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FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND THEORY OF
CULTURE**

**‘Trauma and celebration. Sacralization and transformation of the
commemorative celebration’**

THESIS ABSTRACT

Of dissertation for acquiring educational and science degree ‘Doctor’ in
professional field 3.1 Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (PhD in
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Object and actuality of research

This dissertation is devoted to the commemorative celebrations of the April Uprising of 1876, The Liberation of Bulgaria and the accompanying heroes, as well as the their transformation into festivity. In post-liberated Bulgaria, along with the formation of a new system of government, complex series of tales and images are built, associated with heroism and sacrifice, which subsequently get validated in the mindset of society and in the process of thought about the historical event in 1876.

These tales build a pantheon of the Bulgarian heroes and heroic events, marked with traumatism. Bulgarian people identify and position themselves in the world through these tales – the April Uprising and The Liberation War. The Uprising, its failure and the consequences from it are used to build the image of Bulgarian virtues through the medium of trauma and death, masked with the shades of heroism and sacrifice.

This particular historical event forms the pantheon of individuals in Bulgarian history that emphasize ‘romantic’ features of the nation – heroism, sacrifice, dedication, selflessness. Revolutionaries are elevated into national heroes; they have dedicated their lives to freedom and fought against the foreign domination in the name of mutual independence.

Besides their heroic features, they are used as ‘model characters, derived from the people and are the greatest embodiment of the nation’ (Daskalov, 2009). This event transforms into an event of essential importance for the collective self-consciousness in local and national level as well, and is positioned as a mandatory date in the cultural calendar of particular regions in the country.

The main object of research in this text is the realization of The Grand Narrative of The April Uprising, The Liberation war and their heroes in the commemorative celebrations, furthermore the image of anniversaries is examined, as part of present festiveness in Bulgaria and its transformations in the current situation.

The studied events pay respect to the death of certain people or groups of people connected to a particular period in Bulgarian history. From the moment of the first commemoration in the past to the present days, these anniversaries experience transformations and addition of new elements. They are recognised throughout the years and are an immutable part of the Bulgarian event and cultural calendar. The commemorative historical celebrations included in this

research are commemoration of The April Uprising in Batak and Perushtitsa, Botev's Day and his fellow soldiers in Skravena, and 'The Terror' in Karlovo.

These four terrains determine the regional commemoration as extremely important for the community and the region, and are characterized with annual celebration from the first happening up to today.

Considering the contemporary world and its specific dynamics (technological and cultural), the question which this research is asking is if there is a change in the realization of commemorative celebrations and is there a change in the perception from the community; how is this expressed and what symbols does it bring?

The researched anniversaries in this work are commemorative in their core; their main purpose is to remember and honor the heroic death for Bulgarian freedom as a sovereign state. On terrain though, we encounter the term 'festivity' among the people present, as well as in the local historical materials. Due to that the main focus of the text is to find if the commemorative celebrations have the features of festivity and how are they expressed.

This work is looking for an answer to the question of transformation, that is expressed in conversion of commemoration into festivity and is aiming to position those into the area of modern celebration. Throughout terrain research, this work is aiming to build the present structure of the commemorations and to show the image of the present days.

To achieve these goals, the text is trying to answer the following questions:

- Is there a form of trauma in the historical events and how it is expressed in the present days?
- What meaning do they bring and how is this incorporated in the modern, strongly technological world?
- In what way the community is using the anniversaries and for what reason?

The researched topic is important from anthropological point of view because it aims, on one hand, to determine the direction and borders of the cultural historical heritage of commemorative celebrations in the present situation; on the other hand it positions historical commemorations in the present days, along with their structure and meaning they put in.

The observed commemorative celebrations are an immutable part of Bulgarian contemporary festivals and, as such, their modern image is product of long years of shaping and transformation. The research will contribute to a more detailed view on the present form of commemorations and will put them in certain parameters, following their development until present days, the symbols they are bringing and the perception they give to the audiences.

Short presentation of dissertation

The dissertation contains an introduction, five chapters and closure in 141 pages, bibliography and addendums in 34 pages.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the problem

There are several things presented in Chapter 1: the research problem, the motivation, tasks and purposes, as well as the initial hypothesis, the used methodology and notion tools, on which this work is based. The main questions that are researched are also introduced.

The question, this dissertation is aiming to answer, is if there is transformation in the commemorative celebrations into festivity and how is this presented. The observed annual commemorations are an immutable part of the Bulgarian festivity and, as such, their image is product of long years of shaping and transformation. For that reason one of the tasks in this work is to follow the development of events throughout the years from the initial happening up until present days, as well as the development of events' narration, and their transformation additionally. This work's interest is aimed at contemporary practices, the meanings, that are put into commemorations from the event managers and their audiences, followed by their respective use.

