

From Ritual Communication to Convivial Entertainment: Reflections of Old Drinking Rituals in Folk Songs

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Članek obravnava spremembe v obredih pitja in kako se odražajo v folklori. Za podrobnejšo razpravo so izbrane beloruske in litovske pesmi, ki si delijo več podobnosti. Peseški motivi, analizirani v članku, kažejo jasne povezave med obredi pitja in folkloro (poročne pesmi in šege zaročnega pitja) ter določeno implicitno kulturno povezavo med starimi obrednimi odnosi in praznovanji v poznejših časih (motivi prazničnih pesmi, parafrazirani v pitnih tradicijah). Teoretični okvir prispevka izhaja iz raziskav s področja folklorne, obrednega komuniciranja in zgodovine tradicionalnih pijač, ki preučujejo kulturno kontinuiteto življenjskih pojavov skupnosti. Izkušnje obrednih odnosov, ki se prenašajo iz roda v rod, lahko spodbudijo obstoj arhaičnih kulturnih oblik, tudi če so specifične obredne prakse že davno zamrle in so postale nepomembne, saj so se življenjske okoliščine ljudi bistveno spremenile.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: ljudske pesmi, obredi pitja, pogostitev, tradicionalne pijače (medica, pivo, vino, vodka), obredno komuniciranje.

The article considers changes in drinking rituals and how they are reflected in folklore. Belarusian and Lithuanian songs sharing several similarities are selected for a more detailed discussion. The song motifs analysed in the article show clear links between drinking rituals and folklore (wedding songs and betrothal drinking customs), along with a certain implicit cultural link between the old ritual attitudes and festivities in subsequent times (motifs of feast songs paraphrased in drinking traditions). The theoretical framework of the paper is supported by research from the fields of folklore, ritual communication, and the history of traditional beverages that examines the cultural continuity of community life phenomena. The experiences of ritual attitudes passed down from generation to generation may encourage the existence of archaic cultural forms, even when specific ritual practices have long died out and become irrelevant as people's life circumstances have changed significantly.

KEYWORDS: folk songs, drinking rituals, feast, traditional drinks (mead, beer, wine, vodka), ritual communication.

INTRODUCTION

Anthropologists, mythologists and folklorists who study the content, expression and changes with respect to old religious and community-based rituals often state that the old ritual communication is generally reflected in modern mass events, gatherings of various groups, or simply in everyday communication. One may interpret the norms of etiquette, linguistic stereotypes and folklore motifs which arose from elements of old community rituals as signs pointing to the decay of traditional culture, yet also as evidence of its vitality and adaptation to a constantly changing worldview. Old drinking rituals are among such traditional phenomena which have seen many transformations and taken peculiar forms in folklore.

This article seeks to answer several questions through analysis of folklore and old wedding customs while also exploring relevant research on ritual communication and the customs prevalent in community feasts of the later period. Namely, how do changes in the old drinking rituals take place, and how are their separate elements transformed into the entertainment-related self-expression of the participants at various feasts? Which explicit and implicit reflections of old drinking rituals can we detect in comparatively recent folklore forms? Another relevant question is: how can the investigation of these reflections add to the wider studies concerning the folkloric reception of culture?

Lithuanian and Belarusian folk songs are selected in this article as the folkloric material for investigation. Several relevant motifs in these songs are discussed in an attempt to highlight how archaic drinking rituals are reflected in folklore, and their particular modifications¹. The shared qualities of Lithuanian and Belarusian songs have been discussed by folklore researchers on many occasions. Coinciding folkloric motifs and poetic images, as well as parallels in melodic types, characterise the ballads and wedding, work, calendar and other songs of the two nations (for more, see Misevičienė 1968, 1985; Žičkienė 1996, 2011). Ethnographic data show the two nations share much with regard to calendar festivals, agrarian customs, and the way of life in the traditional community generally. From a historical perspective, these folkloric connections and mutual influences may be explained by both their close geographic vicinity and shared historical experience, going back to the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

¹ The idea for this research emerged in the course of the several years the author of this article spent preparing the scientific publication “The Book of Lithuanian Folk Songs” (“Lietuvių liaudies dainynas”), Vol. 24, entitled “Feast Songs” (“Vaišių dainos”). The volume comprises folk songs recorded in the 19th century – the start of the 21st century, stored in manuscript collections and printed publications of folklore; the main folkloric motifs of these songs include beer brewing, gathering the guests and seeing them off, vivid encouragements to drink to the bottom of the glass, passing a drink around in circle, praising the hosts, etc. As the author analysed several thousands of song variants from different regions of Lithuania and explored the ethnographic contexts of their existence and their connections with the folklore of neighbouring countries, it has become evident that these folklore pieces of relatively recent origin contain the elements of old drinking traditions, albeit rendered in a distinctive way and, more often than not, difficult to recognise. The investigation also revealed that in relatively recent past (approximately at the start of the 20th century), a considerable amount of feast songs was widely sung at weddings as a natural part of the ritual, and, as the ritual died out, they eventually developed into cheerful “drinking songs” accompanying different community festivals. It should be noted that this tendency, i.e., the eventual incorporation of the folk songs previously linked to ritual contexts into community entertainment, may be observed in the folklore of many countries.

