

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2478/se-2020-0016>, © Ústav etnológie a sociálnej antropológie SAV
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**JOACHIM OTTO HABECK (Ed.):
Lifestyle in Siberia and the Russian
North**

Open Book publishers, 2019, 490 p.

It would be a great mistake to think about this book as just a new collection of articles united by a common topic, by common research interests of their authors and by huge (and mostly unrecognized) work of the volume's editor. All these principal components of any good article collection are present in the volume, but it is in many respects much more than that. In order to appreciate the full significance of the volume, it is important to know the intellectual milieu as well as the circumstances in which its ideas and plan were developed. Unfortunately, the editor of the volume included only a small part of this highly relevant information in the introduction to the volume as well as in its appendix, which, by the way, occupies in my opinion the wrong place in the book. Indeed, in Western literature tradition, appendixes represent book parts reserved for illustrative and/or supplementary material, which is relevant but not necessary for understanding the main argument of the work. To put it more simply, these are the parts readers can safely skip and be sure that this would not affect their understanding of and overall impression from the book. In this volume, however, the information about the Lifestyle Plurality project given in the appendix is highly relevant and indeed the chapters preceding the appendix, their relation to each other and their focus, cannot in my opinion be completely understood without it. Therefore, it is by filling these informational lacunae that, I think, I should start this review.

The volume under review represents the final publication produced by the Siberian Studies Centre, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (Halle, Germany) and it has emerged from the last large research project of this centre called "Conditions and Limitations of Lifestyle Plurality in Siberia (CLLP)" (2008 – 2013). For 15 years (1999 – 2014), the Siberian Studies Centre was one of the largest and most important centres of anthropological study of Siberia in the world. Honestly, I do not think there is an anthropologist working in and publishing on Siberia or Russian North, who had not been in this centre at least once and for many of us, including the author of this review, the centre and the period spent there had become an important turning point of the whole scientific career. Being the intellectual descendant of the glorious German tradition of Siberian research of the 18th – early 19th centuries – the tradition on which other traditions, including of course the Russian one, had developed – this important scientific institution and particularly its long-term coordinator Joachim Otto Habeck have done a lot for modernizing this field of knowledge and bringing the anthropological research in Siberia into line with the rest of the modern anthropological research: quite a titanic endeavour taking into account the long period the Soviet "Etnografia" with its ethnos theory and its focus on producing "Historical-cultural essays" about the "ethnographic time" reigned the subfield. The centre and its researchers should be admired for achieving great success in this endeavour. However, it was this very success that posed essential challenges for the centre and for the subfield in general. The CLLP project was an attempt to respond to a set of such challenges that had

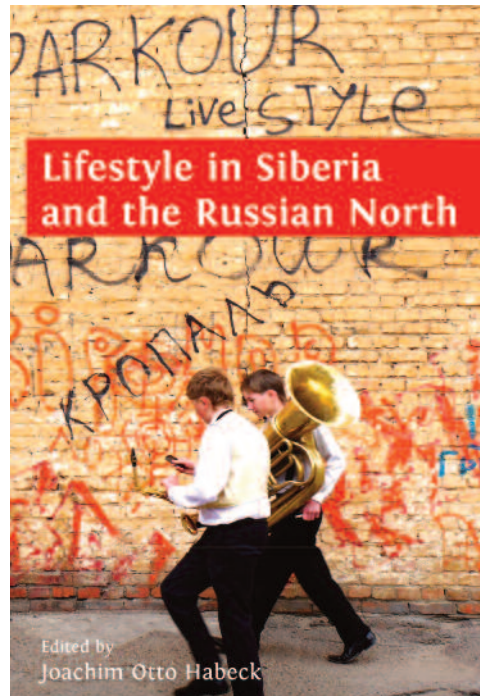
emerged by the end of the first decade of the 21st century. Although these challenges, as far as I understand, ended up being fatal for the centre as an institution, the response to them, in the form of the project and its results, is so ingenious that it, in my opinion, it does not only contribute to important theoretical debates, but also can be decisive in the survival of Siberian Studies / Arctic social studies as an independent subfield.

The most important of these challenges emerged from the transformation of the object of Siberian Studies. For a long time, starting from the 18th century German research mentioned above and till the last decade of the 20th century, anthropological research on Siberia had been understood as a study of Siberian indigenous peoples. The later, in their own turn, were perceived as coherent and bounded historical (if not biological) entities associated with definite geographic loci. Till very recently, the first question a siberianist asked, when he/she met a colleague he/she had never met before was “who you are working on?” or, even more straightforward, “who are your people?” and expected to hear the name of one of the “indigenous ethnic groups” such as “Khanty” or “Chukchee” as a reply. This approach to Siberian Studies had been almost universally accepted till at least the early 2000s and, in many local scientific centres, most notably in Russia, it is still commonly accepted despite the fact that the existence of ethnic groups as definite and bounded socio-geographic entities had been problematized by anthropologists already by 1980s and, by the turn of the century, the whole notion had been abandoned. Probably the most important contribution of the Siberian Studies Centre to our discipline consisted of moving Siberian Anthropology away from indigenous peoples and ethnic groups as entities and objects of study towards empirically observable social (socio-cultural?) phenomena and processes. Now, the first question we ask our colleagues is “what you are looking at?” and the expected answer can be something like “grass root activism”, “neo-traditionalistic movements”, “perception of space”, etc., while “on the example of Khanty group” or “in the Chukchee area” can be only a welcome addition to the answer but not the answer in itself.

However, this shift, which was indeed necessary and timely (if not late) had an unwelcome consequence. In fact, it was exactly the focus on geographically bound entities – the Siberian indigenous peoples – that made the existence of geographically defined sub-discipline – Siberian Anthropology – reasonable. Shifting away from such an entity immediately blurred the subfield identity. Indeed, if any scientific discipline is defined by its object and problem area – and it is difficult to dispute that it is indeed so defined – then an anthropological study of spatial perception performed on a group of Siberian reindeer herding nomads is much better defined as belonging to the Anthropology of Spatial Perception, a subfield of Cognitive Anthropology, than to Siberian Anthropology. Indeed, its object properly belongs to that problem area, while the geographic focus is clearly secondary. In the case of the Siberian Studies Centre, these theoretical considerations were worsened by administrative ones: in line with the general principles of the Max Planck Society, the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthology had a problem field-oriented structure. Among its departments of Integration and Ethnic Conflicts, Legal Anthropology, etc., the geographically defined Siberian Studies Centre looked like an anachronism and the institute administration and advisors more and more often hinted at this fact. Therefore, by 2008 the coordinator of Centre had the difficult task of finding a new focus and research procedure for the Centre, which would, on one hand, keep it in line with modern anthropology, which continued to move away from ethnic problemata with either increasing speed and, on the other hand, would justify the existence of the centre as a separate department. This was a matter of life and death for the centre; what is even more important, this was a matter of life and death for Siberian Anthropology as a whole.

