

SPECIAL SECTION ON POLISH ANTHROPOLOGY

1

ALL SOULS' DAY IN POLISH CULTURE: SACRED OR SECULAR?

The question of death and attitudes to the dead form a subject of considerable significance in the study of Polish culture. Perhaps it represents a particular sensitivity to the continuity of tradition that moves Poles to visit the graves of relatives or pay homage to national heroes on a day at the beginning of November, called All Souls' Day (*dzień zaduszny*).

My direct reason for taking up the subject of All Souls' Day, however, was a desire to understand why Polish Lutherans, who form the subject of my present research and who until quite recently did not - for doctrinal reasons - light candles over the graves of the dead on that day, now do so increasingly. Until a few years ago, in places where there was both a Protestant and a Catholic cemetery, it was still possible to distinguish them easily on this day, because the former was completely unilluminated.

In this paper I analyse this custom, its symbolism and the variety of meanings attributed to it. The paper is in two parts: an ethnographic description of the custom, and an analysis of the problem.

This paper was presented at the International Conference on 'The Role of Ritual in the System of Culture', Zakopane, October 1985; and at Edwin Ardener's seminar on 'History, Ethnicity and Identity' at St John's College, Oxford, on 5th May 1986. I would like to dedicate this paper to Edwin Ardener and to thank all those who have helped me through the different stages of preparing this paper.

I

We can read about the genesis of this festival in the *Church Encyclopaedia*, from the beginning of this century:

...in the monastic orders the custom arose of devoting one day of the year to services for those of their members who had died. Later, they were extended for the benefit of the souls of all those suffering in Purgatory, and the day falling on the morrow of the ceremony of All Saints was reserved for this purpose (Nowodworski 1913: 482).

On All Souls' Day graves almost everywhere are decorated and, in the evenings, lighted candles are placed on them, signifying a supplicatory prayer for those unfortunate souls in Purgatory, that Christ might shine His eternal light upon them and the *locus refrigerii*, *lucus et pacis* might be open to them (ibid.: 252).

The actual genesis of this festival, however, reaches even further back, as is shown by another passage:

The Church rose against idolatry and superstition, though the nation was bound strongly to them, but tolerated older customs in so far as they were not dangerous to the Faith, in accordance with the instructions of Pope Gregory the Great...to endow pagan ceremonies with a Christian meaning (Chełmicki 1913: 252).

Thus the Church introduced All Souls' Day in place of a similar pagan festival. The date coincided with the Celtic division of the year into a 'dark' half (from 1st November to 1st May) and a 'light' half (Rees and Rees 1978: 83-94):

We note that the Winter is the 'dark' half, like the annual night, and that the year begins with the Winter, just as the Celtic day begins on the previous dusk. The old markers were the feast of the Calends of Winter (*Samhainn*) which was fixed historically to 1st November, and the Calends of Summer (*Bealtainn*) ascribed to the 1st May. At the mid-points of the main seasons were feasts on 1st August *Lúnasdal* (Lammas) and on 1st-2nd February *Feile Bride*, Candlemas (the Old Irish *Imbole*) (Ardener 1975:3).

On the other hand, the year among pagan Slavs was probably divided up by festivals linked with the solstices: the winter solstice, the midsummer festival, the Vernal festival in spring and the autumn harvest festival. The Church must have taken this into account when spreading Christianity among the pagan Slavs. Among the missionaries, there were two schools of thought: there were those who tried to encourage festivals that could be accepted by pagan culture; 'ceremonies', on the other hand, 'promoted by the opposition never took root in the richer folk tradition, even when

they were as stubbornly advocated as the *Cammemoratorio fidelium defunctorum*, or November All Souls' Day, introduced in 988 by Odilon of Cluny' (Stomma 1981: 63). Stomma seems to be saying here that All Souls' Day was introduced into Poland by the Church and that it had no pagan history, but ethnographic data seems to dispute this by indicating an undoubtedly pagan setting for this festival. Furthermore, in the rites of the principal festivals connected with the solstices many elements have remained, testifying to the fact that on these ceremonial occasions the dead were not forgotten. It seems that the introduction by the Church of a special festival to honour the dead caused the pagan elements concerning the cult of the dead and appearing in all solstice festivals to be shifted and fused with their Christian equivalents.

However, let us attempt to extract these elements of pagan culture. This process is a logical reconstruction rather than an exact presentation of the data. There was probably a conviction that the souls of the dead live a life of their own, but that the living should offer them care and attention. The dead, who maintain contact with the world of the living, may cause them harm if neglected: '...from the ancestral group seems to have come part of the host of benevolent demons, demonstrating their goodwill to people permanently or occasionally. They increased the livestock on the farm and helped in spinning and rearing horses, plaiting their manes' (Gieysztor 1982: 220).

