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BETWEEN THE LORD AND THE JEW:
SOME REMARKS ON THE IDENTITY STRUCTURE
OF BELARUSIAN *KOLKHOZNIK*S
IN THE LATE TWENTIETH AND EARLY
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES*

Abstract

Following an ethnographic field study, the author presents her findings on the cognitive collective identity of Belarusian *kolkhoznik*s. Their self-definition as a group is based on the semiotic oppositions: peasant–'lord', peasant–Jew, and Christian–Jew, and it testifies to a longevity, or *longue durée*, of pre-modern mechanisms of conceptualising the social reality. The contemporary *kolkhoznik* defines himself as a simple (uneducated) but assiduous man, as opposed to his lord; in contrast to Jews, the *kolkhoznik*s cultivate the land (as farmers) and are baptised. The post-serfdom identity of the 'Christian *kolkhoznik*s of-this-place' is immersed in a mythical worldview and indifferent to any modern ideological and/ or political projects.

Keywords: Belarus, *kolkhoz*, social identity, peasants, Jews, Christians.

I
INTRODUCTION

An anthropologist interested in the social-cultural self-awareness of Belarusian *muzhik*s-*kolkhoznik*s, who aims to grasp the structure and mechanisms of their collective identity, and understand their mentality, needs to work in dialogue with the study subjects. It is a dialogue of this sort that formed my research experience over the recent

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dozen-or-so years (1993–2010), in the course of qualitative research using the ethnographic field method carried out in some *kolkhoz* villages[1] of the western and eastern Belarus.[2] The sources gathered in the course of my expedition have formed a set of some seven-hundred conversations that have prevalently featured interviewees aged over sixty; this choice of the interlocutors was not an intended one, and it only testifies to the demographic specificity of Belarusian villages.[3] Analysis of the talks has focused on identifying the values, norms or standards, and rules divulging in the *kolkhozniks'* identity narration, as well as on the basic semiotic oppositions and distinctive features. It allowed for an insight into the contents, structure, and methods of constructing a collective identity of the group in question, in its characteristic social and historical

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[1] The terms *kolkhoz* village and *kolkhoznik* are my assumed operational generalisation, derived from the way in which the interlocutors perceive the reality. Regardless of the organisational structure of agricultural production that actually functions in a given area (*kolkhoz* or *sovkhoz* and, more and more frequently in the recent decade, joint-stock companies and enterprises of various other sorts), the rural dwellers have incessantly been defining themselves as *kolkhozniks*.

[2] The research was done in some seventy villages of the western Belarus (counties of Berestovitsa, Grodno, Lida, Mosty and Voronovo in Grodno region; counties of Ivatsevichy, Luninets, Pinsk and Stolin in Brest region) and approx. forty in the east of Belarus (counties of Khoyniki, Kalinkovichy and Mozyr in Gomel region; counties of Drybin, Gorki and Mstislav in Mogilev region; Dubrovno county in Vitebsk region). In most cases, these villages were distant from any larger hubs, or county (regional) cities. For more on the method and conditions of the research, see: Anna Engelking, 'The *natsyas* of the Grodno region of Belarus: a field study', *Nations and Nationalism*, v, 2 (1999), 175–206; *eadem, Kołchoźnicy. Antropologiczne studium tożsamości wsi białoruskiej przełomu XX i XXI wieku* (Monografie Fundacji na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej, Toruń, 2012). Also, cf. Justyna Straczuk, *Język a tożsamość człowieka w warunkach społecznej wielojęzyczności. Pogranicze polsko-litewsko-białoruskie* (Warsaw, 1999), 31–8; *eadem, Cmentarz i stół. Pogranicze prawosławno-katolickie w Polsce i na Białorusi* (Monografie Fundacji na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej. Seria Humanistyczna, Wrocław, 2006), 34–42.

