festival or fair.

¹⁴ *Pitha* – “resting place, seat, pedestal, altar”. Hindu term for the name of the place where the power of the deity was rested (most often female deities) (see: Sacha-Piecko and Jakubczak 2003, 135).

¹⁵ *Rudrākṣa* (Sanskrit: *rudrākṣa*) – Shiva’s teardrops; a seed traditionally used as prayer beads in Hinduism. The seed is produced by several species of large evergreen broad-leaved tree in the genus *Elaeocarpus* (Stutley 1985).

¹⁶ In my text there are some inclusions (e.g. about *akṣamālā* or *matalunga*) which are significant in describing the historical and iconographic art through which I explain the religious thought and practice connected with the *mukhalinga*, the object embedded in the art.

¹⁷ *Bīja* – literally seed, is used as a metaphor for the origin or cause of things and cognate with *bindu* (a dot).

or *vija puraka*. There is a snake as a *yajñopivata* and an *ekavalī* necklace around the neck falling to the waist.

Compared to similar figures of Śiva, there is one at Elephanta, where Śiva-Mahādeva is also depicted as holding a *matalunga* (citron) in his left hand (Kramrisch 1988, 447, pl. 4). In Kashmir Śaiva tradition, the citron is especially venerated and has been mentioned as one of the objects held in the hands of *dūtīs* (two women who are partners in Tantric rites). *Dūtīs* are attendants of Abhinavgupta, who is visualized by Madhuraja Yogin in *Dhyāna ślōka* as Dakṣiṇāmūrti – an incarnation of Śiva. Abhinavgupta is one of the greatest exponents of Kashmir Śaiva Siddhānta and is visualized here as holding a rosary in one hand (Muller-Ortega 2010, 46). The reference to Elephanta and Kashmir shows the wide prevalence of this iconography.

Elements of this description match prescriptions given in an important text containing significant *Śilpaśāstric*¹⁸ portions, dated to the seventh century and considered to have been composed in Kashmir, The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna*, though a Vaiṣṇava *Upapurāna*, also contains information regarding forms of deities popular amongst the Śaivite of the northern region. It says that “the staff and the citron are in the hands allotted to the Bhairava¹⁹”. In the hand of Bhairava there is the gem of seed which is traditionally said to contain all of the atoms of the entire seed of the universe. (*Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna*²⁰ 1928 Part III, Ch. 48, Verses 1–20).

It further prescribes that one should make Vasuki (the serpent king), Śiva’s sacred thread. Mahādeva, the god of gods, should be represented with ten arms. This strong-armed (king), should bear in his right hands a rosary, a trident, an arrow, a staff and a lotus. In the left hands of the trident-bearer, the god of gods, should have a citron, a bow, a mirror, a water-pot and a piece of skin. The colour of the whole (image) should resemble the rays of the moon (*Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna* 1928, Part III, Ch. 44, Verses 1–21). Though the Chhatrari image is two armed, it does bear a snake on its torso as well as a citron and rosary.

In addition, other Śaiva images within the precincts of the temple also conform to the descriptions of forms of the Śiva; one such image is the Umā Maheśvara, a 16 cm, made of brass, ninth century Śiva seated in a yoga asana on a circular stool on a lotus with Uma²¹ on his lap and the head of Nandi²² peeping from behind. Another important icon is the Pratihāra-style-Gaurī Śankara icon (Photo 2) enshrined in a small temple behind the main Śiva Śakti temple.

¹⁸ *Śilpaśāstra* – a category of Sanskrit texts, or manuals, dealing with such arts/crafts (*śilpas*) as iconography, and the production of paintings (Johnson 2009).

¹⁹ Bhairava is a fierce manifestation of Shiva associated with annihilation.

²⁰ The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purana* is a Hindu text, encyclopedic in nature. It is a supplement or appendix to the *Vishnu Purana* (see: Hazra 1962, 272–278).

²¹ Uma, known as Satī, Dakṣayāni – in the Hindu tradition, one of the forms of Devi (Parvati), Śiva’s wife.

²² Nandi – in Indian mythology bull, a palfrey (*wahana*) of Śiva.



Photo 2. *Pratihāra* style Gaurī Śankara icon enshrined in a small temple behind the main Śiva Śakti temple. Author: S. Bawa.

