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The Diversity of Sacred Lands in Europe

Proceedings of the Third Workshop of the Delos Initiative – Inari/Aanaar 2010

Edited by Josep-Maria Mallarach, Thymio Papayannis and Rauno Väisänen



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The Diversity of Sacred Lands in Europe

Proceedings of the Third Workshop
of the Delos Initiative



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The Diversity of Sacred Lands in Europe

Proceedings of the Third Workshop
of the Delos Initiative

Inari/Aanaar, Finland, 1-3 July 2010

Edited by Jose-Maria Mallarach, Thymio Papayannis and Rauno Väisänen



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All creation groans and sighs...

Humanity and borders

In the Finnish language, the early semantic strata associated with the concept of *pyhä* ('*holy*') relate to a place on the landscape. The reference is to a border. Many place names, such as Pyhäjärvi or Pyhäjoki, bear this out. These are particular places in the wild, as far as which people have been permitted to travel, though no further. *Holy* outlines an area belonging to man – demarcates it.

The word in this sense is still valid today, although it is no longer literally associated with a place on the landscape. When we speak of the 'holy' we are still expressing the idea of the borders of human existence. A holy day (for example Sunday) or holy object signifies a spiritual terrain isolated from others that speaks of somewhere beyond, a place that does not belong to man. It is a border which demands that we step back – we have to pause, just as we do at a geographical one. It requires our humility, sensitivity and respect.

A sense of the holy and its protection are essential if people are to understand who they are. To be human is to stand before what is holy and to relate to it. That is the only way we can identify the borders of humanity and human activity.

Holy spaces are the doors to the meaning of everything

The Christian interpretation of life is not detached from these archaic, distant meanings of the Finnish word *pyhä* - *holy* – but actually relates to them. This is the case with the stories of creation in the beginning of the Bible, which are basic depictions of human existence. They even use imagery that recalls the ancient meanings of the word.

In the beginning, according to the stories, man is part of the same reality in which God is walking in cool of the afternoon. The holy is not somewhere on the outside. The world does not exist by chance but by the will of God. All creation is holy, because it reflects the holiness of its Creator. But man's tragic destiny is to become separated from this, to be expelled from God's garden. As is well known, it happens in the account of the Fall, the apple and the serpent acting as its agents. Its core meaning is that man will rise to the position of God and above everything else. The stories describe the basis of existence. Man is totally dependent on his Creator and creation, and his relationship with these is the most fundamental of all. It is a relationship with what is holy. The relationship is not simple or calm; it is contradictory, broken.

It is for this very reason - because of the hubris that shatters the basic relationship - that man needs to be able to identify and interpret the holy and those symbols that denote its reality: there is something more, something beyond our reality. -

The separately defined spaces, times and places that are recognised as holy are those that allow people, and the whole of creation, to breathe out, groan and sigh and create something new. They are doors to the deep meaning of life.

Does the holy have a place in modern-day living?

From the perspective of those first stories, we might ask how in today's western culture a person can understand his or her existence in relation to what is holy.

As the foundations of the ecological system shake, there are good arguments for saying that God plays no part in our culture. The basic dimension of human existence, a sense of the holy, is absent, and in its place are merciless consumerism and the logic of exploitation. Where God is absent, people and nature only have a utility value, and no other.

Nevertheless, we should not succumb to romantic ideas about history and claim that people used to have a sense of what was holy but now God is conspicuous by his absence. The modernisation of western culture has not buried the holy, but its place has changed.

In the western process of modernisation, what was understood as holy broke loose from the authoritative power structure. Gradually, one had to get used to the notion that the holy was worshipped totally differently from the way in which power was worshipped. It was a liberating process. For the Christian Church, this legacy means that, living amidst the social and economic powers that are destroying mankind, we are called on to question radically what is going on and boldly stand up for human life itself.

In the same process of modernisation, culture and society also became differentiated and fragmented. Politics, art, science, economics, business, education, religion all became their own separate areas of life. The area of religion became the reservation in which God was given a place to live. Talk of God and the holy was restricted to that place only. When religious life came to have a monopoly on the holy, as it were, other aspects of life could carry on as if they had no relationship to the holy or as if the borders of the existence of what was holy and of human activity did not concern them.

The borders of science

In two areas of life, this has been particularly clear to see. One is the scientific/technological domain. Within its framework, western man has approached life as if there were no borders on the landscape, thus permitting him to go as far as his knowledge and ability allow.

In the areas of biomedicine, genetic engineering and virtual technology, we are at present in unknown territory. Here for once we have to ask whether there is a sacred border beyond which we may not go. The old maps provide no help. It is for this very reason that we need humility, sensitivity and respect so much, and they stem from an awareness of human borders and what is holy.

This is a special challenge for Christian theology of creation. The challenge is on an altogether different scale compared to the conflicts between Christian belief and the natural sciences that date back to the 19th century. Now it is of fundamental importance to ask whether the borders of mankind are marked by anything more than intelligence and ambition. Should we be going on a voyage of discovery in all areas, or are there borders that cannot be crossed from the perspective of humanity and life, borders at which we have to stop, just like we do when we encounter the holy?

The borders of economics, business and consumerism

The other area is economics and business. They now dominate our culture. It is on their terms that we decide what is important and what is not.

Within this sphere of influence, the basic relations of human existence are shaped in a whole new way. How someone relates to economic activity is crucial. People are seen to be fundamentally dependent on it. It has a surplus value, with some features of the holy, but it does not point beyond mankind. One's relationship with it is not the same as that with the holy or God, which indicates something outside man. There is of course room for God, but the limits of human activity or existence are not seen through Him, but through the economy.

In the current climate, there is a danger that the holy, and symbols denoting the holy, will simply become a commodity, like everything else. There will be products that people acquire in order to experience what is holy. There is some demand for this, because a need for the sacred lies deep within a person, just like the desire to live. But, at the same time, the holy ceases to be holy. It becomes banal and metamorphoses into a momentary experience. It no longer allows us to identify human borders and territory.

If people are primarily understood in relation to economic activity, the whole field of human endeavour is in danger of being perceived as one of market relations, pro-

duction, consumption, buying and selling. Then a person also comes to be seen as a product in the social and financial markets. Man, like creation, ceases to be valuable in himself, as something created, in a relationship with his Creator. The borders of humanity are then those of the market, and there is nothing beyond them.

If the sense of what is holy disappears from our culture, so does the perspective from which human endeavour, mankind's own territory, can be examined. This is the danger of a culture ruled by market ideology and consumerism. The consequences could be fateful. They are already visible in the area of global environmental issues as well as in the shape of the growing worldwide gap between the survivors and those who are left to rely on their own luck. This affects the poorest part of the world the hardest, although those who brought about the situation are the rich industrialised countries.

Where the holy places and spaces are

It is in this western world, absorbed as it is by scientific/technological culture and consumerism, that we have a need for holy areas, a need to raise their profile and protect them, and not just have them safely placed within religion's conventional realm.

Holy places and spaces are places to stop at. They are places for calm and silence. Silence is the domain of the holy; it is God's domain. When you can use words to sell anything and they lose their meaning, there is a need to turn to silence, to arrive at the real borders of human existence. The holy shuns the limelight, words and communication: it lives beyond them, where things are left unsaid - there are *no* words.

Silence and stillness are the key ingredients of the Christian tradition, when everything stops before God. They are the essence of prayer. Finns get very close to this when they feel like turning their backs on everything that seems fulfilling in their daily lives but appears to conceal what is fundamentally true, and so they retreat to the seashore or the depths of the forest. There where you believe that you can breathe the presence of God. It is a genuine desire to acknowledge those fundamental relationships that have been put in place for man, the created being, and to see mankind's place from the most basic of perspectives.

The legacy of taking one's time, silence and stopping represents an attitude to life of someone that is calm, takes deep breaths and submits to prayer. Thus, like other religions, the Christian Church takes on the task of maintaining a counterculture, amid all the efficiency, speed and cost-effectiveness of the modern world.

In the silence, we also need to listen carefully to the voices of the limnologists, meteorologists and many other natural scientists, as well as the environmental move-

ment. Their intention is the same as that of the prophets in the Old Testament, who reminded us of our basic relationship with the reality of God and its distortion. Those voices radically compel us to confront the fact that there are limits beyond which mankind should not pass. They call for humility when contemplating creation; they tell us to stop at the border of the holy.

On the European scene, where creation groans under the burden of weighty tarmac, there are signs that what is holy has not vanished. Even in the midst of everything, there is a constant dialogue with God. We have church buildings as a sign of this.

Inside the churches, such pointless and unproductive activities as religious services go on. They do not have any particular appeal, and are given no public attention. The markets ignore them. Nonetheless, perhaps precisely because of them, a cultural place on the landscape remains open, somewhere people take stock of the fundamental relationships associated with their existence and want to bow their heads, as they do when they are before something holy.

When people bow their heads before God in church, this is also a matter of confession: admitting that we cannot listen to the tragic sigh of creation as outside observers. We are deeply involved, even the Christian Church. As human beings, we are part of the consumer culture that contaminates everything, and, as Christians, we have interpreted our faith in such a manner that it has made way for the arrogant exploitation of creation.

The Church cannot, and is unwilling to, dictate from on high how people should behave: instead, it invites them to common self-reflection, humility and the courage to change. In the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church's Climate Programme, this invitation can be summarised in just three words: gratitude, respect and moderation.

Courage

The Church's approach derives from those fundamental stories about what is holy that are told in church services. Alongside the first stories in the Bible, another tale is told, one that gives another view of what is holy. It is the story of Christ, the central theme of the New Testament. It highlights the fact that the sacred, the reality of God, is not just beyond this reality, beyond the gates in God's own domain, but is also fragmented radically amid humanity as a whole.

The holy is not encountered solely in something that reflects the identity of something from the outside, something else that is purer and more whole. It can also be found wherever people have suffered loss, been victims, lost their way, lost their identity or been broken.

That is why this is not just about awareness and identification of the holy depending on humility and respect amid the reality that surrounds us. They also form a basis for the courage to stand up for all life at its weakest and most fractured points.



The articles in this book highlight the notion of creation groaning, something that comes from different parts of Europe, their nature conservation sites, sacred areas and the life of prayer pursued in monasteries. It is the sound of an awareness of what is holy, inviting us to act with humility before creation and, at the same time, boldly resist the greedy world of business economy and the consumer culture. The articles, written by specialists, give a picture of a world we all share, where man is bound to creation, inseparably and fatefully. The worlds of different cultures and faiths have not shown a desire to withdraw or stay silent when it comes to acknowledging the responsibility we all have for creation. Europe's holy places and traditions of prayer are powerful voices that call on us all to be determined and unyielding in our defence of what is holy in life.

To this groan, this call, and on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, I would like to add these words from Psalm 104: "When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground."

Handwritten signature of Kari Mäkinen in blue ink.

Kari Mäkinen

Archbishop





Introduction to the proceedings of the third workshop of the Delos Initiative in Inari/Aanaar, Lapland, Finland

Josep-Maria Mallarach, Thymio Papayannis and Rauno Väisänen

In order to provide to the reader with an introduction to the Proceedings of the third workshop of the Delos Initiative, it seems fitting, first, to present a short overview of what this Initiative is about, its goals, approach and accomplishments, and next, to discuss the purpose of the workshop, the reason for holding it in Northern Lapland, its development and programme.

The Delos Initiative: purpose, approach and accomplishments

To contribute to improve the conservation of sacred natural sites (SNS) in developed countries and thus to assist in maintaining both their natural and spir-

itual values, the Delos Initiative was launched in 2004 in the framework of the Task Force on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas of IUCN World Commission of Protected Areas. The Initiative was named after the Aegean island of Delos, a sacred site for both Greeks and Romans, dedicated to Apollo, the god of light, which was the centre of a long lasting Athenian Alliance. In ancient Greek the name Delos means 'towards the light'. Delos Island has no links to any single living faith.

The purpose of the Delos Initiative is to identify the pertinence and meaning of sacred natural sites and to investigate how spiritual values can contribute to

the conservation and wise use of natural areas in developed countries. The sacred natural sites in developing countries have received relatively much less public and scientific attention, e.g. by the IUCN/WCPA Task Force on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas (Wild and McLeod, 2008). The Delos Initiative was born to remind and recognise that such sacred natural sites exist also in many protected areas of the technologically developed countries, though often neglected or overlooked, and that they are facing specific challenges and need action, if we are to conserve their heritage for the future.

The Delos Initiative approach is mainly based on the standardised analysis of specific sites, chosen based on the criteria of relevance and representativeness. The idea is that if best practices can be identified and developed in highly significant sacred natural sites, these practices will easily spread to other sites by means of their different layers of radiance. The case studies chosen may either be important for world religions, the local or folk variations of them, or for the spiritual traditions of indigenous people or local communities.

Case studies are carefully analysed, usually by local experts, with the objective to assess their natural, cultural and spiritual values, to understand their specificities, how they are related to each other, what are their main stakeholders, often different for the different dimensions of the heritage, and also to identify threats and opportuni-

ties for improvement. The draft diagnose is discussed with various local stakeholders, so that a deeper comprehension of the issues could be achieved. Then, a certain number of recommendations is proposed to overcome the main issues identified, hopefully after discussion and consensus with the main stakeholders again. The results of this process are presented to a peer group and debated among its members, so that lessons of general interest can be extracted from them.

In parallel, theoretical work is carried out to understand the basic principles that the spiritual tradition has about the symbolic character of nature and in the sacredness of natural spiritual manifestations. At this level, the Delos Initiative attempts to assess their relevance and influence in various contexts and to propose and validate analogies and potential relationships.

These two approaches and the implementation of the lessons they provide have brought forward positive results for the conservation of sacred natural sites, in particular, as well as for nature in general in several countries.

Current case studies of the Delos Initiative include protected areas from virtually all IUCN management categories of protected areas. They are found in Europe, North America, Africa, Asia and Oceania, and related to the largest world religions and several primal spiritual traditions and folk religions. Most of these cases combine outstanding natural, cultural and spiritual values. All these sacred natural sites

have preceded the establishment of protected areas, often by several centuries, sometimes by thousands of years, and many of them have traditional custodians or guardians. Some are known by small communities, and have restrictions for access to outsiders, whilst others receive large numbers of pilgrims or visitors, numbering several million per year.

The Delos Initiative has previously held two workshops, the first one at the holy mountain of Montserrat, Catalonia, Spain in 2006, and the second at Ouranoupolis, next to the monastic republic of Mount Athos, Greece, in 2007. The work carried out during the first years was compiled in the proceedings of both workshops (Mallarach and Papayannis, 2007; Papayannis and Mallarach eds, 2010) and encapsulated in the Montserrat (2006) and Ouranoupolis Statements (2007). Thus, the purpose of organising the third Delos workshop in Inari in Finnish Lapland, in the Sámi homeland, was to bring in the Northern European dimension and, especially, and to familiarise with the culture of the indigenous Sámi people.

The conclusions of the work that has been done are being further evaluated and refined, so that guidance can be provided, initially to the managers of protected natural areas that include sacred sites, but which can also be of use to the custodians of these sites, and other concerned stakeholders. Specific Guidelines for sacred natural sites related to mainstream religions is a need recognised in the IUCN-UNESCO Guidelines

for Protected Area Managers on Sacred Natural Sites (Wild and McLeod, 2008), given that the existing guidelines focus on the sacred natural sites of indigenous and local communities.

Until the present day, most of the work of the Delos Initiative has been developed in Europe, either at bioregional or national levels, together with organisations such as the IUCN Landscape Task Force, the EUROPARC Federation, Eurosite, the Convention of the Carpathian Protected Areas, Mediterranean Ramsar sites, and the Protected Area Unit of the Romanian National Forest Administration (Romsilva). For instance, the Spanish Section of Europarc agreed to integrate the cultural and spiritual values in the planning and management of protected areas in the Programme of Work for Protected Areas of Spain 2009-13 (EUROPARC España, 2009), and currently specific guidance is being developed at the national level. Another example was the first Conference of the Carpathian Convention on Protected Areas in Romania in 2008, which approved the identification and characterisation of the Carpathian cultural identity in the protected areas, including spiritual, cultural and natural values, in the Programme of Work, and established a working group for the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of protected areas.

The Inari workshop

The third workshop of the Delos Initiative was held in Inari, Lapland, Finland, from 30 June to 4 July 2010. The theme

of the workshop was: *Diversity of sacred lands in Europe*. The workshop was organised and supported by the Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus, the Ministry of the Environment and the IUCN National Committee of Finland.

The workshop was attended by 30 participants from 14 countries: Estonia, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Greece, Norway, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and United Kingdom, including both expert members of the Delos Initiative and observers from Finland and Russia. This third workshop featured a higher number of case studies than the two previous workshops, including many that were highly significant themselves and/or to widen the representativeness.

The location

A short explanation of the place names is also in place. The venue of the workshop is Inari in Finnish. Inari is called Aanaar in Inari Sámi, Anár in North Sámi and Aanar in Skolt Sámi. Inari's

name in Swedish, Finland's second official national language is Enare.

Inari is a Finnish Sámi village and the Sámi administrative centre that has roughly the same area of the old *siida*, located at the shores of Lake Inari. The word *siida*, meaning Lapp village, was the basic unit of the Sámi community, consisting of single family units or extended families. Each *siida* had a clearly defined area. (Näkkäläjärvi, 2002). Inari is situated some 300 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, in the northern part of Lapland.

Traditionally, the Inari Sámi have been fishermen, hunters and gatherers (Lehtola, 2000). Nowadays, the traditional livelihoods are still important, but the Inari Sámi are mainly employed in similar occupations as the Finns.

The significance of Inari is multiple for the Sámi people. For many centuries this was the 'land of the three kings' of Sweden, Norway and Russia, an important trade post located at the crossroads (Lehtola, 2000). It is for this

Participants of the Delos3 Workshop visiting the outdoor section of the Sámi Museum.



unique position in Northern Lapland that Inari is the only village of Finland where three Sámi languages coexist, i.e. North Sámi, Inari Sámi and Skolt Sámi. Significant efforts are being done both by the Sámi communities and authorities and by the Finnish government to preserve this rich heritage in face of the pressures of standardisation and globalisation (Aikio, 2000).

Moreover, Inari is the closest village to one of the most important ancient Sámi sacred natural sites: Ukonsaari, i.e. the island of Ukko/Äijih, the ancient divinity of the thunder. This relevant sacred natural site was presented as a case study at the workshop held in Montserrat, Spain, in 2006 (Norokorpi and Ojanlatva, 2007).

The venue of the workshop was the auditorium of Siida - The Sámi Museum and Nature Centre which is the interpretation centre for the culture and the environment in Northern Lapland. This remarkable facility opened its doors in 1998, after long years of preparation involving numerous Sámi researchers. It was a milestone for the Sámi people, and their self-esteem, as well as an outstanding facility that provides one of the best exhibitions about the Sámi life and its relations to nature and the northern environment.

The Northern countries

Many people of the North, including the Sámi are not very willing to speak about spiritual matters, not because they are not significant to them, but because they are considered very personal, private and sacred. This is a quite common

attitude in cultures with consistent shamanistic backgrounds, which are mainly based on experiences, supported by oral tradition, and have little, if any, written records, and very limited development of theology and philosophy.

Studies conducted during the last few years showed that most visitors are attracted to protected areas of Finland, and also to other Scandinavian countries, not only to view or observe nature (plants, animals, landscapes), but also to have an experience of peace, harmony, grandeur, etc. showing that, even in those highly secularised countries, the immaterial values of nature continue to be highly significant for modern societies.

It is possible that this kind of attitude is also hidden in the spiritual motivation of many nature conservationists, although it may be covered by the science language and piles of technical data.

The programme

The workshop began on Thursday with the welcoming speeches of Rauno Väisänen, Director of Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services of Finland; Tarmo Jomppanen, Director of the Sámi Museum; and Klemetti Näkkäljärvi, President of the Saami Parliament. These initial speeches were not polite formalities, but conveyed important political and ethical messages, and for this reason they have been included verbatim.

This was followed by a session devoted to the Sámi people and their rela-

tion to nature. Jelena Porsanger began with an exploration about the Sámi religion and concept of nature; Tiina Äikäs explained the results of the excavations conducted in sacred sites of Lapland (*sieidi*), raising a significant discussion about the ethical implications and the ways how the ethical principles were taken into consideration during the research and afterwards.

The afternoon session was devoted to native and indigenous sacred lands. It featured three presentations. The first, by Ahto Kaasik, talked about the Estonian national strategy for SNS protection and the challenges for conserving the sacred hill of Hiiemägi. Next, Vykintas Vaitkevičius presented the Žemaitija National Park and the ancient sacred places of Mikytai, Lithuania. The last presentation, the only one from overseas, was about the Mayo Lands and indigenous communities, Mexico, by Bas Verschuuren.

On Friday, the first session was devoted to minority faiths in European countries and safeguarding natural and spiritual heritage. It featured a presentation about the little known Alevi-Bektashi Muslim communities found in Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and Turkey, by Irimi Lyratzaki. The next presentation, on Uvac-Milesevka Special Nature Reserve and Mileseva Monastery, Serbia, by Svetlana Dindarac, discussed the rich and complex reality of an outstanding sacred natural site located in the holy region of Raska, the heart of old Serbia, and the current revival of its religious significance. Thirdly, Juris Urtāns, presented the Zilais

Kalns (Blue hill) in the context of other ancient cult sites of Semigallia, Latvia, featuring a remarkable ancient holy natural site which is considered a national symbol by Latvian people, with a relevant record of actions for conservation, despite many pressures and impacts, and also a recent complex used for the rituals of followers of old Latvian traditions and neo-pagans.

The second session focussed on the management of sacred lands by mainstream churches. It featured three presentations. First, Vita de Waal presented an overview of the extraordinary number and diversity of sacred natural sites at the Parco Nazionale della Majella, Italy, from prehistoric times to the present. Next, Rob Wild presented the case study of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, one of Britain's foremost Christian Sacred Natural Sites, the only one where national ecological values overlap with national religious and historical values, discussing the revival of the Celtic Christian spirituality and the role of nature saints in it. Finally, Chiara Serenelli presented a landscape approach to the wetland of Colfiorito, a Ramsar site connected with the Via Lauretana, an old pilgrimage trail in Italy discussing the role that landscape planning has and may have on the conservation and restoration of the key heritage elements that make this site precious.

The third session focussed on the management of monastic communities. Thymio Papayannis presented an update about the preparation of an integrated management study for Mount Athos,

Greece, the only monastic republic of the world, in accordance with World Heritage Site Committee requirements. Next, Josep-Maria Mallarach made an overview presentation on the best practices and new trends on the management of monastic lands in Europe and Middle Eastern countries, summarizing a sixteen-century-old experience of community management which is still alive and vibrant in many countries.

On Saturday, the first session was devoted to explore the diversity of sacred natural sites in Europe, including three presentations. The first dealt with the amazing diversity and number of sacred natural sites found in the Carpathian Mountains, Romania, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Serbia, by Sebastian Catanoiu. The second, with the recovery of sacred sites in Scotland, by Alastair McIntosh, where the author, through personal eloquent histories stressed the need to enter into a dynamic relationship with Sacred Natural Sites to become more fully alive, participating in the responsibility to conserve and reactivate them, as part of spirituality of resurrection; of that which gives life as love made manifest. The last presentation, by Alexander Davydov, was also an overview of a variety of Orthodox Christian and indigenous sacred sites in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, including the most northern regions of Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway.

The two last sessions were not devoted to more case studies but to discuss and assess the validation of the 2008 IUCN-UNESCO Guidelines for Protect-

ed Area Managers of Sacred Natural Sites. This exercise allowed the active engagement of all the participants before and during the workshop. In the first session the work was carried in three parallel working groups, whilst in the second one the results of the three groups were presented and discussed, allowing the drawing of joint conclusions. Despite its limitations, this first attempt of assessing the applicability of the existing Guidelines for Sacred Natural Sites was an interesting learning exercise.

The concluding session was a lively discussion in order to identify the key points that were to be included in the Inari/Aanaar Statement, which was refined during the next few days, until it reached consensus.

The workshop included a guided visit to Siida - The Sámi Museum and Nature Centre, which features the evolution of the Sámi communities in this harsh but beautiful environment, their crafts and tools. In one of the rooms there was a temporary display of traditional Sámi drums, painted with symbolic designs and motives. There was also a visit to the open air museum, which features a good sample of different types of log homes and buildings that have been used in the Sámi area.

In addition, an interesting field visit was organised, with two parts, enjoying a sunny afternoon. The first part, by boat, took the participants to Lake Inari, sailing to the Ukonsaari/Äijih Island, where there were some interesting discussions about the need to set

limits to accessibility. The uniqueness of this ancient sacred natural site was made more apparent, as it were, thanks to the beautiful afternoon light and gorgeous views of the lake shores. The second part of the field trip, included a lovely walk through a wilderness area, from Pielpavuono Fjord to Pielpajärvi Wilderness Church, following a fairy-tale landscape of ancient forests, scattered with different types of wetlands. Once at the wilderness church, a wooden building dating from 1760, Vicar Arto Seppänen gave a speech to the participants on the relation of the Sámi and the Lutheran Church. Finally, after the last dinner in the Hotel Inarin Kultahovi a local cultural programme, including traditional Sámi yoik singing was offered to the participants.

The co-ordinators of the Delos Initiative want to express their profound gratitude to the Finnish Saami Parliament

and to the Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus for hosting the Workshop in Inari, with the support of the Ministry of Environment and the IUCN National Committee of Finland, and contributing with the Delos co-ordination to the organisation of the workshop. In particular, they are especially pleased by the excellent involvement of the Natural Heritage Services, the national agency in charge of protected areas, including the participation of the Director of the Natural Heritage Services to the entire workshop, as well as to the editing of the proceedings.

Finally, the three editors want to thank for the effective coordination and the careful linguistic review done by Liisa Nikula, Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services, which succeeded in producing a good quality English publication from manuscripts of very diverse quality.

Rock on the path to Pielpajärvi Wilderness Church



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Part One:

The Sámi people and their relation to nature



SIIDA

Greetings from the Saami Parliament

Juvvá Lemet – Klemetti Näkkäljärvi

The Constitution of Finland guarantees for the Saami the status of an indigenous people, the right to their own language and culture. The constitution grants Saami people cultural autonomy in Northern Finland in their homeland, which covers the municipalities of Enontekiö, Inari and Utsjoki and the northern part of Sodankylä.

The Saami Language Act protects the language, and the responsibilities of the Saami Parliament are specially set by law. The Saami are the only indigenous people in European Union. In Finland there are three Saami languages spoken: the North, Inari and Skolt Saami. All of the languages are spoken

in Inari municipality. There are around 9300 Saamis living in Finland. There are also Saami people living in Norway, Sweden and Russia and all together there are ca. 70 000 – 100 000 Saamis.

The traditional Saami livelihoods are reindeer herding, fishing, hunting, gathering and Saami handicrafts, Sámi Duodji. The only viable traditional livelihood is reindeer herding. Hunting and fishing have become secondary livelihoods. An important part of the Saami culture is the knowledge embedded in the language on places, nature, flora and fauna and the community's history. The Saami musical tradition, *yoik*, is an important part of our culture and the

< The President of the Saami Parliament participated in the Seminar and wished all the participants welcome to Sápmi.

yoik transmits the oral tradition to future generations. Although all the Saami people live in villages, attend Finnish schools and many are occupied outside traditional Saami livelihoods, the Saami culture's traditions are still very much alive.

The Saami society is facing threats. Over sixty percent of the Saami in Finland are living outside the traditional Saami homeland and as many as 70% of the Saami children are living outside the Saami homeland. For the future of the Saami culture the situation is threatening. The Saami living outside the Saami homeland do not get education in the Saami language and culture with a few exceptions. The connection to the Saami traditions and the traditional Saami livelihoods weaken when living outside the Saami homeland.

The Finnish Saami Parliament was established in 1995. There are Saami Parliaments in Norway and Sweden as well. The Saami Parliament is a political organ. Every four years 21 Saami are elected to the Saami Parliament. The Saami Parliament mainly works by giving statements, and by negotiating with officials. All the time the Parliament is trying to improve the legal status of the Saami. It also provides funding for services provided in the Saami language in the social and health sector, to Saami organisations and culture, and for the production of learning materials in the Saami language. The Saami Parliament has an office in Inari and side offices in Enontekiö and Utsjoki. There are around 30 people working in the Saami Parliament. A new Saami Cultural Cen-

tre is under construction in Inari. It is called Sajos and it should be completed in 2012. The building will also house the Saami Parliament and offer other services as well.

The Saami Parliament was very happy that the third Delos Workshop was organised in the Saami homeland and especially in Inari, which is a home of the three Saami cultures. The *Áddjá*, Ukko in Finnish, is probably the most well-known Saami *sieidi* in Finland. The *sieidi* is a sacred place for the Saami people. A *sieidi* is usually a natural object that is usually of stone and unshaped by human. Sacred sites and the meanings associated with them are a part of the ethnic identity of the Saami, and they have played a role in the creation of the Saami environmental relationship. *Sieidis* are evidence of social organisation and of a process of getting a grip of the environment of the surrounding reality. *Sieidis* have functioned as part of the Saami people's environmental relationship. When asking the *sieidi*, for example, for help in hunting or fishing, it is important that the *sieidi* as well will be offered respect and benefit through sacrifice. The people and the Gods had mutual respect; and the Saami people would not try to control the force of nature or Gods at all. The Saami have offered usually meat, fish, antlers, metal and coins to the *sieidi*.

Áddjá has been a sacred place for the Aanaar Saami people during centuries. *Áddjá* is a perfect Delos case study site. Inari municipality is planning on having a lot of tourist attractions and resort villages built around

Lake Inari. Some of them are planned to be built near Áddjá. For the Saami people this development is unwelcome. It's important that the religious site and its surrounding environment are protected from mass tourism.

The Saami traditional religion, shamanism has evolved together with the Saami culture and livelihoods. Nature is an important part of the Saami shamanistic religion. The Saami attitude towards nature can be described as an attitude of unity, in other words, man is seen as a part of nature, not as holding power over it.

The Saami religion that has helped the Saami people to survive in nature has almost disappeared. When the colonialists came to the Saami area, the Saami religion was rapidly forbidden and also the traditions linked to shamanism disappeared. The Saami people were forced to abandon their religion and convert to Christianity. Our knowledge of the Saami religion is thin, because the oral tradition was lost. And, that is something that no science can bring back. Luckily, at least *sieidis* and their meaning have survived through the assimilation process.

Although shamanism was replaced by Christianity, the *sieidis* continue to be an important part of the Saami cultural heritage, and knowledge of the *sieidis* has been passed on from one generation to the other. Many of the Saami *sieidis* are well known. However, there are still many *sieidis* that are only known by members of the community. The Saami people have wanted to

keep the knowledge private, and the privacy of the Saami people's spiritual beliefs has to be respected. In recent years there has been quite a lot of discussion on who can study sacred sites of the indigenous people, who should benefit from the studies and how the research should be conducted.

The approval of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 is meaningful when considering guidance on how to conduct research in sacred sites. The Declaration states in article 11 that 'indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalise their cultural traditions and customs. It includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature'. Furthermore, article 12 states that 'indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains'.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a powerful document and it obligates different stakeholders to respect the spiritual beliefs and places of indigenous peoples. I hope that the Declaration will be implemented in Finland and in other countries as well.

For researchers and indigenous people, it is important that common guidelines are set on how sacred sites of indigenous people should be studied. Finland, like all of the other European Union Countries, has ratified the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. For indigenous people the Convention is highly important. Article 8(j) of the Convention protects the traditional knowledge of Saami linked in natural resources. Finland has begun the implementation of Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The purpose of the work is to secure the safeguarding of the traditional Saami knowledge. The working group will complete its work in summer 2011. The Saami expect that the proposals to be made by the working group will help safeguard the traditional Saami knowledge.

A code of ethical conduct was approved in the Conference of the Parties

to the Convention on Biological Diversity in autumn 2010. The code gives guidance when working in areas where indigenous people are inhabited, where their traditional areas are located or in connection to their sacred sites. When studying indigenous cultures and their heritage, it is important to take the research ethics into serious consideration. For indigenous people it is especially important that they can approve the research methods and aims, and be aware of the research results. The code of ethical conduct states that the information obtained from the research with indigenous people should be shared with them in understandable and culturally appropriate formats, with a view to promote inter-cultural exchanges, knowledge and technology transfer. Perhaps in future the Delos Initiative should consider these aspects as well.





SIIDA

Words of welcome

Tarmo Jomppanen

The Sámi Museum Siida was founded as early as in 1959, and it opened for the public for the first time on Midsummer Day in 1963. For more than three decades, the Museum was a facility that stayed open only during the summer. Today, the Open-Air Museum hosts almost 50 original Sámi buildings and constructions, as well as relevant reconstructions, and it still constitutes a popular part of the exhibitions that Siida provides to the public on the Sámi culture and northern nature.

In 1998, when the new Siida Building was completed, the Sámi Museum became a facility that was able to run professionally. At the beginning of 1999, the Finnish Ministry of Education granted the Sámi Museum Siida the status of a national special museum. During the past

12 years, the museum assumed an increasing number of new and diversified tasks. The Sámi Museum has launched regional activities in the Sámi Area: in Western Lapland in Hetta in the municipality of Enontekiö and in Eastern Lapland in Sevettijärvi, which is the centre of the Skolt Sámi culture. Our third regional office will be established in a few years time at the Ailigas Institute in Utsjoki in the northern part of the Sámi Area.

The Sámi Museum Siida aims at developing the activities of the museum so that it will take care of the tasks dealing with the Sámi in the museum field. As the cultural institutions of the Sámi are very young, this will, in practice, require a redistribution of the resources and the recording and documentation responsibilities.

At present, the Sámi Museum Siida is already responsible for collecting and recording the material cultural heritage of the Sámi related to historic times. The National Museum of Finland does not expand its Sámi collections anymore, and there has been an agreement with the Provincial Museum of Lapland that the Sámi Museum bears the main responsibility in this sphere.

At the moment, the Sámi Museum has not reached a final solution on how to divide the responsibilities of managing the prehistoric cultural heritage and cultural landscapes, but it is proceeding towards an agreement.

The entire Sámi Area, or Sámi Homeland, can be considered a Sámi cultural landscape. This wide region still has a great number of areas that have not been surveyed, as well as many cultural monuments and sites that have not been registered yet. The number of archaeological inventory surveys conducted in the Sámi Area is small when compared to the number of such surveys carried out elsewhere in Finland. As a result of mining, the infrastructure necessitated by tourism and the economic use of forests, the pressures on land use in Lapland have increased. To survey the area archaeologically, we need both expertise and more resources than we have now.

What is a Sámi cultural environment?

In the Sámi community, the terms 'cultural environment' and 'cultural land-

scape' are understood more comprehensively than in the case of traditional cultural landscapes. The cultural landscape of the Sámi consists of an environment built by people, but also of immaterial, symbolic culture created by people. Such a cultural environment includes, for example, the communal knowledge of the right to use certain areas and routes, place names, stories, yoiking, beliefs and narratives – and a vocabulary in the native language which makes communication on these issues possible.

Understanding this necessity is extremely important, especially when the management and protection of the cultural environment and heritage of the Sámi are concerned. It is also crucial to remember that, in terms of culture, the Sámi Area is not homogenous. From the point of view of cultural environments, there are differences in natural conditions and sources of livelihood; the Sámi groups are also different in terms of their visual cultures, cultural contacts, belief traditions, customs and languages.

Until now, tasks that deal with Sámi cultural environments have mainly been taken care of through relevant projects. During the inventory project, a clear need for a permanent Sámi cultural environment unit became evident.

The mapping of the Sámi cultural heritage and the cultural environments related to it must be an ongoing process. There are a great number of cultural environments in our area that are

threatened. It is extremely important to locate the sites which no longer show any visual signs of use, but which we know that are still there according to narrative tradition. One of the characteristics of the Sámi cultural environments is that the old way of living and moving did not necessarily leave traces in nature – therefore, the natural surroundings of many cultural sites look completely untouched.

For years, the founding of a Sámi Cultural Environment Unit has been one of the most important goals of the Sámi Museum. The Finnish Sámi Parliament, too, has been very active in this regard, supporting the establishment of such a unit in its statements to different authorities. We have now taken a step forward in this matter, as a three-year pilot project called Sámi Cultural Environments will be launched at the beginning of 2011. As the name suggests, the project will carry out activities that deal with Sámi cultural environments.

The Sámi Museum Foundation has been granted EU funding for 2.5 years by the Regional Council of Lapland for a project called *Ealli biras – Elävä ympäristö* ('Living Environment'). One of the objectives of the project is to draw up a Sámi Cultural Environment Programme for the Sámi Area. The project will employ a coordinator with expertise in Sámi cultural environments. Through special funding from the Min-

istry of Education, the project will also engage an archaeologist.

The Cultural Environment Unit will operate under the auspices of the Sámi Museum Siida. It has already been agreed that during the pilot project, the National Board of Antiquities will delegate tasks concerning the management and protection of cultural environments to this office. In Finland, the National Board of Antiquities has so far made similar agreements with a number of provincial museums.

Another objective of the pilot project is to draw up an operations model for the Sámi Cultural Environment Unit together with the Sámi Parliament, the National Board of Antiquities, the Ministry of Education and the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY) in Lapland.

Our goal is to ensure permanent funding for the Cultural Environment Unit so that its activities will be carried out on a permanent basis from the beginning of 2014 onwards.

I would like to welcome the Delos Workshop here in the midst of a Sámi cultural landscape, which has been influenced by all the three different Sámi cultures and ways of life that coexist in the municipality of Inari: the Inari Sámi, the Skolt Sámi and the North Sámi cultures.



Indigenous Sámi religion: General considerations about relationships

Jelena Porsanger

The indigenous religion of the Sámi people displays the relationship between humans and everything in creation, which can be called by the concept of 'Nature'. This close relationship has traditionally been reciprocal, and can be considered as the very basis of the indigenous Sámi religion.

Indigenous Sámi religion

Indigenous religion is a frequently used concept in the history of religion nowadays (see Harvey, 2000, 2002; Olupona, 2004). The concept includes religions that do not have a historical origin, such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism or other world religions, and that

do not belong to any of the so-called revivalist movements.

The concept of indigenous religion points to the original starting point of a religion, its persistent nature and a distinctive tradition which is characteristic for a particular people, alongside an ongoing process of change. In the history of research, terms and concepts like 'the historical religions of literary cultures' (Pentikäinen 1998) or 'literary religions' have been used to describe the world religions, while the concept of 'indigenous religions' represents religions which have been practiced by peoples mostly without a tradition of writing, e.g. Rydving (1993, 1995) and Braun and McCutcheon, 2000).

The concept of indigenous religions is used in Asia, America, Africa, Oceania, Australia and other parts of the world, where indigenous people are found practicing their own religion. The first part of the term 'indigenous religion' points to the original belonging of a religion. 'Home' or 'belonging to a home place' are connotations for the term indigenous. This concept leads to the notion of being produced or living naturally in a particular region in geographical, ethnic, or religious sense (Long 2004, 89).

Present day researchers of religions have abandoned such terms as 'primitive', 'pre-Christian', 'heathen', 'illiterate' and 'oral'. Academic religious research has traditionally focussed on issues that were quite distant from those that indigenous peoples themselves considered as indigenous religion. In connection with the Sámi indigenous religion, a sample of abandoned descriptive terms would include the following terms: 'the Lapps' idolarity', 'witchcraft and superstitions', 'the Lapps' religion', 'the earlier Sámi heathen belief and superstitions', 'the original or 'primitive' heathen religion of the Lapps' or 'Sámi Pre-Christian Religion' (Rydving (1993, 1995). These concepts are no longer in use. For the study of the Sámi spiritual culture in the Sámi language, using a Sámi approach, a new Sámi term has been proposed - *sámi eamioskkoldat* (in the North Sámi language, see Porsanger 2007). The concept of the Sámi indigenous religion emphasises the connection between the spiritual heritage

and the ongoing process of change in the spiritual life of the Sámi people, the central importance of the elders and ancestors as the carriers and teachers of the Sámi traditions, as well as embodying an inseparable unification of people and nature.

The concept of nature

The Sámi have traditionally had a different notion of nature than, for example, urban people. The Sámi concept of nature implies relationships, reciprocity, and a notion of power, both for humans and for the whole surrounding world. There is no one single Sámi word, which is equivalent to the Western concept of nature. Instead, there is a variety of terms for what the Sámi considered as nature. That is why the term nature is used in this text in quotation marks. For nature one can find, for example, in North Sámi, the term of *luondu*, which implies the character of somebody or something, like *beatnaga luondu* 'the nature of a dog', *olbmo luondu* 'character of a human', *luondubiras* 'surrounding environment' etc. The term *meahcci* implies territories and recurses outside peoples' permanent living places, but there is a diversity of meanings of this concept (Schanche, 2002).

Nature traditionally has been for the Sámi both a physical and spiritual entity, and humans are a natural part of it. For the Sámi, nature represents at the same time a home, a way of life, the source of survival, continuity and oral history, the present and the future. Tra-

ditionally, the aim of the Sámi people has not been to make the most efficient use of the natural resources as a source of income, but rather to use them rationally in a sustainable way, as survival in the North depends on the renewal of the riches of nature.

The values and norms regarding nature that the Sámi learn already as children are especially crucial today both for the Sámi themselves and for the world, in general. Many indigenous peoples nowadays bring forward their values and understandings of their relationships with the natural environment. They emphasise that holistic understanding of the relationships practised by many indigenous peoples can teach the world a lesson about sustainability, balance and respect in the time of climate change and environmental problems.

The Sámi have traditionally had a holistic understanding of relationships with nature. This can be exemplified by the concept of 'maintenance of life', used in the daily language by the North Sámi nowadays. This is a concept of *birgejupmi*, which is associated with people (both individuals and collectives), natural resources, physical, spiritual and psychical health, and implies a close connection between the landscape, environment, and ecosystems and the social and spiritual healthy development and identity, belonging. *Birgejupmi* for a person or community means ways to manage and to have good life socially, economically, spiritually and in respect to health.

Reciprocity and dialogue

The traditional Sámi outlook on life is based on notions that reflect the relationship between humans, animals, non-human beings, nature, gods and other powers. In this relationship humans and nature are not opposed to each other. Rather, humans are an integral part of nature. On the other hand, nature – both physically and spiritually – is a part of the nature of humans and a source of strength for humans. The weakening of this reciprocal relationship and disruption of this balance may decrease the strength of humans.

On an individual and collective level, the relationship to the internal and external world is maintained through rituals. These rituals keep the order of life in balance, which is very important for the survival of the community. Balance has been traditionally maintained by the Sámi people through rituals, by following normative patterns of behaviour, and established practices, by showing respect, and through a dialogue on both an individual and collective level. By following rules and normative patterns of behaviour people function, Sámi think and feel that they can achieve something. Especially in the worldview of the northern people, the well-being of both humans and nature depends on the balance between them. In Sámi spirituality and tradition both humans and nature are living and active interdependent beings. That is why a constant dialogue between these parts is necessary. Nature and everything that is part of it can be spoken to directly or indirectly. For example, in the

Kola Sámi oral tradition it is natural to say 'You, my grandmother River', 'Thank you, old woman Lake' etc. The relationship between humans and everything in creation is not only personal, but also has a moral meaning – the world around us is ethical and just.

Natural phenomena and spirits of nature

In Sámi cosmology, many natural phenomena were considered universal, independent of people. These included, for example, the Midnight Sun, the Northern lights (*aurora borealis*), and the thunder rumbling during short summer. In Sámi cosmography, each of these had a role in explaining the origin and structure of the universe and the concept of time. It is worth mentioning that the traditional Sámi concept of time is not linear, but circular. For example, according to oral tradition, cosmic hunting of a wild reindeer or elk has happened since the beginning of the world and will never end. The hunters – in some stories the thunder god, in others the Sámi forefathers who invented skis and became stars (*Gállá bártnit* 'sons of Gállá' in North Sámi, three stars in the star constellation known as the Orion Belt) – can never reach the animal. That is why the thunder god is shooting his arrows (lightning, *tiirmes tool* 'fire of thunder god' in Kildin Sámi) from year to year. The constellation of *Gállá bártnit* never comes closer to the constellation of the Elk on the northern sky, but the hunters arise to the sky each evening trying to

reach the Elk, which is constantly moving away from them. These movements and happenings are a part of the cycle of the universe.

Sámi people are aware of natural spirits and the realms that they control (see for example Bäckman, 1975; Por-sanger, 1997a). In the names of natural spirits we find a reflection of the Sámi philosophy: one of the North Sámi terms for spirit *vuoigŋa* is connected to the verb *vuoigŋat* 'breathe', as it is in many other cultures and languages. In the eastern Sámi languages names of natural spirits are compounds in which the word for 'natural spirit' can be translated as living being, creature, dweller, and inhabitant. The first part of the compound comes from the place where the spirit lives: for example, 'water creature' or 'mountain dweller'.

Natural spirits are not considered to be supernatural, physically invisible spirits or masters; they are creatures that live in the surrounding area; they are a part of living nature. Nature follows its own laws, and people need to know its way of life. The natural spirits must be taken into consideration when one settles on a new place, starts to fish, goes to hunt, or lives on a lake or a river. People need to follow certain rules to maintain the balance of nature in their nearest environment. The natural spirits control the way humans use nature.

Offerings

The relationship with nature and its forces is not submissive but active.

Humans can, when necessary, influence the powers of nature by giving, offering, sharing, asking, promising, taking care of, showing respect to, or assuming the shapes of animals.

Offerings were made to the natural spirits only when necessary: for example, when a spirit was known to be angry because people had broken some rule. One did not ask spirits for help, but for goodwill and patience while one stayed in their area. Every geographical place was considered an entity in which the physical dimension was in balance with the spiritual one. Both aspects needed to be taken into consideration when making a living. Therefore, the ideas about natural spirits are closely linked to the Sámi way of life.

Human beings know that natural powers influence their success in hunting and fishing, and they must therefore ask these powers to be kind and helpful. That is why individuals, families and communities found places to worship these powers.

The term *bassebáiki* 'sacred place' in North Sámi is often used in literature and means a place reserved for worship or considered sacred. These places are meant for the establishment and maintenance of a connection between humans, the natural environment and the powers of nature. The term *bálvvošbáiki* can be translated as 'a place for offering'. The term *sieidi* (North Sámi, but known in all Sámi languages) designates the object of worship, especially a rock. In sacred places, offerings were made to enhance

fishing and hunting, to protect reindeer herds, to bring good weather, to ensure good health, to ask a certain natural power to help people achieve what the people want.

The significance of sacred places is not found in the spirit or god controlling the place or the livelihood, nor in the offering or worship itself, but in the power of the thing worshipped. People live through the powers of nature, but they also live within these natural powers, as they do not separate themselves from nature and its powers. The aim of offering is to maintain the internal reciprocal relationship between nature and the people by seeking mutual benefit. When asking for goodwill or help of the natural powers, one must remember to strengthen the power through offerings and tokens of respect. Thus, the power of human beings and the power of nature are seen as interdependent.

Experts

The establishment of a contact with the powers of nature can require special expertise. For this purpose there are experts who can act on behalf of a person, a family or a whole community. Instead of the term of shamanism, which has been used in the study of religions, the Sámi term of *noaidevuohta* was introduced in the 1990s to the study of indigenous Sámi religion by Professor Håkan Rydving (1993, 1995). *Noaidevuohta* ('shamanism') is not considered a form of religion or a practical aspect of a special naturalis-

tic religion today; it is thought to be linked with the way of life and culture of a people. The Sámi *noaidevuohta* is based on the worldview of a people who are dependent upon nature, and it is in harmony with the environment, and the economic and social structures. The Sámi *noaidevuohta* is not just a collection of rites and practices and folklore that explains these structures, but a way of perceiving the world around oneself and acting in it.

The term of *shaman* is not suitable for the Sámi tradition, since there are own indigenous terms for spiritual experts and leaders. In North Sámi, *noaidi* is a term for spiritual experts, men and women, who are better than others at contacting the powers of nature and the world beyond. There are also different kinds of spiritual 'experts', 'those who can see', 'those who know', medicine men etc., and there is a variety of terms for different spiritual experts.

The Sámi *noaidi* was the most important member of the community. *Noaidis* were the ones who maintained the world order among the people – in the life of the community and individuals. They were in contact with the world beyond through their ecstatic experiences. In the Sámi tradition, as in the shamanistic tradition of many other northern peoples, the *noaidi* acted on behalf of the community in order to guarantee good luck in hunting and fishing, to protect the community's lands and waters, and to enhance the well-being of the community. They foretold the future, made contact with the world be-

yond, inquired about secret things, and were healers.

The strength of the Sámi *noaidi* traditionally lay in the fact that they had to master the laws of natural powers. They had to understand how the surrounding forces and the internal power of people influence each other, so that they could use these forces for the good of their community, while at the same time insuring that powers of nature were not depleted.

Holistic understanding

The definition of religion can be connected to a clarification of how individuals and societies define their place in respect to the power or powers which decide the fate and destinies of people (Rydving (1993, 1995). For more scholarly discussions about definitions of religion, see Platvoet and Molendijk (1999), Braun and McCutcheon (2000). In the indigenous Sámi religion, a close and reciprocal relationship to the powers of nature plays a central role. Everything in the world has been seen as interrelated. The main idea of the Sámi philosophy and worldview comes clearly from the Sámi religious tradition connected to offerings, sacrificial places, sacred mountains, waters, natural phenomena and spirits, world of animals, spiritual experts and their activities. The surrounding forces of nature and the internal power of individuals and communities influence each other. Individuals and communities need to maintain bal-

ance in order to make their living and to ensure their well-being. This presupposes that people think about the world and themselves in a holistic and reciprocal way. This understanding is found in the present-day language use. The above mentioned concept of *birgejupmi*, 'maintenance of life', describes a holistic Sámi understanding of well-being and survival and interdependence of everything in the world.

For a more complete explanation of the indigenous Sámi religion the author suggests the following articles: Kulonen et al. (2005), Rydving (2003, 2004, and 2010), Pentikäinen (1997 and 2002) and Porsanger (1997b, 1999, 2000a, and 2000b).

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Archaeology of sieidi stones. Excavating sacred places

Tiina Äikäs

Introduction

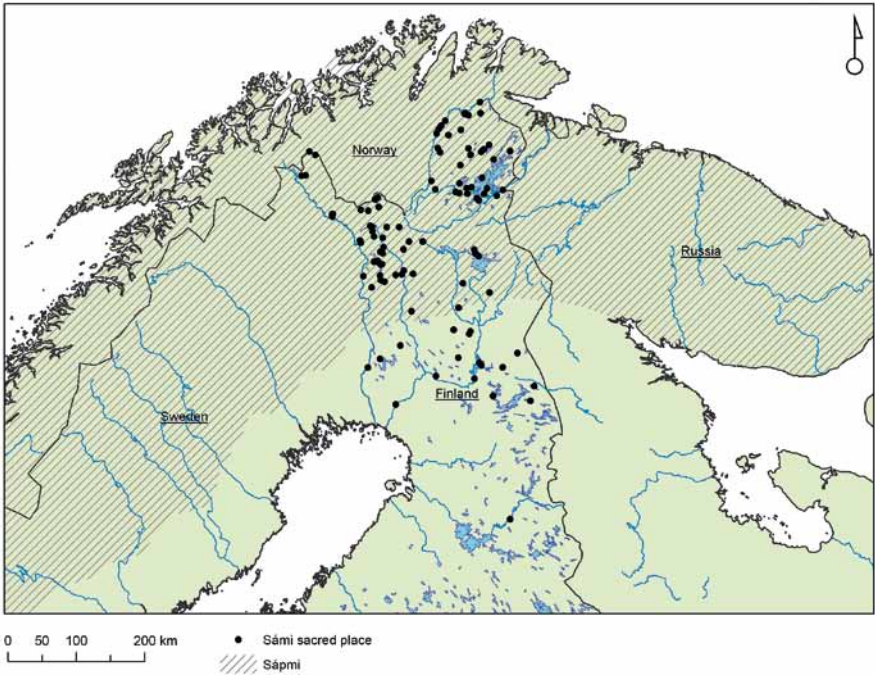
The sacred places of the Sámi indigenous people take myriad forms. They include sacred mountains and fells, lakes, and islands. The most well known phenomena are the offering stones called *sieidi* (in North Sámi). Offerings connected to livelihoods, such as fishing, hunting, and reindeer herding have been left to these stones. Archaeological research at *sieidi* sites has revealed a continuum of a living and changing offering tradition. Nevertheless, while excavating sacred sites, certain things need to be taken into consideration. These include the possible reburial of finds, the returning of knowledge, and respect to the places. Discretion is in

place, since Sámi sacred places are still important for different groups of people. This raises questions about the use and protection of these places.