To reach the goals, this research set and carried out the following problems:

- Preparing of historical frame of the main narration of The April Uprising and The Liberation, setting heroes on a pedestal, follow-up of its development up to present days – including review of prime sources of historical events and present explorers, moments of conflict and usage of the narrative throughout the years;
- To lead terrain research of four chosen places and to determine the nature of the audiences – includes visiting archive institutions and bearers of memory, and taking of interviews;
- Building a frame of commemorative celebrations as events, their development throughout the years and their components – research on events origins and their development; terrain observation and specifying the main components and anniversaries' program. Detailed analysis of each established fragment is included;

- Framing the terrains in the definition ‘memorial places’ in the meaning of Pierre Nora (Nora, 2004) and how they influence audiences and community;

For the purpose of this research empirical material is provided through terrain observations in the towns of Batak (May 13 – May 17, 2017; May 13 – May 17, 2018, 2019 and 2020), Perushtitsa (May 9 – May 10 2018, 2019 and 2020), Karlovo (July 20, 2019 and 2020) and the village of Skravena (June 2, 2019 and 2020). The methodology used during the terrain research contains mainly anthropological methods – direct observation, conversation with audiences and event managers (formal and informal), visiting town’s archives and institutions that are storing data, following up the events in the online space and media coverage in the recent years, as well as photo documentation. The notion tools, on which the hypothesis and analyses in the text are referred to, are described in detail.

Chapter 2: Historical frame

Chapter 2 examines the origin of the narrative on historical events, its main carriers and the spaces reached throughout the years up to now. Furthermore, it examines the laying of the foundations for this narrative’s development. The focus is on presenting the historical event’s initial coverage, which helps the building of the pantheon of the event and its heroes – ‘the first step’ of commemorative celebration’s development.

At its core, this summary is not claiming historical accuracy and is not denying the historical facts, but follows up the different moments of the building of the image of the historical event and its imposing on the collective identity of the Bulgarian person. This text is keeping distance from historiography and examines the problems from the point of view and through the mechanisms of anthropology.

The primary sources delivering information on the historical event are examined; these sources build the main symbols with which the commemorative celebrations operate in the present. Those are Zachariy Stoyanov, Ivan Vazov, Stoyan Zaimov, Dimitar Strashimirov, Ivan Hadzhiyski; additionally, the reaction on The April Uprising abroad and thought the most popular correspondents (Januarius MacGahan, Victor Hugo, Oscar Wilde and others; there is short summary of the Balkan political satire from this period. Every aspect of the historical summary is present with the main purpose to support the idea that commemorations today are projection of years-long process (Dayan, 2015) which beginning is noted along the detailed

summary of the prime sources, that covered the events immediately after their occurrence. The April Uprising turns into a social event. It is a process that helps for a chain of other events to occur. On one hand, the historical process is transformed into commemorations and celebration, on the other hand, a research process that has started its development along with the development of science in Bulgaria. The second process has been transformed too. Today the historical event can't be examined, it is becoming a symbol, conditioned by certain facts and they are incontestable. The historiographer doesn't have the say anymore. The history of The Uprising and the details surrounding it, along with its symbolic capital, start to be imposed on the public consciousness immediately after the events' occurrence. The grounds of The April Uprising and IV revolutionary district are turned into 'places of memory' in the context of Pierre Nora (Nora, 2004). They become places for everyone and no one. They contain a Narrative of collective memory of the nation, which later becomes a method of the institutions, such as the government and the church, to impose certain models, characters and ideas. This institutionalization forces certain symbolic meaning which later becomes a method in the formation of national identity. In this manner the historical event becomes a social event, and in its nature builds The Grand Narrative of the Bulgarian self-sacrificial hero, who would do anything in the name of freedom.

The second part of this chapter examines the modern explorers of the topic, who are analysing the event from symbols and meaning point of view, which the tales of The April Uprising and The Liberation bring. The focus is on literary scholars, philologists, culturologists and anthropologists, such as Nikolai Aretov, Albena Hranova, Georgi Vulchev, Nikolai Dimitrov, Rumen Daskalov, Iliya Todev. The presented researches are putting emphasis on mitologema, main symbols and meanings, that are shaped throughout the years. It presents the path that The Grand Narrative of the Revolution and its heroes walked in Bulgaria. This Narrative is the main force for the commemorative celebrations connected to The April Uprising, its participants and The Liberation War to be held today.

