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Milena Vico
University of Notre Dame Australia

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CHAPTER 6

PRE-WWII LITHUANIAN CULTURE

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So completely absorbed were they by the life bringing natural forces, the rotation of the year's seasons, and by their work in the fields, that their way of life, their language, beliefs, and customs remained little changed down the ages (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 14).

As the previous review chapters of Lithuanian history have demonstrated, Lithuanians lived in a border zone where different ethnic, national and cultural groups met, a zone in which the terms and the forms of their existence were determined not only by their own agendas and imperatives but also by the proximity and claims of expansionist Polish, German and Russian neighbours, each with their own political, economic, class and race ideologies and imperatives which have impacted on, and to some extent defined, the forms and character of Lithuanian life.

As a 'nation', both in the imaginative sense and in political actuality, Lithuanian culture, during the two decades of independence from 1919 to 1940, has always defined itself through a rural lens. The construction of Lithuanian identity in terms of what may be argued is an idealised image of rural, village, community and farm life in the first four decades of the twentieth century, is considered in this chapter through an examination of the core markers of Lithuanian rural customs, practices and values. I have examined them in the context of the anti-modernism and romantic primitivism of the first decades of the twentieth century. These two movements registered in their own different ways, the widespread European anxiety with the scale and direction of modern urban and industrial culture, and in opposition to this valorised what was represented as the regenerating power of rural life. I argue that in Lithuania the post-independence attempts by nationalist scholars to employ idealised notions of the peasant, rural life and landscape have been used to construct and secure cultural identity and re-iterate the national pride felt in the recently won political changes through the construction of a 'Lithuanian-ness' based on rural and ethnic Lithuanian characteristics and ideals in opposition to the metropolitan culture and politics of the Czarist Russian Empire which had conquered and ruled the country for more than a century, the last in a long line of foreign colonising powers.

Such attempts to rekindle nationalist sentiment through the construction of traditional rural values were not confined to Lithuania alone. They were part of a wider cultural phenomenon represented in the development of nationalisms and nations. The Irish scholar, Catherine Nash, in examining Irish colonial and nationalist experience, observes the place of the peasant woman and rural landscape in the production (construction) of Irish national identity, and argues that “Irish nationalist attempts to revitalize and revivify the nation ... intersected with the idea of national identity and gravitated around the notions of place ... [and specifically, of] landscape” and the idealised image of the rural peasant woman (Nash, 1993, p. 44). Nash further notes that “these issues overlapped with concerns of cultural purity and preservation, [and] centred on the image of the West of Ireland as an Irish cultural region, whose physical landscape provided the greatest contrast to the landscape of Englishness” (Nash, 1993, p. 45). The use of traditional land based village life, customs and culture in association with the native language, religion and other key cultural markers such as the cottage, the family farm, the community lifestyle and rituals have come to bear a symbolic weight and signification in the construction of a preferred ‘Lithuanian-ness’, and thus can be seen as part of a larger European discourse and experience of national and cultural identity.

To obtain a broader understanding of pre-WWII rural Lithuanian traditions, beliefs and values, I have again examined the works of expatriate scholars of the pre-war period such as the archaeologist and ethnographer Danute Brazite-Bindokiene (1989) and Marija Gimbutas (1963, 1974), the historians and ethnographers and as well as the British Diplomat James Harrison (1948) and the British historian and traveller Owen Rutter (1926). Their views and values were formed during the first decades of the twentieth century, a high mark of European imperialism and nationalisms, and Lithuania’s first period of independence as a nation-state.

I then reviewed the works of scholars of the post-war period again to assess and compare the differences of focus and interpretation of those scholars formed by the pre-war independence period and those who received their education and training in the decades of the second Soviet occupation from 1944 to 1991. The key scholars of this period have been the ethnographers Irena Cepiene (1992), Birute Imbrasiene (1990), Rasa Račiunaite (2002), and Juozas Kudirka (1991). All their works were written from 1991 to 2002 after the Soviet military withdrawal from Lithuania. Significantly, although formed in a

different cultural environment, these scholars consistently refer to and accept many of the key data and interpretations put forward by Marija Gimbutas. Interviews with members of the present day sample living in Western Australia, Siberia and Lithuania have also been employed to substantiate and validate the data.

As I have argued in the previous chapters most pre-war and post-war scholars writing on Lithuania were, or are, directly associated with elements of Lithuanian culture or history as members of earlier political diasporas or simply as Lithuanians for whom questions of national independence and identity have continued to be topics of major cultural and political exploration in the changed socio-political and economic world. As previously stated, in some of these earlier works the 'romantic' attitude to land, rural life and language, which is a recognizable stage in the development of nationalist movements is clearly present in both the tone and vocabulary used. While it may be argued that in the post-war works, this 'romantic' attitude and vocabulary are less obviously present, the continuing reference to and acceptance of key findings by Gimbutas and Balys in particular, who argue for the continuing power of Lithuanian rural life as a marker of Lithuanian identity and value systems. In presenting the folkloric traditions of work and song and the rituals associated with death and funerals, scholars such as Rasa Račiunaite accept and recapitulate the studies and findings of Balys and Gimbutas (Račiunaite, 2002, pp.114, 128 and 136).

In all writing about the life of the pre-war rural Lithuanian population, the decisive role played by the Roman Catholic Church in the negotiation of rural Lithuanian identity, beliefs and values is strongly evident. The memories and records of Lithuanians interviewed for my research in Lithuania, in Siberia and in Western Australia also confirm the central and enduring role of religious traditions and beliefs in the daily life of the rural population.

Lithuanians are a people whose informing national narratives, values and economic bases are centred in the imaginative and actual terrain of a rural landscape.

Geographically and politically, Lithuania is divided into four regions: Žemaitija, Aukštaitija, Dzūkija and Suvalkija. The customs, traditions, verbal folklore and religious and festive practices that characterise and define these four regions of Lithuania, as well

as the defining elements of their rural architecture and patterns of farm organisation, exhibit a common core of Lithuanian ethnic culture (Kudirka, 1991, p. 23).

In contrast are the city of Klaipeda and the surrounding villages and country towns located in the western part of Žemaitija known as Lithuania Minor. These are the only parts of Lithuania to have direct access to the Baltic Sea. Until 1924, five years after Lithuanian independence (1919), they were still part of Germany, marking them as a region of German influence in patterns of social and economic organisation and linguistic and religious allegiances (Harrison, 1948, p. 15).

The development and evolution of the Lithuanian regions and the cultural and nationalist consciousness which grew were determined not only by the characteristics and traditions of those who settled these terrains over the centuries but by the geographic nature of the land itself. The Lithuanian landscape is that of open plains, covered by forests and lakes intersected and crossed by a network of rivers and their tributaries. The character of this land with its many waterways facilitated not only the development of an agriculturally based society but in the pre-industrial period, provided a major means of transport and access to areas and remote communities from the political and governing centres of Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipeda. In this way the rivers also functioned as political highways. Along the rivers the nationalist activists travelled to reach the people and began the process of constructing a resistant cultural and national narrative.

Theatrical performances and literature readings which represented their construction of the historical Lithuanian past were held in barns to promote interest and pride in Lithuanian customs and language. It can be argued that in Lithuania between 1864 and 1904, as in other contested and colonised settings, the farms became the centres of the awakening of national consciousness and were influential in the development of the nationalist movement (Kiaupa, 2002, pp. 259-268). The farms and the landscape came to carry the weight of the cultural and nationalist idealisation of traditional rural family life, with its fixed morality and gender roles, as the main place for the preservation and reproduction of the Lithuanian language, customs and traditions.

The Rural Lithuanian Family

Like all major Lithuanian institutions in these rural ethnic regions, the family with its clearly defined roles and positions, was marked by traditional patriarchal and gender divides and hierarchies. Men were accepted as the head of the family, responsible for its economic and physical well-being and protection. Women occupied supporting and relational roles with specific responsibilities in the domestic, moral and spiritual spheres. The Lithuanian family maintained close cross-generational relationships in this period; however, not all the elderly lived on the same property with younger members of the family. Some grandparents for instance lived on their own farms, generally not too far from their children's farms. Alfonsas remembered:

Grandparents at my time were respected for their age and experience and their opinions and advice were sort and carefully considered by both children and grandchildren (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2006).

Grandparents living on the same farm would look after the grandchildren and the grandmother typically would help the young future mother with both childbirth and subsequent care of the infant.

The Built Environment: Characteristic Pre-WWII Rural Settlement Patterns across Lithuania

In the nationalistic imagination and in the legislative programmes enacted to reflect this image, the core place of family habitation in pre-WWII rural Lithuania was the farmstead. It was structured around the core buildings of the family farmhouse with its physical and symbolic hearth, as well as the related barns, outlying buildings, orchards, vegetable gardens and fields under production. The farmstead was considered to be the basic social and economic unit of a distinctive Lithuanian settlement pattern and therefore symbolic of the type of social organisation sought by the Lithuanian nationalists, for whom these individual family farmsteads represented the realisation, both in their physical character and in their cultural, moral and spiritual associations, of the ideal form of Lithuanian society in the early decades of the twentieth century. As such, the farmstead conferred distinctive meanings in both the formation and uses made of Lithuanian national and gender identities, making the farmstead the most important

site of cultural and economic self-expression for the Lithuanian rural population and those whose privileged rural life in the construction of Lithuanian independence.

The symbolism attached to the farmstead was intensified by the uniformity of design that characterised the typical visual image of the farmstead in the rural landscape. A square, non-fenced compound with one single-storey farmhouse facing the main road, with a well to supply fresh water was not far from the front of the house. The farming buildings, the numbers of which varied according to the wealth of the farmer, were typically positioned behind the farmhouse and included the stable for the horses and cows, the cowshed, the barn, the granary, the hen-house and the *pirties* (sauna). A pigsty was situated a certain distance from the farmhouse and beehives, for those farmers who had them, were placed at the edge of the property, well away from people and animals. Lithuanians were known as beekeepers and great consumers of honey. On most farms it was popular to have linden trees as a decorative tree and with the blossoms used to produce honey. Family sanitary and bathing needs were also generally accommodated outside, in a small sanitary shed, as well as in a small dam for bathing, usually situated not far from the farmhouse. The dwellings were constructed mostly from pine logs, with only the pigsty being made from straw and clay. Given its availability, timber from the forests, which covered large areas of the Lithuanian regions, was the primary material used in the construction of rural and farm buildings and fences. See photographs in Appendix 13. Such timber could often be sourced from the farmer's own property but, in view of the fact that all timber on properties exceeding twenty acres belonged to the State, it may often have been purchased from the government (Rutter, 1926, p. 39).

In close proximity to almost all farmhouses and to a visible part of the built environment of the farmstead compound were the *koplitelė* (religious shrine) or iron crosses. These were decorated with the symbols of the sun, moon and or snakes, all of which significantly retained the potency of their symbolism in both a pagan and a Christian context. Lithuanian countryside tradition consisted of carved wayside crosses and statuettes of Christian saints carved of wood, with oak most frequently used. These religious symbols and shrines still stand in the central regions of the country in open areas adorning the landscape. In many cases, the crosses were not necessarily built by the farmer individually but were a joint project of the farmer and his neighbours. These shrines and crosses functioned as sites of religious worship and once again demonstrate

the ways in which the rural population unconsciously lived with a fusion of pagan and Christian traditional and religious practices and beliefs in their daily life. Practices and beliefs that drew much of their significance from their identification with the forces of nature shaped the life of the community.

The farmstead property was also marked by an arrangement of maple, linden, oak, cherry and grey green willow trees planted at the front, birch trees near the barns and rowan trees at the edge of the property, not far from a pine or fir forest. Lithuanian farmers in this period still believed that these trees possessed magical healing powers, (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 194). Again this indicates how the geographic and physical organisation and structure of a terrain not only exhibits present physical and social characteristics but is part of a continuing web or chain of beliefs and traditions stretching back into the history of the pre-Christian era and looking forward to the continuing evolution of the culture and its sense of identity. Both of these were constructed in significant ways through the continuing interpretative interaction between human and natural environments.

It is perhaps another marker of the resistant and defensive character of the Lithuanian rural family so adapted to survival in a contested environment that these square family compounds included also a small kennel. A sturdy pole would be positioned adjacent to the cowsheds or the barn with long chains to enable strong guard dogs to be restrained while still being able to cover a large amount of terrain promptly in defence of the family and its property.

The traditional farmhouse was a single-level building divided into two sections: the first consisted of the guestroom, while the rest comprised a large kitchen, and usually also a living room, a dining-room, a workroom and bedrooms. There were plank beds in the kitchen-dining room for the men, while the girls slept in the bedrooms or in the workroom. In the houses of the more affluent farmers, bedrooms were attached to both parts of the house and set up for use throughout the year. Alfonsas, one of my Australian respondents who was living on his father's farm, maintained that: "Most farmhouses had a well ventilated cellar, with an outside and inside entrance, where food was preserved and stored during winter" (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2006).

The farmhouses had double-glazed windows for better protection against the weather and, in some regions, a porch with intricate gables.

Although the external and internal structure and layout of these timber farmsteads were generally consistent across the country, a different territorial cultural identity was noticeable in each single region and in the territory of Klaipeda.