Sieidi – an offering stone of the Sámi

This paper offers an archaeological perspective on the study of the sacred sites. The author is an archaeologist writing her dissertation on the sacred landscape of the Sámi. As a part of the project, fieldwork has been conducted in Northern Finland excavating Sámi offering places. This has led the author to reflect on the ethical issues concerning archaeology of the sacred places.

< Researcher at the Sieddesaiva sieidi.



A map of the distribution on Sámi sacred sites in Northern Finland and the present Sámi area, Sápmi.

The Sámi are the indigenous people of northern Finland, Sweden, Norway, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. Traditionally, they have subsisted on hunting, fishing, gathering food from nature, and later, reindeer herding. The ethnic religion of the Sámi was, in general terms, characterised by personal as well as communal spirituality and its interconnectivity with one's own daily life, and a deep connection between the natural and spiritual worlds. The term ethnic religion is used since it describes best the worldview that was not pre-Christian, but survived also after contacts with Christianity. Another possible term would be indigenous re-

ligion, but it has connotations to a static belief system that could not have been preceded by another. There are also problems concerning the term religion itself. It is a theoretical concept given from outside the culture by researchers and might not be the best term to describe the Sámi worldview.

The Sámi ethnic religion was visible in the landscape in myriad ways, and sacred and profane activities were intertwined (Äikäs et al., 2009). Carpelan (2003: 77–78) has divided Sámi sacred sites broadly into three classes: terrain formation, natural objects, and structures. The first group consists of

fell tops, rock formations, islands, lakes, and headlands. Natural objects are stones, springs, and small caves or clefts. The third group includes carved stubs, erected stones, wooden poles, and stone circles. The latter are an exception since Sámi sacred places usually have not been modified by human hand, as the Sámi saw sacredness in the landscape as it was.

The feature that has raised most interest in the Sámi sacred landscape are the offering stones called *sieidi*. They consist of wooden poles or more often of stones unshaped by human hand. The stones could vary in size and form. They could be ten metres high rock formations or less than a metre high small stones. Sometimes they were anthropomorphic or took other peculiar forms. *Sieidi* stones were often situated on the slopes of fells or by the shores of lakes (Äikäs, 2011). Sacrifices at *sieidi* places were strongly connected to the livelihood of the Sámi (Mebius, 2003: 11–12). Fish was sacrificed before fishing expeditions, game meat before hunting, and reindeer meat was offered by reindeer herders. In addition, cheese, porridge, alcohol, and metal objects were offered and sacrifices also took place when help was asked, for example, during sickness or pregnancy (Äimä, 1903: 115; Itkonen, 1948: 312; Manker, 1957: 88; Rydving, 1993: 104–106; Sköld, 1999: 66; Mebius, 2003: 141). The relationship between a *sieidi* and a human was reciprocal (Schanche, 2004: 5). Hence sacrifices were usually promised before the hunt or fishing trip, and



A wooden pole on top of Kussuolinkivaara in Sodankylä.

if the trip was successful, the offerings were taken to the *sieidi*. But if the trip was not successful, the *sieidi* could be destroyed (Paulaharju, 1932: passim).

The archaeological material that is left from the ritual activities at a *sieidi* usually consists of animal bones mainly from the same animals that were also important for livelihood. In the material from Finland e.g. reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*), sheep (*Ovis aries*) or goat (*Capra hircus*), capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), and fish bones, including pike (*Esox lucius*), trout (*Salmo trutta*) and perch (*Perca fluviatilis*) were found (Äikäs, 2011; Salmi *et al.*, 2011). In Sweden and Norway metal objects, including jewellery and coins can also be found, but in Finland there are only



A *sieidi* stone with anthropomorphic features in Porviniemi, Muonio.

rare examples of metal finds from *sieidís* (Hedman, 2003: passim; Fossum, 2006: passim; Okkonen, 2007). The only metal finds from Finland come from the Inari area. There are also instances when ritual activities leave no traces in the archaeological material (Salmi *et al.*, 2011).

During the period 2008–2010 excavations were carried out at seven *sieidi* sites as a part of the project *Human-animal relationships among Finland's Sámi 1000–1800 A.D.* (Academy of Finland:1122623). The sites excavated in 2008 were Sieiddakeäđgi in Utsjoki, Näkkälä in Enontekiö, and Taatsi in Kittilä; in 2009 Koskikaltiojoen suu in Inari and Porviniemi and Kirkkopahta in Muonio, and in 2010 Dierpmesvárrí in Enontekiö. In addition, a survey was conducted around a sacred lake or *sáiva* called Äkässaivo in Muonio.

Ethical consideration on the studies of sacred places

Even though sacred places are not always strictly set apart from, in Western terms, profane activities (Äikäs, in press A), sacredness is usually something that demands special rules and ways of behaviour. The use of sacred places can be controlled by norms and rules. For example, for the Australian aboriginals some places are so sacred, powerful, and dangerous that people should not visit them. Hence, archaeologists may give offence just by wandering around them. Even more disturbing are excavations, where earth is removed and hidden objects are revealed. (Colley, 2002: 75.) This raises the question whether archaeologists can do research on sacred sites on an ethically sound basis.

Nevertheless, not in all cases do the locals want to ban archaeologists from sacred sites. Sometimes people are keen

to know more about the way their ancestors have used the offering places and welcome the information that archaeological research can provide. There can be different opinions about how acceptable archaeological research is, even within the same community. This is why it is important that archaeologists take a moment to consider the ethical framework of their research before they charge to study sacred sites.

Before the fieldwork of the above-mentioned project started, the Saami Parliament (*Sámedigg*) was consulted. It was agreed that the local media should be primarily informed about the results and that all bones were to be returned to the *sieidis* after the project. The reburial of the bones has been much debated especially where human remains were concerned (e.g. Ubelaker & Guttenplan Grant, 1989; Goldstein & Kintigh, 1990). The cultural context is also vital regarding sacrificed objects which are left at sacred sites. For example, the Zunis of Pueblo tribes, USA, demanded the returning of their sacred objects called *Ahayu* from museums to their sanctuaries, for they believed that the turmoil of the world was due to the removal of the *Ahayu* from their place (Ladd, 2001). In the case of the *sieidi* sites, the attitude towards sacrificial remains might have been more situational. There are examples of *sieidi* stones from which the offered bones have been cleared away. For example, in Sieiddakeädgi the majority of the bones were found downhill further away from the *sieidi* and not directly by the stone where the offerings were

most often placed (Salmi *et al.*, 2011). Written sources give information about the removal of the bones, for example, in cases where there was no more room for new offerings. But there are also examples of misfortunes that followed those who had removed offerings from *sieidis*. (e.g. Paulaharju, 1932: *passim*.) In the case of archaeological research, the returning of the bones was seen proper. An osteologist participated in all excavations, and the identification of archaeological animal bone material was conducted in the field, aided by the osteology atlases and a photograph reference collection. Then, some bones were left at the sites, but when the number of finds was big, all the bones were taken and samples for further analyses were selected at a later time. The bones that were re-

A concentration of bones and the *sieidi* stone in Sieiddakeädgi, Utsjoki.





Osteologist Anna-Kaisa Salmi identifying the bones with archaeologist Eeva Miettinen photographing them in Koskikaltiojoen suu, Inari.

moved from the sites will be returned to the *sieidis* when fieldwork comes to an end in the summer of 2011.

During the excavations, the work was aimed at preserving as much of the site as possible intact. The interventions were limited to small areas of approximately one square metre. While studying the area of the ritual practices in Sieiddakeädgi, 30x30 cm test pits were made around the stone. The excavations were stopped whenever the researchers came across a bone. In this way the project researchers obtained the information about the location of the bones without moving them.

Prior to the excavations, students participating in the fieldwork were advised to behave appropriately at the sites. The project team wanted to show re-

spect to these places. During the excavations, the local media was informed of the interesting findings. The results of the fieldwork were also shared with locals in public seminars. However, still more could be done to reach the locals more effectively, also in the Sámi language. Informing the local population of the results of a research is an important aspect when studying indigenous cultural heritage. Otherwise scientific colonialism may be considered as another form of colonialist practices (Kupiainen, 1997: passim; Nicholas & Hollowell, 2007: passim).

Different visitors at sieidi sites

Sieidi sites are of interest also to other groups than the local Sámi. During the excavations many marks were found, a sign of recent visits to these sites. The bone finds evidence ceased in the seventeenth century (Äikäs, 2011; Salmi *et al.*, 2011) but the sites were not abandoned by that time. The written sources indicate that people left, for example, coins to the *sieidis* even in the twentieth century (Paulaharju, 1932: passim; Kjellström, 1987: 24–33). There are no finds from Finland indicating the use of *sieidi* sites during the eighteenth century, but from the nineteenth century onwards the finds appear again. The green bottle glass from Sieiddakeädgi and four coins from the end of the nineteenth century indicate that these sites were used during that time. The more recent, post-1950s, finds are more varied. They include coins, personal ob-

jects, cigarettes, alcohol, candles, and quartzite. These modern finds can broadly be divided into two groups: some of them continue the old offering tradition and others seem to mark new practices (Äikäs, 2011; Äikäs, in press B).

The modern finds were left for different purposes. Some of the finds including coins, alcohol, personal objects, and meat are related to the old offering traditions (cf. Paulaharju, 1932: 14; Sköld, 1999: passim; Wallerström, 2000: 18; Fossum, 2006: passim). In some cases, the locals might want to respect the old ways of leaving offerings. On the other hand, for example, coins and alcohol could also have been left by tourists. There is a common habit to

A slice of cold smoked reindeer meat from Äkässaivo, Muonio



leave coins as a part of touristic civic ritual to fountains and other special places. Among tourists that go fishing it is not unusual to make alcohol offerings (<http://www.eralieht.fi/keskustelu/t4986>). Additionally, fishing lures that are left to some *sieidi* stones are most likely left by fishermen – either tourists or locals (Hirvonen, 2007: 85). Pieces of Thermos flask and remains of energy drink bottles at *sieidi* sites on fell region tell about visits during hiking trips.

There are also finds that might imply new offering traditions. Three of the most well marked and most easily accessible sacred places, Äkässaivo, Taatsi and Kirkkopahta, revealed finds that can have similarities with neo-pagan customs. These discoveries include cones, a quill, a tied bunch of spray, candles, and quartzite that could be considered as a local version of rock crystal. Finds are similar with those that are used by neo-pagans in Britain (Wallis 2003: passim; Blain & Wallis 2007: passim). Neo-pagans are known to give similar offerings also in Finland and to visit the well known *sieidi* sites (Informant 2009, pers. comm.).

Whose heritage?

The fact that *sieidi* sites have been and still are important for a number of different people raises the question of access: who is allowed to use them and how. As archaeological sites, they are protected by law and this might be seen as contradictory to their modern use. Are the new offerings that locals and tourists leave at the sites rubbish



The participants of the Delos3 Workshop and the wooden constructions in Ukonsaari/Äijih Island, Inari.

destroying the sacred site (cf. Wallis, 2003: 170) or a vital part of the site's biography?

According to tradition, at some sites there might also be limitations concerning who is allowed to visit the *sieidi*. Written sources mention sacred sites where access to women is forbidden and others that were only used by certain individuals (Paulaharju, 1932; Itkonen, 1948). Should modern visitors still obey these rules or should they be only applied to traditional custodians of sacred sites? In some cases visitors can also damage the environment at the sites. In Ukonsaari (Äijih in Inari Sámi), the erosion brought about by the groups of tourists has been prevented by constructing wooden steps and platforms. On the other hand, these might also be seen as unnecessary additions to a sacred site.

Tourists and other visitors can advance the destruction of a sacred place, but

in certain conditions they can also give new meanings to a place. Visits to sacred sites can also increase the knowledge of the local culture and lead to more effective protection. Tourism can be seen as part of ethnographic exploitation of the local culture (Ruotsala, 1998: 95) or as something that should be encouraged but only on the condition that the locals consent and in cooperation with them (Magga, 2007: 14).

The use of sacred places evokes strong emotions. It leads to a situation where certain meanings attached to these places are considered to be more valuable than others, and then the value of other meanings is denied all together. Modern meanings attributed to sacred sites should not be contested, because then the sites might be 'protected', not just from 'outsiders', but also from local people (cf. Byrne, 2009: 68). When protecting sacred sites, the rights of the locals to use the

place have been considered important. For example, in Kakadu National Park in Australia the traditional owners have been given a right to re-work on the rock paintings (Mercer, 1995: 136). In the case of *sieidi* sites, the local people do not consist of a heterogeneous group. Finns might also value these places, but they could have different meanings for them than for the traditional custodians, the Sámi. On the other hand, some *sieidi* places

were only used by certain families or individuals. Should the traditional custodians in these cases be seen as even a more limited group? Considering the multiple meanings attached to the Sámi sacred places by Sámi and non-Sámi people perhaps also the right of other groups to use these sites might be taken into account. Sámi sacred places have a long history and they continue to be alive and meaningful.

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Part Two:

Ancient, indigenous and minority sacred natural sites



Conserving sacred natural sites in Estonia

Ahto Kaasik

Introduction

In 2008, the Estonian Ministry of Culture approved the national conservation plan 'Sacred Natural Sites in Estonia: Study and Maintenance 2008 – 2012'. The conservation plan indicates that nowhere else in Western Europe have sacred natural sites (SNSs) and the traditions associated with them been preserved so well and vividly as in Estonia. SNSs are a distinguishing and valuable part of Estonian native culture, forming a part of Estonians' national identity.

According to mainly historical data, there are approximately 2500 SNSs known in Estonia. Of these, about 500

are sacred groves (*hiis*) covering larger areas. According to regional fieldwork data gathered so far, the total number of SNSs is likely to be as high as 7000. This is heritage of great significance, helping to maintain both biological and spiritual diversity in Estonia.

Sacred natural sites in Estonia

Even though the total area of Estonia is only 47 000 square kilometres, it includes a number of unique native linguistic and cultural regions. There are regional differences also in the types of SNSs. For example, stones and trees that have been used for healing

< A grove-basswood, West-Viru county. When praying or thanking gods, healing or asking blessing for marriage a ribbon or yarn is given as an oblation to the sacred trees.

purposes are more common in western Estonia, and groves for communal prayers are more common in northern and western parts of the country. The unique funeral tradition of cross-trees has only survived in southeast Estonia.

Sacred groves (*hiied*; *hiis*) are probably the best known and popular of the SNSs in Estonia. The users of a sacred grove have historically been the inhabitants of a village, sometimes of a parish or county. There can be found many different traditions, beliefs and folklore that are connected to the sacred groves. Till nowadays a warm attitude towards the sacred groves has been preserved as well as the knowledge that looking at a sacred grove or praying to it gives support.

According to historical data, about 500 sacred groves are known in Estonia. The area of a grove can reach from 1 to 100 hectares and several significant spots can be found within its bounda-

ries, such as sacred springs and trees, funeral places, fireplaces, grove saunas, dance places etc.

Owing to traditional customs, the ecosystems of sacred groves have had the possibility to develop quite freely during centuries or even millennia. Nowadays, being often situated in cultural landscapes, the groves have become stores of biodiversity.

Sacred stones have been brought to Estonia during the Weichsel glaciations by glaciers arriving from Scandinavia. Currently around 500 historical sacred stones are known, which can range from ten centimetres to ten or more metres. On rare occasions cup-marks made by humans can be found in them. Even though around 1700 cup-marked stones are known, less than 20 of them have been considered sacred.

Sacred trees are most often oaks (*Quercus robur*), lime trees (*Tilia cordata*), pines (*Pinus sylvestris*), birches (*Betula pendula*) and spruces (*Picea*

The eye-curing spring of Üügu, Saare county, Muhu isle. Healers and other visitors have trod a path leading to the spring. This is a place of habitation for many orchid species.



abies), but they can also be from other indigenous tree species. Choice of species shows considerable regional variation. For example, in Põlva parish, most of the known historical sacred trees have been junipers (*Juniperus communis*).

Cross-trees are considered an exceptional type of historical SNS. The tradition to cut a cross on a tree that grows on the way to cemetery used to be widespread in Estonia as well as other parts of Europe. Today, this tradition has only been maintained in four counties of Estonia: Põlva, Võru, Tartu and Valga. Even though the cross that is carved in the tree has the shape of a Latin cross, the church does not recognise this tradition as its own. A cross-tree becomes the soul-tree of the deceased one and also a kind of bulwark which protects the living from visits of the souls, except for the specific folk calendar events when spirits are welcome.

Sacred waters can be marine areas, lakes, rivers, creeks, yet most often they are springs. People go to the springs mainly for healing or for soul refreshing purposes, but also to pledge ones faithfulness, ask blessing for marriage, to tell fortunes and give name to babies. Nearby a sacred spring, a sacred tree or stone is often found. People use to take holy spring water home for drinking and healing purposes. In return for the water people throw coins into the spring or scratch silver dust from objects made of silver.

Other sacred natural sites. The above-mentioned types of SNSs are

the most common in Estonia, but other types are found as well. For example sacrificial sites, sliding stones to aid in fertility, and sometimes old trees that grow on stone graves.

Historical and religious background

In Estonia, unlike in many other technologically developed countries, the traditions connected to nature religion are still being followed today. People leave offerings to and gather health and power of mind from tens, even hundreds of sacred sites. The native SNSs of Estonia enrich Estonian society owing to the fact that they have not been demonised under the influence of Christianity as they were in other countries, such as Finland.

Estonians' religious beliefs that are connected to valuing SNSs stand out in the European context. Several proofs for it can be found from sociological studies named below.

According to an Eurobarometer survey 'Social Values, Science and Technology' conducted in 2005, Estonia has the lowest rate of people believing there is a single God (16%) and the highest rate of people believing that there are different spiritual forces (54%) in Europe (http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_225_report_en.pdf). A public opinion poll financed and ordered by the Parliament of Estonia in 2002 showed that 11% of Estonian population consider the Estonian native religion and Taara faith nearest to their heart (Lepane, 2002).

There are more studies affirming Estonians' deep conviction for nature religion. In 1994, the Estonian University of Life Science made a sociological survey which showed that 65% of people living in South-Estonia believe that trees have souls (Moor, 1998). In 2002, Tallinn University carried out an all-Estonian study 'Environment and us' according to which 82% of Estonian inhabitants find nature to be holy and animate (Raudsepp, 2005).

Another public opinion poll ordered in 2010 by the Estonian Council of Churches showed that 20% of Estoni-

ans consider 'maausk' (Estonian native religion) as the true religion of the Estonian people (A Conference of Sociology of Religion 'Elust, usust ja usuelust 2010', Lea Altnurme's presentation 'What should church know about the individual religiousness of Estonians').

Ensuring consistency of following the traditions of native people and freedom of religion has direct connection with Estonian SNSs. The followers of Estonian native religion can practice certain customs only in historical sacred sites where a perceptible bond with ancestors exists.

The sacred hill of Kunda Hiimägi, West-Viru county. Women are singing folksongs and cooking a holy porridge for the prayer held for the souls of the ancestors.



Sacred natural sites and customs

In Estonian native religion, nature's sanctity is tied to its animism. Just like human beings, also plants, animals and landscape objects have soul or spiritual dimension. In old Estonian creation songs, man and everything else in the world is born from the eggs of first bird (swallow). In addition, the Earth is perceived as a life-giving mother (*Maaema* – Mother Earth) who is thus source of both biological and, through human mediation, cultural diversity. Man is not the ruler of nature but a mere part of it. Likewise, fairies and gods form part of nature. Perception of the sanctity of nature is characterised by intimacy and cordiality. For instance when referring to the gods, diminutive form is often used to convey endearment (the suffix *-kene* being added to the name of a god: *Maaemakene*, *Veeemakene*, *Äikene*, *jumalukene*).

The traditions connected to sacred groves (*hiis*) and other sites of this kind have been quite similar over Estonia from the first written records up to modern times - one cannot break branches, mow lawn, dig earth or herd cattle there and has to keep spiritual and physical purity. There are many cases known where those who have damaged SNSs get punished with a severe illness or even death.

For historical reasons, Estonian native religion (*maausk*) has developed largely into a familial, personal and secret belief. People go to SNSs to pray, heal, get blessing for marriage, give name to a baby, hold meetings, cele-

brate folk calendar events, perform magical practices and make offerings. Sometimes the ash of the deceased is scattered there. Offerings and objects used for healing give evidence that sacred sites are in use.

Not all of the practices associated with the sacred sites are easily defined as religious. These include staying in a sacred site, being connected with ancestors, contemplation and gathering spiritual strength.

A significant practice that must be emphasised when talking about spiritual heritage is maintaining a spiritual connection with a SNS. As a result of urbanisation, most of Estonian native people have moved to towns. Staying spiritually connected with the SNS of one's birthplace over the distance offers important spiritual support and confidence.

During the past few decades, attempts have been made to restore the communal customs connected to SNSs. To celebrate certain folk calendar events, members of a community gather in their sacred grove to jointly pray to gods and ancestors, bring offerings and follow other traditional customs. From time to time, communal prayers are organised together with other Finno-Ugrian nature worshippers.

Sacred natural sites in change

The beliefs and customs of Estonian nature religion are an inseparable part of the Estonian contemporary culture, yet it has not significantly touched either Estonian higher culture or the

state institutions. Till recently the values and customs connected to SNSs were not taught in the official education system. Therefore, it is not surprising that appropriate terminology is missing from legal acts.

Established in 1918 and suffered for 50 years under the Soviet occupation, young Estonia is still recovering from mentalities that were forcibly brought in by the Christian and Communist regimes of the foreign occupants. We are relearning to recognise our SNSs and the rights of native people for them. Till recently the state has not seen SNSs as holy sites, but has only handled the natural or archaeological aspects of them. For example, in 2005 the National Heritage Board approved a project to build a wind mill park to the sacred hill of Kunda Hiimägi, which had been taken under protection as cultural monument many years earlier.

In Estonia, 450 SNSs have been designated as cultural monuments. The exact number of sacred sites under nature protection is not known, because they have not been mapped. During the last decades, a number of smaller regional fieldwork projects have been carried out, which have shown that most of SNSs placed under state protection are in a poor state. At the same time it has been proved that many protected species and other natural values can be found at those sacred sites, which have preserved at least in a satisfactory state.

Thus on one hand, the SNSs and the spiritual traditions preserved in Estonia

are of important natural, cultural and social value, on the other hand they are very scarcely researched and underprotected on national level. Estonia is lacking a thorough overview on the locations of most of our SNSs and their situation.

Native local communities have been weakened during the occupation times and have not yet gathered their powers enough to assemble. That is also a reason why sacred sites get damaged or destroyed by different agricultural, touristic and other development activities.

New era

In 1995 the followers of Estonian native religion officially formed their religious associations. A new period of legal acceptance began for Estonian native people and SNSs.

The Estonian House of Taara and Native Religions (Taarausuliste ja Maavalla koda; MK) started to bring together historians, natural scientists and folklorists who are interested in studying SNSs. The aim of Maavalla koda is to bring the research of SNSs to a new modern level, ensure complex and interdisciplinary scientific treatment of SNSs and, through this, direct the state to recognise the importance of SNSs. For the followers of *maausk* SNSs are important as intact and unfragmented cultural and natural areas.

In a few years the research and management situation of SNSs was mapped, a research methodology was compiled and several pilot projects

were carried out. It was concluded that a national conservation plan was needed in order to organise emergency rescue works as quickly as possible.

National conservation plan for sacred natural sites

As a result of thorough explanations from the followers of *maausk*, the Ministry of Culture formed in 2005 an interdisciplinary working group with the aim to prepare a national conservation plan for SNSs. The working group was put together by representatives of different ministries, universities, scientific research institutions and Maavalla koda. While taking part in the preparation of the conservation plan, Maavalla koda was collaborating with other scientific organisations to improve the study methodology of sacred sites, perform field works on the pilot areas and introduce this topic in the media. A first comprehensive overview of the Estonian SNSs was published in the form of a compilation of articles (Kaasik, 2007). Followers of *maausk* also organised protection of several SNSs which received quite a lot of media attention: Tammealuse grove, sacred grove hills of Kunda Hiiemägi and Ebavere Hiiemägi in Lääne-Viru County, Purtse Hiiemägi in Ida-Viru county, sacred grove hill of Paluküla Hiiemägi in Rapla County and Panga grove in Saare County.

On 1 April 2008, as a result of years of preparation, the Estonian Ministry of Culture approved the national conservation plan 'Sacred Natural Sites in Estonia: Study and Conservation 2008–2012'. It

consists of a historical overview of SNSs in Estonia, an analysis of the current situation, and also presents several concrete conservation measures and instructions on how to apply them.

Conservation measures

The conservation plan aims to retain all extant SNSs under national protection, as well as change the protection management in order to cover all the values of the sacred sites: intangible and tangible cultural heritage, natural values and freedom of religion. As the sacred sites help to maintain the traditions of local people (and some traditions can only be performed in the sacred sites), they are also important in enriching the living environment and supporting local development.

The coordinating steering committee of the Conservation Plan consists of representatives of the Ministries of the Environment, Agriculture, Internal Affairs, and Education and Research; the National Heritage Board and Maavalla koda. The University of Tartu is the implementing agency. Measures of the Conservation Plan are designed to handle all aspects of SNSs and the associated values.

As SNSs are one of the most endangered features among Estonian cultural heritage, it is essential to study and save them. SNSs as historical objects are endangered by perishing of the living lore, on one hand, and by lack of information on their existence, on the other. Often only a few old people remember the locations or existence of sacred

sites. Unless researchers interview these people in the forthcoming years, many significant and valuable sites will disappear from the heritage landscape and be forever lost for society.

The Conservation Plan foresees creating a database which supports researching and managing SNSs. The database would consist of folkloric, archaeological, natural, historical and other data on SNSs and provide information on the exact location, condition and form of ownership of each site.

In the first phase of fieldwork, the researchers will make interviews with local inhabitants to specify the locations and borders of SNSs. The second phase would ideally take place in the landscape where SNSs are situated. It focuses on details and the personal bond of the interviewees with SNSs. The following phases comprise taking the GPS coordinates, first demarcation, and its natural scientific, archaeological and ethnographic description.

The received audio and video recordings, and pictures (photos, drawings, schemes, maps) will be systematised, analysed and archived. Subsequently suggestions on demarcation, protection and management of the SNSs found will be made. In order to safeguard confidential information on sacred sites the information about endangered SNSs will not be disclosed.

The Conservation Plan foresees to perform a revision of the Estonian legal regulations and to formulate suggestions of amendments or prepare a new legal act about SNSs. Currently, the Es-

tonian legislation not only lacks direct regulation of SNSs, but does not even mention their existence. Consideration should be given to defining SNSs as a separate category of monuments.

Yet, effective legal regulation and protection measures are not sufficient when society in general does not value sacred sites. The plan foresees to launch media projects, disseminate information on the television and radio, books, exhibitions, lectures and other activities. It also proposes to supplement school curricula with relevant information about the SNSs.

Recent advances

The financial help from the state has so far been 197 000 euros, forming 11,6% from the general budget of the Conservation Plan. With this financing the coordinators of the Conservation Plan have been hired and they have so far led the following works. A research methodology has been compiled and the methodology for demarcation and conservation are being prepared. The database project is ready. An expert group has been put together to raise the necessary competence in the National Heritage Board.

The first fieldwork studies have been performed so far in Muhu parish on the West coast of Estonia and a partial inventory in Juuru and Kuusalu parishes of North Estonia. Altogether there are 102 parishes in Estonia.

A total of 21 researchers participated in Muhu fieldwork. The local community



The sacred grove (hiis) of Tammealuse, West-Viru county. A ribbon is tied as offering in a sacred natural site forming a bond between generations and this way keeping spiritual consistency with ancestors.

network helped to organise the work. During the research period more than 200 inhabitants were interviewed, 120 hours of interviews were recorded and more than 3000 photos were taken. Before starting the fieldwork, according to the collected historical and folkloristic data the researchers were aware of 28 SNSs in this area, and 11 of them placed under national protection. During the fieldwork, participants had collected information about 81 historical sacred sites and additionally about 30 potential sacred sites. They managed to find and perform an inventory of 67 sacred sites. Most of the previously unknown sacred sites were healing stones and springs.

The greatest surprise that came up as a result of the Muhu project was the understanding that researchers are still unaware of a considerable number of sacred sites. The reason for that is that bearers of the living traditions, the users of sacred sites, do not want to

share their knowledge with strangers whom they do not trust. Historical experience has taught local people that if strangers knew about your sacred place, it would be destroyed or interfered. People also believe that when strangers know about your sacred place, its powers weaken.

Values and knowledge

Since 2008, Maavalla koda has organised campaigns (*Hiie sõber*) to find people or organisations who are dedicated to protecting the SNSs. This also serves an educational purpose: the best practices of sacred natural site management and the good individual examples are shown to the public.

Annual photo contest, organised by Maavalla koda, aims to document the current situation of Estonian SNSs and draw public attention to this topic.

A photo exhibition on Estonian SNSs has been made with explanatory texts. This has been already shown in 16 towns and villages.

More than a 100 articles have been published in the media and many lectures have been delivered addressed to Estonian officials, school children and other interest groups.

For the first time in history, the Estonian University of Life Sciences and University of Tartu offer elective courses on SNS. Sets of lectures addressed to officials who are daily dealing with the questions connected to SNS management will be delivered in the next few years aiming to raise their competence and, through this, help to ameliorate the situation of SNS conservation.

Case study: The sacred hill of Hiimägi in Paluküla

The case discusses a SNS in a situation of conflicting interests. The local

government plans to build a recreational sports and tourist centre on the site. Despite the fact that the site is under nature protection, followers of *maausk* have done serious efforts during the past ten years to protect the spiritual and cultural values connected to the sacred hill of Hiimägi. This is one of the most long-lasting conflicts connected with conservation of SNSs in Estonia and has gained lots of media attention. Unfortunately no satisfactory solution has been found so far.

Natural and spiritual values

Hiimägi (sacred grove hill) is located in Paluküla, Kehtna parish, Rapla county, Estonia within a National Landscape Protection Area (IUCN category V), which protects landforms from the glaciations period and wild species. Its total surface encompasses 5713 ha, of which the sacred hill covers only 25 hectares. The area has been included in the Natura 2000 network, as a spe-

A signboard in front of sacred hill of Paluküla Hiimägi, Rapla county. Often natural and spiritual values suffer the pressures of economic interests. Ahto Kaasik



cial conservation area (IUCN Category V), (Dudley, 2008).

In the area of Hiimägi a Natura 2000 natural habitat type of Community interest has been inventoried. It is composed of 'Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) *important orchid sites'. It is also registered as the location of a large population (around 50 nests) of a protected ant species *Formica polyctena*.

The spiritual and cultural values of Hiimägi form an inseparable part of its natural environment. During its long history this place has developed into what it is today due to having been used and regarded as a sacred site. Followers of *maausk* use Hiimägi even today as a natural sanctuary as much as the worsening conditions allow. Regular communal and individual prayers and rituals are being held there and people leave offerings on the hill.

According to the expert opinions of acknowledged Estonian folklorists, the sacred hill of Hiimägi in Paluküla is a SNS, which must be conserved and protected as a whole.

Pressures and impacts

The landowner, the local government, sees mostly the economic potential of Hiimägi, which should be used to develop forest, sports and tourist businesses. Approximately one third of the sacred hill of Hiimägi has already been turned into ski trails and grasslands that are maintained with different

machines. That is also the reason why the frequency of visitors to the sacred hill has gone up and the biodiversity of this place has significantly decreased.

Moreover, next to Hiimägi and on its hillside the local government plans to construct a sports and recreation centre with stadiums, ski lifts, motels etc.

Hand in hand with the impoverishing conditions of the environment, the possibilities to follow spiritual traditions on Hiimägi have substantially worsened. Followers of *maausk* feel that their sacred object has been attacked and their right of freedom of religion is violated.

The National Heritage and Environmental Boards, which are directly in charge of managing this protected area, have given permissions to the recreation centre projects, refusing to discuss the questions connected to spiritual aspects of Hiimägi.

Native people and followers of *maausk* and Maavalla koda find it essential to conserve the spiritual and cultural values of Hiimägi and keep it as a natural sanctuary. They have cleaned garbage from the hill, informed the public, carried out supervision and used all court and administrative means and even physical intervention to obstruct the construction activities on the sacred hill. The local groups have also participated in the implementation of the development plans of the sacred hill, carried out monitoring, negotiated with the landowner and developers, National Heritage and Environmental Boards, conducted research and hired

researchers, organised a public collection of signatures and media campaigns. Many folklorists, historians, conservationists and cultural celebrities have supported these activities.

One of the most dramatic events took place on 8 November 2004, when Maavalla koda called people to gather to Hiimägi for a protest meeting with a purpose to barricade the tractors moving up the hill. Probably it was the outcome of intensive media attention that prevented the conflict. As a result of negotiation, both the machines and police forces left the sacred hill.

After the incident, the protectors of the grove hill filed a court suit, went through all Estonian court instances and lost in the Supreme Court. Currently they are expecting an answer from the European Court of Human Rights about the case of the sacred hill of Paluküla Hiimägi as violation of freedom of religion.

Perspectives

The protectors of the Hiimägi sacred hill have repeatedly suggested several compromise solutions according to which the hill could be used both for recreational sports and ecotourism. The protectors cannot accept the construction of buildings, vehicular traffic and mass events taking place in this sacred site. The local government has offered, from their side, to leave a small reservation area for the followers of *maausk*.

It seems so far that no satisfactory compromise can be found through negotiation. A solution could lie in implementing the Conservation Plan. According to the Conservation Plan, the whole sacred hill of Hiimägi should be placed under heritage protection to ensure constitutional freedom of religion and possibility to perform historical customs. The IUCN-UNESCO Guidelines for Managing Sacred Natural Sites (Wild and McLeod, 2008) will hopefully be of help as well.

Websites

Estonian House of Taara and Native Religions, <http://www.maavald.ee/eng/>

Website of the sacred hill of Palukyla Hiimägi, <http://palukyla.maavald.ee/>

Conservation plan 'Sacred Natural Sites in Estonia: Study and Maintenance 2008 – 2012' (English version), http://hiis.ee/sacred-sites/sns_devplan

Glossary

Looduslik pühapaik - a SNS, a site associated with sacrifice, worship, healing, prayer or other religious or ritual activities according to folkloric, archaeological, historical, ethnological or other data which dates back before the 20th century.

Loodus – 'nature' in written Estonian. For the followers of *maausk* the word *loodus* has a shade of meaning referring that nature is a product or outcome, with a concrete creator, giving the word a monotheistic connotation

Loond – a term that was used in ancient Estonian to signify 'nature'. It harmonises better with Estonian myth of creation, according to which the world was born from bird's eggs and is a self-creating, constantly changing living being

Hiis – sacred grove, a SNS in communal use, comprising a larger and complex area. People intervene in its natural succession as little as possible

Maausk – Estonian native religion, based on nature worship

Maarahvas – historical ethnonym for the Estonians

Taarusk – Taara religion, a monotheistic belief, created in 1930s, banned and vanished during Soviet occupation

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Use and reuse of ancient sacred places in Mikytai, Žemaitija National Park, NW Lithuania

Vykintas Vaitkevičius

Introduction

The study of the ancient sacred places in Lithuania was a rather slow process in the twentieth century. Many ideological and methodological controversies surrounded the subject. The multidisciplinary character of the ancient sacred places and ambivalent ideological attitudes towards them were the factors that affected the issue greatly.

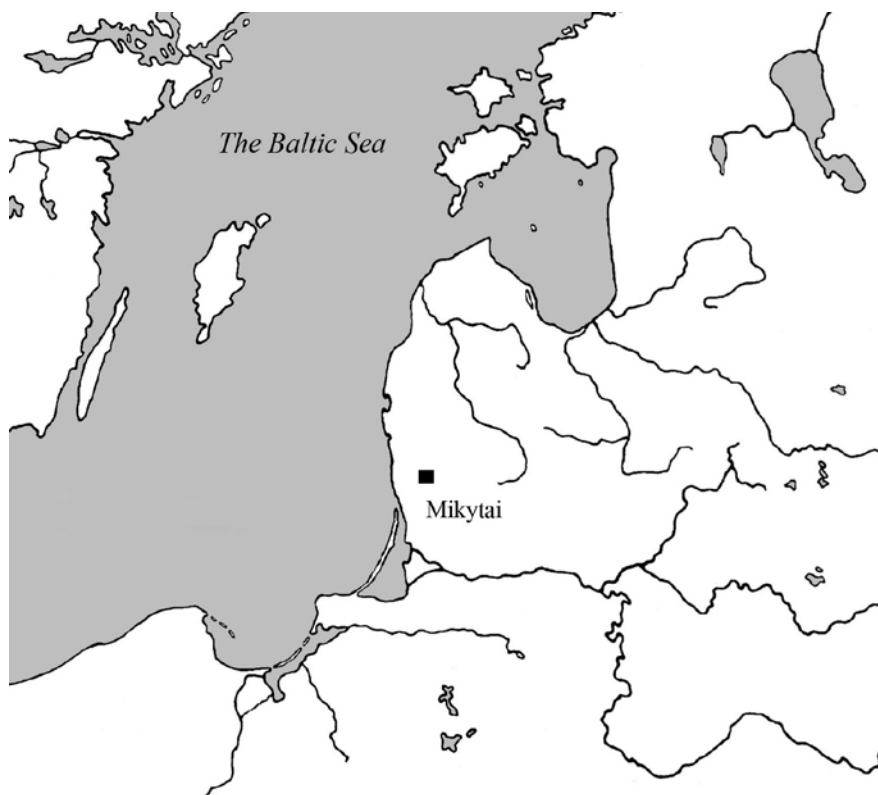
Nowadays nearly 2500 ancient sacred places have been recorded in Lithuania. This figure includes hills, arable fields and meadows, groves and trees, rivers and springs, lakes and wetlands, stones, hollows. There are also some known caves located in exposures on riverbanks.

Ancient sacred places are a highly characteristic type of monuments in Lithuania's protected areas, which cover the most natural lands. Usually sacred places located in protected areas are well preserved, and therefore they deserve special consideration.

The complex of ancient sacred places of Mikytai is located in North-western Lithuania, within Žemaitija National Park. As many other protected areas of the country, this national park was founded in 1991, soon after the independence of Lithuania was declared.

The core of the Žemaitija National Park is Lake Plateliai, located in the middle of the site, although numerous other

< An oak with holes and two trunks grown together on the north-eastern slope of the Alka Hill.



The location of the Mikytai Site in the Baltic Sea Region.

places of interest are located in its periphery. Žemaitija (*Samogitia* – in Latin) is a renown region for its history and cultural heritage.

Although Christianity has been officially introduced into Žemaitija in the early fifteenth century (Jucas, 2007: 31-38), real changes in the worldview of the local population took place only in the late sixteenth century, during the Reformation and the reaction against it. Syncretism of inherited Baltic (and also Indo-European) spiritual traditions and Christianity is highly characteristic of

the religion of the Žemaitija region. It is sometimes described by the term 'Folk Christianity' that includes ancient sacred places: sacred trees, sacred springs, and sacred stones being in passive or active use today. Especially the votive treatment and offerings of this kind are prevalent and practised in Žemaitija. Small wooden chapels, crosses of different size, figurines of the Saints as well as numerous other offerings are brought to the ancient sacred places.

Mikytai sacred places and the Alka Hill

The case of the ancient sacred places in Mikytai is quite different from other Lithuanian sacred sites. The Devil's name that appears in some of the place names of Mikytai as well as in the local legends referring to the Alka Hill does indicate that the original sacredness of the pre-Christian site has been transformed into fear and fright a long time ago. The name of the village 'Mikytai' might have derived from a surname, but at the same time, folk etymology draws attention to the meaning of the Lithuanian word *mikyta* 'the goat', because the ghost of the goat plays the central role in the numerous place legends related to the Mikytai Alka Hill (Vaitkevičius, 1998: 22).

From an archaeological point of view, the hill fort in-between the sites Mikytai and Šliktinė is a significant mark in the prehistoric landscape dating back to the first millennium – early second millennium AD (Baubonis and Zabiela, 2005: 372-373). Couronian settlements covered a huge area from North-western Lithuania to South-western Latvia (Žulkus, 2004: 41). There is no information about a burial site in Mikytai. However, several findings were discovered during the reclamation of the Šata River valley in 1938 and 1970 (arms, jewellery, pieces of rider's equipment, etc.) and their appearance is characteristic of the sacrificial sites all around Northern Europe. In a marshy area located to the north of the hill fort some hundreds of items from the ninth to eleventh centuries AD have been found in two compact concentrations (Rimantiene, 1977: 132-133).

In historical times, at least for four or five centuries, the Mikytai village (*akalica* – in Polish) at the roads crossing was a settlement inhabited by noblemen. For this reason there were no regulations indicating that the villages were the property of the State (e.g. Grand Duchy of Lithuania). The representatives of the noblemen were the keepers of old customs in some cases. This might be supported by recent research carried out in Lithuania and Latvia. In both cases a kind of religious independence of the noblemen related to the ancient sacred places was discussed, and buildings of sacred places next to the villages that were inhabited by the noblemen were presented (Vaitkevičius 2008; Laimė 2009).

Alka Hill (whose literal translation would be 'hill of the *Alka*') is the most significant landmark in the surroundings of Mikytai and it possesses the common Lithuanian name *alka* (feminine). For a long time *Alka* was widely accepted as the name for 'a sacred grove', 'a place where sacrifices were burnt', or 'sacrifice' itself (Vaitkevičius, 2004: 7). It is worth mentioning that *Alka* is one of the few Baltic religious terms of the pre-Christian period. Numerous 'hills of *Alka*' are highly characteristic of the Žemaitija region in Lithuania and the Couronia region in Latvia (Vaitkevičius 2004: 9-10). Usually they belong to archaeological complexes dated from the early fourteenth to the early fifteenth century, the same period when the Northern Crusades and Conversion ends. Evidently, the Mikytai Alka Hill was somehow connected with



The Mikytai Alka Hill in the landscape (view from the west).

the Mikytai hill fort, at least in a visual way, but the key point is the location of the complex of the ancient sacred places in the watershed area.

The Mikytai Alka Hill (184 m above sea level) is located in a woody and marshy watershed area in-between the basins of the Rivers Minija, Bartuva, and Varduva. It has a shape of a large irregular cone, and it represents the ground moraines – the gently rolling hills. All these are related to the glaciers which have disappeared some thirteen thousands years ago in Žemaitija.

The slopes stretching from 28 to 32 m are particularly important features of the site; the southern slope rises gradually, while the northern one is extremely steep. The Devil's Stone (red granite, 3.6 m in length, and 3 m in width) is located in the middle of the northern slope. On the top of the boulder there is a depression of 7–16 cm x 34 cm in size, the so-called Devil's footprint. The Prayer's Well, the second

well-known feature in the area of the Mikytai Alka Hill, is placed on the eastern side. Currently, the dry 0.6 m deep hollow that has a diameter of 2.2 m and is paved with stones, is regarded to be the former place of the sacred spring (Vaitkevičius, 1998: 225-227).

Apart from the Devil's Stone and Prayer's Well mentioned in the place-legends, some other elements of the site should be mentioned. Namely, an oval-shaped pond full of water (10 x 25 m in size); a formation of two stones (of unknown origin), one on top of the other, both of remarkable shape and appearance as well as a table-shaped stone (1.4 x 1.6 m, 0.1 m high) surrounded by a circle of fourteen other stones.

Recently other new discoveries were made during the field-survey that took place in April 2011. Attention was drawn to certain trees bearing holes. Holes of different size and form were shaped in many trunks and (or) branches grown together. The species

of the trees varied, and included an oak, a bird cherry, two spruces, two maples, a pair consisting pine tree and a maple; they were recorded mostly in the north – north-western side of the Alka Hill. Those trees were used in special healing rituals and are known in Lithuania, the former territory of Prussia, as well as in Belarus, Russia and other countries. The holes in the trees represent gates in which the clothes of patients or sometimes sick children were put.

Finally, some other landmarks, such as earth mounds and a particular kind of ditch discovered within the area of the Alka Hill, might be regarded as a result of human activity during the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

Legends and beliefs

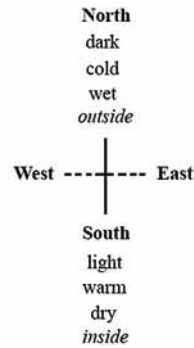
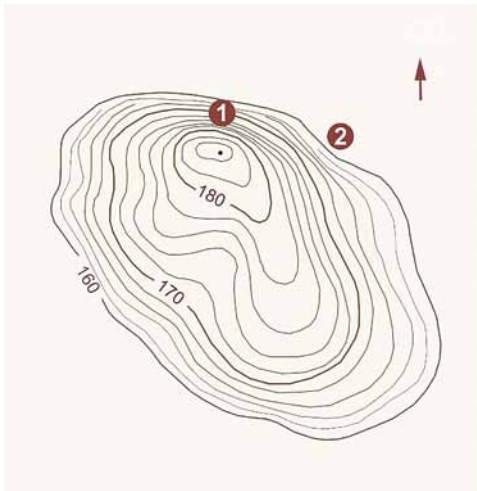
An important part of the intangible cultural heritage of the Mikytai Alka Hill is a

collection of narrations, place legends and beliefs which were compiled during the twentieth century. In 1926 Juozas Mickevicius (1900–1984) authored the first publication on the subject (Mickevicius, 1926). Later on he was followed by Jurgis Dovydaitis (1907–2001), Juozas Šliavas (1930–1979), and Antanas Šleinys (1897–?). The latter is a story teller and folklore collector, inhabitant of the Kruopiai village, and deserves special attention. His place legends are famous in Lithuania and are characterised by the author's very individual style, uncommon among the other story tellers. At the same time, however, his stories have a traditional form and character.

Generally there are a number of motives behind place legends. For instance, the Mikytai Alka Hill is considered the dwelling place of a particular goat that is usually depicted as a ghost that misleads local peasants, and frightens them. By bleating, the goat stays in a kind of active communica-

An indirect illumination of the northern slope of the Mikytai Alka Hill as well as the Devil's Stone in the evening sunshine





The topography of sacred places in Mikytai: (1) the Devil's Stone on the northern slope of the Alka Hill, (2) the Prayer's Well on the eastern foot. The scheme on the right implicates the mythological model of the complex of sacred places in Mikytai referring to the general meaning of the world's directions in the Baltic religion.

tion with the residents of the Mikytai village. This is a reciprocal relation. It is known that men used to produce a drone while blowing the boss of the wheel in a particular way, inviting the goat to the village (Šliavas, 1978: 74).

Another significant concept related to the Alka Hill concerns the mist. It is broadly believed that the Alka Hill produces smoke. This phenomenon is not related to a specific time of the year; the key point is that smoke over the Alka Hill always predicts considerable weather changes – the rainy weather will change into sunny, the coolness into warmth, and so on (Vaitkevičius, 1998: 224).

The extraction of salt on the Mikytai Alka Hill is discussed in numerous narrations as well (Vaitkevičius, 1998: 222-223). The motif of the extraction of

salt is very characteristic of the Lithuanian tales; people are looking for salt in heaven, because salt resources are under control by God (*Dievas*) or Thunder (*Perkunas*) (Vaitkevičiene, 2001: 77-81). But in relation to ancient sacred places, salt is known to be found on the most remarkable sacred hills only.

In the Mikytai Alka Hill not much emphasis is placed on the period and rituals of the pre-Christian religion. Sometimes place legends do mention offerings sacrificed to the Prayer's Well (Vaitkevičius, 1998: 226-227) and washing of the dead at the well before cremation (the well was sometimes called the Death's Well – Šliavas, 1978: 73-74). The latter subject is unique and needs to be thoroughly examined in the future. Archaeological excava-

tions (precisely test pits) took place in Mikytai Alka Hill in 1971 under the leadership of Vytautas Urbanavicius. Neither structures nor artefacts referring to ancient rituals were revealed (Urbanavicius, 1972: 15-17).

One very important factor for the mythological interpretation of the complex of ancient sacred places in Mikytai is the morphology of the Alka Hill itself. The geographical position, topography, and shape are as important for our examination as all material evidences. Surprisingly, the shape of the Alka Hill, and its north-south direction, fits exactly the model of the Baltic worldview: the northern slope is as dark, cold, and wet as the southern is bright, warm, and dry (cf. Vaitkevičiene, 2001: 120-130). Taking into account the accessibility of the Alka Hill (none of the old paths lead to the northern side) it might be reasonably stated that the northern slope and the marshy foot look eerie and unworldly, in comparison to the southern area which was the main arena for every kind of action and activity.

The preliminary analysis of the road network around the Alka Hill proves what was just stated; the main road (also designed for transport) leads to the hill's top from the southern side, and the main path (designed for walking only) stretches from the west to the east approaching the Prayer's Well (again a symbolic expression).

The opposition east-west is slightly expressed but the Prayer's Well, the former site of the sacred spring, indicates

that, very likely, east was connected to life and west was connected to death. Water flowing to the east has a special positive impact on people; according to the Baltic religion such water brings life, health, and beauty (Vaitkevičius, 2004: 45-46). In a particular way the trees bearing holes in the north-western area of the Alka Hill do represent a connection with the otherworld – during the rituals the holes of the trees used to play the role of a gate; while crossing the line between the two worlds every expected change is possible.

A complex of ancient sacred sites

To sum up, the features included around the hill, its location in relation to the watershed area, its topography and morphology, the place legends related to the mist and the extraction of salt indicate that the complex of ancient sacred places in Mikytai, although not thoroughly investigated yet, was used during the Iron Age and the Middle Ages as a sacred place of interregional character, one of the central places in the Couronian region (cf. Vaitkevičius, 2004: 51-52). The prehistoric sacred site lost its sacredness with the arrival of Christianity, most likely in the late sixteenth or seventeenth century – in course of the reaction against the Reformation as well as all pagan elements led by the Jesuits. Another turning point in the history of the Žemaitija region is the decimation of the local population during several outbreaks of plague in the period from

the mid-seventeenth to the first half of the eighteenth century (its last occurrence in 1709–1711).

Indications of the former sacredness of the Alka Hill in Mikytai can be found in the origins of its – name composed of the archaic religious term *alka*, a collection of place legends, and some particular features like the Devil's Stone and the Prayer's Well, which belong to the same complex. The cultural activities promoted by the managers of the national park have already changed the social attitudes towards the Alka Hill. The passive approach (general knowledge without further particular interest) became an active one. In the last decade, a Mikytai cognitive path (approximately 1 km in length including the wooden tower designed for sightseeing) became one of the most favoured trails inside the protected area. Žemaitija National Park hosts approximately 60 000 visitors every year, of which probably 1000 visit the Mikytai Alka Hill, too (Mrs. A. Kuprelyte, personal communication).