The Church opposed the cult of the dead not only for theological reasons, but also for sociological ones. The dead are rather a family matter, while the Church wanted to create broader communities under its own auspices.

...we must remember that the Christian Church had risen to prominence largely because its central ritual practices and its increasingly centralized organization and financial administration presented the pagan world with an ideal community that had claimed to modify, to redirect, and even to delimit the bonds of the kin. The Church was an artificial kin group. Its members were expected to project on to the new community a fair measure of the sense of solidarity, loyalty and obligations that had previously been directed to the family itself. Nowhere was this made more plain than in the care of the dead (Brown 1981: 31).

The Church achieved its sociological goal while theological victory was still rather doubtful. Older customs concerning the dead in fact fused with the Church festival as regards both external behaviour and the folk understanding of the meaning of these customs.

Modern ethnographic research presents the following picture of All Souls' Day in the nineteenth century. It was universally believed that on the eve of that day the souls of the dead came down to earth and made their way to their former homes and, at midnight, to the church, where a dead priest held mass. Thus cemeteries were put in order and candles lit over the graves, which were decorated with flowers and artificial garlands. Food and

money were distributed to beggars. The women dressed in black. A solemn and ceremonial atmosphere prevailed. In certain homes lights and stoves were kept burning all night. Food was left on the table, doors were left open all night, and the occupants of the house went to bed early so as not to disturb the souls as they arrived (Frankowska and Paprocka 1981: 147). It was believed that souls could be released from Purgatory by a specified number of masses - to which end candles were lit and indulgences bought - and that, during prayers said in church by the priest for the souls of the dead (often mentioning them by name), the dead were themselves present and revenged themselves if they were forgotten. For these prayers, the priests were offered gifts or a certain sum of money (Zawistowicz 1933).

Certain relics of customs relating to the dead have survived in the rites of the principal Church holidays. For example, Christmas Eve dinner is held in a solemn atmosphere. The custom of setting one extra place at the table is still observed, but the meaning attributed to it has altered. Originally, it was assigned for the souls of the dead, but later various explanations were offered, for example, in expectation of the Holy Family or of lost travellers. In the past the remains of the meal were left, doors opened, and lights left on all night. Until the eighteenth century, Maundy Thursday was regarded as a day of the dead (Kubiak and Kubiak 1981: 39); in some regions special sorts of bread were given to children or carried to cemeteries, and bonfires were built in fields and orchards (Frankowska and Paprocka 1981: 132-3).

We can distinguish, then, three strata, among which only the third is empirically verifiable: 1) pagan rituals and beliefs, the ethnographic nature of which we can only speculate about; 2) the doctrine and cult of Christianity, which has never existed in a pure form; and 3) the beliefs and practices of folk religion, which are the mixture of the two. This interdependence was neatly formulated by Stefan Czarnowski in his description of the culture of Polish country folk:

Religion, once accepted, tends to shape the social environment according to the pattern it carries with it. And since this environment is not passive material, but a living and thus active community with an irresistible tendency to express itself as fully as possible in every field, it leaves its own stamp on the religion. It introduces into the religion elements of belief and ritual that are foreign to it and combines its practice with social values that have nothing in common with it. It transforms religion to its own advantage, in its own image and likeness (Czarnowski 1956: 89).

An example of this may be the lighting of candles and the mass for the dead understood as a magic sacrifice. Only the performance of the rites causes the desired effect of releasing one's soul from Purgatory.

To return to the reasons why I became interested in the problem of All Souls' Day, I shall now present the situation in the Polish Lutheran context. For theological reasons, anything intended to help souls in Purgatory was frowned upon, such as masses for the dead, indulgences, gifts to the Church, or the lighting of candles. A contemporary cleric, fearing the possibility of syncretism, warned his faithful:

Let us not, then, make something like a contributory mass to the dead; let us light over the graves of our deceased the light of the Gospel of the redemption and the resurrection, for other lights will go out; let us not change and let us treat prayer as an act by which we should like to attain heaven for ourselves and others (Janik 1973: 350).

In the Lutheran Church, remembrance of the dead is currently practised either on the last Sunday of the Church year or on November 1st; posthumous remembrance of particular persons or whole families and contributory prayers is also performed.

It is difficult to say whether ordinary parishioners perceived the matter from the theological point of view. I believe that the clergyman needed to write in the way he did because of the false interpretation by his parishioners of the practices described above. Whether this was a direct loan from Catholic doctrine, or a reference to more distant residues, is today difficult to say. I suppose that it arose rather from a folk theology and from people perceiving certain obligations due to the dead, i.e. a more favourable memory of them (I shall develop this idea later).

