

Out of many modes and motivations

Ritualisation in Border Karelian Orthodox Christian feast and processions

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This article explores a sequence of events, a combination of Orthodox Christian village and chapel festivals, associated processions and a cross-border procession, through the theoretical concept of ritualisation. The sequence of events takes place annually in the Finnish villages of Saarivaara and Hoilola, the Pörsämö wilderness cemetery and the former Finnish municipality of Korpiselkä, located today in Russia; it attracts participants with religious and other motives, including nostalgia and family history. An analysis is made of how different and sometimes contradictory modes of action are structured and intertwined to form a coherent ritual event. On the basis of original anthropological research undertaken near and over the border between Finland and Russia, in Karelia, it emerges that the ritual mastery by Orthodox priests and shared goals and motives of heritage and culture give the journey a necessary structure, which can be studied and explained in terms of ritualisation.

Introduction

People structure and forge their journeys and events with rituals.¹ These journeys and events include pilgrimage, tourism, other forms of travel, feasts and celebrations. In recent years, various forms of Christian pilgrimage activities have started to flour-

ish in the West. These pilgrimages are often grounded in traditionalised landscapes, and they result from activities of various interest groups, such as religious institutions, as well as tourism (cf. Utriainen and Vesala 2020), and allow people with diverse backgrounds and interests to take part. In this article, we focus on a combination of Orthodox Christian village festivals and processions that have taken place along the eastern border of Finland since the 1970s. This complex includes forms of pilgrimage, heritage tourism and village festivals. While this complex can be and has been analysed as a pilgrimage, our focus here is not pilgrimage studies as such. We acknowledge that these feasts and processions are by their constitution similar to pilgrimages elsewhere, and taking part in these activities can be similarly motivated. Instead, our focus is on the ritual processes and how they contribute to the creation of this event. However, we believe that the approach sketched here is useful for pilgrimage studies in general, and thus we discuss with pilgrimage studies.

The aim of this article is to use the concept of *ritualisation* to understand how various, often seemingly contradictory, motives, actors and actions are combined to form a functional whole. We will do so

1 This article is partly based on a previous article in Finnish, published in *Uskonnon-tutkija* 6(1) in 2017.

by introducing these constituents and analysing their place in the event, by analysing what elements keep the event together, and by constructing an explanation of how the whole sequence of events is formed through ritualisation.

The ritual complex analysed here started with a church and village feast, *praasniekka* (from Russian праздник, ‘holiday’, ‘festival’) in the chapel (Karelian and Finnish *tsasouna*, from Russian часовня, ‘chapel’) of the Transfiguration of Christ, located in Saarivaara village. Praasniekka-feasts are combinations of religious and non-religious, more or less ritualised activities: between services, prayers and blessings of

water, participants eat, catch up with each other and reminisce. The feast has been held on every anniversary of the chapel since 1977, on the day of Christ’s transfiguration. Before the Second World War, this holiday, *spuasanpäivä* (Kar.), had been the day of the Hoilola village feast, which is now in May (Sauhke 1971: 178–81; Repo 2007: 72–4). In the case analysed here, the *praasniekka* is associated with processions that proceed between villages of Saarivaara and Hoilola, Hoilola and Pörtsämö wilderness cemetery and the Finnish–Russian border and Korpiselkä village centre. These activities form a ritual complex that takes place over one weekend (see Figure 1).

