

PECULIARITIES OF RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOUR OF LITHUANIAN EXILES AND CONVICTS IN SIBERIA (1945-1960)

Introduction

After the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union, the state, which in 1940 did not have 3 million inhabitants in total, lost about 850 thousand residents in 1940–1952 (STANAITIS, ADLYS 1973: 12-13). The part of these people appeared in exile in Siberia and Gulag concentration camps. The extent of the exile and imprisonment may be witnessed by the following numbers: over 111 thousand inhabitants were deported from Lithuania in 1946–1952, whereas in the periods of 1940-1941 and 1944-1952 over 143, 5 thousand citizens were confined in concentration camps (ANAŠAUSKAS 1996: 330; LIETUVA 2005: 302; 337). It was residents of provinces and towns mostly who found themselves in Siberia. These people differentiated in particular religiousness in their native country till the middle of the 20th century. However, religious behaviour of people has a direct connection with the environment surrounding them. Surely, people behave in one way when they find themselves in everyday situations, whereas their behaviour is different in extreme living conditions when religious activity may become one of the ways to survive and find out the meaning of existence. It is not surprising, though, that in exile and concentration camps Lithuanians used to support and even gave prominence to various forms of a religious activity performed in Lithuania. They existed till the end of the fifties of the 20th century when the majority of exiles and state prisoners returned to Lithuania after the changes in the political system in the Soviet Union (the majority of these people returned to Lithuania until 1960). Thus, religious behaviour in extreme conditions may be revealed via the analysis of the religious activity of Lithuanian countrymen who were exiled to Siberia and confined in concentration camps after World War II.

The *object* of the article is religious behaviour and its peculiarities of Lithuanian exiles and state prisoners in Siberia in 1945-1960. The *aim* is to determine the position of religion in extreme living conditions on the grounds of the ethnographical material of the field research and publicised reminiscences of the exiles. In particular, prayers, singing of the hymns and the role of religious songs during the exile, in exile and concentration camps will be discussed; moreover, communal rituals, the choice of the place for celebrations as well as the customs of rituals will be analysed; the relationship of religious behaviour with religious rituals and customs in Lithuania will also be revealed; furthermore, religious, social and political meaning of the rituals in exile and concentration camps will be determined.

The article has no aim to cover the entire behaviour of the exiles and state prisoners. Besides, it is not always possible to ascertain its contents and the forms of expression. The particularity of life in exile and concentration camps was different in time and space; it also depended on natural and geographical environment. Furthermore, the viewpoint of the representatives of local government to the exiles was different. The mode of a concentration camp differed in time too. Sometimes the exiles used to lead an isolated way of life, thus, their religious life distinguished in individuality. The tasks of the author are also complicated by the fact that there have not been thorough researches carried out in the issue topical not only by its ethnological approach. In general, an opportunity to examine the exiles and the life of deportees and prisoners as well appeared at the end of the eighties of the 20th century only, i.e. at the start of Perestroika (a term for restructuring of the Soviet political and economic system). After the revival of independence this topic was widely analysed in Lithuania. However, the main line combining all researches and reminiscences published in books is that of the analysis of the exile, daily life and working conditions in exile as well as the disclosure of the perpetual tragic destiny of the deportees. The same discourse is distinct in the publicized reminiscences of state prisoners. To be more precise, a broader analysis of social, cultural and religious life is missing. The works of historians do not reflect these life aspects of the exiles and state prisoners at all. Consequently, the works analysing calendar, family, etc. celebrations, rituals and customs in exile do not exist. The fact is that religious behaviour in the reminiscences of ex-deportees and state prisoners is revealed incidentally and only in a few books about the exile and concentration camps.

For this reason, ethnographical field research is a rather significant method which may be helpful in getting closer to the life of Lithuanians in Siberia. In fact, this work has been started too late. During the Soviet period of time, the life of "public enemies" (i.e. the way deportees, not to mention state prisoners, were treated) in Siberia was a secretive topic forbidden for researchers. After the revival of independence it was V. Milius who first tried to look at the topic of exile from an ethnological viewpoint. To be more precise, he formed a minor questionnaire for compiling ethnographical material about spiritual life of state prisoners and deportees (MILIUS 1999: 159-160). With the help of this questionnaire and students from the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences the method of an interview was used to question ex-deportees and prisoners. Having recorded over thirty narrations of exiles and about ten narrations of state prisoners interesting and valuable factual material has been compiled. Part of these data became the basis for the first articles (MARDOSA 2009: 125-130; MARDOSA 2010: 151-160). The data of the ethnographical survey of Lithuania's inhabitants having lived in exile and concentration camps in Siberia have revealed people's religious behaviour in extreme conditions and its development in time. On the other hand, the work has been impeded by the fact that it was difficult to find people who could remember the life in Siberia in detail after several decades due to a venerable age of the respondents and the state of their health. As deportees and state prisoners were moved from one place to another, not to mention their life in concentration