As for the custom of lighting candles on graves and decorating them with flowers on All Souls' Day, the Lutherans saw this as a Catholic practice; November 1st was not seen as a Lutheran festival. They tried to take care of graves all the year round and, if lighted candles could be seen in Lutheran cemeteries, they had probably been lit by Catholic members of the families of deceased Lutherans. This was the situation until several years ago.

Returning to my main subject, All Souls' Day is at present celebrated throughout Poland on the eve of that day, i.e. on November 1st - in other words, All Saints' Day, which is a public holiday. From the small survey I conducted among university students in Kraków (Cracow), it appears that this is a family festival to which relatives often come from considerable distances. A few days beforehand, someone from the family tidies up the graves of the relatives and plants flowers on them. On November 1st, everyone usually goes to Mass in church or at the cemetery, to which flowers and candles are also taken. Later the whole family has a meal together. Cemeteries are also visited at dusk in order to pray in tranquillity over the graves of one's relatives, and to light candles and generally marvel at the evening's atmosphere. Some people also light candles on the neglected graves of people quite unknown to them.

Such information was also gathered by another student on customs associated with All Souls' Day, although here there is a difference: in Warsaw (where she studied the problem) people also visit the graves of soldiers (mainly those who took part in the uprising of 1944) (Komorowska 1984: 143-65). Similarly, in Kraków the graves of those who died in the two World Wars are visited, although my informants did not mention this (perhaps because most of them spend the day outside the city).

An outsider may, a few days beforehand, see numbers of women carrying chrysanthemums in flower-pots. Special candles are bought, for use only on this occasion; they look like small glasses containing stearin and wicks and can burn even when it is windy. Stalls offering these candles and flowers for sale, as well as small wreaths of everlasting flowers, spring up all over the city, especially in the neighbourhood of cemeteries - which then come to resemble market places, especially with the bustle of graves being tidied up (as houses are tidied before Christmas or Easter).

On the day itself it is not easy to reach the cemeteries, for everyone, dressed in Sunday best, is doing likewise. Trams and buses are packed with people, and the roads leading to the cemeteries are packed with cars. The spectacle at dusk is remarkable. The graves are inundated with flowers, mainly white chrysanthemums, shining in the light of the candles. One can make people out in the darkness walking slowly along the cemetery paths or standing round the graves in thoughtful mood. One can hear only the shuffle of hundreds of shoes on the gravel and, from time to time, hushed conversations. The air is filled with the overwhelming smell of lighted candles and withered autumn leaves. All this is so moving that people come there not merely to visit their relatives' graves, but also to partake of this solemn but not sorrowful atmosphere. During the night, the glow from thousands of lighted candles rises over some parts of the city. This is also true on a smaller scale of less populous towns and villages. On the same day the trains are crowded with people travelling to visit the graves of relatives in other places. It is a festival perhaps equal in importance to Christmas or Easter.

So much for the external form of the ritual. As for my informants' interpretations of the lighting of candles, the worldly view prevails that it is a symbol of memory and respect for the dead and of the impermanence of life. Here is an example of one of the more poetic replies: 'The candle - fire - for me is a symbol of memory. It seems to me that in lighting it, I remember the person over whose grave I do so'. The traditional nature of the custom is also emphasised: 'The candles may be rather like the Christmas tree'; 'the lighting of candles on this day is above all a custom which I have known intimately since I was a child'; etc. A religious meaning is also stressed fairly frequently, i.e. the symbol of Christ: 'the candle symbolises a kind of light which is Christ, whom man meets when he dies', and, more often, is a symbol of eternity, eternal life, Divine light. Informants expressed a religious meaning only after receiving a question specifically concerning this, and even then not all of them did so. No connection was made, however, between burning candles and an action to help

souls in Purgatory; this aim is expressed in the mass: 'the saying of a mass for the dead shortens their suffering in Purgatory or affords them relief and brings them closer to redemption'.

At present, then, the ritual of All Souls' Day has a rather temporal significance: to emphasise the remembrance of one's deceased. The religious meaning attributed to the burning of candles is now of a general, undefined nature. The purely religious, confessional aspect of this day is now mainly represented by the mass.

One must remember that there is also the official mass media which, to some extent, influence people's perception of the world. State propaganda has made the festival principally a national one, dedicated to the memory of those who 'laid down their lives in the struggle for the freedom of the fatherland', and a family one, dedicated to the memories of one's relatives. On television, a thoughtful atmosphere prevails with serious music and pictures of cemeteries with burning candles. On the same day, scouts hold vigils over the graves of soldiers and at sites of Nazi executions. Nothing, of course, is said about the implied religious meanings, and the everlasting fire seen burning under memorials to Soviet soldiers is certainly not understood by either the broadcasters or their audience as being intended to liberate them from the sufferings of Purgatory.

