

SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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In this article we examine the way local, national, and regional politics affect the policies and practices of “intangible cultural heritage” (ICH)—a notion derived from the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage—in two detailed case studies from the Republic of Macedonia. While our conclusions are particular to our case studies, we hope that researchers in other national settings will find them useful for describing and analysing their own situations.¹ We begin with a discussion of heritagization and recontextualization, which are inherent in ICH safeguarding processes. Next, we provide background on the external contestation of a distinct Macedonian ethnic and national identity, and the ways that UNESCO ICH safeguarding processes have been perceived and applied in Macedonia. Against that backdrop, we then describe and analyse two contrasting cases of ICH—the social dance “Kopačkata” and the Galičnik Wedding—both of which illustrate how the cultural heritage concept itself can sometimes be used for national, commercial, and political ends.

The case of “Kopačkata” (digging dance), from eastern Macedonia, illustrates the potential for living traditions to embody multiple meanings when they involve the same participants in different contexts. At present, “Kopačkata” exists in different renderings: (1) as a living local tradition; (2) as a staged performance by local practitioners; (3) as a part of the repertoire of professional and amateur folk ensembles nationwide; and (4) as portrayed in media and social media discourse and perceived by the public as a symbol of Macedonian national identity. Though it was recontextualized to some extent beginning in the socialist Yugoslav era (1949–1991), its heritagization has taken place more recently and is connected to its inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of ICH (hereafter, Representative List) in 2014.² “Kopačkata” also operates independent of commercial sponsors,

1. The history of the Convention, the intricacies and nuances of the meaning of ICH, and the effects of its application across myriad settings have been frequent objects of inquiry among ethnomusicologists and folklorists. See, for example, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004); Ceribašić (2007, 2013); Kurin (2007); Helbig (2008); Seeger (2009); Titon (2009); Yung (2009); Grant (2010, 2012); Jähnichen (2011); Margolies (2011); Rees (2012). Numerous edited collections have been devoted to ICH as a theme (e.g., Seitel 2001; Smith and Akagawa 2009; Howard 2012; Hameršak, Pleše, and Vukušić 2013; Psycheva 2014a) and the *Journal of Folklore Research* devoted a special issue to ICH in 2015 (see Foster 2015). The *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* has been published annually since 2006, and, while the *Journal of Cultural Heritage* (published since 2000) and the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (published since 1996) focus on tangible cultural heritage, they include occasional articles on ICH.

2. Probably the Convention’s most important and controversial features are its two lists: (1) the Representative List of the ICH of Humanity; and (2) the List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. According to the Convention, the items on the list are referred to as “elements”
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though its UNESCO inscription ensures that it is prioritized to receive state funds that are administered according to UNESCO recommendations.

The Galičnik Wedding—a tourist festival in western Macedonia that re-enacts a reconstructed, festivalized, and commercialized village ritual—in contrast, has been transformed through recontextualization and heritagization processes that stretch back to the socialist Yugoslav era. Rather than multiple parallel contexts for enactment, the Galičnik Wedding has become a singular performance through which a cultural practice has been fashioned into a national symbol. In its current iteration, it blurs the lines between tourist festival, staged folklore, state- and corporate-sponsored ritual, and life-cycle event.³ Based on these two cases, we argue that while institutionalized systems of safeguarding ICH are always embedded in and affected by political processes of heritagization and recontextualization, the ways that these processes affect cultural practices vary greatly in degree and manner even in the same national context.

From a methodological perspective, this article provides an example of the ways in which scholars from multiple perspectives can collaborate on a topic of mutual interest. While we each possess a relationship to the issue of safeguarding ICH in the Republic of Macedonia, our relationships to the field differ: Stojkova Serafimovska is a local scholar, Opetčeska Tatarčevska is a local scholar and cultural policymaker, and Wilson is a non-native ethnographer. Each of us has conducted independent research on ICH, and Stojkova Serafimovska and Opetčeska Tatarčevska have also been active in applying for UNESCO ICH inscription for various cultural practices in Macedonia. This article brings our research together “intervocally”—that is, based on the principle that each of our perspectives enriches the others, our individual findings and analytical perspectives are aggregated into a cohesive narrative about the common ground that we have found. Though our fieldwork was not always conducted together, this article presents one example of a possible set of relationships among researchers and embodies (though not always explicitly) the compromises involved in our process of collaboration (cf. Justice and Hadley 2015).

Cultural heritage as process

Ethnomusicologists, folklorists, and other scholars have recently defined heritage as, among other things, a political and cultural process of remembering and/or forgetting, as well as communicating certain bodies of knowledge (e.g., Urry 1996;

in the sense that they are constituent parts of the broader ICH of a given community. Since 2013 the Republic of Macedonia has inscribed two elements on the Representative List and one element on the List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. It was also involved in two multi-national applications that were “referred,” or returned for further revisions.

3. In this case, we situate festivalization as one element in a broader heritagization process with regard to the Galičnik Wedding. We recognize separate but overlapping processes of reconstruction (preceding festivalization) and commercialization (a consequence of festivalization most prominent in the post-Yugoslav era). Compare with Ceribašić (2009) on festivalization of traditional music in Croatia.

Dicks 2000; Graham 2002; Peckham 2003; Smith 2006; Smith and Akagawa 2009). Regina Bendix suggests that “cultural heritage does not exist, it is made,” and that from habitual practices and everyday experience “actors choose privileged excerpts and imbue them with status and value” (Bendix 2009:255; cf. Smith 2006). She calls this process “heritagization.” Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004, 2006) writes that all heritage interventions—like the globalizing pressures they are trying to counteract—change the relationship of people to what they do; they change how people understand their culture and themselves; and they change the fundamental conditions for cultural production and reproduction (cf. Hrovatin 2014:35). Heritagization almost always involves recontextualization, a process in which one context for a cultural practice participates in making another context strange, familiar, or both (Opetčeska Tatarčevska 2015). Recontextualization is often accompanied by “resemiotization,” a process whereby a practice is lifted from one context and recast in a modified form in a subsequent context, resulting in new meanings (De Rycker 2014; see Opetčeska Tatarčevska 2015). Recontextualization may occur diachronically or synchronically, with original practices and meanings lingering even as new orientations and meanings emerge.