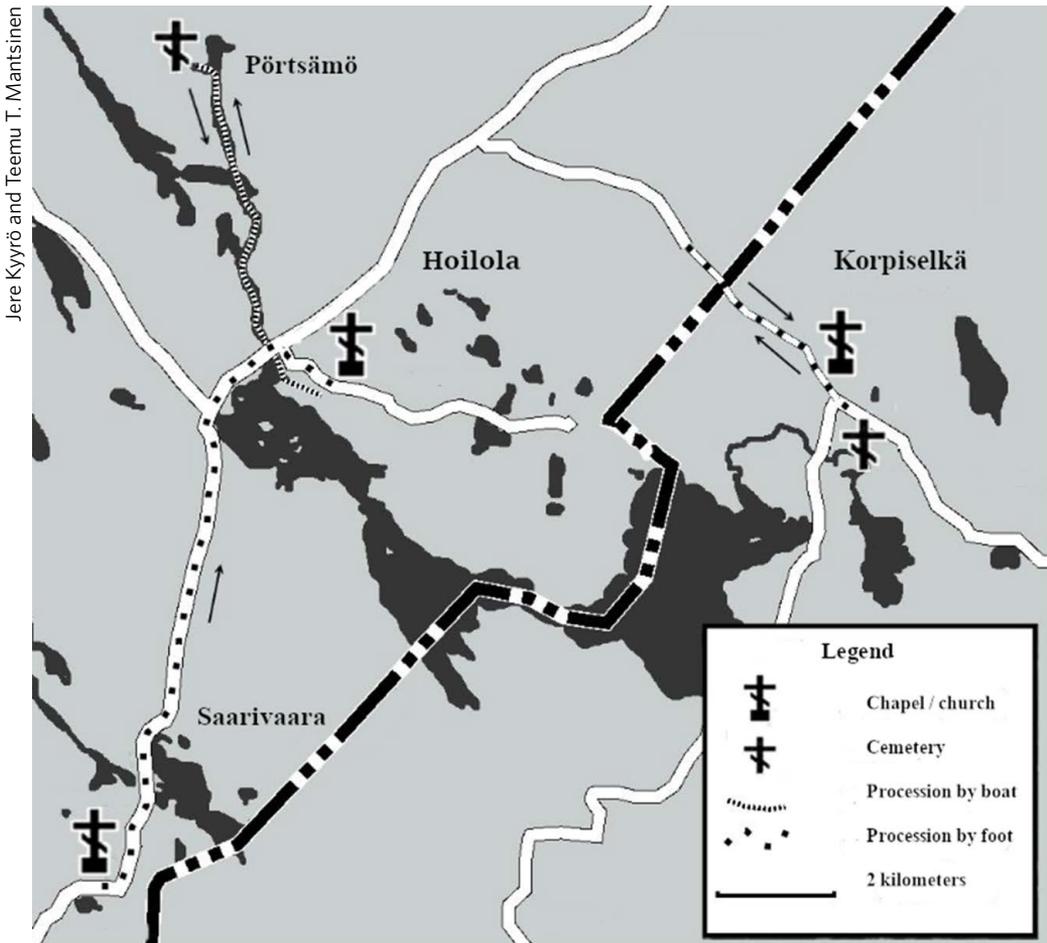


Figure 1. Map of event locations.

The locality where the festival and processions take place is the former township (Fi. *pitäjä*) of Korpiselkä. After the Second World War, most of the municipality, including its centre, was ceded to the Soviet Union, and its population was evacuated to Finland. The villages of Saarivaara and Hoilola remain in Finland, while the centre of Korpiselkä lies in the Russian border zone and has no permanent residents.

Elina Vuola (2020) has studied this event previously, comparing it to other Orthodox processions, from a theological perspective as a religious ritual which incorporates new aspects with reinventions, but within the framework of Orthodox Church and its religious practice. Although we agree with Vuola on some issues, such as the flexibility and incorporation of both religious and non-religious aspects, we emphasise more the role of momentary and imagined community than the religious institution. Although the Orthodox Church and mainly its priests are necessary for the event (especially for permits to enter the Russian border zone), the Church does not dictate the event, but rather adapts to local and social needs, emphasising practice rather than doctrine. Andreas Kalkun, Helena Kupari and Elina Vuola (2018) have analysed this and two other procession events as coping mechanisms for loss of ancestors' land. While we share the same view on the aspect of coping and commemorating the lost past, our focus of study is not on the meaning-making itself, but on the mechanisms of ritualisation, on how various aspects are incorporated into the event. Teemu T. Mantsinen (2020) has studied the event as a pilgrimage, theorising pilgrimage as a ritual of searching and finding traces of the sacred. In contrast, our article does not try to reframe or conceptualise pilgrimage, but to study how the event is constructed through ritualisation.