But it is not only on November 1st that Poles commemorate their dead: customarily they look after the graves of their deceased relatives also before the major festivals of Christmas, when they are decorated with fir spruce branches, and Easter, when they are decorated with flowers or catkins. This custom also applies to the more official ceremonies celebrated by both the state and the opposition - as, for example, the celebration of Labour Day in 1985. The official celebrations in Warsaw were preceded by the laying of flowers at monuments to 'activist workers', by which is meant such people as the early leaders of the Polish Workers' Party. On May 1st the workers themselves, after a service in Nowa Huta for working people, intended to visit the place where two of their colleagues had died, victims of martial law. The procession was, of course, broken up, and only a few people reached their destination.

Poles also celebrate the anniversaries of their relatives' deaths. A special mass is ordered 'for the soul of the deceased' and, if he or she was an important or popular person, information about the mass is published in the Catholic press by the family. Commemorative anniversaries are often used as an opportunity for political demonstrations. The authorities celebrate the anniversaries of *their* heroes' deaths, and sometimes they take the initiative in the remembrance of certain events, in order to make them 'official', as it were, and turn them to their advantage. An example of this may be seen in the situation which occurred in Gdańsk in December 1984, when there was an official laying of wreaths by local authorities at the monument to the shipyard workers who were assassinated in 1970. A later demonstration, which included Wałęsa and other members of the underground Solidarity movement who had gathered for the same purpose, was broken up by force. Wałęsa, realizing that he would not be able to lay the wreath at the monument, threw it at the feet of the riot police.

Several underground activists were arrested on the (absurd) charge of 'hooliganism'.

Thus in contemporary Poland, not only is November 1st devoted to the dead, but also other occasions. Poles remember the dead, then, at particularly solemn moments, just as their pagan ancestors did.

II

Now for an analysis of the ritual dealt with above. It will not be theoretically homogeneous, but rather a preliminary attempt to investigate the problem using various analytical tools and techniques.

Let us start with the reasons for the existence of such rituals. Summarizing the ideas of students of the problem we may offer the following. In the religious systems of traditional cultures there occurs a blending of two categories of time: a transformation of linear time into cyclical, by which social order triumphs over the fortuitousness of death, or, speaking even more generally, culture triumphs over the biology (Eliade 1959; Leach 1961; Bloch and Parry 1982). This is precisely the source of those rituals that divide the continuity of time into cyclically returning periods. One of these ceremonies is All Souls' Day.

Another reason for the ritual is its dealing with death and the dead. Ritual, as Goodenough says, 'can be seen as developing around situations and involving objects that are associated directly and symbolically with matters about which people are in emotional conflict' (1974: 171).

The ritual in question carries the hallmark of sacrifice. Hubert and Mauss (1981) point out that it involves the destruction of a victim for the purpose of maintaining or restoring the proper relationship of man to the sacred order. Similarly, Leach stresses that the role of sacrifice is to enable man to construct a bridge to the other world, to the power of the gods - the source of health, life, fertility, political influence, wealth, etc. This power can thus become attainable for any otherwise helpless individual (1976: 83).

The cult of the dead in the religion of the pagan Slavs, and also after Christianisation, was connected with an agrarian cult. This is a rather universal phenomenon. Eliade has pointed out that agriculture meets the world of the dead on two planes. The first is solidarity with the earth: the dead are like weeds dug into the earth. On the other hand, agriculture is, above all, a technique of fertility, i.e. life propagated by reproduction, and the dead are specially connected with the mystery of renewal and eternal fertility (1959: 301). Like Bolivian Indians (Harris 1982), pagan Slavs tried to gain the favour of the souls of the dead, who were invited to feasts and given food and warmth. These actions established a covenant, a bond between the living and the dead. The food was left neither 'to feed souls', as was often claimed in

earlier Polish ethnographies (Zawistowicz 1933; Frankowska and Paprocka 1981), nor to prove that since the 'food remained untouched, therefore the dead remain dead', as was perversely pointed out in a more recent ethnography (Stomma 1986: 3). The ritual was a sacrifice which was not a matter of eating, but rather one of offering.

Feeding beggars was a similar practice. Beggars are a marginal group to some extent beyond society, and more a part of the next world than of this one. On the principle of reciprocity, beggars had in their turn to pray for the souls of their benefactors. They thus provided a natural link between the temporal life and the eternal. The custom of feeding beggars was common up until the Second World War, when it disappeared along with the social category of beggars. At present it appears only on the occasion of the more important Church festivals.