The CLLP project was the truly ingenious response to this challenge. As far as I can discern it, it was based on the following logic: Although we have shifted our focus away from Siberian people, Siberia as a geographic entity still represents a unity in the sense of being highly relevant for anthropological research. Although it is incredibly diverse in

terms of climate, landscape and its population has very diverse cultures, economies and ways of life, it is subjected to a very uniform administrative and economic regime, forces of social and cultural construction and ideological influences. Furthermore, people living in this huge region share a common history, where the Soviet past and the post-Soviet transformations play an important role. They are subjected to a common system of formal education, retain dense social connection inside the region, understand the same language and actively use it, although with different regularity, in their everyday life. This combination of uniformity and diversity makes the region totally unique. More importantly, it makes it uniquely fit for studies aimed at explaining human diversity, its conditions and limitations, which, at the end of the day, is the main task of Anthropology as a discipline. Particularly, Siberia seems to be a uniquely good place for diachronic comparative anthropological studies. As we all know already from Boas (1982 [1896]) applying the comparative method in Anthropology involves serious difficulties due to its apparent contradiction to the maxim of describing and analysing cultures in their own terms (incomparability of emic categories, as we would put it now). In Siberia, however, the common history, education and regime leads to certain unity of emic categories across the region, but their use and relation to other categories often remain incredibly diverse. This allows fruitful and theoretically rich comparisons, which could be enough to justify the study of this region as an independent field of inquiry given that the focus of comparison – the dimension of human diversity to be explained – is theoretically significant enough. It should be said here that the search for such a dimension occupies a significant place in the history of our discipline: in different times and places, Anthropology was understood as a study of ethnic diversity, cultural diversity and socio-institutional / socio-structural diversity that exists among humans. All these dimensions, however, have been blurred by the discipline's progress. Joachim Otto Habeck's placing the notion of lifestyle and lifestyle diversity as the focus of research can be seen as the new stage in this sequence... well, it is better to say, of course, that this is



a new move in search of such a new stage, but, as the results reported in the volume show, this move is interesting and successful enough to attract serious attention and it gives the whole project a theoretical significance far beyond the Siberian Anthropology and its theoretical and institutional problems.

It is against this institutional and intellectual background that the reviewed book should be properly assessed. The book starts with an introduction by Joachim Otto Habeck, where he introduces the concept of Lifestyle and the way it is defined and treated in the CLLP project. After a brief outline of the structure of the book and of the chapters to follow, this introduction chapter offers an overview of the history of the Lifestyle concept and its usage and treatment in the literature. Two traditions in the treatment of the concept emerge from this overview: one, most clearly and famously represented by Pierre Bourdieu in his "Distinction" (1984), emphasizes the socioeconomic roots of lifestyles and generally treats them as socially induced modes of consumption. The second tradition, which, in accordance to Habeck can be traced to Giddens, but most clearly expressed in

“Lifestyles” by David Chaney (1996), emphasizes the free choice of Lifestyles and their expressive and identification functions. Although the definition of lifestyle as, “an expressive, routinized, and stylized mode of identification” (p. 16 of the book under review) the researchers ended up using in the project is clearly built on the ideas by Chaney (whose book mentioned above is cited and referred to in the volume much more often than any other publication), the chapter does a lot to bridge the two traditions. Indeed, the works of Bourdieu informed the researchers’ interest towards the changing socioeconomic conditions in Siberia, to changes in its social structure and infrastructure as one of the important factors influencing lifestyles, their diversity and range. It seems to me also that it is the interplay between the ideas of Bourdieu and Chaney and the researchers’ wish to find some middle ground between them that informed the choice of phenomena to study comparatively in the project as indicators of lifestyle plurality and its change over time: patterns of movement and patterns self-representation through photos. Indeed, both phenomena clearly have both expressive and socio-economic aspects and their choice, in my opinion, represents an incredibly good move as far as overall aims of the project are concerned: in Siberia, where economic and infrastructural change proceeded more or less uniformly, the diachronic comparative studies of these two phenomena presents a unique possibility to distinguish between general and particular, between the social and economic factors acting on different levels and individual choice in lifestyle formation. Finally, these choices of object and approach justify well the methods of the comparative study in the project, which proceeded through collecting informants’ travel biographies and through so-called photo elicitation, the research procedure in which informants are asked to choose 10 photos that represent them best on different stages of their life history, to arrange them in order they find best and then to comment on them; the photos chosen were copied by the researcher and the comments by the informants recorded. Unfortunately, the discussion of these methods is not included into the introduction chapter: this discussion as well as the explana-

tions about the comparative approach and the choice of indicators for it (both only briefly mentioned in the introduction) are given in the appendix to the book. As I have mentioned above, I find this choice to place the important information into appendix unjustified.

The introduction is followed by a long chapter by Joachim Otto Habeck and Denis Zuev outlining the infrastructural and technological changes that occurred in Siberia since the late Soviet Period. The chapter focuses mainly (in fact almost exclusively) on changes in transport infrastructure and conditions of travelling as well as in availability and kinds of technologies related to visual (photo) fixation and exchange of visual images (the communication technologies in general is also mentioned). This choice of focus is completely justified taking into account the objects of comparative study (patterns of travel and patterns of visual self-representations) and its methods used in the project (which forces me to pity once again that the discussion of these objects and methods is only briefly given in the introduction). The analysis offered in the chapter is very detailed and insightful and its general conclusions seem to be quite justified. The chapter describes well the progressive “individualization” of travel that is the change from public means of transportation and from reliance on social networks for access to them to private means of transportation, such as private cars and to reliance on ones’ own economic means for arranging transportation. The chapter also notices that the possibilities and freedom of travel have generally increased throughout the region despite serious disparities in both access to transportation networks and command of economic and social resources needed to use them remaining in place. These disparities are particularly great between cities and countryside throughout the whole region, but there are still important disparities also between different parts of the region. The same conclusion – possibilities increase but disparities remain – concerns photographing and communication. Generally, the chapter can be recommended as good and dense account of infrastructural change in Siberia during the last 30 years and its impact on the population:

despite necessarily omitting some details, it certainly provides a good general picture.

The third chapter written by Masha Shaw (Nakshina) is one of the three chapters analysing lifestyles and their range in rural areas. This chapter and the research behind it is very important for the CLLP project and for the volume, because it addresses an obvious argument that can be raised against lifestyles as a globally important dimension of human diversity and an object of anthropological study, namely that lifestyles and lifestyle diversity can be observed only in relatively rich modernized societies, while in traditional communities, particularly those where access to economic resources and, hence, consumption choices are limited, individuals do not have both social and economic freedom to choose and pursue individual projects of expressive identification. The research by Masha Shaw shows, however, that even in the most rural and traditional communities, individuals can make individual choices and pursue individual life projects that can contradict both the societal expectations and the “optimal” (from the viewpoint of resource maximization) economic strategies. In other words, lifestyle plurality can be found also in these communities despite certain pressure for uniformity. Importantly, patterns of traveling and self-representation remain important aspects of lifestyle also in these communities. It can be added here that the research by Masha Shaw was performed on the Kola Peninsula, in the westernmost part of Russia, which is quite far away from geographic Siberia. This reflects the tendency of the Siberian Studies Centre to include the whole Russian North (both its Asian and European part) into its object of study. In the framework of the reported project this choice is indeed quite justified, because the traits of Siberia important in its context – the specific combination of uniformity and diversity mentioned above in this review – are shared also by the European North of Russia.