Research on pilgrimages and pilgrimage rituals is vast, yet the concept of ritualisation has mainly been used to analyse ritual action in general or in particular cases (Silverman 1994; Singh 1995; Martin and Kryst 1998; Herrero 2008; Fedele 2014), not whole social events, such as pilgrimages. This article shows that the concept is useful when studying ritual events as a whole. Moreover, this article adds to the understanding of how Orthodox Christianity incorporates the experienced landscape of pilgrimage and forms part of the process of ritualisation.

Processions and associated activity from the point of view of ritualisation

Our theoretical framework for this article employs Catherine Bell's thoughts on ritual and ritualisation. Bell distinguishes ritual as strategic action and as embedded in cultural context, as opposed to automatic activity independent of context, simple habituation or spontaneous action (Bell 1992: 100–1; Bell 1997: 280). Partly building on an old tradition of ritual studies, Bell's theoretical work incorporates, for example, Bourdieu's work on habitus and habitual body, and Foucault's analysis of power.

Bell has used the concept of *ritualisation* to refer to ritual activities as processes of becoming a ritual, and as strategic action (Bell 1992: 90). Ritualisation is a way of privileging certain types of action in relation to other, everyday forms of action (p. 74). According to Bell, such qualities as formality, fixity of times and places and repetition, which in earlier studies were understood as universal qualities of ritual, are in fact not universal, but often employed strategies that are used to produce ritualised activities (pp. 91–2). In processes of ritualisation, ritualised bodies are produced in interaction with the structured

and structuring environment. Ritualised bodies contain a ritual sense, which is not necessarily conscious, but rather implicit control of ritual patterns (p. 98). The corporality of ritualisation comes close to the concept of habitual memory. By using this concept, Helena Kupari has referred to the embodied aspects of religious practice (e.g. making the sign of the cross, prayer and veneration of icons), that are important for their practitioners, but are not given any doctrinal meaning (Kupari 2016a, 2016b).

Among ritual actors, ritual mastery (Bell 1992: 107–8), which is attained in embodied practices (Crossley 2004: 33–42), is sought and respected. In a complex setting, ritual mastery is necessary not only for the religious rituals, but in various other forms, such as knowing local history and connecting participants with it. In a social group a ritual master can become a leader by recognition of their mastery of rituals, and vice versa. However, social actions cover only part of the complex event, as private and intimate actions are also present and are important to individuals, even when not visible to the whole community. Terhi Utriainen offers this insight:

Ritual and ritualising are powerful ways of inviting and cultivating the extraordinary and its effects. In ritual enchantment extraordinary, otherworldly or transcendent ‘somethings’ (beauty, spirits, energies, angels, intuitions) are invited to become part of, and are given a place in, everyday life. Contact with the extraordinary is not always or necessarily dramatic (sacred, overwhelming or totally other); instead it may be quite subtle and intimate. (Utriainen 2016: 51)

Things and events, which seem mundane to some, may be sacred to others. As

people appreciate, deem things valuable, and set them apart with their own actions, they engage in the action of constructing the sacred (Mantsinen 2020: 11). Important aspects of this process are interpretation, framework and incorporation into a sacred order. Within a community, permanent or temporary, these actions must not distract the unity of the group. When the framework allows, individual actions may become part of a larger order.

The concept of ritualisation directs us to analyse the various modes of action (e.g. social and private), forms of agency, environments of action and the multiple relations and hierarchies between these. We understand the structured and structuring environment to consist of material factors (landscape, built spaces, objects and artefacts) and symbolic factors (cultural classifications, expectations and models of action).

Methods of research

The aim of the research is to study a ritual complex consisting of a village festival, processions and associated activities. The research material consists of ethnographic fieldwork. We conducted the ethnographic research over one weekend in August 2016 as participant observers. The main data for this article consists of this participant observation. Beforehand, we made contact with the Korpiselkä village association and Joensuu Orthodox church, which were in charge of organising the events and obtaining permits for crossing the border to Russia. Our access to the field and orientation to it was smoothed by our private histories; the Mantsinen family used to live in Hoilola from the eighteenth century to the early twenty-first century, and Kyyrö has a partly Karelian family background and is an inactive member of the Orthodox Church. Our knowledge of the cultural and

religious milieu created a helpful background from which to build the research setting.

