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or his scope and research autonomy. Staying with the local population produces beneficial methodological, ethical, and financial results.

My research of the establishment, management, policies, and economy of protected areas has been carried out in “Krajinski park Ljubljansko barje” (Ljubljansko barje Landscape Park) and in “Kozjanski regijski park” (Kozjansko Regional Park). Brief research visits have been carried out in South Africa, Macedonia, Poland, and Croatia. However, the major part of my research has been done in the area of Pohorje that has for the last three decades been mentioned in various local and regional plans for the designation of a regional park. After ten years of fieldwork (2002–2011) mountain Pohorje is the spatial and social setting of methodological considerations.

This article shall critically evaluate the following UNESCO brochures: “What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?” (WIICH 2003), “Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage” (CSICH 2003), and “Intangible Cultural Heritage Domains” (ICHHD 2003).

The Scope of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Protected Areas

Pohorje Regional Park, Slovenia

Peter Simonič

Introduction

I have been periodically investigating the field of politics, economy, and natural areas management since 2000. The results of this research are several scientific articles¹ and particularly a monograph titled “Ethnography of Protected Areas” (Simonič 2006). The publication focused on the imperative to know in considerable detail the local way of life, a method which would provide data for counterbalance to the current global and scientifically objectified perspectives in the management of nature protection areas. It is impossible to speak of serious ethnographic work without any prolonged contacts with the local population and without living and working with it *in situ*. Brief visits utilized solely for interviews and observation of private and public life namely yield only superficial data and remain purely symptomatic. Development programs prefer rapid assessments. If such research work is financed or subsidized by the local municipality or by the state, the researcher tends to further determine her

Pohorje

Situated on the utmost eastern part of the subalps, Pohorje levels off into the Pannonian Plain. This rather extensive hilly area measures forty-seven kilometers from the city of Maribor in the east and the town of Dravograd in the west; the longest distance between the northern and the southern rims of Pohorje is twenty-five kilometers. Almost 70% of Pohorje is covered with wood. At six hundred meters above the sea level, and often higher, Pohorje is the home to approximately one thousand farms. According to sources, the settlement of this area and the formation of the cultural landscape on a larger scale started after the 16th century when fertile lowland became scarce (comp. Makarovič 1978). The woods were thinned down by colonizers, feudal lords, landowners, and by those whose existence was likewise built on the profit from local raw materials and resources, particularly foresters, loggers, charcoal burners, glassworkers, raftsmen, stonecutters, millers, etc. (Baš 1967; Natek 1992). Industrial development of the 19th and the 20th centuries enticed many local inhabitants to obtain work in the valleys, thus becoming part-time farmers (or part-time proletariat). Due to population growth and inheritance laws land was increasingly divided and often changed hands. Nationalization of private estates after Second World War and distribution of land to interested small farmers or have-nots has differentiated and centralized the production of wood and

¹ The original version of this text was published 2010 in *Etnolog*.

food on Pohorje. The number of agricultural units has increased. As a result of recent European policy, small landowners have been starting to abandon farming while land property has been increasingly amassed by large and specialized entrepreneurs.

According to the plans from the beginning of the 1980s, Pohorje was to become a protected nature park. Since nature protectionists' programs have designated Pohorje as a future regional park, two types of protection regimes should be created for this region: the stricter around natural monuments and reserves, and the more flexible regime (buffer zone) in the surroundings and margins (*Državni zbor Republike Slovenije* 2004). The later concerns Pohorje's cultural landscape whose distinctive feature is a strong interlacing of social and natural factors (landscape conservation, recreation, and sustainable use of natural ecosystems). It would represent a buffer zone and would include the majority of Pohorje's mountain population in dispersed settlements. In these nature protection plans the cultural landscape represents a cultural-ecological zone (comp. Phillips 2002). Pohorje was recognized as a distinct natural region.

