

**Josep-Maria Mallarach (Ed.)**

**Spiritual Values of Protected Areas of Europe  
Workshop Proceedings**



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# **Spiritual Values of Protected Areas of Europe**

## **Workshop Proceedings**

**Workshop held from 2 - 6 November 2011 at the International Academy for Nature Conservation on the Isle of Vilm, Germany**

**Editor**  
**Josep-Maria Mallarach**



**Cover photo:** Magic moment in the nature reserve “Goor” on Rügen Island, Germany, during the field visit of the workshop (Vita de Waal)

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## **About this report**

The proceedings provide a comprehensive compilation of the results of the international workshop on spiritual values on protected areas in Europe. Participants from many European countries presented not only a wide range of case studies on the diversity of spiritual values within protected areas but tried to provide some guiding principles on how to best incorporate spiritual values into protected area management and management planning. The workshop took place from 2 - 6 November 2011 at the International Academy for Nature Conservation on the Isle of Vilm, Germany.

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## Summary and conclusions

*Josep-Maria Mallarach, editor*

Although many people agree that spiritual values are of major importance in Protected Areas, and even though most visitors show special interest in them; in fact, spiritual values are often neglected when it comes to the identification, assessment and effective ways of adequately integrating them into Protected Area (PA) planning and management.

So, in 2010 the decision was made by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation to try and bridge the gap between the different objectives, it was clear that the workshop should also attempt to develop guidance for PA managers on how to best manage and communicate spiritual values.

During the workshop many case studies and examples from all over Europe were presented – once again revealing the wide range and diverse types of tangible and intangible spiritual values connected with nature – often within existing protected areas. Still, the different examples can only offer a small insight into conservation status, trends and challenges of sacred natural sites or sacred landscapes, which are found in a many protected areas of Europe, including, inter alia, sanctuaries, monasteries, hermitages, pilgrimage ways, sacred or holy mountains, lakes, caves, springs, rivers, rocks, etc. related to a number of diverse living religious or spiritual traditions.

Moreover, given the secularization of many European societies, spiritual values are not necessarily limited to living religious values, but include other related aspects, such as sacred sites from ancient civilizations, as well as peaceful settings of natural beauty to gain inspiration and improve the well-being of mind and soul. Silence, solitude and beauty are usually understood as prerequisites for a deep, spiritual experience of nature.

This summary attempts to encapsulate with brief bullet points the main findings and conclusions of the working groups, as well as the key points of the presentations and discussions that took place during the workshop on ***Spiritual values of Protected Areas of Europe***, held at the International Academy for Nature Conservation, Isle of Vilm, Germany, **2–6 November 2011**. Its structure follows the ten questions that were suggested as topics of debate to the participants of the workshop.

### **Redefining ‘spiritual values’ for Protected Areas of Europe**

The spiritual values of nature (beauty, majesty, peace, unity, harmony, interdependence, cycle of birth/dead and rebirth, continuity, nourishment, abundance) are perceived by many people both inwardly and outwardly to be linked, and throughout the ages have instilled in people a sense of great reverence and gratitude to the Source of these values.

Since times immemorial, human beings have learnt to respect the power of natural elements and have established spiritual relationships with nature. For many people today nature as a spiritual experience still conveys feelings of reverence, awe, humility, amazement, gratitude, harmony, peace, unity and belonging, although at times may also be associated with stupefaction, fear and astonishment.

The perception of spiritual values of nature is often carried out in silence, which is when one reaches a state of inner calm, emptiness or atonement, thereby allowing for an intensification

of inner perception. This is often attained through personal contemplation or meditation, although in other situations it may form part of age-old tradition and ritual as enjoyed by the whole of the community.

Spiritual values or meanings of nature can be – but not necessarily – described in religious terms and act as a catalyst of different forms of identities.

Spiritual values of nature can be experienced when one is affected by spiritual atmospheres – feelings that are not only subjective but universal – emanating from events and phenomena in nature that infuse the observer with intimate feelings of awe, humility, fascination, continuity and deep proximity.

The spiritual meaning of nature can be described and presented using different forms of expression, although certain aspects can never be fully communicated without personal experience and will always remain beyond words.

For many people, the spiritual domain extends beyond the human cultural domain and on towards the Infinite or Absolute. The religious experience of nature is located in the nexus between spiritual and cultural domains, that is, it is culturally mediated. However, some natural spiritual values or meanings, including those related to biological diversity, can be regarded as universal and therefore are part of most human religions, beliefs and spiritual traditions.

In an era that pays excessive heed to a scientific approach to nature and to material values, there is a danger that nature be considered merely as a resource or object of study. The spiritual and emotional dimensions of nature need to be reintegrated to motivate and inspire people to take action to conserve and protect our common heritage.

Spiritual and religious dimensions play a significant role in many people's relationship with nature. Linking spiritual practices and natural experience helps develop new, deeper understandings of nature and therefore fosters attitudes of deep respect and reverence towards the natural world and, in general, the whole universe.

### **Mapping types of spiritual sites in Protected Areas of Europe. Where do which types occur?**

Many people recognise that there is a spiritual dimension to nature. For these people, spiritual values are found everywhere in nature and so can be experienced in all Protected Areas. However, spiritual values may have different intensities or significances.

Sacred/Holy natural sites or elements such as mountains, trees, springs, wells and islands are found throughout Europe. Some are related to ancient spiritual traditions, some to existing religions, whilst others are in the process of being restored or revitalised.

Sacred natural sites related to shamanistic or local traditional natural religions are found in most of Scandinavia and Russia, as well as in the Baltic countries. Examples include the Estonian *hiis*, some of which are still venerated, while others continue to inspire feelings of respect.

Sacred natural sites related to the ancient Celtic, Cucuteni-Trypillyan, Dacian, Etruscan, Hellenic, Megalithic, Roman and Slavic civilisations are found in many regions of Europe and

are sometimes embodied by imposing remains. In some but by no means in all cases these sites have been reused by later religions.

The sacred landscapes surrounding monasteries or tekyies are quite significant in southern and Eastern Europe. In the Balkans, where many were destroyed, as well as in other regions of Eastern Europe, these assemblages are currently being revitalised or restored. This is also the case of a number of hermitages and their lands. Many such sacred landscapes are found within Protected Areas.

Some Protected Areas have been established over ancient routes of pilgrimage. This is the case of the *caminos rocieros* in the Doñana wetlands (Spain) or Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in the Rhone Delta (France). In other cases, hundreds of kilometres of pilgrims' ways connect numerous Protected Areas, including the Camino de Santiago (Saint James' Way) linking Spain, France and Portugal, the Via Lauretana in Italy or the Via Francigena between Rome and Canterbury (Italy, Switzerland, France, United Kingdom), and foster landscape connectivity, as well as the restoration of natural and cultural heritage.

### **Custodianship/ownership patterns of spiritual sites and main stakeholders in Protected Areas. Who is responsible for management?**

In general, sacred natural sites and landscapes have custodians or guardians rather than owners. Nevertheless, religious buildings and their facilities located in sacred sites usually do have owners, which may be public, private or both.

Custodians/guardians of sacred natural sites have the duty to safeguard the spiritual values of the related spiritual community. This may have certain implications for the conservation of natural heritage.

Custodians/guardians of sacred natural sites in Protected Areas should inform visitors of the behaviour vis-à-vis the conservation of the natural heritage that is expected from them.

Custodians/guardians of sacred natural sites in Protected Areas should be consulted before a new Protected Area is set up or when adopting new management goals or plans in an existing Protected Area. They should also be given the chance to participate in management within the context and circumstances offered by the site (only in very few cases do they ever have any responsibilities or influence on management).

### **How well are spiritual values recognised by Protected Area administrations and the public? What is the pertinence and importance of sacred natural sites for contemporary Europeans?**

In most European Protected Areas spiritual or non-material values are not explicitly discussed in planning or management documents. This is so even in cases in which spiritual values are the main feature that attract visitors to the Protected Area.

In some Protected Areas spiritual values are implicitly considered in relation to aesthetics, health and well-being, or other related cultural values, but not as a management domain in its own right.

Recent surveys conducted in some countries (e.g. Finland and United Kingdom) show that one of the main reasons why visitors go to Protected Areas is to enjoy a spiritual experience within nature – solitude, beauty, silence, grandeur, harmony, etc.

In many European countries there is a much felt need to promote new, creative and effective approaches that will allow different societal groups (mostly urban) to profoundly reconnect to Nature.

Most Protected Areas offer outstanding opportunities and have a unique potential for enabling people to experience spiritual values of nature.

Local, national and international pilgrimage routes provide a unique experience that combines nature, spirituality and faith in a personal journey of contemplation.

### **How could religious and spiritual organizations be integrated into the conservation of natural heritage related to spiritual values in Protected Areas?**

It is important to promote a holistic, democratic and inclusive approach to heritage management in Protected Areas.

The potential overlap between religious and spiritual stakeholders should be recognised and work should be carried out at different levels (i.e. local, regional and institutional) to promote cooperation and unity in activities involving natural heritage.

Where they are powerful, religious organisations should be encouraged to influence policies (and their makers) and visitor behaviour affecting Protected Areas and nature conservation from national to local level.

Religious and spiritual organisations and authorities can play a significant role in educating and raising awareness by acknowledging the moral and spiritual dimensions of nature conservation, thereby fostering greater motivation for conserving natural heritage.

It is essential to respect the cultural and spiritual heritage of indigenous peoples and communities within protected areas (e.g. in northern Scandinavia and Russia<sup>1</sup>), including their oral traditions, traditional knowledge and use of nature.

Concerned managers in Protected Areas should nurture both their sacred natural areas and the pilgrims that visit them. They should encourage pilgrims and visitors alike to adopt respectful attitudes to all aspects of a site's heritage – natural, cultural and spiritual – so that it will continue to be similarly attractive to future generations.

### **What challenges and opportunities does working with these stakeholders offer?**

#### **Challenges**

Spiritual people do not like their spiritual experience to be overly "administrated and managed". They expect to find a space where they can freely immerse themselves in the experiences nature offers and the inspiration a spiritual site evokes.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the sami spread from Norway to the Kola peninsula, there are many other indigenous peoples in European Russia and some other Eastern European countries, such as the kalmyks, karelians, komi, kori, mari, mordvins, nenets, skolts, vepsians, etc.

Most managers of Protected Areas do not as yet recognise the value that sacred sites and related religious and spiritual tourism may represent, and often do not include spiritual and religious organisations in the planning and management processes of these sites.

Success is unlikely if the local community is not involved in protecting its own sacred landscape since the community is as much a component of the landscape as the forests, the mountains or the rivers are. Some elements of working landscapes, including local communities or custodians, may be too weak to resist new pressures and impacts and so must be nurtured.

The public must be informed if a particular sacred site cannot be visited, for example in the case of pilgrimages, festivities or particular ceremonies established in local communities that are not open to the public.

Managers of Protected Areas should address the needs and interests such as ritual calendars of different stakeholders. Such initiatives need to be discussed and agreed upon with the custodians and guardians of sacred sites.

The needs of the guardians and the traditional community must be respected if a sacred site is secret or if they do not want to form part of a body organised along non-traditional lines. Specific requirements relating to sacred sites, e.g. solitude and silence, may also exist.

Religious and spiritual people and authorities should recognise rule-based Protected Area management.

Conflicts arising between the different spiritual stakeholders of a particular site may have negative impacts on the conservation of its natural heritage. In these cases, equitable reconciliation has to be fostered and special care should be taken when protective measures in such sites are being planned and discussed.

The target group of custodians/guardians of sacred sites, or 'holders' of the spiritual knowledge is not always homogeneous and may require different styles of language for effective communication. Collaboration with the representatives of organised religious sites (e.g. shrines, sanctuaries and monasteries) is usually easier.

### **Opportunities**

Protected Areas are ideal places for experiencing the spiritual values of nature and as such provide excellent opportunities for forming strong bonds between religious and spiritual people, conservationists and managers of Protected Areas.

There is a great potential for joining forces as a means of developing the conservation, protection and revitalisation of spiritual natural sites, and looking at natural, cultural and spiritual heritages as an integrated whole.

Protected Areas are good places for identifying new sources of funding for sacred natural sites and the spiritual dimension of nature conservation, including investment by religious organisations.

There is a great potential for communicating and revitalising the importance of natural spiritual values via artistic languages such as traditional music, poetry and sacred dances.

Sacred natural sites are good places for sharing the spiritual and cultural values of nature emphasising those values shared by all that are universally recognised.

### **How and under which circumstances could spiritual values increase or enhance public support for Protected Areas?**

Managers of Protected Areas could emphasise the fact that religious/spiritual natural sites have been established and recognised since pre-historical times in many highly diverse civilisations and have often been preserved as a result. Recognition of this long-standing reverence may increase respect and public support.

Managers should acknowledge the fact that certain spiritual activities creating a deep affinity to nature have been performed since ancient times and should continue to be nurtured (e.g. rituals, ceremonies, prayers, meditation and contemplation).

Managers of Protected Areas could improve communication and enhance the acceptance of geological and biodiversity values by adopting more accessible, less technical languages and tools that enable people to relate better to the spiritual values of nature, thereby creating deeper and more positive attitudes and emotions.

Managers and planners could also increase interest in Protected Areas by teaching, documenting, mapping and interpreting spiritual values via participatory processes, workshops, lectures and observations, and also by using local place names, myths, legends and traditional tales.

Nature conservation is the core mission of managers of Protected Areas, whereas spiritual values are an added value that complement biodiversity-related values. However, managers should be aware – and acknowledge whenever appropriate – that in many cases spiritual values are the root reason for nature protection and the designation of a Protected Area.

For religious/spiritual communities, natural values are the external or tangible dimension of spiritual values. Therefore, from a spiritual perspective, a deep encounter with Nature has the capability to connect with the inner dimensions of nature and with human faculties that go beyond the rational.

Custodians of sacred sites and other ‘holders’ of spiritual values are natural allies in nature conservation and could thus be potential facilitators for Protected Areas with regard to local people and enhance the acceptance of necessary conservation measures.

Honest dialogue between managers – or other staff – of Protected Areas and the ‘holders’ of spiritual values is crucial. Therefore, as a first step contact, communication and a search for common ground for cooperation is necessary.

### **What conflicts might arise between the conservation of nature and the conservation of spiritual values?**

Strict nature conservation (e.g. IUCN category I) may deny visitors the right to access or use a site – even for religious or spiritual uses – in cases in which the (newly) Protected Area has been established on a sacred natural site that has been used and venerated for centuries.

Too many pilgrims or other 'spiritual visitors' may have a negative impact on nature conservation, e.g. disturbance of vulnerable species, trampling and erosion, the picking of endangered plants, etc.

The promotion of activity tourism/recreation usually results in greater visitor numbers and could have a negative impact on the sanctity of spiritual sites and harm the spiritual experience of nature.

The boundaries of Protected Areas might not coincide with the boundaries of spiritual sites and thus might lead to a loss of the site's spiritual importance or significance.

Nonetheless, it is important to stress that the level of conflicts between the conservation of nature, on the one hand, and of spiritual values, on the other, is low and occurs only on a local basis in some Protected Areas of Europe. Economic interests are a more serious and widespread threat and may harm both natural and spiritual heritage.

### **How can spiritual values be maintained and enhanced without affecting the conservation of Protected Areas of Europe?**

Custodians of sacred natural sites should cooperate with conservation professionals to decide when access to certain vulnerable or fragile spiritual places should be significantly reduced, restricted or otherwise altered in the best interest of the preservation of their values, just as managers of Protected Area do with some fragile habitats.

When needed, solutions adapted to local and cultural realities should be implemented to resolve conflicts. When required, codes of conduct for religious/spiritual users should be developed in a participatory fashion and creative ways should be employed to communicate with interested parties.

Both regulation and technical solutions may be needed to minimise damage such as soil erosion and trampling in cases of mass pilgrimages and other similar events.

Managers of Protected Areas should have an open attitude to religious/spiritual visitors. This implies dialogue during the planning and management processes involving local people and those involved with specific spiritual values (religious communities, practitioners) in the Protected Area.

In cases of custodians of sacred/holy natural sites without links to any specific entity or tradition that are based on individual knowledge and/or intuitive perception, it is preferable to make use of their links with local people and/or the staff of the local Protected Area.

In the exceptional case of custodians that are not willing to actively communicate/cooperate (e.g. some indigenous communities) with managers of Protected Areas, a questionnaire can be used. Nevertheless, in these cases, custodians should not be studied without their express approval and decisions should not be taken on their behalf without their previous and informed consent.

### **What are the main implications and recommendations for management in Protected Areas that aim to maintain and promote both spiritual and natural values?**

Develop a common understanding of spiritual values, whilst putting nature into its cultural context, encouraging the use of words that are appropriate for each language/culture.

Integrate spiritual values into all aspects of Protected Areas, from names, boundaries and designs, to planning and management objectives and actions, all the while working with local stakeholders.

Build and communicate the evidence for spiritual values in Protected Areas by using case studies and existing expertise in Europe.

Develop a stronger spiritual component in principles and management actions regarding visitor conduct, education and community involvement in Protected Areas, as well as setting up training programmes for Protected Area staff.

When appropriate, set up interpretation centres and programmes regarding the spiritual meanings of sacred natural sites in protected areas in order to raise respect for these sites amongst visitors and/or to enable visitors to enjoy their spiritual atmospheres.

Use well-designed methods for protecting sacred landscapes and avoid using standard recipes imported from outside that are foreign to the values and practices of the local community. Participant observation is the best method for working towards the development of participatory conservation strategies as it offers in-depth insight on pertinent questions.

The 2008 IUCN-UNESCO Guidelines for managers of Protected Areas including sacred sites provide very useful guidance for indigenous peoples, but need to be broadened for use with sacred natural sites with connections with the historical religions of Europe (Christianity and Islam), as well as newcomers such as Buddhism.

Take into consideration the statements of the workshops of the IUCN WCPA Delos Initiative held in Spain (2006), Greece (2007) and Finland (2010), as well as the recent workshop on intrinsic and spiritual values of the Europarc Federation Congress held in Germany (2010).

Collaborate when appropriate with the WCPA Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas, especially with The Delos Initiative, collating case studies and developing a list of experts using existing communication tools.

Develop recommendations and guidelines at European level, building on the Manual of Intangible Heritage that is being prepared by the Working Group of the Spanish Section of the Europarc Federation. Bearing in mind the diversity of contexts, different approaches should be devised for:

- Fostering the spiritual experience of Protected Areas in general.
- Contemporary sacred natural sites and sacred landscapes.
- Ancient sacred natural sites and sacred landscapes.
- Protected Areas including monastic/sufi communities, hermits and equivalents.
- Pilgrimages inside protected areas or connecting protected areas.
- Shrines or temples attracting large numbers of pilgrims or visitors.

A compilation of main recommendations for Protected Areas managers is separately included in the proceedings following this summary on page 17.



## Recommendations for protected area managers

*Josep-Maria Mallarach, editor*

*This summary attempts to encapsulate with brief bullet points the conclusions of the workshop on **Spiritual values of Protected Areas of Europe**, held at the International Academy for Nature Conservation, Isle of Vilm, Germany, **2–6 November 2011**. It focusses on the points that have greatest significance for Protected Area managers. However, the overall conclusions of the workshop (p. 9) may also be of interest and provide additional information for many readers.*

### **How well are spiritual values recognised by Protected Area administrations and the public? What is the pertinence and importance of sacred natural sites for contemporary Europeans?**

- In most European Protected Areas spiritual or non-material values are not explicitly discussed in planning or management documents. This is so even in cases in which spiritual values are the main feature that attract visitors to the Protected Area.
- In some Protected Areas spiritual values are implicitly considered in relation to aesthetics, health and well-being, or other related cultural values, but not as a management domain in its own right.
- Recent surveys conducted in some countries (e.g. Finland and United Kingdom) show that one of the main reasons why visitors go to Protected Areas is to enjoy a spiritual experience within nature – solitude, beauty, silence, grandeur, harmony, etc.
- In many European countries there is a much felt need to promote new, creative and effective approaches that will allow different societal groups (mostly urban) to profoundly reconnect to Nature.
- Most Protected Areas offer outstanding opportunities and have a unique potential for enabling people to experience spiritual values of nature.

### **How and under which circumstances could spiritual values increase or enhance public support for Protected Areas?**

1. Managers of Protected Areas could emphasise the fact that religious/spiritual natural sites have been established and recognised since pre-historical times in many highly diverse civilisations and have often been preserved as a result. Recognition of this long-standing reverence may increase respect and public support.
2. Managers should acknowledge the fact that certain spiritual activities creating a deep affinity to nature have been performed since ancient times and should continue to be nurtured (e.g. rituals, ceremonies, prayers, meditation and contemplation).
3. Managers of Protected Areas could improve communication and enhance the acceptance of geological and biodiversity values by adopting more accessible, less technical languages and tools that enable people to relate better to the spiritual values of nature, thereby creating deeper and more positive attitudes and emotions.

4. Managers and planners could also increase interest in Protected Areas by teaching, documenting, mapping and interpreting spiritual values via participatory processes, workshops, lectures and observations, and also by using local place names, myths, legends and traditional tales.
5. Nature conservation is the core mission of managers of Protected Areas, whereas spiritual values are an added value that complements biodiversity-related values. However, managers should be aware – and acknowledge whenever appropriate – that in many cases spiritual values are the root reason for nature protection and the designation of a Protected Area.
6. For religious/spiritual communities, natural values are the external or tangible dimension of spiritual values. Therefore, from a spiritual perspective, a deep encounter with Nature has the capability to connect with the inner dimensions of nature and with human faculties that go beyond the rational.
7. Custodians of sacred sites and other ‘holders’ of spiritual values are natural allies in nature conservation and could thus be potential facilitators for Protected Areas with regard to local people and enhance the acceptance of necessary conservation measures.
8. Honest dialogue between managers – or other staff – of Protected Areas and the ‘holders’ of spiritual values is crucial. Therefore, as a first step contact, communication and a search for common ground for cooperation is necessary.

### **How can spiritual values be maintained and enhanced without affecting the conservation of Protected Areas of Europe?**

- Custodians/guardians of sacred natural sites in Protected Areas should be consulted before a new Protected Area is set up or when adopting new management goals or plans in an existing Protected Area. They should also be given the chance to participate in management within the context and circumstances offered by the site (only in very few cases do they ever have any responsibilities or influence on management).
- Custodians of sacred natural sites should cooperate with conservation professionals to decide when access to certain vulnerable or fragile spiritual places should be significantly reduced, restricted or otherwise altered in the best interest of the preservation of their values, just as managers of Protected Area do with some fragile habitats.
- When needed, solutions adapted to local and cultural realities should be implemented to resolve conflicts. When required, codes of conduct for religious/spiritual users should be developed in a participatory fashion and creative ways should be employed to communicate with interested parties.
- Both regulation and technical solutions may be needed to minimise damage such as soil erosion and trampling in cases of mass pilgrimages and other similar events.
- Managers of Protected Areas should have an open attitude to religious/spiritual visitors. This implies dialogue during the planning and management processes involving local people and those involved with specific spiritual values (religious communities, practitioners) in the Protected Area.

- In cases of custodians of sacred/holy natural sites without links to any specific entity or tradition that are based on individual knowledge and/or intuitive perception, it is preferable to make use of their links with local people and/or the staff of the local Protected Area.

### **Main implications and recommendations for management in Protected Areas that aim to maintain and promote both spiritual and natural values**

- Develop a common understanding of spiritual values, whilst putting nature into its cultural context, encouraging the use of words that are appropriate for each language/culture.
- Integrate spiritual values into all aspects of Protected Areas, from names, boundaries and designs, to planning and management objectives and actions, all the while working with local stakeholders.
- Build and communicate the evidence for spiritual values in Protected Areas by using case studies and existing expertise in Europe.
- Develop a stronger spiritual component in principles and management actions regarding visitor conduct, education and community involvement in Protected Areas, as well as setting up training programmes for Protected Area staff.
- When appropriate, set up interpretation centres and programmes regarding the spiritual meanings of sacred natural sites in protected areas in order to raise respect for these sites amongst visitors and/or to enable visitors to enjoy their spiritual atmospheres.
- Use well-designed methods for protecting sacred landscapes and avoid using standard recipes imported from outside that are foreign to the values and practices of the local community. Participant observation is the best method for working towards the development of participatory conservation strategies as it offers in-depth insight on pertinent questions.
- The 2008 IUCN-UNESCO Guidelines for managers of Protected Areas including sacred sites provide very useful guidance for indigenous peoples, but need to be broadened for use with sacred natural sites with connections with the historical religions of Europe (Christianity and Islam), as well as newcomers such as Buddhism.
- Take into consideration the statements of the workshops of the IUCN WCPA Delos Initiative held in Spain (2006), Greece (2007) and Finland (2010), as well as the recent workshop on intrinsic and spiritual values of the Europarc Federation Congress held in Germany (2010).
- Collaborate when appropriate with the WCPA Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas, especially with The Delos Initiative, collating case studies and developing a list of experts using existing communication tools.
- Develop recommendations and guidelines at European level, building on the Manual of Intangible Heritage that is being prepared by the Working Group of the Spanish Section of the Europarc Federation.

The overall summary and conclusions of the workshop are included in the proceedings (p. 9), may also be of interest and provide additional information for many readers.



## Introductory overview of the spiritual values in the Protected Areas of Europe

*Josep-Maria Mallarach*

The significance of the spiritual values of nature – and by extension of nature conservation – has increased in environmental and conservation circles with the realization of the implications of limiting the scope of reality to the material realm. This view, espoused by dominant neoclassic economic thought and all related technocratic approaches, is acknowledged as one of the main causes of the systemic global crisis, of which the environmental and economic dimensions are perhaps the most striking features.

Within the IUCN a major turning point was the Fifth World Parks Congress, held in Durban, South Africa, in 2003. For the first time, a large delegation representing the world's indigenous peoples presented a very thorough criticism of Western, materialistic approaches to nature conservation and condemned the terrible injustices indigenous peoples have had to suffer as a result of the creation of national parks and other types of large wildlife reserves based on unjust models. Consequently, the Congress approved a series of forceful recommendations designed to integrate cultural and spiritual values into the strategies, planning and management of protected natural areas and suggesting a new more equitable deal with indigenous peoples and local communities (WCPA, 2003).

Indeed, for most of recorded history, nature and landscapes have been permeated by spiritual meanings and values. Until the spread of reductionist and positivist ideologies began as far as most Europeans were concerned spiritual values were fundamental and by no means intangible realities that, like an odour, were actually perceivable – and this belief has continued to exist in most rural areas, right up to the present.

In terms of the sacredness of nature, the worldviews held by the Proto-Uralic people, Germans, Vikings and Celts were not essentially that dissimilar from those of the Tartar or Dacian people of Eastern Europe, even if some external manifestations were somewhat different. The Roman historian Tacitus wrote in the first century AD that “The Germans (...), do not consider it consistent with the grandeur of celestial beings to confine the gods within walls, or to liken them to the form of any human countenance. They consecrate woods and groves, and they apply the names of deities to that hidden presence which is seen only in spiritual worship” (Tacitus, n.d).

With some variations, this view of nature was alive in the Sami communities of northern Scandinavia and the Kola Peninsula until the past century; even today similar worldviews thrive in Russia amongst indigenous people such as the Kalmyks, Karelians, Komi, Mari, Mordvins, Nenets and Skolts.

When Christianity gradually spread and gained ground at the cost of the old 'paganisms', in many regions believers chose to integrate ancient sacred sites and pilgrimage routes into the new religion, which is why, for instance, many important megalithic centres became Christian shrines. Likewise, the ancient Slavic sacred trees became *zapis* in the Balkans and are still are consecrated and protected by the Orthodox Church in Serbia (see p. 97, S. Dingarac & N. Pesic). Indeed, the overlap between sacred natural sites and sacred landscapes has always been more the rule than the exception (see p. 75, V. de Waal).

Additionally, Christianity created new sacred natural sites. In southern Europe many such sites are either related to heavenly manifestations such as apparitions of the Virgin Mary or have been sanctified by the presence of holy people. Another category are the monastic landscapes, created and maintained for centuries by Christian monastic communities that combine beauty, harmony and productivity with careful and efficient management practices, which have inspired nature conservation in several countries (see p. 139, J-M. Mallarach). Moreover, in remote regions natural areas still exist in which hermits have been living in harmony with nature for centuries and today, even in some of the most secularised countries such as France, hermits are currently experiencing something of a revival (Muizon, 2001).

Hence, all over Europe sacred sites and sacred landscapes linked to almost all of the religions and spiritual traditions that have flowered in the continent and its islands over the preceding millennia can still be found, often within protected areas. This is a highly significant point and can be illustrated by reference to examples of sacred sites such as Om Mountain, related to the archaic Hyperborean tradition in the Romanian Carpathians, and the many large sacred megalithic complexes (e.g. Stonehenge in Britain, Carnac in Brittany and many others on the Mediterranean islands of Menorca, Sicily and Malta) that still cause wonder amongst contemporaries and in some cases are even being used once again for rituals. Among the most outstanding Hellenic sacred sites it is worth mentioning Mount Olympus, the islands of Delos, Patmos and Rhodes, and the temple of Delphi.