Participant observation, according to Kathleen M. and Billie R. DeWalt, differs from everyday observation and interaction in that the findings are recorded in a field diary and the information and interaction is considered as important as information collected by other, more formal methods (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011: 2–3; Knott 2010: 262–9).

We conducted semi-structured observation, where we paid attention to certain features: actors, landscape, mode of operation of different situations (e.g. procession, liturgy, social gatherings such as meals, coffee breaks and waiting periods) and the dialogue between them. Of importance for us was how people organised in groups and were organised by leaders, how they communicated, and what activities were performed by participants in different

situations. To support our observation, we documented the events in pictures and short videos and did ethnographic interviews (i.e. asked questions) from the participants in suitable situations. Our participation was largely similar to the other participants, but differed in some ways; we did not partake in religious rituals in detail (singing, making the sign of the cross, standing behind others or outside chapels during liturgical ceremonies). The other participants took a lot of pictures and recorded videos (Figure 2). Our involvement fell between passive and moderate, and our role could be described as observers as participants (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011: 23–5; Knott 2010: 266–7).

During and after the observation we wrote our field diaries. With two independent diaries we obtained researcher-driven triangulation, with the purpose of adding validity to our observations and painting a multi-perspective description (see also

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Figure 2. Participants record the Orthodox church of Korpiselkä with cameras and phones as they approach the church.

Flick 2004: 178–9). After each day and after the field period, we compared our notes. In addition to our informal discussion and querying with the participants during the observation, we also conducted an additional interview with a key figure who was present throughout the Saarivaara–Hoilola procession's history and did email interviews with the priests who organised the events.

Orthodox Christian processions and their landscapes

Background

The history of Orthodox Christianity in Karelia dates back nearly a thousand years, and pilgrimages, processions and village festivals are deeply rooted in the area, especially before the Second World War. Valamo monastery in Lake Ladoga was a key player in the religious life of Karelians. It drew pilgrims, and its religious art was displayed in churches and chapels. After the cession of Karelia after the war, this cultural tradition diminished. Only in the 1970s did attitudes towards Orthodoxy become more favourable, and Orthodox Christianity experienced revitalisation, including in the form of processions between sacred places. The processions we observed and participated in arose during this revitalisation and desire to reinvent and re-enact old traditions (Sauhke 1971; Laitila 1998; Kilpeläinen 2000: 363–6; Stark 1995, 2002).

The revitalisation of the Orthodox village festivals in eastern and south-eastern Finland has its roots in the pre-war Karelian feasts as well as the post-war situation, where the meanings associated with the lost Karelia were realigned with the references to Karelian-ness and Orthodox Christianity located on contemporary Finnish soil. According to Teuvo Laitila, this became possible in the 1970s, when Orthodox Christianity had become 'exotic,

but acceptable' in Finnish society (Laitila 1998: 415; Laitila 2009).

The processions in Saarivaara started in the 1970s. As mentioned by Father Vesa, the Orthodox priests were inspired by historical research made on the border region of Karelia, as well as Tito Colliander's novel *Ristisaatto* (originally in Swedish: *Korståget*, 1937, 'procession') that culminates in a procession that takes place in Pechory, but in the main the traditions were reinvented in and for a new context. Moreover, Colliander's novel has surprising contemporary importance, as some of the participants in the processions mentioned it to us. The first cross-border processions started in the 1990s, at the same time as the eastern border was opened and visiting the old homeland became possible also for Karelian evacuees. The first cross-border processions were made from Sortavala to Öllölä in 1992 and from Keitele to Konevitsa monastery in 1993. The first procession across the border to Korpiselkä centre was made in 1994: civilians were not allowed to go to the former municipal centre between 1944 and 1992 (Petrisalo 1987: 66; Father Vesa 2012; Field diary 12.6.2016). Although heritage tourism grew rapidly after the Soviet Union eased the restrictions on travelling in 1988 (Lehto and Timonen 1993: 88), Korpiselkä remained closed to civilians. Only religious processions have gained permits to visit this place in the Russian border zone.