Recontextualization and heritagization come into focus particularly during times of social transition, when defining traditional music and dance as ICH becomes significant for shaping or affirming politically consequential constructs, such as national identity. Macedonia’s transition from constituent Yugoslav republic to independent nation-state is no exception. Lozanka Peycheva notes that during such transitions, traditional music and dance practices often follow any of a number of parallel and related transitions, including: “from personal or collective expression to public national cultural heritage”; “from spiritual [or intangible] asset to a commercial product”; “from an oral, fluid practice to a fixed musical-artistic form”; and “from local rural culture to an element of urban and national culture” (2008:85). These processes, related as they are to industrialization and modernization, have been occurring in Macedonia since the Yugoslav era, but took on a different character after Macedonia became an independent nation-state in 1991. As Tvrtko Zebec notes in his discussion of ICH in Croatia, new, small nation-states feel a particular pressure to prove themselves to the international community. Having UNESCO officially recognize ICH valorizes traditional culture, though national and regional policies must be constructed and implemented with an awareness of the implications for the ICH practices and their practitioners (Zebec 2013:330–31; Ceribašić 2013:295–96, 305–308). As a relatively new, small nation-state, Macedonia has faced similar pressure, and Zebec’s warning is applicable in the Macedonian case as well.

In considering processes of heritagization and recontextualization related to ICH and their consequences in Macedonia since its independence, we ask several questions. Are traditions that have undergone change influenced by a state and its cultural policies less worthy of safeguarding than traditions that have changed for other reasons? What forms does, or can, that safeguarding take? And, if institutionally safeguarding traditions unavoidably influences those that were once kept alive by local practitioners alone (Nas 2002; Amselle 2004; Arizpe 2004;

van Zanten 2004), to what extent do state or even corporate sponsorships actually keep a tradition alive if they precipitate change through their political ideologies and related public imaginations of authenticity? Underlying these questions is a questioning of the cultural heritage concept itself. Jeff Tilton, for example, argues that the discourse of cultural heritage “puts cultural managers in a defensive posture of safeguarding property assets ... By supporting the conservation of those assets with tourist commerce, heritage management is doomed to the paradox of constructing staged authenticities” (2009:119). Thus we also ask, especially in cases where an ICH tradition is a living one, whether institutionalized safeguarding measures are necessary or beneficial at all (cf. Grant 2012). To address these questions, we turn to our two examples from Macedonia. In these cases, understanding processes related to ICH illuminates the challenges inherent in current safeguarding practices as well as the ways that local practices can serve as sites for both negotiating issues of national identity and for exerting commercial and corporate influence.

ICH in Macedonia and the contestation of identity

The Republic of Macedonia is a country of approximately two million inhabitants in southeastern Europe; it was established as an independent nation-state in 1991.⁴ In Macedonia, the establishment and development of institutional mechanisms for the safeguarding of ICH are inextricably linked to politics at the international level with regard to the contestation of the existence of a Macedonian ethnicity with a distinct language and culture. Even before its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, Macedonia’s geographic neighbours challenged the ethno-national distinctiveness of a Macedonian nation and an ethnic Macedonian people. Throughout the socialist Yugoslav period, Greece officially denied the existence of a Macedonian ethnicity and language, while Bulgaria claimed both as part of the Bulgarian nation and language. Since 1991, these challenges have most often been articulated through three issues: (1) the name “Macedonia” and the flag of the Republic of Macedonia as symbols claimed as Greek in official Greek policy; (2) the heroes of the 1903 Ilinden uprising against the Ottoman Empire and the Macedonian language as entities claimed as Bulgarian in official Bulgarian policy; and (3) the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the legitimacy of which has been challenged by the Serbian Orthodox Church and some Serbian politicians (Trajanovski 2009:15).⁵ Within Macedonia, these contestations are perceived as challenges to the legitimacy of, respectively, the Republic of Macedonia as a nation-state, Macedonian language and ethnicity, and Macedonian Orthodoxy as a religion. The most tangible consequence of this dispute is Greece’s refusal to recognize Macedonia under its constitutional name “The Republic of Macedonia.”

4. According to the most recent census (2002), the population comprises 64 per cent Macedonians, 25 per cent Albanians, 4 per cent Turks, 3 per cent Roms, 2 per cent Serbs, and 2 per cent other groups (Statistical Office 2005).

5. See, also, Risteski (2009) with regard to the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

Greece has blocked NATO and EU accession for Macedonia until it changes its name; Macedonia has so far refused to do so.

In many ways, these contestations constitute concrete threats to a distinct Macedonian identity, resulting in “identity” (*identitet*) itself emerging as a politicized concept (and an influential political tool) since the 1990s.⁶ As a consequence, the state has put significant focus on affirming and publicizing a national and cultural identity, which, in turn, has spurred processes of recontextualization and heritagization of ICH.⁷ The Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage was passed in 2004, establishing the Cultural Heritage Protection Office (CHPO) under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia and assigning several institutions to protect all types of ICH.⁸ Article two of the law defines cultural heritage as including “the material and immaterial goods which ... have cultural and historical significance and due to their protection and use are settled under legal regime according to this and other Law” (Cultural Heritage Protection Office 2004:1).