Long before the above mentioned proposals for regional nature protection of Pohorje the ethnologist Vilko Novak (1960) proposed what has become the most significant ethnic regionalization of the Slovenian State. He identified four distinctive regions, the Mediterranean, the Alpine, the Pannonian, and the central Slovene region, each with its specific economic, social, and cultural characteristics. For many years, this typology determined the spatial organization of material adopted by Slovene ethnologists (comp. Baš 1980). It was attached to geographical features.² The most recent attempt at regional division of the "Slovene ethnic territory" identified 96 units (Bogataj and Hazler 1996). These authors divided the territory of Pohorje into a northern and a southern part, yet did not substantiate their decision. It may be presumed that they had based it on the difference between the prevailing economic activities in each area. While the southern part, a gentle slope exposed to the sun, is more suitable for farming, the northern part, which is more shady and steep, is better suited to forestry. Since these activities can be found in both areas this is more a matter of con-

tinuum, or simply choosing between one and the other option.

After Slovenia had become an independent state and introduced a new administrative division of its territory, the area of Pohorje was divided between sixteen municipalities all of which perceive Pohorje as their hinterlands.³ Tourist and food industries, political parties, and other factors operate in this area through municipal representatives. While identifying with these administrative units, the term *pohorc*, which designates the regional (environmental) identity has a negative, hillbilly connotation.

It is possible to say that the nature of the administrative units of Pohorje is polycentric. Contrary to this concept, environmental and cultural regionalizations uniformized this area by emphasizing its similarities rather than differences.

Material, Intangible, and Lived Heritage

Slovene ethnology has been always focusing on cultural products, identities, and traditions. In the past, the primary aim of the research of traditional culture was to rescue from oblivion the vanishing lifestyles and identities. Modernization was a threat to scientific mission. However, with the adoption of the "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" (CPWCNH) in 1972 and an increasing interest in traditional culture, the focus gradually shifted to its constructivist character of heritage (Lowenthal 1998) or, in other words, to the changes in its scope and definitions that presumably succumb to social circumstances and needs of the day. Critical evaluations have gradually appeared, both at home and abroad, of concepts such as tradition (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983), social memory (comp. Gross 2000), and modernization.⁴ Heritage has become the focus of collective identity in the changing world around contemporary individuals (Lowenthal 1998; Jezernik 2010). Contrary to "tradition," which was essential for Slovene ethnology and was rarely questioned, the principle of heritage seems more subject to agency and to current ideological tendencies. Scholars have utilized it to prove ethnic "autochthony" and attain national "emancipation" (ethnic nationalism). It has also proved very useful in economic activities (tourism marketing) and in the creation of local and regional identities. An analysis of the entire process of inven-

2 Julian H. Stewart, the founder of cultural ecology, explained social organization and cultural values with natural conditions and with corresponding economic adaptations (Stewart 2008 [1938]). According to the principles of modern ecological anthropology, this approach is rather unsuitable since it equates ethnic and ecological systems and tends to imprison identities within the boundaries of their own natural environment (Kottok 1999).

3 The administrative division of Slovenia was adopted also by the ethnologist Slavko Kremenšek in the 1970s and 1980s. He treated villages, towns, and urban districts as microregions (Kremenšek 1974).

4 Plattner (1991); Ervin (2000); Nolan (2002).

tion and protection of cultural heritage should by no means neglect another significant factor, namely power relations that act as licenses for heritage selection. Like “culture,” “heritage” is a result of political and economic factors and negotiations. Nationalism, the capital, and knowledge are closely intertwined (Foucault 1991).

“Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage” (CSICH 2003) has introduced a shift in the perception of heritage that may be just as relevant as “Kremenšek’s epistemological shift” which, rather than focusing on an object of research it was more interested in that object’s carrier, agent, and, therefore, in his/her “way of life” (Baš 1978; Kremenšek 1985). Much more important than cultural artifacts, meaning materialized knowledge and values, are social relations, rituals, oral tradition, and the transmission of knowledge “from generation to generation.” In other words, what has become significant is the social context in which (material) culture is manifested and reproduced. While this is truly not a new concept, in Slovenian ethnology it is of great consequence that it has been adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and that it is “obligatory” for every signatory state. With it, ethnology found itself, has acquired a new, significant argument that will serve to emphasize its social relevance and strengthen its professional solidarity.

On the other hand, the 1972 “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage” initiated a careful consideration of concrete procedures for the safeguarding of heritage. Both culturologists and natural scientists reacted to an increased pressure on natural resources within the framework of doctrinary (neo-classical, neoliberal) economic growth, standardization, and homogenization.

Applicative natural sciences have been strongly influenced by the “Convention on Biological Diversity” (CBD) adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Biological diversity should be conserved *in situ*, they concluded. The pressures of global and political homogenization, as well as negative reactions to them, led in 2002 to the UNESCO’s “Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity” (DCD). It originated primarily due to the fear of escalation of “intercivilizational conflict” triggered by the 2001 attacks on the towers of the World Trade Center in New York (DCD 2002: 11). Creators of the declaration stated that a cultural dialog is possible only when the diversity of societies and cultures is taken into consideration and respected. The historical development of the division of natural and cultural heritage since the 1970s may thus be summed up through

three concepts, such as “safeguarding,” “protection *in situ*”, and “confrontation of both diversities.”⁵

The Cultural Heritage Protection Act, adopted in Slovenia in 2008 (*Državni zbor Republike Slovenije* 2008), introduced the syntagma “living heritage” in order to emphasize people rather than things and objects. We live this heritage, thus creating a continuous dialog with the past and with ourselves, with our own cultural essence. Living heritage is to transmit verification processes and arguments among contemporaries and from generation to generation. The concept of “living heritage” may be understood as intangible heritage as described above; however, I see it also as “lived heritage.” This heritage is generally not recorded as it takes place in our intimate, private sphere. It takes place as an “everyday way of life.” Lived heritage is the embedded social and “cultural capital” of a community/group (Bourdieu 1998) and does not necessarily fulfill the conditions for its registration – particularly if it takes place underneath the level of the so-called folk culture or the civil society.

Political Frame of Heritage

The 2003 “Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage” (CSICH) gives emphasis to oral tradition (folklore, mythology, cosmology), to festive events in people’s yearly and life cycles, and partly to the knowledge that produces artifacts made by artisans and artists (CSICH 2003: 3; ICHD 2003).

In the sense of the preservation of social organization and the knowledge pertaining to nature and the cosmos it seems that intangible heritage is earmarked specifically for indigenous communities living on the margins of the centralized and global system, and in part also for the evaluation of the traditional ways of life (of “peoples”) living inside respected national territories. Photographs in UNESCO editions portraying dancers of “traditional dances,” transmitters of oral tradition, and artisans producing various artifacts⁶ indicate that the concept of the safeguarding of the intangible heri-

5 While the term diversity is suitable for natural sciences, the humanities and the social sciences should use the term variety in order to avoid cultural/evolutional and racist connotations (the issue is not different species; comp. Lévi-Strauss 1994: 12–14). The conceptual difference is the result of the fact that in Slovenia the formerly integral Institute for the Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage in 2001 is divided into the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation and the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia.

6 (WIICH (2003); CSICH (2003); ICHD (2003).

tage primarily concerns the preservation of the social capital of imagined “preindustrial communities.” Yet we need to be aware that all of these types of communities have long since succumbed to the processes of modernization (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Methodological (and actual) persistence on the traditional would, therefore, cause antagonisms (cultural stagnation) rather than “developmental advantages” (culturally bond adaptation). Authors of the “Slovene Register of Living Heritage” are well aware of the problem (RND 2008: 22).⁷

This brings us to the problem of the collectivistic (essentialist) definition of cultural heritage and to social stratification (comp. Herzfeld 2003). Representing an ideological foundation of ethnic nationalisms and power all over the world, concepts and contents of intangible and tangible heritages draw ideas from more or less stratified, protomodernist communities of the 18–19th century (peoples, indigenous population). It is possible to say that both tangible and intangible heritages are constitutive for the entire community as well as for each social (sub)group; when it needs to be effective heritage, like historiography, it is always generalizing (comp. Lowenthal 1998). Intangible cultural heritage, therefore, represents yet another front in the battle for national/regional characteristics and resources.