Two groups of songs are selected for a more detailed investigation². The first group comprises Lithuanian and Belarusian wedding songs containing motifs of ritual drinking; specifically – the set of wedding songs related to rituals in the betrothal period. Drinking rituals in existence during the betrothal period as reflected in the songs are explored based on considerably well-documented ethnographic descriptions of Belarusian and Lithuanian weddings of 19th century/early 20th century and folkloric material gathered in the same period. Another group of songs analysed in the article is Lithuanian feast songs of a comparatively recent origin that exhibit explicit links with the old songs (especially wedding ones) and might alternatively be called drinking songs. Accordingly, in the following parts of the article two different, albeit closely interconnected cases of drinking rituals being reflected in folk songs are presented: the motifs of wedding songs which show clear links to the ritual context of betrothal, and the repertory of feast songs oriented to entertainment-related feast practices, denoted by distinctive paraphrases of traditional beverage consumption.

It should be noted that this article does not seek to comprehensively analyse the origin of old drinking rituals, the aspects of their distribution or the history of traditional beverages. These fields of interest have received the close attention of scholars from different countries in recent decades³. We are more concerned with the directions taken in the changes occurring in the ritual drinking tradition, especially when the old ritual practices were already extinct. This question is briefly discussed in the part below.

SOME NOTES ON CHANGES IN DRINKING RITUALS AND FOLKLORISATION TENDENCIES

Old written sources, folklore data, and numerous archaeological, anthropological and ethnological investigations show that traditional beverages like mead, wine, beer or vodka have an ancient and rich history in both Europe and other continents (Dietler 2006: 232–235). Since ancient times, they have accompanied religious rituals, community festivals, and life events of an individual, and been widely used as an integral part of libations, to confirm ritual actions, and even as a ‘seal’ holding legal power in important agreements. As researchers of the history of traditional beverage consumption state:

² Different folklore sources were consulted in the selection of Belarusian and Lithuanian song texts relevant for the investigation. A substantial amount of wedding songs was selected from scientific publications of Belarusian and Lithuanian songs (see Вяч.П., LLD.VD). The author of this article also used the early ethnographic wedding descriptions published in the 19th century which usually provide summaries of rituals together with related songs. The Lithuanian feast songs analysed in the paper were selected from the series “The Book of Lithuanian Folk Songs”, Vol. 24 “Feast Songs” (published in 2019; cf. LLD.VŠD). Folk song collections stored at the Archive of Lithuanian Folklore were also consulted.

³ In recent decades, numerous investigations on the use, cultural meaning and ritual significance of traditional beverages have been carried out. With reference to relevant research on this topic in the field of Lithuanian and, in a wider respect, Baltic ritual culture, the works of mythologists and folklorists Daiva Vaitkevičienė (2011, 2019), Bronė Stundžienė (2004), Nijolė Laurinkienė (2012), Elvyra Usačiovaitė (Усачёвайте 2009) should be mentioned. Comprehensive data on the traditions of ritual consumption of mead, beer and vodka in the Slavic countries may be found in the ethnolinguistic dictionary “Славянские древности: Этнолингвистический словарь” (1995–2012).

the importance of these alcoholic beverages is evident in the multiplicity of customs and regulations that developed around their production and uses. They often became central in the most valued personal and social ceremonies, especially rites of passage, and were ubiquitous in such activities as births, initiations, marriages, compacts, feasts, conclaves, crownings, magic rites, medicine, worship, hospitality, war making, peace making, and funerals (Keller, Vaillant).

When delving into the drinking traditions of more recent historical periods that still have noticeable attributes of community life, one observes over the last 200 years the consumption of beverages at festive gatherings of European and other nations has been and remains actively combined with various ritual attitudes. The process of sharing drinks itself encompasses different actions evidently stemming from ritual, and which formerly held sacred meanings. Although for every individual nation this 'drinking culture' has its own features (preferences are observed to vary for drinks or even drinking), a considerable share of feast customs has universal attributes. Here one could include numerous 'international' drink-related gestures and attitudes that are practised quite actively; we note a few of the popular ones easily observable in the feasts of most European nations: before drinking, the drinking vessel is raised in the air, the remainder of the drink sometimes is spilt over one's shoulder; the feast participant sitting beside is greeted (a drink to their health is taken); feast participants compete over who will drink quicker or a greater quantity; when a drink is finished, the glass is turned upside down; sometimes people stand up while consuming a drink etc. Scholars of culture history easily recognise the reflections of archaic drinking rituals in these festive 'performances'. Even these days, in wedding, christening, house-warming and other celebrations in different countries (especially in rural regions) attended by family members, relatives or neighbours, one can hear the hosts encouraging the guests to drink more, and to drink their glasses right to the bottom. All of these festive communication elements have long been seen as an expression of hospitality and popular feast customs. Generally speaking, when celebrating, modern communities do not identify the origin or primary purpose of their actions or accompanying verbal formulas which come from the old ritual contexts, but merely repeat their variations as certain norms of etiquette, habits of social behaviour, or as an engaging tradition that helps to unite members of a group. Over time, peculiar forms of feast culture developed in different countries that were gradually more oriented to entertainment, yet simultaneously preserved some elements of a ritual character, albeit profoundly transformed. According to the author of "Alcohol and Culture", the anthropologist David G. Mandelbaum: "drinking in a particular society may be either a sacred or a profane act, depending on the context, and the people may not be aware of the basic principles and meanings that are actually involved" (Mandelbaum 1965: 281).