In 2006, Macedonia ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003), and the Government of the Republic of Macedonia approved the creation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Department within the CHPO. Since the founding of the CHPO, fifty-eight folk expressions (e.g., songs, dances, folk tales), nineteen dialects of Macedonian, ten dialects of minority languages in Macedonia, and one toponymic system have been inscribed on Macedonia’s National Registry of ICH (at the time of writing).⁹ The UNESCO Convention includes a definition of ICH that recognizes the important role of ICH in the identity of a group, stating that ICH is “constantly recreated by communities and groups ..., and provides them with a *sense of identity* and continuity” (UNESCO 2003; emphasis ours). The Convention made available a

6. For further discussion of Macedonian identity politics since the 1990s, see Danforth (1995), Lafazanovski (1999), Brown (2003), Mirčevska (2011), Grandits and Brunnbauer (2013), Stefoska (2013), and Sundhaussen (2013). With regard to music, see Stojkova Serafimovska (2014) and Wilson (2015).

7. These contestations have affected processes related to national identity in Macedonia and the way the state has engaged with those processes, especially since 2006. For some critical perspectives, see Neofotistos (2011), Vangeli (2011), Zdravkova-Džeparoska and Opetčeska Tatarčevska (2012), Graan (2013), Opetčeska Tatarčevska (2013), Angelovska (2014).

8. These institutions include the Marko Cepenkov Institute of Folklore; the Krste Misirkov Macedonian Language Institute; the Institute for Old Slavic Culture—Prilep; the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural and Spiritual Heritage of Albanians in Macedonia; and the Museum of Macedonia.

9. In December 2014, some ICH terminology and ICH safeguarding mechanisms were changed in Macedonian law to match terminologies and mechanisms of the 2003 UNESCO Convention. For example, *nematerijalno kulturno nasledstvo* (intangible cultural heritage) is now used instead of *duhovno kulturno nasledstvo* (spiritual cultural heritage), the original legal term. *Zaštita* (protection) remains in use instead of *začuvuvanje* (safeguarding) as *zaštita* was established with regard to tangible (material) heritage; protection processes for material culture existed first and were later extended to include ICH. Its prominence as an overarching term remains as a consequence of the law’s initial basis in tangible heritage, hearkening back to the 1973 World Heritage Convention.

new international platform for the affirmation of a distinct Macedonian national identity. Macedonia's first application under the Convention was made in 2011.¹⁰

As Timothy Rice (2007) notes, scholars have increasingly linked music to various conceptions of identity since the 1980s (see also, Stokes 1994; Frith 2004; Nettl 2015:263, 268–71). Rice observes four positions from which music relates to identity in ethnomusicological literature: (1) music gives shape to a pre-existing identity; (2) musical performance provides opportunities for communities to see their shared identities “in action”; (3) music contributes an affective quality or “feel” to an identity; and (4) music gives an identity a positive valence (2007:34–35). As ICH safeguarding practices in Macedonia became linked with affirming a distinctive ethnic and national Macedonian identity, we observed all four processes at work. Through them, musical and dance practices have gained prominence as sign vehicles for and markers of Macedonian national identity (cf. Turino 1999; see also Stojkova Serafimovska 2014), and have often been exploited as such even when the identification experienced by practitioners of ICH is not a national one. That is, political factors have played a role in enabling the national identity concept to encompass practices previously associated only with other types of identity (e.g., regional, village, town, gender), resulting in multi-layered identities for ICH practitioners (Mirčevska 2011; cf. Lafazanovski 1999). We also recognize that these sign vehicles of national identity play a role in shaping a national identity that is associated with a Macedonian ethnicity.^{11,12} To illustrate the influence of the national identity concept in institutionalized processes of safeguarding ICH (i.e., heritagization and recontextualization), we now turn to our two case studies: “Kopačkata” and the Galičnik Wedding.

“Kopačkata”

“Kopačkata,” as it is inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List, is a dynamic social chain dance (*oro*) from the region of Pijanec in eastern Macedonia. The male version of “Kopačkata” takes place as a series of four sections, each of which

10. This is not to say that international recognition of ICH from Macedonia was not a concern previous to the creation of the CHPO and the ICH Department. The Ministry of Culture was directly involved in earlier applications to the UNESCO list of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, two of which failed (discussed below).

11. Ethnocentric national identity symbols by definition exclude Albanian, Romani, and other ethnic minorities in Macedonia. Carol Silverman (2015) argues that the roles of Romani musicians can be minimized (or erased) when they are involved in certain practices marked as national symbols constructed around a Macedonian ethnicity. See also Seeman (2012).

12. An important exception to ICH as supportive of an ethnocentric national identity is the inscription on Macedonia's ICH National Registry of celebrations of St. George's Day by multiple ethnic groups. The Registry lists not only Gjurgovden as celebrated by ethnic Macedonians, but also Shen Gjergji as celebrated by Albanians, Erdelezi as celebrated by Roms, Hidrellez as celebrated by Turks, and Agiu Gjorgy as celebrated by Vlachs. The Registry also includes ICH elements of several minority groups.

involves a particular dance sequence performed in a semicircle:¹³ (1) *šetanica* (walking sequence), which serves to set the formation of the dance and warm up the dancers; (2) *sitnoto* (small steps sequence), in which the dancers' steps are swift and short (skilful dancers actually slide their feet on the ground); (3) *prefrlačka* (crossing-legs sequence), in which the left foot is swiftly crossed over the right foot and the dancers and musicians speed up the dance to its climax; and (4) *kopačkata* (digging sequence), the fastest and most dynamic sequence in which the dancers dramatically jump, landing firmly on the right foot while the left foot repeatedly hits the ground with the intention to dig, which is how this dance got its name. The dance has typically been accompanied by two *tapani* (double-headed drums; sing. *tapan*) played by Roms, but nowadays may include four or even five *tapani*. In addition to *tapani*, “Kopačkata” may also be accompanied by a *kemene* (bowed fiddle), and, less often, by a *tambura* (long-necked fretted lute) or a bagpipe.¹⁴

Through parallel processes of inscription and heritagization, this cultural practice has come to exist in multiple parallel performance contexts. The first of these, its local context, involves spontaneous performance at social gatherings (see figure 1), including weddings and festivals. The annual gathering in Dramče on the Day of St. Michael the Archangel (21 November), for example, concludes with a collective and spontaneous performance of “Kopačkata,” bringing together around one hundred dancers.