Both guardians of cultural heritage as well as environmentalists use diversity as a platform applied to the regional level (cultural area or ecosystem). What the search for tradition/heritage on the level of local communities generally does is that it merely reinforces the administrative division of the nation state and places the local population on the political and cultural map (comp. Fikfak 2003; Löfgren 1989). Regionalization of cultural heritage is further disputable because it often overlooks imperial contexts, neglecting the fact that local lifestyles are a part of a much more complex framework and diffusion (Baskar 2005).

Intangible Heritage as Socialization Network

With regard to cultural-evolutionist’s theories it is possible to treat the social nucleation of the Eur-

asians as a complementary pole of universalization and globalization (Lewellen 1992: 65–67). Within this paradigm communities were primarily divided in clans and families while recent modernization institutionalized the nuclear family as the most “natural fiber” of the nation state. Since the “Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage” conveys the spirit of the “preservation of the social and of the cultural capital of the community,” we should not overlook the fact that the modern family and the household represent a fundamental social unit of shared responsibility and of altruistic existential contribution and inheritance (of economic, social, and cultural capital) (comp. Holý 1996; Pine 2003). Anything on a “higher social level” is administratively managed, institutionalized, and regulated.

But the family is far from being exempt from standard and law. Capitalist ideology is based on atomization and individualization of the community in which the family and the household are the fundamental and primary biological, material, and social (reproductive) units. It mitigates the pressures of our market-driven society while it is simultaneously a fundamental unit of its production and consumption (Wallerstein 2006; Narotzky 1997). In many non-European countries and milieus the application of the Western European concept of the household thus causes methodological difficulties as well as resistance. Due to the differences in the size of basic economic and kinship units, in kinship structure, and so on, facts differ from Western norms (Morrill and James 1990: 459). In addition, there may be groups, even within the middle-class community or within the global community, that differ from the prevalent norm. Two examples are the single-parent family and the single-sex family. They may be recognized as households but not as a family (comp. Pine 2003).

The “Slovene Register of Living Heritage” largely focuses on the images and practices of folk culture and creativity. Like registers in many other countries, it does not take into account social networks and traditions/heritages on the level of “fundamental social units,” that is the households (RND 2008). It is, therefore, not surprising if domestic as well as foreign projects involving intangible heritage reinforce patriotic feelings, thus reproducing collectivist (essentialist) differences. It may be open to dispute whether such a comprehensive project of safeguarding the intangible heritage of families and households would even be sensible, feasible, and welcome. Since households have always differed from each other, be it in regard to activities taking place within them, or in their size, structure, etc.), it is difficult to define exactly which particular way

⁷ In his analysis of the area of Posočje (2009), Miha Kozorog showed that the tourist significance of metal and reggae festivals should not be overlooked (Will they be registered in the Slovene Register of Living Heritage?). The draft of the Slovene Register of Living Heritage (RND 2008: 22) mentions that Belgian developers of their own register have decided to include in their list of intangible heritage not only original creations but also popular culture, cyberculture, and cultural repertoires.

of life, transmission of knowledge, etc., could be selected as the “universal type.”