The fourth Chapter of the volume written by Luděk Brož and Joachim Otto Habeck analyses the changes in the concept of and approach to the notion of leisure time and leisure time activity that occurred in Siberia since the Soviet period. The researchers’ interest towards this aspect is justified, as it seems, by the rather

commonly held (and often expressed in literature) belief concerning the special relation between lifestyle and leisure: that the choice of lifestyle structures and influences first of all leisure activities and that it is in the forms of spending leisure time that Lifestyle can be most clearly seen. Although the chapter by Masha Shaw reviewed above shows that this belief is at best only partly correct – it is demonstrated in this chapter that the choice of one’s job can be and nowadays more and more often is a lifestyle – informed choice – the special role of leisure time in lifestyle research is still difficult to deny. For the reasons, which should be by now clear for any reader of this review, the chapter has a special focus on leisure time travel. The chapter consists of three blocks, which analyse the concept of leisure, forms of spending free time, and particularly leisure travel in the Soviet period, the early post-Soviet period (1990s – early 2000s) and the modern period. In each of the blocks, the general analysis is followed by an analysis of travel biographies of two persons, a man from the city of Novosibirsk and a woman from the rural part of the Altai republic. Although these biographies are far from usual for a number of reasons (the authors accept this themselves), they still illustrate rather well the differences in forms of leisure time travel and other activities between the periods as well as between city and rural areas. Although the chapter does not contain comparative material beyond the two travel biographies, it still illustrates rather well the strengths of the approach proposed in the CLLP project.

These strengths are further illustrated by the next two chapters, which, in a sense, are central for the volume, because they communicate the results of the comparative study of the project. The first chapter by Joseph J. Long analyses the travel biographies collected by the members of the research team in different places in Siberia they worked in as well as (in the case of Masha Shaw) in the rural part of the Kola Peninsula. On the basis of this analysis, Joseph Long demonstrates that the patterns of travel changed significantly since the late Soviet period: individuals do not only travel more but also they have more control over destinations and means of their travel. Therefore, the role of travel as a part of

lifestyle – as an expressive mode of self-identification – has certainly increased. On one hand, even the soviet-time patterns of travel left enough space for individual choice to allow certain lifestyle differentiation. On the other hand, even modern travel patterns are not completely free: they are subject to numerous restrictions including visa regulations, which are particularly strict for some of the destinations (e.g. USA and UK). Therefore, the differences observed are ones of degree rather than kind. The chapter also should be praised for creating a rather productive concept of “spatial imaginary”.

The second chapter written by Jaroslava Panáková deals with the material produced by the photo elicitation method. This chapter is more far-reaching than the chapter by Joseph Long: its author has to deal with a number of methodological hardships related to the analysis of visual, in this case photographic, material. Besides that, her aim in the chapter is much more ambitious than that of Joseph Long: using the photographic information as the basis, Jaroslava Panáková wishes not only to trace the patterns of (self)representation, but also to trace the differences in the concept of happiness between places and historical periods. This, in her opinion, is possible on the assumption that “the snapshots preserved in the home archives are predominantly visual accounts of well-being, not the opposite”, that is that they depict happiness and their comparative study can reveal how happiness changed over time. In my opinion, this aim is a bit too ambitious. Thus, my own experience of looking through informants’ photo albums indicates that they usually contain numerous photos of funerals, graveyards, etc. taken in order to “keep memory” of deceased relatives or beloved ones. Arguably, such photos would hardly be chosen for the photo elicitation interviews and, therefore, would not end up in the collection studied in the framework of the project. However, the assumption made by the author that informants would choose only pictures of their happy moments to represent themselves still deserves some proof: it cannot be taken for granted. Besides that, as the author accepts herself, the ways of visual self-representation depend on photographing technologies and their possession. In the Soviet

time, for example, private photographing was much less spread than it is now. In that time, photographing was often collectively organized by offices and firms where people worked and/or by clubs, spas, sanatoriums, etc., where they spent leisure time. Naturally, these photographs depicted groups of people rather than individuals and often depicted a person with his/her working colleagues. The prevalence of such photographs in the Soviet time could easily reflect these technological and organizational peculiarities rather than a different concept of happiness (the happiness as experienced in a collective and including, or even emerging from one’s work). However, the differences between photographic images from different periods, their stylistic peculiarities, etc., revealed by the analysis performed in the paper are still quite significant and interesting and they can tell a lot even if they cannot be directly related to the changing concept of happiness.

The next two chapters of the volume, the chapters by Eleanor Peers and Artem Rabogoshvili, deal with the relation between lifestyle and the classical object of Siberian Anthropology, the concept of ethnicity. These chapters are quite expected for the book which attempts to give new meaning to Siberian studies in order to accommodate their past in this meaning. The chapter by Eleanor Peers deals with visual demonstration of ethnicity and ethnic symbols in the republic of Sakha, Yakutia, revealed through observations of the celebration of the most important traditional festival of the Sakha people called Yhyakh. The researcher analyses the aesthetics of Yhyakh and some other cases of visual representation of ethnicity in relation to the discussion of the concept of Kultura (culture) as developed in the soviet time and of its ethnic aspect. The author demonstrates that modern aesthetics of ethnicity contain the aspect of these soviet time concepts. Although the analysis performed by this author is not directly related to Lifestyle, it still bears on the concept, particularly on its expressive side. Indeed, as far as lifestyle as an expressive mode of identity includes ethnic identity, the aesthetic of such an expression can indeed explain a lot about this mode. The chapter by Rabogoshvili deals with National-cultural organizations in Siberia that

is organizations of people on the basis of their ethnicity and ethnic culture. The basic message of the chapter, as far as I understand it, is that one should differentiate between the old, established ethnic groups, which existed in Siberia for a long time, and the groups of recent migrants. While the basic activity of the later consists of assisting their members in their adapting to the new place (and sometimes protecting them from xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments and actions of the locals), the former function mainly for preserving ethnic culture and language of their members as well as in maintaining connections between them and their “ethnic homeland”. In this sense they act to connect people with certain concerns and identity and promote certain lifestyles. The author analyses specific ways people maintain connection to their ethnic cultures and “ethnic homelands” as aspects of their lifestyle.