camps, they sometimes indicated a more specific place in their narrations. In other cases they referred to administrative division of Siberia. Resulting from that, the address of the place mentioned will be indicated differently in the text.

Religious customs and rituals during the exile and at the places of deportees

During the exile and at the start of the life in exile individual and family type religious actions appeared to be of major importance. This was determined by the peculiarities of the conditions in exile as well as by the initial stage of life in Siberia. Exile usually started at night and an hour or less was given to prepare. It was allowed to take several necessary things, whereas families having small children and aged parents used to be deported. Sometimes men were separated from women, that is why people experienced a hard physical and emotional shock. While being transported in over-crowded, window-shut, unsanitary livestock boxcars people balanced between life and death which was often destined for babies born in the journey, small children and elderly people. The exile that started on January 14, 1941 was especially tragic because the journey to Siberia was accompanied by the news about the war between Nazi German and the Soviet Union. People who were exiled from the occupied territory were met with hostility because of their treatment as "public enemies" by the Soviet propaganda. The situation was also complicated by the objective reality of war conditions. A big part of state prisoners was shot. In general, people were carried not only by trains but also by sea and other transport for months till they reached the place of exile and imprisonment. Accordingly, an appeal to God for help was people's natural reaction to the situation. No doubt, it was typical of large groups of deportees.

Prayers and religious hymns during the exile

Future deportees used to pray individually or in groups both in the places of temporary meetings and inside boxcars. Hence, it is universally remarked that prayers were a natural feature of daily life during the exile. They were also constant in the places of exile, especially in the initial period of time spent in Siberia. However, it was not only a religious action, asking for God's help. No doubt, prayers were of a big psychological help to people who found themselves in uncertainty, who were uprooted and without any hope to return to their mother land. According to deportees, prayers helped them to calm down, inspired some hope to live and, also relieved the adaptation to extreme conditions during the deportation and in exile. This aspect of prayers is emphasized by the deportees themselves: "A prayer saved me many times - it quenched our hunger more than bread. We came to understand just how much faith means to a person" (an exile deported to Krasnoyarsk region in 1941). Prayers helped to endure inquiries and tortures in the basements of the Committee of State Security as well as in outrageous conditions in concentration camps.

According to the survey material of the exile, various forms of prayers were practised in echelons. People used to pray both individually and in families, and hymns were sung collectively. One informant recalled how deportees were detained in Kaunas: "We would approach a tall wooden fence and listen to the hymns. The guards would drive us away. We found out that those people were being taken to the train station. There they were squeezed into livestock boxcars and deported to Siberia. Today, when I hear the hymn "Maria, Maria" I remember those miserable people." The tragedy of the situation is visually rendered by the following description of the journey on a train: "...As if herrings pressed in a container and gasping for air we would sing sacred hymns, the mournful melody of which reminded the last offices" (MATULKAITĖ 1998: 25). People even managed to conform to liturgical calendar. We see, for example, that in autumn and spring, when special religious rituals were performed in native provinces, deportees used to sing ritual hymns of this period on the trains or, for instance, in autumn they would tell their rosary.

The relation with religion was upheld by religious symbols, such as sacred paintings, crosses. A citizen of Vilnius, born in 1940, has kept hold of her childhood sacred paintings even in Siberian exile. An important religious relic was scapulars that were still popular in the forties of the 20th century. Despite the fact that this symbol of individual religiousness in a sense of folk devotion was less significant, scapulars still witnessed subordination to the Catholic Church and nationality. Accordingly, a 66-year-old Jadvyga from Kaunas tells that in the war-time her mother made her Jewish friend a present of her own scapulars when she ran away from ghetto to hide in the village. "I remember how my mum dressed her in folk clothes of a dead grandma and told her to pretend being a deaf-mute, and if she saw a German, she had to show scapulars on her neck". These individual symbols were precious. Thus, almost every deportee and state prisoner possessed and preserved them. In case of the absence of a prayer-book brought from home, they were also made on the spot. An example may be a prayer-book written on the sheets of cement bags. It was made by prelate Stanislovas Kiškis, an ex-prisoner, spiritual father and patron of the exiles in Siberia in 1951. It is known that state prisoners would make rosaries from bread.