Thousands of Christian Orthodox holy sites are found scattered throughout Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and include the impressive monastic landscapes of the Holy Mountain (Athos) or Meteora in Greece, Vanatori-Neamt or Burilita in Rumania, and Solovetsky in Russia. Similarly, there are numerous sacred natural sites relating to Latin Christianity, including the holy mountains of Montserrat, Montsant and Lluc in Spain, Sacri Monti and La Verna in Italy, and a large number of important shrines such as Lourdes in France and El Rocío in Spain. Pilgrimage routes including the Saint James' Way (Camino de Santiago) in Spain, France and Portugal, and the Via Lauretana in Italy connect protected areas and are still used by pilgrims from many European countries.

This short list – which could easily be extended to many more sites – should also include many of the Muslim holy natural sites found in Europe, above all, in the Balkans, Cyprus and Turkey; e.g. the amazing holy landscape of the Sufi Tekiya of Blagaj, in Bosnia (see p. 47, A. Hadžimuhamedović) and a number of Buddhist monasteries, most built in recent decades in natural areas.

As such, a large number of temples, shrines, monasteries, necropolises, inscriptions, holy springs, wells, caves and trees, burial mounds and pilgrimage routes, many still used for their original purposes, are to be found in some of the most valuable landscapes in Europe. They are all part and parcel of the spiritual heritage included in European protected areas, especially those features that have been classified as “protected landscapes” (IUCN Category V), which amount to almost 70% of the total (IUCN WCPA, 1994). Most papers included in this publication provide significant examples of this reality, such as those by T.Gardashuk (p. 115); A. Hackiewicz (p. 85), S. Hadžimuhamedović (p. 55), B. Rantasa (p. 79) and K. Stara (p. 67).

As well, some of the most pristine landscapes of Europe have also been long-held in reverence by our ancestors and to this day for many retain their original sanctity. For cultural and historical reasons these landscapes are especially significant amongst the Slavic and Finno-Ugric peoples (see p. 63, Y. Norokorpi and p. 149, A. Sepp).

The intense secularisation that has dominated most European societies over the last two centuries has resulted in what Max Weber referred to as a 'Disenchantment of the world' (*Entzauberung der Welt*). However, when the first modern protected areas were established in many countries, around one hundred years ago, spiritual values were often present, as in North America with the religious naturalism of Thoreau and Emerson, and with John Muir and the transcendentalists (Sax, 1980). As an example it is worth quoting Senator Pedro Pidal, who was instrumental in the declaration of the first Spanish national parks: "National Parks or Nature sanctuaries, where people go looking for inspiration in the eternal beauty of landscape, in the sublime charms of forests, meadows and rocks. A veritable temple for the Lord, where soul and lungs breath new oxygen, and one gets strength to return to the strenuous life of the big cities" (Pidal, 1909, quoted by Casado, 2007).

It was not until after World War Two that the spread of natural sciences and modern technologies led to the growing use of scientific criteria and technical language in many protected areas, not just in Europe but in other regions, often former colonies, in which the European influence was most felt. As a result, in recent decades, in most European countries planners and managers in protected areas have been instilled with a materialistic view of nature that neglects all immaterial – including the spiritual – dimensions. This, coupled with intrusive tourism and recreational activities, creates often new challenges for conserving or restoring the spiritual values of protected areas. Combination of ignorance and indifference of sacred values and related obligations, resulting from cultural and spiritual breakdown, are often contributing factors.

Yet, this trend has not been able to entirely erase the inherent spiritual values of nature. Despite appearances, the holiness or sacredness of nature has very deep roots in most European societies and is currently being revitalised in many regions. This is why numerous sacred natural sites and landscapes are recovering after decades of neglect, not only in former communist countries but also, against all the odds, in Western Europe.

One must acknowledge, however, that in contemporary Europe, 'spiritual' is often understood in a very broad sense that encompasses almost everything that is not material. It thus includes not only that – in Christian terminology – which is related to the action of the Holy Spirit, but also the intermediate realms, such as the 'natural spirits' (see p. 41, B. Vogel); as well as all the immaterial qualities that may stimulate more intense and deeper emotional experiences in the natural world (see p. 35, Surau-Ott).

In this respect, the growing demand for silence, beauty and tranquillity in protected areas being expressed in some of the most urbanised and secularised countries of Europe is quite significant, since these intangible values are commonly considered to be basic requirements for the enjoyment of the spiritual values of nature. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the Areas of Natural Outstanding Beauty are a distinct system of protected areas, representing 18% of the finest countryside in England and Wales. As well, in reviews of management plans of national parks such as the North York Moors and the Yorkshire Dales the public

participatory process has given priority to the ability to experience solitude and beauty. Another example is the still active Campaign to Protect Rural England, founded almost a century ago (1926) to protect rural landscapes and their natural values, as well as their beauty and peacefulness.

An additional layer of complexity results from the emergence of new sacred natural sites related to mainstream faiths to which adhere immigrants from distant countries, in growing numbers in many countries of Europe. An example is the Hinduisation of some parts of the mountain landscape of the National Park of Snowdonia, Wales, UK (Nigel Dudley, per. com. 2007), and, in different ways, cases like the Holy Island of Arran, in Scotland, UK, which use to be a Christian Celtic sacred site in the past and now is an interfaith centre lead by a Tibetan Buddhist organization (Soria, 2007).

Once the United Nations Environment Programme had become interested in the cultural and spiritual values of biodiversity in the late 1990s (Töpfer, 1999), recognition of the spiritual values of the natural world began to grow steadily on the international arena. In 2003, UNESCO approved the much needed Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage given that the concept of cultural heritage in the context of the world heritage sites, for example, had been reduced to a purely tangible dimension by the same materialistic bias as had affected natural heritage. As previously mentioned, in the same year the World Parks Congress in Durban approved bold recommendations for integrating cultural and spiritual values into the strategies, planning and management of protected natural areas.

Within the IUCN World Commission of Protected areas, a Task Force on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas was established in 2003. As part of this Task Force, The Delos Initiative was launched in 2004, aimed at fostering the integration of cultural and spiritual values of protected areas in technologically developed countries. International workshops held in Spain, Greece and Finland have discussed numerous representative case studies of sacred natural sites, most of them European, in which a wide range of best practices have been implemented (Mallarach & Papayannis, 2007; Papayannis & Mallarach, 2009; Mallarach, Papayannis, & Väisänen, 2011).

During the last years, several universities have organised seminars, workshops and conferences in Europe – cradle of anthropocentrism and materialism - to discuss topics such as the sacredness of nature, holy places and sacred natural sites and landscapes (Dudley et al., 2008; Verschuuren et al., 2010; Davydof, 2012). At the same time, a significant number of books have been recently published exploring the relationship between religion/spirituality and nature/environment conservation (e.g. Landron, 2008; Sponsel, 2007; Rønnow, 2011).

In the old Europe diversity is very high and nature's pull has many different facets. The trends discussed previously suggest that its deepest pull may in many cases be a spiritual attraction, which, depending on the region in question, may or may not be religious in origin, but establishes an intrinsic relationship (see p. 31, K. Ott). Thus, to be effective the conservation of the most valuable protected areas in Europe necessarily implies the conservation of the spiritual and cultural values that have shaped and/or sustained these areas (Mallarach, 2008). In fact, the beauty and harmony of nature is usually understood or felt as the outer reflection of the truth and beauty of the principles and values of sustaining cosmologies.



Numerous conflicts throughout Europe concerning the safeguard of natural areas, as well as the increasing pressures and impacts on them, underline the fact that, when all is said and done, only immutable intrinsic values are capable of counteracting the large-scale onslaught against nature justified by short-sighted economic arguments.

Globalisation has brought about in recent years all kinds of valuable lessons. Analysis of the collapse of past civilisations has revealed that the most sustainable civilisations are those that have most respected their surrounding environments based on intrinsic and ultimately spiritual values (Diamond, 2005). Therefore, the most resilient and long-lasting value-systems, which have all shown their ability to adapt to changing circumstances, deserve not only our respect but also our fullest consideration. Where, if not, will we be able to find the keys to redress the unsustainable trends that we all agree are in desperate need of modification?

As is well known, the European Union adopted a commitment in 2005 to halt biodiversity loss by 2010. It was the only international body in the world to do so, since others proposed a less ambitious goal of 'slowing the decline' in biodiversity loss by the same date. Despite the vigorous policies on protected areas and nature conservation that have been implemented in many European countries, the dwindling of our natural heritage has continued unabated and biological and landscape diversity has declining unchecked to the extent that 65% of the habitats and 52% of species in the European Union were found to have an "unfavourable conservation status" (EEA, 2009).

How might we reverse these negative trends? How can we modify the deep-rooted attitudes that damage our common heritage and move towards broader-based and more coherent support for nature conservation? Could spiritual values contribute to this noble aim? There is growing evidence to suggest that they might be able to do so. A restitution of the spiritual values of nature would therefore be timely as a way of overcoming superficial considerations that reduce nature to its corporeal parts, and as a way of recovering fuller and deeper perspectives including other dimensions that have been neglected for too long, as well as the powerful feelings and emotions related to them (see p. 133, S. Deikert).

When all is said and done, the whole rhetoric of developmentalists, their unfounded forecasts of continuous growth, the indefinite accumulation of material wealth, and the blind trust shown in technocratic remedies all collide with the implacable thresholds of our biosphere and nature's elegant laws. In light of the growing uncertainty of future scenarios and the anxieties provoked by the systemic crises that besiege us, the common wisdom of a wide diversity of cultural backgrounds coincides in a serene and realistic assessment: nature will have the last word and only societies based on true values – in other words, on knowledge – will have any chance of surviving the crisis. Therefore, the rediscovery of the spiritual values of nature and their restoration to an appropriate place in our society would be an act of greater significance with far greater implications than might at first be thought (Nasr, 1996).

In the context of protected areas of Europe, this would imply embracing the intrinsic values of many of the European conservationists of the nineteenth century, enriched with common elements from all of humanity's great spiritual traditions and articulated with truthful language that appeals to the intrinsic values that remain alive – despite appearances to the contrary – within our society. These values could be conveyed as appropriate by traditional music and

poetry, both closely linked to nature (see p. 129 V. Sahi). In some cases, the impact of the artistic view of nature has been crucial to foster protection of natural areas (see p. 91, A. Koroleva).

Albert Schweitzer's 'reverence for life' (Ehrfurcht von dem Leben) resonates in many contemporary Europeans perhaps even more than in his lifetime. Over the last ten years throughout much of Europe the number of leading scientists, artists and thinkers in many different languages that have appealed to the spiritual values of nature is steadily growing. Simultaneously, many European religious and spiritual leaders, including the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, have articulated their positions and recommendations in many of their declarations and statements.

It is appropriate to conclude by quoting the most prominent of all Spanish ecologists, Professor Ramon Margalef, who, shortly before his death, confessed: "I think that a certain success, or at least a certain inner peace in relation to these problems, requires us to see nature with reverence or with a religious attitude (...). I truly believe that this has to be the base of conservation ethics that will fully move people" (Margalef, 1987). As the reader will notice, both the papers that follow and the conclusions from the workshop provide an array of eloquent testimonies in support of this important message.

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## **Spiritual Values of Protected Areas in Europe – Overview and Definitions**



## ***Between protected areas and sacred sites: From extrinsic to intrinsic relationships***

Konrad Ott

The following assertions present an argument why the relationship between sacred sites on the one hand and protected areas on the other hand can and should be regarded as an intrinsic relationship. This argument has some practical implications of how protected area management and spiritual visitors should encounter each other.

1. Matters of interest must be related. Protected areas (PA) and spiritual encounter with nature (SEN) are both matters of interests. Thus, they must be related to each other.
2. SEN must be distinguished between a) spiritual experiences with(in) nature which can be felt at any present time, and b) sacred sites that stem from religious doctrines which are either “alive” or “dead”. This relation also must be determined.
3. PA must be distinguished between a) the area and its nature (habitats, ecosystems, species), b) its legal status, and c) its management (PAM).
4. We should distinguish conceptually between spiritual visitors and ordinary tourists even if this distinction is often blurred in reality.
5. We leave the relations that result out of the distinctions being made in no. 2, 3 and 4 aside for a while and focus on the general relationship between PA and SEN.
6. In logic, there is a distinction between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* relations. (Philosophies that address this difference are, among others, to be found in Hegel, Whitehead, and Naess.)
7. If some matters coincide in time and space there is an extrinsic relation: **R(e)**. If matters (somehow) belong to each other there is an intrinsic relation: **R(i)**. There is a difference between both kinds of relationships that makes some practical differences.
8. Analytic philosophy and most systems of logic prefer extrinsic relationships for reasons of parsimony and simplicity.
9. An extrinsic relationship between PA and SEN can be put into the following abbreviation: **[PA ↔ SEN] ! R(e)**. In ordinary language: The relationship between PA and SEN should(!) be seen as an extrinsic relationship.
10. The following reasons for this point of view can be given:
  - PA are institutionalized on secular grounds within secular policy making.
  - PA is rooted in scientific conservation biology, not in spiritual “ecosophies”.
  - Nature conservation should be based on secular credible reasons.
  - Spiritual experiences can be “made” outside PA.
  - “Genius loci”– arguments that might establish R(i) have a metaphysical smell.
  - As a matter of fact, PA often have been established in areas on which some sacred sites are located, but this does not make the relationship an intrinsic one since one can explain rationally why this coincidences occurs (former religious restrictions on utilization).

11. Under **[PA ↔ SEN] ! R(e)** a lot of practical tasks remain to manage such extrinsic relationship by professional PA management. Extrinsic relationship can be based on prudence, tolerance, and even some trust in the other party. There can be a search for win-win-situations even within extrinsic relations (as in commerce between companies).
12. By intuition, some (many, most?) conservationists would like to adopt an intrinsic relationship because of some individual spiritual encounters with(in) nature. Spiritual people from different religious traditions that wish to care for the Earth have similar intuitions. (If you do not share such intuitions, just feel happy with R(e).)
13. How can one *argue* in favor of the claim **C = [PA ↔ SEN] ! R(i)** ?
14. Let's concede that pure logic and pure conceptual analysis as such can't warrant C. There is no moral obligation from which C can be derived. Thus, there is neither logical, conceptual, nor moral force behind C.
15. Intrinsic relationships often are not "given" but can be "made".
16. Human beings are free to make C become "true" by their own performative actions and experiences. By doing and experiencing, C can be established (*ipso facto*): "We" can "make" R(i) become true.
17. Humans are both *capable* and *entitled* to establish intrinsic relationships, as in love, family life and friendship.
18. We should read the exclamation mark "!" not just as a "should" based on fixed norms and values but as a performato, which is two-sided:
  1. [PAM → SEN] ! R(i): *invitational attitude* to spiritual visitors and *respect* for sacred sites as such by PA management. This requires to overcome the widespread fear of PA managers against visitors.
  2. [SEN → PAM] ! R(i): *recognition* of PA as such by religious people and authorities. This includes recognition of rule-based PA management but not of any single rule.
19. Such "making" of intrinsic relationship is not a technological one. It is not a making which is under control of PAM, and no arrangement of spiritual experiences by PA administration or even SEN experts. It is more *poietic* than *practical*.
20. Being out in (special) places at which sacred sites and protected areas "blend" and "fuse" people can be "in such making" of R(i) by which they are "coiling" R(i) and make C happen. In some other wording: [PAM → SEN] ! R(i) can be established by focal practices (as restoration activities, spiritual hiking, meditation, festivities, dance, sculpturing and the like) and experiences that might, in the parlance of contemporary environmental ethics, be called transaesthetic, deontic, transformative and the like.
21. I borrow the term "coiling" from my friend Jeanette Armstrong who sees the identity of the Okanagan-Syilx Nation as being rooted in the activity of coiling together the material and spiritual strings of the land. This idea of "coiling the land" can be universalized and is close to ideas of "caring for the earth" and "healing the land" which go far beyond prudent resource management.



22. Coiling is a poetic activity that is being felt intensively from “inside”, f. i. as bliss. Intensities can be enhanced to moods and even to atmospheres in which spiritual encounters with nature fuse with full recognition of an area being protected.
23. Coiling R(i) and atmospheres can be shared commonly by means of discursive and poetic/religious language.
24. Let’s make R(i) become true:
  - Let’s coil the land!
  - Let’s be in the making!
  - Let’s share the bliss of SEN /atmospheres!
  - Let’s form strong coalitions between conservationists, PAM and spiritual people!
  - Let’s make PA locations of SEN and of virtual shared bliss!
  - PAM should welcome spiritual pilgrims who do not wish to leave material traces (despite some CO<sub>2</sub>)
  - Spiritual people do not like to be administrated and “managed”. They like to immerse into nature.
25. If you adopt 18-24, you have reasons to adopt C. Some commitments for both spiritual visitors and PA managers might be derived.
26. Conflicts of both values and interests occur under both relationships but the attitude to conflicts differs.
27. Relations of domination, power, and force are never fully intrinsic.
28. By coiling, PA and its management on the one side and spiritual visitors on the other side can, in some future, belong to each other.
29. The highly diverse individuality of Europe can be enhanced if PA management and spiritual people establish such R(i) from the Baltic Sea to the Iberian Peninsula and from Ireland to Greece.



## ***Spiritual experiences within nature***

*Veronika Surau-Ott*

“I took a train from O. to L. It was afternoon, stormy light shade, sun and shadow on the fields. I was looking in amazement into this landscape. I was completely overwhelmed. I could have burst into cheers. I cried, I had the impression this is God. It was a picture of peace and harmony of everything with everything. I had the impression that I'm part of it. It was a mystic, a sort of pantheistic basic experience, the experience of God in nature”, writes the Swiss author Walter F. Otto (Sölle, 1999).

Everyone can name moments, where she or he is deeply moved by the beauty of nature. The more impressive the aesthetic experience, the more it gains a spiritual character: “We may experience a nature whose poignant beauty on some occasions speaks of a transcendent source for which we lack words and clear concepts.” (Hepburn, 1996; Ott, 2011: 121).

In the following I want to describe spiritual experiences within nature. The chosen method is the so called phenomenology. Literally, phenomenology is the study of “phenomena”: appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience.

The phenomenological approach allows to describe spiritual experiences in their phenomenality and thus to keep them open for different culturally mediated religious interpretations. Spiritual experience of nature is a cross-cultural anthropological constant that meets us at various times in different cultural regions. By describing spirituality in a broad sense as being apprehended by the phenomena themselves, there are probably different intensities of spiritual experience, from amazement to the experience of an all-encompassing unity and even encounter with a divine power. There is no evaluation or exclusivity attached, for the same person may under different circumstances make different spiritual experiences.

The phenomenological tradition distinguishes between a sphere of facts and the sphere of event and experience. While in the sphere of facts objectified measured data and observations are characterized as exact, for being independent of emotional involvement and therefore claimed as universally valid, it is the distinguishing mark of the sphere of event that it takes personal experience to its starting point (subjective or first person point of view). In spiritual experiences of nature things in nature are no objects, but become an event (“Ereignis”).

The German phenomenologist Hermann Schmitz introduced in this context the term “atmosphere” (hier besonders Schmitz, 1977). Atmospheres are defined by feelings that are not only subjective but universal. They form a sense of space that is experienced individually. The atmosphere of a beautiful sunset infects a lot of people, but how a person experiences it, is highly individual.

Atmospheres as a certain quality of moods are experienced as an attaching, moving power, which affect us mentally and physically. For example, we know the merry-boisterous atmosphere of a festival, which infects us or the optically-climatic atmospheres of a warm-peaceful or cool-pale evening mood, but also the physical well-being of a bright morning or the physically stressful atmosphere of a dull, gray winter day.

Atmospheres are neither in the sphere of the perceiving subject, nor in the sphere of the perceived object; rather it is a co-presence that exists within the terms of the subject/object division. Seized and being seized by atmospheres is one act. Figuratively speaking, atmospheres are comparable to an ellipse with two foci. Atmospheres are only differentiated retrospectively into a polar relation between "me" and the thing I perceive. For example: I am standing in front of a tree. Botanically, I can determine the type, age, I am aware of the necessary living conditions of the tree, I can locate it in its habitat, I can even estimate its economic value. Thus, the tree is object of my scientific interest. The very moment in which I say: "This tree is impressive, imposing, beautiful," adds a new quality, which makes the tree more than a mere object. It makes it a unique vis-à-vis. The objectifying perspective is broken in an experience, in which I am seized by the special atmosphere of the tree, in which I perceive the tree new and different. In this sense we can say that this tree has become an event to me. Atmospheres are the very forms in which things and environments present themselves.

Atmospheres, which take the perceiver with overwhelming power, which he can not escape and cause in him feelings of awe and fascination, are characterized by Schmitz as divine atmospheres: "An atmosphere that is a feeling (or a constellation of feelings) as seizing power is divine, if their authority for the perceiver is of unconditional seriousness" ( Schmitz, 1977). This description of divine goes with Paul Tillich's definition of God and religion as unconditional, infinite and ultimate concern.

The divine atmospheres of certain places characterize them as "sacred sites". They all share causing the mood of "numinous tremble ", first feeling of a divine power.

The concept of the numinous as "the holy" was described by Rudolf Otto in the second decade of the last century. "Numinous" is, what evokes in us feelings of fascination, but also the venerable horror, *fascinatum et tremendum*. We can not avoid being grasped by this atmosphere.

The numinous is filled with an atmospheric sensation (Schmitz, 2006). Therefore spiritual experiences can be described as the unconditional, inevitable grasp of divine atmospheres, whose seriousness and ultimate concern can not be escaped. They are characterized by intensification of perception.

Thus spiritual experience of nature means being grasped by divine atmospheres emanating from events and phenomena in nature which infect us with feelings of awe, humility, fascination and deep relatedness.

Although we can describe such experiences and present them in different media, there will always remain a certain kind of "more" in spiritual experiences, which hardly can be expressed, but gives us the promise of comfort and healing. For example, in my perception the tree appears as. . . and in his. . . Instead of points one can fill in different words. What predication ever I choose, it is due to the atmosphere, that the experience can not be formulated completely and adequately in language. In my perception the tree interprets itself. Hence the experience is an "open" one, unfinished. The atmosphere keeps the experience open to its interpretation.

Each interpretation is itself culturally mediated, though. The openness of the event must be in accordance with the openness of a culturally mediated interpretation, as well as the choice

of the medium in which these interpretations are communicated: it may be the medium of the performing arts, music, poetry, dance, etc., as well as religious rituals.

All these different modes of representation are symbolic expressions of a profound experience, which in turn as symbols keep open the phenomenal character of the event. Spiritual experience of nature can, but need not necessarily be described in religious terms. Possible other terms describing this experience can be "respect," "humility," "amazement," "gratitude," "comprehensive harmony", "great peace", "unity", even terms such as "fear" and "tremble".

Can we specify conditions that make it easier to have such spiritual experiences?

The first step in spiritual nature experience is to reach a state of void, emptiness.

In this state we can reach an intensification of sensual experiences, a deepened experience of space and time and thus an intense self-awareness. This we can name contemplation or meditation. The intensity of perception opens a new dimension.

The Dominican Father Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) qualified the deepened experience of time as "Nu" ("Now"), which is more than "forgetting about time". It is "fullness of time", where everything is present and new, where we have in a current view, what ever happened and will ever happen, since there is neither before nor after. It's all present. In the experience of the fullness of time we experience a different sense of time: this "Now" holds all the time within itself.

In the intensive experience of time in the fullness of the "Now" there is the original, current and complete dimension of nature visible.

The Christian mystic Thomas Merton is meditating the sound of the rain in the forest, sitting in the solitude of his hermitage: "The night became very dark. The rain surrounded the whole cabin with its enormous virginal myth, a whole world of meanings, of secrecy, of silence, of rumor. Think of it: all that speech pouring down, selling nothing, judging nobody, drenching the thick mulch of dead leaves, soaking the trees. What a thing it is to sit absolutely alone in the forest, at night, cherished by this wonderful, unintelligible, perfectly innocent speech, the speech most comforting in the world, the talk that rain makes by itself..." (Merton, 1966).

Protected areas provide the opportunity to leave the acoustic and optical noise, and to step into a room, where there is silence and really listening, where we can make deepened experiences of space and time, whether at traditional sacred sites or within nature itself. The nativeness of nature, the wilderness seizes us with a powerful atmosphere and alters us.

Spiritual experience of nature is neither escapism nor the projection of our mental state onto nature, but rather an intensified perception of the outer, as well as the inner world. In the defined way, spirituality is less an emotional experience, although it can move us very deeply, than an act of consciousness related to the experience of unity. It leads to an awareness that develops critical view of developments and can become the starting point of a change in attitude and ethics.

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## **Case Studies on the Diversity of Spiritual Values in Europe**





## Austria and Germany

### ***Sacred Underground Heritage in Germany and Austria: Spiritual use through the ages and current management challenges***

*Bärbel Vogel*

#### **Spiritual values of caves**

Caves are important locations for the spiritual development of mankind. Since the very beginning of human history, caves were chosen for worship, sacrifices, oracles and funerals. The protection of our subterranean heritage should not be reduced to the restriction of access. Besides the conservation of its sensible ecosystems and the geological structures, intangible values like invisible spirits of nature should be included into a holistic consideration of the underground heritage.

Southern Germany made headlines in the recent past with findings from the younger stone age. In four caves of the Swabian Alps, the oldest carved pieces of art of mankind were found. Estimated to be 31000 to 35.000 years old, the so-called *Venus vom Hohlefels*, is the oldest proven representation of a human being. The 30 cm statuette of a lion-man, a human body with a lion's head, could be a fable creature, or the representation of a shaman (fig. 1). Also, a bone flute found there had been crafted some 35000 years ago from a swan's wing bone.



**Fig. 1** Oldest known animal-shaped sculpture "Löwenmensch" ("lion man") from Stadel cave in Hohlenstein Mountain in the Lone valley, Swabian Alb Germany.  
Photo: *Thomas Stephan* © *Ulmer Museum*

Remainders of another kind have been found in the Lichtensteinhöhle near Osterode in the Southern Harzforeland (Lower Saxony). This gypsum cave has been used as a family burial place, probably between 1000 and 800 B.C. By DNA-analysis, the bones could be attributed to 40 different individuals. Later, it was proven that descendants of the death are still living in the area. This is the first reconstruction of a 3000 year old family system worldwide. The initial view of a human sacrifice has now been revised to a cult and burial site of the Urnenfelderkultur. Recently, speleologists succeeded in finding the entrance of this cave, which has been used for the burial and which has been filled in over the course of time.

On the other hand, artificial caves, called *Erdställe*, whose origins date back between the tenth and twelfth century, are still puzzling science. The passages are low, often of a ring-shaped layout with narrow passages. Sometimes a carefully layed-out final chamber is giving the impression of a sacred site. This design excludes a mundane use as storage room, water tunnel, mine or living quarter. Lack of oxygen, a labyrinthic design and at times flooding of many of these sites are in contradiction with an interpretation as a refuge. In contrast to subterranean funeral sites, these *Erdställe* never contain bones or burial objects. A cultic significance, in the widest sense, connected either with ancestral cult or early Christian beliefs of an afterlife, seems to be the most plausible explanation at the moment. A dating is not always possible, since the sites are usually devoid of artefacts. In some areas, cleansing rituals at certain holy days still exist. The distribution of these sites ranges from Southern Germany and Austria to Hungary, Czeck Republic, Poland, France and Spain, usually in farming settlements, under churches, graveyards and or connected to special landmarks (e.g. mountains). In Bavaria alone, more than 700 such sites are known, called *Schrazellöcher*, i.e. dwarfs holes, in the local dialect.

A special use of the Einhornhöhle near Herzberg-Scharzfeld in the Western Harz Mountains is recorded since the sixteenth century. Bones found in the cave have been attributed to the legendary "unicorn" and have been traded as medicine. The horn of this animal was believed to have an almost unlimited healing power; it was rated as an omnipotent medicine. In medieval times, the powder ground from the supposed unicorn bones (*unicornu fossile*) was worth its weight in gold. Many pharmacies in Germany and the Alpine countries therefore chose the unicorn as their emblem. Similar traditions, which are not backed up by any science, still exist today in Asia. As early as the seventeenth century it was recognized that the bones were fossil remains of large mammals, in this case especially of the cave bear. The unicorn, a fabled creature, which never materially existed, nevertheless lent its name to the cave. It drew visitors and naturalists to the cave, including famous scholars like Leibniz (1686) and Goethe (1784). Excavations around 1900 were driven by the desire to find remains of humans from the Ice Age. Only in the 1980s, stone tools were found, proving that Neanderthal Men have used the entrance areas of the cave for shelter around 100000 years ago. Another cave with the same name exists in Lower Austria. There, also, numerous fossil bones were found.