This large composite figure shows Nandi standing behind the divine couple, while the halo like frame or *prabhāvali*²³ has narrative and mythological scenes from Paurānic myths and stories carved around the main image, including the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī and Bhikṣāṭanamūrti²⁴. It is dictated in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna*, that the left half of his body should be Pārvatī, and Śiva should be with four hands. The rosary and the trident should be depicted in the right hand while in the left a mirror and lotus should be shown. Śambhu (Śiva) should have one face, two eyes and be adorned with ornaments, and in the left part of the body should be his consort. *Prakṛti* (unconscious nature) with *Puruṣa* (self, consciousness, universal principle) are marked by close union and celebrated as *Gaurīśvara* (half-female form of Śiva), which is worshipped by all men (see: *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna* 1928 Part III, Ch. 55, Verses 1–6).

In stylistic terms, the *ekamukhalinga* (one-faced *linga*) of Baṭuka Mahādeva, is closely related to the figure of Śiva on the entrance doorjamb (Photo 3) on its *deva śākha*²⁵ that has depictions of gods and goddesses.

Here a four armed Śiva is shown as standing, and Nandi in the form of a bull (*vāhana*) stands behind him. The torso is square with a cross shape around the navel while the face is also squarish with slightly open lips. Significantly, this Śiva figure holds a rosary and a citron in its front hands that bear stylistic similarities with the bust inside. The other hands hold a trident and ring like objects. Similarities between the enshrined image and the one on the doorjamb have also been noticed in the case of Lakṣaṇā Devī at Brahmaur and Mahiṣāsūramardini on the jamb of the Śakti Devī Temple (Bawa 2014, 212).

Comparison may also be made with the *mūlapratimā* or the main icon of Śakti Devī (Photo 4).

The indentation above the lip in both the Śiva and Devī icon are alike as are the three folds on the neck. It should also be mentioned that in terms of facial features, the Devī's face is elongated, nevertheless the sharp ridges of the nose and the fullness of the lips suggest that the same atelier, based in the Brahmaur Chhatrari region, was the workshop responsible for the creation of the wooden carving, the Śakti Devī and the bust inside the shrine. Moreover, the Devī image has an inscription dating from the early eighth century that provides us with the names of both the patron and sculptor; Meru Varmana and Guggā respectively. A translated text of the Śakti Devī image reads:

²³ The *Prabhāvali* represents something similar to *prabhamaṇḍala*; the former is, however, a ring of light that surrounds the whole person of a god, while the latter is a circular halo that is shown close to the head. The *Prabhāvali* is an ornamental circular or oval ring, with a number of *jvālās* (or “protruding tongues of flame”) (Gopinatha Rao 1993).

²⁴ *Bhikṣāṭanamūrti* refers to an image (*mūrti*) of an aspect of Śiva. *Bhikṣāṭana* literally means “wandering about for alms” (Wisdom Library).

²⁵ *Śākha* – literally means a branch. It is the name of a *gaṇa* (attendant of Śiva).



Photo 3: Śiva on the entrance doorjamb on its Deva Śākha of the wooden Śiva Śakti temple.
Author: S. Bawa.



Photo 4. Detail of the *mūlapratimā* or the main icon of Śakti Devī, brass, early eighth century. Author: S. Bawa.

“There was an eminent chief from a pure race called the illustrious Deva-varman of celebrated fame. His son, charming by every virtue, [is] the illustrious Meru-varman, renowned on earth. First, for the sake of the spiritual merit of his parents, he, out of devotion, caused the image of Śakti to be made, after having conquered [his] foes in their invincible strongholds. His life was prolonged by glory, fame and religious merit. It was made by (*kṛita*) a workman called Guggā” (Vogel 1911, 145).

The same pair were also responsible for the creation of three other images at Brahmaur in the Chaurāsi complex, comprising the Ganeṣa, Nandi and the Lakṣaṇā Devī images, all belonging to the broad Śaiva Śakta sect.

There may have been a large Śaiva complex either at Chhatrari or the nearby village of Khani Maṭha that was mentioned in Yugākarvarman's Brahmaur inscription, where details of a Śaivite ascetic institution being dispossessed of the benefit of a Narasiṃha temple are mentioned. *Maṭhas* were popular institutions of Śaivite practice in Kashmir and Central India. *Maṭhas*, such as the one at Khani, were attached to Śakti temples, in which Śiva and Śakti became inseparable components of worship in Śaiva monastic establishments having Tantric overtones (Bawa 1998, 41–43).

The Harsar image, as it stands today, is a later copy of the original image that was stolen from Chhatrari *mukhalinga*. The copy was donated by the *pujārī* of the temple in March 1994. The original image, probably inspired from another one, hailed from the sixteenth century; was two-armed with one hand holding a rosary while the other – a citron; the image was decorated with a serpent as *yajñopavita* (a sacred cord). This was referred to as Mahādeva and was installed at Arsarin (Harsar) as mentioned in a dedicatory inscription by donors Gaṅgu and Kiṣanu, the sons of Bhagasyani Nathu (Vogel 1911, 251).