Since the 1950s, “Kopačkata” has also been rendered by the amateur folk dance group, Kopačka, from the town of Delčevo in the Pijanec region, as a staged folklore performance. This second context for performance of “Kopačkata” (as a staged performance by local practitioners) developed as a result of the institutionalization and recontextualization of folklore under socialist Yugoslavia (Opetčeska Tatarčevska 2013). Though the Kopačka folk dance group is located in Delčevo, its members have always included tradition-bearers from the nearby village of Dramče, drawing also from other Pijanec villages when larger numbers of dancers are needed.

The third context involves the staged performance of “Kopačkata” by many *Kulturno-umetnički društva* (cultural-artistic societies)—KUDs—that have formed throughout Macedonia since the 1950s (also a result of Yugoslav-era recontextualization). KUDs modelled their choreography on that of Tanec, Macedonia's National Ensemble of Folk Songs and Dances, which had stylized “Kopačkata” for the stage (Dunin and Višinski 1995:180).¹⁵ The fourth and final context in which “Kopačkata” exists as a cultural practice is in media portrayals. These representations have emphasized a public reading of the dance as a symbol of national identity—an articulation that came about as the result of the process of its inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of ICH.

13. Until the 1960s, a female version of “Kopačkata” also existed. There has been growing interest in reviving this version in the region of Pijanec since its UNESCO inscription.

14. More details about “Kopačkata” as an ICH element can be found at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=748#10.43> (accessed 28 December 2015).

15. See Petkovski (2015) for more on KUDs adopting Tanec choreographies since the 1950s.

UNESCO inscription and national identity

“Kopačkata” was part of the first group of nominations from Macedonia for inscription on UNESCO ICH lists in 2011. The process leading up to this nomination put into motion a new heritagization process intertwined with both UNESCO ICH implementation guidelines and contemporary political factors. We (Stojkova Serafimovska as an ethnomusicologist and Opetčeska Tatarčevska as an ethnochoreologist) began working with the tradition-bearers in 2010, and were also part of the team that prepared the applications for the first three elements proposed for inscription. We found ourselves in two roles. In the first, we served as mediators between theory and practice—that is, we assumed the position of interpreters of the UNESCO Convention in terms of content and implementation both for the tradition-bearers and for the institutions that were less familiar with the Convention and the term “intangible cultural heritage” itself. In our second role, we were given the task of identifying cultural practices as ICH—a task that required us to alter our way(s) of thinking about ICH. We needed to align our thinking with current political concerns and to redirect our interest away from analysis of living folklore and towards processes related to institutionalization of ICH and related concerns of heritagization and recontextualization (cf. Peycheva 2014b:292).

Considering the national identity politics discussed above, as well as the ways ICH is defined as significant to the cultural identity of its bearers, the “identity” concept played a crucial role in the processes we were involved in as mediators and as identifiers of ICH. The attachment of “identity” to ICH in the Macedonian context resulted in general public popularization of ICH and in more financial



Figure 1. Local tradition-bearers perform “Kopačkata” in the village of Dramče, 2013 (photo: Kirčo Anastasov; used with permission).

support for local ICH tradition-bearers. This was significant because, over the ten years since the implementation of the UNESCO Convention, Ministry of Culture funding for the protection of material cultural heritage (e.g., archaeological projects) has been at least ten times greater than that for ICH. In Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (2004) terms, we were embedded in a metacultural process that implicated the fundamental conditions for cultural production and reproduction of traditional music and dance forms.

In December 2013, when Macedonia inscribed its first ICH element on the UNESCO Representative List (the Feast of the Forty Holy Martyrs in Štip), there was initially a weak reaction from the media, and a press conference was not held until three weeks after the inscription. In response to questions from the media at this press conference about the significance of the inscription, those of us involved in the application decided to use the word "identity" (*identitet*) as it is used in the 2003 Convention, which states that ICH provides communities or groups with a "sense of identity" (UNESCO 2003).¹⁶ Because of the discursive power of "identity" as a concept in Macedonia, we were aware that the inscription potentially could lead to effective safeguarding of further ICH elements. Focusing on the language regarding identity in the 2003 Convention was a tool for raising public awareness of ICH. We decided to embrace the consequences of participating in this metacultural process if it led to resources being directed to local and regional practitioners, even if it also meant that their traditions became national symbols.¹⁷

The next day, headlines proclaiming "UNESCO Recognizes the Macedonian Identity" appeared via media outlets across the country.¹⁸ As UNESCO is an organization under the auspices of the United Nations (the UN does not recognize Macedonia's constitutional name), these headlines aroused significant public interest not only in the inscription, but also in the UNESCO Convention. In his subsequent year-end address to the nation, the President of Macedonia mentioned the UNESCO inscription of the ritual, and at the ensuing celebration of the Feast of the Forty Holy Martyrs in Štip on 22 March 2014, the Minister of Culture and the President were both present.

After "Kopačkata" was inscribed on the Representative List in December 2014, several reactions from policy makers and the public indicated the increasingly strong association between the UNESCO list and the affirmation of national identity. A press conference, scheduled immediately, featured an address by the Minister of Culture and was attended by the general secretary of the national UNESCO commission, the Mayor of the Delčevo Municipality, the dancers from Dramče village, experts involved in the application, and representatives from other

16. We also recognized this as a specific instance in which all four processes, as described by Rice with regard to music and identity, were at work (Rice 2007).