Honoring the death of the victims has changed since the first years after the Liberation. Commemorations are becoming a symbol of bravery and freedom. Collective bodies and institutions, such as nations, states, the church, etc., don't have collective memory, but are creating it, using signs, symbols, historical events and places of memory (Asman, 2004). This way they build their own identity and The Grand Narrative on a national level. Same principle is observed during the examined events. The beginning of the commemorations is shaped as a remembering and memorial service, which with time is turned into a symbol of freedom, gained

through heroic acts. This transformation is due the texts of Zahariy Stoyanov, Ivan Vazov, Stoyan Zaimov. It refers to different fragments of history, formed by tales similar to myths and legends. It emphasizes on chosen elements that carry a clear tale not of loss and failure, but of the fight for freedom and the strength of a nation. Trauma becomes bravery and reason for pride. It is weaved into the national identity, which carries The Grand Narrative of the fight for freedom.

Chapter 3: Rise of the celebrations and theoretical frame

In chapter 3 the appearance of commemorative celebrations and the stages of development up until present days is presented. In that chapter the historical commemorations are positioned in the sense of anthropology and cultural sciences. Their type is defined, as well as their meaning and their heaviness in the science field; this way the prism used for terrain observation is presented.

First type presents the four terrains' tragic events connected to revolutionary activity in Bulgaria. To this day they present the glorious past of the heroes that died in the period between 1876 and The Liberation. Although these emerged as tragic events, they transform into commemorative celebration of heroism and sacrifice, and emphasize on particular individuals and deeds. In the starting period it is clearly seen the initiative to institutionalize and build the cult of heroes in the national self-consciousness.

In summary, the examined commemorative celebrations can be divided into three types: the first type is the one that celebrates the memory of the heroes, patriotism and the national idea for unity (Skravena). The characteristic of this type is that its main moments are not the traumatic historical event, but the act of patriotism and dedication to Bulgarian national spirit. If according to Nora 'places of memory' can be places of important historical events, then the characteristic of Skravena is that it attaches itself to the main historical event, shaping it through its own prism of the big act of self-sacrifice. Skravena is not a place of memory because it is connected to Botev and his fellow soldiers' demise, but because it starts the national Narrative of heroes and the sacralization of heroism and self-sacrifice, and starts the initiative of institutionalizing the national heroes. It seems that in Skravena the heroic deeds towards patriotism and admiration are celebrated, and the achievement of Skravena people is equal to the achievement of the fighters and heroes of The April Uprising and The Liberation war. This is the prism that transforms trauma to celebration. The commemoration to Botev is not only in

the name of the heroes of the revival, it is a symbol of ‘the patriotism and heroism’ of the local residents.

The second type described the traumatic event that gradually transforms into commemoration of heroism and turns into national pride (Batak and Perushtitsa). Here the trauma is passed to the following generations and the meaning of the commemoration is more in the sense of national meaning.

The third type is the commemoration that has entirely commemorative characteristics (Karlovo). The annual anniversary commemoration started only in 1991 – 1995 initiated by the mayor back then. The commemorative celebration is humbly organized with memorial service and flower bearing to the monument; there is no festive element. On focus are the commemoration connected to Vasil Levski’s birth and death, March 3rd, The Rose festival and others. Due to the rich cultural calendar of the town, the commemoration of ‘The Terror’ is focused on paying tribute to the victims through religious service.

History of commemorations follows a transformation throughout the years – the one that changes the memorial service/remembering into nationwide commemoration; this happens when the remains are outside their own dimension and to the anniversaries there are new elements added – military presence, cultural meetings, musical activities. The first transformation is in the nature of mourning into festivity, when not only the death of the victims is noted, but it celebrates the ideal and self-sacrifice, which are uniting the nation. The main historical events and the following commemoration and memorial services are described, the changes in their structure and the contiguous moments in their development as well.

The research is based on data from the local memorial institutions (community centers, museums), tales of municipal and institutional workers, local historical issues and collections. It is paid special attention to the period from 1944 to 1989, when the commemorative celebrations were drastically changed. The religious nature, which is otherwise the foundation of the commemorations, is removed and the anniversaries are tied to achievements of the party and legitimisation of the current government through incorporating the heroes of the revival and their ideals to the ideals of the party.

Furthermore the chapter examines the anniversaries through the term ‘historical trauma’ (Stankov, 2019) and how it is related to the observed terrains. Exactly how the historical trauma is represented throughout the years and to what moments of conflicts and political use it has led. Commemorative celebrations are one of the main events, nurturing the national self-consciousness. The April Uprising and The Liberation are one of the most covered

historical moments in the historical and cultural heritage of Bulgaria. In opposition to the characteristics of the observed terrains that were noted so far, the festive character of the contemporary celebrations is positioned. The carrying out of annual commemoration of the listed historical events is accompanied by a series of small rituals, included in the terrains, except for Karlovo and the memorial for 'The Terror'. The atmosphere before and during the anniversaries is mostly commemorative, gradually changing into festive.