The next two chapters by Ina Schröder and Tatiana Barchunova & Joachim Otto Habeck focus on Live-action role playing (LARP) as both the source and expression of lifestyle. The contexts in which the phenomenon of LARP is analysed are very different in these two chapters. Thus Ina Schröder analyses the role playing game organized in an ethnic summer camp near the settlement of Saranpaul, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug. The aim of the game is to preserve and spread traditional culture of Mansi people through enacting a medieval Mansi heroic tale. The author analyses performative, didactic and gender aspects of this enactment and shows how they are influenced by beliefs and attitudes, particularly spiritual ones, of the camp organizers. Of interest are the similarities the author finds between the role playing game she observed and the Soviet military game for children called “Zarnitsa”. She also analyses differences in attitude and expectations between the participants and the organizers of the game.

If Ina Schröder focuses primarily on how beliefs, attitudes and expectation from outside the reality of the play influences playing, Barchunova and Habeck focus on how role play and role playing influence the life of players outside playing and give rise to particular identities and lifestyles. In order to do that, the authors analyse different stages of enter-

ing and leaving the virtual reality of the game they observed in LARP communities of central (Novosibirsk) and eastern (Vladivostok) Siberia. On the basis of their observations, they differentiate between three categories of players: causal players, regular players and total players. These three categories differ in the degree they maintain the border between the virtual reality of LARP and the actual reality outside LARP and, therefore, in the degree LARP becomes the part of their identity and gets stylized, routinized and communicated to others, which is the definition of lifestyle. This article poses an important question not touched upon in other chapters: can lifestyle be adopted by different degrees and if so how we can differentiate and theoretically account for these degrees? The chapter shows one way to do so, although it is still questionable how widely it can be applied.

As it has been mentioned in the beginning of the review, the CLLP project was realized in 2008 – 2013. For the reasons not explicitly mentioned in the book, it took more than 6 years for the resulting volume to be published. Although this delay, in my opinion, by no means diminishes the theoretical significance of the book, it does make the observations reported there a little bit outdated. In order to account for that, Otto Habeck finishes the book with a chapter summarizing the changes that occurred in Siberia and in Russia after 2013 and that could affect lifestyles and lifestyle plurality. Of course, the main changes are the traditionalist and nationalistic turns, which could be felt already in the early 2010s, but developed fully after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Habeck shows that these turns with their emphasis on traditional values (particularly family values) and call for political uniformity through patriotism have probably decreased the scope of acceptable lifestyles in Siberia. Still the degree up to which this scope became limited needs to be determined by special research. The chapter also summarizes the arguments of the previous chapters and offers a conclusion about the factors that condition and limit lifestyle plurality in Siberia. These include economic and socio-political factors, infrastructure and diversity of consumption goods. Important disparities in these respects exist in modern Siberia and the range

of lifestyles one can pursue in its different parts is different. However nowhere in Siberia both now and in the past, was choice between different lifestyles completely absent. This means that lifestyle diversity represents an important dimension of human diversity to be studied anthropologically and anthropological study of Siberia can uniquely and importantly contribute to this.

Although these conclusions are, in my opinion, well justified by the findings reported in the volume and the CLLP project in generally represents a success, this did not save the Siberian Studies Centre. In 2014, the Centre was officially closed and its former coordinator, Joachim Otto Habeck, adopted a research position outside the Max Planck Society. Despite this, the findings of the project reported in the volume are both interesting and significant and, in my opinion, they show a way out from the current crisis in Siberian Studies. The last project of the Siberian Studies Centre did not save the centre but, maybe, it has saved the subdiscipline. Only the future can show if it is so.

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KIRILL V. ISTOMIN,
Centre for Arctic Social Studies,
European University in St. Petersburg
Institute of Language, Literature and History
Komi Science Centre, Russian Academy of
Science in Syktyvkar

TATIANA ZACHAR PODOLINSKÁ
(Ed.):

*Traces of the Virgin Mary
in Post-Communist Europe*

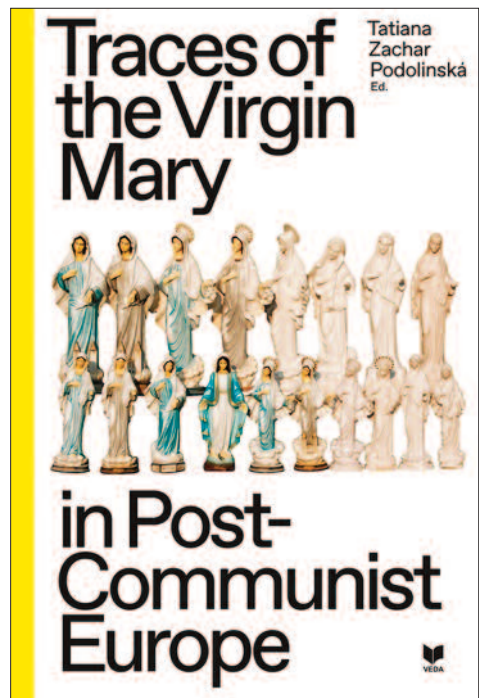
Bratislava: Veda 2019, 423 p.

The Marian cult is one of the most visible manifestations of contemporary folk (and not only its) Catholicism. In the general public, it is associated mainly with cultural and pilgrimage sites, such as Fatima, Lourdes, or, more recently, Medjugorje, or with historical sites such as Poland's Częstochowa. Those "more hip to" may still remember the Marian cult's role in the complicated relationship of the Catholic Church to modernity. Last but not least, it is possible to recall the role of the veneration of the Virgin Mary in the religiosity of the last few popes. Most of the available studies focus mainly on theological reflections on the Marian cult's impact on the changes in contemporary Catholicism. Alternatively, they focus on issues related to the "conservative" nature of Marian veneration and, in recent decades, on gender interpretations of the cult of the Virgin Mary (see for example Byrnes, 1988). Of course, this does not mean that studies that approach the Marian cult's subject from other perspectives do not exist. However, it should be noted that there are still a few of them, and they are perhaps too "dependent" on great theological or other ideological narratives. The reviewed book can thus be a welcome extension of the existing offer of studies and professional texts on the Marian cult's changes and forms in contemporary European society (see for example Halemba, 2011). At the same time, it promises to offer somewhat different perspectives than the traditional approaches mentioned above.

The book *Traces of the Virgin Mary*, edited by Tatiana Zachar Podolinská, presents ten case studies representing a wide range of perspectives – from ethnography, through religious studies to geography. However, despite this methodological breadth, the peer-reviewed publication is relatively compact. This is due not only to the theme and geographical delimitation but also to the clear editorial intent that the chief editor, *Tatiana Zachar Podolinská*, clearly formulates in the introduc-

tory chapter of the book. This opening chapter is a kind of “bolt” of the whole book and a very readable and above all informed insight into various problems and issues connected with the study of the Marian cult in modern European society. The author provides a brief overview of Marian piety’s main turning points in the last two centuries and the essential aspects of the Marian cult, such as the Marian cult’s economic implications and dimensions. At the same time, however, the potential reader will find fascinating insights into the much-discussed phenomenon of desecularization of the modern world and the role that the changing cult of the Virgin Mary can play in some areas and aspects in this process. An essential part of the introductory chapter is also a brief overview and description of specific methodological approaches that can be found in the following chapters-studies. An integral part of the opening chapter is a clear summary of various chapters and an explanation of their selection. Despite its sobriety and a precise “concision”, this part is sufficiently understandable, consistent, and enriching for readers.