17. There are many complex ethical dimensions to this situation with regard to the role of the scholar as an intermediary in such metacultural processes involving state administrations, international bodies such as UNESCO, and practitioners of ICH. Beyond this brief summary, we leave that discussion for future consideration.

18. "UNESCO go prizna makedonskiot identitet." One example is available from the newspaper *Večer* at <http://vecer.mk/kultura/so-chetse-unesko-go-prizna-makedonskiot-identitet> (accessed 30 December 2015).

government institutions and NGOs. Media coverage was noticeably greater than that for the inscription of the Feast of the Forty Holy Martyrs, and, after two or three months, “Kopačkata” gained visibility among ethnic Macedonians throughout the country. Tanec restored “Kopačkata” to its repertoire.¹⁹ The folk dance group Kopačka from the village of Dramče was prioritized to receive funds from the Ministry of Culture for projects involved in safeguarding and promoting the dance. To some extent, other ICH elements began to be used towards political ends and the promotion of a national identity, but not nearly to the extent that other cultural and historical symbols (such as those associated with antiquity or the Byzantine era) have been deployed (cf. Graan 2013 on “nation branding” for a discussion of these more extensive projects).

Effects of inscription at the local level

Although “Kopačkata” has been heritagized and recontextualized in the course of its inscription on the UNESCO list—that is, as a symbol of national identity and an example of staged folklore at the national level—it continues as a living local tradition in parallel with its newer contexts. These parallel contexts relate to the multi-layered identities of the tradition-bearers, the significance of which was highlighted by dancers from the younger generation. One junior dancer, when asked what he feels has been safeguarded by UNESCO and to whom “Kopačkata” belongs, stated, “‘Kopačkata’ is primarily mine, and only after that it is a Macedonian folk dance.”

Those of us serving as mediators advised the tradition-bearers that, as a result of the UNESCO-inscribed status of “Kopačkata,” they receive priority when applying for funds administered by the Ministry of Culture for cultural projects. The folk dance group Kopačka now annually applies for and receives these funds, resulting in improved conditions for rehearsing “Kopačkata” (as well as other local folk dances and songs), the ability to maintain and purchase instruments and folk attire, and the means to promote interest in folk music and dance among younger generations. Indeed, 2014 witnessed a revival of several ICH traditions in the Pijanec region, increased interest among youth, and several projects that mapped other music and dance ICH elements in this region, essentially establishing a community-based inventory, one of the goals of the UNESCO Convention.

Tradition-bearers have also continued to take steps that indicate that the tradition at the local level is not a “frozen” one, but a living, evolving practice. This was evident at a performance at the 2013 gathering on the Day of St. Michael the Archangel in Dramče. Stojkova Serafimovska observed that some performers were dancing in an exceptionally virtuosic manner, improvising completely spontaneously and seeking to out-dance one another. When she asked Dimitar Uzunski, the head of the folk dance group, why those dancers were not members of the official group, he emphasized that their temperaments and virtuosity made them unsuitable for stage

19. Stojče Zahariev and Nikola Arsov, from the Delčevo region, staged *Kopačkata* for Tanec in its inaugural 1949/50 season (Dunin and Višinski 1995:180). It fell out of the repertoire, but was revived in 2004. Its removal from Tanec’s repertoire in 2007 suggests that at that time it was not yet viewed as an important symbol of Macedonian national identity.

performance. And yet it had been Uzunski who emphasized in previous interviews that only the best dancers are allowed to participate in “Kopačkata.” This case and others illustrate the significant role of tradition-bearers in the ongoing and living transformation of the dance, as they establish contrasting and, perhaps, shifting performance criteria for different contexts.

In the case of “Kopačkata,” although the implementation of the UNESCO Convention resulted in heritagization and recontextualization, it also has allowed for the continuation of the cultural practice as a living local tradition as tradition-bearers continue to perform the dance in multiple parallel contexts. At the same time, the implementation of the Convention in tandem with national identity politics in Macedonia resulted in “Kopačkata” becoming a symbol of national identity. This had the effect of directing significant funds to tradition-bearers, who have thus far been able to participate in maintaining control over the tradition itself in accordance with UNESCO recommendations.

Galičnik Wedding

For a contrasting example in which local tradition-bearers are largely absent from the process of continuing a tradition, we now turn to the Galičnik Wedding. We begin with the history and heritagization of the Galičnik Wedding—before and after the introduction of state and corporate sponsorship—and the ways that the festival changed when Macedonia became an independent nation-state. We will then analyse select aspects of the Wedding that are indicative of its construction of “staged authenticities” (Titon 2009), and close with a discussion of the commercial aspects of the Wedding and the related implications for how it is produced and reproduced annually.

History and heritagization

The Galičnik Wedding occurs every year in the village of Galičnik in the Mijak region in western Macedonia. Currently, the Macedonian Ministry of Culture and about twenty corporate entities sponsor the two-day festival. Centring on the wedding of an actual couple with family roots in Galičnik, the festival features the couple’s families, friends, and volunteers performing detailed rituals of the Wedding and wearing traditional attire passed down from relatives or other families from Galičnik. Hundreds of visitors—mostly Macedonians but some foreigners as well—attend the Wedding each year. Many Macedonians view it as an “authentic” and important practice of rural Macedonian folk culture.