Chapter 4: Profile of nowadays situation

Chapter 4 mainly contains descriptions of the terrain observations that were made. It focuses on the presentation of each observation, paying attention to COVID-19 period and the organization of commemorative celebrations in this period. Furthermore, in this chapter is presented the profile of the audiences, which is made after the observations.

The observed commemorative celebrations are united around the shared topic of heroic death and national heroes. Naturally, the following answer of the topic is the similar presentation of the events. Each event is built on different activities, which the text defines as 'fragments'. They form each commemorative celebration and build its main structure, which is similar on every terrain. Each fragment contains hidden symbols and meanings and contributes to the general image that the events are showing.

On terrain observation during COVID-19 pandemic one extremely important feature of commemorative celebrations emerged, which is the symbolic heaviness that stays active during pandemic regulations and restrictions. The celebrations continue to be the main force in the national memory, especially on the local level. The fact that the event managers find a way to organize the events points to the meaning that generates the events. The heavy meaning of the anniversaries clearly stands out during their happening during world wide 'lockdown' and in time of restrictions. Although the format is reduced greatly (the main fragments are kept), the events are happening nonetheless.

In this chapter are examined the profiles of every terrain. The research defined four types: local audience, 'the aliens', bikers, online patriots. The audience of the anniversaries are mainly local residents or such with relatives in the region, for that reason the text discusses them the most. One of their characteristics is that they anticipate the commemorations. Their relation to the event is expressed through their visual appearance. As social creatures people create a number of techniques and channels to express themselves non verbally. One of these techniques is through their clothing and visual presence. The commemoration becomes an

event in which the locals have the opportunity to express themselves, to meet relatives and friends and to exchange information. The individual is aiming to present itself as a separate element with individuality and *the commemorative celebration transforms into social festivity*. The function of such events is honoring the public values and confirming national identity. The model of public behavior changes in the form of renewal and confirmation of public life, which is one of the characteristics of the celebration (Zhigulski, 1989). Bonds and group belonging begin to emerge. Social norms also begin to appear more clearly, the positions are asserted.

Guests, or ‘the aliens’ at the commemorations are in large numbers in Batak; they are also present in the other terrains but not so strongly. ‘The aliens’ can be divided into two types – tourists and guests. Tourists are those who are present on their own initiative and the main reason is the history and culture of the locality. For tourists one of the reasons for attending these events is the connection with the past and the roots, but also the diversity. The second type of visitors are the guests, because they are usually relatives or related with local residents and attend by invitation.

With the exception of Karlovo, tourists are also present at each of the grounds. The most are present in Batak. In the other towns the presence of external visitors who are present only for the commemoration is smaller.

Bikers are some of the most prominent visitors in Batak. They have been active visitors to the Batak religious procession since 2011. According to themselves, however, they have always been an integral part of the event. They are found in the other terrains, but in significantly smaller groups. Native representatives of this culture are an interesting phenomenon and the field for research is large. The representatives who attended the celebrations of The April Uprising were mostly from motorcycle clubs with a religious background. The Bulgarian representatives of this culture, or at least those who visit the commemoration of The Batak Massacre and The April epic, are strongly religious and patriotic. Despite their high presence at such events, it is important to note that they are present in the beginning and don’t stay until the very end.

‘Online patriots’ are the people who assert themselves primarily on social networks, but in reality are not an active part of the commemorations. They are characterized by patriotic posts and comments, extremely active in the online media, in the form of publications, photos, videos, etc. In the XXI century we are faced with the moment when free will and emotionality (or at least the ones we want others to see) are expressed specifically in the online space.

The observation shows hybrid results; on one hand there are attendees who pay their respect physically but also lead casual topics of conversation, on the other hand there are the online patriots, marking the date in social networks with laudatory/respectful posts but physically remain in the everyday world. The individual fragments of the commemorations predispose the audience to 'feels' (Worringer, 1993) the historical event. The rituals in the commemorative celebrations actively involve the past and predispose to deep feeling and connection with the heroes and the historical moment. Emphasis is placed on the inner self-perception and expression, on making contact with the past.

Despite prerequisites for feeling in the historical event, the attendees remain rather passive, in the sense of merely present. On the other hand, in opposition is the coverage on the Internet, where the patriotic character prevails with real mourning slogans, 'patriotic' comments, accompanied with photos of the moment and place.