In Žemaitija, a western region of rich fertile soil, the farms were rather large with more buildings than in other ethnic regions of Lithuania. The farmhouses were solid and large with thatched roofs and typically divided into eight to fifteen rooms. A chimney with an open fire was built in a separate room in the centre of the farmstead. It was used for smoking, storing meat and drying wood. The outside of the farmstead was without decorations. Traditionally on these farms there was a pillar-type cross erected on the property (Kudirka, 1991, p. 25).

The picture was again different in the eastern region of Aukštaitija, the largest region of Lithuania. It was the size of the building, not the number of rooms as was the case in Žemaitija that indicated the wealth of the farmers. Traditionally, the layout of the farms retained the characteristic of the old villages, stretching along the main road introduced by the Valakas Land Reform in 1557 (Kiaupa, 2002, pp. 227-229). The farmhouses were built on one side of the road, the farm buildings on the other. A cross was erected in the vicinity to mark the entrance to the farm. These farmhouses had windows and also a heavily decorated porch. The porch provided shelter from the harsh eastern climate while simultaneously announcing cultural allegiances and status.

In the Suvalkija region farms were mainly built in flat areas and surrounded by a number of trees which both moderated the farm environment and defined its boundaries. The farm buildings were long and narrow, traditionally with a carved and decorated roof. The farmhouses were divided into three sections each with four to eight rooms. Again by the side of the road which lead to the farmstead, an iron cross was erected or a *koplitelė* (religious shrine) was fixed to the trunk of a tree at the turn of the road leading to the farmstead. The spiritual life of the Lithuanian rural population was represented through the socially symbolic signs of the crosses and shrines that they built. It is a reminder not only of how strong the role of religion was in daily life and of the bond between the

Catholic Church and the rural population, but also of the way in which these rural communities predominantly believed that they lived in a spiritual environment (Kudirka, 1991, p. 26).

In Dzūkija, the south-eastern region of Lithuania, the landscape is characterised by forests and sandy, poor quality soils. Traditionally, most of the farmhouses replicated the general design and layout of those in Aukštaitija. They were smaller, with three to six rooms made of slatted timber, generally painted a drab brown and usually lacking the decorative finishes that were possible in the richer, more-fertile and productive farming areas. The farms' associated buildings and granaries were also characteristically smaller and simpler, with potatoes (for example) being stored in holes dug into the ground instead of in constructed bunkers (Kudirka, 1991, pp. 26-28).

The Klaipeda territory, still known in the pre-WWII period as Lithuania Minor, is situated along a narrow stretch of land in the far west of the country facing onto the Baltic Sea. Seafaring and fishing industries, as well as the farming practices that define the rest of Lithuania's regions, are found in this region. Strong links are maintained with the German territories from which many of German cultural and economic markers can be traced. The Klaipeda people have traditionally been Lutheran Christians since the spread eastward from the central German regions of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. This contrasts with the ethnic Lithuanians of the other regions, who are overwhelmingly Catholic. The houses and farms in this region were built on German structural and visual models, the immediate appearance of which signalled their historical ties with German culture and control. The English traveller and historian Owen Rutter observed this German influence and noted that the villages and country-towns of the Klaipeda territory were "Neatly and tidily laid out to form an obvious contrast with the low thatch buildings of the rest of the country" (Rutter, 1926, p. 70). Rutter further observed that this contrast had deliberately German connotations, organized before the war by the German authorities to demonstrate the difference between the German *kultur* and the Russian 'lethargy' (Rutter, 1926, p. 72).

In his comments Rutter appeared to ignore the linear and grided layout of farmsteads and villages in the eastern region of Lithuania as well as the ordered patterns of farms and villages throughout the country. Rutter's descriptions privilege German models of

towns, farms and village layout over Lithuanian traditional models but, in doing so, ignores key elements of Lithuanian rural organisation, focusing on the level of visual symbolism, noting the colour and decorative elements but ignoring the similarities of structural layout and function.

Throughout eastern and south-eastern rural Lithuania, individual *pirties* (sauna) was a feature of the wealthier farmstead. Algirdas, another male respondent, explained that “they were used once or twice a week and often shared with neighbours who were not able to afford their own” (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2003). For the rest of the week all families would use the outside small dams for major washing needs. The *pirtys* were built of timber and were designed for use as a cleansing and stimulating sauna or bath in the Lithuanian style. They consisted of a small entry area where the rural people would undress and leave their clothes, and a larger room containing an open stove filled with hot coals to produce the necessary steam for the user who sat on timber benches arranged along the inside of the walls. Lithuanians traditionally used dried birch branches which they dipped into a bucket of warm water before flicking them across their body to stimulate the body’s circulation and to augment the effects of the steam and the heat of the coals. In the far western regions of Žemaitija and Suvalkija, where links to Polish and German cultural and political territories were strong, the *pirties* did not exist (Kudirka, 1991, p. 27). These traditional practices represent the continuing intimate relationship between nature and the people which characterises pre-war rural life.

The granaries played an important role in Lithuanian folk culture. They were often used by newlyweds for their honeymoon. They were used for storing grain, clothes and beddings, and also as sleeping quarters for seasonally hired working girls from spring to winter (Kudirka, 1991, pp. 27-28).

The decorative garden was an important element in the presentation of every Lithuanian dwelling. In the village it was at the front of the house facing the road. On the farm, it was at the front of the best part of the farmhouse and it was visible from the road and from any guest room. Typically, it was arranged as a simple grid with ordered lines of flowers, shrubs and berries dissected by a central path leading to the house. The most common flowers grown in spring and summer were seasonal lilies, pansies, violets, marigolds and nasturtiums and the perennial rose bushes, lilac, peony and rue shrubs. The *rūta* (rue) was grown in almost every garden. It was accorded a special reverence

due to its strong medicinal properties and for its symbol of maiden chastity and youth. The young girls of the family looked after it (Račiunaitė, 2004, p. 97).

Interestingly, the rue is not native to Lithuania. Franciscan missionaries brought it in the sixteenth century to the Catholic Rokiskis Rectory, in Aukštaitija and, given its strong cultural history associating it with chastity, dedicated it to the Virgin Mary (Bindokienė, 1989, pp. 318-320). In Aukštaitija it was a tradition for the mother of the bride on the morning of the wedding day to put a small wreath of rue, as a sign of the girl's unmarked chastity on the girl's veil, just before the wedding as the daughter asks "*Motinėle mano gimdytoja, uždek man ant galvelės ši paskutini ryteli rūtu vainikeli* [Mother please put this small wreath of rue on my head]". The removal of the wreath as part of the marriage ceremony marked the girl's passage from virginal maidenhood to her new status as a married woman (Račiunaitė, 2004, p. 97). It is significant that the rue with its accumulated cultural association of homeland and moral purity has become a key marker of Lithuanian identity still visible and grown in the gardens of Lithuanians émigrés (Bindokienė, 1989, p. 68). Here again these spiritual customs survived into the twentieth century often alongside Catholic religious practices in the lifestyles, traditions and beliefs of the Lithuanian rural population.

For rural Lithuanians, the soil and everything that grew, propagated and lived in it was valued. The vegetable garden was important to both urban and rural communities. It was vital for survival during the winter time in the absence of transport and fresh goods. It also played a cultural role in supplying basic traditional healing. Indeed, plants and herbs then took on a cultural significance. Linden and birch leaves, camomile, thyme flowers and leaves, raspberry and various berries were grown in the vegetable garden were dried and preserved, so that they would be available for using as ointments, drinks and remedies all year round and especially during the winter seasons.

Scholars like the archaeologist Gimbutas, when dealing with Lithuania's pre-historical and historical periods of beliefs, highlight the continuing influence of the role of nature in tribal and rural Lithuanian culture. An example is the tradition of the *inkilai* (bird nesting-boxes) which were built and placed on trees to feed and encourage birds to nest in the vicinity of the farm or home. In his recollected memories, Algirdas, a present-day Lithuanian émigré living in Western Australia noted: "These *inkilai* were mainly built

for the *špokas*, the first bird to return to Lithuania after the winter” (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2006). Lithuanians believed that a close contact with birds would bring good luck. As a result of these beliefs, for example, *sviblys* (swallow) were welcomed to nest under the eaves of barns and cowsheds as it was believed to offer a good protection against lightning.

Similarly if a pair of *gandras* (stork) chose a particular farm as their home it was believed to indicate that a good man was living there and that it was safe for a traveller to seek shelter for the night (Kudirka, 1991, p. 28). The rural population would therefore prepare a large nest on the roof of the barn, in the confident knowledge that the storks would return preferentially to the same place every year. The stork was also believed to be a symbol of fertility, promising babies to those who lived in the farm and took the initiative to make a nest for the storks. Algirdas also recollected that “the *balandys* (dove) were also kept as pets for the boys of the family and were so domesticated that they were willing to perch on the boys’ shoulders” (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2006). In contrast to the domesticated *balandys*, the *gegutė* (cuckoo) and *lastingalas* (nightingale) were the two forest birds most loved by the rural people and valued both for their singing and as harbingers of a good season (Bindokienė, 1989, pp. 40-42).

The complex web of built and natural environments formed a significant front of influence on the evolution of a sense of communal identity. A number of ancient pagan historical traditions continued to influence the daily life of the rural community leading to WWII.

One result of the Agrarian Reforms of 1920 in independent Lithuania was that the class of middle-size farms began to emerge. Near the old pine log farmsteads, built with roofs of thatch or wooden shingles and surrounded by fields of rye, wheat, barley and potatoes, appeared the more modern red brick building of the new farmstead style, often with a tiled or on occasion tin roof (Harrison, 1948, p. 15). In the memories of Algirdas:

When my family returned from United States, my father that worked as a butcher made a lot of money and we all returned to Lithuania, he built a big farm with lots of buildings the farmstead had a tin roof ... it was the only one in all area and he was very proud of his farm ... they call him the American (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2006).

These new dwellings began to modify the visual and imaginative landscape, augmenting the old narrative with a newer one.

Lithuanian Rural Daily Life

So completely absorbed were they by the life-bringing natural forces, the rotation of the year's season and by their work in the fields that their way of life, their language, beliefs, and customs remained little changed down the ages (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 14).

Gimbutas' description of the old Lithuanian rural life foregrounds the way nationalism has become embedded in the academic discourse of archaeology, in privileging lifestyle and customs as markers of Lithuanian identity. In Gimbutas's account of rural daily life, nature dominates and determines the pattern of life and activity with unchanging characteristics. Arguably, it is more productive to catalogue the ways in which daily farm and village life were organised by people with little economic or industrial resources but a strong and established tradition of knowledge of their natural and cultural environment, and of the ways in which these could be used to provide for and protect their lives and families. In this traditional agrarian pattern of living and working, the seasons did play a significant part as they do in any agricultural society.

Rural families were generally large. Most families had on average five children, although ten was not uncommon as the children provided help to the parents in the management of the farm. Mothers usually breastfed their children for at least a year, as it was the responsibility of the mother to look after the wellbeing of the new born. Breast feeding was believed to be essential for a healthy child. Parents also played an important role in the upbringing and development of the child. Children from their early childhood identified themselves with the father or the mother as the model from whom they learned and naturalised their concepts of personal and social identity, roles and values (Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 72). Grandparents living on the farm and elder brothers and sisters, also minded the younger children while the parents were working or ill or otherwise unable to look after the children, again allocating and naturalising duties in accordance with defined age and gender.

During much of the winter, the country was typically in the grip of extreme cold weather as Alfa, who participated in this study, remembered:

The temperature was from minus 6 to minus 20 degrees it was so cold and there was so much snow that it was so difficult to go to school, we could not walk we went with a sledge ... the classroom was also cold but all the farmers used to bring some fire wood (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2003).

For months on end, the country was covered by thick snow and rivers, streams, ponds, and lakes became frozen and choked, as the snows, fine and dry-blown by the incessant winds, blanketed everything. The days in this time of the year were short and dark. The rural population spent the most part of their day by necessity inside the farmhouse. Through the short dark days the whole family rose between six and seven o'clock in the morning. Men started the day by lighting the wooden stove and then going out to attend to the cattle and the horses. Using a roster system, the men of the area were responsible for transporting the children to school in the closest village. A sledge pulled by horses was used to collect all children in the vicinity, as the thick snow typically made walking impossible.

During the day men collected wood from the forest, mixed fodder for the cattle and provided water to the animals. Using axes, they would break the ice that had formed on the ponds or streams during the night and, transferring some of the water to buckets, would carry it to the animals. They then would shovel the snow and lay planks from the road to the front of the farmhouse to provide access for the family and the horses. In the winter evenings men would make and repair their wooden farm tools, kitchen utensils and in the region of Žemaitija they would make clogs, many of which were designed with simple traditional decorative patterns (Kudirka, 1991, p. 33). Throughout the years of independence, newspapers were available and not costly. Thus, men often finished the evening by reading, before retiring to bed at around 9.30 or 10.00 o'clock. Algirdas remembered his father reading the newspapers every night before going to bed and discussing some important events with his mother, in particular the new political events.

My father liked to read not only newspapers but books that he brought with him from America ... he was interested in politics and the economy of the country ... he was a very clever man ... we also had the radio ... and this was a real novelty (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2003).