[3] A definite majority of the interlocutors had an education of a few primary-school classes, although there were illiterate people along with those with secondary and university-level background. All used a Belarusian local dialect, which in the northern region was shaped into a Belarusian-Russian *trasyanka*; in Polesia, its form was transitory, oscillating toward Ukrainian dialects; and, in the north-western multilingual area of Orthodox–Catholic borderland, the talks with the Catholics were run, in most cases, in Polish. Around 50% of the interviewees were of the Orthodox religion, another 50%-or-so being Catholics.

context.[4] Resulting from an anthropological interpretation, the image of this identity reflects the mentality of the eldest generation, which appears to continue certain pre-modern worldview models. This would not mean that the mentality becomes a matter of the past once its exponents pass away: after all, a mental change is a long-lasting process.

In my talks with the *kolkhoznik*s, accompanying their memory, one goes back in the stratum of developments and occurrences to the early twentieth century, whereas in the layer of senses or meanings, we touch the archaic layers of cultural consciousness (and unconsciousness) dating back to the time before the era of modernisation and modern nationalisms. Although the self-awareness of this group refers to the modern time, there is no doubt that what we simultaneously deal with in its case is a pre-modern peasant mentality which can be looked at today, following the inspiration of certain researchers of post-Soviet Belarusianness, in terms of 'sovietised ethnicity'[5] or a 'Belarusian neo-feudalism'.[6] In investigating the *kolkhozniks*' identity narrative, the anthropologist touches certain *longue durée* processes: the persistence of mental structures, unconscious categories of culture, and a peasant ethos which, realised in this case in its *kolkhoznik* variant, ought perhaps to be named a 'post-peasant ethos'.

It is the task for the anthropologist to grasp the in-group, subjective perspective of the community under investigation: its 'self-perception', 'self-stereotype', 'self-image', and to describe in symbolic, rather than naturalistic, categories. This point of view is expressed, among other things, in the replies to the question of key importance to a collective identity: 'Who are the others?', and, consequently, 'Who are we, as related to the others?'. As the researchers into the 'our' vs. 'other' opposition assume,

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[4] For a detailed take on the subject, cf. my book *Kołchoźnicy*. This article presents some of the major findings and conclusions; for more of them, see Anna Engelking, 'Mentality of Kolkhoz Inhabitants: Research Notes from Grodno Region in Belarus', *International Journal of Sociology* xxxi, 4: *Belarus: Between the East and the West II* (2001/2002), 64–78; *eadem*, 'Simple Hardworking Christian Folks, or the Self-Image of Contemporary Belarusian *Kolkhozniks*: An Anthropologist's Assessment of a Two-Decade Research Study', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, xxvii, 2 (2013), 260–79.

[5] Ryszard Radzik, 'Kulturowo-cywilizacyjna tożsamość społeczeństwa Białorusi', in Ireneusz Topolski (ed.), *Białoruś w stosunkach międzynarodowych* (Lublin, 2009), 46.

[6] Magdalena Zowczak, 'Brasławszczyzna, białoruska prowincja. Szkice z kultury symbolicznej', *Polska Sztuka Ludowa. Konteksty*, lii, 1 (1998), 27.

the concepts or ideas of a group about itself oppose, and form a peculiar negative of the group's concepts or ideas about the others. It thus suffices to reverse these concepts/ideas, to reshape the negative into a positive, in order to obtain a self-image of a group, and learn what are the conditions that the 'our' are obligated to satisfy.[7]

Ludwik Stomma has indicated, with respect to nineteenth-century Polish-language peasant populations in the Austrian and Russian partitions areas, four primary criteria for distinguishing the others, i.e.: linguistic, territorial, class-and-professional, and religious. Based on these, by applying the 'negative-into-positive reshape' mechanism, he formulated a "specific definition of Polish peasant of the nineteenth and late nineteenth/early twentieth century", reading thus: "(i) I am of-this-place (local); (ii) I am a peasant/farmer; (iii) I am a Catholic".

Obviously, such a selection of elements of peasant's self-definition, as well as their hierarchy, must have their social-and-historical conditions determining their shape and their resulting consequences.[8]

Therefore, if taking into account the social-and-historical determinants of the twentieth-century Belarus – we refer the abovementioned approach to the local *kolkhoznik*s of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, it becomes apparent that identical criteria prove applicable to this group and the self-definition is composed of the analogous elements, that is: (i) I am of-this-place; (ii) I am a *kolkhoznik*; and, (iii) I am a Christian (Orthodox/Catholic).