Chapter 5: Symbolic and dimensional measurements of the commemorative celebrations

In chapter 5 the text examines the individual components (fragments) in detail in the commemorative program. Each individual fragment is presented with its symbols and meanings. The work also pays attention to the spatial dimensions of the celebrations and their meaning.

In its general structure, the celebrations consist of a religious part – veneration of the dead (religious procession, laying of wreaths at the memorials of the dead, memorial service) and a secular part – roll-call ceremony, fair street, gala concert (finale). First of all, it is important to note that even the sequence of fragments in the program of each terrain is similar.

Religious rituals mark the beginning of honoring the dead national heroes. In the program of commemorative celebrations with the religious fragment begins the sacralization of the urban space and the construction of connection/contact with the deceased. Although marginalized in the period 1944–1989, the religious element of the celebrations is also forcing the commemorative celebrations. Its return as a practice in the early 1990s is proof of the importance of this part of commemorations. The religious character of the celebrations is fundamental to their existence. This fragment is present in each of the observed terrains. While in Batak, Perushtitsa and Skravena the religious nature of the commemorations only places their beginning, in Karlovo it's the only one. With religion, the first step is taken towards the

summoning of the dead among the profane, the ritual is present as a resisted fragment in each of the observed celebrations.

The reenactment with the symbolic capital it brings, is inextricably linked to historical commemorations. It is visual retelling, a way to remind society of history, heroism, self-sacrifice, to honor the memory; a way for those present to realign themselves, to remember their past and to create the connection with previous times. In the observed towns (exceptions are again Karlovo and Skravena, where to date there is no reconstruction, although it was carried out in Skravena over the years) the element with the historical reenactment is mandatory, or has been present at some point.

Two types of reenactment stand out during the observations: the first is the ‘classic’ reenactment, performed by local volunteers or local committee representatives; the second is a theatrical reenactment with directors, lighting, stage, sound and following a script.

The roll-call ceremony is an invariable part of honoring the national heroes and the commemorations of historical events. The ritual often is last or next to last in the program of the event and contains a number of sub-rituals with deep meaning within itself. This fragment is entirely military practice and was introduced in Bulgaria after The Liberation, taking the main moments and actions from traditions of the Russian army (Grigorov, 2018). While the religious worship of the fallen creates a barrier (distances) the worshipers from the worshiped, the roll-call ceremony makes connection between the sacred and the profane, between the living and the dead. In the realization of its individual parts and rituals, the heroes ‘come alive’.

An important moment in historical celebrations is the political commitment. Commemorations are not only a product of collective memory with the function of consolidating national self-awareness and heroic moments in history. They are also a way to consolidate political models and movements. The honorable guests (who are government and political representatives) often deliver specially prepared speeches for the occasion, thus allowing themselves to interpret the legacies of the ancestors and to incorporate them in their speeches, and in this way legitimizing power, or in other words to apply ‘political ventriloquism’ (Gonsalves, 2017). Commemorations are used for political propaganda and strengthening the influence of a given public figure. This practice is not foreign to the world. Very often the local government forbids political propaganda during the event, but this is usually overlooked through any creative means.

Gradually, the sacred is replaced by the festive, but festive in the sense of the profane, every-day festive, which focus is consumerism. Euphoria replaces respect and the memory,

and the abundant consumption – the experience (feeling) and empathy. The mourning commemoration turns into a celebration of the town, into a dance and alcoholic party. The organization of kurban (roasted lamb as an offering), post-funeral treats and in general foods and drinks, are deep-rooted traditions not only among Bulgarians, but also across the Balkan peninsula, as well as among the Slavic people (Vakarelski, 2008).

The tradition of post-funeral eating and drinking is seen in all nations – Romanians, Czechs, Slovenes, Ukrainians, but also among the English, as is seen in Shakespeare's play 'Macbeth'. Characteristic of the ritual is that it is in honor of the deceased. The type of food and drinks is different according to the respective nation and its traditional habits.

The fair is always marginalized, on the sidelines of the big picture, as an outside visitor, though it symbolizes modern consumerism in society. Fairs are usually associated with fun, various attractions and food (cotton candy, colorful drinks, doner kebabs in the small towns, donuts), many and various street stands with chinese goods (from colorful necklaces, children's toys, beach towels, sunglasses, hats, clothes to street stands with salami, honey, wine and others with questionable quality). Until recently such 'fair streets' were related to annual fair, organized in the respective town, usually at the end of summer or on the day of the temple holiday (Skravena). Today the fair stands are present mostly around the commemorative celebrations. In the research a special moment stood out, and that is the opinion of the audience, that the commemorative celebrations have taken away the functions of the local fair. The organizers clearly distinguish the relation between the commemorative celebration and the fair street and justify its presence with the possibility of financially ensuring the organizational process.