Taking into account that culture (and heritage) is not reified but has evolved through history and by way of interaction between individual agents⁸ (Rapport and Overing 2003: 249–257), it seems logical that the starting point of an analysis of culture is primarily the individual. From the aspect of description and of the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage this further complicates the issue. Families/households are analyzed as social networks (motifs, childhood, personal integration, benefits, kinship norms, etc.) (comp. Sapir 2002; Pine 2003). Relations between these “basic cells” then create a “local community,” “culture,” or the “civil society.” It is undoubtedly on these levels of networking that we should ethnographically record procedures and knowledge about nature and the cosmos, different social practices, etc. All of these are elements of primary socialization which form the framework of acquiring cultural competences and “traditions.”

Although norms constantly change and adapt, Morrill and James (1990) argue that norms observed within the family/the household are very persistent. A similar thing has been established by Cazeneuve and Pagon (1986) for rituals. Intangible heritage can, therefore, persist both on private and on public levels and is linked with routine and ritual – in other words, with protocol.

The family/household aspect of intangible heritage has been investigated by living in a particular household for a lengthy period of time (Simonič 2006), through life stories,⁹ or by studying family and kin relations in the past and in the present (i.e., Hudales 1994; Ravnik 1996). Yet it may be argued, that in general studies of the family and the household, as economic and productive nuclei as well as networks of primary socialization and as the media of intangible heritage, are rather exceptional in Slovene ethnology.

Cultural Diversity and the Dynamics of Nature Protection Areas

On Pohorje – a “remote” agricultural and woodland region of few settlements and many dispersed farms – the knowledge about nature and the cosmos is largely transmitted within the family and the household and by direct practices of handling the natural environment and resources.

This kind of knowledge is not “native,” meaning partial and specific in comparison with other kinds of knowledge, but has long been permeated with information conveyed by books, the school system, mass media, and migrations. The households of Pohorje (and others) have their own, albeit modest, libraries and use internet to connect with the world. Local children attend kindergarten and school. In short, the knowledge of household members is continuously verified and adapted to various other partialities.

Some of the elements of the intangible heritage of agricultural and woodland areas are in conflict with conventions and declarations. In order to transmit in the past the necessary knowledge from generation to generation the young had to take part in production processes (in agricultural activities, forestry, and trade). However, this type of “child labor” has become controversial, particularly when it is not economically evaluated and possibly impedes the schooling of the young (Nieuwenhuys 1996). Yet it is precisely education that causes the transformation of local communities. Upon returning home, the young generation starts to introduce radical, and often urgent, technological and ideological elements of modernization. It may also happen that the young, having acquired education and gotten accustomed to an easier lifestyle in urban centers, do not wish to return to their homes and to work as hard as their parents did to make a living. They might start returning sometime in the future during their leisure time, which once again changes their partial perception of the nature around them and their knowledge about it. Intangible heritage is directly connected with the economic heritage and conditions of a given area (of a regional park).

In the course of the last two decades, denationalization has had a strong impact upon the cultural landscape of Pohorje. The new owners, or their heirs, possessed no knowledge about the sustainable management of forests. Frequently they had no interest either. In order to gain as much profit from forests as possible they radically interfered with the ecosystem. The locals no longer use natural building materials, such as stone and wood, to build their houses and agricultural buildings. By purchasing the necessary building material in stores, they maintain the continuity of environmentally controversial building industry, thus becoming “dependent” on it, while increasingly changing their cultural landscape and its dwelling culture.

Rather than being taken care of by their family and in their home, aged family members are often dispatched to senior citizens homes in urban centers in the valley; solidarity, based on the pension scheme, is transferred to the state or to the market.

⁸ Bourdieu (1977); Giddens (1979); Roscoe (1993); Baskar (1999).

⁹ I.e., Ramšak (1994); Stanonik (2002); Čebulj-Sajko (2008).