Saarivaara

The events we observed in August 2016 circle around chapel and church celebrations. Next we will describe the locations where these events took place. In the village of Saarivaara a chapel (*tsasouna*) was erected in 1976 and consecrated as the chapel of the Transfiguration of Christ, and it is on that religious feast day that the first

two processions take place. The previous day, Friday, a vigil and a village feast was held in Saarivaara. It gathered mostly local permanent and part-time residents, as well as religiously motivated participants, many of whom joined the processions the next day. In the village feast, locals and procession veterans shared their stories of the past.

The chapel of Saarivaara was designed after the chapel of Tolvajärvi, lost in the war, and with its wooden and traditional layout it emulates the Karelian architectural style. The tiny chapel was crowded with people, whose singing, the voice of the priest and all-surrounding incense created an intense setting. For the Karelian evacuee women studied by Kupari, the incense, along with icons and chanting, were sensations that evoked positive emotions (Kupari 2016a: 65). According to some participants, the closeness to nature and its sacred atmosphere were among things that drew people to this small chapel.

Saarivaara-Hoilola

On Saturday, after a morning service in the chapel of Saarivaara, the first procession group of 24 was assembled in line, ready for their journey: first the carriers of the cross, church flags and religious icons, then choir members and priests, and following them other participants. The marching order in the latter part constructed itself automatically, as people who wanted to focus on praying were in front and those who shared the experience by talking followed at the back. Supporting crew and other participants, also approximately 24, travelled by car.

The journey was made by foot on a fairly quiet paved road, apart from breaks and one excursion to a memorial statue of rune singers of Karelia. The Orthodox priests' incorporation of seemingly contradictory elements, such as the rune singers'

memorial, was viewed as of cultural importance, although the rune singers in question were also pagan figures. The journey was also interspersed with the reading of the Scriptures a few times. The senior priest, Father Vesa, together with Father Marko and the village association volunteers, had arranged refreshments, and an intermediate break in a local house of an elderly lady. She belonged to the Evangelical-Lutheran church, but had served the procession basically every year since its beginning. According to her, this 'ecumenical' way of doing things together was natural.

The first procession ended in front of the Orthodox church of Hoilola village. The church was erected in 1957, since the old municipal church of Korpiselkä was lost in the war and was across the border. Shortly after the war a church was built in Hoilola, serving both Lutherans and Orthodox until the Orthodox church was built. After a short break Father Marko held a service in the church.

Pörtsämö

The second procession began in the late afternoon after a meal. The journey was made by a traditional church boat to the old wilderness Orthodox cemetery (Fi. *kalmisto*) of Pörtsämö. The choir took its place in the bow, Father Vesa steering, and participants in the middle rowing. Occasionally Father Vesa rocked the boat, so the bells of the cross would ring. The journey was made mostly in silence, listening to the choir, the priest and nature. On the pier of Pörtsämö the rest of the participants waited for the 24 pilgrims who were making the journey by boat (Figure 3).

The Pörtsämö cemetery dates back at least to the nineteenth century, and some participants have relatives buried there. Traditionally graves in these Karelian cemeteries are supposed to blend into the



Figure 3. Procession by a church boat from Hoilola to Pörtsämö wilderness cemetery.

scenery as generations and memories pass on. This highlights the theme of wilderness in Pörtsämö, which is a fairly remote location. A memorial service (*Kar. panikhida*) and small procession was held in Pörtsämö, as the evening turned darker. After the service, participants rowed the boat back. As the evening settled, the evening mist descended from the shores and the choir singing gave a final experience of the day for the participants.

Korpiselkä

Before the third procession a morning service in the church gathered participants, many of whom had not been present on the previous days. The group was more heterogeneous than the previous day. The journey across the border draws mostly people who have family ties in Korpiselkä or other parts of lost Karelia, and therefore some could be called heritage pilgrims.