Females tended small farm animals and prepared the heavy meals needed for sustenance in an extreme climate. Hearty soup and pancakes with milk constituted the main meal of the day. Everyone participated and it was eaten around seven o'clock in the morning. Women, after their housekeeping duties, dedicated the rest of the day to their needle works. In the evening women wove, spun, knit or mended clothing by the light of a large kerosene lamp in the kitchen. In the recollection of Alfa:

My mother was a very good woman she always worked on the farm and for us children we were only three but she always was knitting, mending our clothes ... I remember her at the light of the lamp put in the middle of the kitchen table ... she was working but she was also telling us stories ... I remember her always happy but with us children she was very strict and very religious (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2003).

Along with making clothes for all members of the family, women generally made napery like sheets, towels and tablecloths, mostly in linen (Kudirka, 1991, pp. 74-75). It was an accepted part of their female responsibilities and a key way in which women, either married or unmarried and of different ages, contributed to the domestic economy and management of the farm and the family. For this purpose, there was in almost every farm, a spinning wheel, a spindle and a loom (Rutter, 1926, p. 47). Young girls would use these tools to prepare their dowry from an early age, firstly making simple items and then more elaborate ones as they grew older and more skilled.

Oral traditions of the folk culture survived through elderly members of the family. Traditionally the grandmothers, if they were living with the family entertained the children, particularly in winter, with *pasakos* (stories) and *misles* (riddles) handed down from generation to generation. In this way they gave centrality and importance to the sense of a shared, unbroken cultural terrain and identity. This sense of shared culture was reinforced and consolidated by the customary practice whereby groups of families from the village and surrounding farms would come together in a *troba* (farmhouse) at the end of the winter working day. The women would knit or sew, singing old traditional songs and re-telling old legends and stories to the youngest about the past of the country, while the children in their turn recited short poems. Participation in these communal gatherings promoted patterns of behaviour that strengthened the sense of a shared cultural belonging and solidarity among the families (Račiunaitė, 2002, pp. 70-72).

The arrival of the first migratory birds marked the onset of spring and farmers began to make plans for spring plantation. The call of the *gegutė* (cuckoo), the marked and much-awaited messenger of spring was heard. Venturing outdoors in bare feet, a practice which was common among the rural working population of all ages in the period, was considered dangerous by the farmers as the earth underneath was still frozen and caused frost bite. The bird thus became a portent of spring, a gauge against which the opportunity to sow seed for the next harvest, and the family's consequent survival, could be measured.

With the arrival of spring, the first ploughing could begin. Men and animals would go into the fields each morning to sow the flax, rye, wheat and oat ears gathered in the previous summer and which they sprinkled with water to facilitate germination. The animals were taken out of their winter shelters by the men of the family and moved to open fields as the spring grasses reached maturity. The women tended the family orchard and vegetable garden; planted vegetables that later would be preserved; and looked after the berry and strawberry shrubs whose fruits would be made into preserves and syrups. Rural Lithuanians in this pre-war period as well as later both inside and outside the national boundary cultivated and then preserved these berries as a conserve and syrup. Algirdas recollected:

In early Spring the *samdininkai* [hired farm labourers] arrived at the farm they were both men and girls and would remain on the farm working until just before Christmas and were usually paid accordingly four *litai* per hour (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2003).

In summer the men, who predominantly slept in the house throughout the remainder of the year, would often transfer outside to sleep on the hay in the barn where it was cooler, as would young children, both male and female. Late summer was the busiest time of the year for all the members of the family. The men were in the fields by four in the morning and, apart from a break for a few light meals, they remained in the fields until sunset. It was the time of the rye, wheat and oat harvests and the period for gathering honey and the picking of fruits (Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 92). The women would start to prepare preserves and pickles for the winter. Traditionally, the farmer's wife would prepare a pail of pickled beetroots and *sauerkraut* (cabbage). During this period there were often celebrations after the end of a long working week, and particularly after the successful conclusion of the harvest, with everyone barn dancing and singing folk songs,

drinking and eating until late at night. Algirdas, who was a young man at that time, explained:

It was the time not only for courting but for showing the ability to attend to farming duties as this signified to the community that the young boys were ready for adult life in marriage as a man capable of attending to and protecting a family's needs and interests (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2003).

In autumn the farm work was dedicated mainly to flax pulling and breaking. Seasonal workers and available neighbours would gather together to accomplish the task, often working long hours. It was a difficult process but it was from the flax that the farmers obtained the linen necessary for clothing the family; and income from sale of the surplus allowed the family to purchase products that the farm could not produce.

In addition to cultivating crops they also harvested naturally occurring food sources, not least of which were mushrooms. In autumn the forests were rich in these mushrooms, which provided another important nutritional source readily available without cost to the rural community. Mushrooms were preserved by the farmer's wife, who salted and pressed them in wooden pails. The better mushrooms were dried with sugar and used to flavour other dishes. Often the whole family would go to the nearby forest to pick the mushrooms after a rainy day, but children were usually the main mushroom pickers, going to the forest in groups to pick mushrooms and play. Aldona remembered how happy she was when she could go to the forest to play with other children and collect mushrooms and wild berries:

I was so happy when in the afternoon with my brothers and other children we could go in the small forest not far from my parents' farms and we could play and picked up mushrooms especially in autumn ... I was so proud to present them to my mother (Aldona, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2003).

Children were expected to work on the farm from a very young age. At first they were given light duties, progressing later to more complicated and skilled tasks. From the age of seven the boys looked after the geese and a year later the pigs and the sheep were taken to pasture daily. At the age of nine they were allowed to tend cattle. Gradually the boys were introduced to men's work such as manuring, mowing and threshing, and by the time they reached twenty years of age, they were allowed to sow, a difficult and delicate operation performed by hand. The girls were taught light household duties at first; later they were taught to cook, sew and knit; and when they turned fourteen they

learnt to spin and weave and began to prepare their dowry. At this age, they also helped the mother in the making of the bread (Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 87).

From the time of its independence, attendance at primary school was compulsory and free for the first four years for all children from the age of eight years. However, the work of the children on the family farm was indispensable, particularly in summer, given that public schools were closed from May to September. This early end to the school year was welcomed by the parents and the government's attempt (then subsequently abandoned) to shortening of this non-school period provoked resentment amongst the farmers (Rutter, 1926, p. 55). Children provided essential labour at the harvest time with no financial outlay to the family. They would rake the refuse of the harvest into small bundles to be collected by the adults, look after small farm animals, collect eggs, pick the low-hanging berries, attend to the hives by driving the bees back into the hives with wetted brooms, to douse them and encourage production activity within the hive. Alfonsas remembered how he was happy at the end of the school to go to the country and spend the holidays on his grandfather farm.

We lived in Kaunas it was a big city but all my relatives lived in the country ... my father was the only son who moved to the city ... after school the day after I used to go to my grandparents farm and I used to help in small works ... I liked to be like the other people, my uncles and my grandfather always were giving me the task to look after the bees it was fun but also you have to be careful that they did not escape the beehive ... if they go on an other property the farmer did not give them back ... it was difficult but I learn looking at my uncles (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2004).

Once again the whole family worked together in an organised way, unchanged across the years, and these rigidly conventional roles and duties demarcated by strict gender and age were accepted as a natural part of their life.

Rural Access to Modern day Facilities: Electricity, Plumbing and Sewerage.

During the period of independence, access to modern day amenities such as electricity, plumbing and sewerage systems was mostly limited to urban areas and country towns. Electrical power was only available to sectors of the city and to country towns where the power grid extended. Sewerage and plumbing were yet to be available in any location.

In large cities power stations were extensively built to further develop industry. In contrast, in small country towns power stations were built only for mills and public buildings such as the hospital, the school, the police station and the town hall, and were not designed to service farms and homes. On the farms, rural people relied instead on kerosene lamps and lanterns that could be purchased at the local hardware shop in town. Small torches with dry batteries were also available at a reasonable price. Algirda's family, for instance, had a lamp within the house and a lantern which hung on the wall next to the door for use when going outside to the stable and to the sanitary shed.

At home we used to have a kerosene lamp on the table in the living room. It was enough for the size of the room. In the evening my father after dinner used to play cards with some neighbours while my mother was cleaning the kitchen or sewing. I used to do my homework and get things ready for school next day. To go to bed I did not need any light because the light in the living room was enough, my bed room opened in the living room. My mother used to prepare the bed before and I did not need to do anything, just to enter in the bed ... [Algirdas further added] ... "I had also a small torch that my father bought for me. I liked it and I used this torch all the time" (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2008).

According to Alfa, nobody had a telephone on the farms, not even wealthy farmers.

It [the telephone] was not just available ... telephones were in the cities and towns. They were in the hospital, and in the police station ... I don't even remember if my school had one, but I think so, because it was a big gymnasium (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2008).

During this period Algirdas, a young boy, believed that the radio was a luxury and not many people could afford it. Only wealthy *kulaks* with more than thirty hectares of land were able to purchase a radio.

My father was not rich but was well off. He had a bit of land. He bought a radio from a salesman in town. My school had one as well the teachers out of their salary bought it. They used to listen to it, but not us. The radio was for their private use (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2008).

Algirdas explained how the radio of his father was functioning in absence of electricity on the farm.

The radio had dry batteries connected to the radio by small cables and were recharged by wet batteries. All of them were bought at the local hardware shop the wet batteries were recharged regularly at the local power station which provided electricity to the town. My father used to go there ... he had to pay but I do not remember how much. Dry batteries lasted approximately a year depending on their use and then they were disposed. They were not very expensive (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2008).

According to Alfonsas: “Lithuania did not have plumbing and sewerage facilities at all” (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2008). In the cities, towns and rural areas a network of wells, provided fresh water for the family’s necessities. On the farm typically the well was not distant from the farmhouse. Alfonsas further added that:

The water was collected from the well with wooden buckets. These wooden buckets in number of two were tied with a rope to a wooden thick stick which a member of the family was carried across the shoulders and then brought into the house. This fresh water was used for cooking and washing. In my family both my father and my mother carried these buckets full of water ... the woman on the farm are very strong they can do the same work of the man ... my mother did not wait for my father if she needed water ... but also she had a young girl helping her ... she used to carry the buckets. In town as well young girls were carrying the water. The Jewish families in town they used to have young Lithuanian girls to carry the water ... I used to see them in the streets. ... The Jewish had shops in the main street of the town and these girls were their made (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2008).

Almost every farm had a dam. The water of the dam was used as drinking water for the animals. During the good season the men of the family used to bath and swim in the dam, while the woman would take a bath in a wooden tub in the proximity. Alfonsas, speaking about the dam on his father’s property, claimed that: “The dam was approximately two metres deep and supported all around by wooden planks ... it was large and we could swim in it” (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2008).

Wealthy farmers had a *pirties* (sauna). It was used for social gatherings of friends and neighbours were invited to join in. Alfa revoked those days with clear memories.

We had a *pirties* and once a month just before the sunset my father’s friends and neighbours used to come to our farm to join my father in the *pirties*. They were man about three or four. They used to come at that time of the day because there was still light. After they used to have a drink of *samagonas* and talk about politics or things that at that time I did not know. I remembered they used to stay for long time, just talking or playing cards (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2008).

Family sanitary facilities, both in the cities and in rural areas, were built outside the dwellings. They consisted of wooden shed which included a wooden toilet seat with a removable container below that from time to time was removed and the contents disposed. Alfonsas recollected that:

On my father’s farm the content of the box was disposed in a deep hole dug in a remote area far from the farmhouse. In the cities and towns the disposal of the body waste was done by men that were hired from the family. They used to

empty and replace the container for few *litai* (Alfonas, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2008).

Electricity, plumbing and sewerage were further developed throughout Lithuania during the Soviet occupation.

Food and Beverage Staples

The staple dishes and beverages of the rural Lithuanian diet were produced on the farm which was traditionally self-supporting. Special and everyday food varied according to the season. Animals born and raised in the spring and summer were slaughtered in autumn and winter, both to regulate the numbers which had to be wintered in the barns, and to provide the meats for preservation to carry the family through the winter months. There was thus more meat on the table in winter, while milk, fresh vegetables, berries, mushrooms and various flour-based dishes were more frequent in spring and summer.

Bread and cereals formed the basis of the Lithuanian rural meal and were consumed daily throughout the country. In particular, rye, barley, buckwheat and oats were used to make breads, soups and porridges. Bread was the most important commodity for the farmer. Home-made *duona* (dark rye bread) was eaten regularly at each meal. *Piraga* (white bread) would be baked and eaten only on special occasions (Ambrazienė, 1944, p. 15). Until the middle of the twentieth century, the pattern was for the farmer's wife to make bread once each week in large quantities, according to the seasons and the number of the family members at home. During the harvesting period, when more labourers were expected to be on the farm helping with different duties, more bread would usually be baked. Typically, the fifteen or sixteen years old daughter would assist the mother. It was a very significant time in the life of the young girl. She was accepted officially in the community as a mature young woman ready for marriage (Račiunaitė, 2002, pp. 88-90).