The Mikytai Alka Hill was an attractive ancient sacred place without any religious connotations, which is characteristic of the dissemination of ancient cultural heritage in Lithuania. Two factors, however, are positively affecting the perception of this ancient sacred place in Mikytai. Firstly, the Alka Hill is easily accessed by car, because it is located only some hundred metres from the parking area. Secondly, the cognitive path established by the managers of the National Park is equipped with the necessary infrastructure: special props mark the path course, information for the public is provided in Lithuanian and English, and sightseeing points are located on the top of the hill. In this way the fear and scare related to the Alka Hill in Mikytai have been transformed into tourist interest and education opportunities, creating another natural and cultural attraction within the national park. It is one of the few examples of this kind in modern Lithuania.

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Zilais kalns – Blue Hill in Latvia

Juris Urtāns

Introduction

Zilais kalns, Valmiera municipality, is the highest point of NW Vidzeme, Latvia. Geologically it has formed as the result of the movements of the glacier and under-ice streams. The top of Zilais kalns rises 127 m above the sea level. The relative height of the hill is 66 m, which is significant for the topography of Latvia. The hill is surrounded by boggy areas. Zilais kalns by itself is a block of hills, which extends ca. 1.6 km in W–E direction, and about 2 km in N–S direction. The top of the hill is plain. The northern side of the hill is very steep and 36 m high, whilst the other sides are gently sloping.

The Latvian name *Zilais kalns* means Blue Hill. Blue colour in place names is very often one of the marks to identify a place as holy, not only in Latvia, but also in many other parts of Northern Europe (Kursīte, 2008). The blue colour was associated with sky, holiness, nobleness, etc. In Baltic German literature Zilais kalns has been mentioned since the end of the eighteenth century (Börger, 1778; Hupel, 1782).

Folklore and written records on Zilais kalns

Several hundreds of folklore records about Zilais kalns have been collected

< Upurkalns (Offering Hill) on the top of Zilais kalns.

in the Archive of Folklore of Latvia. The main motifs in folklore are connected with the hill as an ancient holy place. Very often a holy spring was mentioned, which was used in folk medicine. When the spring dried up, the people continued to use the sand from the spot of the spring for healing. See folklore collections in German and Latvian languages (Balodis, 1909; Hunnius, 1912; Ancelāne, 1988; Ruberte, 1999) and numerous folklore reviews (Ašmanis, 1930; Cukurs, 1930; Cukurs, 1936; Meisters, 1971; etc.).

The Blue Hill as the unofficial cemetery of local peasants was mentioned in the seventeenth century written records. In this cemetery the local people have been buried without acceptance of the Church (Bregžis, 1931). This cemetery was situated on the top of the hill, where archaeological findings and human bones have been discovered since 1874 (Grewingk, 1876). In 1973, during trial archaeological excavations conducted in the place of forthcoming tower, 28 burials from sixteenth to seventeenth centuries were unearthed (Cimermane, 1974). There are written records of the seventeenth century mentioning the hill as a meeting place of witches (Straubergs, 1992). The same was evidenced also in folklore records (Šmits, 1937; Ruberte, 1999). It is quite possible that a Christian chapel or cross once stood on the hill (see Kurtz, 1924; Bregžis, 1931; Mannheim, 1936). This was the praxis for Christianising an ancient 'pagan' holy place throughout Europe. In folklore big and regular markets are described

close to Zilais kalns, which go back to medieval times or even earlier. Those markets were connected with orphans, who came to this holy place from very distant places. The rule was that the visitors of the market had to give donations to the orphans (Abbuls, 1921; Ruberte, 1991, etc.). Those folklore texts have been partly influenced by the so-called folk Christianity. Perhaps the existence of a medieval chapel on Zilais kalns has also provided basis for the existence of folk Christian tradition.

There are a lot of folklore records telling about several objects with sacral meaning, like *Upurkalns* (Offering Hill), *Svētavots* (Holy Spring), stones, trees, etc. on Zilais kalns. There are folklore records telling that the local people used mud from the bogs close to Zilais kalns for healing purposes (Ruberte, 1999). Unfortunately those places in the bogs have not been localised.

Part of folklore is connected with the stories about witches, who used Zilais kalns as an assembling place (Šmits, 1937, 263; Ancelāne, 1988, 102; Ancelāne, 1991; Ruberte, 1999; etc.). Perhaps it may not be a coincidence that in the 1960–1980s not far from Zilais kalns lived a woman who practiced healing and was famous all over Latvia. Her nickname was *Zilā kalna Marta* (Marta of Blue Hill). Her memory is living in present day folklore and also in literature (Zālītis, 2001; Plaudis, 2002; Plaudis, 2008; Plaudis, 2011), exhibitions and theatre performances.

Since the end of the nineteenth century Baltic German and Latvian investi-

gators in many publications have been accepting the general opinion that Zilais kalns is one of the holy places of ancient Latgalians with more central significance, the place for different folk assemblages, which dates back to the Late Iron Age, i.e. to the first centuries of II M AD (Olavs, 1892; Баллод, 1910; Balodis, 1911; Balodis, 1936; Adamovičs, 1937; Malvess, 1937; Balodis, Tentelis, 1938.; *Latvijas PSR arheoloģija*, 1974; Johansons, 1975; Urtāns, 1993, ; *Latvijas senākā vēsture 9. g. t. pr. Kr. – 1200. g.*, 2001, 363; Skutāns, 2010, 14; etc.). Unfortunately this has not been proved by any archaeological or historical material. It is quite possible that the role and meaning of Zilais kalns was enlarged only in the nineteenth century, under the influence of romanticism literature, but in fact Zilais kalns was an important holy site only for the surrounding parishes (Laime, 2011, 14). Despite of that the magnificent hill Zilais kalns, which is dominating over the extended plain and its surroundings, has been discussed as a sacral landscape (Kursīte, 2001).

A national symbol

Zilais kalns has the role of a national symbol or even cliché. From the beginning of the nineteenth century Zilais kalns, as a direct and well-known symbol of freedom, was used in Latvian literature (see Jansons, 1972; Laime, 2011; etc.). Folklore about Zilais kalns has been collected not only in the vicinity of the hill, but all over Latvia, and



A map of Zilais kalns.

it usually reflects the ideas of national romanticists (Laime, 2011). On the basis of folklore, written records, records about the archaeological findings and results of archaeological excavation, Zilais kalns has been included in the list of Protected Archaeological Monuments of Latvia.

Zilais kalns as the ancient holy place has been widely accepted by Latvian people in all times. In Soviet time, during the 1950s, close to Zilais kalns, a Soviet village was built for the migrants used as a labour force in peat bogs, which degraded and diminished the significance of the holy place. The Latvian people justifiably felt that this was an action by Soviet regime to undermine the perception of the holy place. Later, at the end of 1990s, the authorities planned to build a big rubbish landfill close to Zilais kalns, but this project faced big protests from Latvian people and therefore was discarded (Jakovičs, 1999). Later on voices rose suggesting that Zilais kalns should be denominated a national holy place like famous Catholic basilica in Aglona (Dzērve, 2006).



The label on a liquor bottle.

Religious activities and conflicts

The first ideas about the significance of Zilais kalns as a holy place in renewed folk religion appeared already after World War I (Brašiņš, 1986). From the beginning of 1990s to the present, Zilais kalns has been increasingly used for the rituals of followers of old Latvian traditions, *dievturisms* or neo-pagans.

Unfortunately the religious activities have resulted in unauthorised moving of the Offering stone from its previous place, and erecting it in a new place. In addition, several stone structures, like stone circles and stone settings, have been built, and a number of stones have been unearthed from their original spots and gained a new visual image. This is what has caused a conflict between heritage protection au-

thorities and the followers of neo-pagan beliefs. This conflict exists also in the neighbouring countries of Lithuania and Estonia.

On the other hand, Zilais kalns as a popular place and symbol obtains also commercial value and the image of the old sacred hill has also been used on labels, names of companies, etc.

Natural heritage

Zilais kalns is also one of the first listed nature reserves of Latvia. The status of Zilais kalns as Nature Reserve was adopted on 14 November 1924, for an area of 85 ha. At the present the Nature Reserve covers 118 ha and has been declared a Natura 2000 site. It contains different forest types, including protected habitats defined in European Union Habitat Directive 92/43/EEC as Western taiga (9010) and *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, scree and ravines (9118). Zilais kalns has been investigated geologically to establish the process of its geological development (Markots, Zelčs, 2005).

Zilais kalns is rich in biodiversity. There are records of a number of protected flora species of the Republic of Latvia, consisting of lycopsids (*Huperzia selago*, *Lycopodium clavatum*), mosses (*Anastrophyllum hellerianum*, *Geocalyx graveolens*, *Lejeunea cavifolia*, *Neckera pennata*), lichens (*Arthonia byssacea*, *Arthonia leucopellea*, *Arthonia spadicea*, *Arthonia vinosa*, *Chaenotheca chlorella*, *Lobaria pulmonaria*), and vascular plants (*Lathyrus niger*).

It is worth to mention that the richness and diversity of plant species is one of the significant marks of ancient holy places in Latvia. According to old folk songs and sayings, some of these plants were used in folk medicine. For example, in 1866 A. Bielenstein noted the great variety of plants and the great fertility on the other old sanctuary particularly on the hill Elku kalns (Idol Hill) in Central Latvia. The local farmers used the plants collected in Mid-summer as medicinal herbs. They considered the hill a natural pharmacy (Bielenstein, 1866). Scientific study has been made of the plants growing on Idol Hill and their medicinal value has been confirmed by botanical research (Ledus, 1938).

Management

From a management viewpoint, the nature reserve of Zilais kalns needed to limit the stream of the visitors, therefore at the foot of the hill a parking place for cars has been established. The parking place is provided with toilets and information signs. The landscape of Zilais kalns was partly destroyed by a concrete tower built in the 1970s as the watchtower for fire guarding. Recently, a project has been elaborated

to repair the tower, change its use for sightseeing and open it to the visitors.

Conclusions

Zilais kalns, an ancient holy place probably since prehistoric times, has become a national symbol, and a living and significant place in present day Latvia. Zilais kalns includes historical values, e.g. ancient traditions and archaeological sites; significant natural heritage values, e.g. geological features, rich and rare plant species and a beautiful landscape, as well as newly established and developing traditions, which are claimed to be related with the old pre-Christian religion. These values have been carefully studied and are fully acknowledged, and have prompted the government to adapt several legal norms for protecting the integrity of the holy hill, like Nature Reserve, Nature 2000 site. Some of the challenges for conserving the rich heritage of Zilais kalns in front of increasing visitor pressures have been solved by adequate management measures, but others, especially those related with ceremonial uses, pose new threats, ironically coming from emerging social attitudes related to the immemorial holiness of this site.

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Lobaria pulmonaria is one of the protected species in Latvia. >





Alevi-Bektashi communities in south-eastern Europe: spiritual heritage and environmental consciousness

Irini Lyratzaki

Introduction

Alevi and Bektashi are Sufi, non-Sunni Islamic orders that originate from the Middle East and Anatolia. From the thirteenth century and onwards they spread to Asia Minor and the Balkans, incorporating a wide array of elements from the many beliefs and religious practices they encountered, acquiring a syncretistic character. Defying 'orthodox' Muslim religious practices and reflecting their tribal system of social organisation, what differentiates them from the mainstream Muslim doctrine and practices is a deep respect and love of nature. They number many millions mainly in Turkey and the Balkans, and during the last

decades they have started to play a crucial role in the emergence of environmental movements.

In the seventeenth century, Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi witnessed something unexpected while visiting the Turkmen nomads of the Karakoyunlu tribe: Muslims worshipping trees, lighting candles next to them and placing pieces of iron as offerings on their barks. Two centuries later, one of Abdul Hamid II's agents reported nomad peoples from Anatolia worshipping 'the great trees and monumental rocks that are touched by the first rays of the rising sun'. Ethnologists in the twentieth century discovered the same phenom-

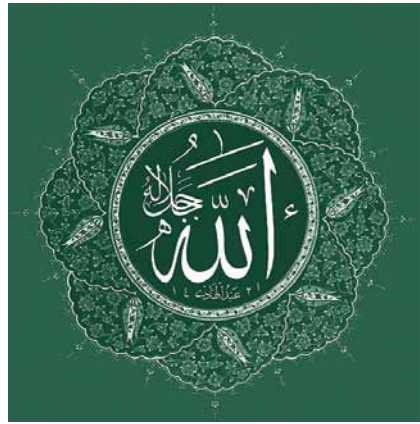
ena in Anatolia and the Balkans and even invented the term 'dendrolatry' (tree worship) to describe this practice (Zarcone, 2005).

What those people witnessed was a special relationship of these Muslim populations with nature, which does not exist among other Muslim believers in the Middle East and North Africa. This relation was the outcome of a cross-fertilisation of beliefs and practices inspired, on the one hand, by Islam (and especially the Arab-Muslim philosophy and Ibn Sina and al-Farabi) and Sufism and, on the other, by animism, shamanism and Buddhism (Zarcone, 2005).

Islam and the natural environment

The Alevi-Bektashi religious traditions, although 'heterodox' (i.e. non-Sunni or orthodox Shi'a), are Islamic. Hence, it would be useful to review the positions of the Islamic faith regarding nature and its protection.

Islam is the easiest religion to understand, yet imperfectly understood by non Muslims. It is the faith of one God, whose will was revealed to Muhammad and was included in the sacred book, the Holy Qur'an. It is not well understood because in the West its name is associated with terrorism and intolerance. In Arabic it means peace through surrender or submission to the will of God, and Muslim, is the one who is at peace through submission to God. Islam is a *Dîn* (Tradition) embracing all aspects of life (as in the case of Hinduism). There is



Allah's name by 17th century Ottoman artist Hâfiz Osman.

no distinction in Islam between things profane and things sacred. Everything a Muslim does is to please God, so all his good actions are being seen as worship. Therefore, all social, political, legal, administrative and economic activities in the Islamic society are as sacred as praying in the Mosque (Norcliffe, 1999).

In addition, man's position in the world is twofold: he is at the same time '*abd* – slave, or even better *abd-Allah* – the slave of God, and also *khalifah* – vice regent, or representative, which elevates humans above all other creatures of the Creation (NasseJ, 1986).

Prophet Muhammad taught 'The world is green and beautiful, and God (Allah) has appointed you his guardian over it'. Muslims believe that Allah created humans to be the *khalifah*, the vice regents of the creation. By that, it is stated that nature is not ours and we can not do with it as we please. Instead, we must act as its protectors (ARC, 2011).

Additionally, the central concept of Islam is *tawheed*, which means Oneness of God. Everything that exists comes from and depends on the one and only Creator. One of the names of God in the Qur'an is Al-Haqq, which means both Truth and Reality. Allah is unity and this unity should be mirrored in the relation between humans and the natural world. It is the duty of humans to safeguard this unity, by protecting the integrity of the Earth, its flora and fauna, its wildlife and environment. It is their duty to preserve the balance and harmony in Allah's creation (Norcliffe, 1999).

Given that humans are khalifah-guardians, they are also accountable for their actions and their omissions – as responsibility is a direct consequence of this status. On the Day of Reckoning, Islam teaches that everyone created by Allah will return to Allah for Judgment and humans will be judged for the way they treated what was entrusted to them. This concept is called *akhirah* – the Hereafter and describes the accountability of the khalifah. Moreover, it is clearly stated in the Qur'an that Allah invites everyone to enjoy the fruits of the earth, but to avoid excess leading to waste, 'for Allah does not love wasters' (ARC, 2011).

The concepts of trusteeship, unity, accountability and the avoidance of wastefulness are the main principles of the environmental ethics of Islam. They are not abstract values, but they are all translated in practical directions on how to live, included in Shari'ah, the sacred law of Islam, and the *Sunna*, the

example set by the Prophet Muhammad, compiled in his *Hadith* (sayings). For example, there are laws in the Shari'ah mandating animal's protection and avoiding all form of cruelty, as well as the conservation of forests. The prophet Muhammad established large reserves around Mecca and Medina where all living beings are protected. According to his saying: 'Whosoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded' and 'If a Muslim plants a tree or sows a field and men and beasts and birds eat from it, all of it is a charity on his part' (Norcliffe, 1999).

Origins of the Alevi-Bektashi orders

The 'Alevi-Bektashi' is a term used for a large number of different heterodox communities, spread in the Anatolia region, the Balkans and other parts of the world. In Turkey alone, where they number at least 15 million, they are divided by ethnicity (Kurdish, Turkic and Arabic Alevis) and language (speaking Turkish, Kurdish, Kurmanji, Zaza and Arabic) (Ignatov, 2008).

Although some Bektashi scholars and Alevis believe that there are certain differences and variances, they have been generally regarded as parts of an integrated Alevi-Bektashi culture (Mavrommatis, 2008; Kressing, 2002; Doja, 2006a, Melikoff, 1998). In the past, Alevis lived in rural or more isolated areas, while the Bektashis lived in urban centres. Today the name 'Alevi' is usually used in Turkey, and the name 'Bek-

tashi' in the Balkans. What characterises these orders is their deep respect and love for nature and beauty, which is evident in their dances, music and poetry.

Both the Alevi and Bektashi orders consider as their founder Haji Bektash Veli, an Islamic mystic and philosopher from Khorasan province who lived in 1209–1271 in North-eastern Iran, in Anatolia (Karamustafa, 1994). His name can be translated as 'The Pilgrim Saint Bektash' and was probably not the actual founder of the orders but a patron-saint, selected at a later time (Doja, 2006a). The Khorassan province was home to Turkic tribes, and elements of their religious tradition that included pre-Islamic and non-Islamic elements that originated in shamanism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, Christianity and other antique religions were incorporated in the Bektashi practices. As they spread towards the Balkans, they additionally incorporated Neo-Platonist, Christian and Nestorian influence (Kressing, 2002).

Being influenced by Sufi approaches, they sought direct religious experiences as opposed to mainstream Islamic practices originating from prophetic revelations. Although they did not object to the mediating role of earthly representatives of God, in practice they defied Shiite hierarchies and performed rituals without intermediaries (Doja, 2006b). Before the establishment of their Empire (the Sunni triumphs over Shiite dynasties, which coincided with the foundation of the Ottoman Empire), and during times of so-

cial, political and military crisis, Ottomans were not themselves identified with Sunni Islam doctrine, but went through a period of assimilation with the heterodox Islam (Doja, 2006a). Common ground must have been found those times between them and the Alevi-Bektashi followers.

The Alevists in particular, allied with Kizilbash – partisans of the Safavids, one of the most important ruling dynasties of Iran, responsible for the spread of Shi'a Islam in Iran as well as major localities of the Caucasus and Indian subcontinent – and expressed the resistance of Turcoman chiefs against the Ottoman State. Bektashism integrated the Kizilbash ideology, which reflected their tribal system of social organisation, and later transformed the Bektashi order to a dervish one (Doja, 2006a). The Kizilbash-Alevists were isolated mostly in Anatolia, in an attempt of the State to suppress Turkey's ethnic heterogeneity (Ignatow, 2008), and preserved rituals and practices that distinguished them from other religious communities. The Bektashi resided mostly in urban centres and were characterised by a more organised structure, although both orders consider their beliefs identical (Melikoff, 1998).

As the Ottoman Empire spread, so did the Alevi-Bektashi orders and they were even associated with the Janissaries troops (Melikoff, 1998). This spread was supported by the Byzantine emperors in the fourteenth century, who used Ottoman troops during the civil wars that menaced the Byzan-

tine state. By the eighteenth century, Bektashi numbers in the Balkans had risen considerably, and a large number of tekkes (buildings designed specifically for prayer gatherings of Sufi brotherhoods) was functioning (Zeginis, 2001).

Starting from the sixteenth century, their beliefs were considered radical and clashed with the 'orthodox' Sunni and Shia Islam. In 1826 the Jannisaries troops were dismissed and the Bektashis were driven to the periphery of the Empire (Kressing, 2002). In 1925, during the revolution led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk - the founder of the secular Republic of Turkey, that put an end to the Ottoman Caliphate - the Sufi orders were officially banned. The Bektashi *tekkes* were closed and their dervishes were exiled. The Bektashi community's headquarters were then moved from Hacibektaş in central Anatolia to Tirana, Albania (Kressing, 2002).

Alevi-Bektashi doctrine

Both orders are Sufi or otherwise called Dervishes. Their primary difference to Sunni Muslims is the fact that the latter believe that during their lives they are on their pathway to God and that after the 'Final Judgment' they will finally be closer to Him, while Sufis believe that it is possible to be close to God and to fully embrace the Divine Presence in this life, living a primarily ascetic life (analogously to monastic orders of Christianity and Buddhism).

The beliefs of the Alevi and Bektashis are syncretic and received influences from the people they were in contact with. These religious cultures share a lot in common with other Islamic mystical movements, such as the need for an experienced spiritual guide called a *baba* as well as the doctrine of the four gates that must be traversed: Shari'ah (sacred law), Tariqah (the spiritual path), *Ma'rifah* (true Knowledge) and *Haqiqah* (Divine Reality) (Kressing, 2002). Their key characteristics include:

- love and respect for all people
- tolerance towards other religions and ethnic groups
- respect for working people
- equality of men and women who pray side by side, and the practice of monogamy (Leaman and Nasr, 2001).

The Alevi-Bektashi worship takes place in *tekkes*, not mosques. The hierarchical structure of the orders consists of the grades of *ashik*, *muhip* (novice), *dervish*, *baba* (similar to a guru) and *dede*. Since the order is mystic, only initiated members are allowed to participate in the ceremonies (Zeginis, 2001).

In the sixteenth century, an emblematic personality and great reformer of the Bektashi order, Balim Sultan, initiated a series of reformations that further favoured syncretism. In an attempt to survive and spread, Bektashism incorporated a number of Christian influences, such as the conception of the triadic God-Muhammad-Ali that is non-existent in the Qur'an, the prohibition of divorce,

the correlation of the worship of the 12 imams with the worship of the 12 Disciples, the use of wine and bread, as in the Christian holy communion and many others (Zeginis, 2001). Turkish scholars, however, have heavily criticised the influences between the two faiths and support the Turkish origins of Bektashism (Doja, 2006b).

Veneration and protection of nature in the Alevi-Bektashi religious tradition

While many references are mentioned in the Qur'an about the protection of nature, they are at the same time dictated separately and not in a unified manner. Just like in Christianity and other faiths, people tend to interpret the guardianship of the natural world – entrusted as a sacred duty to humans by God – as their right to dominate and over-exploit natural resources. As a result, they have separated themselves from the natural world, breaking a powerful bond.

The need of humans to keep a strong connection with nature was fulfilled by the approaches of Bektashism and Alevism. They responded to the desire expressed by many for a pantheistic faith, a faith of the heart more than a faith of the book and a faith of collectivity (Ignatow, 2008).

Although according to the teachings of many religions, nature should be respected, it is usually treated as ordinary, a place where humans, the only species worthy of salvation, are living.

It is considered by many scholars that this approach is generally supplementary, and does not come close to the appreciation and esteem most Asian religions show towards nature, whose views are basically influenced by animism and shamanism (Zarcone, 2005).

In the framework of animism, and as it is also mentioned in the theory of 'Supernature', all natural beings have a soul similar to that of humans. In simple words, all beings in nature have the same worth and status among them and none is superior to the other. The doctrine of the 'Oneness of Being' – that is the belief that everything is in God, even space and the whole universe –, central to the Neoplatonic philosophy but also seen under the perspective of Islam and Sufism, comes close to the concept of the *tawheed*, the unity the Qur'an teaches, and stresses the importance of the sense of community among all things in nature (Doja, 2006b).

The doctrine of the Oneness of Being is symbolically depicted in the choreography of the whirling dance of the Mevlevi dervishes (*evleviye*), representing the descent and return of things that went through all the phases of existence. These doctrines strongly connect to the reincarnationism, an influence directly derived from Buddhism. The Bektashis believe that when people die, if they lived doing good deeds, they will take a human form in their next life, and if they did the opposite, they will reincarnate as animals (Zarcone, 2005).

The most venerated natural elements by the Turkic people since the eleventh century have been trees and forests. People commonly address trees, calling them Mr (*bay*) and this is often demonstrated in toponyms (Mr Tree, *Bay Yığaç*). A ritual prayer mentions '*may your tree with the generous shade not be cut down*'. And in Western Muslim Anatolia a prayer is addressed to all elements '*mountains, stones, great trees and rivers, carry away the sickness my child is suffering from*' (Zarcone, 2005).

Objects of veneration are also rocks and stones; isolated piles of rocks between hills and valleys are often attributed the name *dede*, a title associated with revered elders. Veneration of trees and stones is also met, in saints' graves which are commonly surrounded by holy groves or in sanctuaries and holy places. A tree or grove may be worshiped but it is understood that it is the *barakah* (spiritual influence or blessing) of the holy person that makes it sacred and not that the tree is in itself sacred (Zarcone, 2005). The differentiating factor between the two spiritual traditions is that in Islam specific natural elements are venerated because of certain attributes each element disposes, while in the Alevi-Bektashi tradition all natural elements are equally valued (Ignatow, 2008).

The Alevi semi-nomad tribe of Tahtacı that live in the Taurus Mountains in Southern Turkey are so closely bound up with trees, because as they say 'they love them so much' and pertain that they never harm them. Since inevi-

tably they have to fall some of them, they perform a very complicating ritual, asking for their forgiveness (Zarcone, 2005).

The Alevi societies develop special relations with representatives of the animal kingdom, mainly deer and birds, a practice deriving from animism, as well as the theory of 'Supernature'. The Yürük and Tahtacı tribes that still reside in present-day Turkey, firmly believe that the deer society has a similar structure with the human society, with its own laws, organisation and chiefs, a remnant of ancient Turkic beliefs where human clans maintained relations with animal clans (ibid.).

It has been stated that contrary to Renaissance and Enlightenment philosophies, the Alevi-Bektashi theology is inherently friendly to the environment and the Alevi way of life is ecologically sustainable (Endirce, 1998).

Alevis-Bektashis in south-eastern Europe

The Alevis and Bektashis number many millions in present-day Turkey and the Balkan countries of Greece, Albania, FYR of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania and Bosnia. Three interesting examples of the Bektashis in the contemporary era are discussed below.

The Pomak Bektahis of Greece

Among the Islamic Greek populations that inhabit the Northern Rodopi Mountains in Eastern Thrace, Greece, there are Slavic speaking people called the



Roussa Tekke, Evros Greece.

Pomaks. Many of them are Bektashis and what makes their case special is that the wider area they occupy has been endowed with a rich cultural heritage, which influenced their own culture. There are indications that the region has been continuously inhabited since the early Iron Age (1100–900 BC), and there is a plethora of elements of the ancient Thracian tradition (which also combines Orphic and Dionysian elements) that testifies it, such as rock engravings depicting humans, birds and reptiles, as well as other symbols with magical and averting evil properties, as well as open-air shrines (sacred mountain tops) and dolmens (Aslanis and Arvanitidou, 2001). It is believed that one of the older oracles of the ancient world was situated in the vicinity, the Oracle of Dionysus.

In this area, the second most important Bektashi *tekke* of the world is situated, near the Roussa Village and it is fortunately still in operation. It was founded in 1402 by Kizil-Deli and it is the local Bektashis' most profoundly venerated

place of pilgrimage (Mavromatis, 2008). Nowadays, ca. 30 000 Pomaks are living in Greece, all of them in Eastern Thrace (Alexiou, 2009).

It is rather fascinating that even today, a large number of Thracians consider many natural elements (mountains, dolmens, rocks, springs) holy and try to protect them from unsustainable management practices.

The Bektashis of Albania

In 1925, when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk officially banned the dervish orders, the Bektashi community's headquarters were then moved from Hacıbektaş in central Anatolia to Tirana, Albania.

While by and large ethnicity in South-eastern Europe is closely related to specific faiths (Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks and Romanians are Christian Orthodox, Slovenians, Croats and Hungarians are Roman Catholics, Bosnians, Pomaks and Turks are Muslims), the case of Albania is different. People in the North are Catholics, in the South Orthodox and Bektashi and in the Central and Eastern parts are Sunni Muslims. It is generally agreed that religion in Albania tends to be syncretistic. Elements of the autochthonous folk religions have been preserved in the country, in a much greater extent than in other regions of Europe. It is very common for Albanians to participate in religious ceremonies as a form of social gathering, regardless of their own faith. Approximately 20% of the Albanians claim to have some connection to the Bektashis (approximately 635 000

people) (Kressing, 2002) and Bektashism is one of the four religions recognised by the Albanian State.

The Alevi of Turkey

The Turkic Alevi, despite their persecution by the Kemalist government, have managed to survive in great numbers, especially since they occupied remote areas, away from the capital and the central authority. In addition to the fact that they were firmly rooted in the Balkans for centuries through the Turkish Diaspora they can be nowadays traced to France and Northern Europe. In Turkey, it is estimated that, at minimum, they reach a population of 10 million people and, at maximum, 20 million people (a range of 14 to 27 per cent of the country's population) (Ignatow, 2008).

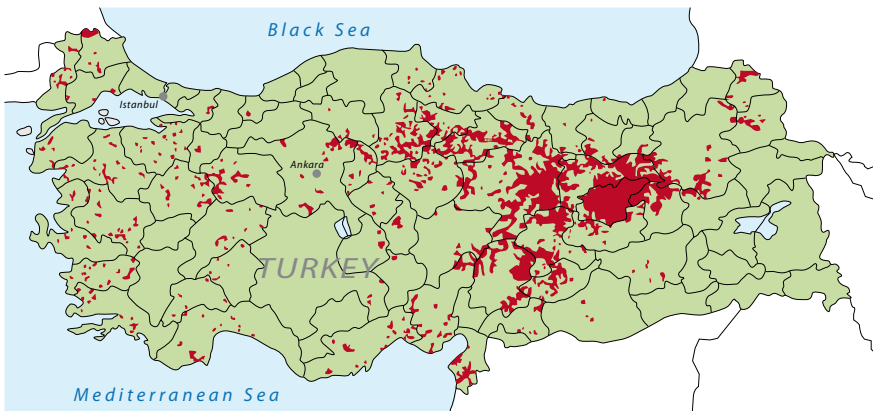
Nowadays, the Alevi ally with the democratic secularists and oppose the fundamentalist influence and the Muslim extremists. They demand Alevism to be recognised as an official Islamic

community, equal to but different from Sunnism.

The Alevi religious notions about nature have taken a political character in the 1990s in Turkey, inspiring a spiritual type of ecology among some intellectual circles, as a response to rising environmental dangers from industrialisation and urbanisation (Zarcone, 2005). Following the military coup of 1980 and the constitutional changes in the 1990s, a large number of *hemşire* (hometown) organisations were established in large Turkish cities and in European cities, which strengthen ties of internal migrants with their homelands. These organisations, along with Alevi NGOs with close ties to Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and many other environmental groups have brought to the fore environmental issues and concerns, as a result of a rising globalisation process (Ignatow, 2008).

In his book *The Environment in Alevism and Bektashism* (1998), Nukret Endirge urges the political authorities and

Map depicting the Alevi population of Turkey.



the environmental organisations to protect the environment by adopting specific measures. Annual festivals associated with devotional sites, where veneration is given equally to saints, animals, plants and minerals, offer pilgrims the opportunity to demand measures against the destruction of nature. Participants in this movement insist that the Bektashi-Alevi thought sees nature (*doga*) as a unit; it sees a harmony that unites all things (Zarcone, 2005).

In the framework of contemporary global environmental movements, a network of environmental and cultural organisations has been developed, with the purpose to oppose the construction of a series of dams in the Tunceli region of Anatolia. Tunceli (or Dersim) remains Turkey's only province with an almost exclusively Alevi population, and is renowned for its natural beauty. According to the project, eight dams are going to be built in the Munzur Valley. Anti-dam activists believe that if the dams will be built, the rise in water will reach the foot of the city and will flood many already isolated regions, cutting off the locals and depopulating the region. A wide network of Turkish Alevi migrants in Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Britain and Australia have joined forces and created the necessary structures with the aim of helping the Alevis in Turkey both financially and in terms of organisational support (Ignatow, 2008).

The Alevi activists schedule protests around the annual Tunceli Festival, which is held in August and lasts for

four days. In August 2004, apart from the usual discussion panels organised during the festival (in which scientists and civic leaders also participated arguing against the construction of the dams), a theatre play was staged, presenting in an original manner the spiritual qualities the Alevi place on the river and valley. The actors cloaked in sacred animals' costumes (deer and trout) told old village stories about the river (Ignatow, 2008).

There are indications, though, that things might start to change, regarding the recognition of their identity, their religious rights, the legal standing of their places of worship, and their wider acceptance by the Turkish government (Altıntaş, 2009).

Conclusions

The Alevi-Bektashi religious culture is unique. Owing to its syncretistic nature it comprises centuries-old beliefs and practices from a vast territory and unifies them into a spiritual tradition that teaches love and respect for all things in nature, animate and inanimate. Combining elements from institutionalised religions and native faiths, it has acquired distinctive qualities and a very unique character. Rooted in two continents and tested in different social and political surroundings and circumstances, it has proved its resilience surviving in the hearts and minds of the faithful.

Although considered a religious minority, their number is quite large in the

Balkans and Asia Minor. Most of them live in Anatolia and for many years have been neglected by the central authorities. In Albania, as well, their community is rather large, and smaller numbers of Alevis and Bektashis can be found all over the Balkans, but also in other parts of the world.

Not well-known in the Western world, their respectful attitude to nature could serve as an example of good practice. Their teachings should become better known and their message of harmonious life with nature should be further promoted. Their voice should be heard by the governments of their countries more clearly and appropriate measures for the sustainable management of protected areas and the environment could be taken.

The natural environment we inherited from our fathers will be probably delivered to our children in a much worse condition. So, as Celal Arslan, an Alevi dede, mentioned during an interview in 2004 (Ignatow, 2008): *'We give primary importance to the environment all the time for our and our children's future. Our ancestors planted a tree wherever they saw water. The importance of trees has come down to us. When we were young our elders used to say 'Plant trees as long as you live. Even if you yourself cannot benefit, other living things such as birds and wolves can benefit', and they planted a love of nature in us. But over time, the slaughter of nature increased. I am telling you as an Alevi, as a dede, we should give environmental consciousness to our children.'*

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Part Three:

Managing lands of mainstream religions



The cultural and spiritual sites of the Parco Nazionale della Majella, Italy

Vita de Waal

Intangible heritage

The Majella National Park is a protected area with an abundance of diverse and intriguing sites spanning at least 800 000 years. These cultural sites are not just physical sites but have deep historic, cultural and spiritual significance that cannot easily be conveyed to people who are not of that culture or spiritual view. Furthermore, some cultural traditions have their source in civilisations that have long since disappeared, but whose traditions are still alive today, as they have been passed on, either orally or in writing.

A further difficulty is that intangible cultural criteria mean different things to differ-

ent people, thereby making it difficult to establish a clear-cut definition. It is therefore of the utmost importance for such work to be multi-tasked, to have different approaches and to include a variety of peoples, especially including those whose traditions are being considered.

This case study will raise a number of questions, but might also present an example in which many cultural, spiritual and historic contexts converge within the contemporary context.

The Abruzzo Region

The sites of Majella National Park need to be set against the historical, cultural

< San Giovanni all'Orfento: Very remote site to which Pietro Angeleri retreated at the age of 69 and where he stayed for nine years.



Eremo San Bartolomeo in Legio (ninth century – still in use): Located next to a prehistoric lithic site.

and geographical background of the Abruzzo Region. Situated in the centre of the Italian peninsula and with over one-third of its territory protected, this region is considered one of Italy's greenest. Within its territory there are Majella National Park, Gran Sasso-Laga National Park, Abruzzo National Park and the Regional Park of Sirente-Velino.

While the Italian peninsula has seen diverse peoples and cultures passing through its territory, many finds confirm that *Homo erectus* inhabited the Abruzzo area since the Lower Paleolithic. During the last glacial period the permanent snow line in this area went down to 1200m. The hunter-gatherers had to move down to the coastal plains while the animals were forced to migrate southwards to find new habitats. The glacial period ended about 10 000 years ago with the milder weather opening new grassland corridors allowing new migration patterns and people from different regions.

Many of the new foreigners that settled in the area brought with them new cultural inputs, metal smelting techniques, domesticated sheep, goats, agricultural knowledge and a tradition of transhumance that would mark the Abruzzo region for millennia to come. Milder weather conditions allowed the transition from a more mobile society to the development of nascent and more permanent agricultural settlements coupled with seasonal movements of transhumant activity.

The transition from a society of hunter-gatherers to an agricultural society did not occur in a consistent manner and for a period Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age cultures appear side-by-side. By contrast, one element that can be found to persist uniformly is the importance given to Mother Earth, to Maja, the giver of life. However, many clay figurines of her in burial sites show that she does not only accompany individuals in this life but also into the after-life. It is to her that the Majella Mountain

has been dedicated and since time immemorial the Majella is considered a sacred mountain, the Mother Mountain.

Transhumance

Majella National Park is intrinsically related to Abruzzo's culture of transhumance. Two of the millennia-old drovers' roads (*tratturi*) used by shepherds and their herds for their seasonal migration traverse Majella National Park and Abruzzo's remote, majestic and dramatic landscapes into Apulia, and over 1000 tholoi-type shepherd huts still dot the Majella landscape to this day.

Transhumance was practiced in the Abruzzo Region since the Copper Ages till the 1950s, marking society, traditions, as well as its tangible and intangible culture. In 1605, and with only a working population of 50 000 people, five million bovines were counted in the Abruzzo region alone to which need to be added millions of sheep and goats. A single shepherd could be moving as many as 10 000 animals along drovers' roads that would be either 55 m or 111.6 m wide, depending on whether he was moving cattle or ovine. The distances travelled per day would be 40 km for cattle and 10-15 km for ovine. Shepherds had to pay a toll for the use of the tracks and for each animal; the income of these taxes to the Aragon crown was considerable. Farmers welcomed the herds as they benefitted from the passage of the animals. Archival records show that wheat yields from fields fertilised by herds were well above average.

The 250 km journey to the south took two to three weeks and every three or five km along the drovers' road the shepherds would find resting places that were strategically located, containing wide open spaces that offered shadow, ample watering opportunities for the herds, cooking areas and stone huts. The routes were also extensively used by all needing to reach the South of Italy or by those travelling northwards. Today, these highways of the past are once again being used as trekking and pilgrimage routes.

Shepherds would build shrines to protector deities or even churches along these tracks which made these the preferred way for pilgrims to travel to/from the Holy Land. The commercial opportunities these migrations presented allowed people to organise markets, build taverns and houses and, over time, lively market villages would come into being, as the most important requirements for making a living existed through the availability of water, roads, and a barter and trade network with neighbouring regions. This was kept alive through the seasonal migration of shepherds that allowed goods to be transported, exchanged and sold. On 8 May the shepherds would return home along a different route to the summer pastures of their mountains, often joined by their families.

The Majella, mountain of sacred sites

It might seem a contradiction that the abundance and diversity of sites is also the challenge Majella National Park fac-

es. Another point is that the same sites have been used and reused by many subsequent cultures. However, beneath it all there is a powerful force that has expressed itself continually, reinforcing the living matrix of this mountain that has expressed itself as a Mother Mountain by giving birth to diverse cultures and spiritual expressions.

To use an ecological word, sites have been 'recycled' and adapted to meet new requirements and interpretations and therefore contain many historical, cultural and spiritual layers. Which one is to be brought to the fore? Or is it the resulting sacred landscape that needs focussing on with this cultural and natural diversity just an outcome of much deeper forces?

Context of monasticism and the Abruzzo

Monasticism in the Abruzzo region is characterised by a number of key dates.

- 4th–6th century AD: Christianity arrives in Abruzzo. The Valnerina Hagiographic texts mention Christians who fled Syria and Anatolia arriving in Valnerina. Here they lived as hermits, founded Anchoritic settlements, introduced the hermitic tradition and reclaimed the marshy valley.
- 501 AD: St Benedict retreats to a cave at Subiaco, while monasteries already exist nearby.
- St Benedict creates his Rule based on the writings of St Basil and the early church fathers.
- 6th century: The hermitage abbey of S. Salvatore a Majella was built on top of Roman settlement. Documents from

this hermitage state that hermits were already living then on the Majella.

- 639 AD: Monks escape the Persian invasions of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Armenia and Sicily.
- 726/739: Byzantine Emperor Leo III issues edicts against the worship of images. Pope Gregory III condemns the Emperor's decision and the iconoclasts escape to Southern Italy.
- 732: Leo III transfers Illyricum and Southern Italy from Papal governance to the Patriarch of Constantinople. Monks escape northwards and to Rome.
- 820: Saracens invade Abruzzo. Monks retire to remote areas to lead an eremitic way of life
- 1042: The creation of maritime links between South Italy, Syria and Palestine and the advent of the Crusades in 1093 bring more monastics to Italy

The Majella National Park

The Majella National Park territory covers 74 094 ha within the three provinces of Pescara, L'Aquila and Chieti and comprises 39 townships.

What sets the Majella National Park apart from the other national parks is the fact that 55% of its territory is situated above 2000 m (6562 ft). This also means that certain areas of the park are not easily accessible from late autumn to spring, thereby giving nature some respite from visitors.

Planning and Management

The Resolution for the creation of Majella National Park was adopted on 6

December 1991. It was founded in 1993 and the institutional organ came into being by presidential decree on 5 June 1995. The IUCN Category is II.

The administration comprises a Board of Directors, an Executive Board, Auditors, and the Park Community that is constituted by the presidents of the regions and of the provinces, the town mayors, and the presidents of the mountain communities in whose territory the areas of the park are situated.

With over six million visitors the Majella National Park was the most visited National Park of the Abruzzo in 2008. The Park has four visitor centres; five information centres; two museums, of which one is dedicated exclusively to the Marsican brown bear; two botanical gardens and four hostels.

There are over 500 km of hiking trails, and the Park attracts visitors that enjoy climbing, trekking, mountain biking and skiing.

The trails are well maintained and sign-posted with length of hike, estimation of time and degree of difficulty. Benches and/or picnic areas can be found along some of the trails.

Sites are often located in remote areas. Directions to the sites are sign-posted. Information panels are displayed at the site. No facilities or shops are to be found at any site.

Natural heritage

The Park is host to a wealth of rare and endemic species related to both fauna and flora from southern Europe as well

as those from the alpine regions thereby providing the essential elements for the survival of highly mobile populations of carnivores, specifically the Marsican brown bear. Some indicators testifying to the natural wealth of the region are the following:

- Fauna: 78% of the mammal species of Abruzzo and 45% of those of Italy are found on its territory.
- Birds: 130 species
- Flora: 65% of the Abruzzo's, 37% of Italy's and 22% of Europe's species of flora is located here.

Cultural and spiritual heritage

The Park contains a wealth of sites that testify to the migration of peoples and tribes of cultural diversity. They contain archaeological sites dating back to the Lower Palaeolithic (old/early Stone Age), caves used extensively from Early Neolithic times, pagan, Italic, Roman and Christian sanctuaries and temples, Roman habitats, at least 1000 tholoi-type huts used for transhumant activities, sacred wells, lakes, and rocks, rock burial chambers, hermitages, coenobites, monasteries, sanctuaries, abbeys, churches and numerous fortified medieval towns:

Although much can still be viewed, most of the archaeological and artistic treasures that were found at these sites have been moved to museums outside the Park's boundaries as the finds were of great importance and of relevance to the cultural heritage of the Italian nation.

The spiritual sites at Majella were so numerous that Petrarch, the famous Italian humanist and poet, called the

Majella Mountain the '*domus Christi*' (the house of Christ).

The deep forested gorges with an abundance of caves, water and springs have made this an ideal location for hermits. It is known that hermits stayed here well before 1000 AD. However, it is mostly through the hermit Pietro Angeleri (1210–1296) that the Majella hermitages are known, as he lived here for over 60 years restoring and amplifying many of the existing spiritual sites.

Continuity of cultural and spiritual heritages

The arrival of Christianity was seen as an additional belief available to the people and tribes living in the area that had a long history rich in culture that was permeated with a variety of spiritual traditions. The people simply incorporated aspects of this new faith and, for a period, all these cultural and spiritual practices were interwoven and found expression without any conflict. Christianity added an element of hope, salvation, and rebirth within the human realm.

The people of Abruzzo have kept many of their traditional beliefs alive, because the region was 'off the beaten track', the high mountain range making this region inaccessible and remote, while it was also considered to be one of the economically poorest regions in Italy.

Still today age-old rituals are being acted out and each town has its own traditions and contributes to the rich tapestry of

cultural expressions that make this land unique. Many of the rituals are linked to elemental forces, such as earth, rocks, fire, water or animals, like snakes, that will link people to the deeper forces that influence and shape human life and mark the changes of seasons on earth. Festivals to celebrate these forces and to invoke their protection are still attended by all, young and old alike, and all participate with equal delight and intensity. Such an example can be seen at Cocullo, eight km west of the Park when in May the statue of St Dominic is brought out after Mass and paraded through the streets completely covered in snakes (which were considered potent guardians of temples and other sacred spaces) followed by the *Serpari* (local snake expert) who is also draped with serpents. The *Serpari* are a hereditary brotherhood of snake-charmers who play a major role in the festival and to this day they are held in high regard. However, this festival has much older roots and is related to a much older rite, that of the snake deity/witch Angitia. The snake-charmers were in pagan times the priests at the sanctuary of Angitia.

Selected sites

Valle Giumentina is an Old Stone Age site dating back 350 000 years that is situated on the edge of what was once a lake in the Valle Giumentina. Paleolithic humans took care of infirm and weak companions, they buried their dead, had spiritual beliefs and engaged in ritual. They were hunter-gatherers. The wildlife that surrounded them included

bison, elephants, rhinoceroses, lions, hippopotami, water birds, tortoises and amphibians inhabiting the marsh areas while the forests sheltered deer, wild horses, bears and boars.

Caporciano includes 67 shaft tombs from seventh-sixth century BC.

Grotta dei Porci is a cave used since Middle Paleolithic times for habitat, burial, cult, and for making tools. A 12 600 year old skeleton was found here, the skull of which can be seen in one of the museums.

Grotta dei Piccioni, 6500 BC, is considered one of the most important Neolithic sanctuaries in this area.

Grotta della Continenza is a cave that includes 37 burials with features common to most burials of this period: the burials contained pierced deer canines, shells and ochre. However, there were also characteristics that were less common: the skeletons were placed in stone circles; the skeleton's head in a few instances was replaced by a stone (as in the nearby *Grotta Maritza*); there were quartz crystals in the burial sites and some burials were found with deer antlers fragments near their head.

Grotta del Colle is a huge cave rectangular 40 x 60 m wide and 4-12 m high that was used in Paleolithic times as a shelter, and only since the italic era did it come into use as a Sanctuary. In the sixth century BC it was an Italic temple dedicated to the Goddess Cerfia, the Mother and Nutrix who gives fertility to the land. A small statuette of Goddess Cerfia has been found and it is interest-

ing to note that during the Procession in honour of the Madonna di Carpineto, all young girls are dressed like Cerfia, with three quarter long tunics over long tiered dresses and flowers in their hair.

Votive deposits and coins dating back to the third century BC confirm this as an important sacred space for the Maruccini tribe. Also found in the same cave was the famous bronze tablet, called the *Tabula Rapinensis* from the same period, which is exhibited today in Moscow's Puskin Museum.

In Longobard times (568 to 774 AD) the cave was a shrine to Archangel Michael while in later Christian times it was dedicated to Santa Maria in Cryptis.

Temple of Ercole Currino, adjacent to the National Park headquarters, is a sanctuary dating back to the fourth century BC dedicated to Ercole Curino. An exquisite bronze statue representing a Resting Ercole from 300 BC and many ex-voti have been found and are now at the Archaeological Museum of Chieti. The sacred well, located inside the cave, is still in use today. An avalanche covered this site in 200 BC. Stones used to build the *Abbazia di S. Spirito al Morrone*, (*Badia Morrone*) at Sulmona and *St. Onofrio* uncovered the Sanctuary in 1259.

Badia San Liberatore a Majella is one of the oldest medieval Benedictine monastery churches, already documented in 884 in an inventory of Benedictine properties. It was destroyed during the earthquake of 990, but rebuilt in 1007. The magnificent and impressive mosaic floor from 1275 has been restored.

San Giuannelle near the shore of River Alento is made up of rock burial chambers, a niche, a small chapel and a sacred pool. It is thought that a group of hermits came here in the eighth century AD.

Grotta Sant'Angelo, a large cave with a church built inside, was already documented in 1221. However, oral traditions mention this as being the site of an older pagan temple dedicated to Bona, the Goddess of Fertility. Women would make the trek through the forests to bathe their breasts in the special waters praying for an abundant milk flow for their new-born child and the many water basins in the rocks would confirm this ancient tradition.

The Church of Sant' Agata that is currently being excavated was built on a pagan temple where women who did not have enough milk for their new-born would come. Women still pray at the altar stone.

Abbazia di Santo Spirito al Morrone, at Sulmona was founded in 1259 by Pietro Angeleri, a holy man who later became Pope Celestine V. The administrative offices and headquarters of Majella National Park are currently located here.

The Hermitage of San Bartolomeo, located next to a prehistoric site, is known to have existed in the ninth century. Pietro Angeleri stayed here and was engaged in its restoration and extension. His piety and fame drew many visitors and he decided to move further up the mountain, to the Orfento. Many miracles are attributed to Pietro Angeleri while he lived here.

Miraculous powers are attributed to the statue of San Bartolomeo which is housed above the altar. In times of need, especially when people were very ill, individuals were allowed to come and take the statue home until the patient recovered. However, the rules have changed and instead of the statue, people today are allowed to take home the knife that San Bartolomeo holds in his hands. This site is still in use today, and several ceremonies and rituals are performed.

Santo Spirito a Majella is a monastic complex with rich legacy of history and traditions. It is one of the most famous and biggest monasteries of the Park. Dauferius stayed here with a fellow group of hermits in 1053. Pietro da Morrone resided here for about three years around the 1250s and his disciple, the Blessed Roberto da Salle, was Prior from 1310 to 1317. It still retains its charm and majesty due to its superb position and to the atmosphere of mystery that shrouds it.

Eremo San Giovanni all'Orfento. Pietro Angeleri stayed at this remote and austere site from 1284 to 1293. The water harvesting techniques used here were applied extensively to all sites and provide examples that could be utilised in the twenty-first century.

The Eremo Sant'Onofrio sul Morrone was built in 1265, though Pietro Angeleri retreated to this hermitage only in 1293. It is probably the most historic site. Elected by the cardinals to succeed Pope Nicholas IV, he refused to accept the Papacy. In 1293 a delegation of cardinals



Santo Spirito a Majella

and bishops accompanied by the King of Naples and the King of Hungary made their way to the hermitage to convince him. Finally he accepted and was crowned Pope Celestine V at S. Maria di Collemaggio in Aquila.

He issued a number of papal bulls, one of these declaring the right of any Pope to abdicate, a right that he exercised within six months to return to Sant'Onofrio. However, his successor, Pope Boniface VIII, decided to imprison him in the castle of Fumane where he died on 19 May 1296. It is believed that Boniface had him killed. He was canonised in 1313.

Sites related to transhumance

Along the drovers' routes one can find caves with shrines dedicated to Archangel Michael, many with healing wells.