In the first half of the twentieth century, and likely before, the Galičnik Wedding occurred every year on Petrovden (St. Peter’s Day): 12 July. Traditionally, Galičnik men who were returning from seasons of *pečalba* (migrant work abroad) married young Galičnik women on this day in a village celebration that lasted up to eight days. At least in part due to these migrant workers, but also because of the export of Galičnik agricultural products like wool and cheese, the village was among the most prosperous of its region. Due to urbanization, permanent migration, and the

end of private land ownership under socialist Yugoslavia, however, the village population began to dwindle from its early twentieth-century peak of 3,000. People stopped performing this ritual after 1953.²⁰

The heritagization process under socialist Yugoslavia began in earnest in 1962, when the Wedding was revived through a re-creation staged in two consecutive years by some former residents of the village.²¹ In 1973, there was a movement to create a festival named the *Mijačka Svadba* (Mijak Wedding) to celebrate the wedding traditions of the entire Mijak region. But, as individuals with Galičnik heritage held many influential governmental positions at the time, the festival instead became the Galičnik Wedding, a state-sponsored reconstruction of the traditional wedding that emphasized the distinct ethnic Macedonian heritage of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. It was launched as a re-enactment in 1974 by the local council (*mesna zaednica*) of Galičnik (which consisted of former residents). This organization remains responsible for acquiring funds for the Wedding each year. The festivalization aspect of the Wedding's heritagization was consistent with the priorities of socialist Yugoslav ideology in two ways. First, it fostered the national identity of a Yugoslav republic based on folkloric symbols and practices. Second, it served to further distinguish Macedonian folklore as distinctively Macedonian and not derivative or artificially created.

The changing nature of the festival became apparent during the 1980s and 1990s. A hotel built in 1980 on the western edge of the village supported and confirmed its status as a tourist destination, signalling a commercialization process. In 1991, the Ministry of Culture of the newly independent Republic of Macedonia took over the Wedding's sponsorship. The same year, a competition was held to choose a young couple to be married at the event and has happened annually since then. The competition transformed the Wedding from a complete re-enactment to the marriage of an actual couple—with the primary (if not only) change being the introduction of the wedding ceremony performed in the church by a priest of the Macedonian Orthodox church.

The village now has no permanent residents; its location at high elevation with limited access makes transporting food and supplies impossible in winter. But many families with Galičnik heritage have begun to take up summer residences in the homes of their parents and grandparents. Nevena Gjozinska, a summer resident, described pre-1991 Weddings in a 2013 interview for the newspaper *Republika*:

In that time when I was a bride and my husband a groom at Galičnik weddings, they were not doing real weddings. Then, the wedding happened without a ceremony in a church, and couples were chosen randomly. We were actually actors. I participated in weddings from 1974, when I was a bride, until 1996. Participating in the wedding

20. See Silverman (2015) for more details on the history of the Galičnik Wedding; see Küppers Sonenberg (1941) for ethnographic description of earlier iterations of the ritual.

21. Other heritagization processes of the wedding ritual occurred even earlier—before it had died out. During the 1930s, residents of the Mijak region invited journalists from England, France, and Germany to document and publicize the ritual (Küppers Sonenberg 1941).

was like being an extra [in a film or television show] ... All of the extras participated and danced the folk dances associated with the wedding.²²

Galičnik families seem to have a greater knowledge of and experience with the distinction between the staged Weddings of the Yugoslav era and the “real” Weddings since 1991 than Macedonians with no hereditary connection to the region.

In 2002, the Ministry of Culture submitted an application for the Galičnik Wedding to be proclaimed a UNESCO Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. By then, the Wedding had been subject to a state-supported heritagization and festivalization process for several decades. Precisely because no grassroots element was present, the application was rejected (see Silverman (2015) for an analysis of the application). The Galičnik Wedding has become a classic example of heritage that has involved the construction of staged authenticities.

Constructed authenticities

The authenticity of the post-1991 Galičnik Wedding is continually constructed and affirmed in several ways. For most visitors to the weekend event, many of the performed wedding customs are unfamiliar. A pamphlet containing brief descriptions of key moments in the wedding festivities is available in English and in Macedonian. Even if they have not personally attended the Galičnik Wedding, most, if not all, Macedonians associate it with the music of the *zurla* (a double reed pipe typically played in pairs) and *tapan*, instruments traditionally played by Romani musicians. Roms from the Majovci clan of Debar have accompanied the wedding ritual for generations and continue this patron–client relationship today.²³

The performance of the male chain dance, “Teškoto” (heavy/difficult dance), is one of the most anticipated events of the Wedding, as it carries great significance as a national identity marker as the result of Yugoslav-era processes of heritagization and recontextualization. Tanec, the national folk ensemble, adapted “Teškoto” for the stage in 1949, adding several key choreographic elements, including one in which the lead dancer stands atop a *tapan* with one leg raised. This staged version of “Teškoto” quickly became standardized and was adapted by folklore groups across Macedonia (see Dunin and Višinski 1995:263–66); in recent years, the amateur group Folklorni Biseri Skopje, for example, has performed the dance using the stylized choreography codified in 1949 (see figure 2).

Through repeated performances by Tanec, descriptions of the dance in national literature (e.g., Koneski 1948:5–7), and narratives in the press and educational curricula, “Teškoto” became strongly associated with Macedonian national identity.²⁴ Its various musical and choreographic elements came to represent the

22. Quoted in “Svadba koja gi sobira site na edno mesto,” *Republika Online*, 14 July 2013. Available at <http://republika.mk/?p=96423> (accessed 15 October 2014).

23. Silverman notes that *zurla* and *tapan* players in many re-creations of the wedding have been Roms from Skopje who were hired by dance ensembles (2015:242–43).

24. Elsewhere, we and others have documented and analysed the development of “Teškoto” as a stylized, modified, mythologized, and nationalized adaptation of a folk dance from



Figure 2. “Teškoto” at the 2014 Galičnik Wedding (photo: Dave Wilson).

historical suffering and resilience of Macedonian people both under the oppression of the Ottoman Empire, and under difficult economic conditions that necessitated lengthy periods of working abroad. The experience of oppression and the trait of resilience became embodied in “Teškoto” as part of a Macedonian national identity, the significance of which could be applied to myriad national, economic, and personal contexts. In 2004, Tanec submitted an application for inclusion of “Teškoto” on the UNESCO Masterpieces List, which failed, among other reasons, because there was no local community involved in its practise (see Silverman 2015).