In the course of history the character of this sacrifice has been changing. Originally it was the souls of dead ancestors to whom sacrifices were offered, and later it was God. Now it is a ritual obligation rather than a proper sacrifice as such. This evolution stems from a shift in the stress on the material value of the sacrifice (food) to its more symbolic meaning and the solemnity of the offerer. Nowadays, it is a candle that is given. This is a good offering because, being burnt, it goes to the other world. But it does not occur only in this context. It is a frequent element in other rituals - for instance, in almost every Catholic church ceremony. Candles blessed on Candlemas Day were lit during thunderstorms and were supposed to protect the household from lightning. Blessed candles were also used to assist a dying person's soul to ascend to heaven. One can conclude that people give offerings to the souls of the dead, invite them to feasts, or pray for them, but as soon as 'their time passes', people need to get rid of them as soon as possible. The candle is supposed to make this transition easier. As to the secular use of candles, their instrumental function prevails (e.g. to provide light during power cuts). They are also sometimes used to stress the ceremonial atmosphere of a meal.

The dominating symbol in the ritual described above seems to be fire (candles, fireplaces, bonfires). It is one of those symbols which, because of its very nature, has always been of fundamental significance in folk culture. This arises, *inter alia*, from the fact that, in van der Leeuw's words:

Fire belongs only half to Nature, and the other moiety to culture. Of course primitive thought did not make this distinction, yet it is fully aware that fire is man's property: even if it did come down from heaven, still it was kindled and nourished by man' (1938: 60).

The meaning of this symbol does not depend only on its own nature, but also on how it is understood. According to Erich Neumann, fire is 'something "red", "hot", "burning"', which means that it is understood emotionally: 'fire is experienced with the aid of images which derive from the interior world of the psyche and are projec-

ted upon the external world, rather than that experiences of the external world are superimposed on the inner' (1971: 294). One may argue that the influence of the permanence of the symbol of fire in folk culture may be based on this.

The fire which I am considering is the good fire, the light:

...when once the association of light with goodness and darkness with evil had become established, it was carried out in ideas of the fate awaiting men after death. Good souls enter a world of light and wicked souls a world of darkness.

These words of Edwyn Bevan (1962: 111) lead us back to the ritual of All Souls' Day. This symbolism, accompanied by other denotations (godhead, wisdom, truth and goodness), is evident in the ritual.

Besides the symbol of fire, flowers also appear in the All Souls' Day ceremony. Their role is to lend the proceedings a more festive character, to stress the reverence of the offerer. In contemporary Polish culture flowers are very often used. They are given during visits to people on their name days to indicate that it is not an ordinary but rather a festive occasion, and they may also express sympathy. They often emphasise respect (for example, flowers given to a doctor to whom one is grateful at the end of an illness); or they function as a bribe to a woman clerk, on whom one is depending to arrange some matter for the donor. Laid at the monument of a national hero, they are an expression of homage. When they are laid on graves during funerals or on All Souls' Day they underline the festive or unusual character of the occasion, express reverence for the dead, and symbolize an association with them.

There could, however, be another interpretation. Let me attempt a structural analysis. For Lévi-Strauss, the opposition between life and death is of primary importance. As with other oppositions, it cannot be overcome, but myths attempt to resolve it. 'Mythical thought', he writes, 'always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution' (1963: 224). In primitive cultures, myth and rite constitute a certain whole, and are, as it were, two aspects of that culture: the theoretical and the practical (Mieletinski 1981: 52).

In the ritual under discussion, one can distinguish at least three important elements: food, fire and flowers. According to Danforth, food mediates the opposition between life and death in two ways. It is the metaphor of the human body as food. 'If the body is eaten by the earth, then it nourishes the earth and gives life to the world of nature' (1982: 104). The second is that food 'is believed to cross the boundary between the world of the living and the world of the dead, to pass from this world on over into the world where the souls of the dead dwell. These souls are thought to have the same needs as living human beings, yet they are unable to satisfy them without help' (ibid.: 104-5). Food is given to them directly or indirectly (through beggars or children).

Flowers, on the other hand, like all plants, weaken the opposition between life and death because they can be reborn each year. Flowers thus provide a metaphor of human life as plant life and therefore constitute an attempt to deny that human death is final (Leach 1961: 133).

Fire, light, symbolizing participation in the divine world and life everlasting (in heaven or in people's memory), can also deny man's death, which is now able to appear as a transitory stage, and not as the definite end of man's life. Fire is the transmitter between the world of the living and that of the dead.