The atmosphere of religious acts

Due to the fact that extreme surroundings inspired to cherish various forms of religious activity, special atmosphere was created for this aim. The scheme of rituals and customs corresponded to religious rituals of Lithuanian province but it was adjusted by specific conditions of political and ideological exile. The major place for rituals was the living-space of deportees and religious corners fitted behind the table (Fig. 1). Such corners were present in Lithuania as well. However, in Lithuania sacred paintings and crosses on the shelf in the corner of a living-space, candles as well as sanctified attributes made an illusion of the altar only, whereas altars outfitted in Siberian barracks and dwellings became a symbol of a church altar or even a its substitute. Photographs, which have remained till present, prove that children were baptised, people wedded, etc. at such altars.

Crosses for altars were usually made by exiles themselves, even by those who did not take an active part in religious activities (Albina, born in 1933 and exiled to Kazakhstan, Kostaney province in 1952). Exiles that were skilled at woodwork would make sculptures of Saint Mary and Christ for altars (a woman exiled to Tomsk province, Kirov district).

Altars in Siberia became first of all a place of family prayers for Lithuanians, and on Sundays they served as a place for communal prayers. People used to tell their rosary at these altars in October, and sing litanies in May and June. On Saturdays during the Lent term deportees would get together in barracks to sing Stations of the Cross, on Sundays they used to sing the hymn "Let Us All Fall on Our Knees", "Maria Maria". Hence, the functions of altars varied. No doubt, one could carry out his or her daily obligations of a believer without altars; a cross or a sacred painting was enough for that. To be more precise, Elena, who was exiled to Krasnoyarsk region, claims that she would always sing the hymn "Hail, Though Long-expected Jesus" in the morning, before going to work. Moreover, prayers were combined with hymns. A woman living during the war states that "Yesterday I came to the barrack to visit our people. Everybody was on the knees telling their rosary and singing "Maria, Maria" (Yakutia, 1942) (ALKSININYTĖ-GRABŠTIENĖ 1993: 15). The woman who was exiled to Krasnoyarsk region tells that she would always sing the hymn "Hail, Though Long-expected Jesus" in the morning, before going to work.

Religious corners were especially important in those barracks where several Lithuanian families would get together. For instance, Lithuanians exiled to Abansk city, Krasnoyarsk region, in 1949 were distributed into different groups, the so called brigades. One of them consisted of Tartars, Russians and 13-14 Lithuanian families. During Advent period the latter used to meet secretly and sing the "Mountains" (i.e. a specific hymn of Žemaitija region, Western Lithuania, intended for visiting the chapels of the Route of Christ's suffering present there) and other hymns. On Sundays during the Lent period they would sing "The Routes of Christ" (Krasnoyarsk region, Mansk district). According to the deportee exiled to Krasnoyarsk region, Motigin district, in 1949, exiles would gather in the living-space of any deportee and tell their rosary at the fitted altar in October, sing the hymn "Let Us All Fall on Our Knees", „Maria Maria". This ritual was based on the tradition of devotion periods in Lithuania. It is interesting that deportees would relocate peculiarities of devotion in Lithuania to the place of exile, for instance, singing the "Mountains" mentioned above, other hymns of Advent period typical to south-eastern Lithuania.

Religion and various national and patriotic actions were important to the exiles of 1941, especially. Even during the war with little hope to return to their native country they used to commemorate festivals. For instance, in the Yakutia during the feast of Pentecost in 1943 several Lithuanian families commemorated the year period passed after the exile in the forest by singing, chanting, refreshing the motherland in their memory (ALKSININYTĖ-GRABŠTIENĖ 1993: 22; 144; 150). No doubt, communal meetings might also cause danger. It depended on the time of the exile, because a close watch was kept on the deportees at first. Gražina,