These places often became places of pilgrimages that were visited on 29 September and 8 May, both days dedicated to the Great Protector Michael, the Patron Saint of Shepherds.

The Santuario di San Michele is a cave sanctuary near a resting place which water makes this an important rest stop and gathering point for shepherds and their herds. Ceramic finds from various epochs testify to its extensive use over time. It is situated on a strategic position on the drovers' road near Pescocostanzo, a well-known fortified medieval hill-top town.

Challenges and recommendations

There are a number of challenges, some of which paradoxically, stem from the successful manner the Park developed various programmes, e.g. breeding, protecting its wildlife, its visitor and educational facilities. The National Park attracts over six million visitors yearly and people of the neighbouring townships realise the importance to the local economy of keeping these visitors in the area. This has led to an encroaching urbanisation in areas inside the park.

Larger visitor numbers create more waste. A rubbish dump and a toxic waste discharge now exist in an adjacent border area, threatening both people and wildlife.

The people of the Abruzzo have a great affection for *their* brown bear, the Marsican Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos marsicanus*), also known as the Appennine

Duration of Use of Majella National Park Sites



Sites - Used since	800 000 to 20 000 BC	12 000 to 9 500 BC	6000 BC	4000 BC Bronze Age
Eremo Sant'Onofrio sul Morrone				
Eremo di San Bartolomeo				
Abbazia S.to Spirito al Morrone				
Eremo Sant'Onofrio				
Badia San Liberatore a Majella				
Tombe Rupestri San Giuannelle				
Grotta Sant'Angelo				
Chiesa Madonna Buon Cammino				
Drovers Road and Sites			√	√
Grotta del Colle	√	√	√	√
Sanctuary San Michele				
Santo Spirito a Majella				
Chiesa Sant'Agata				
Eremo San Giovanni all'Orfento				
Grotta della Continenza	√	√	√	√
Sanctuary Ercole Currino				
Grotta dei Piccioni		√	√	√
Grotta dei Porci	√	√	√	√
Roccamorice Lithic Site	√	√	√	
Valle Giumentina Site	√	√	√	



1200 BC to AD Iron Age Italic culture	AD to 476 Roman Empire	568 to 1017 Lombard Empire	Middle Ages 500 - 1400	Renaissance 1500 - 1700	Still in use in 20th Century
			√	√	√
			√	√	√
			√	√	√
			√	√	√
		√	√	√	√
		√	√	√	√
		√	√	√	√
√	√	√	√	√	√
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			√	√	
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brown bear, an endangered subspecies of the brown bear. Their habitat is mainly restricted to Abruzzo National Park, though a number have also been seen at Majella National Park. The total population of this subspecies is estimated to be only around 40 bears. Big roads and motorways divide Abruzzo National Park from Majella National Park and Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga National Park. There is an urgent need for wildlife corridors between these parks.

The numerous sacred sites also pose challenges, though these are more related to restoration, maintenance and safety measures. While many of these sites (caves, hermitages, churches, abbeys and monasteries) are still in use, not all are used on a daily basis. There might therefore be a question of who is to look after these sites, many still consecrated. Another point is that while these sites are remote, the Abruzzo winter also delivers much snow and with over 55% of its territory above 2000 m many sites are inaccessible from November till March. Nor is the weather gentle with the frescoes and statues and it is amazing that after hundreds of years we are still able to admire some of the paintings. Unfortunately many people think that it is acceptable to scribble their name over paintings, on statues and even on altars. An educational initiative that values the uniqueness of Abruzzo's special natural, cultural and spiritual heritage might help in safeguarding its importance to future generations.

Only recently has some money been made available by the government, and excavations have resumed at

some of the Palaeolithic and Neolithic sites. Recently a 14 000 year old hearth was discovered, making this one of the best-preserved hearths in Europe. While a number of caves today have the necessary legal safeguards (because they are related to paleosurfaces) there are still a number of caves that people can just walk into.

It is of note to mention that only recently (2004) Palaeolithic surfaces in Italy received protection through Legislative decree no. 42/2004, containing the 'Code on Cultural Heritage and Landscape' - Title I, Section 10. However, no such regulation exists related to caves, and of consequence hermitages will suffer further deterioration. Although many of these sites have beautiful frescoes funding might be hard to be obtained for any restoration work.

At present the panels at sites do mention their history and use, but more information is still at hand; it might be worth speaking with those who still hold the memory of how people used these sites, about the sites used for the water cult, of those used for litho-therapy (the rubbing against stone walls or lying on rocks and slabs), the rituals involved with these and the dates which were considered the most beneficial. These are the cultural traditions and related knowledge that are being lost.

Some sites need safer access, e.g. San Giovanni all'Orfento. If this is not possible then there needs to be at least a sign informing visitors that they should not access the site or do it at their own risk and peril.

As was mentioned above, there is a need for wildlife corridors and for feeding programmes for the Marsican Brown Bear.

In 2001, the Board of Majella National Park sent a request to Dr G. Proietti, Director of the Permanent Working Group for the UNESCO World Heritage List at the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, asking for the Park to be included in the list of Italian sites to be presented to the World Heritage Committee. It is a pity that this was refused, as the Parco Nazionale della Majella would be an outstanding world heritage site, offering a variety of sites rarely found elsewhere and spanning from Paleolithic times to the Middle Ages and to the present.

The above-mentioned list of sites contains only few examples of the many sacred and natural sites that can be found there. This National Park is remarkable as the natural aspect is almost overshadowed by the great and diverse variety of sacred natural sites, many of which are not restricted to the historic period.

The Parco Nazionale della Majella, with its protected natural landscape dotted by sacred and historic sites comprises hermitages, monasteries, churches and abbeys. The millennia old traditions of transhumance have influenced the culture of the Abruzzo and the caves, tholoi-huts, drovers' roads, sacred wells and lakes are testimony to a spirituality that is still very alive today. Festivals and celebrations continue to reflect the sacred and are related to the earth, the abundance of harvests and peoples' gratitude for the gifts and the healing power of nature. Around this colourful tapestry of cultural traditions those related to the culinary arts, to food preparation and to food preservation are bountiful. The sacred mother is still very much present and it is hoped that the Majella National Park Board will once again consider bringing the Park to the attention of the Ministry of Culture for inclusion in the Italian UNESCO World Heritage List.

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Holy Island of Lindisfarne and the modern relevance of Celtic ‘Nature Saints’.

Robert Wild

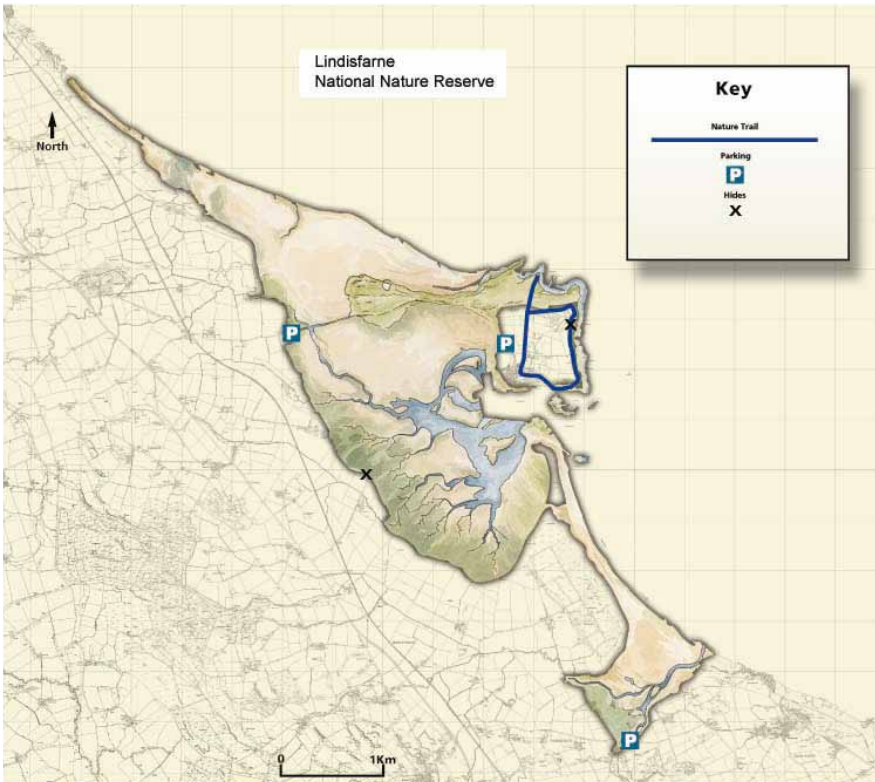
‘All places and all people are sacred. We have to recapture that, and respect even the smallest wood as well as the largest rainforest’ Rev. Canon David Adam, Vicar of Holy Island 1995-2003 (personal communication, 2009).

‘... has shown how much liveliness there is on the island, how much willingness to accommodate new ventures, but also how much determination there is for the future to be shaped by and for the island people. We are not ready to become anyone’s theme park, now or ever!’ (Tristram, 2009).

Introduction

The Holy Island of Lindisfarne is located on the north east coast of England, on the border with Scotland. It is accessible at low tide, across sand and mud flats, which carry an ancient pilgrim’s way and a modern road causeway. It is surrounded by the 3541 ha Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve which protects the island’s sand dunes and the adjacent inter-tidal habitats (Natural England, 2005), that support a wide variety of plant life and attract vast numbers of birds. Almost 300 bird species have been recorded and the wintering wild-fowl population is estimated at 60 000.

< The Parish Church of St Mary’s thought to be on the site of St Aiden’s monastery, and the ruins of the Lindisfarne Benedictine Priory.



Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve with Holy Island at its centre.

Holy Island, Lindisfarne was founded in AD 635 as the first monastic community in England and for 240 years it was a centre of Christian learning. It is associated with several Saints including St. Cuthbert. Desecrated by the first Viking raid on England in AD 793, the Abbey removed St Cuthbert's relics in 875 and they were located at Durham where a medieval Cathedral was built in his honour.

The main settlement on Holy Island is a traditional Northumbrian village of about 150 residents once reliant on fishing and

farming but increasingly engaged in tourism. The island receives in excess of half a million visitors per year, many of whom are attracted by nature and the island's religious and secular history.

This paper builds on the modern conservation situation of Holy Island as described by Wild (2010). It outlines the life of St Cuthbert and expands on the nature spirituality of a group of 'nature saints' of which St Cuthbert is an important exemplar. It examines elements of a revival in 'Celtic spirituality'. It then discusses some of the challeng-

es facing Holy Island Lindisfarne. It asks the question; is it legitimate to invoke the lives of long dead, and largely forgotten saints in the name of contemporary environmental concerns?

Mammals extant in Northern Britain during St. Cuthbert's time.

Species	Date extirpated in Britain
European Wolf (<i>Canis lupus</i>)	c. AD 1740
Eurasian Beaver (<i>Castor fiber</i>)	16 th century
Wild Boar (<i>Sus scrofa</i>),	13 th century
European Brown Bear (<i>Ursus arctos arctos</i>)	10 th century

St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne

Two hagiographies of St Cuthbert survive, one was written anonymously (c. 700), the other by St. (the Venerable) Bede between AD 716 and 726 (Bede, 731; Magnusson, 1984; Farmer, 1998). St Cuthbert lived from 634 to 687, when the Britons (ancestors of the modern Welsh), English, Picts and Dalriada (Irish) were vying for territory and power in northern Britain. We first hear of him at 16 years old, upon the hills of what is now southern Scotland. On that night in AD 651 Cuthbert was defending a flock of sheep, at a time when northern Britain was under larger areas of natural forest and with existing populations of wolf, bear and other large mammals. During his watch he saw a bright stream of light descending from

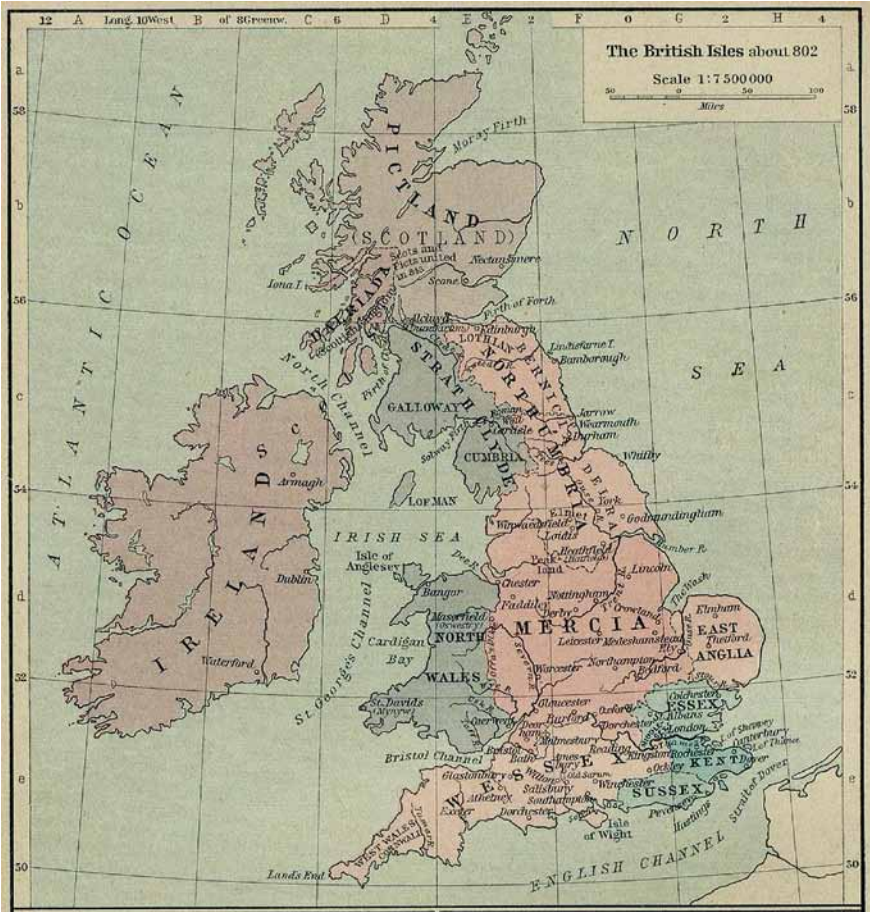
heaven to the south. This signalled the death and ascension of St Aidan, the remarkable founder of the monastery on Lindisfarne, whose generosity and humility is considered to have established the spiritual pattern of Holy Island. On witnessing this event Cuthbert was moved to become a monk.

St Cuthbert's legacy and influence

Cuthbert excelled as a student and gained a reputation as a preacher and healer.

'A hermit, prior and then bishop to the monastic community of Lindisfarne, Cuthbert became on his death in 687 one of the most important medieval saints in Europe and one of the foremost saints of Medieval England.' (Marner, 2000).

Cuthbert, when alive, was visited by Egfrith, King of Northumbria (670-685), he miraculously 'appeared' to King Alfred at Glastonbury, and his shrine was visited by three English kings (Aethelstan 934, Edmund 945 and Cnut 1027). By the late eleventh century his feast days were celebrated in many monasteries in Europe, and many copies of his hagiographies were produced. Forty-five copies are in existence indicating their popularity (Farmer, 1998). Many churches in England were dedicated to him, as was Durham Cathedral, where his relics were entombed. (Marner, 2000). The Cathedral is now a World Heritage Site and is considered 'the largest and most perfect monument of 'Norman' style architecture in England', (UNESCO, 2011).



Political divisions of northern Britain indicative of St Cuthbert's era.

The Lindisfarne Gospels, produced in his honour, are recognised as one of the world's greatest masterpieces of manuscript painting (Backhouse, 1981, Brown, 2003) and one of the best documented (Backhouse, 1981). As well as international fame, Cuthbert amassed a body of local folklore, perhaps larger than any other English saint (Doel and Doel, 2009).

'Cuthbert was not only a historical figure providing continuity with the community's ancient roots at Lindisfarne but was also considered a protector of both his community and 'his people'.....The very physical presence of Cuthbert, in all areas of Northumbria both while alive and after his death, is a fascinating example of the way in which the corporal presence of a saint

somehow helps sanctify a geographical region and affirms and strengthens its boundaries (Marner, 2000).

Cuthbert and nature

St Cuthbert had a close relationship and affinity with nature (McManners, 2008). For Christian preachers of the time this was not unusual. Cuthbert was an ascetic and would spend all night in the sea. Once he was observed emerging at daybreak he knelt on the sand to pray.

'And immediately there followed in his footsteps two little sea-animals (four-footed creatures, which are called otters – Bede) humbly prostrating themselves on the earth; and licking his feet, they rolled upon them wiping them with their skins (fur-Bede) and warming them with their breath. After this service and ministry had been fulfilled and his blessing had been received they departed into their haunts in the waves of the sea.' The Anonymous Life (annotated by Bede's Life) in Magnusson, 1984.

Cuthbert spend several years (676-684) on the island of Inner Farne, close to Lindisfarne. He was particularly fond of the seabirds and is attributed with establishing England's first ever bird protection rules relating to the killing of wildfowl. The Eider Duck (*Somateria mollissima*) is associated with him, and locally nicknamed 'Cuddy Ducks'. He was said to allow them to nest on the steps of his altar on Farne. (National Trust, 2011).

'Tales about St Cuthbert's love for all

creatures, furred or feathered, great or small, are legion. One gets the impression from the Lives (hagiographies) that he virtually declared Lindisfarne a Nature Reserve 1300 years before the Nature Conservancy Council. (Magnusson, 1984).

Sources of St. Cuthbert's nature spirituality

St Cuthbert' nature spirituality can be attributed to a Christian nature tradition and to a pre-Christian Celtic nature spirituality described in the following sections.

A tradition of Christian 'nature saints'

St. Cuthbert was one of a dispersed line of spiritual transmission from the fourth century 'Desert Fathers' of Middle East and North Africa, starting with the eremitic St. Anthony. This group is termed here as 'nature saints' and defined here as saints whose lives demonstrate a particular affinity or love of nature. Nature saints are found in many Christian traditions and the early Church abounds with their stories. The Orthodox Church is an especially rich branch from the same Middle Eastern desert root, and the three named here spanning some 1300 years, are St Yared (505–571) of the Ethiopian Orthodox, St Ivan of Rila (876 to c. 946) Bulgarian Orthodox, St Seraphim of Sarov (1759–1833) Russian Orthodox. The most well-known 'nature saint' in the Catholic tradition is St Francis of Assisi (1181–1226), the patron saint of ecology and some consider that he may have been influ-

c. 251–356	St Anthony of the Desert	One of the early desert monks/fathers.
316–397	St Martin	Gaul of Tours (modern Brittany) developed his spiritual practice based on a hagiography of St. Anthony, he meditated in the 'dessert' and rejected urban ways.
c. 360–432	St Ninian	Briton (Old Welsh), Kingdom of Strathclyde. Inspired by St. Martin founded Casa Candida, AD 397 the first Christian centre in what was then Britain and is now Scotland.
c. 490–d.543	St Serf	Pict, trained at Casa Candida.
521–597	St Columba	Irish/Dal Riada (563 founds Iona)
528–612	St Kentigern (St Mungo)	Briton/Pict. Old Welsh Kingdom of Strathclyde, founder of Glasgow.
d. 651	St Aidan	Irish/Dal Riada, St. Columba's pupil, founder of Lindisfarne Abbey in 635
635–687	St Cuthbert	English Abbot of Lindisfarne

(Note: Derived from Leatham, 1948 and other sources, there are many other saints that could be included in this table).

enced by the missionary saints from Britain that established Christian centres in Europe (Simpson, 1995: 172; Brown, 2003).

Many of the Celtic saints are connected with nature related miracles, locating their centres based on signs from nature, or the appearance of specific animals. To take just one other, of many examples, St Kentigern was led to the site of his religious community or 'muintir' in North Wales by a miraculous white boar. Before it departed the saint blessed the animal. 'Then the saint, scratching the head of the brute, and stroking his mouth and teeth, said: God Almighty, in Whose power are all the beasts of the forests, the oxen, the birds or the air and the fishes of the

sea, grant for thy conduct such rewards as He knoweth is best for thee'. (Leatham, 1948: 121). St Kentigern founded a community - Glesgu (Happy Family), now city of Glasgow. His daily routine, and his habit of living in separate huts were seen a direct line from St Anthony, St Martin and St Ninian' (Leatham, 1948). His Pictish muintir (attendants) founded missionaries in Orkney, Iceland and Norway.

Celtic nature spirituality

The other source of Celtic nature spirituality is the Celtic pre-Christian religion. Pre-Christian Celts believed that all aspects of the natural world contained spirits. Three areas of evidence for an adoption of Celtic nature spiritu-

ality into early Christian forms are identified as follows.

Pictish Sculptured Stones

A seeming transition of Celtic nature spirituality to a Christian form is evidenced in the art of the Pictish standing stones found through central Scotland. Leatham attributes the carvings to St. Kentigerns *muinntir*, where carving was amongst the skills practiced. The wild animals depicted in the carvings include wolf, snake, salmon, eagle, stag, bear and boar (as illustrated in Fraser, 2008). Figure on the right shows the Drosten Stone which shows an intricately woven cross and the enigmatic Pictish symbols, wild animals including bear and boar, the latter being aimed at by a hunter, a domestic goat, an osprey with a salmon and a beautiful carved fawn suckling a doe.

Lindisfarne Gospels

Beautifully illustrated, the Lindisfarne Gospels also exhibit a rich nature imagery. 'The initial letters are filled with a throng of interlacing birds and beasts partaking of the word of God, and with a vortex of swirling Celtic spiral work recalling water, air and fire. For centuries Celtic and Germanic peoples had signalled status and power by the metalwork that they wore... These ornaments and symbols were now applied to the ultimate authority of the Word of God... This is not direct observation perhaps from the natural world...but this is totally at one with creation and building upon that in the way that we know that certainly the Celtic tradition was very inclined to do' (Brown, 2000). Thus the



The Drosten Stone (839-42), front and back. Historic Scotland Museum, Abroath, Scotland.

art of the Lindisfarne Gospels included elements of Celtic, Anglo Saxon, and Coptic art (Blackhouse, 1981; Brown, 2003).

Folk Christianity

Further examples of the melding of the traditions derive from the Celtic folk Christianity of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. For example the Scottish collection of poems, prayers and incantations of the *Carmina Gadelica* (Carmichael, 1900) is an extended collection, and includes much related to nature. This is of more recent origin and is not necessarily directly linked to the era of the early saints. It mostly consists of what is sometimes pejoratively called 'folk' religion but can be considered 'cultural variants' of mainstream faiths.

An example of a prayer follows.

*It were as easy for Jesu
To renew the withered tree
As to wither the new
Were it His will so to do
Jesu! Jesu! Jesu!
Jesu! meet it were to praise Him.*

*There is no plant in the ground
But is full of His virtue.
There is no form in the strand
But it is full of His blessing.
Jesu! Jesu! Jesu!
Jesu! meet it were to praise Him.*

*There is no life in the sea,
There is not creature in the river,
There is naught in the firmament
But proclaims His goodness
Jesu! Jesu! Jesu!
Jesu! meet it were to praise Him.*

*There is no bird on the wing
There is no star in the sky,
There is nothing beneath the sun
But proclaims His goodness
Jesu! Jesu! Jesu!*

*Jesu! meet it were to praise Him.
(Carmichael, 1900)*

These cultural or folk variants often contain valuable elements of the previous indigenous faith, and can be an important source of reviving a nature spirituality.

Celtic Christianity - a caution

The Celtic Christianity revival, however, has its critics, and Donald Meek, in particular, a Celtic Scholar and Gaelic-speaking Hebridean Islander, questions the existence of a unique 'Celtic

Christianity', and suggests much of it is a modern creation. He considers it not well rooted in scholarship that it reinvents and embellishes the facts, and it is separated from the original Gaelic and Welsh sources. He considers many of the promoters of Celtic Christianity are 'constructing and alternative Celtic tradition'. One of the claims he counters is that Celtic Christianity is unique in the Christian world. 'The ideals of the Egyptian desert father lasted long in the insular Celtic context as elsewhere in the West...it is quite unacceptable to see them as purely indigenous or unique to the Celtic areas' (Meek, 2000:147).

Meek also challenges the portrayal of 'Celtic Christianity' as friendly to nature and to the environment, in contrast to modern environmental degradation. He considers that they had little choice other than living close to nature, but does concede that 'Celtic literature across the centuries show a 'lively response to nature' (p. 85), he does not see this a unique to Celtic Christianity, and modern writers, 'weave the body of 'hermit nature verse' into an interpretive pastiche which covers it with a subjective, highly romantic, eco-friendly, and frequently pagan-friendly glow (p. 86)'.

He warns; 'As a result the quest for the saints may be motivated by factors ranging from general curiosity to a special concern for the local economy or the environment. It is important to recognise the diversity of approaches within contemporary 'saint seeking', since it is the preconceived expectation will almost inevitably lead to a de-

gree of reconstruction of the (rediscovered) saints'. Meek admits that, 'the saints, however, are not strangers to reconstruction' (Meek, 2000:162). 'Most people who invoke the saints nowadays will not be concerned so much with the profile of the saint in the past; their main concern will be with the power and efficacy of the saints in the present' (Meek, 2000:163). Meek is particularly dismissive of the collection of Carmichael. '...the Carmina may represent essentially 'folk religion,' blending folklore with saint-lore, pagan and Christian, in ways that ought not to be confused with the formal teaching of any 'Celtic Church'...This popular demotic [i.e. colloquial] Christianity which has come down through the centuries with inevitable reshaping and admixture... It shows the type of syncretism, which can be found readily across the globe in similar contexts (p. 70). Despite his criticisms he states 'Even so no amount of warning will prevent people from believing what they wish to believe especially since 'Celtic Christianity' seems to be in tune with the moods of the age' (Meek, 2000:22).

Modern Lindisfarne, Holy Island and commercial success

As mentioned the contemporary situation of Holy Island is discussed more fully in *Sacred Natural Sites: Conserving Nature and Culture* (Wild 2010), and readers are referred there for more information. The Island is surrounded by coastal and marine habitats, and supports internationally important wildfowl

species and an outstanding assemblage of plants. Due to these wildlife values the coastal area that surrounds Holy Island has been legally declared a National Nature Reserve and is also a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. It is registered as an IUCN category IV protected area in the World Database of Protected Areas, considered a 'habitat/species management area'.

Spiritual values, churches and retreats

The Anglican or Episcopalian Church is the oldest church on the Island and is the Parish Church. The Church is one of the key visitor sites, and often hosts large groups of several thousand people. Due to declining parishioners the United Reformed Church was converted to St. Cuthbert's Centre open to visitors and hosts a variety of religious, spiritual and cultural events, some related to nature. These mostly include bird watching weekends titled, for example, 'Faith and Feathers' and 'Bible and Birds', as well as exhibitions of sacred art. There is a Catholic Church on the island and a resident Catholic Sister (Daughter of the Cross) who welcomes pilgrims. Two retreat centres are on the island, Marygate and The Open Gate. The former is an independent charitable trust, while the Open Gate focuses on Celtic Christianity and runs retreats including one called 'God in Nature' and another 'Saints and Seabirds'. These explore nature beauty and spirituality of Holy Island and other areas such as the Farne Isles and St Abbs Head (<http://www.aidanandhilda.org>). Holy Island has a strong ecumenical movement.

Holy Island has, along with Iona in Scotland, been the node of the revival of 'Celtic spirituality' discussed above. David Adam, a native of the Northumbrian coast and vicar of Lindisfarne from 1995 to 2003, is one of the foremost proponents and closely associated with the Island. He has written numerous books and prayers in the Celtic style (e.g. Adam, 1989, 1991). While Celtic Christianity has its sceptics (see section 2.4), it is clear from its remarkable popularity, that it is filling a need for a form of Christianity with a clear concern for the Earth and its ecological community.

Community, tourism and ownership

Lindisfarne is also a Northumbrian village typical of the area, with a small fishing harbour and traditional buildings. The traditional village community consists of a number of long-established families that have deep-rooted cultural ties to the island and unique traditions. Unfortunately the local population has been declining over recent years.

While no official statistics are kept, it is estimated that more than half a million visitors a year visit Holy Island, and increasingly much of the island's economy is built on tourism, now estimated at 70-80% of the island's income (Tristram, 2009). The main heritage sites depend largely on entrance fees to maintain their properties. Other businesses on the island include hotels, cafes, shops and kiosks. The Island runs a website recording web-hits up from 1.5 million in 2001 to 11 million in 2008 (<http://www.lindisfarne.org.uk/webmaster/statistics1.htm>).

The government owns about 30% of land within National Nature Reserve, and the remainder falls within 17 private holdings of the inter-tidal area. Within the village properties are privately owned by many people. Much of the personal wealth of Britons is dependent on property values, a critical element in understanding Holy Island. Rapid increases in house prices during the decade to 2008 have meant that low-income households have been priced out of their own communities. This situation is not unique to Lindisfarne and affects many villages in Britain. When no long-standing community members remain in a village it might be said to have lost its heart.

Discussion and Recommendations

Conservation management

The National Nature Reserve staff engage in management, including live-stock grazing, visitor management and interpretation. The construction of a causeway (1954-64) has perhaps caused the biggest changes to the National Nature Reserve, reducing the area of habitats important for wildfowl (English Nature, 2005).

Community trust fund

It is increasingly considered that a strengthening of community action is a key element in tackling some of the key social and environmental issues that face us today (McIntosh, 2008). In response to the lack of affordable

housing the islanders established The Holy Island of Lindisfarne Community Development Trust in 1996. The Trust established a Visitor Centre using the revenue to build 11 community houses. This indicates the way in which the island community is countering the challenges of high property values.

Managing tourism

While tourism is the mainstay of the island's economy, hosting over half a million visitors per year puts a strain on the 150 island residents. Peak visitors occur during the summer school and public holidays and at weekends. The tidal nature and limited accommodation does mean regular quieter times and quieter places once one is away from the village centre. The National Nature Reserve is under less pressure than other areas of the island although parking is a problem at peak times.

Seeking balance between nature, religion, community and commerce

The Holy Island is managed by a number of institutions. Agreeing to a common course of action is challenging, because the key players, while sharing common interests, have their own re-mits. Over the past two years a 'Lindisfarne Partnership' has been put in place and is becoming increasingly important in implementing a collective and holistic vision for the management the Island (Andrew Craggs, Natural England, personal communication, June 2011).

Conclusion and discussion

The concept of 'nature saints' is not very well known within the Christian Church, yet the stories of these saints contain strong associations with local places, native animals and nature in general. Many of the miracle stories, while touching, are not factual but do tell of a close relationship with wildlife and wild places. Rather than being unique to the British Isles 'nature saints' are part of a wider Christian tradition that deserves further research.

The Eastern Orthodox Church has perhaps best maintained this 'nature' ethic as living tradition and it may be no accident that it has in fact shown the greatest level of Christian leadership in the face of the current environmental crisis. The British Isles and especially the Celtic fringe seems particularly rich in these saints from the early Christian era. While not unique these, and the folk component of British Christianity, roots religion in a national setting and provide strong connection to local places, local wildlife and local culture. A greater tolerance and embracing of the cultural and folk variants by religious orthodoxies is advocated, especially when it comes to the care of nature, which seem better developed locally than centrally.

Contemporary Britain has a predominantly secular, multi-cultural urban population largely separated from nature. The growing interest on Celtic (or Insular Christianity as some prefer) indicates that these saints do reach across the centuries and hold meaning for

modern peoples in Britain, the Anglo-Celtic diaspora and beyond. It does seem important, while remaining true to what we know of their lives, that these saints are interpreted and revitalised to new generations, as their vigour, frugality and closeness to nature are values needed by modern society. 'The tales are ancient but the underlying sentiments speak directly to us today. We have much to learn from a spirituality that works with the grain and rhythm of the natural world and rejoices in the whole of creation' (McManners, 2008).

The Holy island of Lindisfarne is one of Britain's foremost Christian Sacred

Natural Sites and one where national ecological values overlap with national religious and historical values. The revival of interest in 'Celtic' as an indigenous branch of Christianity may infuse the conservation movement with a spiritual dimension and has contributed to the Island's tourism economy. Conversely, it may have added to the risk to local community values and put the Island's fabric under strain. It is encouraging therefore that the key institutions are increasingly working together to ensure that the island maintains its integrity, community and multiple values into the future.

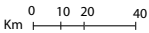
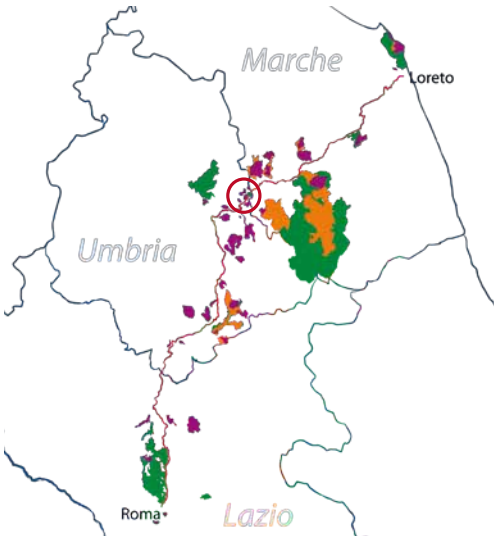
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Lauretana Pilgrimage Route in Italy and protected areas along the route

- National and Regional Parks
- Sites of Community Importance (SCI)
- Zone of Special Protection
- XVI cent. Lauretana postal route of the Stato Pontificio
- Plestian Plateaus and Colfiorito Regional Park



Colfiorito Regional Park



The Lauretana Pilgrimage Route and the Colfiorito Regional Park.

Landscape linkages between cultural and spiritual values. The wetland of Colfiorito and the Lauretana pilgrimage route in the Plestian Plateaus.

Chiara Serenelli

This article constitutes part of a research aiming to investigate the utility of historical cultural and spiritual routes in promoting landscape management and conservation at local level. Landscape is the prominent feature of the project. The research takes into consideration the landscapes of Central Italy crossed by the Lauretana pilgrimage route connecting Rome with the Sanctuary of Loreto, in the East Coast of Italy. The pilgrimage creates a network of territorial and local linkages based on traces of ancient roads that can operate as cultural and ecological connections between people and landscape mosaics. While cultural values are rendered by the historical landscapes shaped by the pilgrimage dynamics, ecological ones are also

given by the presence of Natural Protected Areas and Regional or National Parks along the ancient route.

Cultural and spiritual linkages across the Plestian Landscape

Along the Lauretana Pilgrimage Route, ca. 150 km north from Rome, the traveller reaches one of the crucial stages of the *Cammini Lauretani*, the city of Foligno. Embedded in the landscape matrix of the Umbrian Valley, the town had been an important crossing of the Flaminia Roman road. Continuing from Foligno towards Loreto, the Lauretana enters the Menotre Valley and then crosses the mountainous chain of Appennino Umbro-Marchigiano through the Colfiorito mountain pass, beyond

which lies the ample plateau of Colfiorito. It is named Plestian after the ancient settlement of Plestia, and its ecological and cultural values make it one of the most characteristic areas of the pilgrimage.

The Plateau is a system of seven karstic tectonic plains. While once they all were lake basins, they were later drained as outcome of natural mechanisms and human activities. Even today, however, they appear flooded during some periods of the year, depending on seasonal precipitation. The drainage of water is caused only slightly by the network of ditches and canals, while the seasonal variation in water levels is due to a sub-surface capitation system that relies on the presence of *inghiottitoi*, i.e. natural ground pits also used in agriculture.

The Plestian system is one of the most interesting natural areas in the Central Apennines (Orsomando and Catorci, 1997). It contains the line of the Umbria-Marche watershed and is surrounded by mountains overlooking the Mount Sibillini National Park on the eastern side. It includes biotopes that are very important for the conservation of biodiversity in Italy, i.e. the marsh of Colfiorito, legally protected since 1970 (Pedrotti, 1996), internationally recognised as a Ramsar site since 1976 and made a Regional Park in 1995. Around the 355 ha of wetland, located at the centre of the Basin, the landscape opens out from the Colfiorito Plain onto five surrounding plains located at an altitude of 750–800 m above sea level. The only plain

not communicating with the others is located a few kilometres south-west from the marsh and is separated from the rest by a narrow ridge. The whole plateau system is well visible from the top of Mount Trella, overlooking the archaeological site of Plestia, from which the relations between the plains and the layout of the roads that cross them are well discernible.

The road commonly known as *Lauretana*, which is also named *Romana*, can nowadays be identified with the course of the National Road 77 (Val di Chienti Road). It crosses the Plains from the south-western to the north-eastern side, running along the southern side of the marsh of Colfiorito. Pilgrimages toward Loreto began in the fourteenth century, but it was from the sixteenth century that it was possible to use the postal road of *Stato Pontificio*, suitable for carriages. Today Road 77 is a highway, unsuitable for walking. It is possible to recognise, though, other traces of ancient routes, in many cases unpaved country roads crossing the Plains, stretching among hilly pastures broken out by herbaceous crops and woods of Turkey oak. The whole road network connecting the Plateau with its surroundings is of historical and scenic interest. While the network of ancient roads that cross the Plateaus from west to east mainly corresponds to the Lauretana pilgrimage network itself, other important roads cross the Basin lengthwise, whose ancient courses can still be discerned on the Plains' landscape they cross. Still nowadays, this route system allows the ancient settlement of Plestia located into the Plestian

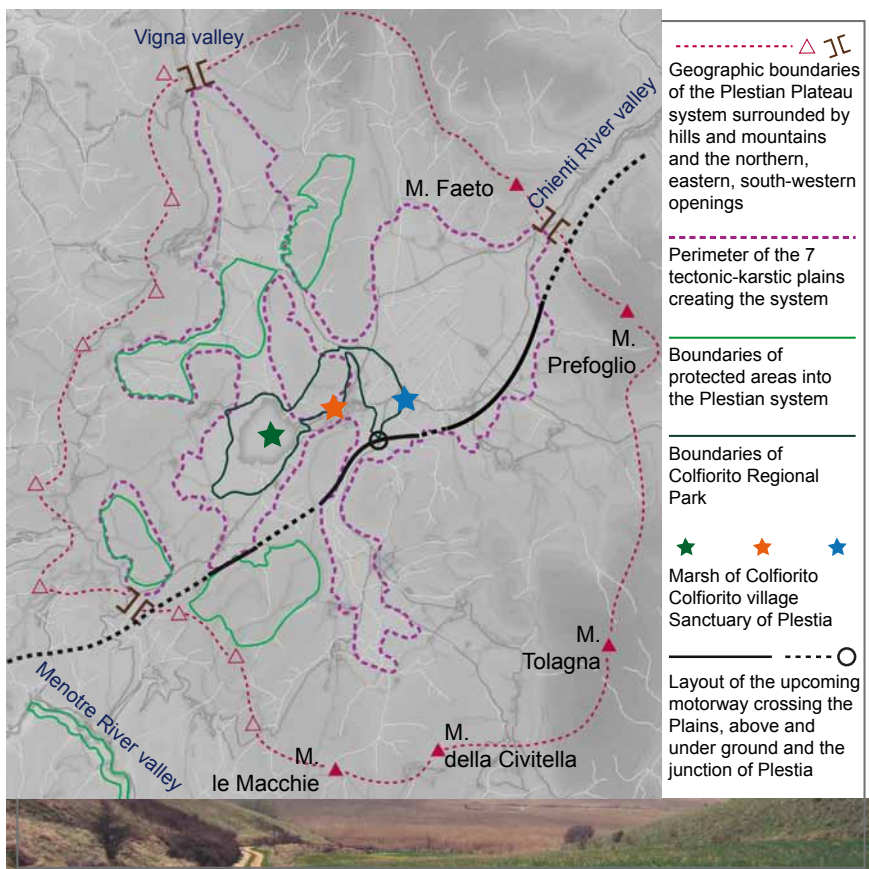
basin to be connected with other numerous landmarks that define the Plesitian landscape's history and keep conveying stories of popular traditions and religious devotion. All along these trails we can reconstruct the route of the ritual processions to the places of worship of the Plains and the near Menotre Valley. Religion has offered the much-needed social cohesion for a population that has always been subjected to consecutive episodes of conquest and change of

administrative organisation. The trails, therefore, have always been of great importance for the locals (Sensi, 1984).

Signs of historical evolution and spiritual values of the landscape

The diachronic evolution of the land and its settlements, together with an investigation of its religious traditions, can surely contribute to the under-

A scheme of the Plesitian Plateau System.





Left: The main sacred sites in and next to the basin forming the system of 'Therapeutic sanctuaries' Right: Present-day rituals and processions of local people and religious confraternities.

standing of the current structure and layers of the landscape.

Traces of pre-Roman settlements characterise the area surrounding Mount Orve. In Roman times, however, the most important centre certainly became Plestia, built on the bank of the Plestian Lake, which was drained to obtain agricultural lands (Sensi, 1984). The main public spaces were once situated around the lake. A historical sign of the

latest republican Roman Age can still be found in the remains of a *domus*, in the archaeological site of the Casone Plain.

Following the barbaric invasions of the High Middle Ages and the destruction of Plestia, the population moved to the surrounding hills and started the construction of castles in defence of the main roads. This fostered the particular hillock settlement system that still characterises the area.

The only remnant of the ancient Plestia is the sanctuary of Saint Mary an early Christian basilica which became cathedral in the eleventh century. In effect, because of its location at an important crossroads, the sanctuary came to represent a prominent centre for religious participation and the spreading of Christianity. In the Middle Ages, the area where the Basilica was located became a junction where the rivalries for the setting of boundaries among the townships of Camerino (Marche), Foligno and Spoleto (Umbria) developed. The townships were all striving for the control of the Plateaus, and thus causing their administrative, civil and religious fragmentation. Therefore, whereas once all pivoted around Plestia, by the twelfth century the Basin was divided along the two main defence lines – Camerino on the one hand, Foligno on the other. Both display traces of fortifications, as the ruins on the top of some hills still reveal.

Nowadays, the regional boundary between Marche and Umbria runs all along the buffer zone which lies between these two ancient frontier lines. Nonetheless, a strong factor of social cohesion can be found in the cultural identity of the local population, their sense of places' historic depth and in a solid religious component that stayed unscathed through all the administrative divisions, in spite of the reiterated frictions concerning the management of the local resources (Sensi, 1984; Sensi, 1998).

During the sixteenth century, an important element of social cohesion stemmed from the *frontier therapeutic*

sanctuaries (Sensi, 1984: 207-231), that is, places of worship generally of very old origins, whose denomination derives from their religious and spiritual function and their position. They are in fact told to have apothropaic powers (therapeutic sanctuaries) and they are located at the confluence of lands belonging to different administrators (sanctuaries of frontiers). Even today, their presence and role is acknowledged as they helped people conserve a certain degree of religious freedom and a distinct cultural identity. The majority of these sanctuaries are dedicated to the Virgin Mary and are located along the Menotre Valley and the Plestian Highlands. Their presence has facilitated the establishment of a network of small pilgrimages from the surrounding villages, often along the ancient routes connecting the settlements.

Even today, on the occasion of local festivities people from the different villages of the Plains find religious references in many of these sanctuaries, which continue to be destinations of local pilgrimages and processions (Sensi, personal communication, 2010). Santa Maria of Plestia has become again a multifunctional centre of religious, economic and social events, as it hosts an annual exhibition of traditional dairy products. Many sanctuaries continue also to be the focus of local religious festivities involving people of every age. Over time, certain sanctuaries have been abandoned and decayed, such as the sanctuary of Madonna di Ricciano (in the Ricciano Plain, one of the seven karst plains).

The spatial distribution of the sanctuaries largely derives from the pre-existence of older religious architectures, such as tabernacles, hermitages, monasteries, etc., related to miraculous events or the religious history of a local community. It thus seems possible to think of those as 'places of memory' that enable communities to remember their past and cultural values, in spite of the physical transformations of the land (Sensi, personal communication, 2010). Sometimes such places of worship are located at the top of a *castelliere*, i.e. a pre-historic type of settlement fortified by an embankment – which remains recognisable still today - abandoned in Roman times and sometime restored and re-used in the Middle Ages (Sensi, 1984: 3-27; Sensi, 1998: 6-8).

The proto-historical system of *castellieri* surrounding the Plains represents another defining element of the Ples-tian landscape, a clear sign of a long history of human habitation and their role in the transformation of the natural ecosystems. The therapeutic sanctuaries, which are mainly located in the valleys and plains, the hillside villages and the castles erected on the very top of the hills, all comprise components of the local history. Together they define a specific cultural and land-use system, a sign of human presence in these lands and a landscape organisation typical of the Basin, characterising its cultural diversity, charged with profound spiritual values and enriched with natural resources.

In such a structure, the main connection, at the cultural, religious and func-

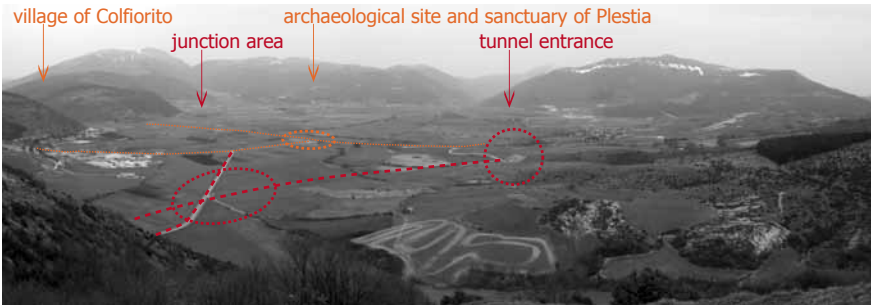
tional level, is given by the web of roads and pathways, defining also the flows of pilgrims directed to the Sanctuary of Loreto. If the linear network of human connection between historical and cultural elements of the Ples-tian landscape can be found in these local roads, a deeper structure subtending also the latter ones can be identified in the agricultural landscape, which has shaped the land patterns of the area according to the human needs.

Biodiversity in the rural landscape

The lands of the Plains are mainly used as croplands. The cultivation of legumes and potatoes is predominant, and along with grain and forage they form the basis of the local agricultural production. In the valleys, although drainage and reclamation works have turned most of the ground into cultivated lands since the Roman Age, wet meadows, marsh and lake formations still are a very important natural resource. The hills surrounding the plains, again, are characterised by the presence of copses, the Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris* L.), the Hop hornbeam (*Ostrya carpinifolia* Scop.), as well as the Downy oak (*Quercus pubescens* Willd.) being the dominant species in the sunnier areas, and the beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.) on the higher relieves. The arboreal vegetation of the hills alternates with the herbaceous vegetation types of the hill and mountain pastures, which define the landscape mosaic shaped by another important local human activity: farming,

The Quadrilatero Project, threats

..... Historic roads of possible pedestrian connection - - - Future road with risk of traffic increasing



Real risks of landscape fragmentation

Entrance of the tunnel near Mount Trella
march, 2010



Works on the buffer zone of Selva di Cupigliolo
march, 2009



Some effects of motorway construction in the Plestian Basin.

and stock-breeding, though nowadays traditional grazing is decreasing. On some hills conifer reforestations made in the Sixties can also be recognised (Orsomando and Sensi, 2002).

The 'landscape units' defining the Plestian landscape create a variegated system of resources that the local communities have used over time, often associating them with social participation events, such as exhibitions, festivals and religious festivities, their

timing marking important moments of the agricultural cycle. This has turned the local landscape into a primary element of cultural and spiritual, as well as ecological, importance defining together with the network of sanctuaries and pilgrimage routes, the 'landscapes of the sacred' (Tosco, 2009: 166).

Additionally, the rural matrix also hosts natural areas of international significance, owing to the presence of rare and endangered habitats or species.

These constitute the nodes of the Natura2000 European Ecological Network. Moreover, sometimes shrines and religious buildings are associated with the presence of protected areas. The link between protected areas and therapeutic sanctuaries is probably coincidental. No historical references connect their location to particular natural elements (Sensi, personal communication, 2010), although sometimes they are related to the cult of spring water (Sensi, 1984) and they are actually built along watercourses or in particularly scenic natural settings. And it is also argued (Antinori, 2009) that some Christian sacred places traces out older pagan temples and sacred sites, often connected to the natural characters of landscape (presence of spring water and mountains). What remains certain is that the shrines and religious buildings are often associated with 'outstanding landscapes'. Anyway the spontaneous manifestations of the devotion of locals and their familiarity with the place make these outstanding landscapes part of their everyday life.

Threats for the conservation of landscape connections and visions for future management

Despite the presence of a significant number of protected areas, nonetheless, the Plestian landscape remains open to threats and transformations. The complexity of the relationships between the different parts of the region, whether they are of natural or cultural/spiritual relevance adds to the prob-

lem. The mere presence of protected areas does not always guarantee a sustainable integrated management of the entire landscape, nor does it halt the loss of biodiversity. Sometime functional choices imposed on by the national government, responding to the current economic global system's needs, actually represent threats for biodiversity conservation, despite the protection of specific sites.

A first threat to the conservation of local ecosystems comes from methodologies of management that are only apparently coherent with the aims of biodiversity conservation, but actually far from a holistic, integrated and systemic vision that takes into account delicate ecological balances and dynamics (Pedrotti, 1996) together with their relations with human activities. This is especially true as regards the marsh, where part of the wetland was drained between 1963-1992, because of the agricultural reconversion, the extraction of peat, and interventions aimed at the naturalistic and touristic 'revitalisation' of the protected area, such as the closure of the main *inghiottitoio* (see above) to stabilise the water level (Pedrotti, 1996; Pedrotti personal communication, 2010). The second threat comes from modern agricultural and zoo-technical practices, e.g. the increasing use of fertilisers, the reduction of linear elements of ecological connectivity, such as hedges and rows of trees, in addition to the spread of urbanised areas at the valley bottoms.

Also for these reasons, the protected areas of the Plains do not yet represent

an ensemble, as they lack connectivity and the management practices inside the protected areas often clash with unsustainable practices outside these areas.

Moreover, the administrative division of the Plestian territory risks dividing a unified landscape with divergent management choices. The Plestian Basin is still shared by three Municipalities, two Districts and two Regions, using the same tools for land planning, but have sometimes different priorities, especially as the regional trends are adapted to the local levels.

The Umbria Region employs two main instruments of planning and governance: Territorial Urban Plan (*Piano Urbanistico Territoriale*)¹ and Regional Landscape Planning (*Piano Paesaggistico Regionale*)²: both strongly oriented to the conservation of landscapes and particular natural values. The former recognises the Plestian Plateaus as a high-interest area for its particular and rare flora; the latter underlines the importance of the Plestian system as a pivotal component of the regional identity, where natural, historical and symbolic elements interact to define a manifold landscape, which has also an economic and social value. Also the Marche Region with the Regional Landscape Planning (*Piano Paesaggistico Regionale*)³ grounds

the importance of the Plestian landscape on its cultural values and typical agricultural productions, linked to the local manifestations of faith and spirituality.

Recognition of the high landscape value, in definitive, is shared by both Regions, and today is even stronger thanks to the Regional Ecological Network project⁴, which aims to become a set of inspiring principles for regional and local programming and planning (Sargolini, 2006).

In particular, the role of the Plestian Plateaus can be seen as strategy for the national ecological connectivity, representing a possible junction in the greater mountainous system of Central Apennine, the north-south axis structuring the ecological continuity at a national level between Lazio-Abruzzo's and Toscana-Emilia Romagna's areas (Romano, 2010) forming a part of the *Appennino Parco d'Europa* project. Furthermore, the Plestian Basin can also be seen as an area of transversal connection with both cultural and ecological values, strengthening again, at the ecological level, its ancient role as a road-link between the Tirrenic and Adriatic coasts. But do such guidelines really become operative planning and management actions?