After the service the group moved to a nearby border guard station and non-

public border crossing, where passports were checked by Finnish and Russian border guards. The same road connected Korpiselkä centre and the villages which remained in contemporary Finland. Therefore the journey was made on a path that many families of the participants used to travel before the war; one of the participants indeed had been born in Korpiselkä. Before the journey began, participants shared and compared stories of their families.

The road is rarely used, and nature has taken over the scenery. During the procession to Korpiselkä, many took photos and tried to locate places of importance. Participants who remained at the back of the line were slightly more talkative than on the previous day, although all respected religious rituals and remained silent during Bible recitals. When the Orthodox church of Korpiselkä came into view, nearly all took their cameras or phones to take pictures of the building, which became the central point of the whole journey.



Figure 4. *Panikhida* on the Lutheran side of the Korpiselkä cemetery.

Orthodox memorial services (*panikhida*) were performed in Korpiselkä cemetery, on both the Orthodox and Lutheran sides (Figure 4), and by a memorial for fallen soldiers of the war next to the church. Before returning from the cemetery to the church, free time was planned for people to search and look around in the cemetery. After a meal by the church, participants had some time to see the church and surroundings. Those who wanted to venture further were accompanied by Russian border guards. We followed a group which wanted to locate the ruins of the Lutheran church in Korpiselkä. Only the stone base was visible, barely, but the ruins were of great importance for the participants.

The event ended with a procession and journey back to the Finnish side, with secular rituals for the border guards, both Russian and Finnish. The group members, consisting of locals, heritage travellers, and some religiously and historically interested participants, returned to their homes.

Ritualisation and modes of action

According to Bell (1992: 197), ‘ritualisation is first and foremost a strategy for the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular social organisations’. Power relationships transpire between actors and in their actions and symbols they use. In the following we will analyse these and other categories of importance in the ritualisation process of the event.

In the complex of processions analysed here, six groups of actors may be found: the priests, singers/choir, assisting personnel, the locals, homeland visitors and people with individual motivations (such as conviction, devotion, nostalgia or other interests).

The priests were in a privileged position: they were the mediators of the ritual frame of all other actions. Two of the priests, Father Vesa and Father Marko, were present during the whole weekend, and on Sunday, for the Korpiselkä procession, the group

of priests was reinforced by Metropolitan Arseni, which emphasised the importance of the event. The agency of the priests can be described by the term *ritual mastery*, which refers to the ability to manage and incorporate embodied ritual forms (Bell 1992: 107–8).

In the case of Father Vesa, the liturgical formality was often accompanied by a playful combination of non-formal acts, such as pulling a knife and a chopping board out of a portable icon, to cut watermelon for thirsty pilgrims. These humorous acts generated variation within the monotonous walking. Such unconventional actions were allowed for a charismatic leader recognised by locals and this transitory community. This action relates to what Bell describes as ‘ritualisation as a cultural sixth “sense”’, where ritual mastery can be seen as an ability to use shared cultural schemes, to employ them in a context in a manner of which participants approve (Bell 1992: 116).

In addition to the priests, the choir was also in a central position to provide the liturgical structure for the processions. The chanting gave rhythm and set the atmosphere for the journey, as well in the services. Some actors, such as Metropolitan Arseni on the way to Korpiselkä, emphasised the religious function of the procession by encouraging the choir and singing (see also Bănică 2015).

Assisting personnel took care of the logistics for the procession participants: they cooked, transported and served food and drink. During the Saarivaara and Pörsämö processions, they were mostly active locals, and during the Korpiselkä procession, a professional catering firm was employed. Assisting personnel included church servants (Fi. *kirkonpalvelija*), border guards, village association volunteers and other locals.

Apart from the organising and leading positions, most of the people were what we call participants. They ranged from individuals who had come to perform their own religious journey in time of loss, to a family who had come to visit their lost family lands without any conscious religious incentive. Although the former group performed central roles in constructing and maintaining sacred and social borders, this latter group was essential in structuring the inner construct of social order with their actions. Individual pilgrims sought private answers from the natural and social environment and rituals, as well with their own private rituals. Family heritage pilgrims sought historical traces of the land of their ancestors, parents, and in one case their own childhood.