who was exiled from Rokiškis to Krasnoyarsk region, remembers that her father was arrested, impeached of anti-Soviet propaganda and imprisoned for singing the litany of Virgin Mary, etc. at home. Add to this, an exile from Zima town, Irkutsk district, was taken nowhere for the propagation of religion (ZAGURSKYTĖ-ŽUKAUSKIENĖ 1993: 123). Hence, religious hymns sung in a strange language at home were treated as anti-Soviet ones by Soviet agents though the hymns did not address the authorities directly. On the other hand, this policy was not targeted at the exiles only. The research of folk religion carried out in the Soviet Union proves that due to an aggressive atheistic state policy, religious activity did not exist there, in fact (SEDAKOVA 2001: 132)¹. Indeed, any religious manifestation was regarded as an action against the system in the state based on atheism. Folk songs seemed suspicious, which included patriotic ones, in fact. As a result, spies and exiles who collaborated with the Committee for State Security would inform the authorities about such songs. Even in 1954 an agent of the Committee for State Security informed that the song called “Lithuanian, aren’t you sorry for Lithuanian songs”, etc. was sung on the name-day of a deportee. The report was commented in the way that the couplets make it clear that “the songs, which are not sung by Soviet Lithuanians in Lithuania, are also preferable there” (ŠNIUKAS 2009: 757). On the other hand, religiousness and prayers helped to survive and improve the relationship with local Russians. For instance, a woman exiled to Irkutsk district in 1951 tells that “Lithuanians sang the hymn “Hail, Though Long-expected Jesus” on the train to work on Christmas morning. People of other nationalities, i.e. Polish, Ukrainians, also accompanied them. Watching the exiles sing Russians took off their hats and congratulated on the deportees”. Consequently, religiousness and spirituality of Lithuanians stopped the mistrust and the altitude towards the exiles changed since then.

Calendar events

Exiles used to celebrate calendar religious events, Christmas and Easter especially, in domestic surroundings. The way these festivals were celebrated was different from that in Lithuania. Apart from a family character, they also possessed a communal one. At first the exiles would pray only on Christmas Eve. Later on, some of them would get Christmas wafers and share with other Lithuanians (Fig. 2). The exiles aimed to cherish Lithuanian traditions on Christmas Eve, paying special attention to the meaning of symbols. In case of Christmas Eve any traditional dishes of Christmas Eve were symbolic, such as mushroom dishes, poppy seeds, herring, *kučiukai* (traditional Lithuanian dish served on Christmas Eve). Children were “visited” by Father Christmas at night (in the Soviet Union there was Santa Claus on New Year’s Day). However, people’s religious behaviour in Siberia was influenced by the Soviet priority to celebrate Soviet festivals only. “On Christmas Eve I kept watch in the hospital, so we had Christmas Eve dinner

¹ In fact, some narratives of the exiles reveal that local people of an older generation were devotional. However, they were not able to show their beliefs. Accordingly, after the destruction of Orthodox churches, they had nowhere to pray (Irkutsk district).

on Christmas Day. I did it for my children. I wanted them to remember Christmas Eve, and the date was not important to them" (ALKSININYTĖ-GRABŠTIENĖ 1993: 175). It is a very informative quotation. What this proves is that mother wished to provide joy to her children inherently and form their national feelings via Lithuanian traditions at the same time. These aims were reasonable, because children had a lot of contact with local youngsters and would gradually lose the skills of their native language, not to mention the influence of anti-religious philosophy at school.

Symbols were also important at Easter. However, at first Easter, the same as Christmas, was commemorated at home secretly. Sometimes Easter was allowed to celebrate in public (Fig. 3). Larger communities used to get together in school halls, taste the dishes brought and children would roll eggs. Moreover, Easter hymns and other devotional songs were sung (Irkutsk district). People prepared eggs dyed in the decoction of herbs or onion peels. However, it was not the dyed eggs that mattered (though people would whittle them from wood if they had none). Waiting for Christ's resurrection was of major importance. The concept of resurrection and belief in the defeat of evil as well as waiting for the recovery of independence was close to the exiles who had lost their motherland. For this reason Ona, who spent 9 years (1949-1958) in exile in Irkutsk district, Kostin city, having returned to Lithuania was very surprised to see that people were afraid to celebrate Easter and Christmas there, bearing in mind the fact that Catholic events were commemorated in extreme conditions of exile. This situation may be explained, first of all, by the fact that festivals and traditions, and religion in general, did not only indicate their viewpoint but also the expression of their altitude towards the Soviet Union.