Bread making was an important ritual, taking at least two days to complete. Rye bread was made by mixing rye flour with warm water in a big *medinis kubilas* (wooden container) in which some dough from the last batch had been left. It was left to ferment over night, then mixed with more flour, covered with a cloth and left to rise in a warm place. Then the dough was shaped into loaves and on a wooden board with a long handle

and was put into a wooden oven. Traditionally, the farmer's wife would make the sign of the cross over the first loaf of bread and press the sign on the last one. Customs related to bread indicate the respect and value attributed to it. If visitors arrived at the farm on the baking day, they typically had to wait until the bread was baked and loaves or slices were given to them to sustain them over the rest of their journey (Ambrazevičius, 1994, p. 12). Children were taught to pick up bread that had fallen to the ground, make the sign of the cross, kiss the bread and eat it. Throughout Lithuania the parents of newlyweds used to greet the couple on the threshold of the house with bread. One loaf of bread would also be presented to the closest neighbour, who in return would exchange a loaf on their baking day. Every *bakana* (loaf of bread) had a different taste and the exchange of breads allowed the bread-makers to savour the differences (Kudirka, 1991, pp. 28-29).

Pork dishes occupied the second place of importance in the traditional Lithuanian meal. Meat from slaughtered pigs was generally preserved in brine in big wooden barrels and kept in the cellar, although some was smoked, except in the region of Dzūkija and Suvalkija where farmers preferred to dry the meat in ventilated rooms (Kudirka, 1991, p. 29). While the process of smoking varied between each region, in all areas it was common to add a juniper branch to the fire to give the meat a pleasant taste. *Skilandys* (smoked sausages) made from a pig's stomach filled with minced meat, onions, salt and various herbs, and *lašynis* (bacon) were very popular delicacies, mostly served with slices of rye bread during feasts. *Lašynis* was also cooked in beetroot soup, the staple meal for the men during rye harvesting as it was considered to provide further energy.

Milk and other dairy products were available in abundance on the farms and widely consumed on a daily basis. Women after the milking would make dairy products which were such an important part of the family's diet. Milk was drunk fresh while butter and both fresh and sour cream were consumed almost every day. Farmer's cheese, another widely used home-produced dairy product, was easy to maintain throughout the year. It was made by heating sour milk, straining the curd through a linen bag to produce a triangular shape and pressing it into a hard piece. In Žemaitija, according to Alfa:

Caraway seeds were added to the curd to produce a flavoured cheese ... sweet cheeses were made by adding some eggs and sugar to the mixture. Cheese was commonly served with coffee and with honey on special festive occasions during the honey season and it was also given to guests as a present (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2003).

Beetroots, turnips and potatoes and other root vegetables have always been important to the diet of the rural Lithuanian population and were a major characteristic of the daily food consumed by rural Lithuanian communities. Beetroots and beet stalks were eaten freshly cooked or pickled during winter and eaten in hot soup with mushrooms during the Lenten fasting period (Kudirka, 1991, pp. 30-32). In summer, cold beetroot soup was served with side dishes of pickled cucumber and boiled hot potatoes sprinkled with dill. Until the middle of the twentieth century the farmer's wife would prepare a pail of pickled beetroots and *sauerkraut* for winter. To add a different taste they used to mix caraway, carrots, sour apples and cranberries to the *sauerkraut*.

Soups made from various vegetable and root bases were the most common dish during winter and often a fresh or pickled cabbage soup or even a milk-based soup with such vegetables as potatoes, carrots, and cabbage was served. Potatoes arrived in Lithuania only in the eighteenth century, but they soon became a staple food due to the ease with which it was possible to grow this vegetable (Kudirka, 1991, p. 30). Boiled potatoes were served in different ways and accompanied almost every meal. Grated potatoes were used to make *blynai* (pancakes), *kugelis* (grated potato combined in a baking dish with onion and bacon) and *cepelinai* (grated potato folded around minced meat), which was prepared for guests and during harvest time. Porridge was another staple prepared from these common farm ingredients. It was commonly cooked with peas (Ambrazevičius, 1994, p. 15).

In autumn the forests were rich in mushrooms, which provide another important nutritional source readily available without cost to the rural community. Mushrooms were preserved as Alfa described:

By salting and pressing them in wooden pails by the farmer's wife. The better mushroom were dried with sugar and used to flavour other dishes. Often the whole family went to the forest to pick the mushrooms after a rainy day but generally the young members of the family enjoyed doing it (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2004).

While the major dietary sources for most rural Lithuanians were dairy products, together with vegetable and grain-based foods supplemented by smaller quantities of fresh and smoked meats, freshwater fish as well as smoked fish for storage became another valued food source for those who lived near water. Smoked eels were considered to be a

delicacy and were consumed with guests or on special occasions. (Rutter, 1926, pp. 30-35) In all regions, the daily and seasonal food patterns depended on what could be readily sourced from or grown successfully in the local environment by a people whose lives were largely based on a self-supporting economy.

Teas made from camomile flowers, linden leaves and various herbs gathered by women during spring and summer were drunk regularly. Coffee, which had to be purchased, was consumed only with guests (Rutter, 1926, p. 44). Aldona maintained that:

A popular drink even today was *salde* made of germinated rye, diluted with water and birch sap ... it was flavoured with blackcurrant leaves, the crust of brown bread or germinated barley or oats and cider made on the farm from dried apples and pears (Aldona, Klaipeda, *Interview Transcript 2*, 2004).

It was usually only on festive days, or when visitors arrived, that the rural Lithuanians drank alcohol. *Krupnikas*, a home-made drink of honey, sugar, alcohol and a number of herbs and spices was served at meal times, but only on particular occasions (Rutter, 1926, pp. 40-43). Lithuanians learned how to brew beer from barley in the sixteenth century and beer-making continued to be a common practice in most families in the North part of Aukštaitija (Ambrazevičius, 1994, p. 15). Unlike the home production of beer, which was always legal, the home production of *samagonas* (spirits) was outlawed during the period of Independence when the authorities sought to maintain strict social controls over the consumption and sale of all spirit beverages in the country. Given the widespread tradition which marked the consumption of such spirits, Alfonsas stated that: “Lithuanians living in the country continued to produce them on their farms even though, if discovered by the police they would have had to pay heavy fines” (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2006).

Rutter referred to these patterns of alcohol consumption and social attempts at control of excessive alcohol consumption. He described at length a conversation which he witnessed in 1926 while celebrating the festival of St. Anne at Mariampole in the Suvalkija region with a well-to-do farming family. While they confidently consumed alcohol at each stage of the meal, a Roman Catholic priest was also at the table and heatedly lamented the extent to which drunkenness was a feature of Lithuanian peasant life. As Rutter observed at the time, apparently with disapproval: “Drunkenness is an

evil in the Baltic States, as it is elsewhere, and it becomes worse as you go north”
(Rutter, 1926, p. 43).

Such criticism of the widespread actuality of excessive alcohol consumption in the peasant and rural classes, reminds one of the strong temperance movements of the nineteenth century and of the alliance between the Catholic Church and this movement. The alliance which soon developed into a political and nationalistic movement was dedicated to protecting not just the physical and economic health of the people but also their cultural health and independence.

National Costume

The Lithuanian national costume grew originally out of the everyday clothing of the peasants. These clothes were traditionally made from heavy wools and linens that could be sourced from regional farm flocks and crops, and woven and sewed at home or bought occasionally from the village shop. The weight and roughness of the fabrics were affected both by climatic conditions and economic and production realities as families predominantly used looms and spinning wheels capable of producing garments strong enough to withstand the weather and wear of many years. With the progressive introduction of colourful additions such as aprons for women and sashes for both women and men, decorated and embroidered with patterns and details unique and distinctive to each of the Lithuanian regions, these clothes were worn by the peasants for festive occasions.

Before Lithuania gained independence from Russia in 1918, the Lithuanian national costume was worn by the educated upper class for folk cultural performances. It was based upon folk costumes that had been worn by peasants in the different rural regions of the country during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Lithuanian national costume started to gain recognition and be accorded value at the turn of the nineteenth century with the birth of a nationalist movement and the awakening of a national self-consciousness. It was in this period that a need for a national costume to signify a national identity that unified Lithuania as a nation was felt among the nationalists.

During the period of the ban on the use of the native language, folk theatre productions of works of contemporary Lithuanian writers were held in the country barns as a form of protest against the Czarists oppression. In these productions, folk songs and dances were performed together with patriotic songs. The actors and singers would wear costumes made at home based on the patterns and model of the clothing that their parents and grandparents had worn. The first formal Lithuanian choir groups were formed in the late nineteenth century in Lithuania Minor, and the style of their folk costume soon became well known throughout Lithuania, effectively becoming the Lithuanian national costume, even though at that time there was no official consensus on the exact style of the costume (Saliklis, in Linda Welters (ed.), 1999, p. 214)

In 1904 when the ban on publication in the Lithuanian language was lifted, the nationalist newspapers such as *Dabartis* and *Varpas* started to advocate the importance of having a national costume that could be a visible the marker of national identity.

A few years later in 1908, attempts to generate a popular consensus on a national costume were made by the Lithuanian Art Society which organized an exhibition of folk dress, with the artist composer M.K. Čiurlionis as curator, by inviting the peasants to contribute sashes, and aprons styled in the old Lithuanian patterns with which they were familiar.

At the turn of the twentieth century the costume known as *Birutes Kostiumas*, established by the Birute Society in Lithuania Minor (in honour of the daughter of a Grand Duke of Zemaitija, who married Kestutis, a ruler of Lithuania), gained wide acceptance throughout Lithuania and remained popular for several decades. The yellow, red and green tulips on the apron of this costume were considered to be highly patriotic, since they were the three colours of the Lithuanian national flag.

...a black velvet vest and a dark red skirt with thin vertical bands of yellow. The hem of the underskirt was decorated, and the skirt had white work embroidery. The apron was embroidered with yellow, green and red tulips ...a thin sash ... and a beautiful amber necklace and bracelet (Kargaudiene, in Ruta Saliklis, Linda Welters (ed.), 1999, p. 215).

In 1926, Antanas Tamosaitis, a student at the art academy in Kaunas, was asked to collect ethnographic material in an attempt to create national costumes. Tamosaitis was

searching for the most characteristically Lithuanian textiles, and for the most beautiful examples of regional differences, which could be used later as models for new creations. In 1930 a book on Lithuanian Folk Art, was published. Most of the patterns of weaving represented in the book were from Tamosaitis' collection. However, in this book only women were portrayed wearing Lithuanian national costumes, while men were wearing military uniforms. Thus, the need for men national costume was felt particularly for the performance of folk dances. Tamosaitis, then designed men costumes and became very influential in the development and acceptance of the Lithuanian national costume, and although some of the emerging costumes were "the author's own creations, they came to be accepted as traditional and authentic" (Welters, et., 1999, p. 215).

Men's costumes were almost uniform throughout the country. They were generally soberly coloured. The outfit consisted of a shirt, generally made of thick white linen, with long cuffed sleeves, and with an inverted collar, both the cuffs and the collars being embroidered with cotton stitches. The costume was also characterized by a pair of long trousers with a waistband, a vest, a lightweight coat, an overcoat, a short jacket and sheepskin coat. Winter trousers were made of dark grey or black heavy woollen cloth, while summer trousers were made of lightweight checked linen or cotton cloth. All men's costumes were completed by a bright woven sash, tied under the collar, while trousers and overcoats were girded with sashes around the waist (with the exception of the region of Žemaitija where sashes were not worn). These sashes were decorated with both geometrical designs and designs featuring the essential natural motifs of the sun, earth and vegetation - all of which reflected the pattern of their lives.

With their festive costume, men also wore a felt hat decorated with peacock and rooster feathers and flowers. In warm weather, in all Lithuanian regions the preferred head covering was a functional wide-brimmed straw hat. Socks were mainly striped and worn with boots or with soft-soled leather shoes. In the region of Žemaitija, popular footwear were the *klumpes* (wooden clogs) which were economical, solid and could be made by the peasants themselves for use by all members of the family. The peasants wore *klumpes* instead of boots or other footwear until the mid-twentieth century (Kudirka, 1991, p. 33). Many people in rural areas in these decades of the twentieth century wore no footwear at all. This is made evident through photographic records of the period,

cataloguing rural Lithuania at home, at work and at communal events (Juodakis, 1971, pp. 20-21).

Women's clothing was more colourful and varied than the men's and displayed more traditional regional characteristics. Female festive costume typically consisted of a white linen shirt, a loose skirt, a bodice and apron, a sash and a large shawl, completed with a head-covering and jewellery made mainly of *gintaras* (amber). Head-coverings were an essential element of the costume as they symbolised the position of the woman in the family and community. In all regions a shawl, bonnet or cap was usually worn as a head-covering by married women, while girls wore a head-covering made of ribbons, usually different from the ribboned head-covering worn by unmarried adult women. In the nineteenth century, married women were expected not to appear in public bare-headed, but to wear instead either a shawl, or a cap as a sign of social position and respect. Once again, with the emergence of the nationalist movement and the role attributed to women the projection of the woman's appearance was vital for the recognition of her special position as mother in the family and as a woman in the nation. The footwear was made by the local village shoemaker out of home-treated leather. The main regional differences were in the patterns and in the methods of weaving and wearing; and in the colours used, with red the dominant colour in most regions.

In Aukštaitija, the women's costumes were marked by light colours, with white the dominant colour. Their skirts were mostly checked, while the aprons were woven in light-coloured linen and decorated with a red embroidered pattern at the edge. The bodices were made in wool and decorated with gold and silver borders. Married women in this region wore *nuometas* (a tied, white linen sash) as a head covering, which was the mark and symbol of the rite of initiation into their status as married women (Kudirka, 1991, p. 35).