Based on analysis of the notional categories used by the interlocutors, fundamental to the second and third of the mentioned identity fields (the first have been covered by me elsewhere[9])

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[7] Ludwik Stomma, *Antropologia kultury wsi polskiej XIX wieku* (Warsaw, 1986), 63.

[8] *Ibidem*; for more on the topic, see pp. 56–64.

[9] The issue of 'local' identity ('of-this-placeness') of inhabitants of Belarusian rural areas has been tackled, i.a., in my articles: 'Tożsamość "tutejsza" na wielojęzycznym pograniczu. Spostrzeżenia na przykładzie parafii nackiej', in Elżbieta Smułkowa and Anna Engelking (eds.), *Język a tożsamość na pograniczu kultur* (Prace Katedry Kultury Białoruskiej Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 1, Białystok, 2000), 17–22; Anna Engelking, '"Nacja" i "narodowość" jako kategorie identyfikacji i tożsamości mieszkańców wsi na wschodzie Białorusi', in Elżbieta Smułkowa and Anna Engelking (eds.), *Pogranicza Białorusi w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej* (Warsaw, 2007), 209–23; Anna Engelking, 'Old and new questions concerning

are the oppositions: peasant–lord; peasant–Jew; and, Christian–Jew. The collective identity of dwellers of Belarusian villages as the *local Christian kolkhoznik*s, based on these oppositions and basically neutral to any modern ideological and political projects, is relativised to the two images (pictures, stereotypes). These are the images of historical and symbolical social partners of the traditional peasant, that is, lord and Jew, both permanently functioning in the collective imagination and imbued with a vivid and rich content.

<div align="center">II</div>

KOLKHOZNIK, IN RELATION TO HIS LORD

What becomes apparent in the conversations with the *kolkhoznik*s is a significant regularity: in statements referring to their collective identity – including those used for self-definitions – the word *muzhik* does not, in general, appear as an autonomous category: it is incessantly accompanied by the 'lord': an estate owner, a nobleman, 'director', an educated man, resident of a town. It is as if, in order to describe himself, a peasant would first have to say what are the characteristics of (the) lord – as observed by Józef Chałasiński, who wrote:

> the basic … social attitudes [of the former peasant], his social personality, are organised not around his personal individuality but around the lord.[10]

Around the lord who, let us add, represents the 'social stereotype of *the other*'.[11]

The peasant myth of origin, as told by the interlocutors (in a variety of variants), adequately introduces one into a relation between the

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Belarusian "local" identity', *Sprawy Narodowościowe*, N.S., 31 (2007), 131–44. The studies of importance to the issue of Belarusian 'local' identity moreover include: Włodzimierz Pawluczuk, 'Białorusini jako grupa etniczna– próba interpretacji socjologicznej', *Studia Socjologiczne*, viii, 2 (1968), 35–50; *idem, Światopogląd jednostki w warunkach rozpadu społeczności tradycyjnej* (Warsaw, 1972); Ryszard Radzik, *Między zbiorowością etniczną a wspólnotą narodową. Białorusini na tle przemian narodowych w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej XIX stulecia* (Lublin, 2000).

[10] Józef Chałasiński, *Młode pokolenie chłopów. Procesy i zagadnienia kształtowania się warstwy chłopskiej w Polsce*, (2 vols., Warsaw, 1938), i: *Społeczne podłoże ruchów młodzieży wiejskiej w Polsce*, 73.

[11] Roch Sulima, *Słowo i etos. Szkice o kulturze* (Cracow, 1992), 145.

stereotype of *kolkhoznik* and the one of lord.[12] The myth instructs the peasant that no subjectivity or autonomy is vested in him, for he belongs to his lord.[13] What the myth teaches, besides, is that peasant is characterised by a composition of negative traits that, when related to the lord, constitute his worseness and inferiority.[14]

The origin myth sanctions the rule whereby a peasant is a human of an 'inferior species'[15] when compared to a lord:

> Such was the occurrence from God that there was Cain and Abel, the two brothers. Abel, he was from a noble family. But Cain killed his brother; the reason was his offering did not reach God. … And a nobleman never kills; wouldn't kill a man. For under Nikolai [Tsar Nicholas II], when there was the tsarist government, a nobleman wouldn't be judged by a court, … for they knew he wouldn't do anything of evil. [G97Roub.AR] Some day, a father had two sons. And the father was fond of drinking. Well, it's just, the father was walking, drunk, down the road, and the two sons were walking too. One of the sons left the father, and the other lifted him, very nicely dried him off, led him to the hut, and had him lay [in bed]. And the father called him a *nobleman*. And named the other one a *boor*. A *boor* means a simple man. I'm just saying, well, nobility came on from there. [G93Ser.MM].

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[12] On the folk vision of the origin of various social strata, cf. Olga V. Belova, *'Narodnaya Bibliya': Vostochnoslovyanskie etiologicheskie legendy* (Traditsionnaya dukhovnaya kul'tura slavyan. Publikatsiya tekstov, Moscow, 2004), 65–72, and *passim*; Ryszard Tomicki, 'Ludowe mity o stworzeniu człowieka. Z badań nad synkretyzmem mitologicznym w Europie Wschodniej i Południowej oraz w Azji Północnej', *Etnografia Polska*, xxiv, 2 (1980), 57–8, 64–5; Magdalena Zowczak, *Biblia ludowa. Interpretacje wątków biblijnych w kulturze ludowej* (Fundacja na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej. Seria Humanistyczna, Wrocław, 2000), 139–83.

[13] "Here, in our place, there was Lithuania, up to the Niemen. Later on, as Lithuania merged with Poland, those lords that were coming here, they took their men with them." [G94Kras.MJ].

[14] "I read in a book where the nobility came from. … There was the war, and whoever went to the war a volunteer, then they called [them] *lords*, and gave [them] estates. Whoever was appointed for the army, those were given some land, and named *nobility* … . And those who renounced that war, escaped to the woods, then they were called *farmhands* and were given nothing. And they were serving." [G98Szaw.JS].

[15] The creation of an 'inferior-species' of beings (such as e.g. women, peasants, Jews, goats, or wasps) by a God's antagonist is to be found in folk aetiological myths; cf. Belova, *'Narodnaya Bibliya'*, 106–8, 147–50, and *passim*; Zowczak, *Biblia ludowa*, 139–55.

The quoted aetiological stories, where "Abel symbolises a group of the *our* and Cain, the groups of *others*",[16] place between the peasant/boor and the lord a fundamental opposition of social inferiority and superiority. This higher and lower social status, bestowed to both groups by the law of mythical archetype, and so constituting their definitional property and thereby fulfilling model-forming and normative functions, is reconfirmed by the interlocutors who assign the opposing autonomous features to each. The catalogue of these traits is dynamic and open-ended; they always take on a social-historical context and the local specificity. Always, however, and unalterably, these are the "aspects of cultural distinctiveness … that have their social significance."[17] As Józef Obrębski put it,

> Which particular objective feature is meaningful for a demarcation, should be decided by its being featured in the group's ethnic image, and its being elevated by members of the separate groups to the position of the discerning rule.[18]

Similarly, in Frederik Barth's view:

> The traits [of ethnical categories] that are taken into account are not a sum of 'objective differences' but just of those deemed by the actors themselves to be of essence. … Certain cultural features are used by the actors as signs and emblems of the differences, some other ones being ignored, whilst some relations deny any radical difference and tend to diminish them. … In determining membership in an ethnic group, solely factors of social importance have a say.[19]

It is only the 'discerning rule', distinctiveness, that brings about mutual separation of groups, which is correlative with the occurrence of their mutual stereotypes. And, it forms peculiar glasses through which the subjects categorising the social reality perceive it. While the reality is changeable and dynamic, the glasses tell one to see it through long-living distinctive oppositions.

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[16] Tomicki, 'Ludowe mity', 65.

[17] Józef Obrębski, 'Problem grup i zróżnicowań etnicznych w etnologii i jego socjologiczne ujęcie', in *idem*, *Dzisiejsi ludzie Polesia i inne eseje*, ed. Anna Engelking (Warsaw, 2005), 162.