The verbal communication of feasts which forms an integral part of the festive 'performance' discussed above has evolved into different forms of folklore. This communication is directly related with the consumption of traditional beverages; it manifests in concise oral formulas and as longer texts intended for specific occasions. In line with local

traditions and occasions for feasts, it may appear as laconic greetings while drinking to the health of the person sitting next to an individual at a feast and bestowing wishes of happiness and prosperity on them, brief toasts, or, to the contrary, as toasts marked by elaborate rhetoric, as well as songs sung by all feast participants that are called *drinking* or *feast* songs. All of these creative activities directly related to beverages and their use and performed by feast participants have long been part of the folklore of various nations and received the considerable attention of scholars investigating traditional culture. In his study “An Anthropological View of Alcohol and Culture in International Perspective”, the anthropologist Dwight B. Heath defines the connections between the drinking traditions and the folklore observed in the cultures of many nations around the world in the following way: “much of what is learned about drinking, whether favorable or unfavorable, is passed from one generation to another through stories, songs, poems, tales, and sayings that reflect long-term cultural experiences and attitudes” (Heath 1995: 343). The “long-term cultural experiences” he mentions should encourage folklore researchers to primarily view the reflections of the old drinking traditions in folklore as a distinct cultural continuity characterised by a specific internal logic and inevitable folkloric paradoxes. It is well known that their poetic character, distinctive symbolic expression and variance caused by the oral tradition mean that folklore texts, especially folk songs, cannot always be seen as a reliable source of knowledge and exploration of community life in the old times. Nonetheless, having selected appropriate tools for analysis, one may recognise a range of explicit and implicit traces of archaic ritual communication in them. Perhaps the most viable research direction here is the thorough investigation of folklore contexts (historical, social etc.), delving into the tendencies of folklore genre development etc.

In contemporary folklore research, the approach taken to folklore texts of various genres as an integral part of everyday life and ritual communication of the traditional community is more relevant than ever.

DRINKING RITUALS AS REFLECTED IN BELARUSIAN AND LITHUANIAN FOLK SONGS

1. “THEY GAVE THEIR DAUGHTER AWAY FOR A GLASS OF VODKA”:

THE FOLKLORIC VERSION OF A DRINKING RITUAL IN WEDDING SONGS

As noted, traditional beverages have made up an important part of the ritual life of a community since ancient times. According to Martin A. Lynn, “drinking accompanied the important rites of passage of birth, marriage and death, the festivals of the agricultural calendar and of the liturgical year, and royal, civic, religious and fraternal rituals” (Lynn 2001: 120). Out of all the listed “rites of passage”, wedding rituals and customs stand out because they continue even today. It is known that archaic wedding customs were first and foremost related to entering into a contract between two families that acquired a legal status via the ritual consumption of traditional beverages. Recent research on Baltic beverages and associated rituals indicates, “historical and ethnographic facts provide the

most data on three areas where a drinking ritual served as a legal act: concluding a marriage, peace treaties, and contracts of exchange (gift and purchase and sale agreements)” (Vaitkevičienė 2019: 337). Hence, the primary role of traditional beverages at wedding rituals was to finalise the marriage contract between the bride’s and groom’s families during the betrothal. It was particularly important in pre-Christian times when the official canonical marriage was still not in place. During the betrothal⁴, the mutual agreements on the material assets given by parents and the bride’s consent to the marriage gained a legal status. This explains why the contracts had to be concluded in the presence of community members (neighbours and relatives served as the witnesses to the contracts and undertakings), and the final legitimisation of the marriage contract was a common feast at which drinks appear to be the main ritual element. A similar order of concluding marriage contracts was found among many European nations until the first half of the 20th century. It should be noted that the ritual consumption of traditional beverages came to wedding customs from the archaic past of community life – its origin is related to ancient libation rituals (for more, see Biegeleisen [1928]: 38–39).

Numerous situations of ritual drinking may be observed at traditional weddings in both Lithuania and Belarus (also in many other Slavic nations). The folklorist Bronė Stundžienė analysed Lithuanian wedding rituals and their reflections in songs and noted that drinking “acts”, numbering approximately 20, accompanied all wedding episodes from matchmaking through to the end of the wedding feast. Stundžienė states, “in all cases, the dual purpose of drinking acts catches the eye: it signifies the ritual separation from one family and the incorporation into another one. In the first case, the bride’s family drink as a sign of giving the bride away, in the second case the groom’s family drink as a sign of accepting the bride” (Stundžienė 2004: 46). Still, the ritual consumption of traditional beverages during betrothal is viewed as the most important act because, as stated, the betrothal was the main part of the wedding ritual.

Linguistic data confirm that consolidation of the contract concluded between the families of the bride and groom during the betrothal by means of community-based drinking was viewed as the key point of the ritual. In Lithuanian, Belarusian (and many other Slavic) languages, the names referring to this wedding stage are directly linked with the words *gerti*, *pragerti*, *degtinė* (to drink, to drink as a sign of giving [the daughter] away, vodka) etc. Here, we mention several of such names based on the monograph “Marriage and Wedding in Slavic Folk Culture” (“Брак и свадьба в славянской народной культуре”) by the ethnolinguist Aleksandr Gura: Lithuanian – *užgėros*, *pragėros*, *sugertuvės*;

⁴ Here it should be explained that *betrothal* in this case refers to the initial stage of traditional wedding, lasting from matchmaking to the wedding itself, which takes place at the house of the bride’s parents. During this period, the families of the bride and of groom made arrangements regarding the allocation of financial and material assets and also negotiated specific aspects of the wedding organisation. Other essential moments of betrothal: the bride’s consent to marriage (frequently known as “giving the hand in marriage”); ring exchange between the newlyweds; gift exchange between both sides etc. As time passed and the rituals were reduced, the initial stages of a wedding, which in both Belarusian and Lithuanian ethnographic “vocabularies” had a variety of names, inevitably changed, were combined etc. (see Фядосік 1980: 20; Vyšniauskaitė et al. 1995: 284–286).