The introductory part is followed by ten chapters having the character of case studies. Each of them deals with a selected aspect of Marian veneration and their manifestations in different geographical, cultural, or social contexts. Most of these studies provide a lot of interesting information and often, many new and “provocative” interpretations. At the same time, however, it is impossible not to notice that this collective publication also suffers from one of the main weaknesses of a similar type of book, which is, in a way, a “random” selection of topics and regions. While two studies deal with the phenomenon of the Marian cult in the Czech Republic and two in Slovakia, not a single chapter is devoted to Poland. The omission of the largest Catholic country in the region, which is closely connected with a Marian cult as an essential part of national identity, is somewhat surprising (see for example Stetkiewicz, 2013). In this context, I would like to point out that contemporary Poland is an excellent example of the “multidimensional transformation” of the cult of the Virgin Mary. Here we find side by side its traditional forms associated with famous places of



pilgrimage, such as the already mentioned Częstochowa or the younger Licheń, as well as in many liberally oriented Catholic communities that do not hesitate to link Marian piety with progressive themes such as gender equality or criticism of excessive rationality. At the same time, Poland is interested in studying the transformations of local Marian cults towards nationwide cultic and pilgrimage sites.

The series of specific case studies begins with a text by *Judit Kis-Halas*, which deals with the exciting topic of “penetration” of contemporary Marian piety with the phenomenon of individualized religiosity and spirituality usually referred to as New Age spirituality. For her research she has chosen one of the most prominent Hungarian Marian pilgrimage sites in Máriagyűd, southern Hungary. She shows in what ways and in what forms traditional and contemporary interpretations of the Marian cult can intertwine and how some specifics of late modern society enter the whole process, especially polycentric narratives of syncretic spirituality. In this context, I especially appreciate the author’s ability to capture the essential aspects of reinterpretation of traditional

Marian piety, its symbolism, and the rituals associated with it.

The “insight” into the Hungarian environment is followed by two studies focused on the Czech Republic. The author of the first of them is *Markéta Holubová*, who, in her text, deals with an overview of the changes and transformation of the Marian cult in the Czech society, especially during the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. The work has a rather descriptive character, especially in its first part. The passages devoted to the situation after 1989 are more attractive, even though they are still descriptive rather than analytical. In addition to many interesting observations that a potential reader may become acquainted with in this chapter, I was particularly interested in the passage devoted to the connection between the Marian cult and apocalyptic tendencies at the turn of the millennium. Another study that focuses on the Czech Republic is the text of religion by *Vojtěch Tuto*. It is a very readable and inspiring analysis of two contemporary religious groups or rather communities in which Marian piety and the cult of the Virgin Mary play an important role. However, the text is not only an anthropological “record” of two communities but also offers well-founded discussions concerning the relationship between the so-called folk religiosity and contemporary religiosity. At the same time, as a researcher from a Czech background, I very much appreciate the final comparison of both groups, which is very dynamic and pays attention to several interesting details.

The following two chapters are devoted to Slovakia. The first of them provides a basic overview of the development of the Marian cult in Slovakia throughout history. Its author, *Roman Kečka*, provides a basic overview of texts, prayers, or depictions of the Virgin Mary, which played or still play a significant role in the Marian cult in Slovakia. This chapter has the character of a summary, which is done very carefully but would belong more to a textbook than to the publication with the ambitions that its editor declared in the introductory chapter. The author of the second study dedicated to Slovakia is the geographer *Juraj Majo*. His approach thus deviates somewhat from other authors, who mainly have an

ethnographic or historical background. But it must be said that it is very refreshing for the readers. However, the very theme of Majo’s study – Marian dedication in the contemporary cultural space of Slovakia is also very stimulating. I must especially appreciate the author’s innovation and the precision and comprehensibility of his analyses and conclusions. The reader will get a fascinating overview and especially an analysis of the “geographical distribution” of the various forms of Marian cult and their position and significance for specific Christian denominations.

The last countries in the CEE region to which the peer-reviewed publication pays attention in connection with the current changes in the Marian cult are Serbia and Bulgaria. Both countries represent orthodox variants of reverence for the Virgin Mary. *Alexandra Pavičević*, an author of a study on Serbia, focuses mainly on the role of the cult of the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God (ser. *Bogorodica*) in the history of Serbia, especially in connection with the role of this cult in creating and encouraging national identity. Even in this case, similarly to the chapter authored by Roman Kečka, it is more of a description and overview of primary historical data and forms related to the cult of the Mother of God. Thus, the potential reader must expect a summary of facts rather than input, rather than a methodologically innovative and analytically robust study. The text by *Vihra Baeva* and *Albena Georgieva*, Bulgarian authors, is devoted to a specific region in central-south Bulgaria and local forms of Marian cult. The study also deals with an essential and exciting topic of the relationship between the local and the “central” in real and everyday religious life, in addition to primary historical and ethnographic data. In this context, there is an inspiring passage that deals with personal narratives associated with specific local places of Marian cult and their role in creating individual identities.

The last group of texts consists of rather “problem-oriented” studies, of which two stand out. The first, authored by *Hubert Knoblauch* and *Sabine Petschke*, focuses on Marian apparitions in contemporary popular culture, especially in connection with their visual forms. The study is convincingly theoretically

grounded in current discussions on the topic of “popular religiosity” and its relationship to the phenomena of “spirituality” and “folk-religion” (see for example Zwingmann, Klein, Büssing, 2011). Methodologically, it is based on visual anthropology and ethnology. The result is one of the most interesting and inspiring texts of the book, which brings several very challenging findings and observations. The second of these studies is the text of the book’s editor *Tatiana Zachar Podolinská*, based on their many years of research into Romani religiosity. It is de facto a meticulous and well-founded analysis and interpretation of several Marian apparitions in several Roma communities in Slovakia. As in other authors’ texts, the reader will find a lot of information, observations, or inspiring interpretations, which are very credibly set in a broader theoretical framework and based on precise fieldwork embedded in a clear and well-founded methodology. It is also worth mentioning the form of the study based on field notes from individual research. The result is a kind of ethnographic “matrix” of themes, symbols, roles, places, and other aspects related to respect for the Virgin Mary among selected communities of Slovak Roma.

Although the potential reader will have some reservations about the reviewed book (e.g., in terms of choosing topics for partial studies or due to different nature and sometimes perhaps the level of concrete texts), it must be acknowledged that overall it is a very successful text, which brings not only a whole range of new information but also several innovative approaches and sometimes even provocative interpretations. In any case, I am convinced that few people will be bored reading this book.