[18] *Ibidem*, 172.

[19] Fredrik Barth, 'Grupy i granice etniczne: społeczna organizacja różnic kulturowych', in Marian Kempny and Ewa Nowicka (eds.), *Badanie kultury. Elementy teorii antropologicznej. Kontynuacje* (Warsaw, 2004), 353.

The *kolkhoznik*s of today invariably 'elevate to the position of the discerning rule' those stereotypical features which in a traditional image of the world were related to a hierarchical estate-based differentiation. They invariably emphasise the various aspects of lordly/noble 'superiority' which is opposed to their own peasant 'inferiority'; in terms of today's social reality, these primarily include education, material status, and attributes of power. Whoever has got none of these, remains a boor; it is as if, regardless of the transitions in the political and economic-social macro-scale, one could not forget that "peasants have descended from Ham,[20] the cursed son of Noah, and the noblemen, from Japheth, and therefore, naturally, the latter must be more respectable, and more pleasing to God."[21] And therefore, we can constantly hear about 'better' and 'worse' people; about lords and boors:

> They're better, that's it, and we're boors, that's it. That's the way it is with them. [G93Pap.JW]
> And the peasants, well, they're just like peasants. They call it *boors*, because they're boors. … So, a *boor*, a *boor*, a *boor*, and a boor will he be. [G98Nacz JK].

The 'better' partner of a 'worse' boor is unchangeably referred by the *kolkhoznik*'s mythical thought to the nobleman model, inscribed in the collective memory, and is primarily perceived as a *noble* one. The category of *nobleness* extends, among other things, to attributes such as social-and-legal predominance over the peasant, richness, and connotations with Polishness. The sphere of etiquette is part of the picture as well (the rules of good manners, social graces, the grammar of politeness, the taboo of cursing), and is usually described by *kolkhoznik*s as *culture*, *delicacy*, or *politeness*.

Simplicity (commonness), a feature that constitutes the stereotype (and, self-stereotype) of *simple muzhik* and is always defined in a relation to *cultured* or *cultivated* and *delicate* lord, is an autonomous pole of *nobleness*. Peasants – those who did villein service a few generations earlier, never waged a war, and were subjected to corporal punishments – are perceived not only as those who 'lived indigently'

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[20] The name 'Ham', written in Polish *Cham*, became commonised as a *cham*, meaning a boor [ed.].

[21] Ludwik Czarkowski, 'Wzajemny stosunek stanów na Podlasiu. Notatka etnograficzna', *Materiały Antropologiczno-Archeologiczne i Etnograficzne*, i, 2, (1896), 6.

but primarily, as beings of a lower cultural standard, if not completely deprived of culture. A *muzhik* would address the others with an informal *you*, instead of *Sir/Madam*, swears, is capable of disparaging the others, easily gets into a fight; in a word, a rude and ill-mannered, boorish and brusque, brutal and, downright, dangerous figure. He never observes any manners; is 'fierce and banditous', as a female interlocutor, born in a petty nobleman village near Lida, described the peasants.

Combined within the *simplicity* stereotype are cultural primitivism and low material status, ascribed to Belarusian peasants, and the contempt shared with respect to them among the higher social strata:

> It is considered that a nobleman is a cultured man, but a boor is not. Oh yes, a man of rough-hewn making. // Why is it said that some are cultured while the others are not? Aren't they all of the same sort? // Not of the same sort, no. A boor can say some undignified words, of sorts. But, a nobleman… Cultured people, cultured everything. Talking the nice way, living the normal way. And, the boors… They call them, in *Russki* [Russian], *chelovek vtorogo sorta* ['inferior-quality man']. [G98Mick.RA].

The opposition culture–lack of culture (culture–nature), being a semiotic counterpart of our–other and man–non-man, is realised here in its 'surface variants', such as *noble–simple* or *cultured–savage*. Importantly, it seems that peasants accept this superiority stereotype projected on them by the 'masters'/'lords' and deem it their own; it seemingly simultaneously functions as a self-stereotype, thus enduringly inscribing the worseness trait in the collective identity of the peasant cast.[22] Furthermore, as attested by the talks with the *kolkhoznik*s, they keep on reproducing it even when it is no longer intelligible.