To date, the anniversaries of the historical events, bearing the weight of the national idea, acquire another function for the local communities. Commemorations must be adapted to the contemporary needs of the communities. These days they aren't only burdened with the national idea but also include the function for the collective in the community. The commemorative celebrations compile within themselves two very important tasks for modern societies – the first is to preserve the idea of the nation with its heroes and symbols, and the second is to preserve the values and traditions of the smaller family community. Exactly these two tasks create perfect opportunities for tourist, economical, political and media usage.

New technologies and their nature as a convenient way to 'cover' make events publicly available online. They create different, parallel events – an online commemorative celebration that is 'attended' not only by people in the country, but from Bulgarians from all over the world.

On the one hand are the attendees/guests of the celebrations that share photos, videos, broadcast live online events and help shape the digital commemoration; on the other hand are the users of the digital world, the people who empathize and relive the historical events, but from the comfort zone of home, their workplace or any other location in the world.

At first the active covering in the digital space is carried out by those present, for whom participation in the social networks is becoming more prevalent in their daily lives. Subsequently, the institutions that are organizing the events also begin to actively present their activity in social networks and digital channels (most clearly this is evident during the Pandemic). Modern people often have lost touch with their relatives, their way of life has undergone significant changes. The contact with history, the past, their roots is revived precisely through filming, archiving the attendance. Sharing online only strengthens that bond and makes it stronger. The digital presence of the anniversaries has another function. Photographing the anniversaries, social media posts and similar actions turn national memory into individual memory.

Chapter 5 also pays attention to spaces and their meaning. The commemoration of historical events is organized at famous and central spaces, such as squares, monuments, and specific places where the event took place. Outside the celebrations, these spaces have practical character, exist and perform specific functions. Squares, for example, have absolutely social function, they are spaces in the town, whose purpose is to escape the reality of the closed town space. During commemorations the researched terrains gain totally different meanings and visual images. Spaces are distanced from the daily character and are replaced by the sacred character on physical and symbolic level.

People's perceptions and their integration into the environment is helping primarily for the transformation of the terrains. Each of the terrains carries the symbols and meanings of a place of memory that are materialized once a year. During the celebrations the urban spaces are noticeably transformed. Through the adjoining solemn and ecclesiastical rituals, the squares become a stage on which the heroes, the tragic events and history come to life. The audience for its part, through its presence and feeling of the past events, builds another commemorative side of the spaces. For a certain time, the spaces are sacralized.

Places of memory are typical for the societies that claim historicity. First we have the Bulgarian nationality, which over the years seeks and proves its deep ancient roots, second (but not in importance) are the researched terrains, which mainly are self-characterized with a glorious past and events and characters of national importance. Another feature of places of

memory is that they rely on the constructive freedom of people and not on religious traditions – each of the four commemorative celebrations mark, albeit tragic, the fight for freedom of the ancestors, gradually turned into a symbol of Bulgarian's free spirit and their stubbornness, image of heroism.

Despite the main common features of the studied places of memory, in depth the terrains present two different types. The first type is the primary place of memory, such as Batak, Perushtitsa and Karlovo. All three terrains are places of memory originally, the historical events happened in the boundaries of the towns, urban spaces and institutions still preserve artifacts from the events to this day. Memory is part of the urban space, embedded in the ground, but it is also basic common denominator of the local community that exists and is proud of its collective memory. The second type is shared memory location. The case with Skravena incorporates in itself several interesting anthropological situations – creation and 'gaining' a place of memory, the process of inclusion in The Grand Narrative of the heroes and The Liberation activities in the country, but also the gradual integration of other important events for the community.

Urban spaces are filled with historical artifacts that support local history and memory. Such artifacts are the monuments that are an essential element in commemorative celebrations. Except for the people, they are the primary bearer of history and memory of events. Through the monuments, history and memories are formalized. They are the means of accentuating specific personalities and events, reinforce positions and maintain official narratives and are set above. Monuments are precisely the generator of memory. More importantly, they generate not only the primary memory of the historical event, but the subsequent political and historical moments and ideologies. Thus, monuments are one of the main generators of a local identity; on one hand they support the imposed from above local identity and give the town/village a specific heroic meaning, on the other hand are major participants in commemorating anniversaries of historical events. For monuments it's characteristic that they are associated with historical and national heroes that perform functions of cenotaph – a tombstone without a grave. These are places that do not contain body remains, a symbolic grave, their function is the perpetuation of the memory, the hero and performance of commemorative rituals. On different side are the ossuaries, which contain decaying remains. Their function is not much different from that of cenotaphs, with the difference that they turn the presence of the heroes into the modern world possible. Their purpose is also to be seen by people, to remind of the

impermanence of being, and the presence of mortal remains make them darker and more impactful.