Churches in exile

After the death of J. Stalin, some priests, who were released from prison, had no right to return to Lithuania, others voluntarily worked as missionaries among the exiles. However, there were no places suitable for rituals. Such a situation was formed not only due to vast destinations among settlements of deportees. Exclusively of this, Polish exiles got permission to build several churches in Yenisei province in the beginning of the 20th century. The settlement contained six churches, one more was build in Krasnojarsk, Achinsk and Kansk but anti-religious policy, which started in the twenties of the 20th century, was disastrous to churches, which were closed at first and the destroyed (ЛЕОНЧИК 2008: 338). Due to the fact that the need for religious service was quite big in the last few or even more years, exiles would search for a way out when the priest arrived. There was an altar fitted in the rooms, at the end of a barrack. People had already taken religious attributes, such as candles, sacred paintings at the time of the exile or their relatives would send them later on. This inventory was necessary for both individual and family type religious activities. Namely, a cross, candles, paintings or sculptures of the saints, herbs fitted the altars.

It goes without saying that at the start of the exile any religious act performed in public caused a negative reaction of the authorities. The situation started changing in 1953, however. The regime was becoming weaker and weaker, the

same as the attitude towards religious rituals and traditions of Lithuanians. To illustrate this, let us consider the following situation. When a priest arrived at the living place of Lithuanians in Abansk city, Krasnoyarsk region, they would fit an altar at the end of a barrack. Thus, children of the exiles would receive their First Holy Communion at such altars when a priest came (Fig. 4). In Igarka deportees used to pray outside too having outfitted the altar of Mother of God, whereas there was a "church" fitted in the street of Sovetsk. A chair with a curtain would suit as a confessional. In this "church" a priest held divine service, confess, and performed wedding rituals (JUCIÚTÉ 1983: 169; 173). In 1955, when priest Mykolas Buožinis arrived to Igarka from prison, he even outfitted a small church in a hut but this lasted for quite a short period of time as he had to leave the city in a year (MATULKAITÉ 1998: 118).

Lithuanians used to marry in exile but they performed rituals of civil marriage only. Religious rituals, however, were performed symbolically by a deportee who was slightly aware of liturgy. Sometimes families were formed in this way only (Zima town, Irkutsk district). However, if a priest came he provided the true Sacrament of Marriage. Such deep awareness of the meaning of the Sacrament, specific to the Lithuanian province of the first part of the 20th century firstly, displayed the position of deportees towards the formation of atheistic society.

The meaning of a church was provided to the cemetery by exiles and it became a site for religious ceremonies. First of all, a cemetery was a sacred place in exile (though not always). It was full of crosses, thus it became sacramental. Lithuanians' cemetery was near Polish one in Kvitok town, Irkutsk district. Men put a sacred painting high in a pine and on Sundays, if it was a day off, Lithuanians used to gather there to sing hymns, pray or even sing. There are data that at weekends in summer the cemetery was used as a place for praying (Fig. 5). For this reason, ex-deportees mention that "the cemetery substituted for the church". Visiting the graves of close people exiles used to organise public communal prayers in summer, and the glade at the fences of the cemetery became a place for singing hymns. It was the buried people who were honoured by prayers and hymns, first of all. However, deportees used to pray for partisans who died in the battle against invaders in the native country. On All Soul's Day they would light a candle in the cemetery and say a prayer. In case of no candle, people would light a spill (Krasnoyarsk region, Mansk district). If the weather was good and there was a possibility (as it was winter time then), people used to get together in the cemetery in the day time and tell their rosary.

May worship

The significance of worship in exile

Extreme living conditions encouraged deportees to cherish various forms of religious activity. Prayers on Sundays, even Mass next to the cemetery or in the cemetery, were not the only communal rituals. It is known that on Sundays in spring there

was May worship organised next to the cemetery or inside it². May worship was the most significant communal ritual in the life of deportees. An exile, who lived in Krasnoyarsk region, in Bolshoy Ungut, claims that May worship and Midsummer Day festivity were the biggest festivals in Siberia (RUMBUTYTĖ-MUCHLIA 2003: 27). In Siberia May worship lasted longer and were more varied than in Lithuania, though there were no proper conditions for a daily ritual during the exile. In the region of Tomsk, where there were nearly 200 Lithuanians living in the farm of foresting, rituals continued for the whole decade till the very end of the exile.