In the Gastein valley in Austria, a show cave with Christian history is found. The cave name *Entrische Kirche* was first mentioned in 1428 and is best translated by "mysterious cave". During the Reformation in the sixteenth century and the Counter-Reformation in the eighteenth century, the Lutherans of the Gasteiner Valley used the cave for secret meetings and services. Although the cave offered space enough near the entrance, even at these times low crawls were negotiated to reach far areas of the cave for prayers. In 1983, for the

500th birthday of Martin Luther, a memorial to Protestants with cross and altar was ecumenically consecrated there. The portrait at the altar shows Martin Lodinger, leader of the Gastein Protestants in the sixteenth century. From 1962 on, the Entrische Kirche was developed as a show cave. Several visitors were redeemed of different ailments during the visit. Radiesthetic measurements were conducted in the 1990s, pointing to various “power places” in the cave. Meditations at these places are offered nowadays on demand. In September, an ecumenical service is held in the cave.

A cave monastery is found in Lower Bavaria near Kehlheim. The so-called “*Klösterl*”, i.e. small monastery, was founded in the fifteenth century by Franciscan friars of the third order.. Remains of late gothic frescoes and a baroque balustrade are testimony of the golden age of the monastery. In 1803, during the secularisation, it fell to the state. The monastery building was turned into a restaurant, which is now a well-frequented tourist destination at the river Donau. The cave church is still used for services.

The hermitage St. Georg auf dem Palven, near Saalfelden, in the Salzburg area, Austria, is still inhabited to the day. The hermit, friar Raimund, regards it as a 'place of desire for transparency', as an 'antipole to our fast-changing time'. The small wooden Georg chapel is leaning tightly to the cave entrance; votive tablets are witness to a deep popular religiousness. The hermitage itself is attached directly to the cliff face below the cave.



**Fig. 2** St. Georg auf dem Palven near Saalfelden, in the Salzburg area, Austria  
(<http://www.lochstein.de/hrp/orte/palfen/palfen.htm>) Photo: *Franz Lindenmayr*

Near Salzburg and for one half in Bavaria, the Untersberg is situated, a mountain enshrouded in fables. Immeasurable riches, time-portals, dwarfs and Emperor Karl and his army - all this is supposed to be found inside the mountain. Every year before Christmas, the mystical figures are revived in the so-called "*Wilde Jagd*", i.e. wild chase, and are dispensing Good Luck and blessings upon the farmers, at the foot of the mountain. The Celts have already been venerating the mountain. The "*Karlsohr*" (ear of Karl the Emperor), a 22 m deep shaft, has been used as an oracle place probably from these times on. The myth of the Untersberg has been spreading fast in modern times. Nowadays, Hopi Indians, originally from southwestern USA, are pilgrimaging to the mountain, and the Dalai Lama called it the *chakra* of the heart of Europe, during his visit to Salzburg in 1992. Following a heavy storm damage of the mountain forest in 2007, the land owner initiated an over-sized forestry road through the conservation area. Mitigation measures demanded by the authorities were negligible; the effects can be seen from afar. NGOs are still hoping that the plateau remains undeveloped. The Untersberg is catchment area for 90 % of the drinking water of the 150 000 souls-city of Salzburg.

### **Conservation challenges and suggestions**

The protection of the sensible ecosystem in karst areas can't be simply reached by restricting the access to caves. A large variety of factors is playing its role in this system. Pollutants leaking into the cave systems from the surface are a peril to the entire subterranean fauna, but also to the ground water. The non-living parts of nature are in need of protection as well. The beauty of dripping stones and other speleothem formations is unique and has no substitutes; furthermore, they contain information on the climate of past millennia. Theft and illegal digging for fossils and archaeological artifacts are destroying not only the beauty, but all information contained in the site as well.

Besides fundamental research conducted by speleological societies, a broad education of the general public about the fragility of caves and karst phenomena is essential. Adequate protective measurements have to be developed in cooperation with authorities and politics. A ban on the trade of cave formations has to be enforced. For a truly holistic approach to conservation of the underground heritage, especially for spiritual important caves, the involvement of nature spirits is a crucial aspect. Usually there are persons known to be in contact with the invisible aspect of nature, like dwarfs, elves, fairies, guardian spirits, or even energies, and are able to communicate. This new approach is certainly a challenge for authorities and should be critically examined in each case. However, a refusal beforehand would mean to lose a chance for a more encompassing view.

Nature touches men in different and specific ways. It affects body, mind and soul. The spiritual value of nature cannot be measured. We should learn to trust our inner feelings again. Rational explanations fail - awareness, patience, confidence and training is needed. They can lead us to realisation of the immaterial creation. Their existence is known to all cultures in the ancient wisdom. Each culture has its own approach to the duality of nature, visible and invisible, expressed in a specific way. The basics are the same everywhere: helpful and harmful powers. Contact to nature spirits teaches a widened and therefore more holistic view. Powerful places, such as spiritual caves, are treasures to take care of. Respect to both parts of nature, visible and invisible, leads to true sustainability and has to define our actions.

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## **Bosnia**

### ***The challenge of protecting spiritual values of Bosnian cultural landscapes through Annex 8 of Dayton Peace Accord, Bosnia***

*Amra Hadžimuhamedović*

#### **Religio perennis, diverse religious forms and landscape in Bosnia**

To be able to comprehend the spiritual values of Bosnian landscapes, one has to start with the language of symbolism and with the pre-text on the complexity of Bosnian sacred topography. The complexity has been expressed through interweaving and overlapping of the forms of the diverse religious expressions – namely Judaism, Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity and Islam – existing together on Bosnian soil for more than a half of a millennium and depicting the continuity of the forms and locations of rituals related to Bosnian Church – authentic Bosnian mediaeval Christian schism (Fine, 1975).

The Bosnian tradition thus relates fully to the definition of *religio perennis*, “the underlying religion” of essential truth and saving grace which is at the heart of each great revelation’ (Stoddart, 2008: 28). The ‘underlying religion’ was accessible to pre-modern Bosnian believers through forms of at least four of major orthodox religious dogmas. This has been most visibly manifested in rituals linked with natural phenomena – sacred caves, springs, mountains, forests, rocks, trees. Beside the well known fact that symbolism of the natural phenomena as multifaceted reflection of One Truth is universal in sacred traditions, this persistence of strong manifestation of ‘underlying religion’ can be additionally explained with the fact that the setting and timing of different forms of rituals were the same, which was not the case with the majority of religious cultural and social phenomena including religious architecture, i.e. synagogues, churches and mosques.

#### **Destruction of Bosnian cultural memory**

Destruction of Bosnian cultural memory through systematic obliteration of its sacred sites in order to decompose their complexity has been a long-lasting process which peaked during the military aggression on Bosnia (1992-1996). The complexity of Bosnian sacred sites has been exposed to disintegrative forces through all streams and waves of modernism that have been coinciding with nationalisms and religious fundamentalisms. The notion of modernism in this text is borrowed from René Guénon’s definition of modern philosophy as ‘the loss or forgetting of genuine intellectuality which has made possible two errors, apparently in opposition but in reality correlative and complementary: rationalism and sentimentalism’ (Guénon, 1995:3).

The harbingers of such complexity have chiefly been those who maintained their sacral traditions outside of the urban and political centres. Thus, the symbolic language of the complexity has been very confusing to both the modernised institutional Church and the Islamic Community – blind to the evidences of the pervasive power of *religio perennis*. They have strived, each for their own sake, to distill their own identities from any shared elements. Sacred art, architecture, and rituals have lost their spiritual links with the *Divine Essence*, i.e. their inward dimension, through this filtering, and they have devalued and simplified to their outward expression as institutional religious arts, architecture and rituals. Landscapes or the

elements of nature that have been integrated into rituals, as well as the rituals themselves, have not been targets of wanton and systematic destruction as it was considered that destruction of the collective memory through banning the rituals should be sufficient to erase their associative spiritual value. However there has not been any statutory protection even of their natural values and destruction through planning and development could happen in certain cases.

Modernistic and socialistic de-sacralisation of the society during the second half of twentieth century was to be achieved by destruction, neglect or conversion of sacred sites and buildings into public parks, museums and even storage spaces. Although the de-sacralisation could be perceived as non selective and effective to all religious denominations, Muslim cultural heritage was visibly targeted by a much more systematic destruction. Sufi orders were banned in 1952, all *tekkes*<sup>2</sup> were locked and nine of them destroyed (Vukomanovic, 2008:139). The majority of these tekkes were pearls of cultural heritage and up to five centuries old. Destruction did not avoid sacred landscapes. They were de-sacralised by the building of roads, gas stations, parking lots, new buildings, etc..



**Fig. 1** *The pilgrimage site of Ajvatovica – natural site with associative spiritual value*

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<sup>2</sup> Tekke is a meeting place of Sufis/dervishes for prayer and the invocation of the Name of God. The similar meaning is attached to zawiya, durgah, khanaqah. (Glassé, 2003: 491).



The heaviest destruction of Bosnian cultural memory, which aimed to erase every remaining patch of the Bosnian complexity, took place from 1992 to 1996, when the layers of local history and conversation were targeted as the major obstacles to the nationalistic and hegemonic projects originating in the neighbouring countries. Thousands of historical monuments and sites, religious buildings, and pieces of art were destroyed through organised crimes of 'ethnic cleansing'<sup>3</sup> (Commission of UN Experts, 1992).



**Fig. 2** *The remnants of the 16th century Aladža mosque found during the excavation of a mass grave in Foca. The human remains have been covered with fragments of the monument destroyed in 1992.*

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<sup>3</sup> In its first interim report (S/25274), the Commission stated: 'Considered in the context of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, 'ethnic cleansing' means rendering an area ethnically homogenous by using force or intimidation to remove persons of given groups from the area'.

'The policy is put into practice by Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia and their supporters in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The political doctrine consists of a complex mixture of historical claims, grievances and fears and nationalistic aspirations and expectations, as well as religious and psychological elements. The doctrine is essentially based on ethnic and religious exclusivity and the dominance of Serbs over other groups in certain historically claimed areas. These views contrast with ethnic and religious pluralism. This doctrine breeds intolerance and suspicion of other ethnic and religious groups and is conducive to violence when it is politically manipulated, as has been the case.'



**Fig. 3** *Medieval necropolis in Stolac with autochthonous form of tombstones locally known as stecak*

### **Integration of cultural heritage into post-war recovery**

The war ceased subsequent to the *General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, also known as the *Dayton Agreement*, reached in November 1995 and signed as an international treaty in Paris in December of the same year. The Annex 8 of this agreement relates to integration of destroyed cultural heritage into the peace implementation process. Commission to Preserve National Monuments was established under Annex 8 in 2001 as a public central national institution responsible for the protection of cultural heritage and it has exclusive authorisation to decide on protection of cultural heritage at the national level.

Criteria for designation of national monuments that form the basis of the Commission's decision-making include landscape values of cultural heritage and integrate cultural landscapes as the objects of protection. Six hundred fifty three sites, monuments and areas have been protected from March 2002 until December 2011.

The policy of the Commission to Preserve National Monuments is to contribute to the sustainability of peace and to foster the reconciliation process through recognising, analysing, evaluating and presenting the complex values of Bosnian heritage. Valorisation of intangible – ontological, symbolical and sacral values has become the central and crucial part of the heritage value assessment process in Bosnia. Protected cultural landscapes embody spiritual as associative value in all cases of the designated monuments, as they are the formative elements of graveyards, Catholic or Orthodox Christian monasteries, tekkes, churches, mosques, and other places of contemplation.



Fig. 4 Tekke in Blagaj attached to the rock at the spring of river Buna.

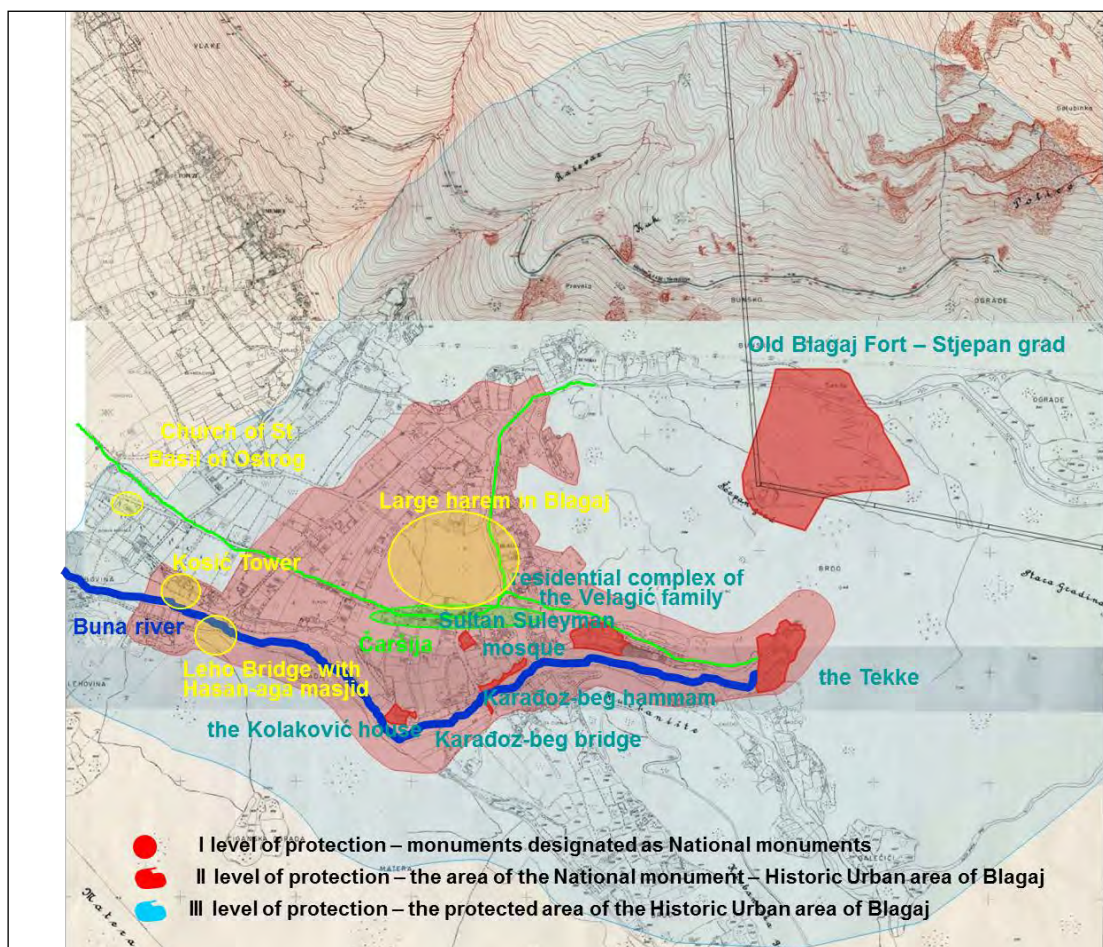


Fig. 5 Map of the protected Blagaj area around tekke that includes wider cultural landscape (Decision of Commission to Protect National Monuments)

## **Tekkes in Bosnia**

The role and symbolic meaning of landscape in Bosnian Sufi rituals will be used in this paper to illustrate the challenge to preserve complexity of Bosnian sacred sites a Muslim form of esoterism. The decision to present the Bosnian tekkes as a case that depicts the major thesis of this paper is based upon the following reasons:

1. Sufis have been open towards other religious forms and their expressions testified undeniably the complexity of Bosnian sacred spaces
2. Nature was the formative element of the ritual and thus the elements of landscape have symbolic meaning linked with the spiritual structure of the mystical path towards the Ultimate Truth.
3. Tekkes have been exposed to oblivion, neglect and destruction more than any other form of religious structures.
4. The revitalisation of the Sufi orders and tekkes in Bosnia, which has started intensively after the recent war, might contain elements of sentimentalism and lack the spiritual intellectuality that threatens the fragmentation of their complexity and pronounced 'architecturalisation' of landscape based on the ignorance of its authentic form and function.
5. Designation of some Bosnian tekkes as national monuments under Annex 8 of Dayton Peace Accord was done with attention to symbolism of the landscapes of tekkes and their ensembles.
6. Sufi orders (tariqas) in Bosnia have been established around the architectural and landscape ensembles of Bosnian tekkes. Nature was the formative element of the ritual and thus depicted the complexity of the locations associated with spirituality in Bosnia.

One possible explanation of the structure of Bosnian tekkes may be seen through the symbolism of its elements. The spatial organisation of a Bosnian tekke was designated according to the seven factors: house, stairs, water (still water and waterfall), rock, spring, tomb and cave. These seven attributes are connected by the path into a picture of cosmic order and each of them may be a symbol of one station or a gate at the Path towards Selflessness and Oblivion within God. (Hadzimuhamedovic, 2006: 43-57).

Decisions of the Commission to Protect National Monuments attest the relations between tangible and intangible values, including landscapes and their pertinent traditions, towards an integrated approach in conservation and the establishing of the balance between spiritual values and pressures of touristic development (Commission to Preserve National Monuments, 2003, 2005).

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## ***Bosnian Sacral Geography: Ethnographic Approaches to Landscape Protection***

*Safet Hadžimuhamedović*

Prior to thinking about any given landscape in terms of protection, one must first attempt to understand its *genius loci*, 'the concrete reality man has to face and come to terms with in his daily life' (Norberg-Shulz 1980: 5), a spirit of place which bears markings of desirable and undesirable history, and the ways in which people, landscapes and events encapsulate them, come to terms with them and resist them. The approach proposed in this summary is a shift away from the fixed certainties of landscape protection discourses towards an ethnographic understanding of the perplexing *imponderabilia* (Malinowski 2005/1922)<sup>4</sup> of particular 'landscaped realities'. The adjective 'ethnographic' stands here, not to delineate a set of methods, but rather to emphasise a specific style of research which 'acquires knowledge of the social world from intimate familiarity with it' (Brewer 2000: 11). Building upon the specific examples of Bosnian sacral geography and the notion of landscape as a cultural process (cf Hirsch 1995), I argue that 'landscape conservation' can at times be not only politically, ethically and methodologically questionable, but also *impossible*, if not thoroughly ethnographically informed.

Contemporary identities of Bosnia are articulated in stark exclusivity and attentive sharing. Both are visible within landscape. The twentieth century has been largely the backdrop of destruction, culminating in the ethnical cleansing of the 1990s which took the lives of over two hundred thousand people and left two million more displaced (ICRC Report 1999: ii). Still, in spite of the systematic *culturcide* entertained by the idea of the 'impossibility of Bosnia', the landscape has continued to communicate its own disruptive sub-alternative history. For the local nationalist programmes, these voices have proved to be too resilient to expunge. This is other landscape is that of *communitas*, as propounded by Victor Turner, the 'relationship between concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals' (1991/1969: 131), which has developed 'into a perduring social system' (ibid: 132). Primarily facilitated by shared religiosity it has rendered itself into a tradition 'of everyday tolerance and co-existence which defined the spirit of Bosnia and Herzegovina' (Sorabji 1993: 7). In fact, while divisions were mapped out on grand political scales, it was precisely those shared elements of space, practices and ontologies, which resisted from within the day-to-day lives of Bosnians. Certain sacred places and religious festivals have retained their shared cultural value in spite of the politics of divisionism.

The rich heritage of shared Bosnian religiosities stands in contrast to the image of Bosnia portrayed by its enemies, a country which, in words of Dodik, a prominent nationalist politician, 'does not have a common history', whose people 'have no shared celebrations but for the international New Year's Day and the Victory Day on the 9th of May' (B92: 2010). For example, strongly related to landscape, the widely celebrated days of St George and St Elijah retain an 'all-Bosnian character' (Hadžijahić 1980: 319), as they are shared by the Chris-

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<sup>4</sup> 'In other words, there is a series of phenomena of great importance which cannot possibly be recorded by questioning or computing documents, but have to be observed in their full actuality. Let us call them *the imponderabilia of actual life*'. (Malinowski 2005/1922: 14)

tian, Muslim and Roma people alike (Malcolm 1994: 58). These holidays are thus known by many names - *Đurđevdan/Jurjevo/Ederlezi/Hidrelez* and *Ilindan/Alidun* among others. At the intersections of several traditions, the sacred Bosnian landscape memorialises 'a whole pantheon' of Slavic deities (Hadžijahić 1980: 309) and numerous practices of the mediaeval Bosnian Church. Hadžijahić notices that the continuation of place and 'syncretism' are most widely noticeable with the already mentioned festivals of Jurjevo and Alidun (St George and St Elijah Day), but other shared festivals like Christmas, Easter, Vidovdan, and some magic practices, may be found in specific locations elsewhere (318-319).

One of the most peculiar places is *Djevojačka pećina* (Maiden's Cave) near the village of Brateljevići. The layers of etchings, myths and rituals point not only to themselves but also, combined, to the overall *genius loci* by ways of communicating those layers to each other and to the audiences they invite. At present, the cave is frequented by largely Muslim visitors who enter the depths of the crevice and make *dova*<sup>5</sup>, a prayer for the soul of the maiden whose grave is said to be in front of the cave. It also shelters Neolithic carvings and clues to the presence of the mysterious and widely debated schismatic Bosnian Church. Its temporal, sacral or utilitarian character is neither simple nor definite. By relating pre-historic, Slavic, Christian and Muslim practices within the same sacred place, the cave communicates a certain Bosnian notion of its own value, but also gives an alternative historical account.

Arguing that any one layer is easily discernible in the designation of this place would be violent to its self-understanding. – Here we see layers of etchings which have been accumulated over centuries. A policy of protection which approaches this landscape from outside will invariably be instrumental in its degradation.



**Fig. 1** View from inside *Djevojačka pećina* (Maiden's cave)

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<sup>5</sup> *Dova* is the Bosnian Muslim word for prayer stemming from the Arabic word *dua* (دعاء) meaning 'supplication and invocation to Allah - asking favours to Him' (islamic-dictionary.com). Accordingly, *Djevojačka pećina* and many other places are referred to as *dovište*, which literally means 'place where *dova* is made'



One simple example of that is visible in the current protective fence put around the parts of the cave which are understood to have 'outstanding value', namely the etchings in the walls variously dated from Neolithic period until the XX century. They are protected from the 'vandals' who wish to inscribe their own meaning into the same place. It is a very crude example of protective measures which effectively destroy the human – personal and tactile relationship with the non-human parts of the landscape. It also denies the right to the self-redefinition of landscape, which is, ironically, the very basis of their protected value in this case. If one of the mentioned layers had not reorganised itself in order to accommodate the new ones, the Bosnian landscape would have had a very different identity. Thus, it is important to ask whether a landscape is destroyed as such if its ability to simultaneously change its character and retain certain memorial value is denied.



**Fig. 2** *Prayer rug in Djevojačka pećina (Maiden's cave)*

The question of landscape as a mnemonic device is perhaps best approached from the aspect of cognitive science. Jonathan Foster argues that any effective memory system should be able to encode, store and retrieve information, and that if any of these components are blocked the whole system fails (2009: 25-26). Mnemonic qualities of landscape are, thus, dependent upon their continued ability to contain memory and the recurrent activity of data retrievers. This process is also marked by the inscription of 'bodies' and 'nature' into each other, a sort of 'dialectical process embedded with memory' (Lovell 1998: 11) which ensures the adeptness of landscape to be simultaneously encoded with a sense of present and future.

Another similar place in Bosnian sacral geography is called Dovište (place of invocation) on the peak of mount Ratiš. It combines pre-Slavic cults of sun and mountain peaks with Slavic pre-Christian, Christian and Muslim traditions. Its continuity of syncretism invites openness for communication with further ontologies. An unbalanced protection may disturb this delicate

process. Perhaps it would also be endangered through ‘unwanted exposure’ of having an ‘official label’ of a protected site. For now, it is both immensely popular among the local people and well off the beaten tracks of the ‘political pilgrim’. The influx of nationalist ideology into major sites of worship like the Bosnian Marian pilgrimage of *Međugorje* is another obstacle to easy protection. It raises questions on the discursive and human rights-related boundaries of protection, as the nationalist programme is strongly embedded into its sacral landscape today. How to approach the protection of such landscapes? Conservationist knowledge is not ready to tackle these issues without lengthy ethnographic research.

Thousands of places across Bosnia resist being informed or claimed by a single religiosity. During my 2010 fieldwork, I have climbed *Šehova Korija*, one of the sacred hills at the entrance to Sarajevo. The two Sufi graves at the site are actively visited by pilgrims, leaving behind their thoughts, prayer beads and candles as the subtle reminders that the living history of Bosnia is syncretic rather than divided, spiritual rather than violent. In the Kuhnian sense (cf Kuhn 1962), small places across Bosnia deconstruct and ruin the ethno-nationalist paradigm which produced the much more vivid landscapes of pain.



**Fig. 3** *Pilgrimage place Dovište at Mount Ratiš in the evening*

The scope of any conservation programme should come from within the communities in question, as they are, as well as their knowledge, inseparable from other components of the landscape. Conservationists should thus gather information after a considerable amount of time spent in participant observation. Participant observation is foremost inclined to experiential learning which implies an understanding 'from within', an ambition to engage with the 'interpretations, social meanings and activities' (Brewer 2000: 59) of the researched communities, something that Clifford Geertz referred to as 'local knowledge' (1983 ).



**Fig. 4** *Candles at the graves of two shayks on the Šehova Korija hill*

The complexities of the Bosnian sacral geography can only be violated if approached through rigid disciplinary frameworks and terminology. An ethnographic account should be best suited to listen to the sounds of memory in practice, as a sort of 'practical wisdom' (Sorabji 2006: 3). Diverse ethnographic examples of 'landscapes' may also generate new research questions and methodologies, but also uncover the generalising fallacies symptomatic of our learnt ways of seeing<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Parts of this paper formed considerations written for my 2011 pre-fieldwork report at Goldsmiths, University of London.



**Fig. 5** *Prayer beads waiting for pilgrims*

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## Finland

### ***Spiritual values of the Protected Areas in Finland***

*Yrjö Norokorpi*

Key attractions of the Finnish national parks include beautiful landscapes, experiencing nature, silence and mental and physical wellbeing. These factors are listed by almost all visitors as motives for their visit. Silence, absence of rush and natural beauty bring peace, release stress and make the mind receptive for deep thoughts. Depending on a person's religious beliefs, this state of mind may amount to a religious experience. This type of relationship with the environment is typical of Nordic people who traditionally live close to nature. It is very important to take this point of view into account in the management of the areas when maintaining their biodiversity. Good understanding of the complex relationship between spiritual and other cultural and natural values is needed.



**Fig. 1** *The area of Pallastunturit in Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park is one of the most famous national landscapes in Finland. The name Pallastunturit means the Awe Fells. The site has been a highly sacred area in pre-christian time.*



**Fig. 2** *The wintertime gives an excellent chance to ski in nature and to enjoy beautiful, clean landscapes, experiencing silence and mental and physical wellbeing (Pallastunturit).*

Even in ancient times, Finland had areas which people conserved in a natural state, including sacrificial groves and other sacrificial sites as well as burial sites, all of which were linked with religion and mythology. Central characteristics of ancient Finnish religion included the belief in various natural spirits or other special spiritual beings, as well as the notion of shamans having supernatural abilities. The natural world was a place full of spirits and hidden knowledge. The ancient Nordic peoples worshipped forces of nature, such as the sun, water, wind and thunder. The god of thunder, Ukko, for instance was the most powerful of all the male deities, and his sacrificial sites were called by names having the prefix Ukko- or Ukon-. Sacred places characteristically had their own names, and thousands of such names still exist throughout Finland, such as Akka-, Akan-, Kalku-, Hiisi-, Hiiden-, Pallas-, Pyhä-, Saivo-, Seita-. Any written information on the pre-Christian religion and sacred places of the Finns and the Sámi is relatively recent, no more than a few centuries old, and the records were made when Christianity had already become the main religion. However, a lot of information on the ancient religion has been preserved as beliefs, myths or in other forms of folklore (Fellman, 1906; Äikäs, 2011).

The idea of actual nature conservation areas started developing in the nineteenth century. During that era of landscape aesthetics and nature romanticism, people sought scenically superior natural environments which famous authors, poets, painters and composers would visit and immortalise in their work. The first protected sites had exceptional scenery and became tourist attractions during the late nineteenth century. As symbols of the country's nature and its unique beauty, they also served Finnish nationalism, which was gaining momentum at the time. This era of 'national romanticism' during the nineteenth century emphasised



the kinship and connection between Finnish nature and culture. The second phase of nature conservation started at the end of the nineteenth century when, alongside scenic and touristic protection purposes, demands were made by scientific circles to establish extensive protected areas representing typical Finnish habitats. Finland's first Nature Conservation Act was passed in 1923, although the first national parks and nature reserves were not established until 1938. Subsequent conservation and wilderness areas have highlighted coherent natural entities and biodiversity. In Finland, the present European Union's Natura 2000 network covers about ten per cent of the total land area.

In addition to their special scientific qualities, the protected areas also have a great deal of cultural characteristics, above all Sámi culture and its long history in Lapland. Metsähallitus has increased its efforts to document the cultural values of the areas under its administration, including ancient relics and sacred sites. More information is needed to plan the management and use of the areas. Furthermore, these sites are highly significant for the identity of the area and its inhabitants, and they provide attractions and added value for tourism. The historic sacred values linked to these sites intensify the significance of their protection.