Translating recommendations into actions at the local level is not always simple, and the Plestian landscape is

1 Regional Act no. 27, 24 March 2000

2 Regional Act no. 13, 24 March 2009

3 Regional Decree no. 197, 3 November 1989 and updating according to the National Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape (Legislative Decree no. 42/2004)

4 Rete Ecologica Regionale Umbra, Regional Act 13/2009 and REM, Rete Ecologica Marche, project from competition, Legislative Decree 163/2006, art. 108

often subjected to threats of ecological landscape fragmentation that also influence the application of the Ecological Network project. The loss of connectivity was influenced by various local parameters; on top of them one can add the decreasing of the social cohesion caused by weak financial cooperation strategies and possibly by the erosion of the religious imprint; additionally, the fragmentation might be caused by planning choices at the national level, and especially those linked to the development of infrastructures.

The problem of road barriers, already existing in the Plesstian region (Romano, 2010), is increasing with the upcoming project of a four-lane motorway connecting Foligno and the Adriatic coast that is going to cross the Plesstian Plateaus from its south-western to its north-eastern side (called the Quadrilatero Project).

While it is planned not to be constructed in the proximity of the wetland so as not to compromise the ecosystem directly, it is nonetheless likely that it will constitute, even during the construction phase, a concrete threat to the unity of the entire system at both the ecological and cultural levels, risking also the loss of historical connections between parts of the Plesstian landscape.

To add insult to injury, the decision to construct a road junction in the area of Plesstia, near the archaeological site and the sanctuary, could also initiate urbanisation processes for the broader area. The dangers of such a prospect might be even more evident, if one

takes into account the fact that the dispersion of urban settlements is one of the major causes of fragmentation and loss of connectivity (Romano, 2010).

It may be argued that the Quadrilatero Project could be an opportunity for the inhabitants of the region, as it will improve the communication with more developed areas, favour tourism and decrease traffic within the villages. A more likely outcome, however, will be an increase of high-speed traffic, pollution and soil consumption in these fragile areas, once characterised by a slow velocity road network in balance with the features of the landscape. In order to be sustainable, the development of these lands should be founded on very different bases.

The Lauretana pilgrimage route restoration project can have a favourable outcome, if its natural and cultural resources are integrated in a sustainable management plan. The improvement of 'slow' travel infrastructures and the creation of naturalistic and historical-cultural routes, embracing the whole Plesstian region and pivoting around the therapeutic sanctuaries network, can be the key concepts, upon which the ecological connectivity and the creation of a system of protected areas around the Regional Park can be rescheduled.

In fact, by integrating the idea of recovering the historical road network into a greater plan at the landscape scale, including both conservation and development, one could guarantee a truly multifunctional delivery of services, ranging from the restoration and con-

servation of the wetland ecosystem as a 'all-encompassing reserve' (Pedrotti, 1996), to the optimisation of the local economic resources, whether they are agricultural, tourist or educational.

This can be feasible only by promoting an idea of a Natural Park far from the patterns of command-and-control as typical of the Italian conservation tradition, already proposed and refused by local populations. A new model is needed, related to the 'new paradigms' developed by recent Italian research conducted by Valerio Giacomini (Giacomini and Romano, 1982) to Roberto Gambino (Gambino, 2010). It proposes a vision that makes local communities and their environmental culture the fulcrum around which projects can be built, and systemic and reticular logics the guiding principles for their implementation. In order to satisfy the need to conserve and manage the linkages between natural and human systems with important historical connections, a new model of a Park has to operate at different and integrated levels of landscape protection. It is, of course, a vision that involves more complex procedures, but it is in the acceptance of complexity that the new vision of reality must be founded upon (Morin, 1993).

The possibility to recover/salvage the relationship between humans and nature underlies also in the IUCN initiative for including Protected Landscapes into the categories of biodiversity conservation. That can be an important example and reference for the Plestian landscape itself.

A possible model of an 'Interregional Park' was drafted as part of a master thesis on 'Lauretana Route as European Cultural Route'. It indicated that the area of Plestia that includes the archaeological park and sanctuary, could be the centre from which the 'cultural system' of the Plateaus can cast its light on the rest of the land, since it is the historical meeting point of the roads that enter the Basin from its natural entryways, which could thus become the 'gates' of the Park.

The Lauretana Route, as the 'backbone' of a low speed travel through the area, could become the main axis of distribution of local products and cultural and traditional knowledge, also through the ancient *hospitalia* located along the way. In fact, today the little parking bays along Road 77 are used by local producers to sell renowned local products, such as the red potato of Colfiorito. In this case, the completion of the motorway project could paradoxically contribute to the redefinition of the existing main road as a slow velocity road network. But evidently, it needs a critical revision of each of the project's stages.

In the Plains, which are characterised by important biodiversity values, all activities will have to be compatible with the conservation of the wet meadow vegetation and the marsh ecosystem. In general, all of the agricultural practices will have to conserve at least small elements of ecological connectivity, threatened by mechanised agriculture.

The natural entryways of the Park will

ensure communication with neighbouring protected areas, thus enforcing ecological connectivity against the effect of the current ecological barriers – mostly, the main roads crossing the Apennine landscape.

In a unitary but not homogeneous structure, elements of the historical memory will create an expanding cultural system, its spiritual components discernible in the cluster of therapeutic sanctuaries, further consolidated by the presence of the Park. The natural and spiritual components will be visibly linked together in the Lauretana Pilgrimage Route network.

It is precisely this strong interrelation between the natural and cultural-spiritual elements of the Plesitian landscape that will guide the planner to develop models of landscape management, which take into account the importance of local communities and let them become the focus of conservation and development projects, by promoting the preservation of spiritual traditions and strengthening the local ecological and landscape culture.

A recent Degree thesis has suggested how an Ecomuseum can be used as a cultural model to be taken into account

for the local development of projects, a tool of both knowledge-analysis and land use planning, where the community becomes the real subject of the local actions and its cultural heritage the main object of local development (De Varine, 2005).

Of course, different instruments, such as the Regional Park, the Ecomuseum, and the Protected Landscape can be used together in an integrated manner, provided that the local community becomes the first referent of the project and dynamic conservation its first objective.

Moreover, in order to connect the Plesitian landscape unit with landscapes belonging to the regions of Marche and Umbria, one has to consider, whether the Cultural Route⁵ can be used as another tool of the valorisation of the natural and cultural resources, not bound within the specific context but guaranteeing interrelationships at a larger territorial scale. Therefore, the Cultural Route becomes a territorial system connecting its local nodes (the Parks, Ecomuseums and Protected Areas) along the thematic and geographic 'conductor' of the Marian pilgrimage route towards Loreto.

5 According to the definition given by both the Council of Europe in the Resolution CM/Res(2010)53 and the International Scientific Committee of Cultural Routes of ICOMOS/CIIIC with the 2008 Charter of Cultural Routes.

The wetland. Steps of protection.

1969 Date of first requirement of conservation of the wetland of Colfiorito by prof. F. Pedrotti (University of Camerino). He proposed a Managed Nature Reserve (*Riserva Naturale Guidata*)

1971 The area is indicated as Fauna Oasis (*Oasi faunistica*)

1976 The wetland is included in the Ramsar list that gives it the international acknowledgement as Natural Protected Area

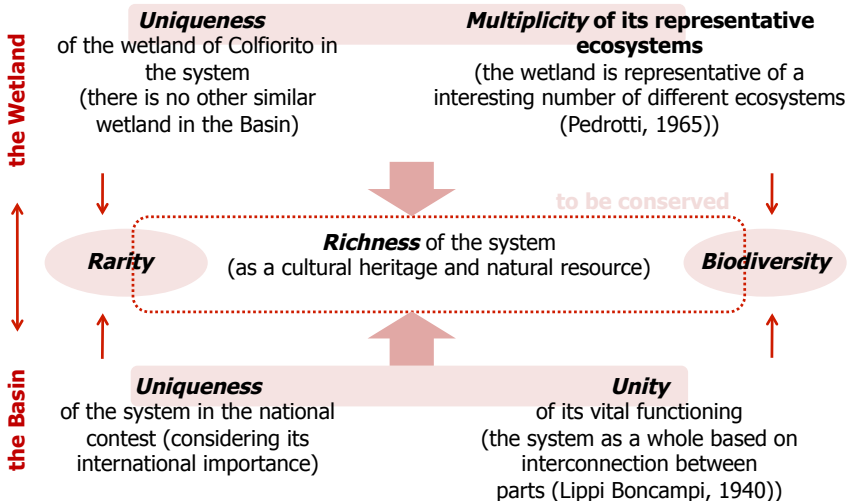
1983 The wetland is included among the Areas of particular naturalistic interest (*Area di particolare interesse naturalistico-ambientale*) by Umbria Region, with L.R. n. 52, after indication of great public interest (*notevole interesse pubblico*) by E. Orsomando and F Pedrotti in 1980/81

1995 Date of birth of the Regional Park of Colfiorito (*Parco Regionale di Colfiorito*) with L.R. n. 9

1994-97 With Bioitaly Project the wetland is recognised as ASP (Area of Special Protection, Directive 79/409/EEC) and SCI (Site of Community Importance, Directive 92/43/EEC)

Present days The Plestian system is considered as an area of public interest (*Area di notevole interesse pubblico*) according to the Italian Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape (*Codice dei Beni Culturali e del Paesaggio*, D. lg 42/2004).

The Landscape. Meanings and importance.



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СВ. КЪМ ГРОБА



Part Four:

Managing lands of monastic communities



Monastic communities and nature conservation: Overview of positive trends and best practices in Europe and the Middle East

Josep-Maria Mallarach

The origin of a resilient lifestyle close to nature

The origin of Christian monasticism is to be found eighteen centuries ago in the deserts of Egypt, Palestine and Syria, during the time these countries formed part of the Roman Empire. Indeed, it is in the Egyptian deserts where the oldest Christian monasteries are still thriving. From the earliest times, the ideal of the monastic life was closely connected to an aspiration to return to the terrestrial Paradise. More or less complete solitude in the wilderness – usually associated with asceti-

cism, under harsh conditions – was sought so that an aspirant might progress spiritually and attain to holiness, developing a deep harmony with nature by approaching, or even recovering, 'the Adamic state'. The idea expressed by St John Damascene, a Church Father, that 'Nature is the icon of the face of God' is highly significant when one recalls the sacramental nature accorded to icons in the Eastern Christian Churches and the veneration they receive.

From the first centuries of monasticism, two main lifestyles developed,

< Rila Natural Park, Bulgaria. The outstanding alpine forests around the Rila Monastery bear testimony of the long-lasting 'holy unity between Nature and the monastery', wished for by its founder Saint Ivan of Rila.



Well tended vegetable gardens and orchards like those near the monastery of Xenophontos, Athos.

which have remained almost unchanged until the present day: community life – cenobitic – and isolated life – hermitic. Hermitism and cenobitism are usually seen as complementary paths. Hermits are often fed by monastic communities, and in some monasteries all monks become hermits during some part of their lives. In other communities, a hermitic life is an option only for those who feel attracted to it. In any case, a hermit devoted to silent prayer and contemplation in solitude is the prototype of the human being in deep harmony with nature. In the words of one hermit, ‘hermits live a cosmic experience of communion with nature’ (Mouizon, 2001). No wonder, therefore, that from the fourth century onwards numerous historical records describe the lives and feats of holy monks and hermits who befriended wild animals, such as lions, bears, wolves or poisonous snakes, and it is recorded that some were even fed by them (Macaire, 1993). Similar phenom-

ena are found in Asia, where monasticism, both cenobitic and hermitic, developed much earlier within different branches of Buddhism and Hinduism.

The expansion of monastic settlements occurred rapidly, and by the end of the first millennium thousands of monasteries were thriving in Europe and the Middle East. The impact of these monastic communities on spirituality, art, science and culture has been widely acknowledged and documented (Krüger et al. 2007; Kinder, 2002, etc.), and their legacy has been, and still is, a research topic for numerous journals. However, the positive impact of these communities in the management of natural resources and nature conservation has received much less attention, despite the fact that the monasteries often developed very successfully what we would currently call ‘sustainable practices’.

Given the fact that the founders of monasteries deliberately sought out solitary

or 'wild' terrain, the longevity of many communities is impressive. Obviously, in desert or arid areas, the survival of the community depended on the development of highly sophisticated and efficient water management and gardening techniques. The first Christian monastery, St Catherine's, founded in 337 AD, is located at the foot of Mount Sinai, an extremely arid region. It has been continuously active ever since, coming under the protection of Islamic law in the seventh century. In 2002 the monastery itself was included in the Saint Katherine Protectorate, one of the largest protected areas of Egypt (Grainger and Gilbert, 2008). A further example is St Anthony's, founded in 356 AD, shortly after the saint's death. Situated on al-Qalzam Mountain near Al Zaafarana, Egypt, the monastery has enjoyed continual occupancy and today is a self-contained village with gardens, a mill, a bakery, and five churches. Similarly to other Egyptian Coptic monasteries, St Anthony's is currently experiencing a revival; its monastic population has grown considerably in recent years, attracting a large number of pilgrims. Many monks of St Anthony's monastery nowadays spend the last part of their lives as hermits in nearby caves.

Such examples are not unique. The result of centuries of prudent resource management by monasteries was the creation of a wide variety of extensive and harmonious monastic landscapes, well adapted to different ecosystems, from the taiga of Siberia to the North African deserts, from the Alps or the

Carpathian mountains to the coastal wetlands of the Mediterranean, many of which have been well conserved until the present day. In actuality, hundreds of modern protected areas have been established over ancient monastic landscapes that still retain their quality and biodiversity. Most of these protected areas are managed as Protected Landscapes, equivalent to the IUCN category V, which is the most common category of protected areas of Europe (Mallarach, 2008). This noteworthy fact provides an additional proof of the effectiveness of these types of community-conserved areas. Almost 50 monasteries (usually including part of the lands they historically managed) have been inscribed in the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites to this day, additional evidence of the global significance of these monastic settlements. Even though most of these sites are classified as 'Cultural', some are Mixed – 'Natural and Cultural' – such as Mount Athos, Greece, or Studenica, Serbia; and in fact, more could also be classified as 'Mixed', as most of the remaining sites retain significant natural heritage value at either global or national levels.

Indeed, sustainability went hand in hand with monasticism from an early time. Among the Benedictines, for example, whose order was established by St Benedict in the sixth century (and whose flourish from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries led to the birth of orders such as the Cistercians, Camaldolensians, Carthusians, etc.), agricultural and forestry management

practices were sophisticated and diverse. St Benedict set an early example of sustainability; the Benedictine communities had to pass on their lands in at least as fertile a state as when they found them. Experts nowadays can single out a forest which was managed by a Benedictine, Cistercian or Camaldolensian monastic community identifying good-practice techniques that were used. In fact, the sustainable forest practices of the Camaldolensians, in the extensive forest lands of the Apennines, were the foundation of the Italian legislation on forestry (Fr. P. Hughes, pers. comm.), and the area around the monastery of Camaldoli, including its Sacro Eremo – hermitage – has been included in the National Park of the Casentine Forests. Cistercians, on the other hand, established their settlements in lowlands, usually next to rivers and water bodies, developing sophisticated systems for harnessing the renewable energy of water (Leroux-Dhuys, 1999).

Because of the alms and donations they received, coupled with careful and efficient management, many monasteries ended up managing large tracts of land and water reserves, sometimes hundreds of square kilometres in size. It is estimated that in many European and Middle East countries monastic communities were responsible for 10 to 25 per cent of the productive area. Moreover, medieval monastic gardens set the example for the establishment of botanical gardens and pharmaceutical gardens in post-medieval European and Middle Eastern towns (MacDougall, 1986). Following the rule of 'Ora et Labora' (Pray and Work), monastic communities have always been eager to develop efficient self-sufficient strategies which allow them to devote most of their time to prayer, meditation and contemplation.

Hermitages, on the other hand, have been traditionally located in wild or rugged country, providing solitude and

The Miracle Monastery, Spain. The spring blessing of water is held at dawn, after a long silent walk listening to the birds singing, during the spring session of the course on Nature and Spirituality, in El Miracle Nature Reserve.



natural shelter, such as in caves. The hermitic domains can be considered a kind of nature reserve, i.e. IUCN protected area categories I or III. The inclusion of some of these hermitages on the periphery of the monastic protected landscapes resulted in a very balanced ecological pattern, which can be still found in many regions. Monastic settlements containing scattered small monasteries of different sizes, with assorted hermitages and monks' cells, in some cases created or maintained astonishing landscapes, like those of Cappadocia in Turkey, and in other cases led to the construction of imposing buildings in the midst of almost pristine natural areas, like the Grand Chartreuse, France. The well known 'Carmelitan deserts' usually located in rugged and isolated natural areas, are a special type of hermitic-based landscape, established from the seventeenth century to host a certain number of temporary hermits in solitary places in Spain, where a number of modern protected areas have been established, such as the Natural Parks of Desert de les Palmes and Las Batuecas (Ruiz & Husillos, 2008).

The historical peak of monastic expansion varied among regions. While in the Middle East, North Africa, and Ireland the zenith was reached in the fifth and sixth centuries, the apogee of monasticism in many Western and Central European countries was not reached until the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries; Russia also enjoyed its heyday during the 1500–1600s. However the history of monasticism is not, of

course, one of steady evolution. Aside from occasional disruptions due to wars or pillage, the worse setbacks suffered by monastic communities of Europe came after the French Revolution (and the secularisation movements), leading into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For political or economic reasons, the governments of many European countries – liberal or communist – banned religious organisations or enforced severe prohibitions on their activities, usually confiscating monastic properties. As a result, many monasteries were abandoned, sacked or destroyed. These measures had severe repercussions not only on monasticism itself, as is well known, but also on nature conservation – a fact which has been less well documented. Some monastic forests carefully managed for centuries were razed to the ground in few decades (Urteaga, 1989), numerous traditional varieties of vegetables were lost, and much 'traditional ecological knowledge' and many related best practices, which had been prudently developed over centuries, were rapidly forgotten.

Later, when the political situation improved, and a certain tolerance for religion was redeveloped, a monastic resurgence occurred in most European countries, which led to the partial – in most places – recovery of what had been lost.

Nowadays, it is estimated that there are more than 5000 monastic communities in Europe and the Middle East, and over 80 000 monks and nuns, clear proof of the amazing resilience of this

way of life. This figure does not include the Catholic friar orders, which usually are located in urban areas, although some of them, like the Franciscans, had originally very tight bonds with nature.

Currently, most of the former European communist countries are experiencing a recovery and/or expansion of monasticism, as can be seen in Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, the Ukraine, etc. The largest monastic population in Europe is actually to be found within the Natural Park of Vanatori-Neamt, in northeast Romania, which includes over 2000 monks and nuns (Catanoius, 2007), organised in self-sufficient communities, either in monasteries or small monastic villages. New foundations are frequent, and the expansion of the historic monasteries is currently common in this part of Europe. On the other hand, the only monastic republic of the world, Mount Athos (the Garden of the Holy Virgin, as it is called by its inhabitants), located in north-eastern Greece, reached its lowest ebb in the 1970s. Since that time, however, the intake has been increasing steadily, and it currently has about 1700 monks, with all its 20 autonomous monasteries fully restored (Speake, 2002).

Despite the general trend of secularisation, and the decline that a number of monastic communities are still experiencing, new monastic settlements are currently being established in different parts of Europe and the Middle East (often within protected areas), and new efforts are underway to recover and protect sacred natural sites. Some examples are briefly discussed below.

- Within certain protected areas of Romania new monastic settlements are being established, e.g. Skitul Sihla, Agapia Veche, etc. At the same time, new monastic villages are developing around the old monasteries of Agapia and Varatec, these being the largest monasteries of the Orthodox world and yet unable to cope with the large numbers of new aspirants.
- Some monasteries in the Balkans are being restored, after many years or even centuries of neglect, e.g. those of Skadar Lake, Montenegro; moreover, some abandoned monasteries in Muslim dominant countries are being recovered, e.g. Mar Musa in Syria.
- There is an unexpected recovery and renewal of hermitism in the mountains of many European countries, but, as well as in Lebanon, where for example in Ouadi Qashida (the Holy Valley) the Maronite Church's spiritual cradle people from different religious backgrounds make retreats in natural caves guided by Maronite nuns (Mgr Samir Mazloum, pers. comm.). In Italy alone it is estimated that over 300 hermits are permanently living in the wilderness, and over 2000 temporary hermits take retreats in natural areas, staying there for a period that varies from a few months to a few years (Denwahl, 2004).
- Several new Orthodox monasteries have been established in Western, culturally Catholic European countries, such as the Solan, Saint Antoine-le-Grand, and Cantauque monasteries in France.
- The recovery and restoration of di-

verse ancient Coptic monasteries in desert areas, e.g. those of Wadi Mur, in Egypt.

- The recent establishment of new monastic orders with ascetic lifestyles within or very close to nature, often referred as the Green Cathedral, e.g. the Little Sisters/Brothers of the Lamb, France, whose members live from alms.
- The unexpected recovery of ancient pilgrimage routes, connecting old and new monasteries, e.g. a number of branches of the Way of Saint James (Camino de Santiago) in northern Spain, and many more in the Carpathians, Romania and Hungary.
- The intensification of efforts by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, among others, to conserve sites sacred to Christianity, including some outstanding sacred natural sites, like Mount Tabor, the Mount of the Blessings, or the shores of Lake Tiberias, threatened by development pressures and projects.

Despite this impressive resurgence of interest in monasticism and the value of community spiritual life in nature, one must also acknowledge the fact that during the twentieth century a number of existing or new monastic communities adopted lifestyles not fully coherent with spiritual principles regarding nature and the environment. The reasons for this are diverse, and include such factors as the influence of the surrounding secular society, a lack of discernment concerning the environmental and social impact of new technologies and practices, and often,

it must be admitted, an insufficient theology of Creation.

Nowadays, most monastic communities are aware of these contradictions and many are working to improve their coherency, following the guidelines of their spiritual leaders. The size of these communities may vary widely, from a few members to a few hundred individuals, either male or female, but usually are made of a few dozen men or women. The principle of self-sufficiency is widespread, especially among Orthodox and Coptic communities. In former times the same could be said of the monastic communities of the Roman Church, but some have now abandoned manual labour for intellectual work.

In terms of leadership and vision, the highest spiritual authorities also have demonstrated a commitment to nature conservation. H.A.H. Bartholomew I is widely known as the 'Green Patriarch', having developed numerous and very significant initiatives at different levels (Bartholomew I, 2003), including some for improving the awareness of monastic communities of environmental issues (Nantsou, 2009), while the last two Catholic Popes have coined the key concept of 'ecological conversion', insisting in their messages on the need for a radical change of lifestyle to reduce consumption and increase respect for Creation (Benedictus XVI, 2010).

In fact, monastic communities nowadays are in a very good position to maintain or develop best practices re-

lated to nature conservation. After all, such practices are part of their history, and most communities have kept records of this; and many monastic communities are producing very fine organic products, such as cheese, beer, wine, liqueur, herbal remedies, incense, etc., or outstanding quality crafts, like icons, rosaries, or pottery. Others are still engaged in farming, animal husbandry, fishing or forestry. All of these activities, naturally, presuppose a spiritual and ecologically responsible approach to the relationship between man and nature, which is, as we have seen, at the very heart of the monastic life.

Values and principles

Christian monastic communities have been established for more than ten centuries in most of Europe and the Middle East. They are, without question, the oldest democratic and self-organised communities of this part of the world to have a continuous positive impact on nature conservation. This significant, but often overlooked, historical fact can be explained, in part, because monastic communities are based on principles which are deeply coherent with environmental sustainability, such as:

- Stability, discipline, asceticism, sobriety, 'poverty'
- Reducing material needs; increasing time for prayer, contemplation and meditation
- Orientation not to material profit, but to spiritual benefit

- The idea of communal rather than private property; the concept of monks as custodians or stewards, never owners
- Cherished values which include: sacredness, silence, solitude, harmony, beauty
- Aiming for perfection, or excellence, in the spiritual and material domains
- Creation/Nature as an image/manifestation of God/Divinity/the Sacred, or as a Teacher. Creation as a gift to be safeguarded and bestowed on future generations
- All natural living beings living in permanent praise of their Creator

The values that monastic communities embrace are, therefore, very removed from the mainstream values of Western materialistic societies, and indeed in this sense the monks may be said to share common ground with most traditional communities or indigenous peoples of the world.

Some have criticised the inhabitants of monastic communities for 'abandoning the world', which is of course partially true, but what is even more true is the fact that secluding themselves from society, these men and women strive to live in spiritual communion not only with other human beings, but with the entire existence. According to the authorities of the Mar Mousa monastery, Syria, 'the second priority is Evangelical simplicity, a way for living in harmony and complete responsibility with the Creation and the society that surround us (...) with an aesthetic of justice and gratification' (excerpt from the official web site).

Therefore, 'the actuality of monasticism is that – like it or not – it embodies within the religion that which is of a spiritual and contemplative essence, extreme and absolute (...), [that which] shows to the world that happiness is not in some remote place, outside ourselves (...) but now and here, where we are with God. In the face of a dehumanised world, the monk represents what our true measures are' (Schuon, 1967).

Except for a few orders that have chosen to remain completely silent, like the Carthusians, most monastic communities use a variety of tools and strategies to communicate their values to society, including the way they understand the Creation and their virtuous relationship with all living beings. They may choose to use traditional channels, new technologies, or both, depending on orders, context and circumstances, although they usually aim at exclusive audiences. Traditional religious tools, like retreats, seminars, counselling, publication of books, articles, and sacred art, are often combined with modern tools, like symposia, websites (see a short selection below), DVDs, CDs, guided tours, interpretation centres, etc. Although few monasteries have explicit communication goals related to nature conservation, it is indisputable that all the values they communicate (including their own example) have a positive impact on their target audience, by increasing respect for nature and encouraging others to adopt simpler, more sustainable lifestyles.

Protected areas and monastic communities: diversity of contexts

Most of the oldest and largest remaining monastic lands of Europe are found inside protected areas of international value (like the Natura 2000 network, established by the European Union based on bioregional criteria), such as the entire Athos peninsula in Greece, or Saint Ottilia in Germany. Indeed, many monastic lands are effectively managed as protected areas, even without designation, as clear examples of community-conserved areas. Some protected areas have been promoted or created by monastic authorities, such as the Natural Park of Rila, Bulgaria, nested inside the national park, or the Natural Area of National Significance of Poblet, Spain.

Land ownership is partially being devolved to some monastic communities in some of the former communist countries, which may include portions of already existing protected areas, such as in the Natural Park of Vanatori-Neamt, Romania, or in the National Park of Rila, Bulgaria.

Some monastic communities have been recovering sacred sites, including sacred natural sites, like the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, that manages numerous sacred sites in Israel/Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Cyprus, and Greece, or the Benedictines who manage a number of calvaries, like the landscape complex of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, in Poland, a World Heritage Site. Other mo-

nastic communities are at the service of pilgrimages, like the Way of Saint James (the first pilgrimage in the world to become a World Heritage Site), which stretches for more than one thousand kilometres through Northern Spain, fostering the development of numerous protected areas along the way (Mallarach, 2005).

On the other hand, protected areas including monastic communities have very diverse ownership and governance systems and styles, involving boards, planning and management regulations, public use requirements, etc. For instance, the territory of Mount Athos is the largest Natura 2000 and Mixed World Heritage Site of Europe fully managed by monastic communities. In most cases, however, monastic communities are not allowed to participate in the boards of governance.

The Natural Park of Montserrat, Spain, where the Abbot of the main monastery is the Vice-President of the Board, or the Poblet Nature Reserve, Spain, where the Prior of the Monastery of Poblet was recently elected President of the Board, are quite exceptional, but could be replicated in other protected areas with monastic communities. Of all the European and Middle East Christian monasteries that have been declared Cultural and/or Natural-Cultural World Heritage Sites by UNESCO, only 40 per cent of them are managed by monastic communities, the rest being managed by governmental institutions responsible for cultural heritage. Such institutions often consider monastic complexes as museums or cultural facilities.

Finally, another trend that needs to be addressed when discussing the European context is the recent creation of some Buddhist monasteries (mostly related to Zen and Tibetan Buddhism) to which an increasing number of Europeans feel attracted. Almost all of these new monasteries are very committed towards nature conservation and environmental respect. At the same time, however, there is an intriguing complementary trend: the creation of new Roman Catholic monasteries in Asian countries, such as Vietnam or Korea, where Buddhism has been the dominant religion for many centuries.

Positive trends

From the environmental point of view, a number of significant positive trends can be identified among the monastic communities in Europe and the Middle East during the last years. A selection of these trends, each with a few examples, is briefly discussed next.

- Development of organic farming in numerous monasteries, such as the Rieunette and Solan monasteries, France; Hosios Lukas and Chrysopigi monasteries, Greece; Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, Italy; Solan, France, and many monasteries of Romania, guided by Pierre Rabhi, the French leader and activist on organic farming, under the patronage of the Orthodox Patriarch of Romania (Rabhi, 1996). Other monasteries like those of Frauenthal and Hauterive Switzerland, or Cystersów, Poland, have been developing best practices in animal husbandry.



The Holy Island of Arran, UK. Tibetan Buddhist Pilgrimages walking in silence across the hills have become a feature of this Scottish landscape.

- Development of sustainable practices on forestry, for instance inverting coppice oak wood to high forest, combining sustained yield with biodiversity and beauty concerns, such as in Simonopetra Monastery, Mount Athos (Kakouros, 2010), or Stift Heiligenkreuz, Austria.
- Sensitising visitors vis-à-vis nature and the environment, e.g. including spiritual principles and connecting spirituality and nature in all educational and retreat activities, for instance in the Buddhist monasteries of Plum Village, France, or the Holy Island of Arran, United Kingdom, and the monasteries of Camaldoli, Italy, and the Virgin Mary of Rodia, Greece; Solan, France; plus a number of inter-religious initiatives, like the Ecosite of Avalon developed by the Institute Karma Ling in France.
- Reducing fossil fuel use as much as possible, sometimes with the explicit goal to reach zero consumption and emissions, e.g. Münsterschwarzach or Marienstatt in Germany; establishing or maintaining efficient water management, e.g. monasteries of Wadi el-Natroun, Egypt; or including strict environmental criteria in all new monastic buildings, such as the monasteries of Siloe, Italy, and Himmerod, Germany.
- Building, restoring or adapting hermitages or places for retreats within protected areas, providing an additional layer of protection, e.g. Les Ermites de Marie, within the Nature 2000 site of Les Albères, France.
- Restoring ancient medicinal gardens and old herbal pharmaceutical remedies and processes, e.g. in Vatopedi, Mount Athos or Stična and Prečastiti Gospod Opat Janez Nowak, Slovenia.
- Including spiritual principles in the planning and management of protected areas, e.g. in Poblet, Spain,

and Rila, Bulgaria. The main aim of the Natural Park of Rila is 'to guarantee and preserve the holy unity between nature and the Monastery, [and] its rebirth as spiritual and cultural centre of the country'.

- It is also worth noting the creation of new monastic orders within the Roman Church going back to their Christian roots, emphasising harmony with nature, simplicity, and life in nature, with minimal resources and impact, like the Monastic family of Bethlehem (a new formulation of the Carthusians); the Little Sisters/Brothers of the Lamb, or the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal.
- Some monastic communities have decided moving from urban settings to protected areas, to develop an eco-friendly lifestyle, such as the Benedictine Stanbrook Abbey that moved to North York Moore National Park, England.
- At the same time, an interest in the

theology of nature has blossomed, as has also the dialogue between science, specially frontier disciplines, and theology. These trends are not confined to Europe or the Middle East, but are more or less global. For instance, it is noteworthy that the theme of the third Inter-religious Dialogue between Christian and Buddhist monastic orders held in the monastery of Gethsemani, Kentucky, USA, in 2008, was 'Monasticism and the Environment' (Mitchell & Skudlarek, 2010). It is appropriate to recall that the Benedictine Community of Montserrat welcomed the first workshops of The Delos Initiative, and that the proceedings of the workshop were the first joint publication between the Abbey of Montserrat – which has the oldest printing house of Europe – and IUCN, a clear sign of cooperation (Mallarach, & Papayannis, 2007)

The Vatopedi Monastery, Athos, Greece. To feed the large vegetarian community of the monastery and her guests, the large greenhouse, heated with wood from nearby forests, makes vegetable production possible during the long winter.



Conclusion

An analysis of the management of natural resources by monastic communities in diverse ecosystems, throughout history, is of great interest from a nature conservation point of view. Such an analysis provides one of the best documented examples, in this part of the world, of effectively managed community-conserved areas that have created, and maintained for centuries, a diversity of beautiful, harmonious, productive and biodiverse landscapes, in very different ecosystems, from the Arctic to the tropics.

In particular, those concerned with IUCN Category V – Protected Landscapes – could benefit greatly from the experience of monastic communities over the ages in the management of forests, pastures, and croplands, not to mention the use of renewal energy, in particular, hydro-power.

Furthermore, the renewed interest in environmental coherence of many Christian – and also Buddhist – monas-

teries in Europe and Middle East is a promising trend. Their message, grounded in solid spiritual principles, and extensive traditional management practices that cover many centuries, provides a living example of resilient sustainable life for many other communities to follow.

For all these reasons, the conservation community ought to pay more attention to this enduring class of community conserved areas, to identify the lessons that may be learned for other protected landscapes in general, as well as for other types of protected areas, especially those with religious or spiritual meaning or significance, such as sacred natural sites or sacred landscapes. In particular, the practices that many monastic communities have developed so as to be as coherent as possible from an environmental point of view, within technologically developed countries that are ostensibly following opposite trends, should be encouraged and widely disseminated.

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Ecosite Avalon: <http://www.rimay.net/spip.php?page=sommaireECO>

Holy Island of Arran: <http://www.holyisland.org/>

Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas. <http://www.iccaforum.org/>

Monastère de Solan. <http://www.monasteredesolan.com>

Monastery of Saint Anthony, Egypt: <http://stantonymonastery.com/>

Monastery of Mar Musa, Syria: <http://www.deirmarmusa.org>

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Monastery of Camaldoli: <http://www.camaldoli.it/>

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Managing the heritage of Mt Athos

Thymio Papayannis¹

Introduction

The spiritual, cultural and natural heritage of Mt Athos dates back to the end of the first millennium AD, through ten centuries of uninterrupted monastic life, and is still vibrant in the beginning of the third millennium. The twenty Christian Orthodox sacred monasteries that share the Athonite peninsula – in Halkidiki to the East of Thessaloniki – are quite diverse. Established during the Byzantine times, and inspired by the monastic traditions of Eastern Christianity, they have developed through the ages in parallel paths and even have different ethnic backgrounds with Greek, Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian and

Cypriot monastic communities (Tachiaios, 2006). Yet all the monks on Mt Athos are recognised as citizens of Greece residing in a self-governed part of the country (Kadas, 2002).

Already in 885 Emperor Basil I declared Mt Athos as ‘...a place of monks, where no laymen nor farmers nor cattle-breeders were allowed to settle’. During the Byzantine Period a number of great monasteries were established in the area. The time of prosperity for the monasteries continued even in the early Ottoman Empire period. However, the heavy taxation gradually inflicted on them led to an economic crisis dur-

< The approach to the Stavronikita Monastery.

¹ The views included in this paper are of its author and do not represent necessarily those of the Holy Community of Mt Athos.



younger and well-educated monks (Sideropoulos, 2000) whose number has been doubled during the past forty years. It is up to them to continue the spiritual traditions of the area during the third millennium.

The heritage of Mt Athos

It is important to note that the heritage of Mt Athos is multiple and integrated, and that it is incorporated in a living millennial tradition (Smyrnakis, 1903). In parallel, this tradition is maintained while the monastic communities of Athos adapt contemporary techniques to their needs. Thus, state-of-the-art methods are being used in restoring and protecting priceless icons and ancient manuscripts, while the monks use mobile telephony and the internet to communicate, although their use is in principle restricted.

The spiritual heritage of the area originates from the Byzantine Orthodox tradition with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople still maintaining the spiritual leadership of Athos (Papachrysanthou, 1992). The strong religious faith of the monks and their devotion to ascetic life dedicated to prayer is an inspiration for the Christian Orthodox faithful, which is estimated now to 200-250 million people distributed in many countries (McGuckin, 2011).

Part of this spiritual tradition is the *avaton*, which forbids the entrance of women and children, as well as female animals to Mt Athos. Since its official establishment in 969 AD by Ioannis Tsi-

ing the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and made them abandon the coenobitic and embrace the idiorrhythmic system (where monks come together but are able to own things individually and not being obliged to work for the common good). Despite their impoverished situation during the eighteenth century, Mt Athos took a leading role in the Greek enlightenment, founding the Athonite Academy near Vatopedi Monastery (Theodorou and Dana, 2003). During the Greek War of Independence in the early nineteenth century, the Holy Mountain became a shelter for the suffering Greek population, and was plundered by the Ottomans. After the end of the war, many Slavonic countries in an attempt to increase their influence in the area donated large sums of money to rebuild old monasteries and the numbers of the monks increased. The world wars and the civil war that followed diminished their numbers considerably.

Near the end of the twentieth century, Mt Athos monasticism experienced a re-vitalisation through an increase of

miskis, the area has been dedicated to the Virgin Mary and has been known as Her 'little garden'. Thus, no other woman has ever been allowed to enter.

The cultural heritage consists of a unique architecture, which melds many different styles from various epochs and countries, perfectly in harmony with each other and very well integrated in the rich natural environment of the Athonite Peninsula. It is complemented by invaluable collections of artefacts, frescoes and icons, manuscripts and old editions, objects of religious art and other precious gifts from devout leaders and pilgrims. Most of these are now properly maintained, although fires and insensitive restorations have caused occasionally serious damage (Papayannis, 2007).

The natural heritage is also unique due to a rapid succession of diverse climatic conditions and ecosystems from Mediterranean along the coasts to alpine at the tip of Mt Athos, which exceeds 2000 m (Ganiatsas, 2003). The variety of cli-

mate types provides a habitat for a large number of plant and animal species, including quite a few endemic to the region (Kakouros, 2006). The absence of grazing in the entire peninsula has allowed the existence of a dense forest, of deciduous and coniferous and maquis vegetation (Dafis et al., 1996).

That is why Mt Athos has been recognised by UNESCO as a Mixed World Heritage property for both nature and culture in September 1988. The entire area has been included in the Natura 2000 European Union network of protected areas, both for its habitats and birds. Both of these designations have been proposed unilaterally by the Greek State, without the participation and the agreement of the monastic communities and have been approved by the World Heritage Committee and the European Commission. The Holy Community of Mt Athos has accepted these designations *ipso facto*, but only within the historic and legal framework of the Athonite Peninsula.

The inner courtyard of the Vatopedi Monastery.



Management responsibilities

The requirements of the two protection regimes under UNESCO and the European Union have created occasional friction between government services and the Mt Athos authorities, who feel strongly that they have the full responsibilities for the management of the Athonite Peninsula. This is based on the long tradition of the area, and has been recognised by the Decree 10/16.09.1926 on the ratification of 'the Constitutional Charter of Mt Athos', as well as by article 105, paragraphs 1–3, of the Greek Constitution. It is also recognised by the 1981 Treaty of admission of Greece in the European Union, which recognises Mt Athos as part of a European Union member state, but with certain special considerations.

In accordance with the existing legal framework, Mt Athos is governed by the Holy Community, which consists of representatives of the 20 monasteries in the area. Each monastery has jurisdiction for the management of their property, certain general matters, however, are decided at the level of the Holy Community, such as opening of roads, or entry of automobiles for the transport of goods and people. For major matters, the Holy Community meets with 20 Abbots also participating (Elissaios, 2007).

The State is represented by a Governor – appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – who is responsible for security matters and the implementation of Greek laws.

In this context, the diachronic views of the Holy Community of Mt Athos are

clearly presented in the following excerpt from a letter sent to UNESCO in October 2010:

'Naturally, the monks of Mount Athos are themselves the unremunerated custodians, protectors, and preservers of the peninsula's natural and cultural treasures. They are, in addition, the bearers and practitioners of a spirituality that is both traditional and contemporary; they are the ones who live in and shape the institutions and established orders. The Athonite administrative authorities (the Holy Community and the Twenty Holy Monasteries), manage their own affairs and struggle to maintain their institutions and traditions. From their own funds, but occasionally with state and private grants, they care for the various monuments, and, either through services that they organize, or that they entrust to outside collaborators, they oversee various studies and restoration projects, plans for the management of the environment, and, with the cooperation and approval of the appropriate government services, they see that these projects are carried out.'

The relations of Greece with UNESCO for all World Heritage Convention matters have been ensured through the Ministry of Culture and the Permanent Delegation of Greece to UNESCO. Often the Holy Community has been ignored, while the Ministry of the Environment (responsible for nature protection) has shown little involvement. This has been strongly protested by

the Athos authorities who have attempted to communicate directly with the World Heritage Committee with mixed results. It should be noted that in spite of recommendations from the World Heritage Committee, the Ministry of Culture and the Holy Community have been submitting separate reports on the conditions of the Mt Athos site (Holy Community, 2008). However, recently there has been progress towards a better understanding and collaboration on all sides.

Thus, in November 2010, at the invitation of UNESCO and the Government of Ukraine, the Holy Community participated formally in a workshop on the role of religious communities in the management of World Heritage Sites with religious meaning. In January 2011, the Ministry of Culture of Greece invited the Coordinator of the Athos Study to participate in a workshop on the management of the Greek World Heritage properties. Finally, on 2–5 June 2011, Francesco Bandarín, Assistant Director-General of UNESCO was the first World Heritage official to visit Mt Athos at the invitation of the Holy Community.

The integrated management study

Objectives

It should be clear that the integrated management study for the Mt Athos spiritual, cultural and natural heritage has been requested by the World Heritage Committee, after a fact-finding mission in 2006 (UNESCO, 2006).

Thus, decision WHC-06/30.COM/7B of the Committee meeting in Paris includes the following:

'The highest priority for improvement of conservation of the World Heritage property is the preparation, approval and implementation of an integrated and multi-disciplinary management plan for the entire area of Mt. Athos, which should cover the following issues:

- *Evaluation of the current situation, taking into account the co-existence of nature and spirituality/culture in Mt. Athos since the end of the first millennium, and the legitimate needs of the Monastic Brotherhoods;*
- *Circulation and transportation network of Mt. Athos;*
- *Integrated management of the natural environment;*
- *Sustainable management of the forests;*
- *Protection of the property within a cultural landscape perspective;*
- *Resolution of the problem of solid and liquid wastes;*
- *Improving management of risks, especially of fires and earthquakes, as well as eventual impacts from climate change;*
- *The importance of developing a consistent approach to conservation decision-making from monastery to monastery.'*

However, the monastic authorities of Mt Athos have accepted willingly this recommendation as they believed it would contribute to the effective conservation

of the Athonite heritage and would also strengthen their claims for responsible management, with full respect to the national legislation and the *acquis communautaire*. They also recognise that the spiritual, cultural and natural heritage of the area is inextricably interrelated and this necessitates its integrated and systematic management.

Structure

The Mt Athos study will, therefore, address a variety of issues, among which are the following.

It would start with an honest and objective assessment of contemporary conditions in the Athonite Peninsula on all heritage aspects. These would include not only positive development, but also threats to heritage and problems to be faced. It would also identify the human and financial resources available for the eventual needs of effective management.

A key issue would be the study of existing land use for worship, habitation,

and productive activities, especially for the cultivations and forestry, energy production and infrastructure networks. Future needs will be analysed and proposals for the future distribution of land use will be developed.

Transport and communication for access to Mt Athos and within its boundaries will have to be reconsidered, so that it serves efficiently the daily needs of the monastic communities and the visitors. It should also be economical in energy and reduces pollution and noise, while maintaining a peaceful milieu, which is an imperative requirement for worship and ascetic life.

A major productive activity, forestry in Mt Athos has been practiced in traditional ways. However, in recent times social and financial developments in Greece have rendered some of these practices obsolete and have encouraged more aggressive exploitation techniques. It is necessary, therefore, to re-evaluate forestry practices within the framework of sustainability (Dafis,

Restored wing of the Hilandar Monastery.



1992), and to promote the certification of wood products from the forests of Mt Athos. As an example, Kakouras (2009) reports that the implementation of selective inversion thinning reduces the risk of wildfires and promotes species diversity. Furthermore, a monitoring system allows a more sufficient ecological and economical assessment of this method.

The high biodiversity of Mt Athos (its flora includes 1453 taxa and its fauna 131 bird species, 37 mammals, 14 reptiles and 8 species of amphibians) (Dafis, 1992), is characterised also by an important degree of endemism (22 taxa endemic to Greece, 14 local endemics and six to the Balkan Peninsula). The rich biodiversity must be identified, inventoried and conserved through appropriate science-based methods and measures, also in accordance with European Union requirements and especially the Birds and Habitats Directives. A system of monitoring key biodiversity indicators on a periodic basis must also be established and managed by the Holy Community.

At the interface between nature and culture are the majestic landscapes of Mt Athos, formed through the ages by natural processes and human endeavours in total harmony. In recent times, however, some of these cultural landscapes have been blighted by insensitive infrastructure works, especially road construction. Although vehicle traffic is very limited, the roads themselves have had negative impacts not only on the sensitive landscapes of Mt Athos, but also on the historic network of pedestrian trails that have served

both monks and pilgrims through centuries. Remedial measures need to be carefully designed to restore the landscapes affected (Papayannis, 2008).

Extensive work has already been done on the restoration of historic buildings and facilities and their immediate environment in nearly all of the 20 monasteries (Pennington, 1978). Most of it has been based on sound restoration practices, with few exceptions. A more systematic approach is now necessary, so that further restoration work will be based on scientific research and documentation and is carried out at the highest international levels of quality; an approach that should take seriously into consideration the living conditions in buildings permanently inhabited by the monastic communities. This is merited by the uniqueness of the Mt Athos architectural heritage.

A considerable part of the cultural heritage of the area resides in the artefacts, icons and other objects of religious arts, written or printed documents, and the utilitarian objects from past epochs. Their careful maintenance and enhancement is well advanced in Mt Athos and in quite a few monasteries state-of-the-art facilities for protecting and exhibiting them have been constructed. However, a systematic inventory and programme of conservation is needed.

The management of liquid and solid wastes in Mt Athos does not present major problems. It must be resolved, however, in a decisive manner using a combination of traditional knowledge



Integration of Simonopetra Monastery in the surrounding landscape.

and modern technology. Preventive measures to decrease packaging of imported products and the extensive use of recycling should be strongly encouraged.

As to energy, Mt Athos is not linked to the power networks of the country, but relies on its own production. Part of it is renewable (hydroelectric and solar energy), but most of it is produced through thermal generators. For the future, ecological practices should be promoted, primarily through systematic energy economy, including the introduction of passive measures in buildings. Production should be redirected to renewable sources, taking into account, however, the need to protect cultural landscapes.

Being a depository of great heritage wealth, Mt Athos must seriously face the need to manage risks. As proven by its history, forest and building fires are the main threats and they require preventive measures, equipment, or-

ganisation and training. For instance, in August 1990 a large wild fire destroyed some of the forested areas of Mt Athos and menaced the Simonopetra Monastery. Also, the Hilandar Monastery was partly burned by a building fire in 2004 and is undergoing restoration. As Mt Athos is in a dangerous seismic zone, the threats from earthquakes must also be considered. In addition, climate change impacts will be felt on the availability of water, on changes in ecosystems and flora and fauna species and through sea level rise. They should be carefully monitored and adaptive measures taken when proven necessary.

Finally, the Athos Management Study will address the related administrative issues, which concern mainly the appropriate organisation of the Holy Community and its Committees in managing effectively the Athos Peninsula. The process of approvals and implementation of the Management Study will also be included, as well as

the necessary arrangements for monitoring developments and for corrective measures whenever needed.

Key aspects

The approach considered by the Holy Community has certain key aspects, which may be considered as highly innovative in view of the specific conditions of a highly sensitive area managed by monastic fraternities.

The fully integrated approach to spiritual, cultural and natural heritage is a key constituent, quite uncommon in Greece, where often the Ministries of Culture and Environment barely collaborate. It requires the establishment of a multi-disciplinary study team, which will appreciate not only the technical and scientific parameters but also the spiritual dimensions that govern them in Mt Athos. An increased understanding will also be required from the responsible monastic authorities, so that they can comprehend the study proposals and be able to implement them effectively.

In this important matter, the perception of the study, as an open learning and educating process for both sides, might facilitate the work and ensure its success. Thus, consultation is planned on three levels. Firstly, and most critical one, with the 20 monastic fraternities and the Holy Community. Secondly, with national public services and authorities involved in Mt Athos, including the Governor, the Ministries of Culture and Environment and the Centre for the Protection of the Athonite Heritage. Thirdly, with UNESCO and its World Heritage Convention and Cen-

tre, including its technical advisors (IUCN, ICCROM and ICOMOS), as well as the European Commission, in relation to the Natura 2000 Network.

The advice of these international bodies would be highly valuable for the preparation and implementation of the Athos Management Study. In turn, the experience gained through it – properly disseminated – may be valuable for similar sacred sites in other parts of the world.

Basic management principles

To allow the monastic community of Mt Athos to appreciate the challenges posed and to reach a consensus, a number of basic management principles were proposed in the first phase of the Management Study. Once approved, they will govern decisively the preparation of the Management Study; against them, the Study proposals and recommendations will be judged before final approval.

The primary principle and objective for the Study is to contribute to a modest extent to the maintenance and strengthening of the millennial Christian Orthodox monastic traditions of Mt Athos, and to encourage their evolution in a world in which the simplicity and sobriety of the ascetic approach to life gains new pertinence.

In turn, the architectural heritage of Mt Athos being unique in its historic development, diversity and wealth, and its integration into the natural environment, must be respectfully restored and sensitively adapted to the needs

of the monastic fraternities that inhabit it. This is complemented by a dense system of footpaths and trails, whose continuity has been partially blocked and needs to be re-established.

This should be complemented by the maintenance and safekeeping of all the elements of cultural heritage in the Athonite Peninsula, including incorporated art work, imported gifts of a religious and secular character, and objects that testify to a millennium of monastic life, as well as the living intangible heritage of oral traditions, liturgical Byzantine music and psalms and related practices, all imbued by a strong religious dimension. In this context, the conclusions of the 2003 ICCROM Forum on Conserving the Living Religious Heritage can be useful and especially their focus on integrity and authenticity (Stovel et al, eds., 2005).

The protection of the natural environment is also an imperative consideration, as it is part of the early Byzantine tradition (Sinacos, 2003). This should include the ecosystems (such as forest, coastal and marine, alpine), landscapes and efforts to increase biodiversity and avoid the loss of species, which is already happening. Many species of the flora and fauna species of the area are included the European Red Data List (endangered, vulnerable and rare) (Philippou and Kontos, 2009).

A control of the terrestrial, marine and aerial boundaries of Mt Athos must be maintained, in order to protect the monastic character of the area and its focus on worship.

The afore-mentioned principle is related to the careful management of pilgrims and visitors, and it aims at reaching a balance between the tradition of hospitality that governs Athos and the need of maintaining peace and quiet. Measures to control the flow of visitors have already been instituted and can be further improved.

In the same spirit, the technical infrastructure must be planned in a highly effective and ecological manner, according to contemporary standards of performance, but also respecting monastic considerations.

There are a few productive activities in the Athonite Peninsula, with various cultivations for self-consumption – mostly using organic agricultural practices – and a limited export of timber and wine, while fishing by the monks plays a marginal role. These, and any additional activities in the future, must be carried out in a framework of sustainability, so that they do not degrade the natural environment and will remain feasible for future generations.