Among scholars, “Teškoto” cannot be defined as an “authentic” *izvorno oro* (a folk chain dance “from the wellspring”) because its characteristics, adapted and stylized for the stage, are clear and its history documented. In public narratives, however, “Teškoto” and the Galičnik Wedding are represented as “authentic” (*aventični*) expressions of ancient customs that Galičnik villagers have performed for centuries, representative of ethnic Macedonian identity. This tendency toward monoethnic representation—making the local symbolic of the national—resonates with state ideologies, supporting opportunities for funding from the state and state-aligned corporate entities. As well, the assertion of such rituals as “authentically

the broader Mijak region (Dunin and Višinski 1995:263–84; Opetčeska Tatarčevska 2012; Zdravkova-Džeparoska and Opetčeska Tatarčevska 2012; Wilson 2014; Silverman 2015:237–39).

Macedonian” functions as a counterweight to external discourses that seek to negate the legitimacy and existence of a distinct Macedonian culture, language, and identity. In an example of Titon’s “paradox of constructing staged authenticities,” “Teškoto” and the Galičnik Wedding have both been constructed as national cultural expressions beginning under Yugoslav Macedonia, and yet have become important to affirming the Macedonian ethnicity and culture as enduring, authentic, and thus legitimate.

Tourism and commercialization

The Galičnik Wedding has undergone significant commercialization since its revival as a re-enactment/tourist festival in 1974, but in the last ten years those elements have taken on a new character with the addition of many corporate sponsors and the involvement of Bagi Communications, an event-planning and production firm, in its organization and execution. The responsibility for engaging this firm and acquiring funds for the Wedding each year continues to lie with the local council of Galičnik, which still consists of descendants of Galičnik residents, some of whom are now part-time residents. In addition to funds from the Wedding’s twenty or so corporate sponsors, each year the Ministry of Culture grants the local council approximately €8,000 to €10,000 for the Wedding in accordance with its inclusion in the category of state-supported cultural projects that receive the greatest funds.

In 2014, though the details regarding the Wedding were poorly advertised and hard to find, Bagi produced some marketing for the event, organized bus transportation from Skopje for those who chose not to drive, and coordinated all aspects of the ritual during the weekend. Throughout the weekend, scripted descriptions of many parts of the ritual were broadcast over loudspeakers at Galičnik’s centre square, an area that was constructed as a small amphitheatre when the Wedding was revived in 1974. Other Bagi employees were connected by radio handsets and coordinated the movements of the bride and groom, their families, and performers from place to place in the village as the ritual progressed. The event-planning agency effectively runs the Wedding and, it could be argued, ensures the appropriate execution (at the directive of the local council) of all of the ritual practices as an authoritative commercial tradition-bearer of sorts.

Other significant commercial aspects of the Wedding include: (1) an honorarium paid to the marrying couple equal to three or four months’ salary; and (2) an increasing number of press members who seek to sell photographs and stories from the Wedding. Wilson spoke with one photographer who said that he attends every year to photograph the visually striking aspects of the ritual. These moments include the bride looking at the groom through the wedding ring when he arrives at her home for the first time; various evening processions by participants in traditional dress by torchlight; and the athleticism and virtuosity of dancers and musicians performing “Teškoto.” He can sometimes sell his photos in international forums for a decent fee, and proudly shared that his photos of the Wedding were featured on the website of news network CNN.

It was advantageous in Yugoslav-era Macedonia to heritagize the Galičnik Wedding to contribute to the marking of a Macedonian national culture as distinctive. It also has been advantageous for the post-1991 Republic of Macedonia to continue its heritagization, constructing staged authenticities to the point of conducting an actual wedding. For purposes of tourism, the Galičnik Wedding is constructed as “intangible culture” though it fails to meet UNESCO definitions of ICH. We argue that the state and commercial sponsors are, in a sense, “safeguarding” the Galičnik Wedding by ensuring its continuation every year. But this safeguarding is haphazard: it has always been based on the current political climate, is not long-term, and is dependent on an imagined, constructed authenticity connected to an ethnocentric Macedonian national identity. As Titon suggests: “When heritage spaces emphasize music in presentational forms from the stage, packaged for tourists, with the value-added mechanisms of commerce, the effect will be to encourage thinking of music as a commodity, with consequences for the professionalization, commercialization, and a media-driven revival of music both within and outside these communities” (2009:122). This commodification effect is clear in the case of the Galičnik Wedding, as Macedonian tourists come to the village to consume a musical and ritual experience of their national identity, an experience that is often a visceral, emotional one.²⁵ Titon challenges the idea of thinking of musical practices as heritage—as things of the past—and instead suggests thinking of them first as living, not deserving of safeguarding, but rather of “stewardship.” But what of already-heritagized practices like the Galičnik Wedding that have been festivalized, professionalized, and commercialized? Though it is debatable whether the Galičnik Wedding is “living” or “frozen,” it seems that the ritual is being stewarded, albeit by the local council in ways that support interests and ideologies of the state and corporate entities with whom it has commercial relationships.