In recent years, the health benefits of nature have been emphasised in nature tourism. The Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus have adopted promoting health benefits as one of the thematic programmes under the motto "Healthy parks – healthy people". The main principle is that public health improves as people get out into natural settings, enjoy positive, genuine and spiritual experiences, and improve their physical and mental health through a wide range of outdoor activities. The role of national parks and their services are recognized as forming part of the wider promotion of wellbeing – mind, body and soul. Health issues including spiritual viewpoints are emphasized in selected areas, and health issues are included in park profiles. Core messages for health promotion and the wellbeing benefits of nature are defined and integrated into a communication programme. A number of studies will be conducted together with research institutes. The health benefits of using protected areas are monitored and measured with findings used to enhance services.

The Finnish Forest Research Institute together with the University of Tampere has devised a specific research route featuring various types of natural sites where the experience of nature is intensified by various exercises (Vattulainen et al., 2011). These are associated with the following themes: enchantment, observing and sensing nature, finding a peaceful place, favourite places and mental landscapes as well as recognizing a mood and building up a positive feeling. Research material is to be collected through surveys and interviews. Initial results have already been published. Some 70% of study participants felt refreshed after completing the route. Many were enchanted by the beauty of the forest. The quality of your favourite place is improved by looking out on water and listening to the bubble of a stream. Sitting around a campfire in a beautiful setting makes you feel calm. Listening to yourself, pausing and experiencing nature work best when you are alone or with just one person. Suitable exercises help you focus on natural beauty and make positive, spiritual feelings rise to the surface of your mind. This study also gives us valuable information for recognizing and assessing the spiritual values of the protected areas.

Several national parks already offer paths that take visitors to the most beautiful and appreciated natural sites and landscapes, improving their accessibility. Increasing pressures of

tourism and the visitors' advanced knowledge of the environment create new challenges for protecting, managing and maintaining the natural and spiritual values of these areas.

The present framework and strategies for tourism development in Finland's national parks are based on nine principles of sustainable tourism. The principles cover different dimensions of sustainability. It is important to recognize that physical and mental health benefits and sustainable tourism are closely connected, since wellbeing is an essential element in sustainability. Especially three of the principles involve in non-material values as well:

- Visitors' appreciation and knowledge of nature and culture are promoted
- Visitors' opportunities to find recreation in nature are enhanced
- Visitors' mental and physical wellbeing are reinforced

The principles should be seen as a long-term goal and their implementation and application is an ongoing process actively applied in Finland over six years. Their acceptability and realization have been measured systematically through visitor and entrepreneur surveys, interviews and other feedback channels. The method to measure and monitor sustainability is based on the system of the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) (Stankey et al., 1985). The LAC planning process provides a way to monitor changes in the state of a national park, and helps to determine appropriate management actions to control negative changes and maximize benefits. In the LAC process the impacts of recreation and nature-based tourism are monitored using selected indicators. The selection of indicators plays a crucial role in ensuring the usefulness and validity of this method. Indicators should cover all the dimensions of sustainable and accurately reflect the important objectives set for a specific area during a specific period. Indicators should also be able to serve as early warning signals of possible problems ahead. In Finland it has been possible to standardize LAC indicators, as unified management methods and databases exist for all protected areas. However, it is important that parameter limits are defined and key species selected for each location according to local circumstances.

The following set of selected indicators involve in non-material and spiritual characteristics: visitor satisfaction index, importance of nature experiences as a motive, importance of mental wellbeing as a motive, importance of relaxation as a motive, quality of recreation environment, quality of visitor management, disturbances due to overcrowding, trail erosion or litter, fulfillment of expectations on nature, services and opportunities for activities. The measuring methods of these non-material parameters are visitor surveys and interviews conducted usually at regular intervals. At first it is necessary to measure and estimate current values for these indicators. The limits of acceptable changes are managerial decisions based on the best available knowledge as well as management actions which should be proactive or reactive.

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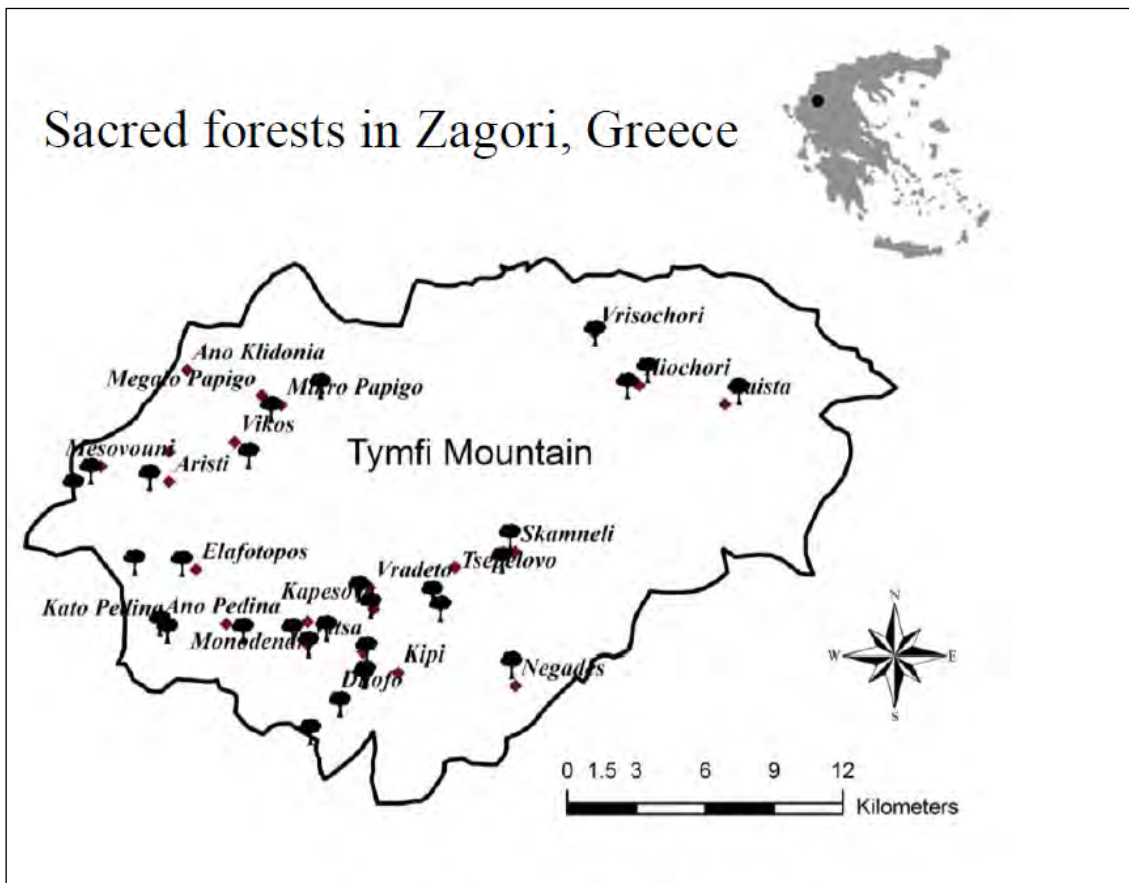
## Greece

### ***Northern Pindos National Park excommunicated forests***

*Kalliopi Stara*

Sacred natural sites, and especially woods and groves, constitute almost certainly the world's oldest conservation systems (Wild and McLeod, 2008; Dudley et al., 2009). The reasons for their foundation and maintenance very often are related with concrete ways of managing local resources and ecosystems, through religious rules (i.e. Chandran and Hughes, 2000; Virtanen, 2002, Anderson et al., 2005).

A network of such sacred sites is found in Zagori (39°51'–39°58' N, 20°40'–20°57'E), a mountainous area in Epirus, in Northwest Greece (Fig. 1 – 4). Zagori constitutes a distinct anthropo-geographical unit, which surrounds the limestone Tymfi massif (highest pick 2,496 m.) included in the core area of Northern Pindos National Park.



**Fig. 1** Location of Zagori and its sacred forests



**Fig. 2** *Eleni Kotsoridou grazing her goats in Mikro Papingo village. Zagori today shows an aging population structure and abandonment of traditional land uses, while tourism has become the main employment of the few inhabitants of the area.*



**Fig. 3** *The forest “Livadi” dedicated to St. Charalampos in Vrysochori village. Sacred woods constitute a basic element of the Zagorian cultural landscapes. Sometimes they are dedicated to the central church of the village and its saints and they are protected by their spiritual power. © Rigas Tsiakiris*



**Fig. 4** *Mikro Papingo. The excommunicated wooded steep slope Plai in Mikro Papingo village functions as a protective wood belt, which protects the settlement from landslides and torrents.*

Protective forests above villages, or groups of veteran trees around chapels and shrines in village entrances, are characteristic elements of the cultural landscape of the area (Stara et al., 2012). Both veteran trees and groves are referred to Greek literature as “iera” (sacred). Although, local people call them with several different names, used in Zagori as synonyms:

“klisiastko” (ekklisia=church, literally that belonging to the Church),

“vakufiko” (from the Turkish vakuf, with the meaning of a bequest the income of which should be disposed for aims beneficial to the public (see Moutafchieva, 1988),

“kouri” (from the Turkish koru = forest),

“livadi” (from the Greek livadi = meadow, or from the ancient Greek livas, related to the function of such forests as protective wood pastures which shield settlements from landslides and torrents (see Stara and Tsiakiris, 2010),

“aforismeno” = excommunicated and

“eptapapado” = excommunicated by seven priests.

Various rituals, including excommunication, succeed to transform trees and forests to sacred elements, separating them from the profane things (the ordinary world). Religious interdicts protected and isolated sacred things (woods and groves in our case) from the profane, which should remain at a distance and set apart from the first (Durkheim, 1912; Douglas, 1966).

Excommunication is the punishment of exclusion from the society of Church and the deprivation of its mysteries and it constitutes the heaviest sentence that can be imposed to Christians. In the first Christian centuries, excommunication constituted a pure ecclesiastical punishment, which concerned dogmatic deviations or violations of liturgical rules, but from the later Byz-

antine period, and particularly during the Ottoman Occupation, its use was extended to the resolution of private issues. That happened because during the latter period, the Church found herself in the special position to substitute political power and judicature in some areas, without having coded civil laws, or the required mechanisms that would support her administrative decisions and force the application of justice (Mihailaris, 2004). As a result during the 14th -18th centuries excommunication was employed as a common practice concerning issues of economic or social nature, i.e. to ensure testimonies in cases of thefts, rapes, livestock stealing, defamations, trespasses, searches of lost objects, safeguards of agreements in claims of pasture lands, regulations of borders etc. It was also used as an abstract threat in order to protect trees, forests and other natural recourses (Grispos, 1969).

The jurisdiction of excommunication was reserved for the representatives of the highest clergy and the excommunication ritual was characterized by officiality, resulting to a higher degree of fear. It was read inside the Church, in an atmosphere of intense religiosity, during a certain big feast, or at least a Sunday, in order to strength its effectiveness. In cases of places' excommunication the ceremony was practiced ad hoc. Certain testimonies report that the participants used to sing certain curse psalms of David, to ring the bell, to hold black candles, to turn upside down a cauldron, or even a tree, and generally to reverse the regular order of things. In very serious affairs the magical importance of the number of bishops that announced the excommunication (three or seven) strengthened more its force. With a reverse process the excommunication could be withdrawn, in order to prevent the suffering of individuals and communities. In case of death of an excommunicated person, an absolution blessing was announced during the funeral, while people resorted to various witchcrafts, so as to neutralize the consequences of excommunication (Mihailaris, 2004).

As all Orthodox punishments, the excommunication aimed to the moral improvement of the trespasser and his/her reintroduction at the Church Community. Thus there was not a formal imposition, but that was dispensed at circumstance, in order to flexibly prevent the sinner from breaking away from the flock, everlastingly excommunicated from the Orthodox faith. Moreover, even if in ecclesiastical texts it is not referred a strictly imposed price, the excommunication was costly. The cost depended on the gravity of the affair, the finances of the applicant and fluctuations of economy and because of that it was easier for entire villages or communities to achieve an excommunication (Lazaridis, K.P. 1968).

After the late 19th century, excommunication gave its place to new forms of Modern European Justice. Although old excommunications have been successful in protecting woods and groves until today, because the Ottoman-ruled Greek society of the 17th-19th c. united herself around the Church, which was also used as a national symbol and definition of identity, giving the picture of a society with powerful religiosity, deep faith in Christian religion and high degree of obedience in ecclesiastical power (Mihailaris, 2004). Moreover, excommunication was based on pre-Christian local beliefs, according to which mature trees are demonic creatures, or are inhabited, haunted or embodied by such creatures, or have souls and thus can damage those who try to harm them (Philpot, 2004).

Likewise to sacred trees, the excommunicated have been thus associated with taboos of cutting and supernatural punishments, as local people believed that felling them might cause misfortune, diseases or even death to the wrong-doer, their family and animals. Those supernatural fears succeeded to secure the exploitation of natural resources for community use



as part of a sophisticated locally adapted management system, as last resorts in times of need, and to protect settlements from natural hazards in the recent past. Some of the reasons of their establishment are not valued anymore as abandonment of past land uses, degradation and population decline, especially after World War II have a dramatic effect on the management practices, social structure and landscapes. Despite this, sacred areas generally enjoy acceptance and respect from local communities and they constitute part of people's cultural identity. Nevertheless the importance of these groves for the local community (especially younger people) has declined in Zagori, as elsewhere, following the recent changes and modernization (Byers et al., 2001; Virtanen 2002). However these mature groves, unique within an historically intensively used Mediterranean landscape, display nowadays a newly emerged value for biodiversity conservation and they can serve as locally adapted exemplar conservation systems in a modern protected area as a National Park.

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## Italy

### ***Protected areas of the Majella National Park in Abruzzo – A spirituality throughout time***

*Vita de Waal*

#### **A spirituality throughout time**

It is surprising to discover that many sacred sites have a long history reaching back hundreds of thousands of years. The abundance and the great diversity of sites at the Majella National Park<sup>(1)</sup> is truly amazing, ranging from the Paleolithic era to the present day. While some cultural traditions have their source in civilisations that have long since disappeared, many of their beliefs are still alive and their sacred sites have continued to be used for millennia.

#### **The Abruzzo region**

Situated in the centre of the Italian peninsula, the Abruzzo can be considered Italy's greenest region. With over 1/3 of its territory under protection one can find the National Parks of the Majella, the Gran Sasso-Laga and the Abruzzo, the Regional Park of Sirente-Velino and a further 38 regional and state owned nature reserves.



**Fig. 1** Map of Abruzzo (small) - Map of National Parks – Map of Majella National Park

#### **The Majella National Park**

Created in 1991, with a territory of 74 094 ha that includes 39 townships within the borders of the three provinces of Pescara, L'Aquila and Chieti, the Majella National Park has IUCN category II status, holds PAN Parks certification 1-5 and is part of the Natura 2000 Network. What sets this National Park apart is the fact that 55 percent of its territory is situated above 2000 m.

## The Majella, a sacred mountain

Since time immemorial people have considered the Majella a sacred mountain about which myths abound; one of these depicts Maja as the daughter of Atlas and Pleione, the eldest and most beautiful of the seven Pleiades; another legend relates the story of a female giant who landed on these shores, hoping to find the herbs that would cure her dying son. When he died she could not bear to leave him behind and instead chose the Mountain as her abode, and since then local populations called the mountain the Majella, the Mother Mountain.

## The Paleolithic Era

The area was inhabited 800 000 years ago by small groups of *Homo erectus* who scavenged and hunted for food, used fire, made stone tools and cared for infirm and weak companions. From burial sites it can be seen that this ancestor already had beliefs related to an after-life.



**Fig. 2** *Valle Giumentina, one of the most important paleolithic sites for the study of palethnology. The inhabitants left traces of their daily life and beliefs*

A number of sites exist on the Majella from this period. *Grotta della Continenza* has been in continuous use since Paleolithic times through to the 19th century, mainly for ritual purposes. The site contains 37 stone-age burials understood to be offerings linked to rites of fertility and with features that were common to most graves of this period: Burials contained pierced deer canines, shells and ochre. However, there were also burials with characteristics that were less common: the deceased were placed in stone circles; there were quartz crystals in the burial sites and some skeletons were found with deer antler fragments near their head, while at other sites some skulls were replaced by a stone, as was the case in the nearby *Grotta Maritza*. However, what makes this site different is that a number of cremated human remains have been found here that makes this Cave together with the *Grotta Pavolella* in Calabria the only two such examples of the Paleolithic era in Italy.

In the *Grotta Maritza*, vases with human remains were found. However, these vases were turned upside-down and their base was shattered. Whereas the body could be contained within the vessel, the practice of *inversion* and the ritual breaking of pots allowed for the soul

to depart. It was symbolic of life being set free. Such practices persisted for millennia, till 1200 BCE.

The *Grotta dei Piccioni* contains eleven stone circles with human remains considered to be human sacrifices related to agricultural practices.

It was during the Neolithic that the transition from hunter-gatherers to a more agriculturally based society occurred and that the first settlements came into being. During the Upper Paleolithic the area was inhabited by *Sapiens sapiens* who created and used more diversified tools and pottery.

At *Fonti Rossi a Lama dei Pelligni* a crouched female skeleton was found 3 m under the foundations of a hut. Experts concluded that because of the manner how the stones around her were built up, that this was part of a foundation rite, maybe related to an ancestor as protector deity or related to ancestor worship. Oxford University carbon dated both the skeleton and the foundations to the same year, to 6 540 BCE. Burials also had a gender dimension as women were buried facing the East while men looked towards the West.

The Copper Age saw the start of a transhumance that would mark social life in the Abruzzo Region till the 1960s. The church situated along a drovers' track testifies to a continuity of use, being originally a pagan sanctuary; then becoming a Roman temple before being dedicated to the *Madonna del Buon Cammino* in Christian times.

### **Ancient tribes of Italy: the Italic people**

The Italic people believed that the dead needed the same material things as a living person, so they furnished their tombs like a regular household. Much has been learned about daily life and people's beliefs through the items found in burial sites.

*Grotta del Colle* was used in Paleolithic times as a shelter, and only during the Italic era did it come into use as a Sanctuary. In the sixth century BCE this cave was a temple dedicated to Cerfia, considered to be one of the main deities of the Italic people.

Votive deposits and coins of the third century BCE confirm this site as being an important sacred space for the Marrucini people. The famous *Tabula Rapinensis*, today in Moscow's Puskin Museum, came from this cave. The tablet describes laws regulating the sale of girls into the service of the Giove temple to be trained to become 'divine prostitutes' while the money of their service to be used for the upkeep of the Temple. The girls represented the best of the Marrucini people, e.g. being members of the nobility or because of their physical beauty or moral integrity. It was considered a very noble and prestigious practice, exercised only in the major shrines of the Mediterranean: e.g. Epizephiri in Locri, Croton and Rossano Vaglio.

During longobard times this Italic temple was re-dedicated to Saint Michael and at a later stage to Santa Maria in Cryptis. This cave has been in use till the 19th century.

Around the sixth century BCE there was a marked transition from the Great Mother, not to a Father Deity, but to a half-god half-human Protector who conquered the dangerous archaic forces and "made the world safe for mankind" This demi-god was Ercole Curino, the most worshipped and popular deity among the Italic tribes.



**Fig. 3:** *Italic Ercole Curino Sanctuary (A) – Sant'Onofrio Hermitage (B) - Badia di Sulmona (C)*

The *Ercole Curino Sanctuary* in Sulmona is an Italic sanctuary dating back to the fourth century BCE. The Greek statue by Lysippos, and the statue found at this Sanctuary show the mythological and cultural roots of this Protector to come from the same source and show the identity of the Italic Ercole Curino to be one and the same as the Greek Herakles. His popularity survived well into Christian times where he can be seen on the facades of cathedrals, e.g. the Cathedral of San Marco in Venice, consecrated in 1094 and the Cathedral of Fidenza and reconstructed after the 1117 earthquake.

Unfortunately, the Ercole Curino Sanctuary disappeared under rubble when a side of a mountain was dislodged in 200 BCE. However, in 1259 the Italic temple complex was found again when stones taken from this site were used for the building of the Eremo Sant'Onofrio and the Badia di Sulmona.

For some time pagan rites and Christianity were practiced side by side and cultural and spiritual traditions were interwoven and expressed without any conflict. Christianity added an element of hope, of salvation and of rebirth within the human realm. But while the son of the Christian God lived a simple life, Ercole Curino (who also was the son of a heavenly father, Zeus) fulfilled his role while enjoying all the good things life had to offer. This aspect was particularly attractive to the people, a trait with which they could identify culturally.

During the seventh century the 'new' Christians were still practising pagan rituals, such as sacrifices in "sacred" woods. It was only during the Longobard reign that Ercole Curino was *replaced* by an other powerful Protector, Archangel Michael, a Commander of the Army of God who fought the most dangerous of all forces. Many caves which were previously dedicated to other deities were now dedicated to him, as was the case of the *Grotta Sant'Angelo* which was built on the site of an older pagan temple dedicated to Bona, the Goddess of Fertility.

Just a century later the *Badia San Liberatore a Majella* was founded in 798 CE and in the next centuries the Majella Mountain attracted so many Christian hermits that it became known as the *Domus Dei*, the House of God.

Pietro Angeleri (1215–1296) is perhaps the best-known hermit who lived on the Majella, founding and restoring many hermitages.



**Fig. 4:** *Eremo San Bartolomeo in Legio (A, D) ; Madonna del Buon Cammino (B); Santo Spirito a Majella (C, E)*

Mentioned here briefly are the *Eremo San Bartolomeo in Legio* (from the ninth century and still in use) located next to a lithic site while *Santo Spirito a Majella* (tenth century, still in use) is one of the Park's biggest and most famous sites. Here Desiderio, Abbot of Monte Cassino, (future Pope Victor III ) and Pietro Angeleri (future Pope Victor Celestine V) stayed in retreat.

After being at *Eremo San Giovanni all'Orfento* from the age of 69 to 78, Pietro Angeleri went to *Eremo Sant'Onofrio sul Morrone*, probably the most historic site. In 1293, after refusing to accept the Papacy and to succeed Pope Nicholas IV, a delegation of cardinals and bishops, accompanied by the King of Naples and the King of Hungary, made their way to this hermitage to convince him to accept the Papacy. This time he agreed and he was enthroned in 1294 as Pope Celestine V.

These are only a few of the sites that can be found at the Majella National Park but they show that spirituality persists throughout time and that sacred sites are inherited and treasured by subsequent civilizations. Sacred sites are rarely abandoned and are rarely orphaned. The sites at this National Park are a prime example where the natural environment was one of the prime reasons for the establishment of precious sites that have been used since Paleolithic times and well into the twentieth century.

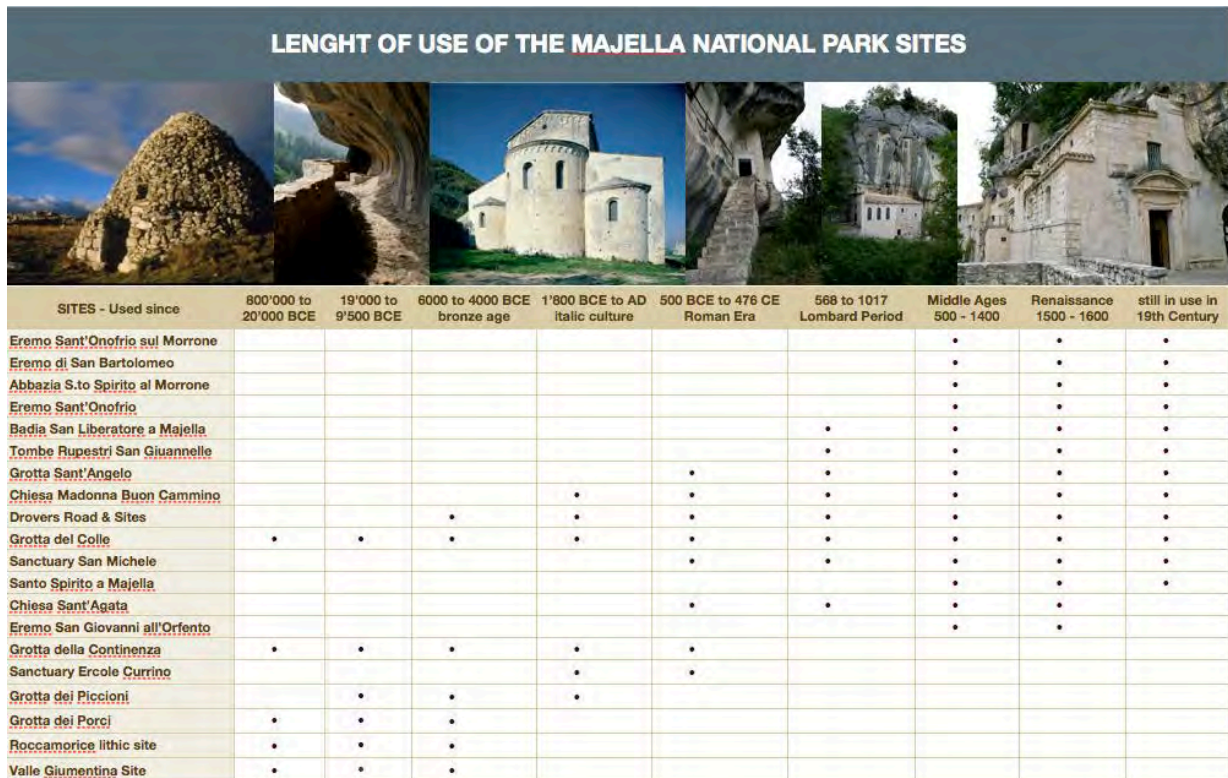


Fig. 5 Continuity of use of sites at the Majella National Park

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## Macedonia

### ***Spiritual values of the National Park Galičica, Macedonia***

*Bojan Rantasa*

#### **History and natural values of the National Park**

The National Park Galičica (the Park) is located in the South West of the Republic of Macedonia. The Park was declared in 1958 by the Parliament of (at that time People's) Republic of Macedonia, 'due to unusual natural beauty and its characteristic flora and fauna of the forests and forest areas of the mountain Galičica' (Law, 1958), and re-declared in 2010 by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia to comply with EU approximated legislation, when the accent was transferred from the forests to the 'biological and landscape diversity' (Law, 2010). The Park's territory is related to the forests on the mountain Galičica, and lies between two large lakes: Prespa and Ohrid, covering a territory of 24 151 ha (Law, 2010).

The Macedonian part of the Lake of Ohrid was listed as a Natural World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1979 (UNESCO, 1979). One year later, the World Heritage Sites area was extended to include the cultural and historic part of the region becoming the site of 'Ohrid region with its cultural and historical aspects and its natural environment' (UNESCO, 1980), thus including the slopes of mountain Galičica, the Park on the side of the Lake of Ohrid.

The natural values of the the Park are characterised by a number of Balkan and South Balkan endemic plants such as: *Ajuga piskoi*, *Erodium guicciardii*, *Oxytropis purpurea*, *Astragalus baldaccii*, *Poa galicicae*, *Lilium heldreichii*, *Arabis bryoides*, etc; and 14 local endemic plants: *Centaurea soskae*, *Crocus cvijici*, *Laserpitium ochridanum*, *Astragalus mayeri*, *Helichrysum zivojinii*, *Nepeta ernesti-mayeri*, *Alyssum galicicae*, *Thymus ciliatopubescens*, *Thymus skopjansis*, *Geranium cinereum*, ssp. *subcaulescens* var. *rupestris*, *Echinops bannaticus* ssp. *Prespaensis*, *Centaurea galicicae*, *Dianthus galicicae* and *Sempervivum galicicum* (Galičica, n.d.).

Moreover, the Park is a habitat of a great number of mammals such as chamois, lynx and bear, and many birds of prey, vultures, large and small cormorant, pelican, etc. However no in-depth study has been made so far on the present fauna (Galičica, n.d.).

One of the main natural values of Mountain Galičica's is that it includes 12 different climatic zones (J. Acevski, personal communication, 2002) and that it has been an ice age refuge place for many plants, such as: *Morina persica*, *Stipa mayeri*, *Ramonda nathaliae*, *Phelipaea boissieri*, etc (Galičica, n.d.).

The Park has system of zone protection, including three categories: 1. Strictly Prohibited, with an area of 985 ha; 2. Tourist & Recreational, with an area of 2 310 ha; and 3. Commercial, with an area of 19 457 ha (Galičica, n.d.).

There are 18 villages within the boundaries of the Park, with a permanent population of 5 355 inhabitants, according to the census from 2001 (Galičica, n.d.). The inhabitants are engaged mainly in farming and livestock breeding in the highlands, and fishing and tourism in the lowlands of the Park.

### **Spiritual values of the Park**

Within the Park there can be identified a great diversity of sites with spiritual values of both natural and manmade character. Most of these sites intertwine as sites have passed 'ownership' from one faith to another, from one religion to another, but the sites as such remain the same. However, still nowadays certain sites remain as Christian, Muslim or even Pagan.