Belarusian – *запойны, першыя, другая (вялікая) и трэцяя запоіны*⁵; Ukrainian – *запойни*; Polish – *zapoiny*; Slovak – *prepíjanie*, Serbian – *пијење девојке*, etc. (for more, see Гупа 2011: 412).⁶ All of these old names for rituals refer directly to the culmination of the betrothal – the establishing of mutual agreement between the family of the bride and the family of the groom through a common feast, where the key action was the sharing of drinks among the ritual participants in a specific order, thereby legitimising the agreements. First, the beverages brought by the representatives of the groom’s family were consumed. As a Belarusian wedding description of the 19th century states, “vodka brought by the representatives of the groom has a significant role: it may be consumed only after the agreement is concluded and it serves as the confirmation that the bride’s parents will honour their promise” (Довнар-Запольский 1888: 11–12). The betrothal ritual occurring after the “economic” agreement between the two families is described by Antanas Juška, the most prominent collector of Lithuanian wedding customs and folk songs of the 19th century:

The bride gives a small posy of rues wrapped into a white kerchief to the groom. The groom takes it, unwraps the rues and attaches them to his chest, takes the kerchief for himself, removes a ring from his finger and gives it to the bride. In exchange, the bride gives her ring to the groom and puts it on his finger; afterwards, they kiss each other. The groom *užgeria nuotaką* (drinks to the health of the bride), and they must drink the cup together to the bottom. Then parents, relatives, friends, and neighbours <...> bestow the wishes of happiness, good days, and a long life upon the newlyweds. They all begin drinking, singing, and celebrating. This is *pragertuvės* (drinking as a sign of giving the bride away), or *žiedynas* (betrothal). (Juška 1880: 9).

Motifs of beverages and drinking are common in Belarusian and Lithuanian wedding songs dedicated to the stage of betrothal. They present a distinct folklorised perspective of the key point of the marital agreement, where a joint feast of the participants and witnesses of the betrothal serves as final confirmation and seals the girl’s consent to marriage, the promise of her parents to give the agreed material assets to the groom’s family, the mutual exchange of gifts, as well as the ring exchange between the bride and the groom. This ritual ‘pouring a drink on’ the marriage contract by using traditional beverages also signified that it was irrevocable. This may be why the ‘theme’ of drinking is so frequent in songs dedicated to this wedding stage. One motif from betrothal songs of both nations stands out as the most popular and most capable of reflecting the festive drinking tradition, which may generally be called *Už degtinės stiklą tėvai atidavė/pardavė dukrą* [The

⁵ Note that in Belarusian wedding customs and rituals exceptional attention was paid to “drinking in a sign of giving the daughter away”; the feast legitimising marital agreements was held three times.

⁶ A linguistic connection of a similar character is also typical in several other European languages. The Polish historian and ethnographer Henryk Biegeleisen wrote extensively about this subject in 1928 (Biegeleisen [1928]: 36–37).

parents sold/gave their daughter away for a glass of vodka]. Below, we provide a few of the most characteristic examples of the discussed motif in Belarusian and Lithuanian songs⁷.

Examples of Belarusian songs

(1) *Да прапою, прапою, Да Тацянкинь татулька Да прапіў сваё дзіця; Да на новымь ганачку, Да за мёду шкляначку, За горелки чарачку* (Карский 1916: 248).

(Tatyana's father drank his child away. He drank her away on a new terrace, for a glass of mead, for a cup of vodka.)

(2) *Да прапіў бацька дачку, Да ні за грош, ні за капейку, Да за чарку гарэлкі* (Вяс.П 147).

(Father drank his daughter away not for a grosz, not for a kopeck, but for a glass of vodka.)

(3) *Ай, што ў гэта за матачка, Што прадала і дзіцятачка. За горкую ў водачку Прапіла малодачку. Лёгка было ў прапіваці, Цяжка будзе ў забываці* (Вяс.П 138).

(What sort of a mother is she, she sold her own child. She drank her young daughter away for bitter vodka. It was easy to drink her away, it will be hard to forget her.)

(4) *Ой, п'яніца, прапойца Да ў Дунечкіна матка: Прапіла сваю чаду На горкай гарэлцы, На салодкім мядочку*⁸ (Вяс.П 156).

(Oh, what a drunkard Dunechka's mother is: she drank her child away by drinking the bitter vodka, the sweet honey.)

(5) *Матка дочку прадала, прадала, На горелоце пропила, пропила* (Карский 1916: 248).

(Mother sold her child, drank her away by drinking vodka.)

(6) *Не гневайся, дзевачка Что мы цябе прапілі. Прапіў цябе ўбесь народ, Твой таточка напярод. Усе пілі чарачкай, А твой таточка шкляначкай* (Вяс.П 179).