The participants could be divided analytically into groups based on their motives for participation and orientation of action: collective religious, individual religious, social, personal, and family heritage. Although these motives and therefore the groups might overlap, they represent model prototypes of participation. These groups of motives and orientation did not contradict each other in action, since every motive had enough space and leaders were also consciously aware of and tolerated them. According to Bell (1992: 92), ‘people engage in ritualisation as a practical way of dealing with some specific circumstances’. This differentiates ritualised action from routinisation or habitualisation, as people approach activity with certain motives, explicit or implicit. Furthermore, these motives and circumstances create different modes of action.

During the event, we observed and categorised different modes of action. First, there were modes of social action. Walking service and prayer framed processions with movement forward, still reminiscent of

historical traditions from Karelia, bridging history and the contemporary world. Memorial services, *panikhidas*, served a uniting function for the transitory community. This was true also for social gatherings during breaks and meals, as well as sharing stories before and during processions.

Second, individual and personal modes of action were numerous, but few more common than others. These include, for example, heritage tourism, religious, spiritual, subliminal or other experiential aspects, personal faith and personal journeys, joining church activities, and finding one's roots. The motives of participation guided participants' actions. The procession gave a larger framework to practise these modes of action, and make the pilgrimage applicable to one's own needs. In a sense, the procession was used by individuals to construct a safe sacred space for individual experiences, which might differ from theological and church motives for the event. Orthodox Christianity was not presented with fixed boundaries separate from the mundane, but was articulated and incorporated into local and temporary community identity, as well as the landscape, and social and individual actions. The church leaders showed their ritual mastery with their flexibility in action. The integrity of Orthodox Christianity was not in danger for the priests, even though participants stretched the boundaries of processions with their modes of action. Vuola describes this:

The reinvented and reframed Orthodox processions and pilgrimages in Finland make clear that where confessional frames and boundaries meet lived religious practices and new contexts, they blur several distinctions while remaining part and parcel of the activities of the Orthodox Church,

which considers them divine service outside the church building. (Vuola 2020: 580)

Although Vuola interprets these activities as incorporated within the framework of the Finnish Orthodox Church, she sees these dynamics as challenging top-down thinking relating to initiative in religious settings (Vuola 2020: 581). We would go even further, and question also the idea of the overarching Church framework as the core of the event. From the perspective of the Orthodox Church, the event is located inherently within a Church framework. However, from the participants' perspective the Church can be reduced to the role of a facilitator or even only a co-participant. In the end, all are correct. There would be no procession to Korpiselkä without participants' personal interest in it, and there would be no travel to the site without the Orthodox Church legitimating the crossing. The event is as it is today because of all the different actions and motives behind it. Over the years and every year ritualisation has incorporated these to create one event. In Bell's words, 'ritual is a tool for social and cultural jockeying; it is a performative medium for the negotiation of power in relationships' (Bell 1997: 141). Although there is an impression of cultural hegemony provided by the Orthodox priests, the complex is nuanced and negotiated.

As we discussed with experienced participants, they informed us that the modes of action were often similar each year. Repeated annually and also within one event, these actions become ritualised acts and they are joined by stories of local and cultural history and the landscape, and thus construct a meaningful story for and of the journey. While some actions are more central to the event, such as processions and *panikhidas*, acts of more personal

meaning, such as seeking graves and ruins and other signs of the past, were central acts for individuals.

In ritualisation, ritual media are means of action, interpretation and meaning-making. These included items used in procession (cross, flags, icons, lantern), items used in liturgy (incense, bells, scriptures), graves, ruins and buildings, and bodies. By repetitive use ritualisation incorporates these media into the complex, and they become self-evident and internalised in the event's corpus. The media become part of the event with strategic action, guided and permitted by ritual masters. They are not accidental nor do they happen separately from collectively and personally important cultural contexts. In this case, the context includes both the religious framework and the cultural-historical landscape, as well as the temporary community with a shared motive for participating in the journey.

Participating in shared and personal rituals shapes the body and builds participant habitus. It produces ritualised practices as well as a sense of ritual (Bell 1992: 98; Kupari 2016a: 157–8). Participants gain information with their senses, and structure this in a meaningful story, combining their personal experience with stories of the past, and joining and experiencing practices of various rituals. Rituals of gathering and sharing memories shape the pilgrims, incorporating them into the event and landscape.