Similar sustainability principles must be applied to all natural resources, and especially space, water and energy, as well as the treatment of waste. The environmental responsibility and the long-term care for the Athonite environment and the generations that will inhabit it in the next centuries should be in harmony with the mentality of the Athonite monastic fraternities (Papayannis and Elissaios, 1994).

A final key consideration is the intention to encourage and ensure the ac-

tive – and decisive – involvement of the monastic community and other permanent inhabitants in every step of the management process, through a system of consultation and collaboration with the Study Team and a voice in the evaluation of options and approvals.

Implementation

Through active participation, it is expected that the Management Study will have good chances of being implemented, once approved. Some other choices will also contribute to the implementation. The Study Team will cultivate close collaboration with the scientific institutions, so that its proposals are the result of a broad consultation. Similarly, it intends to initiate contacts with the appropriate public services and take seriously into account their views. The Study will include a detailed action plan of necessary measures, regulations and interventions, providing a brief description, responsi-

ble driver, time schedule and indicative cost for each. The major issue that needs to be considered here is the financing of all these actions, especially in view of the dire state of the Greek national economy. This should be considered carefully by the Holy Community, which has the overall responsibility for management implementation, and discussions on funding options should be held with the state authorities and the European Union.

It is clear that the integrated and systemic Management Study of the Athos spiritual, cultural and natural heritage is a critical step in the long history of the area. The difficulty in preparing reasonable and balanced proposals and obtaining agreement on them should not be underestimated. On the other hand, if all goes well through the wise guidance of the Holy Community, the Study can play a significant role in the maintenance and strengthening of the traditions of this unique sacred place.

Vegetable garden and outhouses of Simonopetra.



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Special Nature Reserve Milesevka and the Mileseva Monastery

Nadezda Pesic, Svetlana Dingarac and Dimitrije Pesic

Introduction and history of the legal protection of the site

In south-western Serbia, on the territory of the former state of Raska, on the banks of River Milesevka, lies a spiritually, culturally, historically and artistically very important monument of the country's past, the Mileseva Monastery. It became the most holy place of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and people after the relics of St Sava have been transferred there from Trnovo (Bulgaria) in 1236. From that time on the Mileseva Monastery became a place of pilgrimage of the Serbian people and other Orthodox nations from the Balkans. It was declared a 'Cultural property of exceptional national significance' in 1979

by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia.

The protected natural environment adds to the character and the beauty of the monastery. The surroundings of Mileseva are dominated by the canyon of River Milesevka, with a mediaeval fortification on the rocky top and monastic cells high above the river. The area of 290 ha is protected as a natural, cultural and historic complex. In 1990, the Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia declared the surroundings of the monastery as a protected area of natural and cultural importance called the Protected Natural Surroundings of the Mileseva Monastery, managed by the Serbian Orthodox Church.

< The White Angel from the scene the Holy Women at the Sepulchre.



The Special Nature Reserve Milesevka and the Protected Natural Surroundings of the Mileseva Monastery.

The gorge of River Milesevka was designated as a Regional Nature Park in 1976. Now, the protected area is planned to be designated as a Special Nature Reserve of 1236 hectares in size. The State Enterprise for Forest Management 'Srbijasume' is in charge of the management of Milesevka Regional Nature Park.

The Milesevka Gorge is proposed for designation as an IUCN Category IV. As a site of national and international importance, the Milesevka Gorge is included in the list of 'Important Birds Areas in Europe, BirdLife 2000' (YU 21 SE). It is also included in the ecological network 'Emerald', this being a preparatory step towards an inclusion in the Natura 2000 network. The Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia are responsible for monitoring and protection of the protected area.

Natural values

The Special Nature Reserve Milesevka is situated between the two mountains Zlatar (1627 m) and Jadovnik (1734 m). The canyon is characterised by unique wild and rough nature, picturesque landscapes, inaccessible paths and the steep rock formations that sometimes rise to a height of 300 m and descend almost vertically towards the riverbed. The gorge is 24 km long and it ends near the Mileseva Monastery. Walking through the gorge is possible only via a narrow path carved into the cliffs.

The flagship species of the protected area is the griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*). The bird is protected as a rare species as it had almost disappeared. Thanks to the efforts of experts and volunteers, the number of birds has multiplied, and currently, Serbia has the largest griffon vulture populations in the Balkan countries. The vulture is considered a holy bird among the

Serbs. From the eleventh century to the present times, it has been on the Serbian state coat of arms.

On the other hand, there are 30 endemic taxa in the gorge's flora (Matovic, 1992). Eight species are considered rare. The fauna is represented by 24 species of mammals, many of those considered rare (bear, otter, wild boar...). There are 73 species of birds, 38 of those rare and of international importance (such as *Gyps fulvus*, *Aquila chrysaetos*, *Falco tinnunculus*, *Crex crex*, *Falco peregrinus*, *Alectoris graeca*, *Bubo bubo*, *Alauda arvensis*, *Tichodroma muraria*, *Lanius collurio*...).

The activities in the Reserves are generally focused on supervising and maintaining the protected areas. Tourist activities include trekking, bird watch-

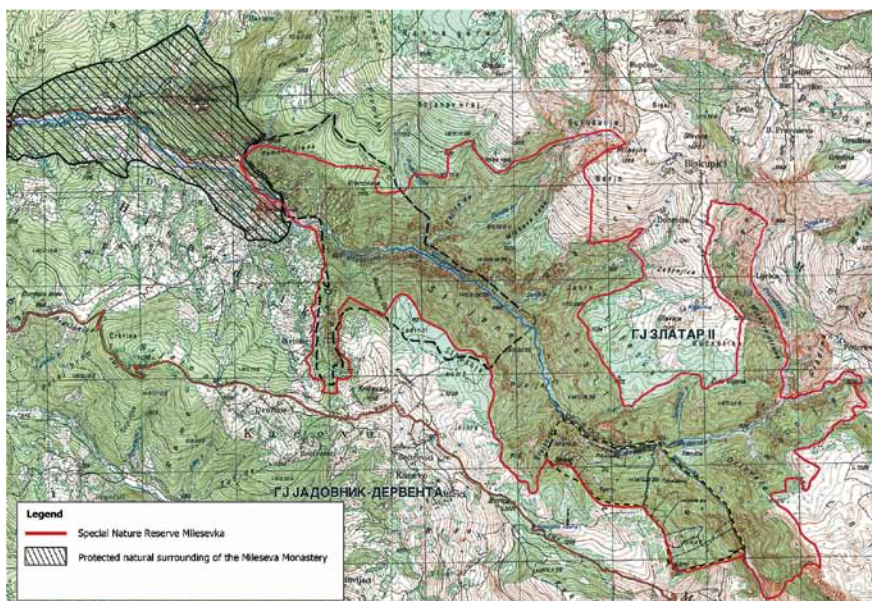
ing, adrenalin tours through Milesevka gorge, photo safaris, visits to spiritual, historic and cultural monuments, rural tourism etc. Visit to the Reserves is restricted to small groups. The local population does not endanger the griffon vultures with their everyday activities.

The Milesevka Gorge is considered a sacred place by the Orthodox Christians, because St Sava's body rested there. His spirit has been protecting the gorge and all visitors with good intentions. The opposite is true as well: all actions that could impair the gorge bring misfortune.

Cultural heritage

The Raska region has been considered holy since the beginning of the

The Mileseva Monastery (1219-1235).



twelfth century, when the first Serbian state had been established by the sacrosanct Nemanjić dynasty. It had ruled over the Serbian lands continuously during the period of more than two centuries (1166–1371). Kings from the holy Nemanjić dynasty established the Serbian spirituality: the Serbian Orthodox church, Svetosavlje (Saintsavaism), literacy, literature, legislation and school system. Deeply religious and devoted to Orthodoxy, all the rulers of this family were generous donors who erected many magnificent monasteries and churches all over Serbia and even on Mount Athos (Hilandar). Until present times all of them are important spiritual places, with valuable monuments of medieval construction and architecture and galleries of the most beautiful fresco paintings.

The Mileseva Monastery was erected between 1219 and 1235 by King Vladislav Nemanjić. Although the monastery was already important and well-known as the burial place of its found-

er, it became the most holy place of Serbia after the transfer of the relics of St Sava. St Sava (1174–1235) is widely considered as the most important figure of Serbian history and is canonised and venerated by the Serbian Orthodox Church. St Sava was an Orthodox monk, the first Archbishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church, a diplomat, writer, legislator and founder of several important medieval monasteries.

Since that time the Mileseva Monastery has been the spiritual and cultural centre of this region and a place of pilgrimage for the Serbians and other Orthodox nations from the Balkans (Kandic, 1995). This tradition has never been interrupted throughout the centuries until present times, despite many different historical influences (the Turkish occupation, wars, communism...). Thus, Mileseva became a centre of hope, courage, and inspiration for the Serbian struggle against the Turkish occupation. Many miracles took place at the grave of St Sava in the Mileseva

The Mileseva Monastery, the Milesevac fortress, the River Milesevka Gorge and the village of Hisardžik make up a natural, cultural and historical complex.



monastery. The Venetian diplomat Ramberty, who visited Mileseva in 1534, wrote that not only Serbs, but also Muslims and Jews were visiting the monastery and asking for healing.

Mileseva was ranked second among all Serbian monasteries. In the golden age of Serbia, during the Nemanjic dynasty, the monastic community in the Mileseva Monastery counted around 300 monks. In 1377 the church saw the coronation of Stjepan Tvrtko Kotromanic as the king of Bosnia and Serbia, while in 1466 Stephan Vukcic Kosaca received the title the 'Duke of St Sava'. The monastery, an artistic and ecclesiastical-political centre, situated at one of the chief stopping places on an important international trade route served as the intersection of influences from Eastern and Western Europe for centuries.

The church of Mileseva is dedicated to the Ascension of the Lord and is built in the traditional style of the Raska region. Mileseva's thirteenth century frescoes are considered to be one of the best samples of painting in Europe of that time (Cmiljanovic, 2009). One of the most famous Mileseva frescoes is the White Angel from the scene of the Holy Women at the Sepulchre, as well as a fresco with the portraits of family members of the Nemanjics. The Mileseva portraits of the first Nemanjic family members were made while they were still alive and therefore are of great historical value.

Since the time of its foundation, the Mileseva Monastery has been an im-

portant spiritual and cultural centre with a scriptorium and a library, where original works of Serbian literature were copied. Also, one of the oldest schools of Serbia existed in the monastery. In 1544, one of the first printing houses in Serbia was established in the monastery (Nemirovski, 1996). The monks printed two books: the Psalter in 1544 and the Prayer Book in 1546. A second edition of the Psalter was printed in 1557. The printing house was located and assembled in a secret hiding place in the sub-dome area of the outer narthex. Manuscripts and printed books were disseminated throughout Europe owing several destructions of the monastery, the migrations of the Serbian population during the rule of the Ottoman Turks, the riots against the Ottoman Turks, and wars. Today, only a few manuscripts and printed books are kept in the renewed treasury.

The monastery was torn down many times in its history, as also other Serbian holy places. The first time the monastery was ruined in 1459 by the Ottoman Turks. It was renewed and reconstructed with the help of the Grand Vizier Mehmed Pasha and his close relative Patriarch Makarije Sokolovic. In 1624 the raging stream took a part of the yard away together with some objects. The monks completely reconstructed the church and other buildings with the help of the Russian emperors. During the Austrian-Turkish War of 1689–90, the Mileseva Monastery, like other Serbian churches and monasteries, was plundered and devastated. A large number of monks, to-

gether with thousands of Serbian families, moved to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The monastery was left in ruins and without monks. In 1863 some prominent local families were allowed by the Turkish Vizier to restore the monastery and the work was completed in six years time by local builders (who used traditional building techniques?). There was a great flood at the end of the nineteenth century, which once more caused major damage to the monastery. After World War II, the Serbian communist government confiscated all monastery property, and only one monk stayed there for more than 20 years without any financial support from the authorities.

In 1974, the Serbian Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments started excavations and conservation works. The church was repaired, the frescoes cleaned and conserved. Detailed activities were initiated in 1980 (Lukic, 2004) with regard to the church, monastery premises and monastery surroundings.

In 1992 the Mileseva Eparchy was established; monks and a Bishop settled again the monastery. In 2002 Mileseva became a female monastery. At present, the monastic community consists of seven nuns, one monk and four novices.

On the steep cliff over the depths of the Milesevka Gorge there are the remnants of twelfth century town Milesevac, which has been declared a Cultural Monument. Below the town, on the north side of the cliff, there are three



A plethora of monastic hermitages in the cliffs of the River Mileseva Gorge.

hermitages founded in natural caves. They are called 'fasting cells' and are located in natural spots thought to be God's creation. The first written reference to these 'fasting cells' is a manuscript from 1508 (Spasic, 1996). Fasting cells are significant elements of the medieval spiritual heritage and invaluable monuments of the period. In the largest hermitage named after St Sava there is a spring of holy water. There are no written records about when exactly the hermits stopped living in the Mileseva fasting cells. Today, they are considered as a cult place, but monks do not use them any longer.

The Mileseva Monastery, the Milesevac fortress, the St Sava hermitage and the village Hisardzik constitute a natural, cultural and historical complex, appreciated alike by the Christian and the

Muslim populations of the region, who are living together harmoniously?

Visitors and pilgrims who come to the monastery attend religious services. Some of them walk through the canyon, and climb a path up to the hermitage of St Sava, where they wash their face and drink the holy water.

Spiritual values

The ethnical and cultural identity of the population of the local communities in the Raska region is marked by Svetosavlje (Saintsavaism). Svetosavlje's ethic implies a historical normative pattern of social behaviour and collective effort of the Serbs as Orthodox Christians that imbues all areas of human practice (Mitrovic, 1995).

St Sava spiritually united the Serbs and that feeling still persists despite a number of different influences they received. St Sava became a myth and a constant inspiration for the Serbian people. The veneration of St Sava was supported by a whole dynasty, a powerful church organisation and the people of Serbia, and that strengthened his cult back in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. During the period of the Ottoman domination, St Sava was a central figure in both the formal religious and traditional cultures, which were responsible for keeping the national spirit of the Serbs alive. His miracle-working body in the monastery of Mileseva was venerated by pilgrims who came from near and far destinations to implore his intercession. The monks from the Mileseva Monastery

had always emphasised their role as guardians of the tomb of St Sava and his cult, even after Sinan Pasha took St Sava's relics to Belgrade (in 1594 or 1595), and burned them in order to break the Serbian rebellion against the Turks. For the Serbian Church and St Sava cult promoters on the other hand, the burning of the St Sava relics became of utmost importance, through which the Saint gained a posthumous martyrdom status. His cult was strengthened and his burial place in the Mileseva Monastery augmented its value as a pilgrimage site, which survives until today.

In Serbian oral tradition during the Medieval and the Ottoman periods, St Sava's role was to watch always over the Serbian people. In many popular legends and folk tales he is the creator of miraculous springs, a master of the forces of nature. Numerous sites have been named after St Sava and considered holy places (water springs, rocks, mountain peaks etc.) and they are always marked with a cross. This links folk spirituality with nature, and nature conservation.

St Sava's Day (27 January) is the '*s/la-va*' (the patron saint's day) for the Mileseva Monastery and is celebrated with holy liturgy, the operation of a spiritual academy in the monastery and a large gathering of people.

Christianity was introduced in Serbia in the ninth century, but the Serbs maintained a lot of pre-Christian rituals. St Sava Christianised those customs and linked them to Christian saints. Many

pre-Christian Serbian tribal customs, cults and myths are preserved in Svetosavlje, not only as secondary relicts of the old spirituality, but also as fundamental pillars of Svetosavlje. The Church of Svetosavlje originated from the people and it is expressed in people's language. Religious service is performed not only in churches and monasteries, but also at the sacred sites in nature, near *zapis* (holy trees) at the fields where some big battles were fought and the Serbian people suffered their own calvary. Some other pre-Christian rituals and customs incorporated in Svetosavlje are:

Krsna Slava: the celebration of the Patron Saint of the home is most typical of the national and religious life of the Serbian people, and is an exclusively Serbian custom. During its construction, every house is sanctified with a religious ritual, and a sanctuary lamp and an icon are brought into the house. On the day of the Patron each family celebrates, and neighbours and friends gather. After the religious service, which is performed by the local priest, bread made especially for this occasion is parted and everybody celebrates with food, drinks and toasts for the well-being of the family.

Sabor: the gathering of people and priests during religious celebrations are often placed in beautiful natural settings near holy places. They have been held since the sixteenth century and have a vast social significance. During the *Sabor*, a religious service is performed and is followed by a popular feast.

Zavetina: a holiday devoted to the patron of each village. It is an important social event during which a religious procession takes place. The litany comprises of cross bearers and their co-villagers who visit the village's sacred sites (usually beautiful natural sites). The litany arrives at the holy site (holy spring, holy hill or holy tree [*zapis*]) and pray. After traditional food has been served, the ritual continues.

Zapis: (Inscription) – sacred trees, have been important long-lasting natural elements and respected through the centuries until the present day. The selected tree becomes a *zapis* through the rite of consecration performed by a Serbian Orthodox priest in which a cross is inscribed into its bark. The *Zapis* is inviolable: it is believed that great misfortune will befall anyone who dares to cut it down. If the tree fell naturally, the tree had to remain at the spot and that place was marked with a wooden cross. People gathered in prayer and sought prevention from misfortune. In Serbian popular religion these rituals have an important role, binding and strengthening the local communities and evoking the respect of nature. It is important to preserve the beauty and original character of the Raska district customs as a part of a centuries-old tradition and a special way of life.

Conservation perspectives and sustainability

Today, the spiritual heritage in this region is very well preserved and it is fostered in the families and the local

community. Thanks to the enormous efforts of the monastic community, the clergy of the Mileseva Eparchy and Bishop Filaret, the spiritual, cultural and economic life of the whole eparchy has been improved. There is a good cooperation among Bishop Filaret, sisterhood of the Mileseva monastery and the clergy of Mileseva Eparchy, on the one hand, and the management authorities of the natural reserve, on the other.

Bishop Filaret is very active in renovation and strengthening of the economy of the monasteries, and the erection of new churches. He also enhances spiritual activities and promotes the increase of the numbers of monks and nuns. In the monastery complex, on the foundations of the old building, a library and treasury have been constructed. A new building for the accommodation of pilgrims and religious visitors was built, as well as a new dormitory for nuns. Also, since the bishop plans to develop tourist activities in all protected areas in his eparchy, a tourist facility was built on Zlatar Mountain, some 14 km away from the monastery in order to reduce the pressure of tourists on the monastery complex and its surroundings. There is a café near the gate of the monastery complex. A radio station called 'Mileseva' has also been established. Bishop Filaret's enthusiasm for building constructions, and his management capacities caused conflicts in the cultural and religious fields; and a question was raised, when the building of new facilities in the monastic complex should stop?

There are no official records of the number of pilgrims, religious visitors and tourists who are currently visiting the monastery. According to a rough estimation of Mother Ana, the prioress of the monastery, approximately 70 000 persons visit the complex annually. Several thousand people are attending the religious celebrations - and around 1500 people arrive there each weekend.

At the moment, archaeological research and pre-conservation works are conducted on several locations under the supervision of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia.

Despite its successive destructions and deterioration caused in the course of time, the Mileseva Monastery preserved a fair part of the original frescoes, which today stand out characterised by great beauty and original expression. After conservation works were completed, the frescoes were again in good condition. In 1996, an eminent professional jury consisting of over one hundred academics, painters, art critics and art historians, with a majority of votes announced the White Angel from Mileseva as the most important painting of the millennium in the area of former Yugoslavia (Cmiljanovic, 2009). The art of the Mileseva frescoes influenced artistic ideas, which flow there more impulsively and strongly than in other regions.

The Mileseva artistic colony was set up in 1974 in the monastery. It has established spiritual continuity, finding key

inspiration in Mileseva fresco painting, in the monastery's architecture and in nature that surrounds the monastery.

Pressures and impacts

The Raska region is one of the most undeveloped parts of Serbia. The disintegration of Yugoslavia, the sanctions, the ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and NATO strikes caused economic stagnation. The poor economy and bad infrastructure cause permanent migrations of local population to the more developed parts of Serbia.

Agriculture is extensive and it is practised in a traditional way. Food is of very good quality, produced mainly to fulfil personal needs and feed local markets. The population in the villages generally is aging. The local authorities are not capable of supporting rural development and the Serbian government has not taken any systematic measures in that direction so far. The Serbian government is very interested in exploiting the natural resources, as it desperately needs economic development and investments. For that reason, the Government neglects the protection of these natural resources.

Spatial planning of the region has not been carried out so far, which creates management problems in the protected areas.

Poverty, institutional and personal irresponsibility, as well as incompetence, lead in some cases to illegal behaviour. For instance, a large number of licenses for wood exploitation and new buildings

have been issued, and waste disposal sites on the edge of the protected zone have been tolerated. Recently, the Serbian government approved research for the reopening of the copper, lead and zinc mine 'Cadinja' that is only 7 km away from the Mileseva Monastery. Furthermore there are pressures to increase the industrial exploitation of a decorative stone within the protected area. Moreover, the amounts of wild berries and herbs picked exceed set limits.

Currently, the main threat to the monastery and the monastic landscape is the illegal building of private houses in its surroundings.

Growing pressure is put on the hydro-power potential of River Lim Basin, which River Milesevka is part of, where many important cultural and historical sites are located, although the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia and the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments have prepared projects for the preservation and protection of those sites.

On the other hand, many cultural events are being organised, which fulfil the spiritual needs of the pilgrims. After consultation with the main stakeholders, a number of recommendations have been made, covering a wide range of issues from planning to specific management aspects, that can affront the main challenges and pressures the site is receiving.

Recommendations

The preservation of any protected value is, to some extent, dependent on the

different needs of the stakeholders. A vital and prospering local community, aware of the value and significance of its heritage, is the best guardian of the natural values, and it is of great importance to offer to it an alternative to the present socio-economic development. There are possibilities for development in several traditional areas, such as traditional agricultural practices (production of organic food), old crafts and in a few new ones (such as tourism), but taking always under consideration the free spirit and pride of local people. Patience and careful dialogue among all local stakeholders are necessary.

In light of the above analysis and diagnosis we suggest the following actions:

- The preparation of a spatial plan for the region should be the top priority. This plan should aim to conserve this precious heritage as a whole, including all the religious, spiritual, cultural and natural values.
 - The management of the protected area in cooperation with local authorities should seek markets in Serbia and abroad for high-quality organic food and promote in that way sales of local products, which will increase the income of the villagers. With the support of the authorities, projects should be launched and encourage young people from urban centres to return to their homeland and renew the production of local organic food.
 - It is of the great importance to promote waste reduction and to construct a regional waste disposal and recycling plant.
- Ecotourism is the way forward, as it would contribute to the economic independence of the local population. It should be based on promoting the natural beauty and the preservation of the traditional spiritual and ethical values, associated to skills and knowledge about life in nature, organic products and traditional handicrafts. The following actions are recommended:
 - 1) The establishment of a network of walking trails and cycling tracks connecting the natural protected sites with the places of spiritual, cultural and historical importance of the area. This action should follow the identification of viewpoints (lookouts) and resting places. One or several tourist information booths should be placed on strategic points along the trails.
 - 2) The reconstruction of the walking trail which leads to Saint Sava's hermitage.
 - 3) The reconstruction of the walking trail through the Milesevka Gorge.
 - 4) The restoration interventions needed to prevent the collapse of some portions of the walls of the fortified town of Milesevac, which is in a bad condition.
 - 5) The conservation and revitalisation of cultural heritage and its natural surroundings, either *in situ* (in existing ethnological complexes with traditional rural architecture) or in designed ethno parks, such as open-air museums are needed. The

building of the new houses and tourist facilities should be done respecting the principles and styles of traditional architecture.

6) The capacity building of the local human resources for training in organic food production, ecotourism, traditional crafts and skills (carpentry, weaving, beekeeping, wool processing) and the nurturing of cultural and spiritual identity.

7) The set up of a unique website that should promote the whole region and facilitate access to information about the area.

- Raise the awareness of the local inhabitants and entrepreneurs about the great value of nature and culture they inherited and the necessity for conservation, protection and restoration of these values.
- Establishment of cooperation with other protected areas with significant spiritual and cultural values at the international level.

To accomplish all of the above-mentioned goals, help and support by the international community is needed.

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Part Five:

Europe: a wealth of sacred natural sites



Diversity of sacred lands and meanings in Northern Europe: Challenges for the managers of protected areas

Rauno Väisänen

Introduction

In this paper based on the opening statement of the third workshop of the Delos Initiative, the sacred natural sites are considered from the protected area practitioner's point of view. Why should the protected areas, national parks and protected area agencies be interested in the sacred dimension of the protected areas? How can the spiritual values be taken into account in the design, management and monitoring of the protected areas? The aim is to show that, although the conservation of the integrity of sacred natural sites may be challenging, it provides parks professionals with a lot of

opportunities and may bring in new and rewarding insights into the interpretation and communication of the diverse values of the parks.

Most of the examples and experiences presented in this paper come from Northern Europe and, especially, from Finland, a sparsely populated forested country with a small indigenous Sámi minority in the north. In Finland, most protected areas lie on the state-owned lands and are managed by a single agency, i.e. Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services. The management is based on standardised and regularly updated principles of the management of protected areas, as well as on legis-

< Koli National Park is of great historical significance as a sacred site and has contemporary significance as a national landscape, both contributing to the Finnish identity

lation and management plans compiled using the participatory approach, which emphasises the role of local and indigenous communities. Altogether the Natural Heritage Services manages four million hectares of lands, including 37 national parks, 19 strict nature reserves, 500 other nature reserves and 12 wilderness areas, as well as three million hectares of public waters, mostly in the coastal areas of the Baltic Sea. In order to investigate and preserve cultural heritage, Natural Heritage Services works in close cooperation with the Ministries and the National Board of Antiquities.

The overlooked sacred dimension of protected areas in Northern Europe

The spiritual values of protected areas have been largely overlooked by the park managers and protected area agencies in developed countries, although the spiritual values of indigenous people in developing countries has received a reasonable amount of attention. There may not be any individual reason for that, but it is possible to find an explanation from the predominantly materialistic worldview related to the modern western culture.

In Northern Europe, many people belong to the predominant Lutheran Church just for practical or purely traditional reasons. The culture is highly secularised. Consequently, it is difficult to communicate on religious or spiritual matters, especially for natural scientists like biologists or foresters, without losing professional credibility. The

managers of protected areas are usually biologists and foresters. So it is not surprising that the natural resources and species of protected areas are often systematically investigated and their features and values are generally relatively well-known and communicated, while the cultural and landscape values are not, and the sacred dimension has been largely neglected.

The Kalevala, the national epic of Finland, is a nineteenth century work of epic poetry compiled by Elias Lönnroth from the Finnish and Karelian oral folklore and mythology. It has played an instrumental role in the development of the Finnish national identity. Even the ancient poems of the Kalevala emphasise the role of common sense, practical knowledge, skills and understanding, instead of metaphysics or religion. In spite of this, people still used to show great respect to nature, e.g. when asking politely nature for some catch for hunters and fishermen and forgiveness when killing wild animals. It was only Christianity, first the Roman Catholic and then the Lutheran Church, that started the alienation from nature and changed the relationship towards a more utilitarian one. Parallel ideological impacts were caused by the development of positivism, materialism and modern materialistic science. The alienation process was greatly enhanced by the industrialisation and associated urbanisation and 'virtualisation', which together have reduced the role of nature to be mainly a source of natural resources for people and businesses, hardly with anything sacred for the politicians and decision-makers.



A rock painting portraying an elk from Kolovesi National Park in Eastern Finland.

However, at a very personal level, the Finns as a nation seem to have an unusually pious and ardent, and at the same time very practical, connection to nature. Thus, visitors of the parks commonly experience at the personal level something spiritually valuable, unity with nature, and maybe with God present in nature. Protected areas clearly have more value for the people than the sum of their species, habitats and ecosystems.

According to an expert of the Finnish protected areas agency, during the interpretation of the values of parks, 'we proudly present our cultural and historical sites, but strictly avoid all connections to the Lutheran church or other religious matters'. In order to make it easier to communicate the sacred dimension of protected areas to visitors and the public at large in a culturally appropriate way, it may be helpful to notice the faint distinction between the concepts 'religious' and 'spiritual'. The latter can be used in context when referring to the personal perception of

nature without causing sensitive confrontations with a person's religious opinions. Tools, best practices and techniques are needed to better understand, investigate, manage and communicate the spiritual and cultural values of protected areas.

Sacred natural sites in the management planning of protected areas

Sacred natural sites are taken into account at varying degrees in Northern European protected areas. In Finland, there are three cases in which the spiritual dimension plays an important role: (1) ancient monuments and sites, (2) areas culturally or spiritually valuable for the Sámi people, and (3) special natural attractions or landscape formations which were used as sacred sites and/or have contemporary spiritual values.

The ancient monuments and sites of the Sámi and other Finns are all automati-

cally protected by the law, and the protection is complemented by social respect. Some rock paintings apparently have had a spiritual role. There are a lot of rock paintings known, for instance, from Kolovesi National Park and Hossa National Recreational Area. For example, the elk is considered to be a sacred animal and there are a lot of rock paintings portraying it. Rock paintings may have had also 'practical' objectives, such as marking the boundaries between different groups of people and improving hunting success.

Spectacular natural attractions or landscape formations often had earlier significance as sacred sites as shown by both the etymological analyses of the site names and the archaeological studies of the sites. They are also commonly considered special places by experts and the public at large because of their beauty, cultural or landscape values. It is not only the sacred site itself in the strict sense, but also the wider landscape around it which contributes to the experience of the

spiritual dimension providing placid space with silence, scenery and dark skies with stars and northern lights. The Western European national romantic idea of national landscapes is also strong in present-day Finland.

It may be noted that even though large areas in the Sámi homeland have been legally designated as wilderness areas (IUCN Category Ib or VI, depending on the interpretation of the criteria), national parks (IUCN Category II) or strict nature reserves (IUCN Category Ia), they include sites and wider landscapes which are of a great cultural or spiritual value for the Sámi people. Such values are, by no means, restricted to the IUCN Category V protected landscapes which have received much more attention (Mallarach 2008).

The names of places reveal the sacred nature of sites

Although largely forgotten and overlooked, the sacred sites are not rare in

Pyhä-Häkki National Park in Central Finland is known for its impressive old-growth forests.



the protected areas of Finland. In fact, they are amazingly common. This is clearly indicated by the names of sites and their etymology. Many sites have been sacred to our ancestors, and many of them still have some spiritual significance to contemporary people.

The meaning of the names referring to spiritual values has often changed or been forgotten during the centuries. Sometimes the conceptual changes have been linked with historical events and associated with cultural and religious changes. In many cases, there are contrasting and fascinating interpretations by various experts. The words *'pyhä'* and *'hiisi'* provide illustrative examples.

The Finnish word *'pyhä'* means 'sacred' or 'holy'. It is a Germanic loan from around 3000 years ago. In Finland, there are at least 42 lakes, 26 hills (*'mäki'*, *'vaara'*), 22 peninsulas, 18 ponds, 15 rivers, 11 bays and 9 mountains with the prefix *'pyhä'* (Lounema 2003). Examples include Pyhätunturi Fell in Pyhä-Luosto National Park and Pyhäkero Fell in Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park, as well as Pyhä-Häkki National Park in Central Finland.

According to one interpretation (Lounema 2003), the original meaning of *'pyhä'* for the ancient Finns was a clearly visible landscape character bordering the familiar inhabited area and the external wilderness. This meaning may have been associated with or gradually changed towards dangerous or forbidden. *'Pyhä'* may also have referred to something sa-

cred, with a restricted access permitted only to a small circle of people, e.g. shamans (Y. Norokorpi, personal communication, 2010). Similarly, 'sacred' has the connotation of set aside, separated or restricted in many other languages, e.g. Greek and Latin and its derivatives. Some parts of sacred groves may have been forbidden and fenced, so that only sacrifices may have been thrown there from outside.

It is interesting to notice that in the Finnish language, the word *'pyhä'* is related to the word *'piha'*, meaning a yard, courtyard or garden. While the constitutional everyman's right of free access covers almost all public and private areas in Finland, the right excludes *'piha'* areas which are reserved only for private use. Thus, the concept *'piha'* seems to have retained some original elements of *'pyhä'*.

The Christian mission in the present Nordic countries was started in the eighth century. It took a longer time for the Christian faith to get an official position in Finland than elsewhere in the Nordic countries, which became Christian in the tenth century. In a papal letter in 1209, Finland was mentioned to have been recently converted to Christianity. However, it was a long process, and the elimination of some of the old 'pagan' beliefs was gradual, only complemented by the Lutheran Church several centuries later. During the process, the Christian faith successfully reserved the word *'pyhä'* for itself and for God. In the Christian context, the prefix *'pyhä'* means good, respected and holy (even a Saint and holidays).



Hiidenportti National Park with its deep gorges in Eastern Finland.

Thus, the concept *'pyhä'* seem to have evolved into a 'positive' direction and it has lost most of its meaning as something forbidden or dangerous.

Another example, the nowadays less common word *'hiisi'*, is similar to *'pyhä'* in many respects, but its conceptual evolution has been strikingly different. The original meaning of *'hiisi'* is an ancient sacred grove, a place of sacrifice and burial (but it has also a commonly known meaning of a spiritual being). In Finland, there are at least 50 hills, 36 peninsulas, 32 ponds, 29 mountains, 25 bays, 16 islands, 12 mires and 12 natural 'gates' or gorges with the prefix *'hiisi'* or its genitive *'hiiden'* (Lounema 2003).

In 1229, when Finland was under the protection of the Holy Seat (and not yet part of the Kingdom of Sweden), Pope Gregorius IX prescribed by a papal bull that all the 'pagan' sacred groves had to be confiscated by the Church. And, so it happened at least in the

southern part of the country, where the great majority of the very small population lived. However, the sites could still serve as graveyards, when they were consecrated for Christianity. Consequently, the concept changed into something remote and scary, rocky wilderness, and finally Devil! The saying *'Hiisi vieköön!'* means 'What the dickens!', and *'Painu hiiteen!'* means 'Go to blazes! Interestingly, the ancient meaning of the word *'hiisi'* has not recovered in the secularised Finnish society, whereas the latter negative meaning of the word is still commonly used.

Challenges in conserving the integrity of sacred sites

The aim of the management of the protected areas is to conserve the integrity of natural and cultural values of the areas. The management should be science-based. In Finland, the inventory,

management and conservation of the integrity of valuable cultural and sacred sites is an on-going process associated with the management planning of individual protected areas (Heinonen, 2007). In addition, a nationwide systematic inventory of the cultural values of forests is included in the implementation of Finland's National Forest Programme 2015. However, some spiritual management-related issues go beyond inventories and are more connected to the perception of sites by the people, and consequently, easily neglected by park managers.

In the Sámi homeland, comprehensive inventories of the values of the areas are carried out, associated with the management planning cycle of the wilderness areas, national parks and other protected areas. The management planning is a participatory process in which the sacred sites are taken into account in a way usually proposed by the Saami Parliament. Due to the privacy of the sacred sites, it is not certain that all the sites are known to the authorities. However, the management of the areas is based on management plans, and prior to all changes in the management plans, the Saami Parliament and other stakeholders are consulted so that these values are respected and not harmed. However, it remains an open question, whether some areas should be classified as sacred natural sites for the Sámi people. It might have some significance, for example, when designing the protected area network or the management activities and visitor management of individual parks. If a

natural site has a remarkable contemporary value as a sacred site, it would be reasonable to restrict its use for inappropriate purposes.

Often individual people or groups of people feel a strong belonging or spiritual interconnectedness to some natural sites or protected areas. For example, Ranger Doug Follett from the Glacier National Park, U.S.A., feels from watching visitors over the last 50 years, that 'the American people feel that their National Park System is the basis of a kind of religion. And that the national parks are the cathedrals where they come to worship. And that the people in big hats [i.e. rangers] are the high priests who have been given the responsibility to protect these sacred land trusts' (Anonymous, 2010a). The same seems to be true in Northern Europe.

How should such experienced holiness, placidity, peace of mind, beauty or other spiritual values affect the management policies and practices? The answer may have far-reaching consequences in developing interpretation and communication strategies of the protected areas and park agencies. It is essential to know why visitors come to any specific protected area, and what the key motivators of the visits are (Kajala et al., 2007). The scope of services and different functions of the area can be developed in the direction that the visitors consider important. A conscious attempt can be made to offer visitors a chance for natural, cultural and spiritual experiences that they consider important and expect from their visits, and to avoid conflicts between

and within visitor groups, e.g. by channelling spatial and temporal distribution of visitor flows.

Why are the sacred sites important?

The intangible values of nature, such as beautiful landscapes and opportunities to experience nature, are invariably the most important motives for the recreational use of protected areas, according to all visitor surveys carried out in Finland (Sulkava et al., 2004, Heinonen 2007). A doctoral thesis (Järviluoma, 2006) on the responses of visitors to four tourist centres in Lapland, three of which are closely connected to national parks, showed, consistently with the visitor surveys, that peace and quiet, beautiful landscapes, and nature in general are the most important attractions influencing visitor's choice of destination. According to the study, women emphasise the importance of nature more than men on average. For older age groups natural features were more important reasons for their choice of destination than visitors on average. On the basis of the visitor surveys, for independent hikers in protected areas, the most important recreational motives are landscapes and natural features, and the next most important ones are relaxation, breaking away from everyday life, and mental well-being (Heinonen, 2007: 105).

Consequently, the sacred dimension of protected areas provides remarkable opportunities for the managers of protected areas, although the park profes-

sionals may feel certain uneasiness when dealing with these matters. The benefits of a wider approach are evident.

- The recognition of the spiritual and cultural values of protected areas increases and deepens the relevance of parks and nature to people. It is very narrow-minded to try to define the significance of nature in the conventional utilitarian or purely natural scientific way, when a multidimensional approach would make nature conservation sensible even to such people who don't care about the identification of species or even about the conservation of birds or beetles.
- The benefits of nature and protected areas for the physical and mental health are evident and diverse (Anonymous 2010b, Stolton and Dudley, 2010, see also the Proceedings of the Conference 'Healthy Parks, Healthy People', <http://www.healthyparkshealthypeoplecongress.org/>). There seems to be a relationship between the personal, and often quite spiritual, experiences in impressive natural environments, such as the national parks, and the mental health and general well-being.
- The integration of spiritual, cultural, social, economic and ecological values in protected area management is likely to help the park managers to avoid losses of cultural and spiritual values. Such losses may be unintentional, merely due to the lack of information. Unfortunately, many of the cultural losses may also be irreversible.
- The enhancement of the living Sámi

culture is a part of the duties of the Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus in Finland. According to the Finnish legislation, the use, management and conservation of natural resources in the state-owned areas in the Sámi homeland shall be integrated in a manner that favourable conditions for the living Sámi culture can be guaranteed. The sacred natural sites form an important part of the Sámi culture and identity. The Natural Heritage Services is working closely with the Saami Parliament and the reindeer herders in order to enhance the living Sámi culture.

- The recognition of the sacred natural sites and the spiritual values of protected areas may increase cooperation with 'new' customers and build up a wider constituency for conser-

vation. The sacred dimension of protected areas has a considerable potential to increase the benefits thereof for human well-being and mental and physical health. In the national parks, it is possible for visitors to stop, to slow down, to calm down, to reconnect to nature, to feel the touch of the pristine wilderness, to revitalise the personal feelings of responsible ownership and belonging somewhere. It would be desirable to develop enhanced tourism and recreation products that combine nature and culture creating integrated attraction elements and reconnecting people with nature through their culture. In a modern society, such a mental recovery is urgently needed.

Ukonsaari Island in Inari is a well-known sacred place for the Sámi people.





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< A Lake Inari island where Inari Sámi people were buried as late as early 1900s.



The Carpathian Mountains, a realm of Sacred Natural Sites

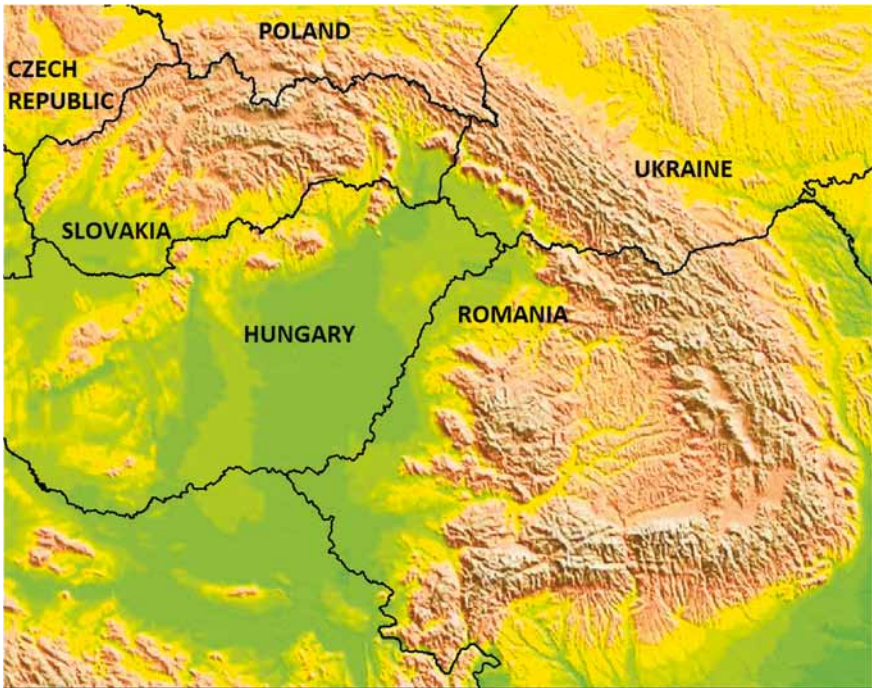
Sebastian Cătănoiu

The Carpathian context

The Carpathian Mountains form an arc roughly 1 500 km long across Central and Eastern Europe, making them the longest, largest and most twisted-shaped mountain range in Europe. From the Danube Gap, near Bratislava, Slovakia, they swing in a wide crescent-shaped arc, surrounding Transcarpathia and Transylvania, to Orșova, Romania, at the section of the Danube valley called the Iron Gate. With an the average elevation of around 850 m and its highest peak, Gerlach, in Slovakia, rising at 2 655 m above sea level the elevation of the Carpathians is much lower than this of the Alps. The total surface area of the mountain chain is

190 000 sq km, while the area of the broader Carpathian region is 470 000 sq km.

The Carpathians are considered to be a reservoir with the highest biodiversity in Europe, including around 60 000 wild species. The wooded areas include the largest pristine forests on the continent, while some primeval beech forests in the Carpathians were designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The fauna includes the most significant population of large carnivores in Europe (bears, wolves, lynx), in addition to bison, deer, boars, chamois, marmots and numerous bird species. The rich variety of the endemic plants and animals, characteristic of the Carpathian



A map of the Carpathian Ecoregion

ecosystems, form a relevant part of the European biodiversity. Beside the large forest patches, areas of other land use types, such as grasslands, cultivated fields and pastures are small; the related agro-biodiversity, though, is very significant due to a long-established agricultural tradition, its most prominent elements being seasonal pasturing in mountain meadows and the cultivation of local plants and trees varieties.

There are seven countries in the Carpathian region, and the total population of around 20 million people is divided among seven nations: the Hungarians, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Czechs, Poles, Romanians, Serbs and several

other ethnic groups. A distinctive feature of the Carpathian region is that in each country minority groups from neighbouring countries live. This ethnically diverse and multicultural region is further enriched by Russians, Jews, Germans, Greeks, Armenians and Roma. However, specific minorities, such as the Rusyns, Lemkos, Bojkos, Hutsuls, Góralcs, Szeklers, Csángos, and Moji consider themselves different from the Carpathian nations (Nikitin et al., 2009; Eberhardt, 2003). The mountain ranges have divided and isolated these populations from each other for centuries, and as a result they have developed and kept their own beliefs, dialects and ethnic identities.

Throughout history, the Carpathian region has been a 'border area' for the large empires, such as the Ottoman, Habsburg, or Russian/Soviet. Solidarity rather than joining of forces was in the political agenda and strategies of the smaller nations in this 'border area'; moreover, the great powers sustained hostility among these nations. The state borders changed many times, and in some areas even the ethnic composition of the population changed substantially. For all these reasons, the border areas remained deliberately underdeveloped and were not industrialised; during the communist era even the collectivisation was not carried out in some mountainous areas, so the direct impact of modernity, with all its implications, is quite low, even today.

Ancient sacred natural sites

Lepenski Vir, situated in the Carpathian Mountains near Danube in Djerdap National Park, Serbia, is considered the oldest urban settlement in Europe. It was a permanent settlement established at a time when elsewhere in Europe only temporary shelters of nomadic hunters were in use. Lepenski Vir was a Mesolithic site of significant religious importance. The fishlike humanoid figural sculptures discovered are related to primeval religion, and represent one of the oldest stone sculptures in Europe. The remains of numerous sacral buildings dating from 6500 BC to 5500 BC have been found. Artefacts covered with pictograms dated around 5000 BC, constitute another

reason to rank Lepenski Vir as one of the most outstanding spiritual sites in the European and world prehistory.

Around 1000 BC, the Geto-Dacian civilisation had spread through the entire Carpathian Mountains region. The main deity of the Geto-Dacians was Zamolxe, its name deriving from the words '*zelmo*' that means skin and '*olxis*' that means bear. According to mythology, after his birth he was blanket-ed in a bearskin and spent long parts of his life living in an underground cave, appearing and teaching people occasionally. This is why each ancient sacred place in the Carpathians is associated with caves or tunnels. The centre of this civilisation, located now in Grădiştea Muncelului Cioclovina Nature Park, Romania, is a colossal complex of hundreds of temples, sanctuaries and fortresses spread over an area of around 3000 square kilometres. All the mountains around this complex are terraced and walled. The Dacian buildings and complexes are positioned following precise geometrical patterns, occult symbols, and maps of the sky. The greatest achievement and mystery of this ancient civilisation is the capital, Sarmisegetuza, called also the 'City Calendar'. 'Sanctuarul Mare Rotund' (Big Round Sanctuary) has an identical structure with Stonehenge, whereas another sanctuary, called 'Soarele de Andezit' (The Andesito Sun), resembles strongly the famous Maya calendar. (Daicovicu, 1991).

The Romanian Carpathians are famous for their cultic anthropomorphic rocks, the most famous being the 'Sphynx'

(which has the same height as the Egyptian one), the 'Babele' (The Old Women) in Bucegi Nature Park, and 'The Twelve Apostles' in Călimani National Park. For ancient Romanians, the sky, '*cerul*' in Romanian, was called '*Caelus Manus*', '*Kerus Manus*', or '*Duonus Cerus*' that means the Lord Sky. The actual name of some Romanian mountains such as '*Căli-man*' and '*Carai-man*' represent not only the mountain, but also Divinity (Geticus, 2003). In Romania, there are three Caraiman Mountains and four Calimani Mountains, all of them considered sacred.

The Bucegi Mountain, located in the Bucegi Nature Park, Romania, is believed to be one of the possible locations of the Dacian holy mountain Kogainon, in which Zalmoxe resided in a cave. In that mountain, there are some amazing and mysterious places like the Omu Peak, known as 'Zamolxe throne', which includes the name '*om*' that is also the sacred syllable of Hinduism and Buddhism as well as the

Caraiman Peak and a vast system of caves, some of them not yet explored. The top of Caraiman, due to its numerous anthropomorphic rocks positioned in a specific way, is considered to be an immense stellar temple, compared with Glastonbury (Geticus, 2003). The Bucegi Mountain is considered to be an intersection of Earth energy lines, an area of very strange magnetic abnormality. It has been discovered that a specific site near the Ialomicioara Cave had positive effects on human bodies, resetting physical and chemical bodily functions to normal state and restoring energy levels. In the popular Romanian tradition this site is called the 'Gura de Rai' (the Mouth of Heaven), and is considered to be sacred, a gate between different worlds, a road to Heaven. Because of the combination of these unique features and its natural beauties, Bucegi Nature Park is currently the most visited park in Romania, receiving around one million visitors per year.

Mosul, Calimani National Park, Romania. The Romanian word Mosul means the Old Man, but it is also a popular name for the Divinity.



In Ceahlău National Park, Romania, the Ceahlău Mountain, called the 'Romanian Olympus' is considered since times immemorial a holy mountain. It is visible from the Black Sea coast, 500 km away. A strange phenomenon occurs regularly: in the first week of August, at sunrise, the shadow of two of its peaks forms, for one hour and half, a spectacular hologram of a pyramid. At the same period of time, above the Toaca Peak, which has a perfect square pyramidal shape, for some minutes, an intense light pillar goes up towards the sky. Some researchers believe that Ceahlău Mountain is traversed by one of the energetic axes of the Earth (www.2012en.wordpress.com). The 'Dobogókő' (The Pulsating Stone), Pilis area, Duna-Ipoly National Park, Hungary, is considered to be the Earth's heart *chakra*. It is in the same place that Attila the Hun chose to place the centre of his great empire. When the Dalai Lama visited Hungary he declared: *'The approach and behaviour of Tibet, similarly to other holy knowledge, sees and experiences the eternity as unity. According to this, the so-called power and energy centres are being counted, not only in a human body, but on the Earth as well. According to the tradition, the Earth heart chakra is in Hungary, more exactly in the area called Pilis.'* (www.docstoc.com)

An amazing mixture of beliefs concerning nature

Recognising the importance and the value of the ancient sacred sites, main-

stream religions established their own shrines and places of worship in their vicinities. It is the Ceahlău Mountain, which, due to its ancient age and the actual monastic life, is considered the second holiest mountain of Christian Orthodoxy, after Mt Athos. Another example is the Sinaia Monastery, also called 'the cathedral' of the Bucegi Mountains, which was built on the main road to the Bucegi Plateau, where the ancient sacred site was located. The entrance to the famous Lalomicioara cave, the place from where Zamolxe supposedly has disappeared, is nowadays guarded by an Orthodox Monastery. Another outstanding sacred place is Dobogókő, which is frequently visited by high-level priests, Buddhist monks, and healers from around the world. Even the Chinese Shaolin order has created its Eastern European monastery close to this sacred site.

The highly spiritual sites up in the mountains, the processions, the calendars, and even the physical locations of the early churches were clearly the same of those of the ancient shrines. Many significant names also testify to their long history. For instance, Saint Andrew, who introduced Christianity to Romania, is locally known as the 'Apostle of the wolves' - a name charged with profound connotations, given that the wolf was one of the spiritual ancestors of Dacians and its head was both a significant ethnic and a military symbol for them. Another example is the myth of Rusalii, according to which the souls of the girls who die young can be seen sailing through the

sky or in the forest, in a gracious dance. If they happen to be seen or heard by someone, that person shouldn't move or speak to the spirits.

For Hutsul people (of Ukraine) the Carpathian Mountains are the land of '*bisytshas*', beautiful ethereal women who, with their song, lure men to their demise. This myth was assimilated with the Christian Post-Pascal feast day of The Fiftieth Day, which became the Pentecost '*Rusalii*' Sunday. '*Rusalii*' is the traditional feast day which is celebrated on the same day with the Fiftieth Day, being devoted especially to the celebration of the spirits of the dead.