⁷ In this article, the quotations of songs are provided in Belarusian and Lithuanian together with English translations. As this paper aims to render the folkloric content and meanings of songs as accurately as possible, a literal translation is given instead of a poetic one. It should be noted that not only texts but also melodies of Belarusian and Lithuanian songs have many similarities. This investigation focuses only on the lyrics of songs; hence the instances of melodies are not included.

⁸ Together with this song, the following remark of the singer is recorded: “[The song is sung] when the groom's parents and the bride's family drink vodka in a sign that they accept the gifts and the marriage agreement” (Калі сваты і родныя нявесты запіваюць гарэлкай дары і згоды на шлюб).

(Don't be angry, girl, that we drank you away. Everyone drank you away, first of all – your father. Everyone drank from small cups, your father drank from a big glass.)

Examples of Lithuanian songs:

(7) *Stikliukėlį penktą gėrė, Jau tėvelį perkalbėjo, Tėvelį perkalbėjo, Tėvas dukreleį žadėjo* (JSD 253).

(They were drinking the fifth glass, they have already persuaded the father, the father promised them his daughter [in marriage].)

(8) *Skamba kanklės Ir trimitatės, Eina močiutė Graudžiai verkdam.*
Vakar vakarą Aš girta buvau, Mano dukružė Aš pažadėjau. Jau šiandien šiandien Išsisiblaivėjau, Jaunos dukružės Labai gaila (LLD.VD 60).

(*Kanklės*⁹ and trumpets sound, mother walks and cries bitter tears. Yesterday I was drunk, I promised my daughter [in marriage]. Today, I have grown sober, I feel sorrow for my daughter.)

(9) *Už arielkos puskvortelę Pažadėjo dukterelę. Ar taip pigiai užauginai, Ar vargelio nepažinai, Ar nesupai naktį lopšelio?* (LLD.VD 64).

([Mother] promised her daughter [in marriage] for half a quart of vodka. Was it so cheap to raise her, did you not experience any hardships, did you not rock the cradle overnight?)

(10) *Girdžiu, pragėrė, liliava, Matka dukrele, liliava. – Pragerk, motule, liliava, Margas karveles, liliava, Ne mane jauną, liliava. Girdžiu, pragėrė, liliava, Tėvas dukrele, liliava. – Pragerk, tėveli, liliava, Margus veršelius, liliava, Ne mane jauną, liliava* (LLD.VD 65).

(I hear, mother drank her daughter away. – Mother, drink away motley cows, not me, a young girl. I hear, father drank his daughter away. – Father, drink away motley bulls, not me, a young girl.)

Attention should be paid to the fact that the folklorisation of drinking rituals in songs occurs in distinctive ways that conform to the laws of song poetics. In a sense, ritual contexts are 'reformulated' to fit the poetic canon of the songs and adapted to their poetic logic. Those parents who give away or sell their daughter for beverages are seemingly reproached and condemned (see examples 3, 4, 9). This folkloric version of the ritual communication clearly belongs to the general ritual context of a wedding (together with, for instance, the bride lamenting upon leaving her parents' home, scolding, or even

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scornful remarks made to the representatives of the groom's family and expressed in a speech or song).

As evidenced by copious ethnographic material and our investigations of the rituals in Lithuanian and Belarusian traditional weddings, the wedding negotiations and related drinking rituals were held at the house of the bride's parents. The initial negotiations between the bride's parents and representatives of the groom's family were sometimes conducted in a 'neutral' place, often a tavern in the town or village. On such an occasion, drinks were also consumed in order to strengthen, to 'pour a drink on', the agreements. The folklorisation of such contracts and accompanying feasts is arguably seen in the songs of the two nations:

(11) *Atpuskėly buvau, Karčemėlėj gėriau, Su ženteliais kalbėjau,
Dukrele pažadėjau* (LTR 514/53).

(I attended a patronal festival, I was drinking in a tavern, I was talking
with sons-in-law, I promised my daughter [in marriage].)

(12) *Прапою, прапою! Прапіў бацька дачку У Слуцку на рыначку*
(Вяс.Об: 403)

(He drank her away, he drank her away! Father drank his daughter away
in the city of Slutsk, at a market.)

The poetic image of a daughter/a girl who was "drunk away" (i.e., given away for beverages and for money) that reappears in songs is directly linked with the archaic customs of buying brides. According to the ethnographic descriptions of Lithuanian and Belarusian weddings, the whole narrative about the matchmaking stage is based on "sale-purchase" negotiations, while matchmakers who come to a girl's parents' house are portrayed as merchants in dialogue between the two families, as well as in songs. The frequent use of money in betrothal rituals should also be viewed as an echo of the archaic 'bride-buying' customs. Some of them are directly related to drinking rituals. The following custom is an example of such ritual communication: "a young man drops a coin into a glass full of vodka and drinks to the health of the girl. She takes the money, drinks vodka, and passes the glass on" (Вяс.Об, p. 387).

Overall, it should be stated that even though betrothal songs embody a poetised view of the principal moment of the wedding, it is obvious that this layer of folklore still has a direct connection with archaic wedding rituals. The song motif discussed above (*The parents sold/gave their daughter away for a glass of vodka*) is the most characteristic motif of Belarusian and Lithuanian betrothal songs, but is far from being the only one. As research on betrothal songs indicates, "next to the motif of negotiations, the motifs of drinking are similarly frequent" in such songs (Sauka 1988: 14).