**Fig. 1** *At least 100 year old cypress tree in the monastery of St Naum, not far from where St Naum is buried. Cypress is a tree symbolising that nearby lies the grave of a heroic person.  
Photo: Bojan Rantasa*

Christianity being the most dominant religion throughout the region of the Park and the latest historical time has the greatest effect on the spirituality of the Park. There are numerous churches, chapels, Early Christian basilicas, monasteries and cave churches, dating from the fourth century AD onwards.

The most famous site is the monastery of St Naum. Located on a cliff at the shores of the lake of Ohrid, and surrounded with the water springs of the river Drim, the place itself, represents both a magnificent landscape and a holy, pilgrimage place. The today's church is from the sixteenth century and is dedicated to St Naum of Ohrid – The Miracle Maker (830 - 23 December 910) (Ohrid, 1997). The site attracts about 200 000 visitors per year, both tourists and pilgrims, making it the most heavily visited place in the Park (Galicica, n.d.).



**Fig. 2** *View of Monastery of St Naum from the lake of Ohrid. Photo: Will, InfoMofa (CC BY-SA 2.0)*

As many other sites around, this site is associated in folk beliefs with healing powers, as St Naum was a healer and a miracle maker. But it is also associated with high mental activity. The translation of the name of the saint – 'Naum' into English is 'On the mind'. It is a local belief that people go there to become wise (Ruza, personal communication, 1999).



**Fig. 3** *The church of St Naum, a place for gaining wisdom. Photo: Nikolovskii (CC BY-SA 2.0)*

Within the area of the monastery of St Naum, there is a spring that is considered to have magical powers. It is said that he or she who'll wash his or hers face with the water of that spring, will forever be beautiful (Ruza, personal communication, 1999). Today on that place there is a small chapel dedicated to St Friday (St Petka) that is built over the spring of water, thus creating a bridge between the pagan old spirituality and Christianity.

There are also other water springs that are considered to have spiritual values. Some have easy access and may have Christian structures in the vicinity; others may have difficult access and are hidden in nature. One of the latter springs is found near the village of Velestovo, located at an altitude of 1 200 masl. This spring is said to have healing powers: if you are tired, you will become rested, and if you are sick, you will become healthy. For this reason some inhabitants from the Ohrid region go to fill water for drinking.

The church of St Bogorodica Zahumska (The Holy Mother) is located on the shores of the lake Ohrid and can be dated back to 1361. The site is commonly known as St Zaum. The popular belief related to St Zaum is that it is a place to become more smart. The English translation of the site – Zaum is 'for the mind'. It is said that simpleminded people should go there to become more intelligent (Ruza, personal communication, 1999).

Near the village of Trpejca there is a cave church dedicated to St Ilija, dating from the fourteenth century. The site has been a hermitage and it gave the place name to the nearby village, which means 'endurance' as the hermits would endure long days of ascetic struggles in the cave with little food or water.

The natural spiritual sites are less known to the public than the Christian sites. However, one could identify a considerable number of sacred forests, sacred trees, spiritual water springs, and also spiritual sites. Most of them are known only by the local population.

The trees and forests have played a key role as sacred sites (temples) of the old gods and goddesses in pre-Christian times. In the Park the most common sacred trees are oaks, beeches and walnuts, although other trees, such as cypress and poplar can be considered sacred as well. Sites as sacred forests, known as vakuf forests are pinpointed by locals with reverence, and their spiritual ownership is related to the Christian church. The reverence displayed towards the sacred trees and forests consist in deep respect and a ban of use and/or disturbance to the site. Sacred individual trees can be found on many places throughout the Park. Most of them are in vicinity of Christian religious objects, as successors of the original ancien pre-Christian temples but there are some sacred trees that lay isolated. These individual sacred trees are known locally as panagii. Though there are no new panagii it is said that a priest would make a ceremony to consecrate these trees, marking them with a nail, or another object, thus making them holy, so people would refrain not only to cut them, but even to pick up a fallen branch from them.



**Fig. 4** *Approximately 300 year old sacred walnut tree in the village Trpejca. Walnut is the tree that is connected to the life of man: the birth, fertility, the death and the soul. Photo: Bojan Rantasa*

Other natural spiritual sites exist, of different nature, some of them embedded in the place names of the Park. For instance, the Evil Valley (Zli Dol), where it is believed that evil forces exist and commonly is considered that the cars slow down on their own when passing there.

### **Management constraints**

The main constraint that the management of the Park has in its operational protection of natural and cultural site, thus of spiritual sites probably is funding. The funding scheme of the park is not regulated with the new Law that declared part of mountain Galičica a national park, under which the Park has been re-established in 2010. Therefore is left on the previous system of self-financing from activities in the Commercial zone. Furthermore, there is no controlled entrance to get income from visitors, despite the fact that the coastal areas of the lakes of Ohrid and Prespa are the most popular tourist destinations of Macedonia, and power relations make further pressures to the integrity of the natural sites.

On the other hand, the park does not receive sufficient support from local government and/or national government, and even there are many overlapping governing and managing jurisdictions between institutions and agencies at different level.

Spiritual sites are affected from the process of the societal change. From one side, people turn again to Christianity, thus Christian sites gain greater importance. While on the other, natural spiritual sites, that relate to pagan believes loose meaning as only the old local people still relate to them. The young local people focus on the rapid money making dynamics of the today's life, thus making space for the 'rural development' process related to building of tourist facilities in a spiritless manner (Friedmann, 2010).

### **Current opportunities**

The Park authorities are in a process of developing the first nature protection management plan and are engaged in the process of establishment a trilateral UNESCO Biosphere Reserve around the lake of Prespa, involving parts of Albania, Greece and Macedonia. Both these processes provide possibilities for public participation and transferring the focus of protection on forests and landscapes to the societal need for protection. Thus enabling a process where locals can potentially increase the importance of the consideration of the spiritual sites in the management, and intertwine the protection of nature with the protection of the spiritual sites.

Sacred trees, natural sacred sites and other sites of spiritual significance in the Park area and beyond, have been venerated and protected through centuries. In fact, the natural spiritual sites have been the equivalent of modern protected areas, in a time when values (spiritual and human) were considered of highest importance, in comparison to today's declaration through legal instruments where material values (money) are considered of highest importance.

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## Poland

### ***Conflicting relations between spiritual and economic values in Białowieża Forest, Belarus and Poland***

*Anna Hackiewicz*

#### **Białowieża primeval forest and its natural qualities**

Białowieża is one of the best examples of how the ancient vast Eastern European forests would have looked like in the past, when this vast region was covered by forests and travel was largely limited to river routes until the fourteenth century.

Currently, the area of the Białowieża forest is over 226 000 ha, from which about 72 percent are found in Belarus and the remaining 28 percent in Poland. The forest constitutes a dense complex on forestlands, woodlands, including all types of plain habitat forests with some interspersed small field settlements. On the Polish side there are seven settlements and on the Belorussian side over twelve.

On the Belarusian side, the Biosphere Reserve covers 177 100 ha, including a core area of 6100 ha, whilst the World Heritage Site comprises 87 600 ha.

On the Polish side, only 10 500 ha of the Białowieża Forest are protected as the Białowieża National Park (Białowieżski Park Narodowy), whilst only 5725,75 ha are strictly protected.

In spite of centuries of human presence and interference, many parts of the forest still possess the qualities of a primeval forest. Białowieża forest features a biological diversity rarely found in other European forests. It is one of the few areas in Europe that has the complete group of hoofed mammal species, including wisent (European bison) and that the number of predators – both mammal and birds of prey – comprises at least thirty species.

#### **Białowieża Forest through the history**

The earliest known settlements date back to the end of the Palaeolithic period (about 10 000 years BC). During the Neolithic period different cultures were present. Then, the *Episznurów* cultures, which had animistic beliefs, were using some parts of the forest as food resources, house timber, forest area, and other parts as cultic and burial places.

The settlement process initiated larger changes in the cultural landscape of Białowieża forest, starting between the seventh and ninth centuries, when the Slavic population began to colonize the area. Trees and other plants were present in many well documented Slavic rituals. Thus the forest was surely divided into places of cult – including stone circles – and those used for resource utilization. A breakdown in the settlement process took place after the plundering invasions of Yotvingians and of Lithuanians in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The deserted lands were overtaken by Lithuania.

The first Christian Orthodox churches were built there between the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries. Many of them were located on the sacred hills, like Grabarka; while others were related with sacred water streams. Forest management also included gaining wood and honey from the numerous wild beehives, and a large amount of hay for nearby villages. Later, the political stability of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the fourteenth century allowed a new

wave of colonization of the vast woodland area, which was named Podlasie or Podlasze, which meant the lands of the Trakai voivodship.

The first recorded piece of legislation to protect the forest dates to 1538, when King Sigmund I the Old instituted the death penalty for poaching wisent. He also built a new hunting manor in Białowieża, which became the namesake for the entire forest.

In 1541 Białowieża Forest was declared a royal hunting reserve and it was managed accordingly, with some interruptions, until the end of the Russian empire

During the reign of Casimir IV Jagiellon (1569-1576) the forest was divided into parts, which were subordinate to some castles and their rulers. During these times, the forest area was settled by a variety of ethnic and religious groups: Pagan Lithuanians, Muslim Tartars, Orthodox Russians, and tribes of Catholic Polish.

On behalf of the Lithuanian Dukes, a governor of Bielsk Podlaski administrated the woodlands. A group of peasants-hemmers (*osocznicy*) was formed from the country population to protect the forest from the people who had no rights to use the forest resources. In exchange, they got more lands and they were released from many duties. People who were working in the forest had special royal preferences to use its resources and, thus, shaping its cultural landscape.

At the end of the sixteenth century, when the quantity of gaining wood increased, the sheds of the woodcutters appeared in the Forest. The ash of wood was required for the production of glass and soap.

In the middle of the seventeenth century the invasion of the Transylvanian Duke Rakoczy and the war with Moscow took place. Russian Tsar divided Białowieża Forest into two parts: Marine's and wisent's Zones. The first was designated as a source of timber for Russian fleet, whilst the other was protected by old sacred animal-turs. On the place of old Slavic cult the Tsar's palace was built which has been protected throughout next two centuries as well as the wisent zone.

However, until the late seventeenth century most of the forest was unpopulated. At that time, several small villages were established for development of local iron ore deposits and tar production, and many of them still exist.

After the industrial revolution, since the eighteenth century, the forest became a source of economic grow for local settlers. Only between 1845 and 1861 the Russian Empire exported around 134 470 trees and 90 000 logs. During World Wars I and II, more than one million cube meters of wood were extracted by the German army. Eventually, more than seventy percent of the great, magnificent forest, which once spread out from Kaunas in Lithuania to Lublin was destroyed.

### **Conflict of values and contemporary management challenges**

Outside the national parks, pressures and impacts on Białowieża forest continue unabated. Recently there have been cut more than one thousand over 160 year-old trees. In February 2007, the Supreme Audit Office of Poland report revealed irregularities on the forest management, drawing attention to the lack of forest planning. Because of the errors pointed out to the State Forests National Forest Holding- the manager of Białowieża Forest in Poland,



the wood from the forest may not be marked as the prestigious FSC certificate. Eventually, Białowieża National Park – the only Natural World heritage Site in Poland – can be removed from the UNESCO List. In 2006, Prof Dr Eckhart Kuijken stated that ‘policy of administrators responsible for the wilderness care more about profits than nature.’

In 2008, the Ministry of the Environment of Poland announced the project to enlarge the Białowieża National Park by about 20 000 ha onto other state-owned land. The National Park would then encompass an area of about 33 000 ha, which constitutes 49 percent of the Białowieża Forest within Poland.

The source of the problem about managing and protecting the Polish part of Białowieża Forest lies in the relations between settlers and forest. The mayor of Hajnówka district - Olga Rygorowicz- said that: “for local people trees are a gift and they have grand respect to the forest which is a ‘gift from mother earth’ and it should be possible for local people to use it”. Current regulations allow settlers taking a certain amount of wood from strict protected forests. Moreover, the State Forests National Forest Holding can cut trees from semi-protected areas of forest, resulting that there are forest reserves where numerous trees are still being cut.

### **Relations between spiritual and economic values of Białowieża Forest**

In the past centuries local beliefs of the people determined the economic activities of community. Nowadays Białowieża Forest has been zoned with different types of protected areas:

- landscape reserves, to protect beauty and uniqueness of certain areas;
- reserves focussing on special plant or animal species;
- strict reserves – to protect unique biodiversity;
- natural monuments, to conserve certain elements, such as the oldest trees.

On the other hand, forest activities in Poland are based on “Principles of Silviculture” which set the model of forest management. Although Principles of Silviculture relate to economic forests, they have been applied in all semi-protected areas of Białowieża Forest, resulting in an annual harvest of around 300 000 cubic metres of trees that is taken from the Polish part of Białowieża Forest. Ecologists do not see the reason for cutting trees in semi-protected areas, since already 83 percent of forestland in Poland is managed following economic criteria.

Many people in the Podlasie region are employed in the forest industry. Other economic activities are related to collecting mushrooms, forest fruits and herbs which local people sell on the market or use for themselves. Nowadays the forest is an attraction for tourists from urban areas who are looking for contemplation in more natural areas. Thus, large touristic infrastructures have been built in recent years in Białowieża National Park, such as the Russian Tsar’s Palace Museum, Museum of Forest and several touristic routes.

Spiritual values of forests are more or less acknowledged. For example nowadays Białowieża Forest is promoted by the Polish government as a Biosphere Reserve or as a Landscape Reserve. However, little attention is put into the education of people, especially children about beliefs and spiritual values connected with Białowieża Forest, i.e. old burial places or

Slavic places of cult. More attention is addressed to more “obvious” values, such as the wisents – animals which have been protected since the thirteenth century as the symbol of the king of the forest. However, despite that it is widely known that visitors come to enjoy the beauty of this gorgeous forestland; they can observe lots of cut stumps of trees instead of beautiful landscapes.

For local communities – mostly Catholic and Orthodox – the meaning of forest has changed, but it still evokes spiritual feelings, for example fruit trees are still seen as the symbol of fertility; lime trees as a symbol of saints, oak trees as a symbol of spiritual power, and many others. Other trees may be the symbol of families and cities, e.g. one pine that became a symbol of Mielnik city. Numerous stories about the mystery of the forest, sacred trees or streams associated to both Orthodox or Catholic sanctuaries are still alive. Moreover, for many local artists, the forest is a source of inspiration for making sculptures, paintings or writing poems. The memories about Białowieża Forest were saved in poems of the most important Polish writers, such as Mickiewicz or Slowacki, who evoke the myth of the great, mysterious place where strange creatures are living. The symbolic values of forest also appear in many Belarusian and Polish folk songs popularized by local singers. In many villages there are competitions for children in writing poetry about the forest and nature. All these activities clearly show that the centuries-old forest still plays a significant role in the life of settlers in Podlasie. It is not only the source of economic growth, but also a symbol which carries strong cultural and spiritual values.

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## **Links:**

<http://www.bpn.com.pl>

<http://www.lasy.gov.pl>

## Russia

### ***Russian-Lithuanian Curonian Spit National Park: revitalization of spiritual values by artists of Nidden***

*Alexandra Koroleva*

The Curonian Spit is a strip of sand in South-Eastern Baltic, 100 kilometers long, divided between the Russian Federation and the Lithuanian Republic. Since 2000, it is an object of the UNESCO World Heritage, a universal value of which is a result of intricate interactions between nature and people living in this area.

In terms of landscape morphology, the Curonian Spit is rather young and developed during the past 6000 years as a result of coastal sediment dynamics driven by waves, currents as well as wind. Areas of coastal erosion provide material for sand accumulation along the spit. Typical features of the landscape are the famous open sand dunes, which are the second tallest ones in Europe. However, not only natural features make the Curonian Spit unique.



**Fig. 1** *Satellite image of the Curonian Spit*



**Fig. 2** Sand dunes on the Curonian Spit

In the middle of the 18th century peaceful life on the Curonian Spit was disturbed by the Seven Years' War. The Spit had many times served as a way not only for people's migration but also for wars, however it was the first time when war actions had such a critical impact on this territory. It was not only the peaceful way of life of fishermen's villages disrupted but also, due to massive destruction of forest, the sand became unstable and started moving. The moving dunes covering remains of forest, villages, cemeteries and roads became a dominating element of the Curonian Spit landscape for many years. The ecological situation on the Spit at that time can be considered as an anthropogenic desertification and total destruction of a natural landscape. Travelers who needed to go by the road Königsberg-Memel suffering from unstable sands, sea wind and shelterlessness, called this land "starveling, lifeless, severe, and horrible". Such pictures can be found in literature, first of all in Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann's *Das Majorat* ("The Entail") and Agnes Miegel's *Die Frauen von Nidden* ("Women of Nida"). Finally, the Curonian Spit got a strong image of sombre 'Prussian Sahara' in public acknowledgement (Schlicht, 1927).



**Fig. 3** Art exhibition on the “Nidden Artists Colony”

In the course of a century and a half following destruction of the Curonian Spit landscape, Prussian authorities put lots of efforts to organise restoring activities. A high and stable protective coastal bank was formed; systematic planting of greenery in a fore-dune plain and stabilising of moving dunes with mountain pine (*Pinus mugo*) started. Thanks to these activities, in the middle of the 19th century, destruction of the Spit’s landscape stopped. When sands were stopped and the dunes got covered with plants, favourable conditions for permanent dwelling were created; all settlements on the Spit found their final locations where there is convenient access to water. The villages gained their typical architectural structure, exterior view and features, modest severe beauty (Кулаков и др., 2008).

Changed by the end of the 19th century, the Spit needed a new artistic description. Travelers who crossed the Curonian Spit had fully evaluated the changes happened to this land and made them public in their travel memorials. New look at ‘Prussian Sahara’ was suggested by well-known politician and scientists of the 19th century Wilhelm von Humboldt who, while traveling by the Spit from St-Petersburg in 1809, wrote in a letter to his wife some lines that became widely known later on: “The Curonian Spit is so remarkable that it’s necessary to see it, like Italy or Spain, unless you want to miss a beautiful picture for your soul”. Following Humboldt, Königsberg lawyer, writer, and translator Ludvig Passarge discovered on the Curonian Spit “such a rare nature monument that, in its severe and strict majesty, its richness of unprecedented phenomenon, can’t be found anywhere else across German lands” (Schlicht, 1927). But it took almost a hundred more years for these views to become commonly shared by the general public.

The Nidden colony of artists had interesting and educating role in forming public attitude to the Curonian Spit. Actually, artists promoted creation of a new spiritual value of the Spit. Solitariness and modest beauty of the Curonian Spit attracted artists, and in 1880 an artists' colony was created in Nidden. According to Max Pechstein, it was possible to paint the nude on the sea side of the Spit at that time, so deserted in was there. A number of German artists working in the Curonian Spit from 1880 to 1944 resembles pilgrimage and counts for over 200 names. 92 of them were from Western Prussia; the rest came from Danzig, Bromberg, Hessen, Holstein, Würzburg, Rheinland, Bohemia (Барфод, 2003). Naturalists, impressionists, expressionists, 'new corporeality' followers, animalists, and others were among artists working there (Клук, 2003).

"The Curonian Spit was discovered by artists. They were somehow messengers of this paradise that fascinated and inspired them again and again," – wrote in 1935 Ernst Mollenhauer, a soul and central figure of the Nidden colony of artists from 1919 to 1945 (Э. Молленхауэр, 1991, М. Молленхауэр, 2003).

The Curonian Spit represented by Nidden artists is not just a natural paradise. It's a mythical abode, a kind of Antique Arcadia or Celtic Avalon, where tired warriors restore their energy and preparing for going back home. Like Roman aristocrats, German artists find living in provincial Nida idyllic on the contrary to intense rhythm of a big city. And just like Roman poets turned a real geographical area (mountainous province of the Greece's Peloponnese peninsula) into a mythical peaceful place where ordinary people live in a harmony with the nature and gods take part in cheerful festivals together with happy peasants, artists of Nidden embodied their dreams of a golden age in an image of the Curonian Spit.

German musician Herbert Wilhelm had written: "That world seemed to us enchanted, turned into some inconceivable country brought closer to the God, a special kind of a paradise... There our souls were filled with presentiment of a higher, heavenly world to which we should have belonged to." (Wilhelm, 1967).

"...powerful image of dunes with their horrifying, truly heroic character will never be a common property, it will be only valued by a limited circle of people able to see a reflection of the eternal in it." (Барфод, 2003). Undoubtedly, this 'limited circle' included people of the art: painters, composers, writers. Though, following Humboldt and Passarge, many scientists, writers, and poets celebrated the Spit in their works, an absolutely exclusive role in forming an image of the new age Spit belongs to artists that settled a famous Nidden colony. It was them who imprinted in their artworks that unmatched cultural landscape formed on the Spit by the beginning of the 20th century.

Animated by painters' brushes modest and severe landscapes of the Spit gained high level of spiritual value and now attract pilgrims from all over the world. Today the Curonian Spit is divided between Lithuania and Russia. Each resident of Kaliningrad certainly shows the Curonian Spit to his guests. This tradition is similar to pilgrimage. But, for a recall, the Curonian Spit is just a hundred kilometers of sea coast, pine forest, and dunes. This landscape seems to have non-material value discovered, in their time, by the artists of Nidden.

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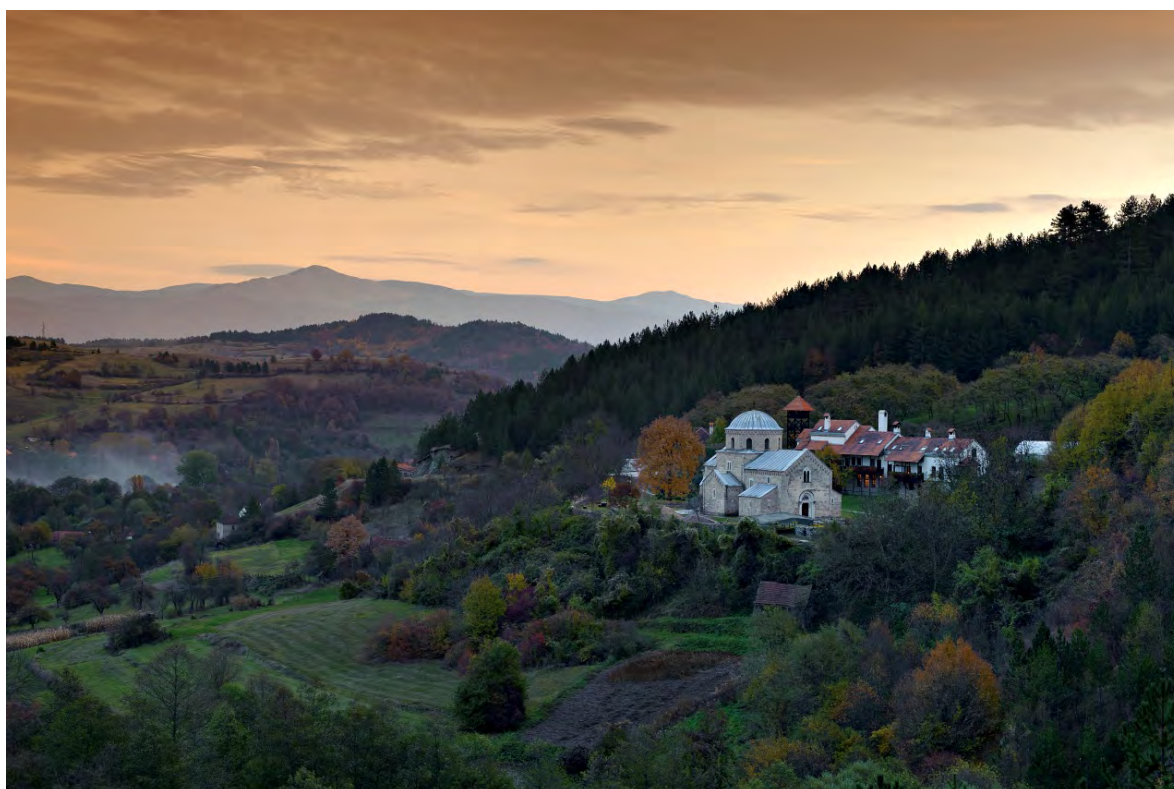
## Serbia

### ***Gradac Monastery and Nature Park Golija, Serbia***

*Svetlana Dingarac & Nadezda Pesic*

#### **Introduction and history of the legal protection of the site**

Mt. Golija, the highest mountain in southwestern Serbia, is an area of high scenic qualities with a mosaic of different and well preserved ecosystems, where land is still used in traditional way, social structures are unique and local customs and crafts live on. It is situated in the Raska region, where in the twelfth century were established the foundations of the Serbian state and spirituality by the holy Nemanjic dynasty. Presence of a manifold and divers cultural and historical heritage testify about the deep spiritual significance of the area and its continuity during the centuries.



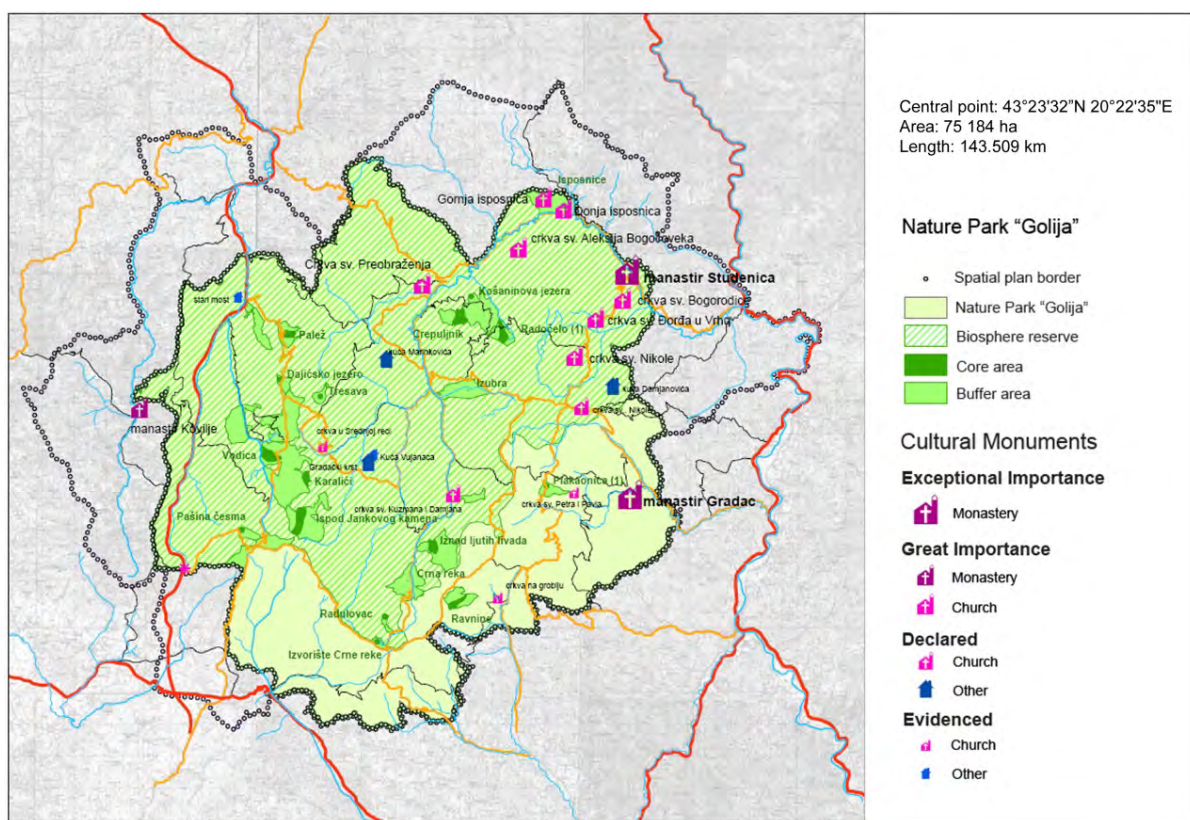
**Fig. 1** *The Gradac Monastery, situated on the wooded slopes of Mt. Golija (photographer Svetlana Dingarac)*

In 2001, the Institute for the Protection of Nature of Serbia declared Mt. Golija as Nature Park Golija by the Decree which classified it in the first category of protection, as an asset of exceptional significance, covering an area of 75 184 ha. The same year, by the Decision of UNESCO-MAB Committee, a part of Nature Park Golija (53 804 ha) became the Golija – Studenica Biosphere Reserve. The Biosphere Reserve belongs to the IUCN category V, but includes areas of categories I and IV. The region has a status of Object of geoheritage of Serbia. It is on the list of potential Important Plant Areas in Serbia and also on the list of potential Emerald Sites. Public Enterprise ‘Srbijasume’ is in charge for management of the Nature Park Golija and Golija – Studenica Biosphere Reserve.

## Cultural and spiritual heritage

Protected cultural monuments situated on the Mt. Golija include:

- Two cultural monuments of outstanding importance: Studenica Monastery with protected surroundings and the Gradac Monastery which are also situated on the main pilgrimage route of Serbia.
- Eight cultural monuments of great importance.
- Seven uncategorised cultural properties (cultural properties that are declared, but with lower values than the two previous types).
- Four evidenced cultural properties (cultural properties that are recorded and have lower status of protection than all the other types).