These three symbols possess the same property: their role is to ease the discrepancy between life and death. They are used simultaneously, but in the course of history their role has been changed. Now it is rather the symbol of fire which conveys the message.

Let us pass on to the sociological part of the interpretation. 'In all societies', write Huntington and Metcalf, 'regardless of whether their customs call for festive or restrained behaviour, the issue of death throws into relief the most important cultural values by which people live their lives and evaluate their experiences' (1979: 2).

We honour the memory and the graves of those who were particularly important to us and who represented values particularly dear to us - indeed, who personified them. In paying homage to them, we acknowledge that we have the same beliefs as they had, and demonstrate the will to realise and defend the values they represented. And although our ancestors were surely no models of virtue, our memory sacralizes them. On a broader level, this concerns national heroes. That pantheon, however, is not assigned for ever. Heroes are historically changeable; nowadays, heroes are those figures who fought for independence and, more importantly, attained it, such as Field Marshal Józef Piłsudski. There are always many flowers on his grave in the crypt of Wawel Castle in Kraków.

People feel obliged to honour the memory of their ancestors. Historically speaking, this obligation has been realised in various ways. The principle of such ritual, however, has remained the same: as Turner put it, emotion was realised in ritual, which confirmed it as the norm, and the introduction of the ritual itself reinforced the norm (1970: 28-9). However, Radcliffe-Brown asserted that it is the ritual itself that determines the presence and intensity of the feeling expressed (1964: 324). I think that in the ritual in question there are two types of motivation; the first is connected with the acknowledgement of certain values as described above, while the second consists in social pressure only. However, the emotional result of performing the ritual is similar: strengthening or evoking the feeling of solidarity with the ancestors, continuity of tradition, or drawing attention to eternal matters.

Furthermore, the playing-out of the ritual itself integrates the group and allows it to distinguish its own members from outsiders. All Souls' Day fulfils this function by acknowledging the identity of the group and giving it a sacred character. However,

what has undergone change in the course of history is the nature of the group itself. Initially (i.e. before and for some time after the introduction of Christianity) we were dealing with a tribe; later, with a religious community, which was usually the local community made up of family groups; while at present, following urbanisation, it is the family and the nation. The sociological literature confirms the importance of these groups (at least as far as the two latter periods are concerned). The last period is of particular interest. Research into social consciousness by Stefan Nowak in the 1970s suggests that the Polish nation seems to be the sum of atomised families with nothing in between (Nowak 1979). The reasons for this should be sought as usual in the sphere of politics. All medium-range structures at present functioning in Poland are inauthentic, for they are created by the authorities. All attempts so far to create spontaneous groups or associations have been in vain; the only one to survive has been the underground Solidarity. On the surface, on the other hand, the groups which have resisted the destructive effects of the system are the family and the nation. The family is a group which can to a large extent resist the pressures of totalitarianism and the negative effect of the permanent economic crisis. The nation, on the other hand, is for historical reasons of fundamental importance to Poles and is linked with a sense of cultural identity. Thus the ritual described emphasises lasting and important social units, which are as it were realised over the graves of their dead, and the processes in which society participates. It also marks out lasting divisions and distinguishes its own members from outsiders. In this case, it principally concerns the division between the 'authorities' versus 'society at large', a division which became particularly important after 1980.

Connected with this is the problem of the two patriotisms: official patriotism, which chiefly concerns the last forty years of communist rule, and the spontaneous or traditional patriotism, expressing the cultural continuity of the Polish nation, despite attempts by the authorities to interrupt it (see Mach 1985). It must be added, however, that traditional Polish patriotism was formed during the period when Poland was partitioned: a strong identification with an idealized 'Poland' as a cultural unit became at that time the only source of national identity. This patriotism was, in fact, then the only indicator of the existence of a Polish nation. Being oppressed by a foreign power, Poles clearly distinguished the nation from the state. Thus the traditional patriotism is not chauvinistic, because it emerged from the need for ideological defence rather than attack, for example to sacrifice a great deal for the homeland (though all too often this has been limited to grumbles about the 'poor country' without anything positive being done). Patriotism of this kind thus has not necessarily meant a sense of solidarity with other compatriots, but rather a sense of solidarity with the idealized image of the country (symbolized by national heroes and those periods when Poland was a powerful and independent state). The communist state has tried to turn this Polish patriotism to its own advantage, but it has only partially succeeded. Poles have recognized that this

state, however 'Polish' it may be, does not express the Polish nation's aspirations, and that it has no intention of continuing traditional Polish culture, in which a sense of independence is deeply rooted.