2. “DRINK THE GLASS AND SHOW ME THE BOTTOM OF IT”:
PARAPHRASES OF DRINKING RITUALS IN LITHUANIAN FEAST SONGS

As noted, various drinking motifs recur in wedding songs and are often directly linked to wedding customs. Lithuanian folklore research shows that long ago following the death or significant transformation of the old wedding rituals, a large number of the songs that had accompanied them were gradually incorporated not only into wedding celebrations but into other community feasts and entertainment. Already in the Lithuanian cultural press as far back as in the early 20th century, an article (author unknown) about betrothal customs and related songs noted that songs performed as part of wedding drinking rituals have acquired a new meaning over the course of time: “young people sing them at their gatherings; they are also sung in various feasts: christenings, name days, etc.” (Užgėros 1913: 39).

Moreover, around the end of the 19th century and early in the 20th century a multitude of new songs appeared that dealt with beer and vodka, the merry sharing of drinks, encouragement to drink to the bottom of one’s glass, etc. Slowly emerging from all of these old and new songs was a separate corpus of songs named “feast songs”, or “drinking songs”. In recent years, these songs have received growing scholarly interest from folklorists and mythologists (Vaitkevičienė 2019: 23–24, 141–144; Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė 2015). Conditions for the exploration of feast songs as an integral part of community-based communication have improved following a recent publication of them in a scholarly volume¹⁰. Songs of a similar character can be found in the folklore of several nations. In community feasts, feast songs are inseparable from other forms of feast folklore such as toasts, board (drinking) games, jokes; they are unquestionably related to the consumption of traditional beverages. According to Kevin Grace, “the genre of drinking songs owes its existence to the celebration and conviviality that is associated with the consumption of alcohol” (Grace 2010: 77).

Below, we present several of the most popular motifs from Lithuanian feast songs that interpret the drinking theme in a particular way. These selected instances represent song types with numerous variants. These songs were put down in writing at the end of the 19th century and start of the 21st century.

Perhaps the most frequent motif deals with encouraging a person/s to drink to the bottom of the glass. This motif may generally be called *Išgerk stiklą, parodyk dugną* (“drink the glass and show me its bottom”). Many feast songs contain active encouragement to consume the whole beverage and not leave a single drop in the vessel. The songs also call to “turn the glass upside down”, “show the bottom of the glass”, “roll the glass across the table”, i.e., to prove that the liquid has been fully consumed. Such songs also claim that any guest who does not drink their glass to the end will be “punished” and need to drink several more servings. All of these imperatives found in songs are connected to the general atmosphere found at feasts, where singing is combined with drinking and a range of traditional gestures (raising glasses, drinking while standing up etc.).

¹⁰ For more detailed information, see footnote 2.

(1) *Išgerki stiklelį Visą į dugną, Neliki sveteliams Savo lašelių* (LLD. VŠD 819).

(Drink the glass to the bottom, don't leave a drop for the guests.)

(2) *Išgerk stiklelį ir parodyk dugnelį* (LTR 5571/54).

(Drink the glass and show [me] the bottom [of it].)

(3) *Išgėriau stiklelį In dugnelį, Paritau stiklelį Per stalelį* (LLD.VŠD 252).

(I drank the glass to the bottom, I rolled the glass across the table.)

(4) *Versk ant šono stiklinėlę, Parodyk dugnelį* (LTR 3839/22).

(Tip the glass on its side, show me the bottom of the glass.)

(5) *Jei sklenyčios neišgersi Ir ant dugno neapversi, Tris gersi, tris gersi* (LTR 3957/8).

(If you don't drink the glass and turn it upside down, you will drink three more, you will drink three more.)

The encouragement to drink one's beverage "to the bottom" heard in the feast songs of considerably late origin and surviving until these days as an amusing entertainment, in its origin is an ancient cultural phenomenon, presumably linked to the archaic drinking rituals of the Baltic peoples. The book "Deliciae Prussicae oder Preussische Schaubühne" by Matthäus Prätorius, published at the end of the 17th century, along with other old sources, describes libations being poured on the soil during community gatherings as offerings to the Earth Goddess, household deities, or souls of the departed (for more, see Vaitkevičienė 2019: 298–304). An integral part of this ritual was performed when community members drank from the same vessel as the vessel was being passed around a circle and every participant in the ritual drank it down to the bottom. When ritual contexts died out, passing a drink around a circle became an element of communal communication in entertainment and gained new meanings. In modern times, the custom of drinking from the same vessel by passing it around a circle has died out in communal feasts in Lithuania and other countries. It was replaced by drinking from separate drinking vessels given to each feast participant. The encouragement to drink one's glass to the bottom survives even today, although it has turned into an invitation for guests to drink as much and as swiftly as they can.

Another equally popular motif in feast songs is drinking "to one's health". It should be noted, however, that wishes of health, happiness and joy are very common in these songs. The addressees of such wishes are the hosts of the feast, the guests, neighbours, and relatives.

(6) *Už gaspadoriaus sveikatą Mes išgersim su ukvata. Už gspadinės sveikatą Mes išgersim tris stiklines* (LTR 4528/178).

(To our host's health we will eagerly drink. To our hostess's health we will drink three glasses.)