In addition to the already-mentioned doctrinal ecologism, another factor that has an impact upon households is the neoliberal economy (comp. Gudeman 2003: 176f.). Both concepts are in fact connected with the process of globalization (comp. Gupta 2005). Modernization not only introduced machines, new types of breeds and seeds, chemical fertilizers, and feeding stuffs but also denoted dependence upon the economic policy of merchants and financiers. During the period of Slovene post-socialist transition many people incurred long-term debts, thus increasing the pressure on the younger generation and reducing the space available for manipulation for that generation, which also affected its relation to “tradition.”¹⁰

Material and Ideological Reproduction of Farm Households

Although not directly, the Agricultural Chamber of Commerce and the Slovene Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food are the most significant contributors to the preservation of the intangible heritage of farmland economic areas. This sector receives the largest proportion of European subsidies, which in the long run ensures the continuity of intangible heritage – whether this is acceptable for other sectors or not.¹¹ However, in order for farms and their occupants’ traditional knowledge, social practices, and “identity” to survive, intangible heritage has to adapt to the changes in European and global markets. Rural development programs, which largely focus on the economic base of farms (households), focus on the following: training for work in agriculture and forestry, support for young transferees of farms, early retirement of farmers, modernization of agricultural holdings, increase of commercial value of forests, adding value to agricultural and forestry products, improvement and development of infrastructure, participation of agricultural producers in food quality schemes, support for producer groups in the areas of information and sale promotion, support for the establishment and operation of producer groups, environmental subsidies for agricultural areas, natural handicap payments for agriculturally less favored areas, preservation and improvement of

rural heritage, diversification in nonagricultural activities, and support for the establishment and development of micro-companies (MKGP 2007).

The taxonomy and financial resources of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food and of rural development programs seem much more promising and realistic for the purpose of the (direct) safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage of agricultural and forest areas and of households than the humanistic/culturological approach, applied by guardians of heritage and developers of the “Register of Living Heritage.” Agricultural rural development plans provide for the material existence of agents, treating heritage merely as an appendix.

Registration and marketing of family and household intimacy would certainly affect the basic sphere of intangible heritage. It is possibly for this reason that the “Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage” remains on the level of the community at large and focuses on its festivals, rituals, oral heritage, and craft knowledge.

Negotiations concerning the planned as well as the existing nature protection areas focus on the rights and obligations of the local population. In the case of Pohorje, these issues concern agricultural rights and obligations. Maintenance costs of ecologically redefined social systems (safeguarding!) are transferred to the level of family (household) economy. This is due to the fact that it is possible to remain viable only by increasing economically unevaluated activities. These include extended working hours, daily or permanent work migrations, drawing from household reserve, inclusion of insufficiently paid and unskilled (migrant) workers, pathologies of daily life, etc. Another possibility for the adaptation of rural communities lies in the increased dependency on national and international (European) subsidies and allowances.

Where Is Intangible Heritage?

Intangible cultural heritage as has been defined by UNESCO’s “Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage” (2003) is but a small temporal and spatial segment of the great diversity of ways of life that can be classified as heritage. Intangible heritage from the private (household) sphere, for example, the transmission of knowledge about nature and the cosmos (natural heritage, ethnobotany, horticulture), language and communication, oral tradition, education, symbolic hierarchies within the household, and mutual help among neighbors, to name a few, has been largely overlooked and discriminated in the convention and in

10 Similar financial pressure has been noted several times from 1848 to 1948 (comp. Lazarević 1994).

11 Farmers, agricultural organizations, companies, and the rural development sector receive approximately 55 billion euros per year, which is over 40% of the entire yearly budget of the European Union. Food-processing industry receives the highest pecuniary aid of all (Zgaga 2010).

protected areas management plans. UNESCO's definition of culture is narrower, reified.

Intangible heritage, on the other hand, is currently the most exposed and exploited segment on local and regional levels. Group activities and festivities from the sphere of secondary socialization and identification are applied in tourist marketing. Although contrary to the mission of protected areas, such activities represent an important financial source for investments in nature protection.