> I cannot remember why they are the nobility. Well, must've been, from some lords, this nobility. … I can't explain it out to you. … Some noble ones, the nobility. The way they talk is noble, and ours is simple; then, maybe they're the better ones? [G93MMoż.IP].

The opposition of a *noble* Abel and a *simple* Cain focuses around work–non-work, the key and structuring opposition in the peasants'

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[22] I use the term 'cast' as described in Aleksander Hertz, *Żydzi w kulturze polskiej*, introd. Czesław Miłosz (2nd extended edn., Biblioteka Więzi, 57, Warsaw, 2003), 92; for more, see *ibidem*, 91–124.

perception of the social environment. The conviction that the lords'
jobs are not a work – a view that is sanctioned by the origin myth,
determining that Abel's descendants "did nothing but fared well"[23]
– is a stereotype deeply rooted in the peasant culture, for which only
the farmer's effort is describable in terms of work, or labour.[24] In his
Młode pokolenie chłopów ['Peasants of the young generation'], a work
that considers, among other things, the longevity of a "traditional
form of the peasant life, which took shape in the serfdom period",
and analyses a "primary opposition of the social-and-moral models
of lord and peasant", Józef Chałasiński wrote:

> The content of these models is describable as follows: Lord is an autono-
> mous being; anything he does becomes valuable by itself, without a purpose
> of use in its design – the lord himself adds value to whatever he does. His
> work, entertainment, thinking never call for an external justification in
> terms of a purpose to be served, or an effect to be brought about. The lord
> himself is a measure and a judge of values. He is a ruler for himself. In
> contrast to lord, peasant *is there to labour*. Rather than giving meaning to
> the labour, it is the labour that gives peasant a meaning. Doing labour
> is the peasant's surviving argument. The significance of what he does finally
> makes sense not because of the peasant himself but because of the labour.
> His existence is not substantiated because of himself but the grounds for it
> are external: it is the perennial order of the society and of the world where
> 'a peasant shall always be a peasant'. … The two models, lord and peasant,
> form a rule that sorts two social circles out: the peasant and the lordly one.
> The individuals belonging to these two circles have a different view of the
> society as a whole. In the lordly circle's perception, human individuality

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[23] Oskar Kolberg, *Krakowskie*, pt. 3, ed. Józef Gajek and Marian Sobieski (Dzieła
wszystkie, vii, Wrocław *et al.*, 1962), 8.

[24] The peasants' understanding of work on the land, with which they contrast
the intellectual activities of professionals, i.e. 'the lords' – have been analysed by
sociologists, with J. Chałasiński coming to the fore with his *Młode pokolenie chłopów*;
the other studies of relevance being: Eugenia Jagiełło-Łysiowa, 'Praca jako wartość
w środowisku chłopsko-rolniczym', *Wieś Współczesna. Pismo Ruchu Ludowego*, xii,
6 (1968), 19–31; *eadem*, 'Praca. Cechy formalne i cechy-wartości', in Czesław Kos
(ed.), *Przeobrażenia kulturowe wsi. Analiza głównych zagadnień i próba sformułowania
refleksji teoretycznych. Wybór studiów* (Warsaw, 1981), 75–106; Józef Styk, *Ewolucja
chłopskiego systemu wartości. Analiza historyczno-socjologiczna* (Rozprawy Między-
uczelnianego Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii. Rozprawy Habilitacyjne, 1, Lublin,
1988); in a linguistic aspect, cf. Małgorzata Mazurkiewicz, 'Praca i "sacrum"
w polszczyźnie ludowej', *Etnolingwistyka*, ii (1989), 7–28.

is dominant; the society as viewed by the peasant circle is a hierarchy of social positions.[25]

The notional structures categorising the social universe are *longue durée* phenomena; hence, the work–non-work opposition constitutes the contradistinction of 'lords', the non-working ones, and *muzhiks-kolkhoznik*s as people performing peasant work on the land. Just as in the period before the *kolkhoz* system, 'hardworking people' do work in the *kolkhoz* while the lords govern – meaning, rule and rob, have money and an 'easy life'.[26]