The presence of such a magnificent image, replete with the mythological complexities of sectarian worship associated with Paurānic Brahmanism, demonstrates a close association and the influence of Śivaism as practiced in early medieval north India, especially Kashmir and the central regions. The Śiva-Śakti temple too must have been an independent shrine perhaps with a stone *sikhara*, which is no longer extant, though remnants of a stone temple can be seen in the contiguous Lakṣaṇā Devī Temple at Brahmaur. A similar trend involving the disintegration of stone temples and the relegation of their stone images to the peripheries of newer Devī temples can be seen elsewhere in the Western Himalayas, such as at Kao and Mamel in the Karsog valley.

IDENTITY AND ITS REMNANTS

Local tradition²⁶ identifies this Śiva bust as Baṭuka Mahādeva, and the term itself is intriguing, because early Paurānic texts do not mention Śiva in this form. The *Śiva Purāna*, *Viṣṇudharmottara* and other *Purānas* in which Śiva and other iconography find mention are specially significant to trace how resonances of an older tradition are still echoed in identities and practices in recent times. The one reference in the *Śiva Purāna* to Baṭuka is in association with the incarnation of Pināka bearing Lord Śiva as Kirāta who killed Mūka and with pleasure granted favours to Arjuna. In it, Lord Kṛiṣṇa says that he propitiated Lord Śiva for seven months in the mountain of Baṭuka and thus pleased Śiva. (*ŚivaPurāna*, 37.13–14). The location and identity of the mountain

²⁶ Place: Chhatrari, District Chamba, Date: 15th September 2002, Informants: Chuuni Lal-Pujari, Suresh Kumar-Pujari, Puran Chanda and Chatur Ram-Kothari and Riharu Ram-Chela (medium) of the Devī (also known as Mata da Grahānu).

is unspecified but Baṭuka has traditionally been associated with Bhairava and in fact, his child form or *bāl rūpa* is often seen in later Śaiva tradition.

Baṭuka Bhairava has always been considered an unorthodox deity associated with dogs and unclean demons, perhaps belonging to autochthonous cultural traditions that were incorporated into the Brahmanical religious matrix. This is part of an extended tradition where the Yajurveda describes Rudra as Śvapati (Lord of Dogs) and the Atharvaveda as being accompanied by howling dogs (Chakravarti 1986, 46).

The description of the Baṭuka Bhairava icon, given in the *Rupamandana*, with eight arms does not match the image at Chhatrari, for it is prescribed that in six of these arms *khatvāṅga*²⁷, *pāsa*²⁸, *suta*, *damaru*²⁹, *kapāla*³⁰ and a snake should be held. Of the two hands adjacent to the body, one carries a piece of flesh and the other is in *abhaya* – *mudra* (gesture of fearlessness). The figure is flanked by a dog which is the same colour as Baṭuka Bhairava. Even the *Vatuka-bhairavkalpa*, a later text devoted to this particular form, describes that this aspect of Bhairava should be depicted with red *jatās* (matted hair), three eyes and a red body. He should carry in his hands the *śūla pāsa*, *damaru* and *kapāla* and ride a dog. In addition, he should be stark naked and surrounded by a host of demons (Rao 1998, 177–179). In the Tantric tradition there are 64 *bhairavas* or *kṣētrapālas*, each having a dog as its companion. For Baṭuka and Kāla Bhairava, the dog actually becomes the *vāhana* (vehicle) (Krishna 2014, 105).

It is in Kashmiri Saivism that Vaṭuka Bhairava has a major presence in textual as well as ritual practice and represents the *rājas guṇā*³¹. In one of the myths, it is narrated that at the early dawn of creation, Mahādeva meditates on his Paramśakti. His meditation leads to a revelatory vision of a beautiful Himalayan forest called Sundermal where Parmaśakti gives instructions to her Yoginīs to prepare meat dishes and other delicacies for human consumption. Mahādeva takes the form of the Svachanda Bhairava (5 faces, ten arms and 15 eyes) and approaches the supreme force, Mahāśakti, while her attendants are terrified and struck dumb by this form.

It is believed that on observing their dread, Paramśakti or Mahādevī cast an infuriated eye at a pitcher of water whereupon Baṭuka Bhairava emerged. Here too, he has been ascribed as ten-armed holding a spear, a pitcher, a *damaru*, a noose and two arms in *abhaya* (gesture of fearlessness) and with favour-giving postures. The narrative relates that Baṭuka Mahādeva and the Yoginīs are unable to ward off Mahādeva in his

²⁷ *Khatvāṅga* is a long, studded tube originally created as a weapon. It was adopted as a religious symbol in Indian religions.