**Fig. 2** Map of the cultural monuments situated within the Nature Park 'Golija' (stock of the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development of Serbia)

Studenica Monastery is one of the best structures of Serbian creative art and one of the most important centres of Serbian history, culture and spirituality. Stefan Nemanja, the founder of the medieval Serbian state, founded the monastery in 1190. Studenica was declared Monument of Culture of Exceptional Importance in 1979. In 1986, the UNESCO included Studenica Monastery on the list of World Heritage Sites, and the Institute for the Nature Conservation of Serbia declared 'Protected natural surroundings of Studenica Monastery' on the area of 269 ha.

An impressive number of churches were built over the centuries near Studenica Monastery. The reason for this is the fact that Studenica Monastery, as a centre of spiritual and religious life not only of this region, played directly and successfully an essential missionary role.

Gradac Monastery, was built around 1270 on the foundations of an early Christian basilica. The Monastery is the endowment of Queen Helen of Anjou. In 1979, it was declared Monument of Culture of Exceptional Importance. Helen of Anjou (1236–1314) was the queen consort of the Serbian Kingdom, wife of Stephen Uroš I and mother of kings Dragutin and Milutin. For some time she was together with her sons ruling the Serbian Kingdom. Helen of Anjou was canonized by the Serbian Orthodox Church and her feast day is 12 November. Helen was a Catholic and of French origin. She built numerous Orthodox and Catholic monasteries and founded the first girl's school in medieval Serbia.

During the Ottoman rule, from fifteenth till nineteenth centuries, the Monastery was predominantly with no monks and no roof cover. At the end of sixteenth century it was reconstructed, but soon was devastated again. In the last century, between 1963 and 1975, a complete reconstruction of the main church was performed. In 1982, construction of living quarters began and the monastery was revived again. In 2005, during archaeological explorations, the prehistoric cultural layer was discovered in addition to the Medieval cultural layer and the Medieval cemetery that have been identified earlier.

The architecture of the Gradac Monastery, is a good example of monumental Raska School, and includes numerous Gothic-Romanesque elements. Being the earliest building in Serbia where the Gothic style is expressed to a great extent, its architecture is of the utmost importance for understanding architectural developments in the thirteenth century in Nemanjić Serbia (Kandic, 2005).

The church was adorned with frescoes around 1275, although today the fresco decoration is considerably damaged. The monastery of Gradac was surrounded by a elliptical wall along whose inner side was a row of buildings necessary for the life of the monastic community, like refectory, kitchen, cells and stores from which only foundations have been preserved till today.

Today, the Gradac Monastery is a nunnery where eleven nuns and novices currently live. They obey the monastic rule which relies on prayer and obedience. The majority of nuns have completed higher education, mostly the Academy of Fine Arts or the Academy of Applied Art. The monastery is famous for its icon painting workshop and for perfecting the graphic design of religious objects. Icons painted by Gradac's nuns, besides being placed on the iconostases of the major Serbian monasteries are also in demand in the West, equally by the Serbs in diaspora and foreigners. Their work has won praise from critics and it is considered as a high-level art. "As an artist I thought that art would allow me to find the truth, but I had found no answer," says the prioress Efimija. "When I decided to join the Church, I learned icon painting, reconciling my spiritual and artistic aspirations. I don't believe that we can reach such artistic depth if there is no divine light within ourselves."



**Fig. 3** Prioress Efimija at the opening of one of her exhibitions (photographer Svetlana Dingarac)

The nuns regularly exhibit their work in galleries around the country and abroad. Presence in media led to increased popularity and increased number of visitors who started discovering Mt. Golija and its natural and spiritual values.

Besides icon painting, the nuns create greeting cards, carry out the graphic design for CD cardboard holders and make souvenirs obtainable at the monastery kiosk. Moreover, they work with children inspiring both their creativity and spirituality. Once per year, the nuns organize a unique cultural event 'Days of Queen Helen' to celebrate the Queen and her endowment with rich cultural program and competitions in old crafts and knights' games.



**Fig. 4** Cultural festival 'Days of Queen Helen' (photographer Svetlana Dingarac)

Ethnic and cultural identity of the population of local communities in Raska region is marked by Svetosavlje (Saintsavaism). Svetosavlje's ethic implies a historical normative pattern of social behaviour and collective effort of Serbs as Orthodox Christians in all areas of human practice (Mitrovic, 1995). Svetosavlje is named after St. Sava (1174-1235), who was an Orthodox monk, first Archbishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church, diplomat, writer, legislator and founder of several important monasteries. In many popular legends and folk tales he is the creator of miraculous springs, a master of the forces of nature. Numerous sites on the Mt. Golija have been named after St. Sava and are considered holy: Sava's hermitage, Sava's foot, Sava's spring, Sava's vat, etc.

Serbs accepted Christianity in the ninth century but maintained a lot of pre-Christian beliefs and rituals. St Sava succeeded in performing the christianisation of those ancient customs and linked them to Christian saints. Many pre-Christian Serbian tribal customs, cults and myths have been preserved in Svetosavlje, not only as secondary relict of the old spirituality, but also as fundamental pillars of Svetosavlje. For this reason, religious service is done not only in churches and monasteries, but also at the sacred places in nature. The two pre-Christian rituals that connect religious service with sacred places in nature incorporated in Svetosavlje are:

*Sabor* is a gathering of people and priests during religious celebrations that are placed in nature near holy places. They have vast social significance. One of those natural sites is Dajicko lake, a cult place of the region to which are connected many tales and legends.

*Zapis* (literally, Inscription) refers to a particular type of sacred tree, that has been respected through centuries till present times. People chose some dominant tree near

the village, usually an oak. The selected tree becomes a *zapis* through the rite of consecration performed by an Orthodox priest in which a cross is inscribed into its bark. After that, the place where the tree is situated becomes important and people gather there to pray. People believe in its healing power and consider it as ble. *Zapis* can be found in lots of villages all over Mt. Golija.



**Fig. 5** Consecration of a new sacred tree 'zapis' (photographer Zeljko Sinobad)

### **Pressures, impacts and recommendations**

The need of the state for capital and investments and the need of the developed countries for resources bring about the issue of selling Serbia's natural resources and excessive use of those resources. Also, entrepreneurs frequently lobby for legislation that makes easier investments which are in conflict with nature conservation.

The manager of Golija Nature Park, state-owned company Srbijasume, frequently advocates the interests of the government which can go against the interests of natural heritage preservation.

Awareness of local population about the value of their surroundings and potentials for sustainable development is low or missing. Moreover, there is a loss of the traditional spiritual values, customs and beliefs which preserved all sites considered to be sacred, because the number of elderly is decreasing and the young are more and more focused on material values.

Finally, poor cooperation between the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia and monastic communities is another issue.

Based on the results of one survey that we conducted in October 2011 with different stakeholders and our field work with local population, we suggest three recommendations to address the main challenges and pressures:

- Establishing a counselling body of dedicated individuals, including priests from the sacred places of Golija, individuals from administrative management, agriculture, culture, tourism and locals. This body would work to develop consciousness of locals and other key stakeholders in the protected area on matters of the unity of nature, culture and spirituality as well as restoration and preservation of sacred places.
- Constant public pressure on the managers of the protected area and on the state institutions is necessary to conserve the natural heritage.
- Starting initiative for changing the Spatial Plan and Master Plan of Mt. Golija, since none of these documents provides effective measures for nature conservation within the Nature Park.

To conclude, the presence of different natural sites with spiritual dimension should play a significant role in nature conservation of the Nature Park Golija. Therefore, affirming those sites among key stakeholders, local community and society in general is necessary. The Gradac Monastery, due to its activities and constant presence in media, could provide useful inputs to public education and awareness, emphasizing inseparable unity of natural, cultural and spiritual features of Mt. Golija.

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## Spain

### ***Guidance to integrate the intangible heritage into planning and management of protected areas of Spain: Project and process***

*Josep-Maria Mallarach and Marta Múgica de la Guerra*

#### **Protected Areas and the Spanish Section of the EUROPARC Federation**

Spain, one of the most biodiverse countries of the European Union, has an extensive system of protected areas. Some forty different types of protected areas encompass over 6.6 million ha (12.5 percent of the Spanish territory), a figure that increases up to 14 million ha (about 28 percent) if one includes the Natura 2000 sites. Over 4 000 people are directly involved in protected area management, which is mostly under the responsibility of regional governments (*Comunidades Autonomas*) of Spain (EUROPARC-España, 2010).

The Spanish Section of the EUROPARC Federation (EUROPARC-Spain) was established in 1993, as an independent organisation involving all public institutions responsible for planning and management of protected areas in Spain, and the main professional forum for protected areas of the country.

Among the main accomplishments of EUROPARC-Spain are: creation and updating the data base and maps of the protected areas of Spain; promoting the Action Plan for the Protected Areas of Spain, adopted in 2002; promoting the Programme of Work for the Protected Areas of Spain 2009-13; preparing more than 40 publications, including manuals, guides, evaluations, reports, bulletins, etc.; organising, with the university Fundacion F.G.Bernaldez, the annual Master Programme on Protected Areas, and several training programmes since 2000; and putting together the Annual Conference on Protected Areas of Spain since 1999. All the publications are available (in Spanish) at the web page [www.redeuroparc.org](http://www.redeuroparc.org).

#### **The interest for the intangible heritage of protected areas**

In 2005, the XI Congress of EUROPARC-Spain, held in Cangas de Narcea, Asturias, organised, for the first time, a round table to discuss the intangible values of protected areas of Spain. Debates ended with three significant conclusions:

- Integration of intangible values in the planning methods and strategies and the management of protected areas would promote the inclusion of feelings and social sectors that have been marginalised from biodiversity conservation and protected area management.
- The link of people with sites of acknowledged spiritual significance may contribute to the conservation of protected areas where these sacred sites are found.
- Recognising traditional ecological knowledge in planning and management of protected areas would contribute multiple benefits to the conservation of agrobiodiversity and add value to the trades, communities and persons that are their holders.

Later, during the preparation of the *Programme of work 2009-2013 for the Protected Areas of Spain*, a Work Line on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas was included. It is worth to mention that this line is included into a chapter devoted to “Increase the social support by showing the services and benefits that Protected Areas provide to society”.

One of the main actions included into this Work Line was the preparation of a guidance manual to promote the integration of the intangible heritage in the protected areas of Spain (EUROPARC-España, 2009). This project, promoted by EUROPARC-Spain in collaboration with Silene Association will be discussed next.

### The Guidance Manual

The primary target group of the guidance manual are policy-makers, planners and managers of protected areas of Spain. However, one expects that it be useful for local organisations and communities responsible for the conservation of intangible heritage, e.g. custodians of holy sites, brotherhoods, local communities, etc. For this reason, the structure and language of the manual will be as straightforward as possible, in order to facilitate its use by any interested person involved in intangible heritage management and conservation.

The manual will provide principles, criteria and methods to take into consideration the spectrum of intangible cultural and spiritual values in all the stages of protected areas, from the designation to the management and evaluation, in view of increasing opportunities and social support for nature conservation and developing a more holistic approach for the conservation of the entire heritage. It will also provide best practice examples from a number of case studies that will be prepared -see Table 1.

**Table 1:** Selected potential case studies

Natural Park Serra de Montsant, Catalonia
Natural Park Muntanya de Montserrat, Catalonia
Natural Park & Biosphere Reserve of Montseny, Catalonia
Natural Area of National Significance Vall de Poblet, Catalonia
Natural Park l'Alt Pirineu, Catalonia
Park of Garraf, Catalonia
National and Natural Parks of Doñana, Andalusia
Natural Park Sierra de Andújar, Andalusia
Natural Park Las Batuecas, Castilla-León
National Park Picos de Europa, Asturias, Cantabria & Castilla-León.
Natural Monument Ojo de Guareña, Castilla y León
Natural Park Alto Tajo, Castilla y León.
Natural Park Cañón de Riobobos, Castilla y León
Natural Park Hoces del Duratón, Castilla y León
Natural Park Serra de Montsant, Catalonia.
Natural Park Muntanya de Montserrat, Catalonia
Natural Park & Biosphere Reserve of Montseny, Catalonia.

Natural Area Vall de Poblet, Catalonia
Natural Park l'Alt Pirineu, Catalonia
Park of Garraf, Catalonia
National and Natural Parks of Doñana, Andalusia
Natural Park Sierra de Andújar, Andalusia
Natural Park Las Batuecas, Castilla-León
National Park Picos de Europa, Asturias, Cantabria & Castilla-León.
Natural Monument Ojo de Guareña, Castilla y León
Natural Park Alto Tajo, Castilla y León.
Natural Park Cañón de Riobos, Castilla y León
Natural Park Hoces del Duratón, Castilla y León

The main goals of the manual are:

- Define and characterise basic concepts related to intangible heritage.
- Propose a common terminology for planners, managers, custodians and users.
- Recommend effective methods for conducting the inventory and diagnose of intangible heritage.
- Propose procedures for the effective integration of these values from the identification and delimitation to planning, management and evaluation of Protected Areas.

The manuals that have been issued by the EUROPARC-Spain are usually the result of a team effort, involving a participatory process. The manual about the intangible heritage will not be an exception; on the contrary, after drawing the plan and securing the funding, the first step was inviting the member organisations to propose people who could become involved in the working group. Eventually, during the month of May 2011, a working group was established, including 25 people belonging to 20 different organisations, coming from seven different Autonomous Communities of Spain.

During the first months, the discussion revolved around the scope of the concept of intangible heritage, and values relevant to protected areas. On 20th of September a preparatory seminar was organised in Poblet, to discuss the integration of the intangible heritage in the protected areas of Catalonia, in which fifteen experts from ten organizations and agencies participated.

From 3 to 5 of October, a workshop was organised. Sixteen participants from eight Autonomous Communities of Spain and two NGOs gathered in the village of Sant Martín de la Virgen del Moncayo, at the foot of the the Moncayo Natural Park, Aragon. Main discussions were about the challenges for integrating intangible heritage values into the planning and management of protected areas, based on four case studies (National Park Picos de Europa, Natural Monument Camí dels Pelegrins d'Useres, Natural Park Montsant and Strict Reserve

Malpaís de Güímar) plus a number of other examples very diverse, from a hermitage domain within a Nature Reserve, to a population of an endangered orchid species, to whom special intangible values are attached by selected groups of visitors, found in a Natura 2000 site.



**Fig. 1** *Participants of the workshop in San Martin de la Virgen del Moncayo, Aragon, during the field trip to Moncayo Natural Park, October 2011.*



**Fig. 2** *Jordi Falgarona provided the impetus for including the intangible heritage into the protected areas of Spain*

Seven types of values related to intangible heritage components were identified, and several examples of each type were proposed, coming from different protected areas of Spain

- Aesthetic: silence, tranquillity, visual, auditive, beauty,
- Artistic: traditional dance, music and songs, traditional plays, toys, nature painting, literature, photography, films, TV documentaries that played a significant role on nature conservation.
- Historic: relevant historical facts.
- Language: language, dialect, idioms, relevant vocabulary, traditional legends, myths,
- Religious: rituals, pilgrimages, ceremonies, living shrines, monasteries, chapels, hermitages, etc.
- Social: governance, structures, rules, customs, traditional knowledge and trades, feasts, gastronomy
- Spiritual: holy mountains, caves, lakes, springs, trees, and also abandoned temples, shrines, monasteries, hermitages, caves, ...

At the very moment of writing this paper, the group continues the work on-line. A draft outline of the manual has been prepared, and two questionnaires for preparing case studies and for identifying intangible heritage components of protected areas are being tested across the protected areas of Spain. The next workshop is planned in March, and will be hosted by the Natural Park Serra del Montsant, Catalonia.

The Guidance manual for integrating the intangible heritage into the protected areas of Spain is expected to be completed during the summer 2012. It will be published in the collection *Manuales de EUROPARC-España* and distributed accordingly in paper-back, and also in electronic format from the web site: [www.redeuroparc.org](http://www.redeuroparc.org). Given that this will be the first manual of its kind to be produced in Europe, testing and refining their guidelines will probably be required during the coming years.

It is hoped that a similar manual could be produced at the European level, drawing from the experience of the Spanish manual, this workshop, the workshop on intrinsic and spiritual values of protected areas organised in the last EUROPARC Conference, and the conclusions of the three workshops that the WCPA Delos Initiative has organised in Europe during the last five years.

In any case, there are good reasons to expect that improving the incorporation of the intangible heritage into the management of protected areas of Europe will increase both the possibilities of success and support for the conservation of the heritage included in our protected areas.

## **Acknowledgements**

The original idea and impetus for including the intangible heritage into the protected areas of Spain was from our friend and colleague, the late Jordi Falgarona, a committed and creative member of EUROPARC and EUROPARC-Spain until 2008; founder and President of the Silene Association ([www.silene.es](http://www.silene.es)), to whom this manual will be dedicated.

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## Ukraine

### ***The spiritual and natural values as a component of the national identity of Ukraine: The case of the Medobory Natural Reserve***

*Olesya Petrovych*

The conservation of natural heritage in the conditions of the modern industrial world, high need in natural resources, and large economic expectations is a difficult task. As of 1 January 2011 Ukraine had 7 739 protected areas and sites that belong to eleven different categories, according to the national system. Among them there are large areas such as biosphere reserves and national nature parks, and smaller areas under strict protection –nature reserves. In addition, there are smaller areas and sites such as nature monuments, sources, rocks, caves and individual old trees which are also protected and often have an important value for local societies. Despite the complexity of the issues at the stake there are many examples of successful management of such protected areas in Ukraine.

Ukraine is a large state with old cultural and spiritual traditions, and rich natural heritage. Ukraine is the second largest European country, and has almost 46 million people, mostly followers of the Orthodox or Catholic Church. Although the majority of population is Orthodox Ukrainian, more than one hundred different nationalities with distinctive cultural and religious traditions peacefully coexist. The State tries to honor the rights of all citizens taking into account their cultural, linguistic, religious and vital necessities. One important function of the State is the conservation of historical, cultural, spiritual and natural values, as a component of national identity, and as necessary condition for maintaining the state in the future.

Despite 70 years of Soviet regime on the territory of Ukraine, the attitude towards the cultural and spiritual values of the Ukrainian people is very significant. During seven decades the Soviet system directed its efforts on forming its own values. To unite hundreds of different nations and cultures in the socialistic or communistic social ideal of the Soviet Union, it was decided to eliminate the spiritual values that created differences between nations. Therefore, religion and religious ceremonies, spiritual practices and folk traditions were all outlawed or considered vestiges of the past. In the period ranging from the 1930s to 1960s, most monasteries and temples of different religions were destroyed in Ukraine. Despite these great losses, the territories which belonged to the monasteries and temples, and sacred natural sites have not lost their values, especially for local societies.

The process of renewal and restoration of churches, temples and monasteries, reconstruction of consciousness and history, spirituality and culture began in 1992 in independent Ukraine, and continues today. Obviously, it is not possible to restore or recover all that was lost. Sometimes in place of lost values, new and sometimes completely different values are being created. On the other hand it is sometimes possible and feasible to rebuild temples which were destroyed half a century ago, but in any case they will be new temples, new people will walk to them, and only a few age-old icons and historical certificates will create the illusion of the historic character of temple. But the place of the destroyed temple continues to have spiritual value, and the former spirituality found a way to continue its existence, often changing very little.

Around one thousand years ago there were similar processes of reconstruction. But on the places of destroyed pagan temples, churches grew, or were overgrown by forests. We continue to value these places either as existent temples or as historical sites. The land use of these territories changed, but similar spiritual values still exist and have an important significance for contemporary people.

Along the same lines, two, three, or four thousand years ago, several nomadic tribes lived in Ukraine. Today we continue to value their sacred places; their numerous scattered burial mounds are an inalienable part of the Ukrainian landscape, glorified in folk songs and legends, having an extraordinary historical value. Ancient stone sculptures which stood on the top of burial mounds, objects which were buried within the burial mounds together with their owners, have been kept in museums and currently are the objects of national pride. Consequently the spiritual value of these sites continues, though in other ways.

### **The case of the Medobory Natural Reserve**

One of the protected areas in Ukraine that combines very rich natural and spiritual heritages is the natural reserve Medobory. The reserve is located in the central part of the Tovtry ridge, and in the western part Kremenetskyi ridge in the Ternopil oblast, in western Ukraine. Tovtry is a unique natural monument of the geological past formed 15-20 million years ago. There are no equivalent natural sites in Europe. Today the hilly ridge of Podilski Tovtry displays an amazing diversity of limestone weathering forms, vertical karst caves, small karst lakes, and unique landscapes.

The reserve has a rich biodiversity. More than 1 000 species of higher vascular plants have been recorded, including a significant proportion of rare, endemic, relict and the border-areal species. The local flora is rich in honey, medical and vitamin plants. On the other hand, more than 2 500 insects and other invertebrates have been identified in addition to 11 amphibian, 7 reptiles, 190 bird, and 47 mammal species. The richness and beauty of nature and landscapes attracted people here for a long time.





**Fig. 1** *View of the nature reserve Medobory*

In the following a few monuments of Medobory that retained their spiritual meaning today are presented:

During the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, the Zbrutsky cult center was active, which united the sanctuary Zvenigorod, Bohit and Govda within the place of the actual nature reserve

Settlement sanctuary "Zvenigorod" - the great cult center that appeared in Scythian times (from two to three thousand years ago) and Slavs adapted to their sacred use. This was a secret place where our forefathers, avoiding the adoption of Christianity, prayed to their gods, and performed sacrifices to them. The religious settlement had a system of ramparts and ditches. In the area around, there were discovered small temples, a sacrificial chamber, some sacrificial pits, housing for priests and one of the first closed pre-Christian temples of this region. During the tenth to thirteenth centuries it was the basic Zbrutsky cult center, and only priests-shamans constantly lived in the settlement. Around Zvenigorod a number of satellite-villages are found.

The structure of Zbrutsky cult center consisted of three healing springs under a mountain near Zvenigorod. One of them is believed to have healing powers in respect to vision, the other for the nervous system, and the third for the digestive system. These sources, thanks to legends about them are currently considered spiritual elements of the protected area. People believe in their healing properties, visit the source, drink water and pray.

Next to "Zvenigorod" Pushcha a hermitage is located, a man-made cave. During the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, several monks, who were missionaries, converting people to Christianity, lived in this site. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the cave was inhabited by hermits who endured ascetic lifestyle. They knew the herbal properties and could heal ill people. After the death of the last hermit in 1914, the local people built a chapel within a cave. Until 1939 it was a place of mass pilgrimage. The chapel was restored at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The location of man-made cave is a powerful wedging out to the surface of limestone in picturesque cliffs. The territory of Pushcha and the settlement is covered by natural forests, with many rare plant and animal species.



**Fig. 2** *The hermits cave*

Bohit Mountain, another sacred site, is the highest peak of the reserve and also of the Husiatyn district (414 m). From the tenth to the thirteenth centuries there was the town-sanctuary where according to the assumption of scientists, the world famous statue Zbrutsky Svyatovyt, (memorial sculpture of the ancient Slavs) was located. The altar looked like low barrows, composed of large boulders and smaller stones with a square hole in the middle. Around the

central part of a small temple, eight sacrificial pits are symmetrically located. All the sanctuary buildings are well preserved, because they are made of stone. Zbrutsky Svyatovyit is unique for both the technique of fabrication and also the imaging. Statue of idol looks like a square stone pillar on four sides of a carved image, divided into three horizontal tiers. Researchers argue that this is due to perceptions of pagans about division of the Universe: the world of gods, earth and underworld. The upper part of the sculpture features a head with four faces, covered with a round cap. This sculpture is considered one of the most remarkable monuments of the ancient Slavs' culture.



**Fig. 3** *Statue of Idol*

The settlement-sanctuary is surrounded by two-ring and two transverse earthen dam ramparts, which were recovered on stone shafts during the Scythian period, when the settlement was reconstructed. Near the embankments at the base of the settlement there is a prehistoric stone setting (dolmen), a kind of gate, formed by two huge vertical and one transverse man-made stone pillars. The meaning of these structures is different: for example one of them is considered to represent the gates for reincarnation or rebirth.



**Fig. 4** *Earthen ramparts*



**Fig. 5** *Gate*

One of the challenges for staff of the Medobory Reserve is to organize access to these popular religious sites, taking into account the high level of biodiversity and the fragility of the natural areas. The excursions are organised and accompanied by an officer of the Reserve. A strict schedule exists and both number of excursions and tourists in groups are limited to prevent any damage to the fragile natural and sacred monuments. The path is equipped with information boards and signs. However, local people are allowed to freely visit the source and the chapel in a cave.

### **Conclusion**

The partial list of examples of holy natural places and sacred natural sites and biodiversity values of the Medobory Nature Reserve is just a small but important part of the spiritual wealth of the region and Ukraine as a whole.

The author is convinced that if one would analyse the types and elements that have a spiritual value within protected natural areas in Ukraine, one would get extraordinary results. There is an impressive diversity of types and the number and significance of the sacred elements found there. This combined list of natural and spiritual heritage could be the pride of the country and the background for the uplift of the people, a significant contribution of Ukraine to the spiritual and natural heritage and the future of the world.

### **Acknowledgments**

I thank Galyna Oliyar from the Natural Reserve of Medobory and Olena Kryvyk from the Department of Protected Areas of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine for providing materials and assistance in writing this article.



## ***International Hutsul Festivals: Restoration of Local Traditions and Contribution to the European Common Heritage***

*Tetiana Gardashuk*

Modern people still feel their strong connection with nature and living beings in spite of high level of industrial and technological development and urbanization. The concept of biophilia proposed by Edward O. Wilson might be useful for explanation our deep biological need for affiliating with life and nature (Wilson, 1995; Kellert, 1996). He defined biophilia as a preference for certain natural environments as a place of habitation (Wilson, 1994).

In the time of environmental and humanitarian crisis people not only redefine direct and indirect economic value of nature, but also try to rethink the full range of values of nature. Many researchers and experts emphasize the importance of aesthetic, symbolic, educational, humanistic, and intrinsic (or existence) values of nature.

The aesthetic value of nature manifests itself though provoking feelings of intensive pleasure from the physical splendour of the natural world. Aesthetic elements of nature are associated with feelings of harmony and order, on the one hand, and inadequacy of artificial substitutes, on the other (Kellert, 1996). Thus, nature serves for people as a source for artistic inspiration and as a criterion of beauty. Each culture cultivated its own unique sensibility to the beauty of nature, which is reflected, for instance, in folklore and other features of lifestyles and habits.

The symbolic value of nature reflects the human tendency to use nature for communication and thought. Nature's symbols are reflected in development of human language. The many objects natural world especially animals are reflected in stories, myths, and fairy tales to illustrate the ways of resolving dilemmas of human life, authority, power, parental and societal relationships (Kellert, 1996). Furthermore, natural objects (animals, plants, especially trees, stones, rivers, lakes, mountains, etc.) are endowed with religious symbolism (Crapo, 2003). The nature's symbols have powerful emotional significance for people because they provide community with common spiritual ground, unite generations and sustain historical memory. Loss of the nature's symbols may result in disintegration of communities or even nations.

The aesthetic and symbolic values of nature are very closely connected to humanistic and educational value of nature. For instance, the humanistic value of nature helps people to develop the capacity for caring, bonding, and kinship.

Sacred, symbolic, aesthetic, educational, and intrinsic values of nature are already recognized at the political level. Importance of their protection is put in the international policy agendas. Among the documents which provide the commands for protection and development non-material spiritual values of biodiversity, nature, and landscapes one can highlight the Convention on Biological Diversity - Preamble, Article 8j (1992); the European Landscape Convention (2004), and the Carpathian Convention (2003).

The European Landscape Convention was adopted on 20 October 2000 in Florence, Italy, and came into force on 1 March 2004. Its preamble recognises that the landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures and that it is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity.

The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003) provides a framework for cooperation for the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge by protecting traditional architecture and land-use patterns, local breeds of domestic animals, local crafts and by marketing of local goods. It is also aimed at enhanced awareness-raising, education and public participation by improving access of the public to information on the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians.

According to the initiative of the Governments of Carpathian countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic and Ukraine) the group of experts published the report called the Carpathian Environmental Outlook (KEO–2007). This paper is a geographically integrated assessment report on the state of the Carpathian region, its resources and natural life support systems. The Carpathian Environmental Outlook presents the analysis of demography, trends of social-economic and cultural development of the region, risks assessment, and approaches to policy formation and decision making in the Carpathians (Carpathian Environmental Outlook, 2007).