In Žemaitija a women's costume was again brightly coloured. It consisted of a tailored bodice, a vertically striped skirt, an apron with red vertical stripes with horizontally patterned bands, and a shawl. The women and the men mainly wore *klumpes* (wooden clogs) while wealthy women wore leather shoes with laces.

In Dzūkija, the costume was colourful, with checked skirts and aprons decorated with bright designs, although in the eastern part of the region white linen aprons were more common. The women of Dzūkija completed the costume with fine lace, crochet, interweaving and embroidery, all of which gave some indication of the woman's economic and social position.

In Suvalkija the skirts were richly coloured with vertical stripes, while the aprons, although dark, were decorated with stylized tulip motifs and patterns of lilies, clover leaves or peas, again emphasising the close association between landscape, nature and regional identity. The most decorative sashes were also made in this region and neighbouring Dzukija.

In contrast to the brightness of the costumes throughout the Lithuanian ethnic regions, in Klaipeda and surrounding territories the costumes were mainly dark and sober and with some characteristics which distinguished them from the other regions. Skirts were straight with vertical stripes or checks and aprons were mainly white, made in a single panel with vertical stripes and a wide-patterned band at the bottom edge. The shirts were white with a gathered neckline unique to the region and marked by embroidery on the sleeve cuffs and shoulders. Characteristic elements of these costumes were the intricate patterned sashes and stoles which consisted of two panels, with a narrow lengthwise insertion usually embroidered in contrasting patterns. Almost every woman and girl wore a *delmonas* (a decorative handbag) which was fastened at the side or at the front of the waist band. Colourful knitted gloves, mittens and stockings completed the costumes (Kudirka, 1991, p. 34).

Children's national costumes were similar to those of the adults. Boys' costumes were without vests or jackets. Young girls wore short checked or patterned skirts with aprons embroidered with traditional regional patterns, but without sashes. Adolescent girls wore calf-length skirts and a small crown made of ribbon loose on their shoulder.

The national costume continued to have symbolic significance and was worn by Lithuanian women well into the twentieth century. Rutter, in his record of his trip through the region of Klaipeda in 1926, describes what he presents as a typical Lithuanian woman in the following essentialist terms:

Being of pure Lithuanian type –fair hair, blue eyes, fresh complexion and full figure and fine and even teeth – the national costume became her perfectly. The pleated skirt in coloured stripes, blue and red predominating.... Over the skirt was an embroidered apron in blue and red wool on white. Her flaxen hair, worn in plaited coils on either side of her head, was bound with a narrow ribbon of yellow and blue - to match her hair and eyes. ... an amber necklace completed the costume and made her a very lovely picture. These costumes are still made in the country and it is to be hoped that the example of Lithuanian ladies will lead to a revival (Rutter, 1926, p. 86-87).

One can argue that Rutter's description of rural Lithuanian women during the period of independence is based essentially on the ideology of the 'pure race'. In depicting this image, however, Rutter ignored the fact that Lithuania was more than the Klaipeda region and its people, as can be seen in the maps in Appendix 11.

Dainos and Folk Dances

Dainos (song) and folk dances were part of the rural Lithuanian daily life.

Dainos would narrate the journey through the Lithuanians' life, would regulate the family and community relationships, and define people's feelings of kinship with nature and its creatures. This intimate relationship is underlined in Gimbutas' works.

Songs, sung in rotation by several voices, and with refrains which harmonised with the rhythm of harvesting and flax and hemp plucking and drying ... man's life was inseparable from daina [song] (Gimbutas, 1964, p.15).

Lithuanian folk songs, *sutartinės* and *raudos* (lamentation songs), were expressions of feelings of deep joy or deep sorrow. They were handed down from generation to generation by the women of the family, and these women thus, played an indispensable and had an active role in their creation, preservation and performance. *Sutartinės* are old polyphonic songs sung only in the north-eastern part of the Aukštaitija region and still survived at the turn of the twentieth century. Typically, groups of three or four women sang and danced the *sutartinės* with slow movements. The men would accompany them, playing the melody with a *kanklės*, a five strings instrument, one of the most archaic Lithuanian string instruments

Raudos (lamentation songs) were sung throughout the country also to the turn of the twentieth century. *Raudos* were used to celebrate sad time in life; for example the departure of the loves one through death, marriage and unforeseen events. The lyrics were

determined by the social standing and family position of the person. In *raudos* that celebrated death, the deceases were addressed as they were still alive, and the cause of their death was questioned (Kudirka, 1991, p. 58). *Raudos* dedicated to the bride or groom and would describe the pain felt by the parents as their children left the family home and lost their youth.

Rural Lithuanians loved dancing. Young people gathered to dance in the field in summer or in the local school hall during winter time. Typically the elderly and youngest members of the community would join in to enjoy the social events. In the recollection of Alfa:

We used to go to dance at the local school hall, we did not have many entertainments when I was young we had to work or study ... but for some occasion as Name's Day, we used to have parties and dancing. My father did not have any on the farm but we used to go to the school ... sometimes even at the house of some relative an uncle's farm not too far from where we lived (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2008).

The oldest Lithuanian folk dances were the *sutartinės* which accompanied the *sutartinės* songs. Other folk dances were the *rateliai* (ring dances), *žaidiniai* (game dances) and *šokia* (ordinary dances) which included waltz and polkas. The latter were danced mostly by the Lithuanian émigrés in Western Australia. Algirdas, with feelings of happiness, had fond memories of watching people dancing.

I was only a teenagers but I enjoyed to go to see people dancing, I used to dance a bit of polka ... I was clumsy but I liked to go because I could meet girls. My brother that was ten years older he used to play waltz and polka ... he was very good (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 1*, Perth, 2008).

Lithuanian folk dances were dominated by ring and game dances centred on harvesting, growing crops and livestock, or on the relation between young people and matchmaking. *Žaidiniai* (game dances), similar to *rateliai* (ring dances), were not sung and were based on creative improvisation of the lyrics and performance. Movements were limited by walking in rows or in a circle. The number of the participants was not restricted. The style of dancing changed during the evolution of the dance; from a slow beginning, to faster movements towards of the end of the dance (Kudirka, 1991, pp.62-64).

Šokia (ordinary dances), were accompanied by instrumental music. Separate couples danced without following a larger plan or structure as required in group dances. The

couple would embrace each other, as in the polka or waltz, or would hold each other when facing or standing in a circle. Leg movements were dominant, the steps were short and the feet were not raised high.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries game dances were gradually replaced by ring dances. During the period of independence young people favoured polkas and waltz and other fast-dances, the steps and movements of which were brought to Lithuania from new contacts with Western European countries.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

Religious education played an important role in the life of the family. It was left to the mother to introduce the child to the values of the Church. This formation was considered vital for a moral upbringing and for acceptance as a member of the community. Catholic Church traditions and customs dominated the moral code to which most Lithuanians conformed. From an early age the children were thus introduced to the parents' moral code and religious belief system. In later years these teachings assumed special importance in the formation of the girls' future lives. The girls would eventually have the task of the bringing up their own family according to the accepted customs, rites and values of their community. The children were brought up with a strict moral code reinforced by the principle, "*Dievas viska mato ir uz blogus darbus baudzia*" (God sees everything and punishes you for the bad deeds) (Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 79).

At the age of just two years, children were able to recite brief prayers, and by the age of three had been already taught the 'Our Father' (Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 73). At the age of nine, Catholic girls and boys made their first confession and received their First Communion. Children would go to services with their mother every Sunday as well as attend all the other church celebrations. See photographs in Appendix 13. They participated with all members of the village community in the *Gegužinės ir Birželinės pamaldos* (prayers for the months of May and June dedicated to Our Lady) and would recite *Rožinio spalio mėnesi* (rosary in October) and again participate in the days of *Kryžiaus dienos* (Days of the Cross) and *Žolinės* (The Feast of the Assumption).

In Žemaitija, during the month of May after work most of the families of the village would meet in a *troba* (house) to pray and recite the rosary and the *Marijos Litanija* (Litany of Mary). Young people also participated, and sang and from time to time danced old folk dances. Again this is an instance of how religious and broader national cultural tradition and rites seamlessly mixed together in pre-WWII Lithuania. During *Gavėnia* (the period of Lent) people gathered in procession and, while praying and singing, would go to a hill called *Kalvariju* (Calvary) to recite the Stations of the Cross in front of a small chapel, each station recalling a stage on Jesus' route to crucifixion on Calvary.

In Dzūkija, every day during the period of *Adventas* (Advent), families would observe *Švenčios Mergele Marijos Valandas* (a one hour prayer in honour of Our Lady). The father of the family would start the prayer and the family would then join in (Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 18).

Religious education was considered to be among the most important school subjects and was taught throughout the entire period of a child's schooling. During primary school religious education occupied one hour a week, most often on Monday. A sign of its importance was that it was taught by a priest. In secondary school, religious education increased to two sessions per week, for a total of two hours. Some participants in the study remembered the social embarrassment of being questioned on those Mondays about their family's attendance or otherwise at the mass held on the previous day, a clear instance of both the authority accorded to the priest and of the ways in which individuals felt that their identity and standing in the community was a subject for general discussion. In the memories of Alfonsas:

I was always asking to my parents to go to church on Sundays because I was scare of our priest ... he used to call us by name and tell in front of the entire class if you have been to the church ... the village was small and he knows everybody ... it was very embarrassing and I remembered that on Sunday I was always the first to be ready to go so the priest could see me (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2003).

During the period of Independence an essential role in the life of the child was played by education, which previously was denied by a century of Czarist oppression.

Hospitality and Charity: The Rhetoric of Idealisation

After centuries of cultural, political and economic domination by the interests and needs of more powerful neighbouring countries, the periods marked overt nationalist activity, and finally the rebirth of the nation from 1919 to 1939, were characterised by an impulse to celebrate, idealise and re-privilege a version of life which had been previously suppressed by a colonial or imperial power. In the associated narratives, the way of life of an idealized imagined community is developed and fore-grounded (Said, 1993, pp. 70-79).

In this nationalist narrative, which is shared by Lithuanian émigrés, nostalgia and memory are key contributors to the construction of this idealised and lost homeland. The studies of exiled and pre-Soviet Lithuanian scholars and the memories of Lithuanian émigrés (interviewed in Western Australia and Siberia), as well as the memories of a people who lived under Soviet rule for half a century, represent the pre-WWII Lithuanian rural population as one which was not only the repository of the nation's culture, religion and linguistic heritage but one that was marked by a community ethic of warm hospitality and charity. They write and speak of the rural community as one which formed an extended family and in which members helped each other and shared their material goods with those in need. Victoras maintained that beggars were never sent away empty handed: "A thick slice of home-made bread with a slice of *lašinyš* (bacon) was given to the less fortunate without hesitation" (Victoras, *Interview Transcript 2*, Krasnoyarsk, 2004).

If a traveller knocked at the door in need of shelter he was not refused even if sometimes, for lack of space in the dwelling, the stranger had to be accommodated in the barn (Ambrazevičius, 1994, p. 16). An uninvited guest who arrived while the family was having a meal would be invited to join in. In the case of invited guests, mainly relatives who lived some distance from the farm or close friends, the hostess would take particular care in the preparation of the meal. Hospitality was always generous and pressing food on visitors was considered the mark of a good host. Alfa remembered a tailor coming regularly to the farm.

At our farm used to come a tailor with an assistant that was a young girl ... I remembered my mother ordering some clothes for my father and the tailor stayed

at the farmer and made them ... they were paid but my mother gave them shelter and food over the period of time that they were working (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2003).

Neighbours would often join the party that lasted for hours and people would sing traditional songs and dance barn dances (Rutter, 1926, p. 70). Those farmers in stronger economic circumstances reserved the best room of the house for the guests. This room would have a comfortable bed, a small table and a tablecloth. In contrast, the family would only use a table cloth on special occasions and to celebrate festivities (Imbrasienė, 1994, p. 12). Individual behaviour was based on cultural and religious tradition and belief systems. Alfonsas recollected:

My mother was a very Catholic woman who always gave to the poor some bread ... the *ubagai* [beggars] were mainly men from forty to fifty years of age with some sort of physical disability. They recited some prayers inside the house, and after my mother will [sic] give some sausages, or a piece of cheese or a slice of *lašynis* with bread (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2003).

Qualifying his initial statement, Alfonsas added:

The beggars did not come to the farm very often, only once or twice a week and that they were both male and female, while the larger number of beggars gathered mainly around churches where people who came to worship would give them some coins (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2003).

The work of the contemporary Lithuanian scholar Imbrasienė supports these recollections of a strong tradition of Lithuanian hospitality. She claims that this is also confirmed by literary sources dating back to earlier centuries. Like Gimbutas and Bindokienė, Imbrasienė invokes the authority of time to naturalise this view of pre-WWII Lithuanian culture (Imbrasienė, 1990, p. 74). According to Bindokienė, Lithuania strove to live in peace and she writes that: “*akis uz aki* [an eye for an eye] was not a practice ever embraced by the Lithuanians” (Bindokienė, 1989, p. 50). This claim, of course, might not survive historical scrutiny of the politics of mid-twentieth century Lithuania. The account of a participant in the study also undercuts the idealised view. Victoras in contrast to the other recalled that:

Farmers always had fights with neighbours or other people in the village, often over something as trivial as a neighbour’s cow trespassing on one’s property or causing damage on other properties (Victoras, *Interview Transcript 3*, Krasnoyarsk, 2004).