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DAVID VÁCLAVÍK,

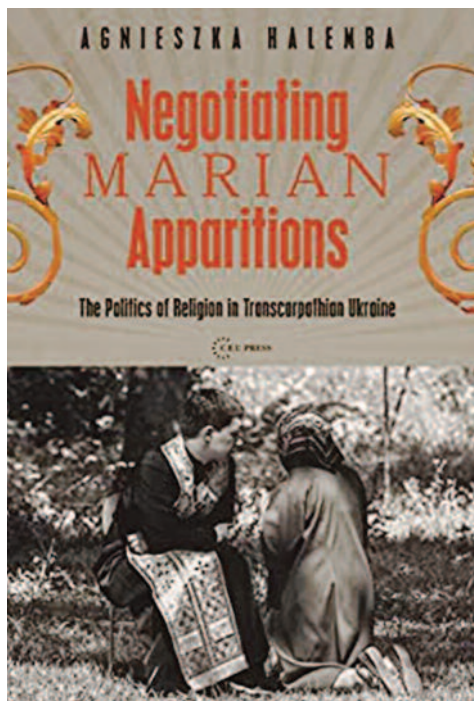
Department for the Study of Religions,
Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno

AGNIESZKA HALEMBA: *Negotiating Marian Apparitions. The Politics of Religion in Trans-Carpathian Ukraine*

Central European University Press, 2015,
312 p.

The book *Negotiating Marian Apparitions. The Politics of Religion in Trans-Carpathian Ukraine* is the second monograph by the anthropologist of religion Agnieszka Halemba. Since her Cambridge training in social anthropology, Halemba has been affiliated with institutions in Poland (Warsaw University Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology and Polish Academy of Sciences Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology) and Germany (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas), spending a significant period of time on fieldwork in Trans-Carpathian Ukraine and Eastern Slovakia. While in her first monograph she focused on religious change and revival among the native Telengits of Altai, the people of the borderland region of Russia, China, and Mongolia (Halemba, 2008), the present book looks at another borderland case. Agnieszka Halemba moves deeper into the institutional and organizational aspect of religion in Trans-Carpathian Ukraine after state socialism, focusing predominantly on priests’ management of the Virgin Mary apparition site “where local religious commitments are relatively strong and religious organizations relatively weak” (p. 3).

Halemba differentiates religious organizations and institutions that, along with religious experience, define the religious life of individuals. Especially the organizational dimen-



sions of religious life have been significantly understudied and its role for religious experience undervalued in anthropology, writes Halemba. Without the focus on social organization it is in particular difficult to differentiate between religion and non-religion and Halemba calls the process that makes religion socially significant “institutionalization of religion”. This productive perspective means that not every person must have the immediate experience of religion and still recognizes religious authority, power, and legitimacy.

It is “not the organization with clearly set rules, boundaries, and hierarchies, or even the way in which this organization is perceived, but the people within an organization – their dealing, strategies, and negotiations” (p. 13), writes Halemba. In other words, what Halemba does is to understand and analyse “what happens when socially established ways of acting and thinking interact with explicitly established organizations perceived by local actors as agents in a given field” (p. 14). Thus, Halemba’s book brings together religious experience, the social significance of religion, and organizational studies that are all usually studied separately.

The study of the Greek Catholic church is an excellent case to research institutionalization processes; being part of the Catholic Church, the church links church hierarchy and organizational structure with sacredness. Due to historical reasons, the Greek Catholic church in Transcarpathia secures more autonomy on the local level as well as with regard to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. The local congregation can hire and fire their priests, control finances, and even decide about the form of ritual practice while still being part of the Catholic Church. As Halemba underlines, “if a priest wants to have authority, he has to legitimize it in ways that go beyond the ones envisaged within the framework of the episcopal myth” (p. 19).

By referring to the concept of Tamara Dragadze (1993) Halemba reminds us that Soviet policies strengthened the role of personal experiences, and in some cases, notably in Transcarpathia, it even strengthened the importance of socially institutionalized forms of religiosity, “the domestication of religion” that demonstrates the move away from the control of religious organisations into a private sphere under socialism. The major theme in Transcarpathia has therefore not been the revival of religious life after socialism, as religion has never left the private life of people there, but the actual question has been the position of religious organizations after socialism. In other words, the book is about the revival of organizational religion and far less of the personalized religious experiences.

The chapters are dedicated to several issues touching upon the religious institutionalization. In chapter two the author discusses the role of the church commission in approving or disapproving apparition, to prevent a split in the church and keeping control over the site. Chapter three discusses the place of Transcarpathia in the national and religious projects of Ukrainian and Slavic Christian entities respectively. This social and historical setup is followed by the chapter on the authority of Virgin Mary vis-à-vis the priests and the laity and priest perspective on the church’s “organizational, communal, and mystical dimensions”. Chapter five is dedicated to issues of church unity and its relations to Virgin Mary apparitions. In the concluding chapter Halemba

focuses on the global-local dialectics of the Catholic Church of which the Greek Catholic church in Trans-Carpathian Ukraine is a case in point.

Halemba only briefly discusses other kinds of communities undergoing further institutionalization and transformation after socialism along with religion. The ethnic and national identities are referred to predominantly as serving the purpose of political unity of the church and of Ukraine but further analysis of the ethnicity / religion nexus might have enriched the perspective on religious institutionalization. A productive comparison is made with reference to Galician Greek Catholics, studied by Vlad Naumescu (2008). Halemba questions Naumescu's perspective on Greek Catholics following the Orthodox imaginary as commonality of religious practice in Ukraine defined as east Christian identity. Halemba rightly points out the difference in national identification, among others, between the multi-ethnic Transcarpathia and nationally conscious Galicia, but deeper theorization of (multi)ethnicity along with religious institutionalization might have brought deeper perspectives. As my own research in south-east Poland showed, for both Greek Catholic Ukrainians and Roman Catholic Poles ethnicity is of crucial importance for historical reasons and even sometimes overwhelms the identification based on religion (Buzalka, 2007). The Trans-Carpathian social-organizational role of religious and ethnic identification could have brought a fresh light not least with regard to religion and non-religion but also to cohabitation, tolerance, and civility in a multi-ethnic setting.¹

Halemba discusses the economic side of religious institutions and has offered a compelling comparison of Slovakia and Transcarpathia about the consequence for the church authority of financial contribution from the state to churches in Slovakia and the relative lack of it in Ukraine. However, more elaboration of the role of the material economy in Trans-Carpathian religious life, its embeddedness and transformation in this predominantly rural area, seems desirable with regard to

theory of religious institutionalization.² In other words who the Trans-Carpathian believers are economically, can tell us something important about their religious institutions too.

Despite these wishes to be included into the volume, the major quality of the book is proof that anthropologists need to go far beyond conventional sociological or psychological research of religion. The grasp of the social organization of religious authority, legitimacy, and power provided by Halemba represents the kind of research (not only of religion) in East Central Europe that needs to be practiced far more frequently. The sheer fact that Halemba published an ethnographic monograph, the genre rarely practiced by colleagues in Slovakia, and she did so despite a hard current situation in a discipline that has been dismissing ethnographic monographs as outdated vis-à-vis the need for publications in high impact journals, underlines the importance of long-term ethnographic fieldwork as the key distinguishing feature of social and cultural anthropology. Halemba concludes, "the cognitive approach suggests that, purely on the personal level, experience is never religious. It is the social institutions and organizations that create a religious field" (p. 279). This is not to dismiss the cognitive science of religion, to whose inspiration Halemba also subscribes. This book shows rather the opposite: that we need to do especially the ethnographies of social organization of religion in order to tell something important about religious power, authority and legitimacy that other scientists, such as sociologists and psychologists, can never do by however deep cognitive inspiration alone.