Monuments are an example of the ways of the state, institutions, and sometimes of people to create imagined communities (Andersen, 1998). At first, with the inclusion of monuments to history through symbolic and physical practices, and subsequently to the present. Second, there is the appearance of their use to include ideals of the heroes to their own, in order to self-legitimize. They have an important political role and help shape the public spaces and sacralize the otherwise neutral landscapes of the locality.

An essential part of the commemorations are the various components the commemorative celebration program contains, which the text divides into *traditional and newly introduced elements*. It is established systematicity in the very manner of their arrangement: the religious moment that is distinguished from the secular is first, it consists of honoring the dead with wreaths, a religious procession, holding a memorial service/prayer. Elevating the fallen into national heroes, they are honored by every important institution in the country. If the representatives of the government are ‘the means’ of the state to honor their memory, the religious part of the commemoration is the participation of the church. Another essential element is the roll-call ceremony, accompanied by the loud speeches of the honored guests. And last but not least in importance, is the reenactment, again a way to pay tribute and witness heroism. Reenactments are the modern way to feel with the audience. They set a frame, in which ‘historical injustices’ are compensated (Agnew, 2011). They are also one of the ways to make history come alive for the common man, they bring the viewer to the past. Although the historical reenactments strive to present a true picture of past events, here we observe a selection of individual moments of history, which additionally fuel the national narrative.

Modern (newly introduced) elements, on the other hand, are: the symbol of the consumer society – the fair, and the finale of the celebrations – the ‘folk joy’. The two elements complement each other, the concert program goes into fun on the fairground rides and consumption. These two components are accompanied by the most modern elements, such as the constant coverage of the event in the online networks. This way, it is observed the intertwining of the traditional, imprinted in the collective consciousness as a national symbol, and modern solemnity, transformed into euphoria and festivity.

Each of the commemorative events observed is gradually transformed into a celebration, losing its mourning character. We are witnessing a transformation from honoring

the fallen to their elevation to national heroes and celebrating the ideal of freedom and self-sacrifice. Commemorations of historical events in which the emphasis is on death have undergone three transformations, the last of which is still in progress.

Main conclusions and directions for future researches

The presented field research and its analysis show that the commemorative celebrations of historical events in Batak, Perushtitsa, Skravena and Karlovo have developed over the years from the historical event to the present day. Their structure changes over time in response to changes in the world around them and changing cultural practices. The events they commemorate are part of one of the main narratives in The Grand Narrative of the Bulgarian Nation. This narrative began to take shape in the first years after the Liberation, when memoirists, writers and historiographers set the task of building the image of the then contemporary heroes and institutionalizing the events in order to unite the nation and promote the new civic position (Valchev, 2014). After the establishment of the April Uprising and the Liberation as significant dates in the historical and cultural calendar of the country, the celebrations gradually began to acquire an institutional and secular character. Anniversaries are marked with the presence of military representatives, bones (where there are any) begin to be presented out of their usual place and thus not only legitimize the importance of the historical moment, but also change the meaning of the spaces, sacralizing the events. Monuments, which change the meaning of the urban landscape once a year and also contribute to the sacred moment, gradually become an essential element of the celebrations and their significance. The program is complemented by cultural events. In the period 1944 – 1989, transformations were observed again – the religious ritual was abolished to be replaced by a connection and integration of the celebrations with the achievements of the party (opening of factories, party workers borrowing the ideology of revival heroes). Anniversaries become bank holidays for local residents, and celebration becomes institutionalized.

The path that commemorations "walk" is long and influenced by the cultural and political practices of the respective period, until it reaches its modern hybrid form. Today, the commemorative celebrations are the most important dates for the respective locality (with the exception of Karlovo). Their program is essentially a hybrid mixture between their original form and that of the period 1944 – 1989. Each fragment has a specific meaning in the practice of honoring the past and making contact with it. The last few years have seen one final (for

now) transformation. In its essence, it is more complex than the previous ones, because it has the task of meeting several of the needs of the modern person. First of all, there is the need to interweave everyday modern practices, or more specifically, the digital world. New technologies are becoming more prevalent in commemorations – used by attendees and online patriots who share their emotions on social networks, and used by organizing institutions to reach ever larger audiences.