(7) *Cinkt cinkt, stiklā pakeldamas, Klan klan, ī gerkli leisdamas. Ī tava sveikatā, ī mana žyvata, Ei vyvat, ei vyvat!* (LLD.VšD 430).

(Clink clink, lifting the glass, clank clank pouring into the throat. Here's to your health, and here's to my life, hey, vivat!)

(8) *Gaspadoriau, gspadine, Būkit visi linksmi, Būkit visi sveiki* (LLD.VšD 800).

(Host, hostess, may you all be happy and healthy.)

(9) *Giminėlės mano, Mylimieji mano, Tai mes gerkim, uliavokim, Kolei sveiki esam* (LLD.VšD 40)

(My beloved relatives, let's drink and be merry while we are healthy.)

(10) *Sveika sveika, mūs sesula, Alaus gereklela* (LLD.VšD 82).

(Greetings, our sister, a drinker of beer.)

(11) *Kad mes sveiki vis būtum, Arielkēļi vis gertum* (LLD.Vš 249).

(So that we'll be healthy and will always drink vodka.)

The anthropologists/folklore researchers Albert Baiburin and Andrej Toporkov believe “the custom of drinking ‘to one’s health’ is undoubtedly of mythological origin”. According to these scholars, the prototype of this custom was drinking in honour of a deity. Even though greeting one’s table companion while passing a drinking vessel on to them may seem like a simple gesture, its ancient meaning is profound (Байбурин, Топорков 1990: 150).

We do not have firm grounds to state that a direct link exists between feast songs and the old drinking rituals. In these songs, the repeated encouragement to drink to the bottom of one’s glass, to pass the drinking vessel around the table, the wishes of happiness, joy and especially of good health are all not explicitly related to archaic ritual practices but through models of behaviour and interpersonal communication that have been around for hundreds of years and were formed under the influence of ritual communication. Therefore, the drinking motifs in feast songs which unexpectedly remind one of the old drinking rituals are more appropriately to be viewed as paraphrases of ritual communication or as certain allusions to an implicit ritual experience. It is likely that feast songs were created in order to verbalise and sing about the actions of the hosts and guests during feasts (passing a drinking vessel around the table, encouraging people to drink to the bottom of their glass, turning the drinking vessel upside down etc.), which, as mentioned, is closely connected with the old rituals. In this way, the reflections of archaic drinking rituals were introduced in more recent folk songs.

The community members, gathered around a festive table and passing drinks around, are united by mutual goodwill, the joy of being together, the desire to share food and drinks and thereby have an experience of a feast and humans coming together. As D. G. Mandelbaum states, “drinking together generally symbolizes durable social solidarity – or at least amity – among those who share a drink” (Mandelbaum 1965: 282). Feast songs enable a better understanding of the essentially changed reality of traditional beverage consumption, where the sacred ‘vertical’ ritual experience is transformed into a ‘horizontal’ experience of interpersonal connection. Regardless of the reason that people gather together, it is essential that their being together, while sharing drinks and food, chanting sacred hymns, or singing merry drinking songs, constitutes a feast in the widest sense of the word. It may be viewed as a pause *hic et nunc*, taken to rejoice in the great company of friends and relatives, to drink to each other’s health, wish happiness, and to celebrate life itself, having forgotten one’s work and other troubles at least for a moment. This vivacious attribute of traditional gatherings that is found in many nations round the world was extensively analysed by the philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin. In his book “Rabelais and His World”¹¹ dedicated to the carnivalesque medieval folk culture, he writes: “the banquet always celebrates a victory and this is part of its very nature. Further, the triumphal banquet is always universal. It is the triumph of life over death” (Bakhtin 1984: 283).

Even though they no longer exhibit a noticeable connection to the old drinking rituals, feast songs fulfil a distinctive communicative function – they bring the community together, create a positive atmosphere, and bring joy. In this context, the songs also serve to provide a certain ‘musical background’ for the feast while also acting as a common creative activity which unites the community. In the words of Grace, “drinking songs continue to be a dynamic rather than static cultural expression of group behavior” (Grace 2010: 78).

CLOSING REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

Ellen B. Basso and Gunter Senft, the editors of the collective monograph “Ritual Communication”, argue that a ritual is not only an action or event, but an experience as well: “ritual is not only something done but also something experienced in the doing” (Basso, Senft 2009: 3). The specified “ritual experience” unites generations of people living in different époques. The experiences of ritual attitudes passed down from generation to generation may encourage the existence of archaic cultural forms, even when specific ritual practices have long died out and become irrelevant as people’s life circumstances have changed significantly. After all, even such habitual, arguably ‘automatically’ performed actions, such as a handshake upon greeting someone, or the especially popular drinking “to one’s health” at feasts, have an ancient and remarkable history that reveals the abundance, transformations and a certain universality of ritual actions. As noted by the scholar

¹¹ A Lithuanian box-zither musical instrument.

of religious studies and the ritual theorist Catherine Bell, “at one time or another, almost every human activity has been done ritually or made part of a ritual” (Bell 1997: 91).