The Carpathian Environmental Outlook proposes three scenarios for the Carpathian region's Future Development (2005 – 2020) and their complex assessment. These scenarios can be briefly described in the following way:

- “Business as Usual” scenario predicts that no new policies or measures are implemented apart from those already adopted and agreed (corresponds to the GEO “Markets First” scenario). The predicted consequences of implementation of this scenario are social/cultural homogenization and marginalization of environmental values of the region.
- “European Union Policy First” scenario presumes the regional implementation of sustainable policy measures and collaboration between countries and citizens of the European Union (corresponds to the GEO “Policy First” scenario). The possible consequences of implementation of this scenario are both great opportunities and uncertain challenges. Most of the future policies and development are defined by the European Union integration and extension by 2020, while Serbia and Ukraine are not yet members of the European Union.
- “Carpathian Dream” scenario is focused on key regional issues and policy differentiation (derives from the GEO “Sustainability First” scenario). Expectations from this scenario are economic prosperity, social justice and gender equity, decreasing regional disparities and a cleaner and healthy environment.

Thus, the “Carpathian Dream” scenario is relevant to the concept of sustainable development and corresponds to the task of full implementation of the Carpathian Convention and its protocols.

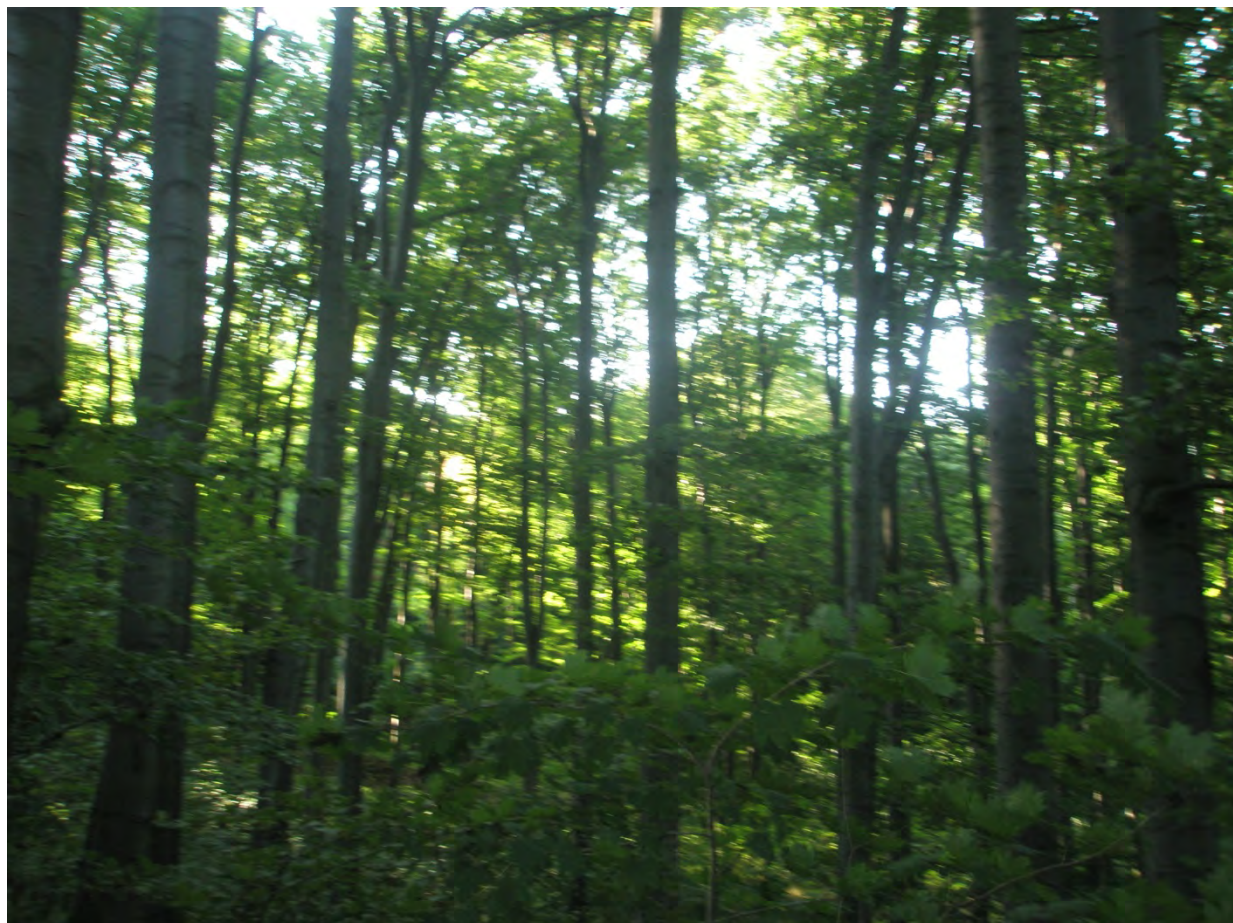
Ukraine is a party of the Convention for Biological Diversity, European Landscape Convention, Carpathian Convention, and other international instruments and initiatives aimed at protection natural and cultural heritage. Ukraine is also looking for closer cooperation with the European Union in all spheres of protection natural, cultural, and spiritual values.



## **Hutsulschyna and Hutsul Festivals**

The Hutsul, or Hutsulschyna, region is the territory of the Carpathians which overlaps Ivano-Frankivska, Chernivetska, and Zakarpatska regions (oblast) of Ukraine and also a part of the north of Romania. Hutsulschyna is home to an ethno-cultural group known as hutsuls.

For Ukrainians Hutsulschyna symbolizes the beauty of nature, historical glory, cultural and spiritual richness, healthy environment, and kindness and hospitality of local people. Local life styles, local economies, culture and handcrafts are closely connected with features and forms of the local landscapes and environment, as well as the natural resources of the territory.



**Fig. 1** *Protected forest in the Ukrainian Carpathians*

Hutsulschyna is famous by a particular style of wooden architecture (houses, churches); embroidery; art of decoration of Easter eggs, called “Pysanky” (nine unique techniques); wood carving; ceramic; weaving; and specific music, songs and dances.



**Fig. 2** *Living tradition: three generations of hutsul musicians*

Local people feel their close spiritual connection with nature (biophilia) and therefore they have strong motivation for protection natural and cultural heritage and for sustainable development of the region. The Hutsul International Festivals is one of the instruments for raising people's awareness about natural, cultural, and spiritual heritage. The purposes of the Festivals are community integration, conservation of natural-cultural heritage; protection and development of local arts and handcrafts; raising the status of local artists, development of local economies, and extension of local brands

The International Hutsul Festival was founded on 21 September 1991 as an annual event. Every year the festival is hosted by one of the towns of Hursulschuna. From the time of its foundation there have been conducted 19 International Hutsul Festivals. The Festivals are organized by the Regional and local authorities; Ukrainian Union of "Hutsul" communities; Regional Society of researchers of Hutsul; Kosiv Institute of Applied and Decorative Arts; Kosiv branch of Taras Shevchenko Scientific Society; Hutsul Educational Council; and the National Nature Park "Hutsul". Participants of the festivals are local communities; hutsul representatives from all parts of Ukraine and from abroad (Poland, Romania, Croatia, Moldova, etc.); artists; scientists; educators, representatives of NGOs; nature advocates; politicians. The festivals also attract tourists from other parts of Ukraine and abroad.



**Fig. 3** *The ceremony of the opening of the 19th International Hutsul Festival (Kosiv, Ukraine, 27-28 August 2011)*



**Fig. 4** *Traditional Hutsul ceramic reflects the features and images of nature of the region as well as natural symbols*

## **The National Nature Park Hutsul**

The National Nature Park Hutsul is the key organizer of the Hutsul International Festivals. The Park is situated in the heart of Hutsulschyna, within Kosiv region, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast. The National Nature Park Hutsul was designated on 14 May 2002, according to the Decree of the President of Ukraine. Its total area is 32 371 ha, from which 24 665 ha are not excluded from different traditional land users. The territory of the Park possesses scientific, educational, recreational, historical, and aesthetic (i.a sacred) values. Therefore, the Park is the main custodian of both the natural and cultural heritage.

The main goals of the Park are:

- Conservation, restoration and sustainable use of natural resources: genetic resources, flora, fauna.
- Protection and sustainable use of unique natural ecosystems and landscapes.
- Protection of the ethnic and cultural environment and cultural-historic heritage.

The territory of the Park is divided in the following four zones, according to the Law of Ukraine on the Nature Conservation Fund of Ukraine: the zone of strict protection; the zone of regulated recreational activities, including short-term recreation, tourist routes and eco-routes, sightseeing, while industrial forest use, hunting and fisheries are prohibited; the zone of permanent recreation, including hotels, camp-grounds, and other visitor facilities; and finally, the zone of economic activity.

Education and extension are considered as priority activities by the the Park's managers. To fulfil this task the Park has the visitors' centre, where it conducts conferences, excursions, lectures, lessons for local schoolchildren and guests. In cooperation with the local government and other NGOs it was also organized the mobile environmental education centre for people of remote settlements. The National Nature Park Hutsul is also actively involved in organization of broad range of environmental festivals and quests, research projects, as well as environmental camps for children and youth. One of the attractions of the Park is the tourist and artistic complex "Wealth of St. Nicholas" dedicated to one of the most revered saint in Ukraine – St.Nicholas (Sviatyi Mykolay).

The 19th International Hutsul Festival and Scientific-practical conference "Hutsul Phenomenon: the art to live and to create" was hosted by the town of Kosiv, from 27–28 August, 2011. The twenty years of experience of conducting the International Hutsul Festivals where National Nature Park Hutsul plays the key role can be considered as a good example of:

- Keeping spiritual values of landscapes, natural symbols, local knowledge and traditions.
- Transition from instrumental mastering of nature for utilitarian needs to harmonization of relationships between nature and human society.
- Community integration for both raising economic welfare of local people and protection of both natural and cultural heritage.
- Region advertising and attraction of green, eco- and ethnic tourism.
- Stimulation economic development through creation of new markets and new work places.
- Ukraine's integration to the European Community.

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## **Communicating and Experiencing Spiritual Values in Europe**





## ***Using folk traditional music to communicate the sacredness of nature in Finland***

*Virpi Sahi*

Regarding nature as a resource for satisfying human needs is a cultural self-evidence of our time. In Finland, for example, the individual experience of forest among citizens is confused by forestry discourse, led by forestry specialists. Forest is defined e.g. as a planting area or a mature stand. It is expressed in numbers, excluding “nature” from the forest. Meaning of forest as a sacred place is stripped away, which makes exploitation feasible. On the other hand, even biological concepts such as biodiversity do not cover our whole experience of forest. Pure technic-economical and biological viewpoints may alienate citizens from their inner relationship with nature (Kovalainen and Seppo, 1997; Kovalainen and Seppo, 2009).

Forests may offer radical experiences of spirituality and sacredness for a modern individual (Louv, 2005: 285). Sacred is typically associated with a boundary – between life and death, continuity and limits, natural and human, settled and unsettled. The experience of sacredness arises in the subjective, non-conceptual reality of an individual. On the other hand, a community tends to define things that are allowed to be considered as sacred. (Anttonen 1996; Ketola 2010).

An interdisciplinary approach is needed in discussing the values of nature. This means applying not solely academic environmental or economical understanding but also the artistic perceptions of nature. In this article I apply my personal experiences as an environmental specialist and as a folk singer and try to pull together a starting point for communicating the spiritual values of nature.

The task of art is to help us to reach the experience of beauty, goodness and sacredness (Ojanen, 2001). In best case art is a critical way of thinking that challenges the prevailing moral and values (T. Mäki, communication in TV YLE1 Strada 26.5.2008). The art of music has always been an important element in building of human communities (McNeill, 2006). Music affects our minds through emotion and non-lingual concepts. When we hear music we first get a feeling and then thoughts. In a case of a song with lyrics, the melody creates an atmosphere and the words specify what it is all about. (Salo, 2006: 38, 42). A live performance may also offer a great experience of presence to the audience following the show.

Folk singers in all cultures have expressed their awareness about the natural powers as well as about relationship between the man and the nature (Heiskanen, 2007). Even for modern citizens, folk singing may communicate the non-economical and intangible meanings of nature.



**Fig. 1** Finnish vocal group *Inehmo* performs traditional Finnish folk poetry combined with Finno-Ugrian melodies. The author of this article is the second singer from left. Photo: Tapio Lindholm 2006

Folk music maintains tradition and transfers knowledge and wisdom in a community. It helps us to understand how nature has set foundations and shaped human cultures across the times. Finnish folk poetry has traditionally been performed by singing. It contains myths e.g. about the genesis of the world (from a bird egg) and a big oak that covered the sky, just to mention a few. In addition, folk poetry describes many traditional ways of living in co-operation with the nature and offers a rich vocabulary for description of forest, mires and waterways and their fauna. (Hästesko, 1920; Kuusi 1963; Laitinen 2006).

A folk singing performance may offer individuals and communities with new, strengthened meanings that are linked up to the surrounding nature. Festivals such as *Seurasaari soi!* ([www.seurasaarisoi.fi](http://www.seurasaarisoi.fi)) or *Sommelo* ([www.runolaulu.fi/sommelo/](http://www.runolaulu.fi/sommelo/)) are obvious forums for such shared interpretations. (Sahi, 2010).

In addition, live performances can purposefully be included to a communication plan of any public event, to strengthen the selected message. For example, in the opening day of the *Sipoonkorpi National Park*, organized by *Metsähallitus* (Forest and Park Service of Finland) in 2011, a folk music performance was placed in the forest with the aim of interpreting the local swedish-speaking cultural layer and the importance of traditional agriculture.

In the field of environmental education there has been only a few attempts to apply live music or singing as a tool of interpreting nature to children and the youth (V. Perkola, personal communication 2011). According to Steve van Matre, the founder of Earth Education, songs are most powerful organisers (Van Matre 1990).

In Finland folk singing is a relevant cultural phenomenon. According to Heikki Laitinen, the professor of folk music in the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finns are traditionally a “singing nation” with two main powerful oral traditions: the ancient Kalevala metre rune singing and the new metre “rekilaulu” tradition. Traditionally anybody could be singing during the day. A great shift in Finnish singing happened for 150 years ago when oral tradition started to weaken and was gradually replaced by written lyrics and recorded music. Unaccompanied singing vanished because of a default of accompaniment. The songs that anybody could sing were replaced by more complicated songs. As a result, the singers become listeners.

(H. Laitinen, lecture 5.10.2011).

Kalevale metre RUNE SINGING	New metre REKILAULU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>2 000 – 3 000 years old</b></li> <li>- <b>eight syllables in each line</b></li> <li>- <b>singing line by line</b></li> <li>- <b>anybody knowing the Finnish language can produce</b></li> <li>- <b>rich, poetical vocabulary on nature</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>flourished between 1 600 – 1 800</b></li> <li>- <b>four lines in each verse, second and fourth lines make up end rhymes</b></li> <li>- <b>singing verse by verse</b></li> <li>- <b>often introductory verses with a statement about nature</b></li> </ul>

I have been running courses called “Folk singing as environmental education” in the nature schools of the Helsinki region, targeted to teachers, day-care workers and nature interpreters. According to my experience, folk singing as environmental education may include:

1. Hearing a song – rouses feeling or motivation; links up meanings and serves as a communications tool.
2. Singing songs together – a channel for shared experience. The group can take things or places over by singing.
3. Producing lyrics – any poet articulates a word view.

As a part of environmental education programme, folk singing activates presence and sensitivity. It is developed in contact with local nature and thus reflects the nature. Songs give an idea of a world view that people used to have, and there may be a lot to learn. Carefully selected songs may also offer a tool for re-establishing meanings, especially pointing out that nature is more than a resource. Creating own lyrics means producing personal observations and interpretations of nature.

Compared with modern music (or using recordings) folk singing has several advantages. Acoustic singing (or music) melts into the environment but does not cover it. Songs are “easy to carry” and singing can be practised outdoors. The most traditional songs are usually based on listening to the lead singer and repeating, and thus they do not need to be readily learnt. “Do it yourself” is a central principle, not “making art”. Also natural sounds can be integrated.

The experience of sacredness cannot be taught or transmitted from one to another, nor it can be produced artificially (Ketola, 2010). However, the conditions where it can arouse and come into consciousness may be created. This can happen in festivals and events or in the framework of education and nature interpretation.

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## ***An introduction to the field trip "Trail of leisure and insight", Biosphere reserve South-East Rugia, Germany***

*Steffi Deickert*

The programme of the workshop on spiritual values of protected areas of Europe included a field trip through the forest nature reserve Goor. In my diploma-thesis I developed an environmental education concept for this forest (Deickert 2007), which included the "Trail of leisure and insight" ("Pfad der Muße und Erkenntnis"). The words 'leisure' and 'insight' have somewhat different meanings in English than in German and their various levels of meaning are intended to appeal the potential visitors. This paper intends to provide a better understanding of the concept behind the design of this trail.

The 4.5 km trail leads through the Goor. This forest of about 80 hectare belongs to the nature reserve Goor-Muglitz and may offer deep insights into the region's natural and cultural heritage. Visitors walk through a variety of forest types, past imposing trees, burial mounds and reforested former settlement areas. Each of the 19 stations of the trail is marked with a glacial boulder, showing a number and the logo of the trail. An accompanying brochure offers information regarding each station respectively. For those that are interested, I offer guided hiking tours on the trail.

This forest features beeches, hornbeam, maples, oaks, wild cherries and other tree species as well as some non-native spruce, Douglas fir and larch. In 2003 the Michael Succow Foundation for the Protection of Nature took over responsibility for 60 hectare. The Foundation primarily aims at allowing the natural dynamic processes in the forest. No broad-leafed trees are cut. Instead, they are left to grow until they die naturally. So wilderness can develop. By this means the trail allows visitors experiencing this developing wilderness.

On the one hand, the trail is situated within the Biosphere reserve South-east Rugia, a model region for sustainable development. Accordingly, the title "Trail of leisure and insight" hints at two major requirements for the implementation of sustainable development: awareness can be achieved through information and reflection. Willingness to implement a sustainable lifestyle needs to provide time for leisure, i.e. to have time and opportunity for open-mindedness, new insights and for developing a new relation to nature. On the other hand, the Michael Succow Foundation assumes that "[nature] represents the basis of human life. Therefore it is our main goal to counteract the anthropogenic global changes and the destruction of nature. We need to give nature time and space to recover and rebuilt its strength. (...) There needs to be a transition from an economic growth model to a societal model of ecologically sound development and cultivation in harmony with nature" (<http://www.succowstiftung.de/philosophy.html>). Both arguments point to a strong need of a new understanding in dealing with nature.

My vision for the forest nature reserve Goor is to create space for the visitors to reflect on nature and themselves and to reconsider their relationship with nature and wilderness. Visitors should connect wilderness with positive emotions. The hike on the trail aims at both capturing thoughts and minds and allowing for mental relaxation, thus encouraging people to become more open-minded to new ideas such as wilderness, protection of natural dynamic processes and sustainability.

One of the most difficult challenges in environmental education and the education for sustainable development is to advance from knowledge to action. The key question is: How to motivate people? Encountering positive experiences with and in nature could be an important source and starting point.

The Goor is an ideal location for this. Visiting this forest should be a fulfilling, inspiring and enjoying experience. If we connect being in nature and experiencing nature to positive emotions, we are able to develop growing consciousness of nature values. This allows us to pay more attention to nature and the consequences of our behaviour on nature. This idea is well-captured in one of the main conclusions and demands of the Forum for Ethics and Culture in the Baltic Sea Region (2003): “Emotions are the indispensable basis of our relationship to nature. And spiritual and religious dimensions also play a much greater role than is often realised. In order to deal with nature in a responsible and respectful way, we must allow ourselves to be moved emotionally by nature, to find words to describe this and to make such experiences a concern of society”.

In my opinion, this emotional part is connected with spirituality. Our feelings are assimilated and expressed through our mind/spirit/mental abilities. Positive emotions create the essence for positive experiences with and within nature. Spiritual practices like meditation, concentration and contemplation can create such positive emotions. Linking spiritual practices and nature experience is helpful in developing a new understanding of attitude towards and dealing with nature.

Personally, my main keys to spirituality are Yoga practice and -theory, which I began at the age of 19. Contemplation, concentration and meditation are important pillars, which helped me develop more empathy. This extended towards empathy for and consciousness regarding nature and led me to the decision to study landscape ecology and nature conservation. Drawing on this personal experience I would like to underline that spiritual views and practices facilitate and improve interest in, awareness for and engaging with nature.

Both because the Goor is located in a model region for sustainable development and because the issue of sustainable development has been also important in my studies of landscape ecology, the concept of sustainable development has been a major topic in my reflections on developing the trail. Sufficiency, which aims for sustainable lifestyles, constitutes an important guideline of sustainable development. This requires consideration, realization of the necessity of sustainable actions and constant effort. It also requires courage for changes, action and reflection of our own behaviour. The trail aims to give impulses and stimulate motivation for sustainable lifestyle. Accordingly, in thinking about creating the concept of the trail, I decided to illustrate this guideline by referring to issues like quality of life, deceleration, time wealth and sustainable consumption. Furthermore, the trail focuses on nature as value for a good life by featuring issues such as “recreation in nature”, “feeling mentally connected with nature”, “experiencing that nature brings personal change and life force” and “learning and experiencing reverence for nature”.

In regard to the ability to “feel mentally connected with nature” I refer, inter alia, to the concept of self-realization, which constitutes an important part of Deep Ecologist Arne Naess’ philosophy. Naess defines self-realization by pointing to widening identification: “The realization of union with the whole nature is made through the understanding of the particular things

as a manifold of expressions or manifestation of Nature (God). But Nature or God is nothing apart from the manifestations” (Naess, 1977, cited in Ott, 1999).

In understanding the single being (Atman) step by step we perceive (the) Godly Nature (Brahman). Every single being is able to expand in space and time. This process is called widening identification. Such a being, in such a process, will come close to self-realization. Self-realization is the widening of the ‘little’/‘small’ self or ego (jiva) towards the ‘great self’, or real higher or elevated Self or Atman (Naess, 1997) “We are connected to all beings through this higher Self. Out of this closeness to all beings derives our ability for identification with others“ (Kalff, 1997). I conceive that the process of widening identification is helpful to grasp what we mean when we ask for a new awareness in our dealing with nature.

Many present-day environmental ethicists are assigning major importance to this process of widening the self in facilitating more sustainable lifestyles. Meditative elements, such as those used in environmental education, seem well suited for fostering a concentrated and contemplative perception of nature and for allowing people to be open for widening identification: “The experience of meditation is stimulating relaxation (...). Meditative elements are connecting to the deeper levels of your consciousness. All thoughts you are used to have might be able to rest. There might be a possible space for inner experience besides your mind through letting go old thoughts and mind functions.” (Bayrische Staatsforstverwaltung, 2004).

On the one hand visitors should be encouraged to relax and to find a place beyond their daily routine, on the other hand they are also supposed to be motivated to reflect and muse. Meditative elements should help supporting visitors to become aware of their interests and emotions and should be animated to approach new topics, thus possibly learning at the same time something new about themselves.

How is it possible to connect meditative elements with knowledge in an enjoyable way? For the trail concept, I decided to draw on an internationally applied concept called “Interpretation”. This method can be align to the needs of education for sustainable development. It allows for creating a relationship between visitor and natural or cultural phenomena in an interesting and pleasant way. "Interpretation is a (...) communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heritage\\_interpretation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heritage_interpretation), <http://www.interpcan.ca>; Tilden, 1957). Interpretation claims that a phenomenon should be recognized through different perspectives: historical, artistically, scientific, literary, philosophical, aesthetic, symbolic etc. That way, visitors will find it easier to establish a relationship to the object of interpretation. Fantasy and creativity, a feeling for community, solidarity for human and non-human world will be supported.

The contents of the accompanying brochure address the different stations by dealing with subtopics like nature conservation, e.g. the importance of beech trees in our region; land use- and settlement history of the forest, ecological relevance and relevance of forests for a good life, e.g. as a place for leisure and insight; nature awareness, art and lyrical art. Accordingly, the brochure contains informative texts, poems, photos and also aquarelles, which try

to capture the 'mood' of each station which should open for a meditative atmosphere. Two of the aquarelles are mandalas<sup>7</sup>. They are proposed as examples for meditative elements in the booklet. One of the mandalas displays a tree – a symbol representing all plants that supply us with oxygen - standing in the middle of the universe surrounded by the four elements: air, earth, fire and water. Besides the mentioned topics, the guided walk through the Goor suggests several contemplative exercises to raise attention and consciousness on nature in general, and particularly to forest and trees.

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<sup>7</sup> *Mandala* is a Sanskrit word that means "circle. (...) In various spiritual traditions, mandalas may be employed for focusing attention of aspirants and adepts, as a spiritual teaching tool, for establishing a sacred space, and as an aid to meditation (...). In common use, mandala has become a generic term for any plan, chart or geometric pattern that represents the cosmos metaphysically or symbolically, a microcosm of the Universe from the human perspective." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandala>)



## **Inventories and Documenting Spiritual Values within Protected Areas**



## ***Diversity of monastic protected areas and best practice examples in Europe***

*Josep-Maria Mallarach*

### **Monasticism: A resilient lifestyle close to nature**

From the earliest times, the ideal of the Christian monastic life was closely connected to an aspiration to return to the terrestrial Paradise. Solitude in the wilderness, usually associated with asceticism, was sought so that an aspirant might progress spiritually and attain to holiness, developing a deep harmony with nature by approaching or recovering 'the Adamic state'. The idea expressed by St John Damascene that "Nature is the living icon of the face of God" is highly significant when one recalls the sacramental nature accorded to icons in the Eastern Churches and the veneration they receive.

From the first centuries of Christian monasticism, two main lifestyles developed, which have remained unchanged until the present day: community life – cenobitic – and isolated life – hermitic. Hermitism and cenobitism are usually seen as complementary paths. A hermit devoted to silent prayer and contemplation in solitude is the prototype of the human being in deep harmony with nature.

The expansion of monastic settlements occurred rapidly, and by the end of the first millennium thousands of monasteries were thriving in Europe. 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 nature conservation, and protected areas in particular, has received much less attention.

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 Iberian steppes, from the Alps or the Carpathian mountains to the coastal wetlands of the Black or the Mediterranean seas, many of which have been well conserved until the present day. 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).

Indeed, sustainability went hand in hand with monasticism from an early time. Among the Benedictines, agricultural and forestry management practices were sophisticated and diverse. The sustainable forest practices of the Camaldolensians (a branch of the Benedictines), in the extensive forest lands of the Apennines, were the foundation of the Italian legislation on forestry. 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). Moreover, medieval monastic gardens were the origin of botanical gardens and pharmaceutical gardens in post-medieval European and Middle Eastern towns (MacDougall, 1986).

Because of the alms and donations they received, coupled with an 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 countries monastic communities were responsible for managing 10 to 25 per cent of the productive land.

Hermitages, on the other hand, were traditionally located in wild or rugged country, providing solitude and natural shelters like caves. The profound peace of the hermitic domains results in the fact that they often 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 settlements resulted in a very balanced landscape pattern, which can be still found in several regions of Europe. The so called 'Carmelitan deserts' are a special type of hermitic-based landscape, established from the seventeenth century onward to host a certain number of temporary hermits in solitary places, where a number of modern protected areas have been established, for instance the Natural Parks of Desert de les Palmes and Las Batuecas, Spain (Ruiz & Husillos, 2008).



**Fig. 1** Cave hermitages of Sierra de Alcubierre, a Natura 2000 site, Spain.

The historical peak of monastic expansion varied depending on the region. While in Ireland a summit was reached in the fifth and sixth centuries, the heights of monasticism in many Western and Central European countries was not reached until the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries; and Russia enjoyed its heyday later, during the 1500-1600s.

However the history of monasticism is not 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, 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 on nature conservation. Many monastic forests were razed to the ground in few decades (Urteaga, 1989), and numerous traditional varieties of vegetables were lost, and much traditional ecological knowledge and related best practices were rapidly forgotten. Later, when a certain tolerance for religion returned, a monastic resurgence occurred in most European countries, which led to the partial recovery in most places of what had been lost.

Nowadays, it is estimated that there are more than 5 000 monastic communities in Europe and the Middle East, including over 80 000 monks and nuns, a clear proof of the resilience of this way of life. Currently, most of the former European communist countries are experiencing a recovery and/or expansion of monasticism. The largest monastic population in Europe is actually to be found within the Natural Park of Vanatori-Neamt, northeast Romania, which includes over 2 000 monks and nuns (Catanoius, 2007) and the only monastic republic of the world, Mount Athos, located in Greece, has about 1,700 monks, with all its large monasteries fully restored (Speake, 2002).



**Fig. 2** *Mt. Athos and monastery of Dionysiou, Natural and Cultural World Heritage Site and Natura 2000 area, Greece*

Most of the oldest and largest remaining monastic lands of Europe are found inside protected areas of international value, like the Natura 2000 network. Indeed, many monastic lands are effectively managed as protected areas, even without designation, as indisputable examples of resilient community-conserved areas. Moreover, some protected areas have been promoted or created by monastic authorities, e.g. the Natural Park of Rila, Bulgaria, or the Natural Area of National Significance of Poblet, Spain.