In Catholic liturgy May worship for Saint Mary have been present in Lithuania since the middle of the 19th century (MARDOSA 1999: 141). It is based on singing the litanies for the Virgin Mary. Due to spring works and distance to the church countrymen found it quite difficult to take part in church rituals. As a result, a tradition of litany singing started to be formed in provinces. Hence, singing of May liturgies in provinces progressed without the help of the Church since the very beginning. The liturgy determined the morning or evening singing of special devotional prayers all May only (ČIBIRAS 1942: 125). In the time being May worship became one of the most significant forms of communal religious life in the province. Consequently, it naturally appeared to be one of the most distinct religious events in exile. The significance of May Mass is proved by the fact that women would sing May liturgies even on the trains during the exile (NAVAKAUSKIENĖ 2001: 61).

The place, contents and meaning of rituals

Religiousness of deportees, as well as the significance of religion in exile, is demonstrated by the fact that exiles outfitted altars for rituals even in extreme living conditions. The altars described above were used for that purpose; religious rituals, however, required more space. Accordingly, the largest room in the largest barrack or a house was intended for the ritual so that adults and children, who also took an active part in the rituals, could be admitted. Thus, temporary altars were fitted for May worship with the help of crosses, candles, a painting or a sculpture of Saint Mary decorated in herbs (Fig. 6). Altars were outfitted in larger living rooms, even a small altar was fitted at the end of a barrack. In Igarka, as well as in Reshio in Krasnoyarsk region, deportees used to have rituals at one of the barracks (JUCIŪTĖ 1983: 169; 173; ISTORIJOŠ PAŽENKLINTI LIKIMAI 1999: 29) and sing the litanies near their dwellings (Fig. 7). If there was an altar in Krasnoyarsk region, the door had to be opened, because there was not enough space inside for everybody; if people gathered outside, they were not able to hear the hymns (ČERNIAUSKIENĖ 1997: 317). People of other nationalities would come as well. Accordingly, larger rooms had to be found and altars fitted there.

May litanies were sung in secret at first. Sometimes such rituals were dangerous for deportees as organisers might have been imprisoned for it. Singing

² In Krasnoyarsk region, Mansk district people not only sang hymns at the altar at home but also used to sing outside, in the glade next to the cemetery. The leader was an exile who used to be a sacristan in Lithuania. This type of a ritual is close to Lithuania where singing the litanies in the chapels of cemeteries was not occasional (MARDOSA 2010: 157).

of the hymns was persecuted by the commandants who took care of the living conditions and behaviour of exiles (MARDOSA 2010: 155). The situation started to change after the death of Stalin when deportees were allowed to celebrate in public. In Krasnoyarsk region, in Bolshoy Ungut, almost all the countrymen used to sing May litanies at the cross in the middle of the settlement. Exiles used to pray collectively at the cross on Sundays, sing May litanies, tell their rosary in October, and have rituals in June. May rituals at crosses were not widely spread, however, a place for singing hymns is also definite in Lithuania³. Such activities were quite common in Vilnius region in the 20th century where singing the hymns at the crosses of provinces was spread most widely (MARDOSA 1999: 141).

Despite the fact that the ritual signified the ideas of unity, contact with the motherland and nationality, religious motives still appeared to be of major importance. Alongside with other hymns, Litany of All Saints was also sung. Add to this, an interesting way to sing the "Litany of the Love of God" has been recorded. This hymn is known from the rituals of Cross Days, which were performed before the Ascension Day, when people used to come at crosses for three days and pray for God's help in bad weather or at risk of a disaster (MARDOSA 2002: 89-106). Having found themselves in extreme conditions in Siberia deportees also appealed to God in the following way:

*Lord King of Abraham,
Bestow us freedom and stave off the enemy, etc.* (Komi-Perm province, Verkuchi).

This chant was sung even when people were being taken to Siberia. To be more precise, a respondent remembers how she asked others to help to sing this hymn when the echelon stopped for three days on the way to Siberia in 1945. According to the narrator, the chant had to be sung three times, i.e. in the same way as people used to sing it three days in turn while visiting crosses in the village during the Cross Days. The deportees did not succeed in that as a guard came, interrupted the singing and made everyone stay in a livestock boxcar. The transfer of a hymn against disasters and evil to the horror of the exile moment and the exile itself signified that people treated the policy of the Soviet authorities as a disaster for our nation.