Zamolxe, the brown bear, known in folk beliefs as 'Martin', 'Martin the crone' or 'the elder', was a sacred animal for the Geto-Dacians. Even today in the popular calendar, which combines phenomenology with pre-Christian and Christian events, the brown bear is well represented; 24 March is the 'Saturday of the bear', 31 July, 1, 2 and 13 August are the 'Days of the Bear'. The most important period for the bear is 1–3 February, which is called '*Sretenie*' (Winter Martins). Offerings consisting of meat and honey are left in the forest, near a passage of the bear, on 2 February, which is called 'The big Martin'. For all Carpathians the twelve cosmogonic days from Christmas to Epiphany represent the clearest example of syncretism between Christianity and pre-Christian faiths. In accordance with pagan heritage, masks are used during the winter feasts in order to avoid malevolent spirits. The game of

bear masks, which is very spectacular in the Moldavia region, represents the death and resurrection of nature, also demonstrating vitality, finesse and force. Given the fact that these ancient beliefs are deeply rooted and frequently met in local traditions, the bear is currently quite abundant in forested areas of Romania; their population accounts for two thirds of the entire European brown bear population. (Gorovei, 2003).

In the Carpathians some ancient Pre-Christian rituals and beliefs are still alive, and have survived Christianity. The '*molfars*' (for Hutsul people, Vysnytsky National Park, Ukraine), are wise botanical healers who gather medicinal plants from the mountainscape, and use chanting and music from a small instrument known as '*drimba*' in the healing process. They have an intimate and loving relationship with all components of the natural world, from Earth to water, fire to forest and all of the animal and plant life of the Carpathian environment. The Goddesses of Kopanice or the Mystery Wise Women (White Carpathians Protected Landscape Area, Czech Republic) can heal a person using only curative herbs, can find lost or stolen things or give good advice in partnership relation problems. Within the isolated communities of the Romanian Carpathians (Apuşeni Nature Park, Munţii Maramureşului Nature Park) certain people, especially old women, know and use magic incantations against illness, bad luck, hex, etc.

Christian sacred natural sites

Nowadays, the majority of the inhabitants of the Carpathian area are Christians, and many of them are strong believers. A large part of the Polish, Slovak, Czech and Hungarian population is Roman Catholic. There are also Hungarian Calvinists and German Lutherans. The Szeklers belong to the Transylvanian Unitarian Church, which is a religion established in and spread from the Carpathian area. The majority of the Ukrainians, Romanians and Serbs are Eastern Orthodox Christians. The Greek Catholic Church has a special significance in the Carpathian region, because the greatest part of its adherents live in this part of Europe, mostly Ukrainians and Romanians, but also Slovaks and Hungarians. In all countries of the region, owing to the current deterioration of living conditions, the collapse of earlier systems and ideals contributes to the increase of the number of adherents of new Christian religious movements.

Characteristic of the Carpathian region are the centuries-old wooden churches, adapted perfectly to the landscape and to the small local communities, scattered in the forests. The most significant wooden churches in Romania (Bârsana, Budești, Desești, Ieud, Plopiș, Poienile Izei, Rogoz, șurdești), Slovakia (Hervartov, Tvrdošín, Hronsek, Leštiny, Kežmarok, Bodružal, Ruská Bystrá, Ladomirová) and in Poland (Binarowa, Blizne, Dębno, Haczów, Lipnica Dolna, Sękowa) have been declared World Heritage Sites. The architectural forms of these churches repre-

sent a marvellous blend of Western and Eastern influences; there are Romanian Orthodox churches with a Gothic architecture, but also Polish Romano-Catholic churches with Orthodox onion shaped spires. The craftsmen were able to build these amazing buildings only with wood, without using any iron nails or any written plans, just using their knowledge, a secret transmitted only to chosen members of their guild.

Another old custom of the region, which is still preserved nowadays, was that monks built small hermitages in the vicinity of their monastery. Along the years, many of these hermitages have grown, becoming new monasteries with their own priors.

Because there were many invasions, wars and riots during the Middle Ages, some of the Carpathian churches and monasteries were strongly fortified. Outstanding examples are the German fortified churches in Transylvania that have been declared World Heritage Sites (Biertan, Călnic, Dârjiu, Prejmer, Saschiz, Valea Viilor, and Viscri).

The number of Christian Sacred Natural Sites of the Carpathians is very large, although, at this moment a complete inventory does not exist. Only inside the legally established protected areas of Romania, there are 198 operating churches, monasteries and hermitages, populated by around 1800 monks and nuns. It suffices to mention only some protected areas where these kinds of sites exist at a higher concentration:

- Vânători Neamț Nature Park, Romania, the spiritual heart of Romania: 16 monasteries and hermitages (Neamț, Secu, Sihăstria, Sihla, Vîratec, Agapia, etc) are located inside the Park boundaries as well as around 40 churches, small hermitages, and monasteries in the proximity.
- Munții Maramureșului Nature Park, Romania: it hosts over 60 churches.
- Grădiștea Muncelului Cioclovina Nature Park, Romania: 10 churches are situated within its boundaries.
- Porțile de Fier Nature Park Nature Park, Romania: more than 30 churches, monasteries and hermitages can be found in its territory.
- Poloniny National Park, Slovakia, has the highest number of old wooden churches among all national parks in Slovakia: Uličské krivé, Jalová, Ruský Potok, Topol'a, Kalná Roztoka.

Another characteristic feature of the Sacred Natural Sites in the Carpathians is that they are not only alive but also

strongly connected with the local communities and those beyond them as well, often through pilgrimages. As regards the mountain range of the Carpathians, it is estimated that there are more than 400 places of pilgrimage, while in the whole Carpathian region their number is approximately 700. Most of these pilgrimage sites are small and only of local significance, but 50 to 60 of them have national significance, and some 10 to 15 are of international importance.

The most famous and the most frequented pilgrimage sites in the Carpathian region are the following:

- In the Polish Carpathian region: the Jasna Góra monastery in Czestochowa, visited every year by several million pilgrims; the Calvary Sanctuary in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, the biggest compound of its kind in Europe and Poland's second most important historic destination for pil-

The Agapia Veche Convent, Vânători Neamț Nature Park, Romania is a holy place dedicated to cenobitic life. Destroyed and rebuilt many times during the centuries, the Agapia Veche Convent (Old Agapia) was established in the fourteenth century.



grims; Wadowice, the birthplace of Pope John Paul II visited by around 200 000 pilgrims yearly, etc (Borsa et al., 2009).

- In the Czech Carpathian region the most significant sites of pilgrimage are: Velehrad and Křtiny (White Carpathians).
- In the Slovakian Carpathian region, the main national pilgrimage places are Nitra, related with the Saints Cyril and Methodius, the creators of the Glagolitic alphabet which was created to transcribe the Old Church Slavonic language; the Zobor Mountain where the first monastery in Slovakia was built; Hronský Beňadik, related with the Benedictine abbey established in 1075, all in or close to Ponitrie Protected Landscape Area; the Levoča Mariánská Hora church, close to Slovenský Raj National Park; Litmanová, the place of an apparition of Virgin Mary, in Pieniny National Park.
- In the Hungarian Carpathian region the most famous pilgrimage sites are Máriapócs, Máriaremete, Máriaosztra, and BÉlapátfalva all situated in Bükk National Park.
- In the Romanian Carpathian region, the Orthodox monasteries are the main pilgrimage destinations. There are four main concentration areas of monasteries: those of Bucovina (Humor, Voroneţ, Moldoviţa, and Suceviţa), Neamţ region and Vânători Neamţ Nature Park (Neamţ, Secu, Vovidenia, Agapia, Sihăstria, Văratec, etc), the valley of River Olt, Buila Vânturariţa National Park and Cozia National Park (Hurezi, Curtea de Argeş, Cozia, Bistriţa) and Munţii

Maramureşului Nature Park (Moisei, Bogdan Voda, Rozavlea, and Bârsana). The main pilgrimage place of the Catholic Hungarians in Romania is the church and monastery in şumuleu Ciuc (around 300 000 pilgrims yearly).

- In the Ukrainian Carpathian region pilgrimage destinations are Krekhiv (miracle working icons), Hrushiv (apparition of Virgin Mary) etc.

The presence of the monastic communities and hermits living in solitude in the wilderness is another characteristic of the Carpathians. Only in the Romanian Carpathians, monastic communities are found within 13 National and Nature Parks. The life of these monastic communities in forested areas, usually living in harsh conditions, often includes an efficient use of pasture lands, hay fields, and glades. The monastic communities have a long-established tradition of wise use of natural resources, in order to cover only their essential needs, giving to the natural elements found in the Carpathians some utilitarian, cultural and spiritual value. Thanks to the ancient monastic recipes, the plants and herbs that grow near the monasteries are famous for their medicinal qualities. Brother Cyprian, an eighteenth century monk from červený Kláštor, Slovakia (Pieniny National Park), who was a famous pharmacist, is only one of many well-known examples. Each monastic community practises a number of traditional activities without a significant negative impact on the environment, such as livestock farming, woodcraft, fruit

growing, picking of mushrooms and forest fruits, apiculture, weaving, producing of traditional drinks from fruits, bakery, and fishing from ponds.

This resilient model, characterised by a sustainable consumption and production, has not served to produce large amounts of food; the small surpluses are sold in the monastic stores or used as alms during the religious feasts. The hundreds of years of the monastic ownership of the land, and the continuous presence of the monastic communities during that time, shaped the Carpathian landscapes in particular ways.

In some cases (Agapia Convent and Văratec Convent, Vânători Neamţ Nature Park, Romania) the monastic communities are not organised in monasteries but in monastic villages, developed according to self-sufficiency rules. These villages have their own post offices, dispensaries, mills and stores, and are almost entirely self-sufficient.

Modern sacred natural sites

During the World Wars, the Carpathians region was the scene of some of the largest and desperate battles. Only in World War I nearly two million soldiers died on the Galician and Romanian fronts. Because of changes of borders and translocation of populations related with the disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War I, as well as the Soviet domination after World War II, the graves of the soldiers are not cared for, while

many of them are not even marked (Borsa et al., 2009). Nowadays, these cemeteries represent places of pilgrimage and self-communion. This has happened all around the Carpathians; an astonishing characteristic example is the establishment of the Sfânta Cruce (The Holy Cross) Hermitage in Vânători Neamţ Nature Park, Romania, a place where thousands of Romanian, German and Russian soldiers were killed during a battle of WW II. The corpses of the soldiers were not buried; they were simply left there decaying, because their number was great, the front line moved rapidly and the political situation changed; as a result the surrounding forest has become a sacred one. The Heroes Cross on the Caraiman Mountain (Bucegi Natural Park, Romania), 28 m high, is the tallest structure in the world dedicated to the heroes who died during World War I, situated at an altitude of over 2000 metres. Nowadays this cross is also a subject of pilgrimage, not only for those who want to pay their respects or honour the heroes, but also to worship the Divinity on the top of a sacred mountain.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Jewish population in the Carpathian region was estimated at around 5 million people. Since then, especially during and after World War II, their number rapidly decreased, and as a result, the old synagogues and Jewish cemeteries are now an object of attention for their descendants, which spread all around the world. The Carpathian Mountains are related with the



The Dacian King Decebalus, Poștile de Fier Nature Park, Romania. This statue, started in 1994 and finished in 2004, is the tallest rock sculpture in Europe (40 m high), located on the rock bank of River Danube.

birth of the 'Hasidic' (the word deriving from the Hebrew word 'Hasid' meaning pious, righteous, invigorated and alive). It is an important mystical movement founded by Baal Shem Tov in the seventeenth century, one of the greatest luminaries of the Jewish people. His later followers said that going out to nature to speak to God in our own language is the secret to spiritual growth for every Jew and every human being. Based on the teaching of Baal Shem Tov, his great grandson, Rebbe Nachman wrote: 'When a person meditates in the fields, all the grasses join in his prayer and increase its effectiveness and power.'

In Domogled-Valea Cernei National Park, Romania, near Herculane, 3000 to 5000 yoga adepts from all over Europe meet every spring, to do several meditative practices together, including a yang spiral. On the other hand, the New Age movements are interested in the

resurrection of the ancient Pre-Christian beliefs, even of the Zamolxe cult.

Not only the former sanctuaries and worship places are used, but also new artistic creations became the subject of spiritual interest, like the statue of the Dacian King Decebalus, carved in stone, in Poștile de Fier Nature Park, Romania.

Sacred natural sites, local communities and nature conservation

A characteristic feature of the Carpathian area is that there are several places inhabited by more than one nationality, with distinctive cultural heritage, while there are areas which were inhabited in the past by national and religious groups who do not live there anymore. Thinking especially about the ancient Sacred Natural Sites, it is

obvious that the sacredness of some of them does not present a spiritual interest for contemporary local communities, and preservation works in these sites is carried out only for touristic purposes. Even in this case, however, local communities are usually interested in maintaining unchanged the environmental quality of these sites.

It is indisputable that Sacred Natural Sites which are currently important for the local communities play a key role in nature conservation, because each of them conveys respect for Nature as

a divine creation, and allows raise of awareness for environmental matters and dissemination of sound nature protection practices. But more importantly, visits in these sacred natural sites require not only external cleanliness, but also internal purity and a reverential attitude. Therefore, affirming the sacred values of landscapes, sites and species is a necessary step to protect nature, emphasising thus the amazing integration of the natural and spiritual features of the Carpathian region.

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The 'sacredness' of natural sites and their recovery: Iona, Harris and Govan in Scotland

Alastair McIntosh

Science and the sacred: a necessary dichotomy?

It is a pleasing irony that sacred natural sites (SNSs), once the preserve of religion, are now drawing increasing recognition from biological scientists (Verschuuren et al., 2010). At a basic level this is utilitarian. SNSs frequently comprise rare remaining ecological 'islands' of biodiversity. But the very existence of SNSs is also a challenge to science. It poses at least two questions. Does the reputed 'sacredness' of these sites have any significance for science beyond the mere utility by which they happen to conserve ecosystems? And is this reputed 'sacredness' a feature

with which science can, and even should, meaningfully engage?

In addressing these questions science most hold fast to its own sacred value – integrity in the pursuit of truth. One approach is to say that science and the sacred cannot connect because the former is based on reason while the latter is irrational. But this argument invariably overlooks the question of premises. Those who level it make the presumption that the basis of reality is materialistic alone. The religious, by contrast, argue that the basis of reality, including material reality, is fundamentally spiritual. Both can apply impeccable logic based on these respective premises

and as such, both are 'rational' from within their own terms of reference.

This leads some philosophers of science to the view that science and religion should co-exist in mutual but compartmentalised respect, separated, as it were, by an impermeable membrane. The evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould advanced this view where he wrote:

'No such conflict should exist [between science and religion] because each subject has a legitimate magisterium, or domain of teaching authority - and these magisteria do not overlap (the principle that I would like to designate as NOMA or 'non-overlapping magisteria'). The net of science covers the empirical realm: what is the universe made of (fact) and why does it work this way (theory). The net of religion extends over questions of moral meaning and value. These two magisteria do not overlap. (Gould 2007: 594).'

But is such a position good enough, especially when the scientist is invited to engage with the 'sacred' because sacred groves, mountains, lakes, etc. might be just about the only remaining semi-intact areas of biodiversity around on account of the ravishes of materialism? Such a scientist will doubtless have the generosity to concede the biological utility of the sacred, but is there also ground for her or him to entertain the root phenomenon of 'sacredness' itself? It is true that many of the claims of religion *prima fa-*

cie rule themselves out of court from a scientific perspective. For example, idea that God (as the 'ground of being') created the world in six days is manifestly preposterous. But scratch a little deeper and most modern theologians view such imagery as poetic or metaphorical truth rather than literal truth. The one speaks the truth of the 'heart', the other of the 'head', and we need both to be fully human and thereby to engage the 'hand' in active management. Every time a scientist speaks of 'parallel universes', or even of the school textbook construction of the atom, they too are using metaphor.

More than just reflecting on the structures of logic and language, we might also ask, if we are to be scientific, whether the sacred might actually be amenable to scientific inquiry. If people claim that the sacred is something 'experienced', and if it appears to be an experience with consistencies, why should that not be studied empirically like any other perceptual phenomenon that purports to shed light on reality? Who said that religion must be confined to being the straw man of blind faith? What interests are served by keeping it there? Is it not so that, as with other scientific phenomena, if you don't look you won't see? Is it therefore not incumbent upon science at least to entertain investigation of the claims derived from religious experience, especially where these appear to find a measure of consensual validation? This is increasingly being undertaken in medicine where advances in neuroscience have opened up new vistas of research into spiritual

experience as part of the healing of the body (Clarke 2010). Why should it not also be a new field for conservationists who have a responsibility for planetary health? So doing can allow park managers to optimise their assets. It can synergise benefits across an extended spectrum, thereby ultimately strengthening the political will to sustain and resource nature conservation.

In hinting that 'nature is good for the soul' the hard-pressed biological scientist should not be expected to become an authority in spiritual matters. However, it may be useful to know that an extensive body of research and literature has build up over the past century, culminating in the field of consciousness research. An early milestone was William James's classic study, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, first presented as the Gifford Lectures in 'natural religion' at Edinburgh University between 1900 and 1902. The twentieth century saw further experimental and conceptual advances. A fine review of the literature is *Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the Scientific Evidence* published by the American Psychological Association (Cardena et al. 2000). Especially relevant is the last chapter by Wulff on mystical experience.

Weak and strong sacred experience

A range of terms have been devised to describe religious and related 'anomalous' experiences such as might be associated with either the founding 'saintly' figures behind SNSs, or with

subsequent experiences reported by visitors. The theologian may speak of experiences as 'visionary' or 'mystical'. Rudolf Otto used the word 'numinous' in popularising 'the idea of the holy'. The humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow, best known for his hierarchy of human needs, devised the term 'peak experience'. This latter term allows the inclusion of experiences that may not have an explicit religious connotation but is still perceived as uplifting to the 'spirit'. All of these comprise an area of study known as 'transpersonal psychology'. For our purposes it is helpful to follow Wulff (in Cardena et al. 2000: 397–460) in recognising a continuum from mild to extreme (or weak to strong) transpersonal experiences – so-called because they suggest a realm of experience that lifts consciousness beyond normal ego-bounded limitations.

Weak peak experience (to use Maslow's term) is very common outdoors. These include mildly intensified aesthetic experiences with nature and close bonding with fellow humankind. For example, a mildly euphoric feeling of closeness to one's friends might be memorably felt while mutually witnessing a breath-taking sunset.

Ringer and Gillis (1995) have indicated the importance of outdoor trainers understanding that such weak experiences can readily escalate to strong levels of psychological depth. They propose an eight-point scale ranging from surface-level aesthetic experiences, through deepening levels of identity formation, all the way to the 'universal lev-

el' of mystical experience – something that is widely experienced by indigenous people. They suggest that levels of depth should be managed during adventure training in order to respect the implicit contract of what groups have signed up for. In an important anthology Grof and Grof (1989) also highlight the importance of recognising that 'spiritual emergence' can become a 'spiritual emergency'; an ontological crisis. This, perhaps, is one reason why the sacred is often held at arms length.

That recognised, some people actively seek out strong experience. Robert Greenway, a pioneer of ecopsychology, invoked what he calls the 'wilderness effect' to facilitate this with some of his students. In his studies covering 1380 people, 90 percent described 'an increased sense of aliveness, well-being, and energy' and 38 percent described life-changes that 'held true' five years after their return from what he led them through. Greenway offers as fairly typical the following account from a group of twelve people near the end of a two-week trip up the Eel River in northern California (Greenway 1995).

'We had gone as deep into the center of the wilderness as we could, and as deep into our hearts and minds. We had adopted games and structures we knew would open us beyond our familiar constraints. Now, in the fullness of our opening, our ability to feel and understand reached unexpected depths.... We came upon a huge pool that seemed bottomless - shadings of blue-green darkening almost too

black in the depths.... We knew without speaking that we had found 'the place'. We fell silent at the sight, knowing that this would be the turning point, 'the most sacred', the place of deepest wilderness, for this day, for this trip, for this time in our lives, and perhaps in our entire lives.... We swam, crawled onto the hot rocks ... most of us slept for a time. Later some spoke of amazingly vivid dreams.... Distance disappeared and there was an openness into ourselves that was an openness to each other that embraced the pool, the river, and further out into the wilderness, the 'other world', the whole Earth, the universe'.

Such an example is not tied to any specific religion. An example of a strong mystical experience that is tied would be the following from George Fox, the founder of the Quaker movement.

'I now came up in the spirit past the flaming sword into the paradise of God. Everything was new. And the whole creation gave off another smell to what I knew before, beyond what I could ever express in words. I knew nothing but purity and innocence and rightness as I was renewed in the image of God by Jesus Christ, so that, as I say, I entered the state that Adam was in before he fell. The creation was opened up to me.... Great things I was led to [see] by the Lord and wonderful depths were revealed to me, beyond what I could ever put in words' (Ambler 2001: 101).

Fox's experience wears very different clothing than Greenway's more eclectic example. However, both share a sense of 'cosmic consciousnesses' such as has caused mystical experience to be described as 'the perennial philosophy'. Walter Stace identifies such cosmic unity and up to eight other characteristics with mystical consciousness (Pahnke and Richards 1969):

- Undifferentiated unity – sometimes called 'the hallmark of mystical experience'.
- Objectivity and reality – the experience seems more real than real.
- Space and time – feel as if they have been transcended.
- Sacredness – pervades the experience.
- Deeply-felt positive mood – joy, blessedness and especially love.
- Paradoxicality – normal categories of logic seem to fall away.
- Ineffability – cannot adequately be expressed in words.
- Transiency – The intense aspects of the experience usually pass fairly quickly (one of the features that differentiates it from psychosis).
- Positive change – to life in attitude and/or behaviour, often permanent.

Like other contemporary scholarly approaches, Wulff's review (*op. cit.*) explores a range of ways that might account for such states and their frequent generalised consistency with one another. These include neurophysiological theories, psychoanalytical and other psychological perspectives, and all the way to face-value acceptance of spirituality. But that debate need not concern us here. It is suffi-

cient for us to note that the association of a natural site with sacredness has a phenomenological significance that might take it beyond mere utility from a conservationist's point of view. It is possible that such sites are important not just for the biodiversity of non-human species, but also for the evolution and health of the human condition in a troubled world.

Sacred natural sites and spiritual presence in varying traditions

If 'spirituality' broadly consistent with Stace's criteria might be on the cards, what might this suggest for the human ontological significance of SNSs? A spiritual worldview is one that considers the world, and specifically, human life, to be ensouled. The spiritual is that which gives life and specifically, life as love made manifest. It is the 'interiority' of that which is exterior; the knowing consciousness behind the known. Several major religions consider such consciousness to be personified, thus the Kena Upanishad of Hinduism asks: 'Who sends the mind to wander afar? Who first drives life to start on its journey? Who impels us to utter these words? Who is the Spirit behind the eye and the ear?'

The Manduka Upanishad underscores the suck-and-see empirical approach to spiritual consciousness, thus: 'In the union with him is the supreme proof of his reality'. The Mundaka Upanishad says: 'In truth who knows God becomes God' (Mascaro 1965: 51, 83, 81). These concepts have their equivalents in other religions, for example, the deification or

theosis in Orthodox Christianity based around the mystical notion that St Athanasius expressed in the words, 'God became man so that man might become God'. Christian associations between nature and the sacred are also seen in such teachings of Jesus as 'Consider the lilies of the field...', in the totemic designations of the gospels where Mark is the lion, Luke the ox and John the eagle, and in panentheistic passages such as John 1, Psalms 104 and the twelfth chapter of the Book of Job which says: if in any doubt about the divine 'Ask now the beasts ... and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee. Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee'. To borrow another term from Orthodox theology, higher consciousness interacts with nature in *apocatastasis* – the revelation (*apocalypse*) of what is actually to be found there (*stasis*). From this we might derive the hypothesis that SNSs are of vital importance because they show us more deeply what nature actually is.

It might additionally be noted that the most sacred site in Islam, the Kaaba at Mecca, holds at its epicentre the Black Stone. Encased in silver, this is about thirty centimetres in length. Pilgrims on the Hajj process around and, if they can get close enough, kiss it. According to tradition, Umar, the second caliph and companion of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), said to this stone: 'No doubt, I know that you are a stone and can neither benefit anyone nor harm anyone. Had I not seen Allah's Apostle kissing you I would not have kissed you' (Bukhari 2007: 2:26:667). On such ac-

count the practice, strange though it is in the wider context of Islam, is not considered to be idolatrous.

Amongst many of the world's indigenous peoples the sacredness of nature is central to the conservation of biodiversity. This also applies in Western Europe where, for example, faerie hills in contemporary Scotland have been noted as depositaries of indigenous lore and local taboos that contribute to the conservation of biodiversity within them (Laviolette and McIntosh 1997). In a major assessment edited for UNEP's Global Biodiversity Assessment, Posey emphasised the spiritual basis of biodiversity amongst many indigenous peoples, surmising:

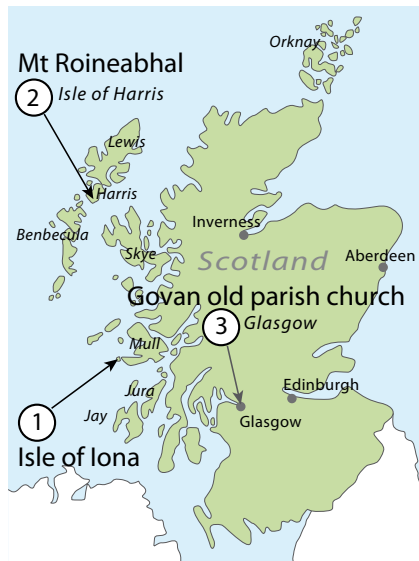
'Although conservation and management practices are highly pragmatic, indigenous and traditional peoples generally view this knowledge as emanating from a spiritual base. All creation is sacred, and the sacred and secular are inseparable. Spirituality is the highest form of consciousness, and spiritual consciousness is the highest form of awareness. In this sense, a dimension of traditional knowledge is not local knowledge, but knowledge of the universal as expressed in the local. In indigenous and local cultures, experts exist who are peculiarly aware of nature's organizing principles, sometimes described as entities, spirits or natural law. Thus, knowledge of the environment depends not only on the relationship between humans and nature, but also between the visible world and the invisible spirit world'. (Posey 1999: 4, his emphasis).

The word, sacred, has an etymology from Old Latin, *saceres*, that connects it to concepts of protection and of being 'set aside'. The etymology of the word 'holy' derives from the Old English, *halig*, connected to *hal* meaning 'health'. To return again to the medical analogy, we need such health-restoring set-aside if we are to seek regeneration of what is broken in the Earth and its peoples. This is biological but it is also cultural, for there is something about timeworn practice associated with particular sites that seems to be connected with their effect on consciousness. T.S. Elliot puts it thus in *Four Quartets* (1959: 50–51):

*'If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from any-
where,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same: you
would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not
here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to
kneel
Where prayer has been valid'.*

Static and dynamic concepts of sacred natural sites

Thus far in this paper I have explored SNSs generally as phenomena that, through impacting on consciousness to varying degrees, connect natural nature to human nature. Here in Western Europe these links have become attenuated. Science is sometimes blamed for this, but I have tried to



show that SNSs can potentially benefit from, and not be destroyed by critical empirical enquiry.

From this position I now want to suggest that SNSs should be understood not just as static entities that have long been *recognised* and often protected – albeit sometimes in a rather fossilised museum-piece manner. They should also be understood as dynamic processes. This allows for sites to be *reactivated* in cultural recognition, and even imaginatively *recreated* in consciousness. The following three case studies from Scotland illustrate these three positions of recognition, reactivation and recreation.

Recognised sacred natural sites – Example: the Isle of Iona

Iona is said to have been established as a monastic site by St Columba of Ireland in A.D. 563. To stand beside the



Iona Abbey.

eighth century St Martin's Cross at the Abbey entrance is to witness Biblical scenes carved in stone that have withstood nature's elemental blast for nearly two-thirds of Christian history. The island is owned for the nation by the National Trust for Scotland. It is a well-established and highly protected SNS with 130 000 pilgrim and tourist visitors a year. We can therefore view it as 'recognised' and its status is secure.

George MacLeod who founded the Iona Community described Iona as a place where the boundary between the spiritual and the material worlds is 'tissue thin'. Writing just a century after Columba's death in 597 Adomnán, the ninth abbot describes how Columba went to a knoll and prayed all night with his arms outspread towards the heavens. A monk witnessed a host of angels gather around the saint, 'flying down with amazing speed, dressed in white robes'. The knoll is to this day known as *Cnoc nan Aingel*, the Hill of the Angels. An interesting feature is Adomnán's endorsement of empiricism. He says:

'One should take notice of this story, and carefully think about the extent and nature of the sweet visits by angels that no one could know about but which, without doubt, were very frequent, for they generally came to him as he remained awake on winter nights or as he prayed in isolated places while others rested'. (Adomnán 1995: 218).

Reactivated sacred natural sites – Example: Mt Roineabhal, Isle of Harris

This site hosts the medieval church of St Clement on the lower slopes of Mt Roineabhal (*Roin-e-val*). Local tradition dates it back to the Culdees and the Druids. Although Roineabhal is only 460m in height, it rises directly out of the sea. With stunning views in all directions it has the awe-inspiring character of a much larger mountain. It is the highest in south Harris, a designated National Scenic Area.

Between 1991 and 2004 a battle raged to stop Roineabhal from being turned into a 'superquarry' to export roadstone (McIntosh 2001). One part of the protest involved my bringing Stone Eagle, the Mi'kmaq war chief from Canada, and Donald Macleod, a Calvinist professor of theology, to testify at the government public inquiry. Our witness focussed on the 'creation' reflecting the majesty of the divine and this helped to *reactivate* local awareness of this. A wide-ranging campaign led to the quarry being stopped. Today visitors speak of their 'pilgrimages' to the mountain. As one native tradition bearer has said: 'If it wasn't a sacred mountain before, it is now.'



St Clement's Church and Mt Roineabhal, Isle of Harris.

Today Presbyterian clergy on both Harris and the adjoining Isle of Lewis show a new openness to ecotheology. One leading conservative evangelical wrote in the local newspaper: 'My theology tells me that the things that are seen declare the things that are unseen: that the details of the creation declare the grandeur of the Creator ... without [whom] ... I am at a loss to explain what I see of nature at close range' (Campbell 2010). Such re-activation of sensitivity to 'creation' and 'providence' helps to legitimise conservation consciousness in a community. It could serve as ongoing insurance policy for the mountain's protection. Strikingly, in 2009 the island's residents voted by a 2/3 majority to support exploring national park status for Harris with the Scottish Government.

Recreated sacred natural sites – Govan, City of Glasgow

Govan is an economically deprived area of Glasgow with high incidences of drug abuse and unemployment. Its Old Parish Church is the repository of a fine but lit-

tle-known collection of ninth century carved stones. The pilgrimage guide, *Britain's Holiest Places*, states that 'Govan Old Church has no equal when it comes to telling the story of Scottish Christianity' (Mayhew Smith 2011, 499). From here the Rev Dr George MacLeod, Lord MacLeod of Fuinary, led the rebuilding of Iona Abbey in the 1930s. His Iona Community became a platform that transformed the position of the Church of Scotland on urban poverty, ecumenism and nuclear weapons.

Today Govan Old Parish Church seeks to recover its history as an ancient site of pilgrimage, spurred by a new ferry link across the River Clyde to Glasgow's new Riverside Museum of Transport, opened in 2011. There is a palpable sense amongst key segments of the community of a sacred natural site being not only revitalised, but also, imaginatively *recreated*. More than just a reactivation of the past such recreation of a wider sense of being an SNS speaks from today's people to their present needs with one eye on the past and the other on the community's future.

An example is the GalGael Trust. It draws inspiration from the Christian symbolic and nature imagery on the church's carved stones in reconnect-



Deer hunting scenes and Celtic eternity knotwork on St Constantine's Sarcophagus, Govan Old Parish Church.



GalGael Trust Workshop – Participants on 'Navigate Life'.

ing disaffected urban youth with their natural environment. In a programme called *Navigate Life*, young people work with retired shipyard workers. Activities include building traditional boats that are sailed down the river, both actually and symbolically reconnecting coastal communities while mending lives traumatised by violence, addictions and poverty.

GalGael's trainees start with a block of wood, a hammer and a chisel, and are taught to see and express the beauty of nature in what could be seen as applied apocatastasis. It builds social conviviality and draws out the beauty of each human being. Participants describe the process as 'a transformation'. Pride in people and place is rekindled in a triune expression of community with soil, soul and society (McIntosh 2008). A community garden project also produces local food, thereby widening dietary horizons and awareness of the carbon footprints. Most participants are not people who would go to church, yet a community consultation in October 2010 showed that a spiritual awareness drawing from the

history of Govan manifests as a potent factor in the local sense of identity and belonging.

Conclusion

To be able to maintain its social function the spirituality of SNSs must be allowed to breathe. Scientific rigour can and should be paired with the motivational drivers of ethical vigour. To enter into a dynamic relationship with SNSs is to participate in the responsibility – *the ability to respond* – that can heal the world.

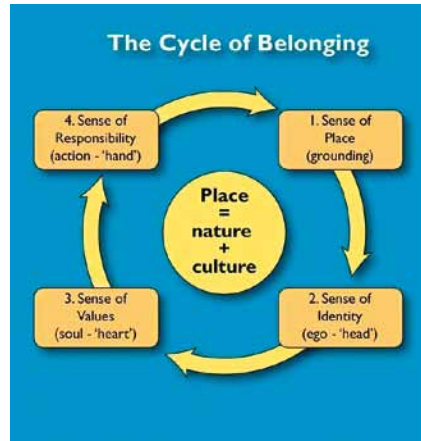
Based on the above examples the *Cycle of Belonging* (McIntosh 2008) posits community of place as the starting



The GalGael Trust on the Firth of Clyde.

point of human ecology. From here a sense of place informs a sense of identity, which carries with it a sense of values, which motivates the sense of responsibility. That, in completion of the cycle, reinforces sense of place. Community degeneration happens if this cycle is damaged at any point. Community regeneration is promoted when it is strengthened at any point.

A spiritual understanding, one that is predicated on love both immanent and transcendent, mandates that community of place should be inclusive rather than exclusive. There must be profound respect for the indigenous, for what is found there, but not xenophobia. In Celtic tradition such inclusiveness reflects in the twin sacred duties of hospitality for the short term, and fostership (or adoption) for permanence. This is reflected in the name 'GalGael' – a term that originated in



The 'Cycle of Belonging'.

ninth century Scotland. The *Gall* is the stranger and the *Gael* are the heart-land indigenous people. Metaphorically there is something of both of these in most of us today and both must meld in recreating indigeniety to care for the Earth.

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Synergies between spiritual and natural heritage for habitat conservation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region

Alexander N. Davydov

Barents Euro-Arctic Region: a tool for international cooperation in the North of Europe

On 11 January 1993 in Kirkenes, Norway, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia and Sweden signed a Declaration of the Establishing of International Organisation Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR). BEAR has several mechanisms to promote the cooperation among the northern regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. One of them is the Habitat Contact Forum (HCF). Gradually, HCF has started to incorporate cultural and even spiritual

components to its work on nature conservation and, especially, on protected areas.

BEAR is managed by the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) which is represented by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. BEAC elaborates the general strategy of cooperation. Practical questions are delegated to the Barents Secretariat, which is located in Kirkenes.

For practical reasons, the Barents Programme was organised into ten working groups on culture, environment, education, indigenous peoples, agricul-

< Remnants of a sacred grove next to the chapel of Saint Spirit in Glazovo village, Kenozero, Kenozersky National Park (Archangel Region, Russia).

ture, reindeer-breeding, economics, science and development, health-care, and transport and communications.

Nowadays, BEAR unites the Northern provinces of Norway (Nordland, Troms, and Finnmark), Sweden (Västerbotten, Norrbotten), Finland (Finnish Lapland, Oulu including North Ostrobothnia and Kainuu), and Russia (Republic of Karelia, Republic of Komi, Murmansk Region, Archangelsk Region and Nenets Autonomous Area).

Habitat Contact Forum: a tool for international environmental and cultural cooperation in BEAR

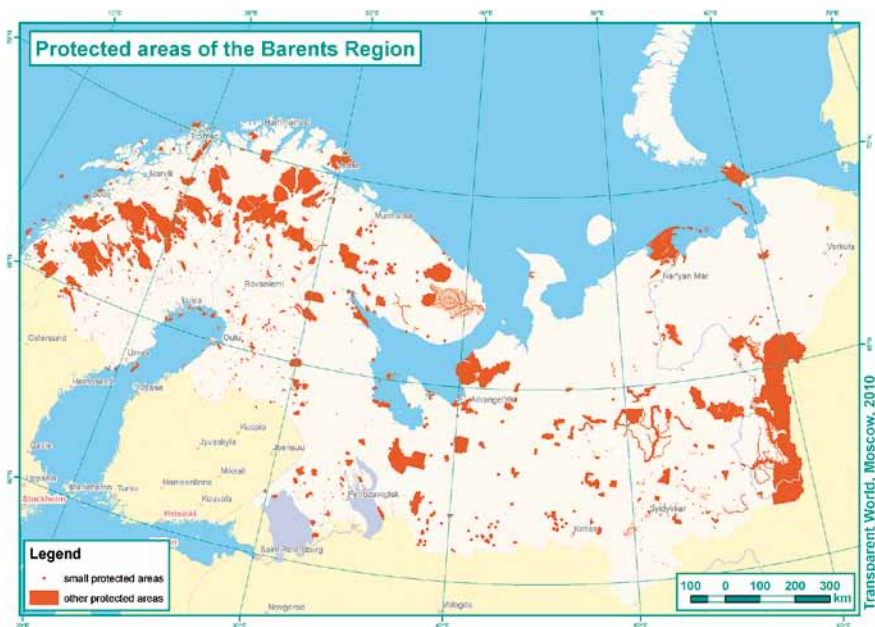
The cooperation of the Nordic Countries with North-West Russia in the field of nature protection started with the international environmental expeditions in this region. All these expeditions included scientists connected with nature conservation and cultural heritage protection (Davydov, 2003). The first expedition was organised around the Onega Peninsula in summer 1997 (Onezhskoe Pomorje 1997). Inspired by the second expedition (Belomorsko-Kuloiskoe Plateau 1998), a group of experts started planning an international workshop on protected areas in BEAR.

The first International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region (or Habitat Contact Forum) was established in Trondheim, Norway in November 1999 (HCF I, 2000). HCF was meant to be an arena for cooperation on habitat conservation issues in BEAR to achieve increased focus on

the need for further establishment of new protected areas, proper management of existing ones, and other relevant issues (HCF II, 2003, Appendix 2: 1). At HCF I, a mandate was defined and a list of international projects was developed.

The second HCF was organised in November 2001 in Petrozavodsk, Republic of Karelia (Russia). A work plan for conservation issues of protected areas in BEAR was prepared on a 3-year basis to meet the obligations set by the Arctic Council (CAFF/CPAN), IUCN and the CBD. New projects were dedicated to designing and establishing new protected areas, biosphere reserves, 'green belts', and transboundary protected areas, as well as to sustainable tourism development in protected areas, but there were no special sessions or projects dedicated to their cultural and spiritual values.

The third HCF was organised in Kuhmo (Finland) on November 2003. There was a session on 'Nature and Man' and a working group created on 'Cultural and Ethical Questions and Local Participation'. The working group stated that a deeper understanding of protected areas, including the cultural heritage, is an essential part of HCF work. It suggested that cultural components should be incorporated into the work on habitat conservation, especially the ideas of people living or near protected areas. HCF emphasised that 'although the natural heritage is relatively well-studied, the cultural heritage has not been sufficiently investigated and classified in relation



A map of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

to the environment' (HCF III, 2004: 14). In the paper by Davydov (HCF III, 2004:66-67) the term *spiritual habitat* was formulated based on the investigations of the holy groves tradition in Kenozero National Park.

The fourth HCF was organised in Syktyvkar, Republic of Komi (Russia) in September 2005. There were five working groups, including one on 'Ethic and Cultural Problems'. At the resolution, the role of the environment and indigenous and local populations was underlined (HCF IV, 2006: 235). The working group proposed that: 'In connection with economics globalisation and human interference in natural, cultural and historical sphere, we are greatly anxious about the matters of cultural and ethnic development and also the participation

of the local population and indigenous people in habitat conservation. In this respect the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples living on protected natural territories is of vital importance. It is also important that the peoples and local population themselves should be involved in the system of direct consultation and decision making process concerning protected natural territories.' (HCF IV, 2006: 233). It also recommended to include an item connected with local population into the programme of the next HCFs and to develop a long term international ethnic and ecological project on natural, cultural and historical heritage in BEAR (HCF IV, 2006: 233). Unfortunately, the project was never realised.

The HCF themes were affected by the

work of the Delos Initiative. The SNS of Ukonsaari Island was presented at the first Delos workshop (Norokorpi and Ojanlatva, 2007) and the Solovetsky Islands SNS at the second Delos workshop (Davydov et al, 2009). At the Nordic-Russian conference on 'The last large intact forests in North-West Russia: protection and sustainable use' (Steinkjer and Lierne, 2007), the Delos Initiative was introduced by Davydov. The conference recommended introducing the ideas of Delos Initiative to the next HCF.

The fifth HCF was held in Umeå, Sweden, on October 2008. HCFs had become a part of the official Barents cooperation and they were organised with the participation of local people, NGO's, scientific institutes and federal and regional authorities of BEAR (HCF V, 2008: 3). At a session dedicated to forest biodiversity conservation, Davydov presented a paper on SNSs in the forests of North-West Russia, introducing the Delos Initiative to HCF (HCF V, 2008: 54). It was noted that SNSs offer an opportunity to integrate cultural and natural values. The approach may lead to a combination of conservation efforts that result in a synergy of benefits for both values (HCF V, 2008: 6).

The sixth HCF was held in Archangelsk from 31 May to 5 June 2010 (HCF VI, 2010). It included, for the first time, a session on the synergy of spiritual and natural values in the BEAR.

A paper by J.-M. Mallarach and Th. Papayannis on the Delos Initiative explained the idea of the Initiative and the

activities developed so far. (HCF VI, 2010: 70–71, 157–158). A.L. Fedyayev and O.V. Churakova touched the questions of the reasonable practicality, and the spiritual and moral need to restore technologically damaged Northern areas (HCF VI, 2010: 156). S. Sohlberg discussed the RAIPON/CAFF Sacred Natural Site project (2001–2004), the RAIPON seminar (2007), and UNESCO meetings in Copenhagen (2006). He proposed that HCF VI should initiate a kick off meeting for a project of synergy of SNSs on natural and cultural heritages (HCF VI, 2010, 162).

The synergy was also emphasised in the cases from Finnish Lapland by Norokorpi (HCF VI, 2010: 158–159, the Russian North by A. Davydov (HCF VI, 2010: 155) and Svalbard/Spitsbergen by W. Gorter and T. Minaeva. Finally, N. Skytte presented results of a fieldtrip to Pym-Va-Shor, the SNSs and unique hot water springs in Bolshezemelskaya tundra of the Nenets Autonomous Area (HCF VI, 2010: 161–162). V. Sahi introduced folk music as a tool of expressing the spiritual values of nature (HCF VI, 2010: 160–161).

The Hyperborean dimension of the Delos Initiative

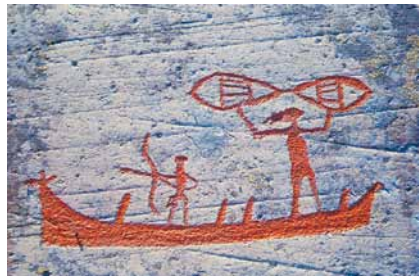
BEAR represents the northern most sacred sites in Europe: holy crosses scattered on Svalbard/Spitsbergen, Franz-Josef Land and Novaya Zemlya Archipelagos, which are now protected areas of different kinds.

In the mythology of many peoples *North*

is associated with an area filled with cold and purity, a place where 'the edge of the world' is located, or the border of *oekumene*, territory on the Earth occupied and developed by humans. North is also a 'country of spirits', the land of the dead. This mythological image of the North is emphasised by its geography. The North is truly an extraordinary land: winter night last for many months and the flashes of polar lights flare up in the sky. In the summer the sky remains light during the nights, and the sun and the moon can be seen at the same time. For centuries 'Northern dimension' has been surrounded by the odour of sanctity in the cultures of different peoples. In the Greek tradition, the legendary Leto (Lada), mother of Apollo and Artemis, who gave birth to them on the island of Delos, came from the North. The Hyperboreans loved by Apollo and many times visited by him, lived in an ideal country located 'behind Boreas'. (HCF VI, 2010: 155).

The concept of *sacred* is enriched by the extreme geography and climate in BEAR. The sailing in the Arctic Ocean is more dangerous compared to warm waters. The image of St. Nicholas, as a patron of sailors' revival on the coasts of the White and Barents Seas became popular. Crosses and chapels on islands and coasts are reflected in the Pomor sayings: 'There are 33 (St.) Nicholases from Kholmogory to the Kola Bay' (sailing route by White and Barents Seas), or 'That man who has not visited a Sea has not really prayed to God'.

To be a hermit in the taiga is incredibly hard, especially in winter time. The



Rock carvings (rock paintings) in Alta (Finnmark, Norway).

feeling of fate is believed to become sharper in the extreme conditions, which makes the attitude to the sacred places also keener.

All these factors bring people closer to each other, promoting mutual understanding among the people of BEAR.

The North of Russia traditionally was a country for monks, hermits, and saints; the land associated with purity and holiness for centuries. The spiritual importance of the North for all Russia was proclaimed by scholars and philosophers, such as Georgy Fedotov: 'Not only for us, but let the Russian North become a Country of Sacred Miracles, a Holy Land, in common with Ancient Hellas or Medieval Italy, calling pilgrims from all sides of the Earth' (Fedotov, 2005:142).

However, the fragile nature of BEAR in under an increasing pressures of military and industrial activities. Gas and oil deposits, gold and diamonds are of a growing economic interest in BEAR.

Sacred natural sites and World Heritage Sites in the North

Some SNSs have been designated World Heritage Sites (WHS) and included into the Field Guide to protected areas in BEAR (Günther, 2004).

Christian churches protected as World Heritage Sites

The Cultural and Historic Ensemble of the Solovetsky Islands in Archangel Region consists of more than a hundred islands (312.8 sq km). The area is protected by Solovetsky State Historical, Architectural and Natural Museum-Reserve since 1967. The monastery architecture complex of Transfiguration Cathedral (built in 1558–1566), the Church of Assumption (1552) and other buildings surrounded by the wall were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1992. In addition, there are the holy mountain Golgofa (Calvary) and the holy lake Svyatoye ozero. In spite of the ethnic and cultural changes, the geography of SNSs hardly changed. Sacred stones -*seidas*- and labyrinths are found on Zayatsky Island side by side with Christian Orthodox crosses and hermitages. Since the revival of 1990, Solovetsky Islands are as significant for the Orthodox Russia as the Holy Mount Athos (Davydov et al, 2009).

Kizhi Pogost (Kizhi enclosure) is a part of the State Historic-Architectural Museum Kizhi in Republic of Karelia. There is an ensemble of the wooden Church of Transfiguration (1714?), Church of Intercession (1708) and bell-

tower (1862) on Kizhi Island. The island was considered sacred in the local folklore tradition. The museum has about 20 branches and there are chapels on the small islands and on the shores around Lake Onega. Some of these islands are also considered sacred in local folklore.

The Church Village Gammelstad in Norrbotten, Sweden is a unique example of a medieval church village in North Scandinavia, established in 1621. There are 424 small wooden houses around the stone church, creating a SNS complex. The houses belonged to families from remote countryside places, which stayed at Gammelstad for some days participating weddings and church ceremonies. The Gammelstadsviken Nature Reserve (435 hectares) was established in 1973, including Lake Gammelstadsviken and its surrounding.

Archaeological World Heritage Sites

Alta Rock Drawings in Finnmark, Norway, include a group of petroglyphs on the rocky coast of the Alta Fjord.

Sacred natural sites within the World Heritage Sites

Virgin Komi Forests (about 30 000 sq km) is the common name of the WHS of Pechoro-Ilychsky Natural Biosphere Reserve (11 346 sq km) and Yugyd Va National Park (18 197 sq km) in the Komi Republic, Russia. It is the largest mainland protected area in Russia. The eastern border of the Park goes along the ridge of the Ural Mountains. The pro-

ected area was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1995. There are numerous well-known SNSs in the WHS: the Old Master, Stone Woman, Tel'pos-Iz Mountain, Arch grotto, Erkusey Mountain, Saran-Ded of Nenets people, and Man' Pupy Ner of Mansi people.

The Laponia World Heritage Site in Norrbotten, Sweden, includes Stora Sjöfallet (1278 sq km), Padjelanta (1984 sq km), Sarek (1970 sq km) and Muddus National Parks (493 sq km) and several nature reserves, valleys and lakes. According to F. Forsmark (County Administration of Norrbotten, pers. comm.) the Sámi people have several SNSs on the mountains, such as in Kvikkjokk and in Sarek, as well as in the forest landscape, for example, in Gällivare close by (Akkavaara/Saivo).

Nationally protected areas with sacred natural sites

The protected areas in the Spitsbergen Archipelago, Norway, include the northernmost Christian Crosses of Promise to God in the world, which were erected there by the Russian Pomores.

A protected area called Franz Josef Land Federal Zakaznik was established in the Archangel Region in 1994, with a total of 62 600 sq km of land and water area. The Christian Crosses of Promise to God were built there by the Russian Pomores

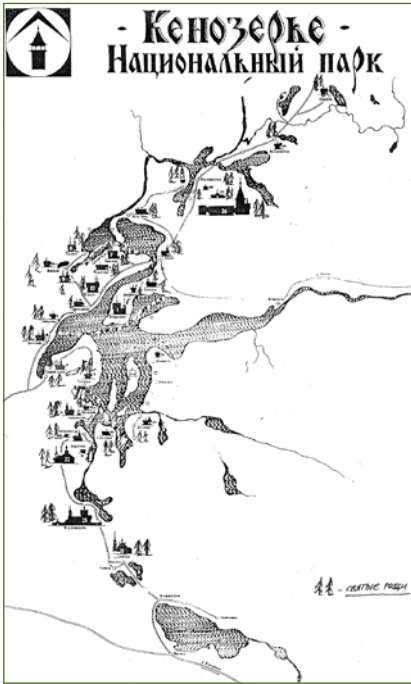
Russkaya Arktika (Russian Arctic) National Park, Archangel Region, was established in 2009, including a part of

the Northern Island of Novaya Zemlya Archipelago (6320 sq km) and water area (7939 sq km); in total, it covers 14 260 sq km. There are Pomor Holy Crosses of Promise to God.

Vodlozersky National Park (about 5000 sq km, Republic of Karelia and Archangel Region) is the biggest wetland protected area in BEAR, including several SNSs such as the Petunij/Lyulyuostrov Island (connected in local folklore with *vodyanoy*, a spirit of water), the Dechy Island (according to local folklore, a place of sacrifice) and the Maly Kolgostrov Island with Il'insky Pogost - St Elias main church.

Vaigachsky Nature Reserve (3330 sq km) lies in the Nenets Autonomous Area, Russia. The Vaigach Island has been a sacred place for all of the Nenets people from Yamal to Kanin peninsula for hundreds of years. Among Nenet shamans there was a custom to visit Vaigach and to build there a sacred place of their own. The name of this island in Nenets language is *Heibedya Ya* (Holy Land). The most SNSs were: Cape Vesako (Old Man, Grandfather), Cape Hadako, (Grandmother), the stony cliff Nyuheh (Son) and the island of Zinkovy with Semikiky (Seven-Faces Spirit) wooden figure.