It can be argued that Bindokienė is an ethnographer coming from an émigré family and thus her account of the Lithuanian people and customs is based on the memories of people who chose exile rather than live in a Sovietised Socialist Lithuania. It follows that these memories may well have a nostalgic quality and may express personal views based on a romantic vision of the lost homeland, not the realities encountered in daily living. Again, according to Rutter, Lithuanian hospitality was: “not of the cutlet for cutlet variety ... but of the kind which means befriending a man you have never seen before and may never see again” (Rutter, 1926, p. 75).

Lithuanian Family: Customs, Rituals and Celebrations

Thus, by means of *rites de passage* the woman as an integral part of family and community, joins the global process of creation – of humankind, nation and family (Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 141).

The most important means of preserving their customs and values for the rural Lithuanian population was through the family. The role of the woman in the family therefore was fundamental. It was socially accepted that her duty was to accompany and support each member of the family throughout the whole of their life. Mothers, sisters, daughters and *bobutė* (the wiser women in the village) were considered to be the *essence* of the family and, indeed, of the wider community. They were responsible for the biological process of creation and for the social procreation and shaping of people, family, community and nation. Furthermore, in the inherited traditions of the rural Lithuanian value system, women were also given status as protectors and transmitters of national values and identity. This of course echoes the role accorded to women within the wider frame of the European Nationalist Movements (Nash, 1993, pp. 44-46).

Childbirth and Christening

Childbirth was an important occasion for the whole extended family and village community and one which brought the community together, especially in small villages. After a child's birth only the female relatives and close friends would visit the mother and the newborn. This act of a visit would confer to the mother her status and role as a woman in the community in relation to age, marital status and sexual experience

(Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 69). Each visitor would bring a present, as a sign of respect and affirmation. Alfonsas maintained that:

To go empty handed was believed to compromise the lifelong happiness of the infant and to reflect poorly on the values of the individual making the visit (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2003).

It was customary in Žemaitija to erect a cross on the property where the child was born, to celebrate the birth and to invoke God's blessing on the child. In the other regions it was more common to plant a tree to celebrate the child's birth (Račiunaitė, 2002, pp. 58-60).

The first important religious event in the Lithuanian child's life was its Christening ceremony, during which the formal naming assured their entrance and acceptance into the family, and into the wider community of the Church, the village, region and nation. Customarily, it took place between one and two weeks after the birth, and was celebrated in accordance with the Roman Catholic Rite. If the children were weak or ill, their Christening was immediate. The urgency with which the rite was performed marks the force exerted by religious belief in the life of a people who accepted without question that without being baptised the child could not go to Heaven. The Christening was followed by a party at the house of the parents of the newborn with all members of the family, relatives and friends, up to an average of thirty to forty guests, being invited. Alfa recollected that: "For a special event such as a Christening, the wealthier parents would hire a woman to bake a *tortas* [cake] mainly with nuts" (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2006).

The choice of the godparents was crucial. The godparents became closely tied to the family and would take upon themselves the full responsibility for raising the child, in the case of the death of the parents (Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 54). A person who was asked to be a godparent could not refuse. It was believed that refusal would mean that the child would be unhappy throughout its life (Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 70). Having accepted the role of the godparent it was then incumbent upon that person to visit the children during religious events, as well as bringing them small presents.

From the introduction of Christianity, and especially for the rite of the Christening, the Lithuanians in most parts of the country began to name their children after a saint as a

sign of respect and religious devotion. The Catholic Church had never recognized the old pagan and historical names, but to ease the initial resistance from the Lithuanian people to the new practice, had accepted a compromise in which both Catholic Saints' names and Lithuanian epic rulers' names and old pagan names, were given to the newly born child. For instance, the girls could be given first a Catholic Saint name such as Anne or Mary, and second a name such as *Aldona* (gifted with all), *Dana* (the gift) or *Birute* after the name of the wife of the Grand Duke *Kestutis*. Boys similarly were given names such as John, George and Joseph, from the Catholic tradition, with the inclusion of a second name such as Vytautas, Algirdas or Gediminas after the names of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. Here again, the influence of religion among the rural Lithuanian population, which started for each member of the community at the time of their birth and baptism, is visible in the imposition of Christian names necessary for acceptance into the communities of Church and nation.

Marriage and Weddings

The average age for a man to marry was between twenty-five and thirty years, whereas for girls it was between twenty and twenty-five. In the period of Lithuanian independence, a man was usually considered to be ready to marry only after he had finished the two years of compulsory military service required of all young men (between 21 and 23 years of age). In principle, both men and women had freedom of choice, but the consent of both sets of parents was essential if the family were to continue to live in peace and harmony with each other and the neighbourhood. Should parental consent be withheld, young couple intent upon marrying would normally have to leave and renounce all claims to inheritance (Rutter, 1926, p. 56). Girls were often pressured by their parents and relatives to choose men who were regarded by the community as being of strong moral character and economically secure, as safeguards for a happy marriage and the wellbeing of any future children.

Throughout the country, the wedding was an event, to which the whole village would be invited and which was celebrated in accordance with the Roman Catholic Rite (Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 100). Generally, the wedding was celebrated on Sundays to allow relatives and friends to participate. The groom would wear his best suit, the bride a white long dress embellished with a small branch of the customary rue pinned on her veil or

dress. After the religious ceremony it was common practice for the parents to greet the newlyweds at the threshold of the bride's childhood home, offering bread, salt, a glass of wine and a small branch of rue. It was believed these gifts would ensure the couple's fertility and prosperity (Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 108).

The wedding, particularly for the wealthier farmers, would usually be organised by the *piršly* (matchmaker) and *svočia* (matron of honour). These roles were typically undertaken by older relatives or by elderly members of the community. The *piršly* would take care of the official offer of marriage and the financial aspects. The *svočia* would be responsible for the organisation of the wedding party and the guests. Festivities would usually extend over most of a week, three days at the house of the bride and three days at the house of the bridegroom (Rutter, 1926, pp. 56-58). The round shaped *raguolis* was the traditional Lithuanian wedding cake which represented faithfulness and eternity. Family members would share it with the whole village assembled to celebrate the beginning of the young couple's new life and to officially mark the acceptance of this new family into the community (Račiunaitė, 2002, p. 109).

The marriage of a son who was to succeed his father and inherit the farm would bring great change in the life of the farm itself. Before the ceremony would take place, the father would transfer the ownership to his son and would arrange for him to pay certain shares to any brothers and sisters based on the value of the property. After the wedding the young man and his wife would become master and mistress of the farm, although they generally would not immediately start farming independently, especially in an extended family.

The parents would retire from ownership and ultimate responsibility for the farm. In most cases they would remain on the farm until their death and would continue to receive the support of food and shelter. They would reserve the right to keep a few farm animals of their own and would help with farm and family duties, particularly the socialisation of the young. Younger siblings predominantly remained on the farm until the girls married and the boys often would go out to the world to make a living (Rutter, 1926, p. 57). In more prosperous families or in family with wealthy relatives this may well have involved formal study at a secondary and, occasionally, tertiary level of the

second son. Preferred occupations involved working as teachers, government employees, and police, or in the armed services. Alfonsas maintained that:

Unsurprisingly, in a deeply religious culture like that of the pre-WWII rural Lithuania, many boys also chose to become priests, especially the second son was encouraged to enter in the priesthood, as this profession was regarded as very highly. The family as well would have gained more respect among the community (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2003).

Death and Funerals

Lithuanians considered death to be a natural part of the life cycle and children participated with the adults in its rituals from a young age. When death was imminent, a priest was called to the house to hear the dying person's confession and to administer Holy Communion and the last rites. The death of a member of the community was announced by the tolling of the local church bells. Once a death had occurred it was the woman's responsibility to wash and dress the deceased in their best clothes. If the family were in need, friends and neighbours would help with the purchase of good clothes. It was a tradition in most regions to dress deceased adult women in dark clothes with a white or black head-covering. Deceased young girls would be dressed in white clothes, with a white head-covering on which would be pinned a small wreath of rue or myrtle, symbolising their status as an unmarried woman (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 189). The deceased person would have a set of rosary beads or a small image of Our Lady placed in their hands as a sign of Christian hope and piety (Rāciunaitė, 2002, p. 125).

As there were no funeral parlours in the villages, the deceased was kept at home for three days in the best and largest room of the house to ensure time for relatives and friends to come and pay their respects. In particularly hot weather this period was abbreviated. The body would lie in an open coffin on a plank surrounded by flowers, and with two lit candles at each side of the coffin. On those days relatives and visitors would come to recite the rosary. It was customary to kiss the deceased goodbye, and children would have to kiss the feet of their dead parents as a sign of respect (Kudirka, 1991, p. 51). Aldona asserted that: "This practice was strictly observed and often caused distress among children who would hide or run from the room" (Aldona, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2004). It was also a common practice to take photographs of the deceased with relatives and friends. Jonas maintained however that:

This custom involved a certain cost not all families could afford to do this but was observed in most of the case, as it was seen as a sign of the bond between the deceased and the living (Jonas, *Interview Transcript 3*, Krasnoyarsk, 2004).

At the *šermenys* (wake), and in addition to the rosary, it was customary to praise and bid farewell to the deceased through the singing of the ancient *raudos* (lamentation songs), a practice which, because of the active rural oral tradition, continued to survive in the villages. These songs, performed by hired professional lamenters, were believed to ensure the safe arrival of the soul of the deceased in the kingdom of the dead and the continuity of the soul's presence among both the members of the immediate family and other relatives. Despite having been officially banned by Christian missionaries on their arrival, in Lithuania the 'raudos' were still preserved and performed in villages in the pre-WWII period (Gimbutas, 1963, pp. 186-187).

Adolfas as a young boy did not like to attend funerals. "It was terrible, I was scared" (Adolfas, *Interview transcript 2*, Perth 2003). However he maintained that some of his older friends used to go to the church and to the cemetery to watch them.

Adolfas, out of curiosity, used to watch through the window of the room where the people would gather for the occasion.

I remember a man that was a friend of my father ... he used to work I don't remember where but he got sick ... he was so thin and the colour of his face was some sort of green and grey. He was on a sort of table, before he was put in the coffin. Three or four women were around him mostly dressed in black. They were singing and crying with a loud voice together. They had a book in their hands an old black and thick book. They remained there for three days. When they finished singing the body was put in the coffin and taken to the church. These women were called *Kantička* ... they used to do this as a job. They lived in the village. From the family they had food, drinks and some money (Adolfas, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2003).

The family, and most of the community village, would accompany the coffin to the church where it would be re-opened and blessed by the priest outside the door before the commencement of the *gedulingos mišos* (funeral mass). From there, it would be resealed and taken to the cemetery for burial. See photographs in Appendix 13. If the deceased had lived not far from the church and the cemetery, it was a custom that the coffin would be carried by four male friends or relatives; otherwise it would be carried in a cart. The coffin would be covered with a black banner with a white cross in the centre. After the funeral, relatives and neighbours would all be invited to the house of the deceased for a

burial dinner. Here again, the funeral was an occasion that brought together relatives, friends and neighbours in a form of continuous socialising and sharing in each stage of life.

The period and rituals of the *gedulas* (mourning) were considered to be a sign of respect towards the deceased. A set period of mourning was observed according to the status and position of the person in the family. For parents, one year's formal mourning was observed. For a wife or a husband, it was one year or half a year, while for brothers and sisters one year, half a year, or three months. Dark colours were considered to be the colour for funeral mourning. Women would wear a black dress with a black or white scarf, while men and children would wear a black band around one arm as a sign of mourning and respect (Račiunaitė, 2002, pp. 134-136). Here again, the rituals and customs which defined and regulated the entire life of the rural Lithuanian people evolved in ways that linked strong religious practices and beliefs with older traditions.

Calendar Religious Celebrations

The significance and continuous maintenance of religious practices, beliefs and festivities as part of the everyday family and community life underline the emotional ties between cultural, national and religious identity and values. In these ways, the relevance and the authority of religion and family structures remained the core of the Lithuanian rural culture. Christian (specifically Roman Catholic) feasts and old Lithuanian festivities and celebrations such as *Kūčios* (Christmas Eve meal), *Verbo Sekmadieni* (Palm Sunday), *Velykos* (Easter), *Joninės* (Feast of Saint John the Baptist) were recorded and enacted, often fused together. The most significant days of the year in this predominantly Catholic and agricultural country were often related to farming and land husbandry, or to the seasons which were already associated with the beginning of life and death. Holidays were not uniform across the country, but the main celebrations retained the same core characteristics for all of the country.

Kūčios (Christmas Eve Meal)

Approximately 92% of the Lithuanian population is Christian, the rest being mostly of the Hebrew faith. Of the Christians, almost (approximately 93%) are Roman Catholics,

and this determines the character of their Christmas celebration (A.Senn, 1946, p.132). The celebration of *Kūčios* (the Christmas Eve meal) for rural Lithuanian people was, in terms of customs and traditions, more meaningful than Christmas Day itself. Moreover, in contrast with other religious celebrations of the Church, the Christmas Eve celebration retained elements and features of the pagan pre-Christian period. For instance, it was thought that on this night the souls of the deceased would return home. Nobody would go out in fear of meeting hostile spirits (Ambrazievičius, 1994, p. 12).