It was women who were the main singers and organizers of rituals in Siberia. They distinguished in deep consciousness of the meaning of religion and the need for rituals, conveyance of religious and national values to the youth in the same as in the Lithuanian province of the first part of the 20th century (MARDOSA 2011: 751-753). In general, women made about 70 percent of all the exiles (LIETUVA 2005: 302). Women would take their children to rituals. In Krasnoyarsk region (Biriusuk town) children even used to sing hymns (LIETUVAI PRIE MANOS UPĖS 2008: 133). The youth would take an active part in the rituals though communicative functions mattered more to them than the ritual ones. Moreover, men would also sing hymns and sometimes conducted them. Add to this, men cared for their family

³ The first information about May rituals in the province is the data about May worship celebrated at a cross in middle Lithuania (Kėdainiai district, Truskava province) (MILIUS 1997: 213).

members to take part in the ritual and helped to outfit the altar. By the way, the heads of families found themselves in bigger danger, whereas such an activity of women was treated in a more liberal way.

Monthly rituals in exile, though being irregular, united deportees on the basis of religion, helped to keep in touch and communicate in an informal way. The same as in Lithuania, exiles used to talk to each other in the evening, share the news and read letters from their motherland. No doubt, the effort put in had a lot of influence on the young. The following case may serve as a means of illustration. A 15-year-old girl, who was exiled to Krasnoyarsk at the age of 8 and finished school in Siberia, wrote to her exiled 35-year-old cousin in 1955 who worked as a miner in Karaganda region (Kazakhstan) after jail and felt very lonely: "We must not forget our identity, because if you forget your native country, its traditions and the language, you can't be part of the nation". They both returned to Lithuania, however the man came back only after the revival of independence in 1991. Hence, it may be stated that the ideas of the unity of deportees were supported with the help of religious rituals and customs. Moreover, religion became an efficient means to preserve national identity. For this reason the forms of religious life presented above were sustained by people themselves and stayed active during the entire period of the exile.

Religious activity in concentration camps

National symbols and various religious symbols were of great importance to state prisoners. Apart from religious aims, they helped to resist political regime; in addition, such symbols became arguments for ethnic and national identification (ČEPAITIENĖ 2001: 182). State prisoners used to sing patriotic songs in their free time, especially the ones of religious aspect, such as the popular hymn in Lithuania "Maria Maria". Sometimes even wardens did not forbid singing patriotic song in labour camps (RACIŪNAS 1993: 120). In the prison of Karlag (Kazakhstan) Orthodox Christians did the work of Catholics at Christmas and other religious events, so that the latter could only be present at work and rest. Catholics did the same to imprisoned Orthodox Christians in return. This was also practised by people exiled to coal mines after imprisonment where they had no days off.

Equally important was the aim to preserve the usage of symbols and its succession in concentration camps. Namely, reminiscences make it clear that in Magadan concentration camp (1946-1955) cakes for Christmas Eve were made out of bread. Once in Chukotka four Lithuanians together with a Hungarian priest Bush having a piece of Christmas cake, went to another Lithuanian, who worked as a stoker, to commemorate Christmas Eve. Sugar and bread were laid on the table. The stoker possessed half of the glass of seal fat. Indeed, the priest gave permission to consume the food inappropriate for fast because of an extreme situation. They were praying in Lithuanian, and the priest in Latin. Towards the end of the worship they were caught by guards on duty. The "guests" hid in the drying chamber. When there no danger anymore they went out of the chamber and it appeared that the priest lost his consciousness because of the heat in the

drying chamber. He was barely brought round. Hence, the sense of Christmas was witnessed by symbols, pointing up sacredness, whereas the birth of Christ was commemorated at the risk of life. A case is known when a priest who worked at a fire station and who was in good terms with the chief, on Sundays would hold divine service in Latin together with Lithuanian prisoners in the very fire station (1955-1956). However, convicts did not show their religious beliefs on purpose. Catholic rituals and customs might not be acceptable to prisoners of various beliefs and religions living in the same large space. For this reason priests would provide spiritual services for prisoners individually, such as confess, the last rites (viaticum).

Lastly, May worship was present in concentration camps as well. Namely, in Northern Ural women had a chapel with an altar fitted in a barrack of the labour camp where they used to pray not only during May events but also on Sundays. It is interesting to mention that this altar was ecumenical, because a statue of Saint Mary (made of papier-mâché) was put on the globe as a symbol of the unity of all believers in Christ in the world (Fig. 8). In the concentration camp women used to gather in the drying room in May and pray with a woman on guard (Arkhangelsk region, 1946-1958). Moreover, May hymns were also sung by women in the concentration camp every evening. Of course, it was complicated to fit an altar in the labour camp, thus a cross or a picture of Saint Mary nearby was enough. Surely, May worship and other religious acts were possible in concentration camps due to the weakening of the Soviet regime in the middle of the fifties in the 20th century.