²⁸ *Pāsa* – translated as “noose” or “lasso”, is a supernatural weapon depicted in Hindu iconography.

²⁹ *Damaru* is a small, two-headed drum.

³⁰ *Kapāla* – a skull or a skull-cup – a cup made from a human skull and used as a ritual implement (bowl).

³¹ *Rajas* is sometimes translated as passion; it is one of the three *Guṇas* (tendencies, qualities, attributes), a philosophical and psychological concept developed by the Samkhya school of Hindu philosophy (Larson 2001; Lochtefeld 2002).

Svachanda Bhairava form. The Svachanda Mahādeva however leaves and Paramśakti blesses Baṭuka and Ramana Bhairavas created thus as embodiments of *rājas* and *sattva guṇas*³² respectively. In another version of the story Bhrangesh Samhita Brahma and Viṣṇu are humbled by Śiva instead of Baṭuka and Ramana. As a reward for their efforts the Mahāśakti, grants these Bhairavas protection and on the 13th *Krishna pakṣa*³³ of *Phālguna*³⁴ (called *Herath*) *yōginīs* merge with the Mahāśakti, and she in turn with the *juvālālīṅga* (Toshakhani 2010, 157–159).

This is celebrated in Kashmir Saivism through a fortnight long ritual around the 13th of *Phālguna* where Bhairava emerges as a *juvālā-līṅga* or a *Līṅga* of blaze and overwhelms Vaṭuka Bhairava and Rāma (or Ramana Bhairava) the mind born sons of Mahāśakti.

In another part of the Himalayas, in Nepal, Baṭuka Bhairava has a temple contiguous with the Vatsala temple in Paśupati-nātha and an independent procession is held there and this Bhairava is taken outside (Michaels 2008, 13).

JATĀRS: CHARĪ YĀTRĀ, ŚOBHĀ AND RATHA YĀTRĀ

The entire area has numerous *jatārs* or fairs and festivals, either linked to or independent of each other. Three-day festivals, such as the one at Chhatrari, are also celebrated in other parts of the erstwhile *riyāsat* (“a state”, region) including Pangī, where the *Iwān* is celebrated every year in Dharwas and the *Unoni* at Lujh, Suraalm Karuni and Karias to venerate the Devī in her various forms (*Census of India 1961* 1964, 37).

Every year at Chhatrari, a *yātrā* known locally as *śōbhāyātrā* is taken out of the main Śakti Devī temple and taken around the village. This *yātrā* takes place annually on the occasion of the three-day *melā* (feast, festival or fair), which coincides with the last day of the better known Maṇimaheśa *charīyātrā*, when the *charī* (staff) starts its return journey to the Charpaṭi Nāth *samādhi* in Chamba town. The *yātrā* and the accompanying rituals are conducted in four stages, each with a separate yet interlinked significance.

On the first day of the *melā* at Chhatrari, the main idol of Śakti Devī is washed in the morning with water brought from the Maṇimaheśa Lake (*Census of India 1961* 1964, 50) and later the small *mukhālīṅga* is taken out in a palanquin in a procession

³² *Sattva* is one of the three *Guṇas* or “modes of existence” (tendencies, qualities, attributes), a philosophical and psychological concept developed by the Samkhya school of Hindu philosophy (Larson 2001; Lochtefeld 2002).

³³ *Krishna pakṣa* refers to the dark lunar fortnight or waning moon in the Hindu calendar. *Krishna* in Sanskrit means “dark”. *Krishna pakṣa* is a period of 15 days, which begins on a day *Purnima* (Full Moon), culminating on a day *Amasvasya* (New Moon). *Krishna pakṣa* is considered inauspicious, as the moon loses light during this period (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paksha>, access: 10.11.2017).

³⁴ *Phālguna* is a month of the Hindu calendar. *Phālguna* is the eleventh month of the year, and corresponds with February/March in the Gregorian calendar (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phalguna>, access: 10.11.2017).

as described below. On being asked about the relationship between the Maṇimaheśa and Śakti Devī temples, the *pujārī* said it was an ‘old tradition’. The same explanation was offered for the *melā* and its importance.