The day before Christmas, December 24, was not officially declared by the church as a day of obligation. However, it was a day of fast and abstinence and “no one eats anything before supper” (A. Senn, 1946, p.133). It was considered to be a family celebration and visitors would not be expected or invited. In the rural areas all labour would be limited to the essential, both around the house and in the stables. Preparation for *Kūčios* (Christmas Eve meal) would take all day from the early hours of the morning. The family would work together for such preparation. Firstly, the house would be thoroughly cleaned and then women would prepare the evening meal, as well as the Christmas and Boxing Day meals. The men of the family would generally not directly help in the preparation of the meal, except for “the last minute rush to the fish market or liquor store” (A. Senn, 1946, p.133). After having attended to their respective tasks, all members of the family would change into festive clothes. For that evening, the *Kučiu Stalas* (dinner table) would be covered with a white tablecloth under which an armful of hay would be spread by the head of the family as a reminder that Jesus was born in a stable. Foreign to Lithuania was the Nativity Scene which played an important role in most other Catholic countries of the era such as in Italy and Austria (A. Senn, 1946, p.132). Places were set for the absent members of the family and marked by a fir twig or sprig of myrtle. For the recently deceased, both the twig and a burning candle were added.

The meal would commence late in the evening at the time the Evening Star first appeared in the sky. Once everyone was at the table, the father would make the sign of the cross and recite a short prayer to thank God for the food and for the harvest, and would ask for a blessing over the household for the coming year. The meal would start with the family sharing a *ploktelė* (a thin wafer), also known as *Dievo Pyragas* (God’s bread), brought home after having been blessed earlier at the church. The meal would be

based on a selection of twelve different dishes, each representing a different month of the year. Each was served without meat, fat, eggs, or dairy products, being based instead on *silkės* (herrings), mushroom, and *kišelius* (cranberry pudding) with poppy seed milk. The specialty of the meal was the *kučios* dish, a mixture of cooked wheat, barley, rye and peas or beans (A. Senn, 1946, p.133). Homemade cider and water took the place of alcohol, as alcohol was not allowed at the meal (Imbrasienė, 1990, pp. 10-12).

After the meal it was customary in some regions to leave any remaining food on the table until the following morning, in the traditional belief that the souls of the ancestors and deceased members of the family would return home for supper that night while the family was asleep (Imbrasienė, 1990, pp. 12-13). The animals also took part in the celebrations of the night by eating the hay from the table and some leftovers of their masters' food brought to them the following morning. The hay was given only to the cows and sheep as it was believed that only the cows and sheep kept warm the Infant Jesus with their breath (Senn, 1946, p.133). This was again demonstrating the close relationship between the farmer and his animals. The horses were considered to be essential for the work in the fields and for the maintenance of the family (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 187).

After the meal, the young people would enjoy making predictions for the coming year. Unmarried girls would take as many fence pickets or logs into their arms as they could, and count them. Even numbers meant that they would be married soon; odd numbers meant that they would remain single for the following year (Kudirka, 1991, p. 39). The farmer would be concerned with his next year's crops, his beehives and his cattle. It was believed that if on Christmas Eve the snow flies the bees would thrive and produce a bountiful quantity of honey in the following summer (A. Senn, 1946, p.134). Later in the evening most of the people would attend the midnight *Berneliu Mišos* (Infant Mass).

The Christmas tree was the biggest treat for the children, although it was more common in the city than in the rural areas. Alfa, who was living in a farm, remembered that in rural areas:

Teachers would make a school Christmas tree with the help of the children and parents ... decorations were made of straw strung together on a thread and arranged into geometrical figure ... apples, fir or pinecones, nuts and paper

cuttings were also used for decorations (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2004).

Although widely adopted in the city, this tradition of a decorated Christmas tree was not accepted by the majority of the rural Lithuanians in their own homes. Instead they strongly abided by the old Lithuanian Christmas traditions of the table with its hay and places set for the dead and absent family members. The tradition of decorating a Christmas tree had developed in Germany and England in the mid- nineteenth century and was introduced into Lithuania only at the beginning of the twentieth century during the period of independence (Imbrasienė, 1990, p. 19). This was the period in which the new government tried to establish contact, cultural and economic ties with other European countries.

Kalėdos (Christmas Day)

Kalėdos (Christmas Day) was celebrated over two days: Christmas Day, December 25, and Saint Stephen's Day, December 26. After attending the morning service people would return home and spend the rest of the day with the family only, as Christmas Day was another day reserved for family celebration. The meal was rich and mainly based on the consumption of meat, shared in happiness; and the weather was one of the most relevant elements of the day. It was believed that if Christmas Day was white, Easter would be green (Imbrasienė, 1990, p. 20) and spring was coming soon. St. Stephen's Day was also a day of rest, although, unlike on the previous day, time was spent visiting friends and receiving visitors.

Užgavėnės (Shrove Tuesday)

Užgavėnės (Shrove Tuesday) was a festival celebrated on the eve of Ash Wednesday, to mark the beginning of the period of Lent, and was marked by rituals of both food and theatre. It was a special day for eating pancakes made from potatoes or flour. Pancakes were the symbol of the sun, a premonition of the arrival of good weather and the renewal of life. It was also the last opportunity for eating rich foods, as a very strict Lenten fasting period had to be observed in preparation for Easter. People would work only until midday on Shrove Tuesday and then would go to visit friends, spend time together

and enjoy sledging down the slopes while others tried to pour water on them. It was believed that such merriment would cause the hens to lay more eggs, and would prevent the birds from damaging the fields of corn. Eggs and corn took on added importance as they would be the staples of the Lenten diet. The people denied themselves meats and other richer food sources in religious observance of the Lenten rituals (Kudirka, 1991, pp. 40-42).

The other central element of the *Užgavėnės* festivities, especially popular in Žemaitija, was the use of the traditional characters of *Kanapinis* (skinny character), the *Lašyninis* (fat character), and the *Morė* (old maid) who symbolised the difference between winter and spring and caricatures of the Jewish traders and gypsy figures. The *Morė* with a broom in one hand and a flail in the other, was brought around the village as if she were uncertain whether she should continue flailing last year's harvest or start the spring cleaning by sweeping the yard. It was a tradition on this day for people to wear masks of wood or bark, and costumes representing beggars, animals, the devil and death (Kudirka, 1991, p. 40).

Culminating these celebrations marked by jokes, superstitions and fortune telling related mainly to the coming harvest, was a procession of the three characters through the village. While Lithuanian historians and ethnographers such as Jouzas Kudirka and Danute Bindokienė have focused on the jocular nature of these celebrations, their descriptions ignore the cultural and racist undercurrents implicit in the use of caricatures of marginal Lithuanian groups like the Jewish traders and the gypsy. This became a core part of the Shrove Tuesday carnival in the Lithuania of the late nineteenth through to mid twentieth centuries. Bindokienė described the use of a Jew offering his goods in broken Lithuanian and a Gypsy looking for something to pilfer, adding that on Shrove Tuesday people made fun of all the social groups of the village community (Bindokienė, 1989, p. 154). Such statements in their unconscious acceptance of and participation in this custom are blind to and collude in the re-inscription of the political edicts and language laws which regulated and constrained the lives of these groups in a community. This authentic 'Lithuanian-ness' was being increasingly defined through group identity as membership of the predominantly Catholic, ethnic and rural Lithuanian community.

Didžioji Savaite (Holy Week)

The pre-war Lithuanian people considered Easter to be the most important and significant religious celebration of the year. This was because of the belief that through the sacrifice of Christ and his resurrection mankind would achieve salvation. In a country with such numbers of believers, the Easter Week observance and celebration could only be seen as a period firstly of penance and abstinence, and then celebration. The commemoration of Christ's death was followed by that of his resurrection. This week also had significance in terms of the agricultural cycle as after the full moon of Easter, the time was signalled to commence sowing and working in the fields. Yet again, we see core cultural festivities fusing religious and natural elements in and for this pre-WWII rural Lithuanian community.

Easter Week observances began with the *Verbo Sekmadieni* (Palm Sunday) rites. On this day, one week before Easter, it was customary for people to attend the Sunday Mass with a bunch of greenery to be blessed by the priest during the service. Alfa remembered that: "In place of the palm or olive tree branches traditionally favoured by Mediterranean Christians, the Lithuanians would bring juniper branches and bunches of pussy willows" (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2003).

Later, it became a tradition in some regions to also take a branch of an oak tree to be blessed as a symbol of strength, or a branch of birch tree as a symbol of respect. Again, the influence of nature on the life of the rural population and the intimate relation between trees and people is noticeable in the meshing of these Christian and rural Lithuanian traditions (Čepienė, 1999, pp. 61-70). The greenery once blessed, would be brought home, dried and subsequently burnt, as it was believed that the smoke would protect the house from evil and bring good luck (Kudirka, 1991, p. 42).

Palm Sunday would start very early in the morning, and it was customary that whoever rose first would strike those who were still sleeping with the prepared green branch and would sing "*Ne aš musu, verba musa, ne tau šopa, verbai šopa, už nedelios bus velikos* [I do not hit you, the green twig is hitting you, I do not hurt you, the twig is hurting you, and in a week it will be Easter]" (Imbransienė, 1999, p. 46). Aldona recollected that after church: "It was also a tradition for the participants to tap each other on the shoulder or

hands with the blessed twig, exchanging wishes of good health and youth for the coming year” (Aldona, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2004). Palm Sunday marked the beginning of the Holy Week and the final preparations for Easter. Much of those days of the Holy Week would be spent in prayers and attendance at church services.

Svariujų Ketvirtadienis (Holy Thursday) was traditionally a day of spring cleaning, during which both the home and surrounding farmstead buildings were thoroughly cleaned and tidied. It was believed that on this day the water of the lakes, springs and rivers had some magic powers that helped to restore or maintain good health. It was a tradition for people who had a rash or similar skin disorder to seek healing by bathing in these waters (Čepienė, 1999, pp. 39-44). Again, the influence of natural elements in the life of the rural population was a determining factor from which the people could not detach themselves. Although the people were ready to observe strictly the teachings of the Catholic Church, the old pagan beliefs enjoyed a continuing and prominent position in their life.

Didysis Penktadienis (Good Friday) was reserved as a day in which noise was not allowed in the home. People would strictly observe *pasnikas* (fasting) and, in some families, adult people would not even drink water. The practice of fasting on Friday was followed by most Catholic Lithuanians. They would spend the day in prayers and church attendance. In the church, all pictures or statues of the saints would be covered with a dark cloth as a sign of sorrow. Alfa maintained that:

In some regions it was also a widespread custom to recreate Christ’s tomb and sometimes even to post guards at its side who would be dressed as ancient Roman soldiers. Churches also remained open to allow people to observe an all-night vigil ... [Alfa remembered that with her mother] she used to go to the church and stay there for many hours praying ... we spent two or three hours often, I used to go outside and play with girls of my age and then go back into the church ... I liked to go there I could also meet with some of my friends (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2004).

Didysis Šeštadienis (Holy Saturday) was set aside as a day for church. After the morning’s church service, people would often take home some pieces of blessed coal. It was believed that these would help to keep misfortune and evil away. It was also believed that if blessed fire were taken home early in the day, the farm work would begin early in the season and would be successful. Blessed water would also be taken

home and used for sick people and animals and would never be thrown away. Children, helped by their parents, would prepare *margučiu* (traditional dyed and decorated Lithuanian Easter eggs). They would go to the nearby forest or garden to gather leaves to use to form a pattern on the eggs or to give them different colours. Eggs were dyed commonly in hot water with peeled onions, oak or birch leaves, or hay, and different patterns were drawn on them. Such natural dyes would be used, as artificial dyes were available only in city stores.

The most popular colours were yellow, orange and green, obtained from different combinations of leaves. It was a custom to give *margučiu* (Lithuanian decorated Easter eggs) as Easter presents, as it was believed that they brought good health, good luck and happiness to the people who received them. In Aukštaitija, the Easter table was decorated with a small fir or pine tree with nine or twelve small branches which it was believed had magical powers. Nests with eggs and birds made of multi-coloured paper were fixed on each of the branches. It was believed that eggs from that tree would bring good luck and good health. After having completed the formal preparation for Easter, most people would spend the rest of Holy Saturday in church, and remained together most of the night until Easter Sunday, praying and singing hymns as they kept vigil (Čepienė, 1999, pp. 70-73).

Vėlykos (Easter Sunday)

Velykos began early in the morning, with people attending the Resurrection Mass which included a procession that would encircle the church three times while young girls would throw petals of flowers or greenery in front of the procession. People would come to the church from far away and as early as four o'clock in the morning families would already be up and ready to start the journey to the local village church by cart or on foot. At the end of the Easter Sunday service everyone would return home in a hurry. It was believed that the family which arrived home first would have a successful year and complete all farm work on time (Kudirka, 1991, p. 35).

Easter Sunday was again a celebration within the family and, like Christmas, guests would not be expected or invited. After the long fasting period of Lent, rich food such as a head of pork, piglet and roast lamb, with game, cheese and butter would be part of the

meal, as well as the traditional eggs. Aldona recollected that: “Children enjoyed the hunt for the Easter eggs hidden by the *Veliku Senelė* [Easter granny] or the Easter bunny, which the children would never meet as they were told that it came before sunrise” (Aldona, *Interview Transcript 2*, Perth, 2003).