The ritual complex of the event consists of individual and collective ritualised activities. They connect shared stories to the landscape. Some rituals, such as singing and reciting scriptures, are more essential to the collective experience and other rituals, such as finding stone bases of destroyed houses or gravestones of relatives and taking pictures, to individual experiences. Both collective and individual rituals can become

part of the scene because hierarchical structure imposes the larger framework of Orthodox processions and festivals, and because ritual mastery is performed by the priests, which in turn legitimises actions within the framework.

Discussion

In this article, we have demonstrated how ritual complexes can be constructed from multiple sources (the Karelian Orthodox past with its ritual customs, fictional literature, key locations with their particular histories and meanings, imagination and interpretation of mind), are maintained by and participated in by various types of agents and actors with diverse backgrounds and interests, and consist of diverse modes of action.

According to Bell, ritualisation takes place as part of dynamics in which 'all activity reproduces and manipulates its own contextual ground' (Bell 1992: 8). The actors of the event build a ritual process with their own actions, building one entity, with each actor affecting the activities of others. Separate actions became ritually significant in the whole framework. Ritual mastery is needed to contain the complex, to guard and legitimise its boundaries. However, the ritualised framework allowed some space for the individual interests and modes of action to actualise.

Rituals, in this perspective, differ from ordinary human life in that it is strategic action in a culturally appropriate setting. Participants in the event do not act aimlessly. Even when their motives differ, there is structure in the action. Each individual is informed of cultural, historical and religious elements, and the limits of the setting. This guides their action. Participating in an informed activity forms socially informed body and habitus (cf. Bourdieu 1977: 124), which operates in the limits of the setting.

The process of ritualisation can thus operate on multiple simultaneous levels, at least as long as there is ritual mastery present.

Finally, we discuss our findings in terms of pilgrimage studies. Compared to historical times before the war, nature has moved from being regarded as a wild, dangerous otherness with spirits, to become a different kind of sacred order, where the historical-cultural milieu is repeatedly constructed in individual and collective rituals. In our analysis, ritualisation produces a sacred order of and in the landscape. The actions of ritual masters, individual rituals of storytelling and meaning-making, seeking and finding (thus creating) sacred spaces construct the landscape in unison with previous knowledge and national-cultural narrative. For the participants, the landscape is not sacred because of its supranormal entities, but its historical and cultural importance, which they do not forget.

Stories of the past, family history, experiencing nature and seeking spiritual experience were incorporated into the journey with rituals. Of importance was a ritual of seeking traces of these in the landscape and connecting stories to it. This ritual of seeking and finding sacred traces, which Mantsinen (2020) has claimed to be pivotal in pilgrimages, is not a passive but an active ritual. With it, all participants from various backgrounds and different motives can interpret and create a story of their liking, in the same landscape.

René Gothóni (1994: 193) claims that pilgrimage is a journey of spiritual change, comparable to the ascetic practice of repentance. While this was probably the case for the religiously oriented pilgrims, other functions were also present in an event which combines various motives and spreads wider than a traditional pilgrimage. In our analysis, most central elements

of action in this event were evoking, constructing and cherishing memories (religious, personal, family, and cultural), and performative incorporation of them into the landscape. Journeys were made mainly in peripheral, uninhabited terrain, which for some participants separated the experience from mundane life. This detachment created an open space to connect the past, stories and themselves in the action. These findings resonate with Della Dora, Walton and Scafi (2015: 16), with pilgrimage being ritualised by crossing boundaries in environments and activities that are separated from the mundane.

Terhi Utriainen and Kari Vesala point out how pilgrimages as ritual complexes are constructed from diverse materials and are products of active work done by various types of actors (Utriainen and Vesala 2020). According to Bell (1992: 105–6), ritualisation creates a temporary systematicity from all conflicting aspects, with temporary mediation. Thus ritualisation can be seen as a framework to explain why an event with such a diverse group of participants and motives holds together and offers something for everyone. ■



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