Nevertheless, it is interesting that the Maṇimaheśa *yātrā* links the entire Chamba Brahmour valley, an area under the control of the Mosuna dynasty³⁵ from the time of Meru Varman (the legendary *raja*, a founder of the dynasty) onwards and within a pilgrimage and homage circuit. The Maṇimaheśa *charīyātrā*³⁶ is taken out by a sect of wandering mendicants known as *sādhus* from the Daśnāmi *akharā* in Chamba town after consecrating the twin staffs of Charpatnāth, symbolizing Śiva and Pārvatī. Then there is a *pujā*, the feeding in a gathered communal feast called *langar*. The Jaṅgams or the Viraśaiva sing the praises of Śiva and are paid a ritual fee *dakṣiṇā* by wandering mendicants known as *sādhu bābās* who are their patrons or *jajamāns*³⁷ during this period. The next stage of the ritual takes place at the neighboring temple of Dattātreyā³⁸. The group of *sādhus* next go to the main Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa temple complex where the *charī* is hosted by the temple committee and pay obeisance to the shrine of Charpatnāth and to the *tri-mukhalinga* within the Cañdragupta temple. It continues on its onward journey, halting at designated spots to reach Brahmaur where it stays within the precincts of the Chaurāsi complex. Here, the tall Maṇimaheśa temple is to be found with a large *līṅga* that is enshrined within. The *charīyātrā* which continues from Brahmaur (Photo 5) goes up to Brahmani Devī before it proceeds to the Dal Lake.

On the way to Maṇimaheśa Dal, all pilgrims are enjoined to bathe in the Brahmāṇī Kuṇḍa, at the temple of Brahmāṇī Devī, also known as Bharmāṇī (*Census of India 1961* 1964, 62). This ritual started because of a belief that Śiva granted a favour of precedence to the Devī to expiate his sin of having stayed in Devī’s Vatika (a pasture). In another version there was a struggle for supremacy in the area and the vanquished Devī asked for this favour (Bawa 1998, 59). There are other sites associated with Śiva and Gaurī and one of these is Barachundi, where it is believed that Śiva as a bridegroom plaited Pārvatī’s hair after she had bathed in the Gaurī Kuṇḍa (a site on way to the Lake).

The linkages between Śiva and the Devī continue through the mixing of Pauranic Brahmanical textual traditions with local beliefs. Here, instead of Kāmākhyā in Assam, it is the Dal that is believed to be the site where the *yoni* of Sati fell after she committed herself to the fire of Dakṣha’s sacrifice or *yajña* and was ritually dismembered by Viṣṇu’s *cakra* to calm Śiva who carried her body and wrought destruction on the universe. It is believed by the Brahmin community of Gaddis that Śiva who had witnessed the dropping of the last limb of Sati’s body into the nether world (*patāla*) now changed himself

³⁵ See: footnote 8.

³⁶ Field survey in August September 1993, 2003, 2012.

³⁷ A *jajamān* is a person who requests and pays for a performance.

³⁸ Manimahesh Lake and Mani Mahesh Kailash Peak are located in Himachal Pradesh, between Mahoun and Hadsar, in the Himalayan range Pir Panjal.



Photo 5: The Mañimaheśa yātrā with the *charīs* carried by *sadhūs* on way to the Mañimaheśa Lake.

Author: S. Bawa.

into a mountain, taking the form of *Parvata Liṅga* to uphold the *yonī*. This site came to be known as *Yoni-Tirtha* or *Pīṭha*. The importance of the *yonī* as *pīṭha*, or receptacle for the *liṅga*, is mentioned in various *Purāṇas* such as *Devī-Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (7.30–44–45) and *Kālīka Purāṇa* (18.36–54) and is also elaborated on in the *Śiva Purāṇa* which says:

“The phallus is united with vagina and vagina is united with phallus. For the sake of perpetual enjoyment here and hereafter the devotee shall worship the phallic emblem which is Lord Śiva Himself. He is the sun giving birth and sustenance to the worlds. His symbol is justified in the coming into existence of things. Persons should worship Śiva, the cause of birth, in his phallic form. That which makes the *Puruṣa* known, is called *Liṅga*, (the symbol). The unification and fusion of the symbols of Śiva and Śakti is thus called *Liṅga*. The Lord delighted at the worship of His symbol wards off the function of the symbol. Hence the devotee shall worship the phallic emblem with the sixteen forms of service and homage to acquire benefit from *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* through, meaning inherent or extraneous” (*Śiva Purāṇa* I. 105–109 and I. 136).

So, a devotee is asked to worship both Śiva and Śakti. Rituals involved in the worship of Śiva and Śakti are prescribed regularly. It is believed that they can lead to the attainment of material and spiritual benefits through urging devotees to not be deceived in regards to money, body, mantra or conception. In such rituals Śiva, in the company of his wife, feeds his devotees (*Śiva Purāṇa* I.140–142). Thus, public feasting and festivals are encouraged in the Pauranic version of Śivasim.