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1 On ethnicity in Transcarpathia see, for example, Martin Kanovský (2009).

2 On state financial aid of the Slovak state and its lack of it in Ukraine see Agnieszka Halemba (2008).

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JURAJ BUZALKA,

Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences,
Comenius University in Bratislava

Family Memory in the Spotlight

RADMILA ŠVAŘÍČKOVÁ-SLABÁKOVÁ, IRENA SOBOTKOVÁ, MARCIN FILIPOWICZ, ALENA ZACHOVÁ, JITKA KOHOUTOVÁ, MAREK PETRŮ:

I rodina má svou paměť. Rodinná paměť v interdisciplinárním kontextu. [Families Also Have Memory. Family Memory in the Inter-Disciplinary Context]

Palacký University, Olomouc, 2018, 244p.

RADMILA ŠVAŘÍČKOVÁ-SLABÁKOVÁ, IRENA SOBOTKOVÁ:

Rodina a její paměť v nás ve světle třígeneračních vyprávění [Family and Its Memory in Ourselves in the Light of Three-Generational Narrations].

Triton, 2018, 320 p.

Works presenting the results of research by experts in social sciences and humanities focused on (individual, social or collective) memory,

usually begin with the statement that memory studies have seen unprecedented development since the 1980s. The recollections of eyewitnesses of the past, their memories, and (auto)-biographies raise the interest not only of academics but of the general public as well. The concept of (social / collective) memory was elaborated on by Maurice Halbwachs (1925) in what is already an iconic work today, *Les Cadres Sociaux de la mémoire* [The Social Frameworks of Memory]. Dozens of his followers have worked with it or subjected it to criticism in their works (e.g. J. Assmann, 2001; A. Assmann, 2016; Muxel, 1996; Erll, 2017), among others the authors of two books published in 2018 as the scientific outputs of the GACR project, *Family Memories and the Inter-Generational Transformation of Identities*, conducted at the Palacký University in Olomouc. Inspired by qualitative research on family memory and its inter-generational dynamism the principal researcher, historian Radmila Švaříčková-Slabáková, set up an interdisciplinary research team with the intention of exploring the topic of family memory from the perspectives of several scientific disciplines.

Especially the first of these two publications – *Family Also Has Memory. Family Memory in the Inter-Disciplinary Context* (Palacký University, Olomouc, 2018) – is proof of this effort. The book presents the results of work by a wider team of researchers representing psychology (Irena Sobotková), literary science (Marcin Filipowicz, Alena Zachová), philosophy (Marek Petrů), and historiography (Jitka Kohoutová, Radmila Švaříčková-Slabáková). At the beginning of their collaboration, they sought to answer the question of how they can cooperate and jointly study family memory, and whether they can acquire a clearer picture of its functions and contents by interlinking the current knowledge of the particular scientific disciplines. The ambition to carry out thorough interdisciplinary research, as noted by the principal project researcher in the introduction, encountered the problem of insufficient current research on family memory in the Czech lands, as well as boundaries of the individual disciplines and limited knowledge of the individual authors.

Despite this critical evaluation of their own efforts, the book eventually brings interesting,

innovative reflections and views. The texts of the monograph are based on three different sources which the authors analyze and interpret. The first part works with materials that were obtained from interviews conducted in thirteen contemporary families, seeking to ensure the representation of several generations. The next part is based on data from an older historical period, with the family of the 19th century Czech intellectual elite in the center of attention. The last part, dedicated to a philosophical exploration of memory, is a theoretical elaboration on the concept of identity and memory. Using a fresh language, the publication examines the issue of the relationship between individual and collective memory as well as individual and collective identity, with a specific focus on the contents and transfer of family memory. The authors note that there is little systematic research on childhood memories despite the fact that family is a psychological constant for each individual, a space of the primary socialization. They offer findings on the forms and contents of childhood memories in the individual generations of contemporary families, highlighting the tendencies in content changes, speaking about the relationships of family stories, and the big history or the era (social context) in which they are actually constructed. The statement that present-day family stories are characterized by ephemerality, which is explained by the authors through the current forms of families and the ways of their functioning, is undoubtedly interesting and would be worthy of further exploration and discussion. The reflection on identity through the lens of philosophical observation closes the book with an idea that the concept of individual identity, based on the continuity of autobiographical memory, gradually becomes less important. The authors suggest that if the identification process does not relate to the experienced past, the concept of the future with all the wishes and plans that we project into it could be adequately applied in it.

This interdisciplinary publication represents for me a pleasing attempt to offer an inventory of the family memory research within various scientific disciplines in the Czech lands along with an effort to create a primary platform on which our Czech colleagues can (and I hope they will) base their further research, enriching



the research field of family memory with new points of view.

The second book is a continuation of the above-described work – it is based on the pre-defined space of reflections and findings captured in that monograph. As a result of collaboration by historian R. Švaříčková-Slabáková and psychologist Irena Sobotková, it is characterized by inspiration with family-focused memory studies, as well as family psychology (Muxel, 1996). The main ambition of both authors was to understand more thoroughly the contents, functions, meanings, and transfers of family memory. They disposed of unique materials obtained by means of consistent qualitative research: interviews conducted with three generations of thirteen families. The introductory presentation of the entire research sample, of its characteristics, methodological and ethical issues (Miovský, 2006) addressed by the researchers during the project, is followed by an analysis and interpretation of the data obtained. The work is divided into four parts. The first one, *Family Memory*, observes the interest of the individual generations of the family history, the depth of recollections of their predecessors, as well as intergenerational relation-



ships. One of the authors' findings is a direct connection between the narration of memories and the quality of relationships in the family and/or the functioning of a three-generation family. Their research proved again how the sharing of stories within the family is directly related to the emotional links between its members and how it directly affects their identification with the family. The second part, *Recollections, and Childhood*, is dedicated to childhood as the most important stage in human life from the point of view of socialization and the creation of individual identity. In the center of attention and the authors' interpretation were images of childhood, as presented by three generations, their relationship to the place where they lived their childhood, and the importance of the family of a mother and father during this period of human life. In the third part, the authors explored the opportunities and contents as well as the bearers of the intergenerational transfer of family memory. They thoroughly analyzed their transformations and shifts in time, their importance (support of coherence,

strengthening of relationships, and family identity awareness) as well as their perception by different family generations. The authors outline the tendencies in specific generations and, with respect to the generation of grandchildren, they draw attention to their loose attitudes to family reunions and rituals. This raises the question of what takes over the function of the family in their case – a work team, an interest group, or a group of peers and friends? The last, fourth chapter focuses on family patterns, values, as well as the memory of World War II and the period of the Communist regime. In this subchapter, the authors observed the relationship between the official historical narrative present in the social discourse and the narratives circulating in family memory and within inter-generational communication. The authors' findings correspond to the works already published – talking about the family's past enhances the awareness of a common past in the members of the family and gives them a system of values for coping with current situations and orientation at present. Interesting is their finding according to which, in well-functioning three-generation families, all three generations share similar attitudes to family values. The concluding part of the publication offers a conviction that it is good functioning of a family that significantly influences family memory and its importance for all members of different generations.