And finally, it comes to the presentation of the celebration itself in the digital space. Although this type of commemoration was dictated by the Pandemic and the restrictive measures, perhaps in the near future it will be further developed and the digital celebration will be more and more seriously present in the anniversaries and their commemorations (an example is the current project of IM Batak – "Before the dawn is the darkest. How Bulgaria's freedom is burning", which seeks to present the atmosphere of the April Uprising through high technology, holographic visualizations and other modern technologies). Second, but not least, the contemporary nature of commemorations must respond to modern people's need for togetherness. A togetherness that legitimizes the large community – the nation, with common roots, a glorious past with its heroes, and the other – the micro community of the family. Anniversaries are no longer just important dates in our history, they are an occasion for loved ones and relatives to gather and spend time together. For this reason, and in some of the territories for the local residents, the commemorative celebrations overlap with the local fair. In an increasingly engaged and divided technological world, commemorations are tasked with responding to contemporary needs, passing on the past to future generations, and preserving the unity of both nation and family.

The research, analysis and other components of the work present a detailed analysis of the problem, which corresponds to the situation of the celebrations at the present moment. The commemorations, the subject of this work, are an invariable part of the country's cultural calendar, and like any other aspect of our intangible world, they too undergo changes and modifications. These changes are influenced by a number of factors, the main of which are general human and technological development, the global world we live in and its influences on every aspect of modern people's life, the development of the state and its moral and value symbols, political status and customs. As a result of the rise in the 21st century and the change in the cultural and everyday world of people, their function is to meet the needs of the community related to its roots and its cultural and historical heritage and past, to unite and preserve the memory of the past, as well as to pass it on to the next generations. In this line of

thought, the commemorative celebrations to date have a specific appearance and meaning, which will certainly undergo changes in the future and will transform, incorporating in itself other functions, until recently typical for events of a different nature.

Contributive moments of dissertation

Theoretical and methodological contributions

Building an original conceptual model for the study of regional celebrations of national holidays and heroes.

A Contribution to the Study of Commemorations

The dissertation contributes to the consolidation of the research field of commemorative celebrations, insofar as it provides a detailed and analytical image of anniversaries, as well as highlights their structure. The paper reconstructs the main narrative that multiplies the anniversaries and its genealogy. Major fragments, meanings, uses and audience perception are carefully considered. Historical cultural frames of commemorations are specified, thereby providing empirical material for future research and analysis.

A contribution to the study of contemporary festivity

The dissertation contributes to the research field of the "new festivity" (Koleva, 2018) by examining the commemorative celebrations of historical events related to the April Uprising and the Liberation, and positions them among other holidays in the Bulgarian calendar. The local invariance of the modern festivity is emphasized, insofar as the specific type of commemoration is emphasized along with its specificities and characteristics.

Enriching anthropological studies of the transformation of regional identity in modern times

The anthropological approach to the history of the celebrations and their contemporary appearance builds the complete image of the commemorative celebrations in today's situation. At the same time, an anthropological approach is combined with the tools of micro history to highlight the dynamics of commemoration in the contemporary situation. The empirical material collected in the process of work (in the period from 2017 to 2021) enriches the field of anthropology and cultural sciences, providing new data on the holding of anniversaries of historical events in Bulgaria, including during the Pandemic.

A contribution to the field of cultural management

Although the dissertation does not focus directly on the cultural management of cultural heritage, the research contributes to building a complete image of commemorative celebrations and the practices they incorporate. The work contributes to establishing the needs of contemporary audiences and shapes the frame of anniversaries that would serve to update and modernize the organization of historical anniversaries.

Interdisciplinary contribution

Commemorations are seen as a celebratory practice with a traumatic/commemorative nature. Tracing their development and examining each individual fragment in the anniversaries allows the object of study to be analyzed with interdisciplinary approaches, thus presenting a more detailed and detailed description of the object of study. Commemorations are presented as a bearer of intangible cultural heritage, but also as a generator of specific meanings and beliefs in society and, more specifically, as a powerful transmitter of national identity. On the other hand, they are also seen as a process that incorporates political, touristic, economic and technical meanings and concepts. Taken together, this shows that modern commemoration has the complex task of continuing its original mission, but also incorporating the contemporary needs of society and the times in which they are realized.

Publications on the research topic

“Fragments of commemorative events and their use in transforming commemorations into celebrations“, *Annual of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski“ – Faculty of Philosophy, Cultural Studies. Vol I*, Sofia: 2022, p. 89–113.

“Scravena through the lens of the commemorative event on the day of Botev and those killed in the Liberation wars“, *Annual of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” – Faculty of Philosophy. Postgraduate Students Book. Vol V*, Sofia: 2020, p. 125–140.

“Key moments in the development of commemorative events in Batak and Scravena - political, media and institutional uses and symbols“, *Seminar_BG*, Issue. 27 [online], ISSN 1313-9932 /under print/

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