**Fig. 3** *A nun explaining how the green filter works, Monastery of Boulaur, France.*



**Fig. 4** *Monastery of Poblet, World Heritage Site and Protected Area, surrounded by organic vineyards and olive groves, Spain.*



**Fig. 5** A hermitage of "Les ermites de Marie", Natura 2000 site, Eastern Pyrenees, France.



**Fig. 6** Monastic forests near Skitul Sihla, Vanatori Neamt Natural Park, Romania.



**Fig. 7** *Saint Ivan forest, protected by the founder of the Rila Monastery, Rila Natural Park, Bulgaria.*

Other monastic communities are devoted to 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).

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.

Finally, another trend that needs to be addressed 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 Buddhist monasteries are very committed towards nature conservation and environmental respect.

### **Examples of best practices and positive trends**

What follows is a selected sample of representative examples of positive trends identified in lands managed by monastic communities in Europe.

Development of organic farming in numerous monasteries, such as the Rieunette and Solan monasteries, France; Hosios Lukas and Chrysopigi, Greece; Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, Italy; Solan, France, and most monasteries of Romania.

Development of sustainable practices on forestry, e.g. inverting coppice oak wood to high forest, combining sustained yield with biodiversity and beauty concerns, such as in Simonopetra Monastery (Kakouros, 2010) or Stift Heiligenkreuz, Austria. Other monasteries e.g. those of Frauenthal and Hauterive Switzerland, or Cystersów, Poland, have been developing best practices in animal husbandry.

The Natural Park of Montserrat, Spain, where the Abbot of the main monastery is the Vice-President of the Board, or the Protected Area of Poblet, Spain, where the Prior of the Poblet Monastery has been elected president of the Board, are quite exceptional, but could be replicated in other protected areas including monastic communities.

Land ownership is partially being devolved to some monastic communities in Eastern Europe, 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.

Including spiritual principles in the planning and management of protected areas has been either proposed or realised by monastic communities in some protected areas, e.g. Poblet, Spain, and Rila, Bulgaria.

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.

Sensitising visitors vis-à-vis nature and the environment is a common practice in many monasteries, e.g. the Buddhist monasteries of Plum Village, France, or the Holy Island of Arran, United Kingdom, and the Christian monasteries of Camaldoli, Italy, the Virgin Mary of Rodia, Greece; Solan, France; in addition to a number of inter-religious initiatives, like the Ecosite of Avalon, 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 or including strict environmental criteria in all new monastic buildings, e.g. the monasteries of Siloe, Italy, and Himmerod, Germany.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the management of natural resources by monastic communities in diverse ecosystems is of great interest from a nature conservation point of view, because it provides one of the best documented examples of effectively managed community-conserved areas that have created, and maintained for centuries, a diversity of beautiful, harmonious, productive and biodiverse landscapes in Europe. 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, crop-lands and gardening, not to mention the use of renewal energy, in particular, hydro-power.

For all these reasons, one ought to pay more attention to this enduring class of community conserved areas, to identify the lessons that may be learned for protected areas, especially those with spiritual meaning or significance. In particular, the practices that many monastic communities have developed to be as coherent as possible from an environmental point of view, within European countries that are ostensibly following opposite trends, should be encouraged and widely disseminated.

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## ***National Plan on Natural Sanctuaries in Estonia - 2008–2012: Challenges and perspectives***

*Arvi Sepp*

### **Introduction**

Sacred natural sites including traditions and beliefs regarding nature have survived relatively well in Estonia, compared to other European countries. With growing pressure from landside development the issue of dealing with them and issues of traditional beliefs came up prior to the year 2008, when finally it was decided to establish a formal plan. The Study and Conservation Plan, prepared on the initiative of the House of Taara and Native Religions by a work group at the Ministry of Culture was signed by Estonia's Minister of Culture in spring 2008. The outcomes of this approach and attempt to respect traditional values and sacred sites and at the same time have them reflected in spatial planning shall be outlined in the following short presentation.

### **Sacred natural sites in Estonia**

Typical sacred natural sites (natural sanctuaries) in Estonia are sacred groves, complexes with an area ranging from 1 to 100 ha (Kaasik, 2011), comprised of sacred trees or forests, and sometimes also sacrificial stones and springs. Such a natural site, with its trees, often looks somewhat higher in the surrounding landscape and has survived better on small hills which have not been ploughed up for farming or used as construction sites. All older villages, which existed before the conquering and official Christianisation of Estonia in the 13th century, had such a sacred site, although a group of villages may have had a common site. Nowadays, mostly historical data about 500 such sites exists; however, the conditions and exact locations of most of them are not known to researchers. Approximately 80% of the sacred natural sites of Estonia are not under state protection.

At such sites, traditionally trees were not cut and the surface of the land, the soil, was not cut or dug. Gifts were brought and in some cases still are being brought to the sites. The sites are considered to have special, often healing power. For local people, whose ancestors have lived in the same villages for centuries, it is easier to communicate with ancestors at such special sites.

Similar sacred natural sites and corresponding traditions, beliefs and practices can be found in the territories of other Finno-Ugric people in the European part of the Russian Federation.

There are a few documented cases in which orders were given by officials to destroy a sacred natural site based on ideological or religious grounds in earlier centuries. In Estonia, these officials have been foreigners during most of written history. Instructions to destroy a sacred site involved taking away all the visible offerings, cutting the trees and ploughing up the site, in order to physically destroy it entirely. Otherwise, trees might have grown anew. This shows that the site itself, as a whole, was important, not only the growing trees on the site. Any gatherings and collective ceremonies at these old sacred sites were forbidden even up to the beginning of the twentieth century.

Such a sacred natural site is called a hiis (case forms: hiie, hiide) in northern and central Estonia, in areas closer to the Baltic Sea (Valk, 2009). The word may have a cognate in the

Saami language. It is also semantically and phonetically similar to the English 'heath, heathen' and German Heide.

The study and conservation plan of sacred natural sites (Eesti, 2008) involves, in addition to larger size sites, individual trees, stones, springs (especially eye-springs) etc. that are considered to be sacred or healing. There is written information in archives, research institutions etc. of about 2000 such smaller sites in the country. These may occasionally be remnants of earlier larger areas.

The Study and Conservation Plan deal only with traditional sacred natural sites which were already in use before the twentieth century. Therefore, some new sacred sites are not covered. The sites covered by the Plan may occur both within and outside legally established protected areas.

### **Background and preconditions for adopting the Plan**

Sacred natural sites with a corresponding attitude, traditions and beliefs regarding nature have survived relatively well in Estonia, compared to other European countries. Physical survival of these sites has helped to preserve the traditions and, in turn, preserving the traditions has helped to conserve the sites.

Folklore has been collected extensively in Estonia since the nineteenth century and Estonia's archive collections are, comparatively, among the biggest in the world. Many references to sacred sites are from the 1920s to 1930s. Data on an estimated 2500 sacred natural sites - including individual sacred natural objects- has not been systematically studied and is not sufficient for locating the sites in the present landscape. Therefore, the sites have to be inventoried by fieldwork, using the help of local informants. Sometimes local people have deliberately kept the location of their sites secret.

Prior to 2008 Estonia also had its housing bubble and economic bubble, inspired by European Union money and loans. Increased construction pressure on some sacred natural sites led to actions to protect them. These actions and the ensuing court cases received a great deal of public and media attention across the country. As a result, in April 2008 Estonia's Minister of Culture signed the Study and Conservation Plan, prepared on the initiative of the House of Taara and Native Religions by a work group at the Ministry of Culture.

### **Objectives and activities of the Plan**

After providing background information and defining the sacred natural sites, the Plan lists objectives and measures to meet these objectives, including output indicators.

The main general aim of the Plan is to preserve the sacred natural sites and related intangible heritage through research, appreciation and conservation. To this end, it includes fieldwork inventory of the sites; building a database of the sites; analysing their legal protection; disseminating the study and inventory results, and providing measures to ensure the maintenance of the sacred natural sites in the future.

### **Inventory**

Fieldwork inventory and the mapping of sites in about 30 of the total Estonia's 102 parishes were planned during the period of this Plan. The Plan is expected to be continued after 2012.

Fieldwork methods have to take into account special psychological factors in asking questions about the sacred, creating an interview atmosphere, using open questions etc. In the case of fully inventoried sites, biological - especially botanical- data will also be gathered.

### **Database**

Compiling the online database also involves digitising and input of earlier archive data, which will help to prepare for fieldwork. Sufficient memory space is needed to record the oral tradition. In order to safeguard confidential information, different user rights will be applied. The database is to be used for conservation planning.

### **Legal status and conservation of sacred natural sites**

The aim of all objectives and measures is the conservation and preservation of the sites. Current Estonian legislation does not even mention sacred natural sites or sacred groves. Analyses of relevant legislation and proposals to amend legislation are planned.

### **Disseminating study results, developing nature friendly values, and appreciation of sacred natural sites and local identity**

The Plan relies upon the educational system (curricula, school-books and environmental education), museums and the media.

### **Continuation of results, transmission to future generations**

Supporting the revival of traditions is mentioned here. Implementation of an advisory system, especially for land owners, is planned in cooperation with custodians of sacred natural sites.

### **Issues and perspectives**

As mentioned in the Plan, the scope of the fulfilment of the objectives depends on the actual funding. After 2008 there was a drastic cut in available funds; by November 2011 the Plan had received state funding of less than 20% of what had been established in the Plan. So the inventory cannot be done in most of the targeted parishes. Inventory has been done in two parishes -including botanical data.

The database has been programmed and tested with a limited amount of data.

A public opinion survey was ordered, which showed that 70% of the population of Estonia considered the protection of sacred natural sites either important or very important. Interestingly enough, support was equally high among all religious groups.

Traditionally, sacred natural sites have been protected by social patterns of behaviour and beliefs, without the support of legislation. Nowadays, more and more spheres of life are regulated by written law. An application for a construction permit can be turned down only if there is a legal basis for refusing. That holds true even in the case of a protected area if the site is in a limited management zone.

In Estonia, protected areas are classified into three types: national parks, nature conservation areas and landscape conservation areas. In the case of national parks, cultural -and spiritual- factors can also be taken into account. However, in the case of the other two cate-

gories of protected areas, criteria are usually based only on natural heritage values, and therefore, on natural sciences.

In sacred natural sites, nature and tradition, nature and culture, the visible and invisible, or intangible, and the material and spiritual have not been separated, i.e. they form a whole. But, nowadays, sacred natural sites fall outside of the institutions and laws dealing with nature and culture. The Environmental Board and Nature Conservation Act proceed on the basis of the data of natural science, avoiding the spiritual and cultural dimension -except in the case of national parks. The National Heritage Board and the Heritage Conservation Act classify sacred natural sites within the category of archaeological monuments, in which case only archaeological finds and the archaeological cultural layer are protected. However, the human footprint at most sacred natural sites has been minimal.

This fragmented approach is insufficient for the effective conservation of sacred natural sites. For example, in the case of the the Sacred Grove Hill in Paluküla (Paluküla hiimägi), a landscape conservation area and Natura 2000 area, environmental authorities found that cutting a row of trees and excavating a ditch for a sky-lift would not damage the habitat significantly (a semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates, Festuco-Brometalia), although this would have been detrimental to the sacred natural site. On the other hand, inspectors of the National Heritage Board were called in to determine if any archaeological objects would be extracted, because the site is also partly under national heritage protection. Finally, only a gathering of citizens on the site and public attention was able to stop the bulldozer.

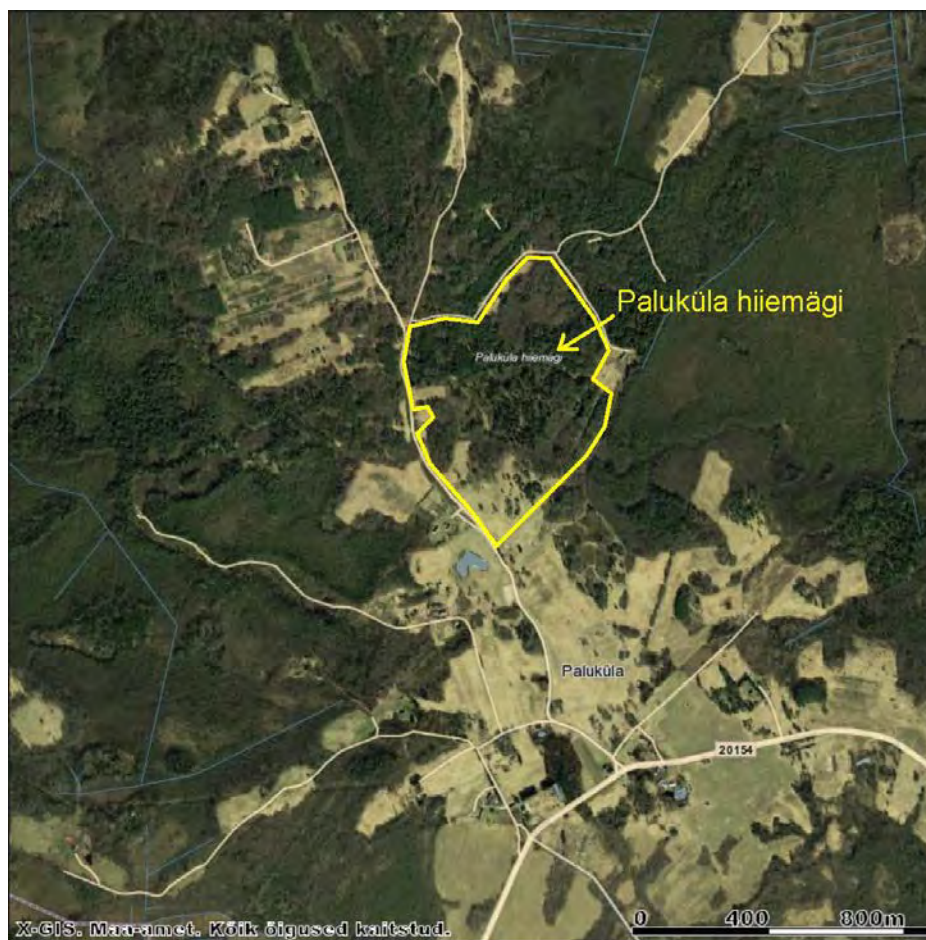


**Fig. 1** Sacred Grove Hill in Paluküla (Paluküla hiimägi), in Kõnnumaa landscape conservation area and Natura 2000 area. (Photo: Toivo Sepp and Paluküla Sacred Grove Hill Custodian Society)





**Fig. 2** Prayer and gathering on the Sacred Grove Hill in Paluküla (Paluküla hiemägi, Paluküla village, Rapla parish, central Estonia) at the Souls' Time, November 2008. (Photo: Auli Kütt)



**Fig. 3** Location of Sacred Grove Hill in Paluküla (Paluküla hiemägi) in relation to the houses, roads and fields of the village of Paluküla. (Aerial photo: Estonian Land Board)



**Fig. 4** *Dark clouds over the Sacred Grove Hill of Paluküla. Gathering at the Souls' Time, November 2010. (Photo: Heiki Maiberg)*



**Fig. 5** *Making porridge and singing folk-songs of the older type at a gathering on the Sacred Grove Hill in Kunda (northern Estonia), October 2009. (Photo: Heiki Maiberg)*



**Fig. 6** Sacred Grove Hill in Paluküla (*Paluküla hiiemägi*) as the highest place, seen over a bog from the neighbouring village of Lalli. October 2011. (Photo: Monika Suškevics and Paluküla Sacred Grove Hill Custodian Society)

Therefore, some legal changes are needed to provide effective legal protection to sacred natural sites. Three options could be envisaged:

- a) To amend the Nature Conservation Act of Estonia
- b) To amend the Heritage Conservation Act of Estonia
- c) To adopt a special act or regulation for sacred natural sites of Estonia.

Currently there is considerable political agreement to continue the Plan after 2012.

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## ***Perspectives on sacred and spiritual values in conservation policy and management***

*Bas Verschuuren*

### **Introduction**

Today a network of undetermined magnitude and important biocultural diversity spans the globe: a network of nodes of sacred natural sites and pilgrimage routes. These sacred connections are found in every country, also in Europe although some are more acknowledged than others.

The resilience of interconnected biological and cultural systems underscores the vitally important role of local and indigenous communities, faith groups and others that seek spirituality in nature. This spiritual dimension encodes important ethical and moral behaviours related to sustainable ways of living and therefore holds very important lessons for wider humanity (Verschuuren 2012).

These sacred natural sites, pilgrimage routes and places of spiritual significance are often not sufficiently understood or recognized in conservation policy and management. Nonetheless, in Europe, rural people, religious followers and indigenous peoples play a vital role in the governance of their surrounding environment often based on historic, religious and spiritual ties to nature. Accommodating the needs of these people in conservation management and policy remains a scarcely covered terrain to date.

### **A contribution to conservation and protected areas**

Protected areas cover around 12.1 per cent of the Earth's surface, and according to some estimates Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas possibly would add up to an approximate 20 per cent (Chape et al., 2008). Sacred natural sites and other spiritual places in nature are thought to make a significant contribution to extending the global conservation network (Verschuuren et al 2010). As often happens, most of those sites are managed under cultural heritage laws or fall under the domain of religious organisations and indigenous peoples.

Indigenous lands, contain many such places and constitute 20% of the Earth's surface (7% of which is legally owned by indigenous peoples). Liberal estimates suggest that these lands contain approximately 80 per cent of the world biodiversity and 95 per cent of the world's cultural diversity (Sobrevila 2008). An additional 7 per cent of the Earth's surface is governed by mainstream religion's organisations to which over 80 per cent of the Earth's populations is known to adhere (O'Brien & Palmer, 2007). Lands owned or governed by indigenous and religious groups have necessarily been included or recognised in conservation designations

Just as World Heritage Sites, Protected Areas and Ramsar Sites may overlap; sacred natural sites and pilgrimage routes exist throughout and beyond them and serve as a vehicle for nature conservation, evidently also in Europe (Mallarach, Papayannis & Väisänen, 2011). Recognition of the importance of those places for the conservation of biological and cultural diversity is urgent and requires us to look beyond how we currently imagine protected areas.

## **Need for a review of policy and governance arrangements**

To date, a review of existing laws and policies (international and national, plus local political realities) that assist with the conservation of sacred natural sites and faith based conservation areas is still lacking. A first attempt is being undertaken by the Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas Consortium with help of the Sacred Natural Sites Initiative. The review will include existing rights, but also of those laws that contravene with laws that help protect sacred natural sites and community conserved areas but it does not focus on faith based conservation areas. The review also address gaps, strengths and weaknesses (e.g. community/nation specific) as well as implementation of existing rights and provide specific legal/rights-based strategies for the protection of sacred natural sites, landscapes and pilgrimage routes.

Formal recognition that sacred sites form an interconnected and interdependent network is also lacking. Current international treaties that can support the protection of sacred natural sites and their care takers are:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).
- International Labour Organization Convention (No. 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, adopted 1989.
- World Heritage Convention - Cultural Landscapes (1992).
- UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere's (MAB) Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves (1995),
- UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001).
- UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)
- UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP; 2007).
- Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), article 8j., 10c & Akwé Kon Guidelines
- The Ramsar convention on wise use of wetlands (1971). Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21.
- Declaration on the rights of
- (Mother Earth) (2010).

Conservation management could, where appropriate, support people to exercise their cultural, spiritual and religious responsibilities that they are entitled to from national and international law. Free and Prior Informed Consent, the right to self-determination, right of religious freedom and of confidentiality of sacred and spiritual sites and related knowledge will need to be better recognised and endorsed in national and international conservation policies. A much quicker route in support of the recognition of sacred and spiritual values and practices in protected areas would be to develop best practice guidance, education and training modules for protected area staff and planners.

## **Best practice guidelines and precedent**

Conservationists, academics and lawyers should work with faith communities, indigenous, local and rural peoples as well as custodians to conduct appropriate and culturally sensitive forms of research and respectful, reciprocal inter-cultural work to support other cultures and faith groups to help conserve nature. Examples of guidelines developed so far include guidance for conservation managers, planners and decision makers on sacred natural sites and landscapes have been developed in the international arena:

- *CBD: Akwé: Kon Voluntary Guidelines for the Conduct of Cultural, Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Regarding Developments Proposed to Take Place on, or which are Likely to Impact on, Sacred Sites and on Lands and Waters Traditionally Occupied or Used by Indigenous and Local Communities* (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity 2004).
- UNESCO/IUCN: Best Practice Guidelines No.16 “Sacred natural Sites, Guidelines for Protected Area Managers” (Wild and McLeod, 2008).
- The Delos Initiative: Focusing on guidance for sacred natural sites in technologically developed countries, has published three proceedings and statements containing lessons learned from case studies (Mallarach & Papayannis, eds. 2007; Papayannis & Mallarach, eds. 2009; Mallarach, Papayannis & Väisänen, eds. 2011).
- Sacred Natural Sites: Conserving Nature and Culture (Verschuuren et al, 2010). The research for the book also informs this policy brief and contains both a detailed action plan for work on sacred natural sites and also a Custodians statement.
- UNEP-WCMC’s ICCA registry will include SNS in order to ensure their appropriate recognition by policy makers and conservation planners. Communities choose the degree to which their information is made available to the database and to the public.
- Convention on Biological Biodiversity (CBD) Code of Ethical Conduct to ensure respect for the cultural and intellectual heritage of indigenous and local communities relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

Community Protocols, when part of an endogenous process in which communities outline their aspirations for well-being are labelled Biocultural Community Protocols, to facilitate an interface between their traditional ways of life, their rights and external entities such as private companies and governments.

The Sacred Natural Sites Initiative builds an alliance of custodians, traditional knowledge holders, conservationists, academics and others in support of the conservation and revitalisation of sacred natural sites and territories ([www.sacrednaturalsites.org](http://www.sacrednaturalsites.org)).

## **Sacred Natural Sites Guidelines for Protected Area Managers**

The aim of the IUCN UNESCO Guidelines (Wild and McLeod, 2008) is to help protected area managers to not only conserve the natural aspects, but also to better recognise and engage with cultural, spiritual and religious aspects of sacred natural sites within protected areas. They guide protected area managers on what actions are appropriate and make suggestions for creating an enabling environment for custodians, local communities and other stakeholders.

The Guidelines are organized in two parts. Part 1 contains the supporting sections which include the preamble, introduction, background information and photo plates of sacred sites. Part 2 contains the 5 page essential guidelines which consist of 6 principles and 44 guideline points. The section also contains a discussion which covers the principles of the Guidelines illustrated by case studies and is supported by references and annexes. These are the six principles:

- Principle 1 Recognise sacred natural sites already located in protected areas.
- Principle 2 Integrate sacred natural sites located in protected areas into planning processes and management programmes.
- Principle 3 Promote stakeholder consent, participation, inclusion and collaboration
- Principle 4 Encourage improved knowledge and understanding of sacred natural sites.
- Principle 5 Protect sacred natural sites while providing appropriate management access and use
- Principle 6 Respect the rights of sacred natural site custodians within an appropriate framework of national policy.

Because sacred natural sites have been managed by custodians, communities or faith groups, particular attention is needed to the development of additional custodian-led conservation guidance. This is important in the light of the CBD 2020 target of covering 17% of terrestrial and 10% marine areas, conserved through equitable and effectively managed systems of protected areas and other effective area based conservation measures. It adds to the recognition of existing cultural and spiritually embedded conservation approaches.

If you have experience with the conservation of sacred natural sites you can help improve the Guidelines by taking a survey, testing them in the field, translating them into your local language or through developing a case study on your sacred natural site and management experience, go to [www.sacrednaturalsites.org](http://www.sacrednaturalsites.org).

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## Workshop Programme

### Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> November

	Arrival	
18.30	Dinner	
20.00	Welcome & introduction round	Facilitators: JOSEP-MARIA MALLARACH, RALF GRUNEWALD, BfN

### Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November

07.30	Breakfast	
<b>1 Introduction: Taking stock of the range of spiritual sites in Europe</b>		
09.00	Introductory overview on the spiritual values in the protected areas of Europe	JOSEP-MARIA MALLARACH, Spain
09.45	Spiritual values of Protected Areas of Finland	YRJÖ NOROKORPI, Finland
10.30	Coffee/ tea break	
10.50	Golija-Studenica Biosphere Reserve and Gradac Monastery, Serbia	SVETLANA DINDARAC, Serbia
11.30	Protected Areas of the Majella in Abruzzo - A Spirituality throughout Time	VITA DE WAAL, Italy
12.30	Lunch	
13.30	Guided tour of Vilm island	RALF GRUNEWALD, BfN
15.00	Coffee/ tea break	
15.30	Northern Pindos National Park 'excommunicated forests', Greece	KALLIOPI STARA, Greece
16.00	Diversity of monastic protected areas and selected case studies in Europe	JOSEP-MARIA MALLARACH, Spain
16.30	Three working groups followed by a short plenary session. Topics: 1. Redefining "spiritual values" for Protected Areas of Europe. Mapping types of spiritual sites in Protected Areas of Europe (where do which types occur) 2. Ownership patterns of spiritual sites and main stakeholders in Protected Areas (who holds management responsibility) 3. How well are spiritual sites recognised by PA administrations and in the public? What is the pertinence and importance of sacred natural sites for contemporary Europeans? What are the main trends?	facilitated by JOSEP-MARIA MALLARACH with assistance of RALF GRUNEWALD and GISELA STOLPE

18.30 *Dinner*

19.30 Cultural evening: Presenting products and customs related to spiritual values from Protected Areas from the home countries of the participants all

## Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> November

07.30 *Breakfast*

### 2 Managing spiritual values in PAs: stakeholders and governance, challenges and conflicts

08.30 Relations between economic and spiritual values of Bialowieża Forest in Podlasie, Poland ANNA HACKIEWICZ, Poland

09.00 Sacral geography of Bosnia and protected areas conflicts, Bosnia SAFET HADZIMUHAMEDOVIC, Bosnia

09.30 The challenge of protecting spiritual values of Bosnian cultural landscapes through Annex 8 of Dayton Peace Accord, Bosnia AMRA HADZIMUHAMEDOVIC, Bosnia

10.00 Spiritual traditions and values of trees in National Park Galicica, Macedonia BOJAN RANTASA, Macedonia

10.30 *Coffee/tea break*

11.00 Working groups on:  
 1. What role, do religious or spiritual organizations play, or should play in the conservation of natural heritage related to spiritual values?  
 2. How and under which conditions could spiritual values increase or enhance social support for Protected Areas? What conflicts might arise between nature conservation and spiritual values conservation?  
 3. How can spiritual values be maintained and enhanced without being detrimental for the conservation of Protected Areas of Europe? Based on the stakeholders identified: what are challenges and opportunities in working with such new stakeholders?  
 facilitated by JOSEP-MARIA MALLARACH with assistance of RALF GRUNEWALD and GISELA STOLPE

12.30 *Lunch*

14.00 Working groups continued and presentation of results

15.15 *Coffee break*

### 3 Helping people experiencing spiritual values

15.45 Using folk traditional music to communicate the sacredness of nature in Finland VIRPI SAHI, Finland

16.15 Holy underground heritage in Germany and Austria. Spiritual use through the ages and current management challenges BÄRBEL VOGEL, Germany

16.45 The experience of the Hutsul Festivals in the Carpathians, National Nature Park Hutsulshchyna, Ukraine TETIANA GARDASHUK, Ukraine

17.15	Spiritual experiences within Nature / Creation in the context of protected areas	VERONICA SURAU-OTT, Germany
18.30	<i>Dinner</i>	
20.00	Introduction into the fieldtrip	VERONICA SURAU-OTT and STEFFI DEICKERT, Germany
20.30	Optional: poster presentations or various short presentations from participants	All

## Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> November

07.30 *Breakfast*

### 4 Field Trip: “Trail of leisure and insight – experiencing nature including spiritual values in an old beech forest in the Baltic region”

08.20	Departure from Isle of Vilm	
08.40	Walk from Lauterbach to the “Goor Nature Reserve”	
09.00	Start of the trail. Experiencing nature and possible ways how to find out more about its spiritual dimensions	STEFFI DEICKERT, Germany
12.20	Ferry to Vilm	
12.30	<i>Lunch</i>	
14.00	Reflection of the Field Trip – similar examples from participants?	

### 5 Providing guidance to PA managers to include spiritual values

14.40	Existing international legal frame and IUCN-UNESCO guidelines on SNS for Protected Area managers	BAS VERSHUUREN, The Netherlands
15.10	Dialectics between protected areas and holy sites. Allowing spiritual values to improve conservation and managing protected areas for spiritual experience	KONRAD OTT, Germany
15.40	<i>Coffee/ tea break</i>	
16.00	The experience of the EUROPARC-Spain working group on the guidelines for integrating intangible heritage into planning and management of PA	JOSEP-MARIA MALLARACH, Spain
16.30	National Plan on Natural Sanctuaries in Estonia: Study and Conservation 2008–2012: challenges and perspectives	ARVI SEEP, Estonia
17.00	Working groups to formulate recommendations to PA managers and other stakeholders in Europe to include spiritual values into PA management	
18.30	<i>Dinner</i>	

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19.30      Conclusions and way forward

20.30      Evaluation of the seminar

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21.30      Farewell party

## **Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> November**

07.30      *Breakfast*

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07.30      Departure of the Participants  
and  
09.30

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08.00      Departure of the train from Lauterbach Mole  
and  
10.00

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