We are not suggesting that the Galičnik Wedding is not meaningful, important, or significant to its participants. On the contrary, its significance to Macedonians should serve as a caution to those involved in processes of safeguarding ICH in Macedonia and elsewhere. Past and present political and economic processes connected to ICH always need to be carefully considered, especially when they are not as clear as they are in the case of the Galičnik Wedding. Because these cultural practices can sustain imagined or imaginary meanings from generations past, they and the authenticities they claim to carry are always at risk of being redefined in the service of state ideologies and commercial interests. When that happens, those ideologies and interests can both capitalize on and shape cultural practices in their favour. Serious consequences can include the construction of nationalistic ideologies based on imagined authenticity or the tendency to essentialize cultural practices as monoethnic in the service of national identity politics. As scholars

25. Audience members report experiences of chills or crying, as well as emotions of sadness and sorrow during performances of “Teškoto.” The struggle and resilience associated with the sonic and visual elements of “Teškoto” are not only vehicles for representing historical understandings of an oppressed Macedonian people, but are also often experienced as symbolic expressions of any number of contemporary personal experiences of hardship (see Wilson 2014 on the emotions attached to “Teškoto”).

engaging in ICH from any angle, in the face of such consequences, we need to take ethical and moral responsibility to continue asking which elements of ICH are to be safeguarded and why.

Conclusions

We have provided two examples of ICH from Macedonia that illustrate contrasting results of heritagization, recontextualization, and institutionalized processes of safeguarding ICH. Both of these practices have been shaped to serve as national identity symbols by different though related processes situated in Macedonia's political context. "Kopačkata" provides us with an example of how implementing UNESCO processes for safeguarding ICH can result in the sustenance of a living tradition at a local level, even when such processes are employed in the service of identity politics at national and international levels. By contrast, the Galičnik Wedding demonstrates how earlier processes of heritagization and recontextualization resulted in the reconstruction of a local tradition as a symbol of national identity in the form of a tourist festival sustained by a local council of part-time residents in partnership with an event-planning firm that it contracts every year. We see contrasts not only in the fact that "Kopačkata" has maintained its status as a living local tradition and the Galičnik Wedding was reconstructed as a re-enactment, but also in the ways that these practices are sustained. Both receive financial support from the Ministry of Culture. But while, for "Kopačkata," those funds are administered to the tradition-bearers themselves (in accordance with the implementation of the UNESCO Convention), in the case of the Galičnik Wedding the funds flow through the local council, which is not accountable to any safeguarding standards and is also dependent on funds from commercial sponsors.

Though "Teškoto," for decades, has been the singular emblematic folk dance associated with Macedonian national identity, the implementation of the UNESCO Convention has resulted in "Kopačkata" recently becoming known throughout Macedonia as a folk dance that is symbol of national identity alongside "Teškoto." In the case of the Galičnik Wedding and "Teškoto," this type of national-level recognition of a local tradition as significant resulted in state and commercial interests taking control of a tradition and modifying it to serve their ideological and economic ends. Though the mechanisms of the UNESCO Convention can never be immune from political processes, the case of "Kopačkata" suggests that safeguarding ICH can allow for the continuation of a cultural practice in multiple parallel contexts while still providing tradition-bearers with the means to continue to propagate their living traditions on their own terms, though it is still too early to tell whether this will continue.

Through the case of Macedonia, we have shed light on some of the ways that traditional culture is in a dynamic relationship with social, political, and economic processes, and the ways safeguarding practices must consider this dynamic relationship. Although the long-term effects in our case remain to be seen, it

suggests that processes of safeguarding ICH, when implemented in ways that empower local tradition-bearers, may be effective in sustaining cultural traditions even when safeguarded ICH elements are simultaneously employed for other political and ideological ends.

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Abstract in Macedonian

Зачувувањето на нематеријалното културно наследство во Република Македонија

Истражувајќи го нематеријалното културно наследство на Република Македонија како тема преку која зборуваме за идентитетот, трансформациите и одржливоста, со овој труд се надеваме дека успешно ви претставивме и модел на мултиперспективен академски пристап во истражувањето на еден ист феномен. Во трудот се презентирани два контрастни примери на традиционални културни практики врз кои процесите на „херитизација“ и „реконтекстуализација“ имале сосема спротивно влијание. Преку заштитеното културно добро Копачката, покажавме како имплементацијата на УНЕСКО-вите политики и механизми на негување на нематеријалното културно наследство, може да резултираат во насока на негова одржливост на локално ниво, дури и кога тие процеси се ангажирани како сервис на политиките на идентитет, на национално или меѓународно ниво. Спротивно, Галичката свадба ни покажа како раните процеси на „херитизација“ и реконтекстуализација, резултирале со „прогласување“ на локалната традиција за симбол на националниот идентитет, чиј носител денес повеќе е маркетинг агенција, отколку локалните жители.

Иако *Teškoto* со децении беше неприкосновен национален танцов симбол на Македонците, имплементацијата на УНЕСКО-вата Конвенција (Париз 2003), доведе до тоа да и *Копачката* се репопуларизира низ државата и да стане таков симбол на македонскиот национален идентитет. Од друга страна, препознавањето на вредноста на Галичката свадба и Тешкото како важна локална традиција, резултираше со сериозна посветеност на државата и други засегнати (пред сè комерцијални) страни,

да ја превземат „контролата“ над „традицијата“ и да ја стават во „служба“ на одредени политички и економски/туристички цели.

Механизмите на УНЕСКОвата Конвенција не се имуни на политички процеси, но, случајот со пијанечката Копачка демострира дека зачувувањето на нематеријалното културно наследство сепак може да обезбеди континуитет на културните практики во повеќеслојни, паралелни контексти, оставајќи им простор на самите носители да ја живеат својата сопствена традиција во/на денешницата. Иако долгорочните ефекти останува да се видат, презентираниите два случаи укажуваат дека процесот на негување на нематеријалното културно наследство, кога ќе се имплементира на начин на кој ги поттикнува локалните носители на традицијата, може да биде ефикасен во одржувањето на културните традиции дури и кога заштитените нематеријални добра истовремено се користат и за други политички и идеолошки цели.