One can learn much about these matters from a study of rituals and the symbols used in them, because they will in any case reflect, according to Turner, the key to an understanding of the social structure and the social process (1969: 1-43).

Let me conclude with the problem which was presented at the beginning of this article. Why did Protestants begin observing the ritual of the lighting of candles? It was the secularisation of this custom in an organisational sense, as well as the attribution to it of a very general religious meaning, which caused Lutherans to cease seeing it as a threat to their identity as a denomination different from Catholicism. Furthermore, failing to practise this custom would now be understood as an offence to the memory of the dead. From this change in Lutherans' behaviour, it may therefore be concluded that there has come about a change in the meaning attributed to the ritual.

The problem of secularisation (or rather, 'de-denominationalisation') itself remains behind, however. I believe that the two phenomena have overlapped. First, there has taken place a spontaneous generalisation and erosion of the religious significance of the lighting of candles, as this specific symbolism was no longer necessary. The pagan meaning of this ritual, or method of understanding it, no longer constitutes a threat to the Church. The Church meaning constructed to replace it, i.e. the 'supplicatory prayer for the wretched souls in Purgatory, that Christ might shine His eternal light upon them', seems today to be rather naive. For this reason it has been replaced with a more universal meaning. Whether this process was spontaneous or guided is difficult to say; certainly Church teaching has ceased to be concerned with the question. It has, as it were, become so obvious that it requires no specific justification; like the Christmas tree at Christmas, as one informant put it, 'it has to be, and that is all'. But this secularisation does not mean desacralisation, for now it is people's memory and concern which sacralizes the whole sphere in which the ritual is performed.

On the other hand, there is a deliberate propaganda campaign on the part of the state media which, like the Church a thousand years ago, seek to accommodate old customs and apply a meaning to them which is convenient for the media as acceptable to society. In this case, it consists of drawing attention to the remembrance due to the dead. The occurrence of such phenomena we know from other contexts: the acceptance of the substance without identification with the transmitter. The worldly meaning has penetrated through to people's consciousness, dislodging the need for a religious justification. It was perhaps stronger, more general and unifying, and so is included in the ritual of all Poles, regardless of their denomination or lack of it. This ritual, moreover, is of some significance in the development of a sense of national identity, of the national ethos and the struggle for liberty.

And it often happens that it turns against the intentions of the propagandists, as people more often go 'to the graves of the Home Army [the resistance movement of the Polish government-in-exile during the Second World War], of those who were murdered near Katyn [where several thousand Polish officers were assassinated by Soviet secret police in 1940]...[or] those who took part in the 1830 and 1863 uprisings' (Komorowska 1984: 155), as one Warsaw informant put it, than to memorials to soldiers of the Red Army. Propaganda has always been interested in the graves of 'liberators' and of those who 'fell preserving the rule of the people' (e.g. Polish soldiers fighting together with the Red Army). It may be said that Polish society visits its own graves, and the authorities their own. This duality is even more dramatic when the authorities try to make society's graves 'official', as shown earlier. That example clearly indicates the basis of official ritual - the one meaning it carries is the legitimisation of authority. This meaning, at least since 1980, is recognised as such by society, which is why there is a desire to give even supremely official occasions, such as Labour Day (May 1st), the stamp of spontaneity. That is why, since then, Solidarity demonstrations and parades have been organised in many towns and cities, aided by the Church, which celebrates the worker St Joseph's Day on the same day.

Hence the phenomenon of adjustment is not at present a one-sided process. On the part of the authorities there is the 'officialisation' of traditional holidays and rituals. I may mention here two more examples: Whitsun has been made into the Festival of the United People's Party and May 3rd into that of the Democratic Party, both allies of the PZPR (the Polish United Workers' Party). On the other hand, society has made 'spontaneous' the festival of Labour Day, till now exclusively official. Nevertheless, in the social consciousness there does exist a clear division: Christmas, Easter, Corpus Christi and All Saints' Day (together with All Souls' Day) are family and Church festivals, while Labour Day and July 22nd, the anniversary of Poland's restoration of 'independence' after the Second World War, are official festivals. Two other festivals should also be mentioned here: May 3rd, the anniversary of the signing of the Polish Constitution in 1791, and November 11th, the anniversary of the rise of the Polish state in 1918. In the period between the wars these were state festivals; at present they are celebrated as opposition festivals, together with August 31st, the anniversary of the rise of Solidarity.

In conclusion, let it be said that the changes which have taken place in the understanding of the ritual described and interpreted above can be considered in three different aspects: 1) religious - in the sense of Catholic, denominational; 2) religious - in the sense of generalized Christian; 3) religious - in the sense of sacred by the force of people's memory and the performance of ritual. One may argue that the third aspect is not religious at

all, but that is only a question of definition.