In this article, we considered how the elements of the old community-based drinking rituals are developed in folklore. The song motifs discussed in the paper show explicit links between drinking rituals and folklore (wedding songs and betrothal drinking rituals), as well as a certain implicit cultural connection between the old ritual attitudes and the festivities of later times (the motifs of feast songs paraphrased in drinking traditions). In both cases, we can still talk about active community-based traditions of beverage consumption. Meanwhile, beverage consumption in modern times has acquired an essentially different character. Numerous studies on the history of beverage consumption reveal an obvious shift from community traditions to individual self-expression: as the old ritual communication faded, community-based drinking customs have gradually become a means of fulfilling one’s personal needs or even of alleviating psychological difficulties. On the level of interpersonal communication, the sharing of drinks has become established as a social act ensuring mutual understanding and convivial relationships. As scholars of the history of traditional beverages state, it is:

not that the ancient uses of alcohol have been forgotten: a drink is still the symbolic announcer of friendship, peace, and agreement, in personal as well as in business or political relations. In modern society, however, many people discover that drinking can often help them to suppress the overwhelming inhibitions, shyness, anxieties, and tensions that frustrate and interfere with urgent needs to function effectively, either socially or economically (Keller, Vaillant).

The culture of traditional beverage consumption has developed from the most archaic religious rituals and the use of drinks to legitimate significant community contracts to beverage consumption being more a form of pastime, a way of relaxing and creating an elated mood, and an integral part of entertainment and interpersonal communication. Notably, traditional beverages and the practices of their consumption remain a connecting link between the customs of archaic celebrations and contemporary feasts, and also serve as a means for creating a festive atmosphere. In the most general sense, “alcohol is universally associated with celebration, and drinking is, in all cultures, an essential element of festivity” (Social and Cultural Aspects of Drinking 1998: 9).

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ОТ РИТУАЛЬНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ К ЗАСТОЛЬНЫМ РАЗВЛЕЧЕНИЯМ: ОТРАЖЕНИЯ ДРЕВНИХ ОБРЯДОВ В НАРОДНЫХ ПЕСНЯХ

Вита Иванаускайте-Шейбутиене



Тема данной статьи – вопросы, касающиеся соотношения ритуальной коммуникации и фольклора. На основе актуальных антропологических и фольклорных исследований выясняется, как меняется обрядовое употребление традиционных напитков и как отдельные элементы архаического ритуала трансформируются в современные застольные развлечения, также какие прямые и косвенные отражения древних застольных обрядов можно обнаружить в относительно поздних формах фольклора.

Для исследования привлечены две группы белорусских и литовских народных песен. Первая группа – литовские и белорусские свадебные песни, имеющие прямую связь с обрядами *пропивания невесты* (бел. *запойны*; лит. *pragertuvės*). Так же использовались этнографические описания белорусских и литовских свадебных обрядов XIX века. Вторая группа – литовские застольные песни относительно позднего происхождения.

Традиционные напитки (мед питный, вино, пиво или водка) имеют очень долгую и богатую историю в Европе и в других континентах. С незапамятных времен они сопровождали религиозные обряды, коллективные праздники и важные события жизни человека, широко использовались в либациях, а также служили юридическим утверждением важных соглашений.

В белорусских и литовских свадебных песнях довольно часто встречаются мотивы, связанные с обрядовым употреблением традиционных напитков. Одним из самых распространенных является мотив «отец (мать) пропил (продал) дочку за водку». Песни с этим мотивом сопровождали обряд обручения. Укрепление брачного договора между сторонами невесты и жениха повсеместно совершалось путем совместной трапезы, главной частью которой всегда была выпивка, обозначающая *пропивание невесты*. Фольклорный мотив дочери, отдаваемой / пропиваемой за напиток или деньги, связан и с архаическими обычаями покупки невесты. Этнографические описания свадебного обряда обоих народов подтверждают, что весь сватовской нарратив основан на переговорах «купли-продажи», а сваты, приезжающие в родительский дом девушки, в диалогах и песнях обычно изображаются как купцы.

Фольклористами давно замечено, что при исчезновении или существенном изменении старых свадебных и других обрядов многие их сопровождавшие песни в конечном итоге стали частью разнообразных застольных развлечений. В литовском фольклоре образовался довольно большой массив *застольных песен*, включающий старые (в первую очередь свадебные) и новые (созданные в конце XIX в. и в первой половине XX в.) песни, имеющие разные застольные

мотивы. Самыми популярными оказались призывания пить до дна, покатыть чашу по столу, перевернуть и показать её дно, пить на здоровье гостей и хозяев, пожелать здоровья, счастья и др. Во время праздничного застолья пение этих песен обычно совмещалось с разными жестами и действиями ритуального происхождения: пить стоя; выливать остаток напитка через плечо; выпить до дна, обнять и поцеловать рядом сидящих и др. Песни такого рода известны в фольклоре разных народов.

Нет веских оснований говорить о какой-либо прямой связи между застольными песнями сравнительно позднего происхождения и старинными общественными ритуалами. В этих песнях повторяющиеся призывы выпить до дна, пожелания счастья, радости и особенно здоровья более уместно называть парафразами ритуальной коммуникации. Застольные песни выполняют уникальную коммуникативную функцию – они создают позитивную атмосферу и объединяют сообщество.

Проанализированные мотивы песен отражают как прямую связь между ритуальным употреблением традиционных напитков и фольклора (свадебные песни и обряд *пропойн*), так и некоторую косвенную культурную связь между архаическим обрядовым поведением и поздними застольными развлечениями (мотивы застольных песен как парафразы древних обрядов).

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