As mentioned before, water from the Maṇimaheśa Dal or lake is taken to bathe the idols at Brahmaur and Chhatrari on Radha Ashtami or Durbashtmi. The next day of the ceremony it continues to Harsar and then proceeds via Dhhancho to the shore of the Maṇimaheśa Lake at the foot of Kailāśa Mountain³⁹. In its original form, the act of ritually bathing and consecrating the image of Śakti Devī with sacred waters brought to Śiva not only links the two sites of the rituals, but also the deities. The Maṇimaheśa *yātrā* and the one at Chhatrari not only reinforce the sacredness of Brahmaur but also unite all the main temples of Chamba-Brahmaur in a relationship of priority and kinship (Bawa. 1998, 37, fn 5).

On the morning of Radha *aṣṭami*, a sacred dip is also performed at other sites, holy to Śiva, in the Brahmaur region such as at Tri-Lochan Mahādeva on the Chamba Brahmaur road, in the Sal river at Saho, in a pond at the site of a temple called Anala Mahādeva near Pukhri village and also at Kunjar Mahādeva in the Bhattiyat division. In Chamba town, people bathe in the Ravi River, where it is believed that the waters of Maṇimaheśa Dal reach by mid-morning, and then pay obeisance to the Śiva temple of Chandragupta in the Lakṣmi Nārāyana temple complex.

Once a relatively restricted pilgrimage, in which mainly the Gaddis, Chambyāls and Pangyāls⁴⁰ participated, it has now grown into a pan-regional pilgrimage with people from Punjab, Jammu, Kashmir and other parts of Himachal joining in. According to a local tradition in the Bhadarwah, across the Padri Pass, there is an account of sectarian conflict between the *nāgas*⁴¹ and Vaiṣṇava cult represented by Garuda, and Śiva, in which is recounted that Śiva decided to relocate to Kailāśa after a request from Vasuki Nāga, who presented a *maṇi* (a jewel) to Śiva and thus Śiva is called Maṇimaheśa Mahādeva. Even the Jammu state of Chanheni claims a connection with Śiva and says that Gaddien Dhār or the ridge of the Gaddis from Mantalai to Maṇimaheśa was given to Gaurjāas as a dowry and thus the populace of Chanehni go with Gaurjā from Mantalai to Maṇimaheśa Kailāśa every year along with the *yātrā*, bringing the goddess to her natal home for her annual visit to her village. The legend resembles that of Nandā Devī as Gaurja and her marriage to Śiva in Garhwal region.

THE EVENT: RITUAL AND PERFORMANCE

In phase two, after bathing the idol, the actual procession of the Śiva bust from the sanctum of the temple and its short foray outside the *garbhagrha* (a small sanctum) takes place. The *ratha yātrā* is described as a *śōbhā yātrā* by temple functionaries. The

³⁹ Manimahesh Lake and Mani Mahesh Kailash Peak are located in Himachal Pradesh, between Mahoun and Hadsar, in the Himalayan range Pir Panjal.

⁴⁰ Tribes living in Himachal Pradesh.

⁴¹ *Nāga* is the Sanskrit and Pali word for a deity or class of entity or being taking the form of a very great snake, specifically the king cobra, found in the Indian religions (Elgood 2000, 234).



Photo 6. The *śōbhā yātrā* of Baṭuka Mahādeva emerging from the Śiva Śakti temple. Author: S. Bawa.

ratha is a small wooden *pālki* or palanquin made of a woven *niwār* (a coarse kind of tape) around wooden posts made of *devadar* wood (Himalayan cedar). It is prepared to receive the *mūrti* by lining it first with a blanket, then covering this with a red brocade cloth (called *sāl* or *sālu*) and finally, placing round cushions as support on two sides of the palanquin *ratha*. The brass *mukhaliṅga* described above, which is kept on a platform (along with other small images) to the right of the main image, is taken out of the *garbhagrha* by temple functionaries and placed on the *ratha*. It is then decorated with two long necklaces of silver and gold. A *mukuṭa* (a crown decoration) is placed in front of the crown on the bust. Thereafter, a silver *chhatra* (an umbrella) is placed atop the image (I was permitted to observe these preparations up to this point but then was asked to leave).

The *ratha*, carried by the *kothāri* and other temple functionaries, is taken out by the main temple door (Photo 6).