Even though the registration of the intangible heritage of the family/household (types of knowledge, traditions, and ways of life) seems an impossible project, and in a way just as essentialist as we reproach the UNESCO "Convention on Cultural Heritage" to be, it seems that in this manner it is possible to avoid ethno-nationalist connotations and link intangible heritage with economic and political conditions and needs of everyday lives of people – with social constituencies of the "culture" and "heritage."

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Mariavites and the Occult**A Search for the Truth**

Zbigniew Łagosz

The subject explored in this text is one of numerous “subplots” included in my dissertation, titled “Aleister Crowley’s Influence on the Magical Societies of the 20th-Century Poland,” where a net of interconnections between the Polish occult and the idea, creation, and activity of a great personage of contemporary magic, A. Crowley, is revealed. The issue touched upon in the further part of the text, however, being merely a “splinter,” is extremely interesting due to its uncovering of a bond between commonly unknown strictly Polish Catholic schism and the world esoterism.

The Mariavite movement, being thoroughly a Polish denomination formed on the basis of revelations experienced by Feliksa Maria Franciszka Kozłowska (1862–1921), has been suspected of having connections with Martinist orders and the Gnostic Church since the beginning of its existence. However, evidently Crowley’s very own ideas and thoughts were unknown to Mariavites. Supposedly, the only issue shared by both parties that could have result-

ed in closer relations is the mentioned Gnosticism, most probably introduced into Mariavitism by Jan Maria Michał Kowalski or his successors.

Mariavites (from Latin *Mariae vita* – the life of Mary) initiated their activity on August 2nd, 1893, when Kozłowska, referred to by her followers as “Mateczka” or Blessed Maria Franciszka,¹ experienced a series of religious visions.² Their essence was based on the idea that the sinful world may be saved only by spreading the reverence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist and by imitating the life of the Mother of God.³ According to the revelation, the contemporary times are described as “the last days.”⁴ If the evil reigning in the world is not defeated, the world will be punished.⁵ Originally the word “Mariavite” referred solely to nuns and priests,⁶ participating in the new congregation brought into being by *Mateczka* and functioning on the basis of her visions. Several years later, this term began to include also the secular followers of the movement. In a short time the congregation consisted of tens of priests (in the initial phase the overall number of members and supporters amounted to approximately a hundred), among whom the most contributing were J. M. M. Kowalski,⁷ Kazimierz Maria Jan Przyjemski, and Roman Maria Jakub Próchniewski. Some of the clergymen participating in the organisation were graduates of the Ecclesiastical Academy of St. Petersburg (M. Dominik

1 Maria and Franciszka are Feliksa Kozłowska’s religious names. The term *Mateczka* is not unusual, as it was commonly used as a reference to the mother superior in Poland. The corresponding appellation in France was “Petite Mère” and in English speaking countries “Little Mother.” The term “blessed” came into use after Kozłowska’s death in 1921 (in a letter from T. Mames; author’s collection).

2 The first revelation took place exactly on August 2nd, 1893, with following visions occurring repeatedly until 1918 (Mames 2009: 20).

3 It is frequently said that revelations obliged the faithful to practice the cult of the Virgin Mary. As Konrad Rudnicki had observed, this common belief is incorrect, since the matter was not concerning the obligation of such a cult but the imitation of the way of life.

4 “The last days” are defined by Mariavites as “the approaching of the end of the cultural era and the beginning of the new one; an end of a certain evolutionary era” (in a letter from Rudnicki; author’s collection).

5 Revelations put an emphasis on the clergymen’s morality, whose ungodly life is seen as the major reason for the depavation of the world. Therefore, the renovation ought to begin from “the source,” that is the Holy See in Rome (Mames 2009: 21).

6 Mariavite congregations were obliged to live according to rules of Saint Francis of Assisi.

7 J. M. M. Kowalski (1871–1942), as every Mariavite priest or nun, had two religious names: the name of his patron saint and Mary’s name. Thus, his full name was Jan Maria Michał Kowalski (Karas 2001: 113).