Inarijärvi Natura 2000 Area (900 sq km) covers the biggest part of Lake Inari in Finland (1043 sq km). There are several islands which are the old cemeteries. The famous Ukonsaari is a sacred rocky island differing from of the other islands. 'The God of Thunder *Ukko* (*Äijih*) was the most powerful of all the male



A scheme of the location of sacred groves in Kenozersky National Park (Archangel Region, Russia).

Sými deities and his most important sacrificial site was Ukonsaari (Äijih)' in Inarijärvi (see Norokorpi and Ojanlatva, 2007).

Pyhä-Luosto National Park, Finland, includes the Pyhätunturi area which means a sacred fell. Pyhänkasteenlampi Pond is located in its centre between steep cliff walls. A stream flowing down into the lake forms a high shower-like waterfall, the Pyhäkaste. The names tell of the beginnings of Christianity and the old beliefs of the Forest Sámi (Pyhänkasteenlampi – Holy Baptism pond, Uhriharju – Sacrifice Ridge, and Noitatunturi – Witch

Fell). Deer and their antlers were sacrificed on Uhriharju Ridge in hope of a successful hunt. (Y. Norokorpi, pers. comm.).

Kenozersky National Park in Archangel Region has 45 *svyatye roschi* (sacred groves) on its territory, most of them very discernible in the landscape. Some of these sacred groves look like a forest (Vershinino), whilst in other cases there are only a few trees surviving (Glazovo). The wooden crosses and Orthodox Christian chapels have remained in the sacred groves, but the old rites and folklore traditions show existence of the pre-Christian Fenno-Ugric spiritual substrate and a parallel with sacred groves of the Khanty and Mansi people in Siberia (Davydov, 2009).

In Muddus National Park in Norrbotten, Sweden, there is Måskosårså, the sacred natural site of the Sámi people.

In Bonden and Snöan Islands Nature Reserve in Västerbotten, Sweden, in the Gulf of Bothnia of the Baltic Sea, there are eight stone labyrinths. There are labyrinths also on Linskär and Stenskär Nature Reserves (Norrbotten, Sweden).

Pasvik Nature Reserve in the Murmansk Region includes the sacred Kalkupya/Kalkuavve Sámi mountain.

In Saltfjellet-Svartisen National Park in Nordland, Norway there are several sacrificial sites of the Sámi people.

In Hossa Hiking Area in Kainuu, the Värkallio rock paintings are amongst the largest prehistoric rock paintings in

Finland. The pictures on the rock wall rising from Lake Somerjärvi were painted about 3500 – 4500 years ago, and are located along a water route that was used in ancient times, and include numerous separate figures depicting scenes of hunting and shamanic rituals. The pictures in the rock paintings are usually linked to hunting magic. Painted rock walls could also have functioned as cult places of shamanic worship (Y. Norokorpi, pers. comm.).

Sacred natural sites under the protection of monastic communities

Valaam Island in Ladoga Lake, Republic of Karelia, is surrounded by several small islands with skets. Since the twelfth century it became a hermitage and then, in 1160, a monastery. Now the entire archipelago is managed by the renewed Valaamsky Monastery. The first monk of Valaam Island was Greek monk Sergius, who came there as a hermit and also to proclaim the Gospel to the pagans. Now the Valaam Archipelago is managed by the revival monastic community of the Valaamsky Monastery.

Sacred natural sites protected by religious or folklore tradition

Sacred islands: Spildra is a famous burial site of *noitta/noaidi* (Sámi shamans) in Finnmark, Norway. Monasteries built on islands are typical of the Orthodox tradition of the Russian North. Old Sámi shaman places were

used as places for monastery buildings (e.g. Kozhozersky Monastery on Lake Kozhozero). River and lake islands were favourite places for solitude of Orthodox monks who started monasteries on islands, such as Nelezin (River Volkhov), Kamenny (Lake Kubenskoye), Valaam and Kon'-Ostrov Island (Lake Ladoga), Roschinsky (River Svir), Moug (Lake Mougzero) and Kiy-Ostrov Island (the Onega Bay in the White Sea). As an example, on the islands of Lake Onega, there are more than twenty Orthodox chapels.

Sacred capes: *Svyatoy Nos* (Sacred Cape), is located on the Kola Peninsula in Russia. There are dangerous maelstroms and in order to avoid shipwreck, sailors would made sacrifices (e.g. food, flour, butter) near Svatoy Nos and pray to God to pass the place.

Sacred mountains: At Tjamstanberget in Västerbotten, Sweden, there are many Sámi legends connected to sacred mountains, e.g. *ättestupa*, a steep rock face where old and infirm people were thrown or threw themselves down (Karlsson, 1999: 172–173). According to a medieval legend, on the Witches Mountain on Vardø Island, in Finnmark, witches were burned. Minisey, the leader reindeer, (Russian name Konstantinov Kamen') is a sacred mountain of Nenets people on the North Ural Mountains. According to the legend, the Daughter of *Num* (*Num* is a supreme spirit of the Nenets), was attacked by *Na* (evil spirit) and all reindeers of her *argish* (relay, team) were turned into stones, which became the Ural Mountains.

Sacred stones: In the Republic of Karelia, special attention is paid to footmark-stones, e.g. those near villages, such as Kokorino, Vojnitsa, Rinnoyarvi, Hvoyny, Volkostrov, Vidany, Mashezero, Tarzhepol', Ladva, Kurkieki, Pogrankondushi, Kinelahtha, Viglitsa, and Andrusovo. There are stones and mountains which have lacunas in the forms of feet, hands, arrows, rings, footmarks of reindeers, bears, etc. These stones were used as places of sacrifice, which were made famous by legends and local folklore.

Sacred springs: Pym-Va-Shor is a SNS with hot springs in the tundra of the Nenets Autonomous Area in the Republic of Karelia, there are famous sacred springs like Tri Ivana (Three men with the name Ivan), Kamenny Bor (Stone Pine Forest). Some sacred springs in the Archangel Region have chalybeate water (Matyora on Lake Kenozero, Gavrilovo on River Vya), but some of them do not (Lyavlya on River Severnaya Dvina).

Sacred groves and trees: the Koz'min Perelesok sacred grove of the Nenets people is situated on the Kanin Peninsula, Russia. Sacred pines are found near the Myagozero Village, Republic of Karelia.

Pilgrimage paths and routes: In North-West Russia there was a pilgrim path on the Onega Peninsula from Archangel to the Letnyaya Zolotitsa Village and then by sea to the Solovetsky Islands. However, the most popular was the sailing pilgrimage from Archangel to Solovetsky Monastery by the White

Sea. A pilgrim path around Lake Kenozero started and finished by the walls of the Pahomiev Kensky Monastery. There was also a non-Christian traditional pilgrimage of the Nenets people on the tundra and then, using traditional sledges drawn by swimming reindeers, over the ice or on the water of the Yugorsky Shar Gulf, to Heibidy Ya (Vaigach Island).

Seidas of Sámi: include different geographic/natural objects. In Finland, e.g. Taatsi in Kittilä, Näkkälä in Enontekiö, Sieiddakäedgi in Utsjoki, Koskikaitiojoen suu in Inari, and Kirkkopahta and Porviniemi in Muonio (see Äikäs, *in this book*).

Place names. North-West Russia: numerous place names include terms like *svyatoj* (holy), *besov* (devil's), *bolvansky* (idol's), e.g. Svyatoo ozero (Holy Lake), Svyatoy Nos (Holy Cape), Besov Nos (Devil's Cape), Bolvansky Mys (Idol's Cape), Bolvanskaya Gora (Idol's mountain), etc. Place names with the Karelian prefix *pig-* in the Republic of Karelia (look *pyhä* in Finland). In the Nenets language there is the prefix *he-* (sacred), like Heibidy Ya, *hekur* (sacred small stone 'pyramid'), Yau-mal He, etc. Northern Finland: see Väisänen (*in this book*) and Norokorpi and Ojanlatva (2007). Northern Norway: *Mortensnes* (Cape of Dead), the prefix *troll*, a mythology giant and spirit of mountains, e.g. Trollfjord. Northern Sweden: *Trollsjön*. For all of the territory of Sámi Land there are *seid* (*seida*, *seidi*).

Concluding remarks

Sometimes common mythology and cultural heritage can be used as an argument in developing the transboundary cooperation. For instance, the Finnish/Karelian epic *Kalevala* gave name to a large protection area complex, the Kalevala Parks, situated in Finland and Russia, including places where this epic poem was collected from the local people in the nineteenth century by Elias Lönnrot. The territory contains SNSs on capes and islands, where posts with bear skulls used to stand even at the beginning of the twentieth century (Metsähallitus, 2005: 336).

Both Pasvik-Inari and Interpark Kalevala will be included in the international project on the Green Belt of Fennoscandia, a new form of networking of forests, mires and fell areas spanning the borders of Northern Norway, Eastern Finland and North-Western Russia (HCF VI, 2010: 91, 176; Günther, 2004: 50).

The Resolution of the sixth HCF stated that 'the need to take the cultural and

spiritual values into consideration when establishing protected areas, and to encourage the use of folk art expressing the intangible values of nature and society. The HCF VI welcomed the application of the IUCN/UNESCO Guidelines on Sacred Natural Sites and the Delos Initiative, and expressed the support for the next workshop to be convened in Inari, Finland'.

However, despite all that has been explained on SNSs, research and inventory of SNSs in BEAR are still largely neglected, and the implementation of the Delos Initiative in the North of Europe is vital. This gap is reflected in the publications about protected areas in the BEAR which have not devoted special attention to SNSs, or to the spiritual heritage in general.

The North can be seen as a kind of refrigerator of cultural values, which let us start an international project which could be the identity of the BEAR in synergy of natural and spiritual values - a Hyperborean projection of the Delos Initiative.

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Part Six:

Other related issues

Applicability of the IUCN-UNESCO Guidelines for Protected Area Managers on Sacred Natural Sites: first assessment

Josep-Maria Mallarach

Introduction and context

Since the last World Congress on Protected Areas in Durban, South Africa, 2003, the discussion about the relevance of sacred natural sites on nature conservation in general, and protected areas in particular, has gained momentum within IUCN and related organisations. The efforts undertaken by several working groups within the World Commission on Protected Areas and the Commission of Environmental, Economic Policies of IUCN, in particular the Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas, have already introduced the concept of sacred natural site (SNS) in some significant guidance documents and succeed in mainstreaming this topic in the broader international conservation agenda.

Two guidance documents presented at the 2008 World Conservation Congress deserve special recognition in this respect: the UNESCO-IUCN Guidelines for Protected Area Managers on Sacred Natural Sites (Wild and McLeod, 2008) and the Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories (Dudley, 2008). Among the significant improvements that the last document includes in relation to the previous guidelines for applying protected area management categories (IUCN, 1994) is the inclusion, for the first time, of SNSs in all categories of protected areas, with a large table that provides examples of all of them, and also the inclusion of the governance dimension, which allows the consideration of traditional custodians and religious organisations related to SNSs.

On the other hand, the UNESCO-IUCN Guidelines for Protected Area Managers on Sacred Natural Sites was a milestone, which substantially developed previous IUCN documents dealing with the concept of sacred areas, such as the Guidelines for Mountain Protected Areas (Larry et al., 2006). The Guidelines on Sacred Natural Sites have already been translated into Spanish and Russian and are currently being translated into other major world languages, since the topic is of global interest. They address managers of protected areas that have been established on SNSs, providing guidance on ways to integrate this pre-existing protection, based on spiritual values, so as to avoid potential conflicts, and promote the conservation of both the natural and spiritual heritage.

The Preamble of the Guidelines states that: *'during the process of guideline development, it was recognised that mainstream faiths also care for numerous sacred natural sites and many have profound teachings related to the relationship between humans and nature. We have endeavoured to develop the guidelines in such a way that they are broadly applicable to the sacred natural sites of all faiths. (...) This attempt to incorporate limited experiences of mainstream faiths should be considered preliminary. Further work is needed to analyse and understand the diversity of sacred natural sites revered by mainstream faiths, which comprise the great majority of humankind. Of course, efforts to put such ideas into categories fail at some point'*.

The decision to prioritise the SNSs of indigenous peoples and local communities in the Guidelines was fully justified, since these are the sites, and the peoples, that have been suffering the worst impacts and facing the greatest threats and challenges, deserving, therefore, all possible support and attention from IUCN. As a matter of fact, most members of the Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas are involved in activities supporting indigenous peoples and local communities in impoverished countries.

On the other hand, most of the work that has been done at the international level during the last few years, focussed on indigenous peoples. This was already apparent in the UNESCO workshop of Xishuangbanna, 2003, where the proceedings, entitled 'The Importance of Sacred Natural Sites for Biodiversity Conservation' (Lee and Schaaf, 2003) do not discuss case studies related to the three largest world religions. Similarly, in the UNESCO-IUCN Tokyo International Symposium on the role of SNSs and cultural landscapes (Schaaf and Lee 2006), sacred natural sites related to Christianity and Islam were also absent.

Within the Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas it was agreed that the purpose and scope of work of The Delos Initiative was well suited to completing the existing UNESCO-IUCN Guidelines on Sacred Natural Sites, so that the complementary guidelines could be better applicable to SNSs related to mainstream

religions, as well as to SNSs where there is an overlapping of religions and/or spiritual traditions. For this reason, during the Inari workshop a session was devoted to discuss the applicability of the existing Guidelines.

Before going further, it is appropriate to briefly ponder the concept of sacred. The English word 'sacred' comes from the Latin word '*sacer*' and its derivative '*sacratum*' which means 'set apart to, or for, some religious purpose', or 'consecrated'. For this reason, sacred sites are separated, protected, from outward, 'profane' influences, and for millennia, on all continents, they have been the predecessors of modern protected areas. The concept of sacred land or water can be found, in one way or another, in most, if not all, the religions of the world; although in some of them there is no specific word for it (Eliade, 1959; Nasr, 1989, 1996). It is also applied, beyond religious frames, in different forms of spirituality (Mann and Davis, 2010)

The IUCN-UNESCO Guidelines provides the following simple working definition of sacred site: 'A sacred site is an area of special spiritual significance to peoples and communities', which was first proposed by Oviedo and Jeanrenaud (2007). Another operational definition is 'a sacred site is a place in the landscape, occasionally over or under water, which is specially revered by people, culture or cultural group as a focus for spiritual belief and practice or likely religious observance' (Thorley and Gunn, 2007). These working definitions are deliberately broad and

open, recognising the limitations of the western words 'sacred', 'natural' and 'site', and, as a consequence, it has been argued that 'it is important that the concept remains open for further articulation' (Verschuuren et al, 2010).

The importance of SNSs for nature conservation is extremely significant and has been widely discussed during the last years (Dudley et al. 2005; Thorley and Gunn, 2007; Verschuuren et al, 2010). It suffices to say that sacred natural sites are the oldest type of protected areas that have been around for many centuries, even millennia in some regions, showing an amazing resilience to different civilisations or religions. In some parts of the world, SNSs continue to effectively protect critical elements of the natural heritage, in some cases more significant or extensive than those protected by legally established modern protected areas, and often more efficiently.

Context of sacred natural sites for mainstream religions

According to the best estimates available, over 80% of humankind is either affiliated to or influenced by mainstream religions. Christianity and Islam alone encompass more than 50% of the world population, and both religions are globally growing in relative and absolute terms (O'Brien and Palmer, 2007).

Although the concept of the sacred, and by consequence, that of SNSs, has continuity across cultures, all over

the world (Eliade, 1959), there are also significant differences among SNSs, which cannot be underestimated if one is to produce guidelines well suited to the characteristics of the main types of SNSs.

Most religions share basic principles towards nature, resulting in the need for respect. However, when we take a closer look we find quite different attitudes towards nature, and natural sacred manifestations, resulting in very diverse types of SNSs. An important distinction can be drawn between 'in-tact' SNSs, where the natural components have not been modified, and access is usually restricted, and sacred sites that have been consecrated, including shrines or sanctuaries, whose shape usually symbolises or synthesises the entire cosmos, attracting faithful, in some cases in limited numbers, in other cases by the millions. Made following the rules of traditional sciences, these sacred buildings often including relics or other sacred objects, which add significant value to the sanctity of the site (Burckhardt, 1958).

Diversity exists not only between religions, but within all of them. Different branches of a single world religion may have quite different views regarding the sanctity of nature. Christianity provides a good example of that. The Eastern, Coptic and Orthodox churches are those that retain the clearer teaching about the sacredness of nature, and, at the other end of the spectrum, the Reformed or Protestant churches are among those that have the weakest links with nature, at least in

the form of SNSs, although many of them have been making significant efforts to recover and reformulate the ancient Christian teachings on nature (Hessel and Ruether, 2000) and some have a better environmental record than other Christian churches. The Catholic Church is in between, usually closer to the eastern branches of Christianity in the countryside and natural areas. Moreover, within each branch another distinction needs to be made between the outward and the inward dimension, the last usually associated with mystical teaching, always much closer to nature and all living beings.

On the other hand, religions are not static. Over the centuries religions change the interpretation of their spiritual teachings and, to an even greater extent, how these are translated into social, economic and environmental policy and practices, to adapt to new circumstances and challenges. The way in which mainstream religions are responding to current global challenges, with increased environmental awareness, and renewed responsibilities towards the natural world, is one example of such a change. It is also important to underline that new SNSs are continually recognised, either because the perception of a place changes, or because the faithful move (Dudley et al., 2005).

Although the exact figures are not known for any of the world religions, and will probably never be known, the number of SNSs related to mainstream religions is extremely high. In the case of the Indian subcontinent, for instance, the number of sacred groves related to

Hinduism has been estimated at 100 000 to 150 000 (Malhotra, 1998), not to mention the numerous sacred mountains, like Mount Khailas, sacred rivers, like the Ganges, etc. In Ethiopia, the second most populated country of Africa, where Christianity has been the main religion for about two millennia, it is estimated that over 35 000 'church forests' have been conserved, usually located next to modest church buildings, huts or caves where hermits have been living, providing vital biodiversity reservoirs in the context of extensive deforestation and deteriorated landscapes (Tree Foundation, 2010).

On the other hand, many countries do not have SNSs related to indigenous or local peoples, but only SNSs related to mainstream religions. This is the case of many European and Middle Eastern countries. However, in most of the world, SNSs related to mainstream religions coexist with SNSs related to indigenous spiritual traditions, in different degrees of harmony.

SNSs related to mainstream religions are found in protected areas belonging to all IUCN categories (Verschuuren et al., 2007). In some countries, individual protected areas or even entire systems of protected areas, are owned and/or managed by religious organisations. A case in point is South Korea, where a large portion of the system of national parks was established over the properties of Buddhist monastic communities (Hugh Kim, personal communication)

A considerable number of SNSs have been resilient to cultural and spiritual

changes, being reused by consecutive religions or spiritual traditions, either historic and/or current, displaying overlapping values which often show complex relationships. Even if the spiritual tradition has vanished, contemporary society often displays respect for ancient SNSs.

Some protected areas include a high diversity of SNSs, which are still highly relevant for the local population and provide powerful incentives for respect and conservation, even if they are related to extinct civilisations, which are still accessible in both tangible and intangible manner.

Last, but not least, one has to recall that mainstream religions and related organisations are among the oldest and more resilient social structures in the world. All world religions have significant teachings on cosmology, and a long experience in nature conservation, in diverse forms, including SNSs, and most of them are increasingly interested in nature conservation in the face of the global losses of biodiversity. Moreover, some religious organisations are significant landowners and their properties include valuable natural areas. For all these reasons they could be significant agents and also influential allies of conservation organisations, as has been widely acknowledged (Palmer and Finaly, 2003).

Validation aims and process

What follows is a brief description of the methodology used in the workshop

to assess the applicability of the existing IUCN-UNESCO Guidelines, followed by the conclusions that were attained.

Some weeks before the workshop, a document was sent to all the participants explaining the purpose and the methodology of the exercise, and asking them to prepare the participatory session. In particular, they were informed that in a previous analysis, during the elaboration of the Guidelines, a number of concepts and related key terms had been found to be missing to be fully applicable to the main world religions, including 'faithful, guest houses, holy people, holy sites, monasteries, monastic communities, religious authorities, religious organisations, religious values, shrines, temples, tombs and worshippers'. During the subsequent exchanges of correspondence, it became clear that additional significant concepts were missing, including those of: pilgrimages, sanctuaries, processions, and religious landscape.

The Inari/Aanaar workshop was attended by some 30 experts from 14 countries, with very diverse experience and backgrounds. They all had in common a working experience in dealing with SNSs in Europe. However, the experience of some experts was based in a limited number of SNSs, of the same type, whilst in others it was based in hundreds of sacred sites related to diverse religions.

The session devoted to this exercise was the first attempt to assess the ap-

plicability of the existing Guidelines for Protected Area Managers on Sacred Natural Sites. Therefore, the validation method itself was put into test. Participants were organised into three groups. The first group dealing with SNSs of indigenous peoples; the second one with mainstream SNSs and the third one with a subset of the former, namely SNSs related to monastic communities. Each participant filled in a table with the existing guidelines, where he or she should indicate, whether each particular guideline was either fully applicable to all SNSs, needing some new wording/language to be applicable to all cases, or needing concepts not included in the existing Guidelines. The participants were also told that they should explore, whether additional guidelines, if any, should be included to cover the diversity of SNSs related to mainstream religions. In each group there was one person able to answer the doubts of the participants. One of them was Rob Wild, co-author of the Guidelines.

As one could expect, the range of responses obtained during this exercise was very wide, reflecting the range of expertise of the participants, their particular experience, and also their different backgrounds.

Whilst some participants considered that most guidelines are applicable, the majority considered that a good number of guidelines are not applicable as they are, and suggested various changes. The most experienced participants considered that between 20–50 per

cent of the existing Guidelines are not applicable as they are to the SNSs in which they have been working.

Results on the applicability of Guidelines

Participants considered that some missing concepts and related key terms would be useful for the guidelines to be fully applicable to the world religions. These concepts include faithful, guest houses, holy people, holy sites, monasteries, monastic communities, religious authorities (only appears once, in table 2), religious organisations, religious values (only appears in two case studies), shrines, temples, tombs, worshippers.

Guidelines for SNSs devoted to mainstream religions and sites with overlapping faiths / spiritual traditions may decide to use alternative concepts. For instance, instead of SNSs, holy natural sites or holy natural places may be preferable to several branches of Christianity and Islam. This nuance may seem minor, but in their respective theologies it is significant, because the concept of sacred is reserved to the divine order. For this reason, guidelines that include new concepts may change their very title.

Next, the results of the first assessment based on the experience of certain countries (Belarus, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico and Spain) have been summarised.

- Based on a large number of SNSs from Lithuania and Belarus, mainly

Christian, and some related to pre-Christian traditions, it was considered that seven guidelines are not applicable as they are, and need to modify their language.

- Based on the diverse types of SNSs of Finland, 16 guidelines are not applicable as they are, and it was suggested to modify the concepts in seven of them.
- Based on the experience of SNSs from Mexico, mainly related to indigenous traditions, with some Catholic and mixed sites, 17 Guidelines are not applicable as they are, and it was suggested to modify the concepts on seven guidelines and there is need to modify the language on the remaining ten guidelines.
- Based on the experience of SNSs of Italy, mostly Catholic, between 16 and 20 guidelines – according to different experts – are not applicable as they are, and it was proposed that the concepts need modification, while in some cases it was also suggested that the language needs modification.
- Based on the experience of SNSs of Romania, mostly Christian Orthodox, 14 guidelines are not applicable as they are, requiring modification of their language.

In addition, a preliminary assessment was done for SNSs tied to specific world religions, with the following results:

- Based on the experience of SNSs related to Christianity and Islam in 20 countries from Europe, Africa and Asia, 13 Guidelines are directly ap-

plicable as they are, eight would require modifying somewhat their language, and 20 would require modifying at least one concept.

- Based on the Christian Orthodox SNSs in several European countries, it was found that 19 guidelines were not applicable as they are, of which five need to modify some concepts.

Other comments:

- The distinction between indigenous and mainstream faiths is an oversimplistic dichotomy. There is a need to include 'cultural' or 'folk' variants and the enrichment of mainstream faiths, and also the inner or mystical dimension of the religions.
- Some custodians fear of 'New Age' spiritual movements, because they may interfere with traditional practices and create disruptions.
- Intellectual property rights (Access and Benefit Sharing, CBD) are not well covered in the existing Guidelines.
- Psychological wellbeing should also be included, because SNSs are considered to be life givers, both biologically and spiritually.
- Landscape symbolism is often very significant, has many implications for nature conservation and should be better discussed.
- The relations between spiritual connectivity (pilgrimages paths and trails) and ecological connectivity should be better explored.
- Identifying, layering and the implicit meaning of local practices is their underlying (but possibly forgotten) ecological or social function.
- The need for protected area manag-

ers to adopt measure seeking for silence, solitude and beauty, as prerequisites for experiencing sacredness of nature in all spiritual traditions.

- In the process of revitalisation it is important to be aware of the cultural appropriation, and to avoid 'theft'.
- SNSs can be social and even political drivers or motivators of conservation by connecting urban people with nature in deeper ways than non-sacred protected areas can.

Discussion and conclusions

The significance of this validation exercise reflects the limitation of the participants to the workshop and their expertise. This was the first validation exercise, which hopefully will be followed by other assessments, in other regions, to obtain a better understanding of the aspects of the existing Guidelines that would be desirable to review or complement.

The existing IUCN-UNESCO Guidelines for Protected Area Managers of Sacred Natural Sites are both relevant and useful. All the participants of the assessment agreed that the Guidelines are very significant. Were they implemented, a large number of the problems and conflicts affecting SNSs in many countries, especially those related to indigenous peoples and local communities, could have been either prevented or addressed and solved.

The main conclusion of the exercise conducted in the workshop is that the existing guidelines have to be further

tested, refined, adapted and complemented. At least about one third of the guidelines were considered directly applicable as such to SNSs related to mainstream religions, and a similar proportion could be applicable with limited adaptation of language of concepts. Taking into consideration the global scope they have, and the extraordinary diversity included, this fact is very positive.

The results attained further prove the need to continue working on analysing additional case studies related to mainstream religions so that either the next version of the Guidelines, or perhaps complementary guidelines that may be produced in the near future, may better cover the existing diversity of SNSs of the world.

When guidelines for SNSs for mainstream religions are produced, it will be necessary to take into consideration representative case studies, carefully analysed, not only from all world religions, i.e. their different branches, their mystical dimensions, as well as their combination with folk religions, and/or other religions or local spiritual traditions, because of the significant differences that exist among them in this respect.

Guidelines related to living SNSs probably have to be better emphasised as a dynamic process. As suggested by ICCROM (Stovel et al., eds. 2005), living religious heritage is a crucial component of SNSs that also has to be safeguarded.

Like any other natural or human organisation, religion and spiritual traditions are a dynamic and evolving, and so are SNSs, at the interface of nature and the deepest aspirations of humankind. Analogously with deteriorated landscapes or habitats, there may be a need of recognition and revitalisation of SNSs that have been neglected. In those cases a holistic approach that embraces all dimensions of heritage seems highly advisable.

Having said all that, one has to acknowledge that the diversity of SNSs of the world is such that any global guidelines, no matter how developed or refined they may be, will always need some degree of adaptation to the regional or national characteristics, or to particular religious or spiritual traditions. Human diversity in this respect is bewildering. A number of key concepts of the existing Guidelines – including sacred and nature – are absent in many of the world languages and worldviews.

Global Guidelines on Sacred Natural Sites could hopefully inspire regional or national guidelines. In some European countries, like Spain, a participatory process is being planned by the national section of the EUROPARC Federation to produce national guidance to managers of protected areas for incorporating the intangible heritage in protected area planning and management.

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Inputs and comments from the workshop

The participants of the Delos3 Inari/Aanaar workshop have made the following significant comments during the workshop sessions and while discussing the Inari/Aanaar Statement at the closing session of the workshop:

1. Participants confirmed that sacred natural sites are places, in their broader sense, both historical and contemporary, that express the biological, cultural and spiritual diversity of life and form an integral part of the cultural identity of many human communities and societies in Europe, as elsewhere.
2. SNSs should be understood not just as static entities, rooted in the past, but also as being dynamic and evolving with changing human needs. Thus, the following main categories of SNSs could be identified:
 - a) Recognised SNSs that are already celebrated and protected,
 - b) Revitalised SNSs where historical recognition has lapsed, but is being regenerated, and
 - c) New SNSs, where there has been little or no traditional recognition related to acknowledged spiritual signs, and
 - d) Ancient SNSs that do not have religious significance for contemporary society.
3. Recognition of SNSs may help in building up a wider constituency for nature conservation and filling gaps in protected area systems. Protected areas, SNSs and other natural

- features and landscapes with a strong spiritual dimension contribute to human wellbeing, mental and physical health, by providing serene and beautiful places where people can slow down, and experience peace, harmony, beauty and the interconnectedness with the intangible or spiritual dimensions of Nature.
4. The significant differences that exist within religions or with SNSs of previous religions and spiritual traditions, as well as their practices in relation with the environment and nature conservation can be seen as opportunities for developing more effective approaches for conserving threatened SNSs. Additionally, the reconciliation between faiths and religions that have been in conflict is of utmost importance, especially in SNSs where there has been conflicts among different religions or spiritual traditions.
 5. Attitudes of deep respect for nature conservation in Christianity are linked in many regions to the outstanding example set up by holy people, like St Francis of Assisi in Southern Europe and the Middle East, St Cuthbert in England, St Patrick in Ireland, and St Seraphin of Sarov in Russia. The attempts to recover nature conservation theology and conservation implications, such as those from Celtic Christianity, or Celtic saints, for instance in the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, are very important.
 6. Hermitages and hermit domains are in need, hence in synergy, of strictly protected areas, with very limited public use. They are endangered and threatened in many countries, despite the fact that hermits can be seen as prototype of human beings in harmony with Nature. Promoting the implementation of the concept of hermit reserves is, therefore, fully justified.
 7. SNSs should be inventoried in order to avoid involuntary damage to them and irreversible losses of cultural, spiritual and natural heritage. However, some SNSs are widely known, while others are private and only known by a limited number of people. In order to respect the privacy and to take into account the sensitivity of the spiritual values and the risks involved, special attention should be paid to the appropriate level of public access to the databases and other information on sacred sites. This approach is analogous to that followed for areas vital for critically endangered species.
 8. There is a need to develop tools and techniques to communicate and interpret the spiritual, holy or sacred dimension of protected areas to the visitors and the public at large. In this respect, traditional local songs, arts, crafts, etc should be used as the preferred tools to convey the spiritual and intangible values of Nature to the visitors of protected areas, especially in the visitor centres. In addition, intangible values and the arts can be an

equally effective tool as interpretation and communication activities, while involving locals in conservation activities.

9. SNSs and other sites with special spiritual and cultural value should be incorporated into the national legislation. When necessary, public access, construction and other human activities should be limited, both inside and around SNSs, to ensure the values of the sites. Spiritual values should also be legally recognised as arguments for establishing protected areas.
10. The message of religious traditions and wisdom that foster a deep, meaningful, and lasting bond with nature and carry out respectful practices on nature conservation and sustainable environmental management should be more widely disseminated.
11. Transboundary, regional and sub-regional co-operation, such as the Barents Euro-Arctic region and the Carpathian region, are very important and should be encouraged when promoting synergies between the conservation of natural heritage and spiritual heritage.
12. The significance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN DRIP) was stressed, as well as the Principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent and Indigenous Peoples (FPIC).
13. The concepts of animal spirits, totemic species and other cultural

significant species (symbolic, identity, etc) should be incorporated in the study, planning and management of SNSs.

14. Special attention needs to be paid to and significant support is to be offered equally to those sacred natural sites of indigenous people that have already been recognised as well as to those that are not yet known as sacred natural sites.
15. In various countries of Europe, natural sites considered sacred since prehistoric times and which are often located in areas of high natural heritage value have been recognised and inventoried. Several case studies from the Baltic countries showed that these sites still have significance for current societies (identity, iconic, symbolic, etc.). In Estonia, where the heritage connected to sacred natural sites is significantly rich, a state level conservation plan (Estonian National Conservation Plan for Sacred Natural Sites) has been prepared and adopted to instruct conducting the inventories and saving the sacred natural sites. In order to ensure efficient conservation of sacred natural sites appropriate legal status and management measures are needed.
16. The Delos Initiative could explore whether other international instruments (such as the Habitat Contact Forum, the Barents Region Protected Areas Network and the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas)

as) can make contributions to SNSs and to the inclusion of the general spiritual values of Nature to nature conservation strategies, plans and programmes.

17. A first assessment on the relevance of the 2008 IUCN-UNESCO Guidelines for Managers on Sacred Natural Sites (which focus on indigenous Sacred Natural Sites) performed during the workshop showed that between 20-50% of the existing guidelines would need to modify either the concepts or the language to be fully useful and applicable to SNSs related to mainstream religions. This result justifies the Delos Initiative goal to developing additional guidelines for natural sacred sites related to mainstream religions

18. It is recommended that the Delos Initiative should bring to the attention of the Contracting Parties of the CBD at their 10th Conference to be held in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010 the following:

Our concern that the important contributions of sacred natural sites, landscapes and waters of indigenous peoples and local communities to the objectives of the Convention are in danger because of threats represented by not acknowledging the role they play as protected areas, unsound developments and lack of recognition of the rights of their custodians to decide on the present and future management of such sites.

Documentation that demonstrates the important contributions of sacred or holy natural sites created and maintained by religious communities, including monastic communities and other groups of believers of the world, make to the conservation of biodiversity and to the long-term maintenance of ecosystems that provide many benefits to communities, peoples and countries.

Our recommendation that measures to value and protect sacred natural sites of all peoples and communities be adopted by the CBD Parties at national and international level, with due respect to the traditional governance systems that have taken care and maintained such sites for centuries or millennia, and with due and meaningful involvement of their custodians at all relevant levels.

Our request to CBD Parties and other stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Convention to work together with religious organisations and the traditional custodians of sacred sites to support the improvement of tools and approaches, as well as appropriate policy frameworks, to enhance the resilience of sacred natural sites in the face of global changes that bring new and unprecedented challenges to their present and future maintenance.

Conclusions

Results

The Delos3 Workshop in Inari/Aanaar of Finland proved to be rich in contributions concerning the diversity of sacred natural sites (SNSs) of Europe, their ancient origins, their fascinating history, the challenges and threats they face in the contemporary context and their prospects for the future. These contributions generated lively discussions and led to conclusions through a process of structured debate.

In spite of the diversity of opinions presented and defended, certain generally accepted currents permeated the whole process. A strong element was the realisation that the old continent of Europe includes vibrant indigenous peoples (such as the Sámi in Finland, Sweden, Norway and NW Russia) and numerous well-

rooted native and local communities. In spite of the ubiquitous impacts of homogenisation and globalisation, they attempt to maintain their ancient beliefs and traditions, most of which are imbued by deep and pervasive spirituality. In fact, these traditions are being regenerated and strengthened in quite a few cases, creating hope for the future.

While some of the most prominent SNSs related to major faiths in Europe are being recognised and efforts for their integrated management are on the way, much less has been done about the natural sites with spiritual relevance for indigenous peoples and local communities, with some highly interesting exceptions presented during the workshop. Thus, the main conclusions of the event were incorporated in the Inari/Aanaar Statement, included below.

The Inari/Aanaar Statement on the diversity of sacred natural sites in Europe

The 30 participants from 14 countries (Estonia, Finland, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, and United Kingdom) in the Third Workshop of the Delos Initiative, held in Inari, Finland on 1-3 July 2010, arrived at the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. The indigenous Sámi peoples and their traditions – as well as the traditions of most indigenous religions – are of great importance in the context of the cultural, spiritual and natural heritage of Europe. In particular, their views emphasising the interconnectedness of human beings and nature, and deep respect for nature, can provide invaluable lessons of global significance and ensure the well-being of indigenous communities and the viability of their cultures.
2. In various countries of Europe, natural sites considered sacred since prehistoric times, often located in areas of high natural heritage value, are being recognised and inventoried, such as the Estonian National Conservation Plan for Sacred Natural Sites. Several case studies from the Baltic countries showed that these sites still have significance for current societies (identity, iconic, symbolic, etc.), which may encourage conservation measures. However, many of these ancient SNSs need protection with an appropriate legal status and management measures.
3. Some protected areas of Europe include a high diversity of SNSs from consecutive civilisations, as Majella National Park in Italy exemplifies. Many of these sacred sites are still highly relevant for the local population and provide powerful incentives for respect and conservation.
4. Christian and Buddhist organisations involved in land management in Europe are gradually adopting attitudes and practices of increased respect for the natural environment. Such positive developments must be made known widely to encourage their faithful and other religious organisations along these lines.
5. In this positive context, a number of European Christian and Buddhist monastic communities are taking the lead, with effective and innovative approaches to the ecological management of their lands, be they formally declared as protected areas or community conserved areas or not, such as the Orthodox monastic communities of Mt Athos, Greece.
6. Closer collaboration in the conservation of SNSs between their custodians and conservationists is slowly growing, but greater efforts are required before synergy is established and positive common goals for safeguarding the natural, cultural and spiritual values are attained.
7. In spite of some positive trends, threats against SNSs appear to be

growing, even within legally declared protected areas, especially against those that are the most modest and natural, because of changing land use patterns, expanding urbanisation and insensitive development initiatives. Mobilising international public opinion may help in averting such threats and the Delos Initiative is requested to play a role in this process.

8. Tourist and visitor pressures on SNSs may often be a threat, causing physical and spiritual degradation. Public use, when acceptable, needs to be addressed through appropriate visitor management measures and greatly improved public awareness.
9. SNSs should be inventoried to avoid damage and irreversible losses of cultural, spiritual and natural heritage and to be incorporated into national planning and legislation. The process of the National Inventory of Estonia is a good example. Those that are private must also be protected, regulating public access to the sites and to the databases and other relevant information.
10. Effective conservation of SNSs requires the active and informed participation of all stakeholders in systematic efforts to reach consensus on objectives and required measures.
11. The first assessment on the relevance of the 2008 IUCN-UNESCO Guidelines for Managers on Sacred Natural Sites (which focus on indigenous SNSs) clearly showed the

need to developing additional guidelines for SNSs related to mainstream religions.

12. Networks of SNSs in particular regions must be recognised and strengthened, or re-established where feasible. In this sense, an important role may be played by the pilgrimage trails or paths, which may be enhanced when they also provide landscape linkages, like the Way of Saint James (Spain and France) or Via Lauretana (Italy) and many others in the Carpathian Mountains.
13. Studies conducted by Metsähallitus showed that most visitors to protected areas of Finland are attracted to them not to view or observe species, habitats or landscapes, but to have a personal experience of peace, harmony, grandeur... in Nature, which shows that, even in some highly secularised countries of Europe the immaterial values of nature have the priority for society at large.

The participants expressed their profound gratitude to the Finnish Saami Parliament and to the Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus for hosting the Workshop in Inari, with the support of the Ministry of Environment and the IUCN Committee of Finland, and contributing with the Delos co-ordination to the organisation of the workshop.

Inari, Finland, 3 July 2010

Complementary points

In addition to the points captured in the Statement, other pertinent points were discussed and they are worth adding to the conclusions of the meeting complementing the Statement above.

Theoretical issues

The workshop participants confirmed that SNSs – in their broader sense – are places, both historical and contemporary, that express the spiritual, cultural and natural diversity of life and form an integral part of the cultural identity of many human communities and societies in Europe, as elsewhere.

Thus, the message of religious traditions and wisdom that foster a deep, meaningful, and lasting bond with nature and carry out respectful practices on nature conservation and sustainable environmental management must be understood and more widely disseminated. In addition, when applicable, the concepts of animal spirits, totemic species and other significant species (with their identity and symbolism) should be taken into account in the study, planning and management of SNSs.

It should be also noted that attitudes of deep respect for nature conservation in Christianity are linked in many regions to the outstanding example set up by holy people, like St Francis of Assisi in Southern Europe and Middle East, St Cuthbert in England, St Patrick in Ireland, St Seraphim of Sarov in Russia, etc. The attempts to formulate a nature conservation theology – such as

those from Celtic Christianity, based on the example of Celtic nature saints, for instance in the Holy Island of Lindisfarne – are very important.

On the other hand, significant differences exist within religions or with SNSs of previous religions and spiritual traditions, as well as their practices in relation to the environment and nature conservation. These can be seen as opportunities for developing more effective approaches for conserving threatened SNS. Additionally, the reconciliation between faiths and religions that have been in conflict is of utmost importance, especially in SNSs where there has been conflicts among different religions or spiritual traditions.

It should be also noted that there is difficulty in distinguishing between cultural and spiritual aspects of natural sites, as they often coexist. Often, cultural aspects are easier to identify, while spiritual ones are more elusive. Thus, the Sámi people are more comfortable in speaking about their cultural traditions than about their beliefs.

Role and conservation of sacred natural sites

Recognition of SNS may help in building up a wider constituency for nature conservation and filling gaps in protected area systems. Protected areas, SNSs and other well-conserved natural features and landscapes contribute to human wellbeing, mental and physical health, by providing serene and beautiful places where people can slow down, and experience peace, harmo-

ny, beauty and the interconnectedness with the intangible or spiritual dimensions of Nature.

Hermitages and hermit domains are in need, hence in synergy, of strictly protected areas, with very limited public use. They are endangered and threatened in many countries, despite the fact that hermits can be seen as prototypes of human beings in harmony with nature. Promoting the implementation of the concept of hermit reserves is, therefore, fully justified. In the contemporary context, wilderness areas provide opportunities for solitude and spiritual concentration.

Special attention should be paid to and significant support shall be offered equally to those SNSs of indigenous people that have already been recognised as such, as well as to those that are not yet known as sacred natural sites.

Implementation and operational aspects

SNS should be understood not just as static entities, rooted in the past, but also as being dynamic and evolving with changing human needs. Thus, the following main categories of SNSs could be identified:

- Recognised SNSs that are already celebrated and protected.
- Revitalised SNSs where historical recognition has lapsed, but is being regenerated.
- New SNSs, where there has been little or no traditional recognition related to acknowledged spiritual signs.

- Ancient SNSs that may not have any religious significance for contemporary society, may foster, though, attitudes of respect based on its past character and significance.

SNSs should be inventoried in order to avoid involuntary damage to them and irreversible losses of cultural, spiritual and natural heritage. However, some SNSs are widely known, while others are private and only recognised by a limited number of people. In order to respect their privacy and to take into account the sensitivity of the spiritual values and the risks involved in publicising vulnerable or fragile SNSs, special attention should be paid to the appropriate level of public access to the databases and other information on SNSs. This approach is analogous to that followed for areas vital for critically endangered species.

In parallel, there is a need to develop tools and techniques to communicate and interpret the spiritual, holy or sacred dimension of protected areas to the visitors and the public at large. In this respect, traditional local songs, arts, crafts, and other means of expression should be used as the preferred tools to convey the spiritual and intangible values of Nature to the visitors of protected areas, especially in the visitor centres. In addition, intangible values and the arts can be an equally effective tool in interpretation and communication activities, while involving local inhabitants in conservation actions.

Further, SNSs and other sites with special spiritual and cultural value should

be incorporated into the national legislation. When necessary, public access, construction and other potentially harmful activities should be limited, both inside and around SNSs, to ensure the values of the sites. Spiritual values should also be legally recognised as complementary arguments for establishing new protected areas, or enlarging the existing ones.

The European and international dimension

Transboundary, regional and sub-regional cooperation in Europe, such as the Barents Euro-Arctic Region and the Carpathian region, is very important and should be encouraged when promoting synergies between the conservation of natural heritage and spiritual heritage. Thus, the Delos Initiative could explore, whether other international instruments (such as the Habitat Contact Forum, the Barents Region Protected Areas Network and the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas) could make contributions to the SNSs and to the inclusion of the general spiritual values of Nature to nature conservation strategies, plans and programmes.

Further, the significance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN DRIP), as well as the Principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent and Indigenous Peoples (FPIC) were considered of particular importance in dealing effectively and sensitively with SNSs.

The way forward

The 2008 UNESCO-IUCN Guidelines for Managers on Sacred Natural Sites (which focus on indigenous SNSs) were considered a document of great value. A first assessment of its relevance performed during the workshop, however, showed that between 20-50 per cent of the existing guidelines would need to be modified either in concept or in language to be fully useful and applicable to SNSs related to mainstream religions. This result justifies the Delos Initiative goal of developing additional guidelines for SNSs related to mainstream religions within the next few years.

It was also recommended that the Delos Initiative bring to the attention of the International community, and particularly of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the following:

- A concern that the important contributions of SNSs, sacred landscapes and waters of indigenous peoples and local communities to the objectives of the Convention are in danger because of the threats represented by ignoring the role they play as protected areas, the unsound developments and the lack of recognition of the rights of their custodians to decide on the present and future management of such sites.
- Documentation that demonstrates the important contributions that sacred or holy natural sites, created and maintained by religious communities, including monastic communities and other groups of believers of

the world, make to the conservation of biodiversity and to the long-term maintenance of ecosystems that provide many benefits to communities, peoples and countries.

- A recommendation that measures to value and protect SNSs of all peoples and communities should be adopted by the CBD Parties at a national and international level, with due respect to the traditional governance systems that have taken care of and maintained such sites for centuries or millennia, and with due and meaningful involvement of their custodians at all relevant levels.
- A request to the Parties of the CBD and other stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Convention to work together with religious organisations and the traditional custodi-

ans of sacred sites to support the improvement of tools and approaches, as well as appropriate policy frameworks, to enhance the resilience of SNSs in the face of global changes that bring new and unprecedented challenges to their present and future conservation, which includes maintenance, restoration, preservation and protection (according to the 1980 IUCN-PNUMA definition).

This was not possible at the 10th Conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010. However, the mandate of the Delos Initiative remains valid for other related international meetings in the near future, including the IUCN Congress in Busan (of the Island of Jeju, Republic of Korea) in 2012.

Participants of the Workshop at the opening of a cave on Ukonsaari Island.



Delos 3 Workshop

Diversity of Sacred Lands in Europe

1 to July 3, 2010 at Inari, Lapland, Finland

1.7. Thursday

Venue: Auditorium of Siida, The Sámi Museum and Nature Centre

09.00-10.00 Opening Session

		Chair: Thymio Papayannis
09.00-09.20	Opening of the Workshop	Rauno Väisänen, Director, Natural Heritage Services
09.20-09.40	Welcoming Words	Tarmo Jomppanen, Museum Director, Sámi Museum
09.40-10.00	Greetings from the Sámi Parliament	Klemetti Näkkäläjärvi, President of the Sámi Parliament

10.30-12.30 Session 2: The Sámi People and Their Relation to Nature

		Chair: Rauno Väisänen
10.30-11.45	Sámi Faith and Nature Concept	Jelena Porsanger, Assoc. Professor, Sámi University College
11.45-12.30	Sacred Places in Sámi Culture	Tiina Äikäs, Researcher, University of Oulu

13.30-15.30 Session 3: Indigenous Sacred Lands

		Chair: Matti Määttä
13.30-14.30	Maavalla Koda, the National Strategy for SNS Protection and the Sacred Hill of Hiiumägi, Estonia	Ahto Kaasik
14.00-14.30	Žemaitija National Park and the Ancient Sacred Places of Mikytai, Lithuania	Vykintas Vaitkevičius
14.30-15.00	Mayo Lands and Communities, Mexico	Bas Verschuuren
16.00-17.30	Tour of the Sámi Museum and Nature Centre	

2.7. Friday

09.00-10.30 Session 4: Minority Faiths in European Countries and Safeguarding Their Natural and Spiritual Heritage

Chair: Gonzalo Oviedo

- | | | |
|-------------|---|-------------------|
| 09.00-09.30 | Alevi-Bektasi Communities in Eastern Europe: their Natural and Spiritual Heritage | Irini Lyratzaki |
| 09.30-10.00 | Uvac- Milesevka Special Nature Reserve and Mileseva Monastery, Serbia | Svetlana Dingarac |
| 10.00-10.30 | Zilais kalns - Blue Hill in Latvia | Juris Urtāns |

11.00-12.30 Session 5: Managing Lands of Mainstream Religions

Chair: Bas Verschuuren

- | | | |
|-------------|--|------------------|
| 11.00-11.30 | Sacred Sites of Majella National Park, Italy | Vita de Waal |
| 11.30-12.00 | Lindisfarne Holy Island, UK | Rob Wild |
| 12.00-12.30 | Wetland of Colfioritto, a RAMSAR Site Connected with Via Laurettana, Italy | Chiara Serenelli |

13.30-15.00 Session 6: Managing Lands of Monastic Communities in Europe

Chair: Vita de Waal

- | | | |
|-------------|---|-----------------------|
| 13.30-14.00 | Mt Athos (N. Greece): Towards an integrated approach | Thymio Papayannis |
| 14.00-14.30 | New Trends on the Management of Monastic Lands in Europe and Middle East | Josep-Maria Mallarach |
| 16.30 | Boat to Ukonsaari (Delos Montserrat case study), an Island with Old Burial Site
Boat to Pielpavuono and a Tour of Pielpajärvi Wilderness Church
Tour Guide Eija Ojanlatva | |

3.7. Saturday

Venue: Auditorium of Siida, The Sámi Museum and Nature Centre

09.00-10.30 Session 7: The Diversity of Sacred Natural Sites in Europe

Chair: Rob Wild

09.00-09.30 Sacred Natural Sites in the Carpathian Mountains Sebastian Catanoiu

09.30-10.00 The Recovery of Sacred Sites in Scotland Alastair McIntosh

10.00-10.30 Synergies between Spiritual and Natural Heritage for Habitat Conservation in the North Alexander Davydov

11.00-13.00 Session 8: Evaluating the UNESCO-IUCN Guidelines for Managers of Protected Areas on Sacred Natural Sites

Chair: Josep-Maria Mallarach

11.00-11.30 Evaluating the Applicability of the Guidelines on SNS: Identification of Topics and Issues Josep-Maria Mallarach

11.30-13.00 Parallel Working Groups

14.00-16.00 Closing Session 9

Chair: Thymio Papayannis

14.00-15.00 Presentations of the Three Working Groups. Discussion and Conclusions

15.00-16.00 Workshop Conclusions and the Inari Statement

16.00-16.30 Recent Developments of the IUCN WCPA Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas (CSVPA) Rob Wild

19.30 Dinner at Hotel Inarin Kultahovi including Cultural Programme

Appendices

Appendix I: Workshop participants and authors

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NOTE: These contact details were up-
dated in December 2011. Some may
have changed since then.

* Author, not present at the workshop.

Appendix II: Photo credits by chapter

All creation sighs... Humanity and borders

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Use and reuse of ancient sacred places in Mikytai, Žemaitija National Park, NW Lithuania

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Zilais kalns – Blue Hill in Latvia

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P. 94 FunkMonk: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tempulli_i_bektashinjve_ne_vlore.jpg#globalusage

P. 96 commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Allah-eser2.jpg

P. 102 Ggia: el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Αρχείο:20100328_Seyyid_Ali_Sultan_Tekke_Dervish_Lodge_Evros_8.jpg

P. 103 Metsähallitus/Hannu Sipinen (from original by Magnus Manske: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Alevis_in_Turkey.gif)

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P. 128 William R. Shepherd, 1923: www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/shepherd/british_isles_802.jpg

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Environmental concerns were a top priority during the production of the Delos Proceedings. At every stage of the production, the most ecological materials and methods appropriate for the publication were selected. Nevertheless, the publication left its print on the environment, as making it required energy and raw materials and produced waste and emissions.

No. of pages: 292 pages plus covers

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Research for the ecological footprint was carried out by Mika Ruuskanen, Manager for the Nordic Green Edita Programme.

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