The relationship between family memory, family identity, and family values represents an area that should be further explored, as suggested by both authors. This monograph is a very thorough immersion in the obtained data. I consider the functional creation of the research sample – three-generation families willing to collaborate – to be of a great benefit to the research and its processing. In my opinion, it is currently a big challenge, as I could personally see while conducting and carrying out research that focused on a similar topic – family stories communicated in three-generation families.³ The authors have taken up this challenge successfully and interpreted the obtained data very consistently and with con-

3 VEGA project 2/0086/14: Family histories. Inter-generational transfer of the representations of social and political change (2014–2017). The main output was monograph "Talking and Silence: Inter-Generational Communication in Family" (Vrzgulová, Vofánská, Salner, 2017).

certed effort, embedding it in the context of knowledge captured by available expert literature. The book by R. Švaříčková-Slabáková and Irena Sobotková is inspirational reading also for researchers in Slovakia and perhaps a challenge for not only interdisciplinary but also joint Czecho-Slovak research. It would be a pleasure for me to be a part of it.

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MONIKA VRGULOVÁ,
Institute of Ethnology and Social
Anthropology SAS in Bratislava



JAROSLAV ACHAB HAIDLER:
Židovské hřbitovy a pohřbívání
[Jewish Cemeteries and Burials]
Prague, Grada Publishing 2019, 192 p.

I have for various reasons recently dealt with the practical and ethnological aspects of present-day Jewish funerals,⁴ and I was therefore impatiently waiting for the publication of the book *Židovské hřbitovy a pohřbívání* [Jewish Cemeteries and Burials]. I knew that Jaroslav Achab Haidler systematically mapped Jewish cemeteries in Czechia. I had at least partial information not only about the difficult life stories of the author, but (thanks to a Czech Television TV series) also about some of his opinions, interim results as well as his undisguised emotions.

At the first sight it was clear to me that it was going to be interesting reading. The book consists of a short introduction and seven chapters (all of them with a one-word title). The first one, called *Domy* [Houses] (cemeteries in Hebrew are “bejt olam” or “bejt ha kvarot”,

⁴ See Salner, 2014.

meaning houses of eternity or houses of life) sheds light not only on the apparent paradox of these terms, but also on the place of cemetery within the diversity of opinions of believing Jews. This chapter also describes the Jewish ideas about death, resurrection, eternity, as well as their different perceptions compared to the approach by the general population. Haidler notes that Jews ... *did not think even for a moment that anybody would perceive their "eternity" in a Christian way. For them, eternity (or home) has from time immemorial been timelessness, a different reality and full knowledge of the truth and the matter of fact. It has never been a paradise in the Christian sense*" (p. 21–22).

In the next chapter, *Kameny* [Stones], the author explains the forms of marking graves from the oldest references in the torah⁵ up to the present. In this context, Haidler also explores the roots of the tradition of laying stones instead of flowers on Jewish graves, while noting that this custom has no support in the torah. The title *Text* suggests that the third chapter (rich in terms of material and interest) deals with inscriptions on graves. The next chapter *Symboly* [Symbols] analyses the informative as well as the decorative aspects of gravestones. The chapter *Pohřeb* [Funeral] describes the traditional customs related to dying and burial. (In this regard, there is the opportunity to compare it with contemporary Slovak material in the future.⁶ It is a pity, though, that there are only a few references about the current state of the issue, as it would deserve greater attention.) In the penultimate chapter *Hřbitovy* [Graves] Haidler draws attention, among other things, to the religious and informative meaning of the "holy soil". *One of the very first duties of a new religious community is to arrange the purchase of land to serve as a burial ground. Until space for a prayer house and torah scrolls as well as requisites for the Mikvah – ritual bath – are arranged and land for the burial ground is purchased, the community cannot be considered religious. The history of cemeteries can thus*

also serve for the mapping of the history of individual Jewish communities (p. 143). The final chapter, called *Člověk* [Human], explores how the destinies and characters of buried people are reflected in the epitaphs.

In the description of the individual chapters of Haidler's text, I have intentionally avoided details: there are (perhaps too) many of them and with their detailed analysis we would run the risk of concealing the general focus of the book. Haidler concentrated mainly on the material culture during the period before the "great destruction". With his approach, he is more a historian (and archaeologist at some points) than an ethnologist. The focus he chose results from the current state of the Jewish community as well as the author's personal qualities and knowledge. With this I mean his admirable ability to concentrate, his willingness to work systematically even in difficult circumstances, his above-average knowledge of the Hebrew language, the torah or the (relatively recent) history of Jews in the Czech lands. In the text, religious and historic realities overlap with subjective opinions and reflections. I personally welcome this approach, since it helps me fill my gaps. As an ethnologist, I have been exploring the course of contemporary funerals based on interviews and direct observation, while, for various reasons (including the absence of the necessary language, historical and religious knowledge that Haidler disposes of), I have perceived the material culture and the historical context rather marginally.

The diversity of the topic is also reflected in the book layout. The pages are divided into three columns. The author's text is in the middle, while the outer column contains Haidler's explanatory notes and the inner column (in red) is used for the translation of Hebrew terms and consistent citation of the texts of the torah. This approach has undeniable advantages as well as negative aspects. On the one hand, formal clarity facilitates the reader's orientation; on the other hand, it distracts the reader.

The book is completed with many colour

5 I was surprised that J. A. Haidler wrote the word torah in lower-case: I respect this author's licence.

6 Frieder, 2014: *Brány milosrdenstva. Modlitby a predpisy pre chorých a smútiacich* [The Gates of Mercy. Prayers and Instructions for the Sick and Mourning Ones]. This manual, written in German, was originally published in Nové Mesto nad Váhom in 1942. The Slovak translation was initiated by the Bratislava rabbi Baruch Myers, who added his comments and explanatory notes.

photographs, part of them being displayed in the outer column (naturally, in small format). These pictures illustrate the diversity of cemeteries, graves and epitaphs, though their value is diminished by missing descriptions and localisation. As a result, they serve more for decorative than documentary purposes. From the expert point of view, the value of the book is also impaired by the absence of citations (except for the torah) and bibliography.

Nevertheless, the benefits of the reviewed publication prevail over my objections. The book and, in particular, the long-term preservation efforts of Jaroslav Achab Hadiler deserve recognition and sincere thanks.

PETER SALNER,

*Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology
of the Slovak Academy of Sciences*

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