It descends into the *Kuṇḍa* area (an enclosed courtyard with a fire altar or *vedī*), ascends steps on the left and does a circumambulation (*pradakṣiṇā*) of the temple. It leaves the temple's premises from a south gate, goes into the *bazār* and finally, re-enters from the middle gate and is rushed directly into the temple. The *ratha* is accompanied by musicians playing the *dhōl* (drum), *narasiṅghā* (broad trumpet), *paun* (a percussion instrument) and *nagārā* (kettledrums).

On being asked whether such *ratha yātrās* take place elsewhere in the valley, the reply was always in the negative. The reason given for this singularity was that such a *mūrti* did not exist elsewhere. On being further questioned about the specifics of this particular *mūrti*, the *kothāri* said that only this *mūrti* can be taken outside. Other *mūrtis*, not even the small idols in the sanctum, can be transported around. This ritual appears to be significant given that a *līnga* cover (called *mohrā*), of this type, is rare in the Chamba valley. The Vajreśvari in Chamba town and maybe even the Harsar images are probably the only such examples. The Vajreśvari image installed in a temple of the same name, in Chamba town, is a *mohrā* – a brass mask that is used as a mobile icon to be carried out in the *rathas*, and is also often installed for regular and daily worship in the Mandi region, previously known as Siraj. However, in case of the Vajreśvari icon, it is considered to be the *pindī* – the primeval body of the Devī, and is never taken out of the sanctum for a procession.

THE MASK DANCE

Stage three involves a performance of Śiva-Śakti and the demons being played out in the public arena through a mask dance enacted on the premises of the temple. There are six masks in total, all made of wood and called *khapar* or *mukhauṭā*, and are daubed with layers of orange-red paste. While witnessing the *ratha yātrā*, I observed that the masks were placed against the outer entrance wall of the main shrine throughout the day. As soon as the *ratha yātrā* is over, six men enter the temple and don the masks after shutting the main door. After they are dressed, the men dash out of the temple and run around in the *pradakṣiṇā* rite⁴² of the courtyard in front of the Umā-Maheśvara temple (Photo 7). Here they sway and dance around each other. During the entire performance, boys from the village beat them with *bicchū-būṭī* (nettles) and then masked men chase them off. The masked men then run back into the temple and the doors are shut again.

The dance is supposed to be a re-enactment of the fight between the Devī and a Rākṣasa called Buḍhā (identified with Mahiśāsura). It is believed that the Devī killed him at Chhatrari and the temple was constructed to commemorate the event. Of the six masks, one represents the Devī, three are those of the Buḍhā *rākṣasa* and two those of Chandrahauli⁴³ or dancing girls. The nettles are considered to be the guardians of the Devī.

⁴² *Pradakṣiṇā* – the action of walking clockwise round a person or deity as a mark of respect (*English Oxford Dictionaries*).

⁴³ Perhaps this is a local version of the term *Chandramauli*, the crescent moon on Śiva's forehead which is referred to in the *Mahābhārata*.



Photo 7: Mask wearing dancers circumambulating the Śiva Śakti temple Chhatrari, 15th September 2002. Author: S. Bawa.

The outer walls of the sanctum are painted with 18th–19th century murals depicting various Purānic and popular incidents from narratives of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the struggle with and defeat of various demons by Kṛṣṇaas well as Durgā. The faces of these demons (Photo 8) be they Śunga and Niśunga, or Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa are painted in orange-red very much in the vein of the Mukhautā used in the masked performance.

The description and details of the mask dance are not given in the village survey but there are two photographs that show the dancers with masks and some rudimentary additional attire such as a scarf called a *dupaṭṭā* that identifies the wearer as feminine. Another photograph shows the villages surrounding the dancers (*Census of India 1961* 1964. Chitrari, unnumbered photographs). All the men who don masks belong to the Sipi and Lohār castes. Their names, when I was viewing the procession, were Hans Rai, Devī Chand, Mangu, Pritam Chand, Prito Dev and Hukama Ram. Jago Ram played the *dhōl*, Baladev and Hansa were on the *bans* (flute), Chunni Lal-Narasiṅha, Manoj Kumar and Naresh Kumar were on the *paun* while Gyan Chand on the *thāli* accompanied them.