The meaning attributed to the ritual in question changes from 1) to 3). This process may be called secularisation, but there is still much room for the sacred. The ritual may not be regarded as a religious one, but at the same time it is not entirely secular either.

There are still some questions which remain unanswered. Is contemporary man reconciled to the inevitability of death, or has he removed this problem from his consciousness? Have people ceased to be aware of the discrepancy between the loss of their own worth and the fact that they are mortal, or do they continue to believe in the immortality of their souls? It is difficult to give unambiguous answers to these questions, but the ritual I have attempted to present in this article allows me to count on the remembrance of my living relatives on at least this one day of the year.

GRAŻYNA KUBICA

REFERENCES

- ARDENER, E. 1975. 'The Voice of Prophecy: Further Problems in the Analysis of Events', unpublished ms.
- BEVAN, E. 1962. *Symbolism and Belief*, London: Collins.
- BLOCH, M., and J. PARRY (eds.) 1982. *Death and the Regeneration of Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BROWN, P. 1981. *The Cult of the Saints*, London: SCM Press.
- CHEŁMIŃSKI, Z. (ed.) 1913. *Podręczna encyklopedia kościelna* [Short Encyclopaedia of the Church], Vol. 37-38, Warszawa.
- CZARNOWSKI, S. 1956. 'Kultura religijna wiejskiego ludu polskiego' [The Religious Culture of Polish Country Folk], in *Dziela* [Works], Vol. 1, Warszawa.
- DANFORTH, L.M. 1982. *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- ELIADE, M. 1959. *Traité d'histoire des religions*, Paris: Payot.
- FRANKOWSKA, M., and W. PAPROCKA (eds.) 1981. *Etnografia Polski* [The Ethnography of Poland], Vol. 2, Wrocław.
- GIEYSZTOR, A. 1982. *Mitologia Słowian* [Slavonic Mythology], Warszawa.
- GOODENOUGH, W.E. 1974. 'Towards an Anthropologically Useful Definition of Religion', in A.W. Eister (ed.), *Changing Perspectives in the Scientific Study of Religion*, New York: J. Wiley.
- HARRIS, O. 1982. 'The Dead and the Devils among the Bolivian Laymi', in Bloch and Parry 1982, pp. 45-83.
- HUBERT, H., and M. MAUSS 1981. *Sacrifice*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- HUNTINGTON, R., and P. METCALF 1979. *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- JANIK, R. 1973. 'Wspomnienia pośmiertne - czym są?' [Posthumous Remembrance - What Is It?], *Zwiastun*, Vol. XIII, no. 23, pp. 349-50.
- KOMOROWSKA, J. 1984. *Świąteczne zwyczaje domowe w wielkim mieście* [Domestic Festive Customs in the Big City], Warszawa.
- KUBIAK, I., and K. KUBIAK 1981. *Chleb w tradycji ludowej* [Bread in Folk Tradition], Warszawa.
- LEACH, E. 1961. *Rethinking Anthropology*, London: Athlone Press.
... 1976. *Culture and Communication*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LÉVI-STRAUSS, C. 1963. *Structural Anthropology*, New York: Basic Books.
- MACH, Z. 1985. 'National Symbols in the Context of Ritual: The Polish Example', *JASO*, Vol. XVI, no.1, pp. 19-34.
- MIELETINSKI, E. 1981. *Poetyka mitu* [The Poetics of Myth], Warszawa.
- NEUMANN, E. 1971. *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- NOWAK, S. 1979. 'Przemiany świadomości społecznej społeczeństwa polskiego' [Changes in the Social Consciousness of Polish Society], *Studia Socjologiczne*, no.4.
- NOWODWORSKI, M. (ed.) 1913. *Encyklopedia kościelna* [Encyclopaedia of the Church], Vols. 27 and 32, Płock.
- RADCLIFFE-BROWN, A.R. 1964. *The Andaman Islanders*, New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.
- REES, A., and B. REES 1961. *Celtic Heritage*, London: Thames and Hudson.
- STOMMA, L. 1981. *Słońce rodzi się 13 grudnia* [The Sun Rises on December 13th], Warszawa.
... 1986. 'Ludwik XVII i upiory' [Louis XVII and demons], unpublished ms.
- TURNER, V. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
... 1970. *The Forest of Symbols*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- VAN DER LEEUW, G. 1938. *Religion, Its Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology*, London: George Allen & Unwin.
- ZAWISTOWICZ, K. 1933. 'Obrzędy zaduszne' [The Customs of All Souls' Day], *Wiedza i Życie*, Vol. VIII, no.10.