Conclusions

The particularity of life in exile differentiated in time and place. It also depended on a season and geographical environment. The attitude of local authorities towards deportees differed as well. Resulting from that, religious behaviour of exiles conveyed a different meaning in different periods of life in Siberia. It was the religious life of convicts that mostly depended on regime conditions which were changing in the time being. In fact, such religious life had no distinct system in the concentration camps of Gulag. However, while trying to conform to a difficult life in exile and labour camps, people used to model their religious behaviour after the rituals and customs of religious life in the Lithuanian province. Religious acts were connected with the domestic environment of exiles and performed in public. According to the form, rituals and customs were of three types, i.e. individual, family like and communal.

It was prayers and hymns that were of major importance during the exile itself and in the initial period of exile. Despite the fact that religious actions were forbidden, prayers and hymns were possible in domestic environment individually or together with family members. Accordingly, temporary and permanent altars were outfitted in living rooms. Christmas and Easter were also celebrated at home, which differently from the ones in Lithuania, distinguished not only in a family like but also in a communal nature. The form of religious rituals altered

in the middle of the fifties after the changes in the political situation in the Soviet Union. Then conditions in exile and imprisonment improved, hence religious rituals were organised collectively and in public. Cemetery became a place for religious ceremonies in exile.

May worship played the most significant role in the religious life of exiles. Singing of the litanies took place at the altars fitted in people's living rooms, barracks or outside in May. The transfer of a tradition from the Lithuanian province to exile was not a religious action only. Deportees of different ages used to take part in rituals. Due to this, such ceremonies performed an important function of integration and communication. Namely, an idea of the unity of exiles is evident in communal singing of litanies. May worship helped to preserve spiritual connection with the lost native land and became one of the forms to resist Soviet atheism and regime. It is not a coincidence that prayers and various devotional songs were performed not only individually but also collective litanies of May worship were also sung by state prisoners under severe conditions in concentration camps.

Religious customs and rituals helped the exiles and state prisoners to preserve religiousness in Siberia. No doubt, religiousness became one of the conditions to survive and not to lose hope to return to their mother country. Apart from devotional aims, religious customs and rituals developed patriotic feelings among young people and were beneficial in the endurance of Siberian torment. For that reason, religious rituals and customs were appreciated and cherished. Moreover, the examination of the field proves an important influence of women upon religious and national identity of the exiles and children in Siberia, especially. Under those circumstances the forms of religious life presented above were supported by people themselves and stayed active during the whole period of the exile.

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PECULIARITIES OF RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOUR OF LITHUANIAN EXILES AND CONVICTS IN SIBERIA (1945-1960)

The article analyses the models of religious behaviour of rural residents exiled to Siberia and Gulag concentration camps (in 1945-1960). Data collected during fieldwork revealed that religion and religious rituals occupied multidimensional place during different periods of exile in Siberia. The most important for the deportees were rituals and customs at home, and those that were public. They were practiced on an individual, family and collective level. The form of these rituals and customs often depended on the specificity of life in exile. In fact, such religious life had no distinct system in the concentration camps of Gulag. At the moment of deportation and initial settlement in exile, individual and collective prayers were of utmost importance. Besides, the graveyards established in the places of exile also used the place for performance of religious ceremonies. The most significant collective ritual among the Siberian exiles were the May worship. The altars for family and collective rituals with image of Blessed Virgin Mary were built in barracks or a residential house. Thus, the collective rituals at home and in public place were of utmost importance for the exiles, since they used to integrate the exiles on the basis of religion and became the means of preserving religious and national identity.



Fig. 1 An altar. Krasnoyarsk region, Village Maklakov, 1956.



Fig. 2 First Holy Communion. Siberia, 1956.



Fig. 3 Easter. Siberia, 1949.



Fig. 4 Christmas. Irkutsk district, Zima town. 1957.



Fig. 5 Mass in a cemetery with two priests present. Irkutsk district, Zima town. The summer of 1953.



Fig 6 A cross embroidered by exiled women and taken to Lithuania from Siberia. It was intended for the altar of May worship. Lithuania, the museum of Ramygala school. [Photo by J. Mardosa]



Fig. 7 May Mass. Irkutsk district, Zima town. 1956.



Fig. 8 Ecumenical altar in the hut of a concentration camp, Northern Ural, middle of the fifties