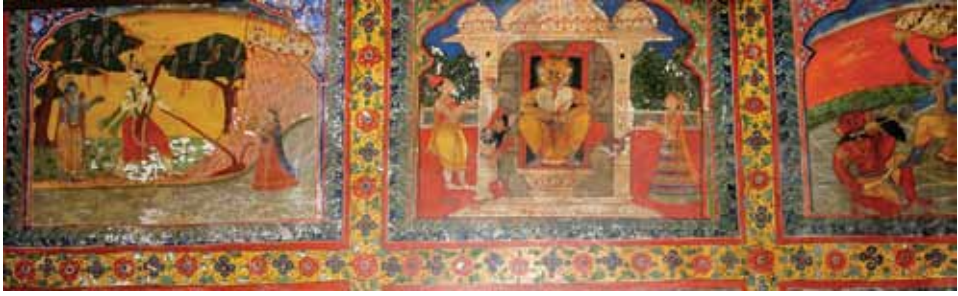


Photo 8: Painting on the wall of Śiva Śakti temple showing a red bodied demon being vanquished by Varaha, left panel. Author: S. Bawa.

RITES OF POSSESSION: THE CHELA

The performance continues with rites of possession, where the medium or *celā* (Rihāru Rām) is sprinkled with water in front of the Śakti Devī image, not unlike the lambs and goats that are sacrificed to the deity. During the ceremonies witnessed by me, throughout the day, devotees sacrifice sheep and even tiny little lambs to the Devī. The sacrificial offerings are tied to one of the wooden post-supports of the temple, water is sprinkled on them to make them shiver and then the actual decapitations take place. The sacrifices are independent proceedings where the *pujārī* is not required.

Apparently the Devī possesses the *celā* (this takes about twelve minutes). I could see him twitching and shivering through a crack in the wall. He then rushed out of the temple, ran around it in *pradakṣiṇā* up to the courtyard where he swayed and jumped up and down. Village elders asked him questions about the crops and rains which surrounded him. This did not last very long and he soon dashed back into the temple. This ended the ritual/performance part of the *melā*.

The next two days of the *melā* are mainly devoted to various kinds of community dances. The area around the temple used to organize village activities such as volleyball matches, rides and dances by the Gaddi tribesmen. Stalls selling wares from Chamba region and even Pathankot are just outside the temple, and villagers buy trinkets and items from them. This is also the time when devotees beseech the Devī for favours. If these are fulfilled, they then return the following year with offerings for the Devī.

Deities in mask or *mohrā* forms, are displayed in many parts of the Kullu-Mandi region or at pan-regional fairs or festivals such as Śivarātri at Mandi and Dussehrā at Kullu. However, there are also local processions and fairs that establish familial and hierarchical relationships between deities at an inter-village level. Cases in point being the two villages of Kao and Mamel in the Karsog valley; a *mohrā ratha* of Mamleśvara, a form of Śiva, is taken out to meet the *mohrā ratha* of Kāmākṣrā Devī from Kao

where they meet as husband and wife. Similar practices are observable elsewhere in the Tirthan valley.

The observations of the objects, rituals and performances highlight the peculiarities of the *jatārs* (festivals) of Gaddis. These bind the region together within a network of mythology, ritual performance and pilgrimage, translating classical Brahmanical ideological and metaphysical framework into local legends, beliefs and ritual practices. Many layers of religious experience have created this multivalent system of *jatārs* in the valley. The resonances of Kashmir Śivaism are easily explained, given the physical proximity and the system of exchange of religious elements in the region (Bawa 1998, 39, 42, 45, 50). The *vamsavali* or the genealogy of the kings of Chamba, records that the founding king reached Varmapura or Brahmaur via Kashmir. His descendant, Meru Varman, obtained the images in Brahmaur and Chhatrari established under the influence of his eminent guru who was an inhabitant of Kashmir (Vogel 1911, 90–1). The practices and cults peculiar to Kashmir such as Baṭuka Mahādeva thus find echoes in local cultic beliefs in the upper Ravi valley, as do stylistic affiliations in art.

The processions out of the temples, mark or delineate the territory of Devatā or the deity, while also allowing all those present to be sanctified through his *darśana*⁴⁴, in a practice that may have travelled with the Gaddi herdsmen as they traversed the Western Himalayas. The mask-dance, rites of possession and sacrifices further enhance this experience by perpetuating the memory of a mythical event with all the characters, conflicts and contestations embedded in it. The Devī, Śiva and the demons all inhabit the physical and religious landscape of Chhatrari and Brahmaur and constantly adjust, shift and find visibility in the *ratha yātrā* of Baṭuka Mahādeva.

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⁴⁴ Darśana (darshan) is described as an “auspicious seeing or beholding” of a holy person, which bestows merit on the person who is seen. It is most commonly used for theophany, “manifestation / visions of the divine”, in Hindu worship, e.g. of a deity (especially in image form), or a very holy person or artifact. One can receive darśana or a glimpse of the deity in the temple, or from a great saintly person (Flood 2011, 194; Encyclopaedia Britannica).

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