The day after Easter children would go to *kiaušinauti or velikauti* (to collect eggs) from godparents first, and then from other relatives and neighbours. All over Lithuania it was a custom to exchange eggs and then to hit the eggs together in a show of good luck and strength. In Dzūkija people used to say *einam mušyniu* (let us go to hit eggs) and test the eggs’ hardness (Imbrasienė, 1990, p. 50). Children would win the eggs that they broke. Algirdas had memories of a popular Easter game:

Another popular game was *margucius rikineja* [to roll eggs]. Children would roll their eggs down a slope made out of bark. The aim being to hit another egg on its way or to the bottom of the slide, and any egg that was hit would be won by the child who had rolled the egg onto it (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2003).

According to the contemporary ethnographer Prane Dundulienė, it was also an Easter custom for young unmarried men to walk through the village playing music and reciting poems. This custom was called *lalavimas*. The young men would stop at each house of the village and wish the family a good year, a rich harvest and good health. *Lalinka* (a special song) was addressed to unmarried girls. The song praised the girl for her beauty and her virtues, and wished her a happy marriage (Šaknys, 2005, pp.60-61). The young men received Easter eggs as a reward for their music and singing (Imbrasienė, 1990, p. 51).

Sekminės (Pentecost)

Sekminės was the celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit held seven weeks after Easter and an occasion to greet the arrival of spring. On this day, young girls in some villages in the western part of the country would go to the forest to gather flowers and greenery from which they made garlands. It was a tradition in those parts to adorn the house, fields, and garden with birch branches and cows were also decorated with a wreath of wildflowers as it was believed that this would make them more productive. Young birch trees would also be placed on both sides of the house entry, as it was

believed that this would bring peace to the home and the family (Čepienė, 1999, pp. 75-77). Greenery would again be taken to the church to be blessed and, once dried, would be kept all year as it was believed that smoke from the dried greenery and birch would keep the evil spirits away (Imbrasienė, 1990, pp. 56-57).

Joninės (Feast of Saint John the Baptist)

The celebration of *Joninės* coincided with the Midsummer Solstice. It would take place the night before June 24. This period marked the shortest night and the longest day of the year and was a very popular and joyous summer festival celebrated all over Lithuania. It was also known as *Rašos Šventė* (Holy Dew), the ancient name given to this particular night of the year. With the introduction of Christianity the Church disapproved of this pagan festival and accepted its celebrations only in relation to the Christian Feast of Saint John the Baptist whose feast day coincided with the Solstice. This night was dominated by the symbol of the sun in the form of a burning cartwheel fixed high on poles and adorned with wreaths of herbs and flowers that symbolized growth. Magical powers were attributed to Midsummer Day and the period immediately before *Joninės*. In some villages of Lithuania Minor it was a custom on the day before the celebration for the women to gather different types of herbs, as it was believed that after the night of June 24, these herbs would acquire healing properties (Imbrasienė, 1990, p. 64). Young girls in colourful dress would go to the fields to collect different flowers and make garlands and keep them all year round.

By midnight it was a tradition for people to gather on the highest hill near the village and light a fire which would burn all night to shed light on the fields and keep away all the evil spirits and witches which could harm the animals and the crops. The lighting of the bonfire was a privilege given to the men who had been named Jonas, (John) as the Solstice celebration was also the celebration of their name day. Water was believed to have magic power as well. People would go swimming so that they would be healthy and beautiful and so that young people would be married soon (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 196). The fields were sprinkled with this magic water to ensure good crops and the animals were bathed in rivers or lakes to keep them healthy. Girls would float wreaths on rivers to learn of their likelihood of marriage. Sometimes a burning candle or a bowl filled with burning tar was fixed in the middle of the floating wreath. Saint John's night was a night

full of superstitions, with the bonfires being the centre-piece and symbolic essence of the whole celebration.

Žolinė (Feast of the Assumption)

Žolinė was observed on August 15. It coincided with the coming of autumn. It was a custom all over Lithuania for people to gather flowers and greenery from their gardens and fields and bring them to be blessed in the church. The custom came from a legend about Mary's burial, in which both Mary's body and soul were taken into heaven and only the flowers remained in her tomb. Bunches of cornflowers, daisies, red clover and poppies were brought to the church to be blessed, then dried and kept around the house and in the farmstead buildings. It was believed that they would protect the home from storms, lightning, fire and bad spirits. Flowers blessed during the Assumption mass could not be disposed of otherwise a great calamity would descend upon the family. On this day, families gathered together and hoped the coming year would be a productive one (Imbrasienė, 1990, pp. 72-74).

Vėlinės (All Souls' Day)

Vėlinės was celebrated on November 2, in honour of the deceased members of the family. Most rural Lithuanians believed that after death the *velė* (soul of the deceased), would continue to remain among the living. Thus, *Vėlinės* was seen as an occasion to reinforce this bond (Gimbutas, 1963, pp. 189-191). The *velės*, never left the earth, the village and the community. They went to live on 'a sandy hill' in the neighbourhood of the village where Dievas (God) resided. On the night of November 1, the souls of the deceased would go to the church to pray and then would come back home. To make the return to their homes easy, the dogs would be locked away and the doors and windows would be left unlocked (Imbrasienė, 1990, p. 76). People would go to the church and attend commemorative services and would light candles. It was believed that the soul not only would expect prayers but would demand them (Bindokienė, 1989, pp. 202-204).

At the cemetery, graves would be decorated with candles and it was customary in almost all Lithuanian regions to have a procession led by a priest through the cemetery on the night before *Vėlinės*. It would stop first at the grave of the most recently deceased

person. A candle would be left to burn on each grave throughout the night and neglected graves would also be visited and decorated with flowers and candles. Lithuanians would spend this day at the church or at the cemetery in prayer and would not hold or attend joyful functions. It was believed that to do so would cause suffering to the soul of the deceased. Furthermore, trees grown in old Lithuanian cemeteries would never be touched by a pruner's hand, as people believed that to cut a cemetery tree would hurt the deceased (Čepienė, 1999, p. 60).

Superstitions

Customs, traditions, values and beliefs are all core markers of a national identity. However a nation's traits can also be found in the way in which people express their feelings of anger, happiness and in the way they curse.

In most of the interviews I noticed how the respondents who took part to this study used colourful expressions to add more meaning to their interviews. A sense of their expressions is relevant since it offers an insight and better understanding of the Lithuanian people and their culture. Most of my interviewees went through a great deal of detail in explaining when and how to use such expressions, words and curses in order for me to gain their trust and confidence. I noted that among the Lithuanian émigrés numerous superstitions still survive; they are considered by scholars to be reminiscent of ancient paganism fused with Christian elements. Although I share their views, I argue that superstitions survived in most countries; however, Lithuanians' superstitions are particularly colourful. Typical examples were provided by Balys (an 88-year-old male participant in the study) translated from Lithuanian:

- Don't whistle inside the house, whistling will call the devil;
- Don't kill a spider it will bring bad luck;
- *Boba* (an annoying person) get out of the cart, for the horse it is a relief;
- Don't spit on fire or water it brings bad luck;
- You must not walk over a baby who is crawling or sitting or lying on the ground as the baby will stop growing;
- Don't put a loaf of bread upside down as it is a sign of lack of respect (Balys, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2003),

Balys explained further one of the most powerful curses: “Let the neighbour’s cow die” (Balys, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2003). In a rural society wishing the death of a farm animal which supported the family would have caused devastating consequences.

Leisure Time

The Lithuanians spent most of their days and seasons working in the fields or on the farm; time for leisure was limited. Whatever leisure time did exist was valued for its power to develop a strong sense of individual and community knowledge and respect for inherited national traditions and religious institutions and rituals.

Men would read newspapers or books, and would spend time playing cards with neighbours who lived in nearby farmsteads. Algirdas recounted during an interview that: “People would also gather family and friends to listen to the radio which, while a novelty initially, was slowly becoming more affordable for everyone during the period of independence”(Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2004). Given the significant national and international events and tensions which marked the decades of the 1930s and 1940s, the collective sharing of the radio was an important way of maintaining awareness of what was happening in the country, while consolidating community ties and allegiances. It was the first means of mass communication and it was appreciated by the rural population which lived far from the big cities. Hunting was the other major activity which would bring together two or three men to hunt hares in the forest.

Women would have fewer opportunities for leisure time as previously stated typically the Lithuanian rural families were large. However, they would spend time with their children and doing needle works. Aldona recalled also that:

During winter my father invited friends and neighbours to sauna which was another social event. This would take place once or twice a month and after the sauna everyone would stop at our place to have a drink and spend some time together (Aldona, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2004).

The cultural life of the pre-WWII rural Lithuanians evolved mainly around the family, primary schools and church. The district teacher would organise national commemorative days, mother’s day plays, folk dances and singing, and from time to time a dancing night with polka, waltzes and folk dances. The local *klebonas* (parish

priest), together with the organist of the church, would organise a children's church choir in which children aged from fifteen to seventeen years of age participated. They would practise two or three times a week and would then sing during Sunday Mass and special religious events. According to Alfonsas:

For children it was a happy time as it would be spent with friends living perhaps on distant farms, but brought together by the socially endorsed role of the priest and rituals of religious worship (Alfonsas, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2003).

On Sundays and festive days the work was reduced to the bare essentials, as the whole family put on their best clothes to attend religious services. They would travel by cart for long journeys, but more often simply on foot when the distance was not more than seven or eight kilometres. After the service, especially when the weather allowed, the family would visit friends in the village or spend time outside the church, speaking with relatives or friends who lived on distant farms. For the Lithuanians, church attendance was an important means of maintaining contact and ties with the wider community and sharing in its happenings. As the rural population was necessarily engaged for most of the time in working on the farm, the best way of maintaining these contacts was through opportunities presented and legitimised by religious celebration or seasonal work, both of which brought people together.

Market days were another key occasion on which the community could come together. For the whole of the farmer's family these market days, usually each week on a Thursday, were a major event. The farmer and his wife, if the wife did not have small children at the time, would go together by cart to sell surplus farm products, such as eggs, cheese, butter and *grietinè* (sour cream), honey, fruit, berries, vegetables and bread. Alfa remembered her mother accompanied her husband to the market, sometimes in part:

To avoid the possibility of his stopping with friends at the *smuklè* [inn], spending the money, from the selling of the farm products, and returning home with just a string of *barankos* [biscuits] for the children who generally remained at home (Alfa, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2004).

These *smuklè* were local inns often owned by Jewish Lithuanians, located along the main roads, where food and drink were served. Their location along the travel routes increased the chance of the farmer being swayed to stop off on his way home. Such measures make evident the difficult economic conditions under which most of these

families lived. This represents the ways in which one cultural group's naturalised problematic behaviour is conditioned by assigning the responsibility to another cultural group, the Jewish small business operators.

As noted in Chapter 3, Jews, according to the Czarist Regulations for Jews of 1804 and 1882, were forced to live in towns and cities and to work on mercantile activities to strengthen the economy of the urban centres. Consequently, they were banned from living in rural areas and from agricultural practice (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 228). Their mercantile activities were also on display at the markets, where Lithuanian Jewish artisans and small shopkeepers operated. Rutter describes a typical market day in the city of Kaunas in 1926 in these terms:

Near the [Jewish] quarter is a large square where the main market is held twice a week. All around the square are the shops of the Jews, who sell chiefly hardware and cheap clothing; fronting the shops are the boots of the country people who bring in their fruit and eggs and vegetables, while the centre of the square forms a convenient park for the long Lithuanian carts. The Kaunas market is the meeting-place of Jews and Gentiles ... trade brings them together (Rutter, 1926, p. 11).

Rutter's account foregrounds the ways in which the two communities lived and worked separately. The ethnic Lithuanians primarily engaged in agricultural activities in a rural farm setting, while the Jewish Lithuanian population was based more in artisan and mercantile work in villages and towns. This observation hints at the tensions which would increasingly erupt between ethnic and Jewish Lithuanians over the next two decades. The Government policy in the newly independent country sought to shift the balance between urban and rural, ethnic and Jewish work and professions in the new nation-state.

According to Algirdas the rural population also enjoyed dancing and during the summer time it was very popular to hold *Gegužinės* (open air dancing) for the young people.

A suitable place would be chosen in an open field, which was surrounded by barbed wire decorated with coloured strings or ribbons bearing the red, green, and yellow colours of the Lithuanian flag while a pole with the national flag, would also be positioned so as to be clearly visible from a distance (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2004).

Algirdas continued by saying that often:

In the evening, sporting competitions such as short distance running races or wrestling matches would take place and the winner would receive a prize ... it was very popular event ... many young people remained up until late (Algirdas, *Interview Transcript 3*, Perth, 2004).

During the Czarist period, *Gegužinės* had not been allowed as it was recognized by the authorities that nationalist activists could and doubtless would pass information and propagandistic materials against the Czarist authorities and their rule among the people during these supposedly non-political celebrations (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 176).

Conclusion

This chapter is a detailed description of a selected number of customs and traditions, values and beliefs which the researcher has identified through in-depth study of respected scholarly Lithuanian sources constituting the *essence* of pre-WWII rural Lithuanian culture. Such data have been used to lay the foundation for the multi column table, column 1. See in Appendix 3. A profile in summary form of the pre-war customs and traditions, values and beliefs is also presented in this table.

The next chapter presents a detailed descriptive account of the core features of the pre-WWII Lithuanian culture of the present-day sample in Perth, Western Australia.