Of all the interlocutors, possibly the most comprehensive definition of the opposition *non-working lord–working non-lord* was expressed by a man named Jan from Peluntse, a village not far from Radun', who ascribes to the 'lord' the characteristics related to a higher social status and education background, and explicitly positions him in the non-work area, described in terms of authority and affluence. In such a concept, the interviewee has opposed the 'lord', definitely a follow-up of the traditional stereotype of the feudal 'good lord', to the category of simple and laborious man he identified himself with:

> A lord is the one who knows how to handle the people, and a lord is who understands everything and has his people to manage. And a simple man, hardworking, how come he could be a lord? A lord is the one who never works at all, and can [= knows how to] deal with people, such one is a lord. And the one who is rich, even if he has no people to manage. [G93Pielun.JD].

The phrase "a simple man, hardworking, how come he could be a lord?" is an extremely expressive self-definition of (a) *kolkhoznik*,

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[25] Chałasiński, *Młode pokolenie chłopów*, 71–2 [italicised by J.C.].

[26] "Now, all's taken away by the lords-and-masters [the interlocutor incidentally uses the word *pańszczyzna*, which normally stands for 'serfdom' but the etymological ambiguity seems legitimate – trans. note] [*laughs*]. // Well, aren't there any lords now? // Now, there's even more of the lords. More of the lords! // What do you mean, more? // Ooh! Certainly more. The *predsedatel* [*kolkhoz* chairman]'s a lord, the deputy's a lord, the agronomist's a lord, the senior agronomist's a lord, the zootechnician's a lord, the manager of the cattle's a lord, the foreman's a lord... How many lords, in every village? The lords, all of them! And everyone travels around by car." [G99Pap.SK].

one that points out to the core of this community's collective identity. *Simplicity* and assiduity, the significant 'bricks' (distinctive features) used here to construct an image of member of one's own group, are set against those of lord, the structural opponent, a 'non-simple' (educated) and non-working man. Education and labour, the attributes 'elevated to the position of the discerning rule', are found to be common in the self-identification formulas used by the *kolkhoznik*s, whereby their own identity is, of necessity, described as a *simple folks, hardworking people*, a *mediocre nation*, and the like. All these phrases refer one back to the low position, marked with worseness, which *kolkhoznik*s – similarly to their forefathers, at one time – held within the social structure.

In line with the idea behind the origin myth, the *kolkhoznik*s' interpretation of the social structure sees lords and peasants as part of the opposition sequences: non-working–working; ruling–subject; better–worse; higher–lower in the hierarchy; cultured/cultivated–common/boorish; delicate–coarse; rich–poor; educated–unlettered. The oppositions thus outlined, on a 'hierarchical complementariness' basis,[27] are expressed in most various specifications, out of which the self-image of contemporary *kolkhoznik* emerges – found to be a continuant of the self-stereotype of the feudal-period peasant and a continuant of rustic conceptualisation of social structure.

Today's *kolkhoznik*s are related, based on a hierarchical complementarity, with the *kolkhoz* authorities: the new, modern 'lords'. The peasant–lord opposition functions in the social reality as a symbolic tool with which it is segmented and hierarchised, regardless of the historical and social realities it encounters. Whether the patriarchal lord of yore, contrasted with villein, or interwar-period estate owner and his farmhands, or the apparently undistinguishable local petty nobles and peasants populating the villages in various periods of the last century, or a modern *predsedatel* and 'his' *kolkhoznik*s, or the educated 'city' man and the rural uneducated man – their picture will always remain dual, featuring those higher up and those lower in the social hierarchy. In terms of mythical thought, they remain the lords and the boors, which testifies to a social validity of the models and

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[27] Charles Taylor, 'Źródła współczesnej tożsamości', trans. Andrzej Kopacki, in Krzysztof Michalski (ed.), *Tożsamość w czasach zmiany, Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo* (Demokracja – Znak, Cracow, 1995), 18–19.

values represented by this opposition – and, to the fact that there is no peasant without a lord or master.

<div align="center">III</div>

<div align="center">*KOLKHOZNIK*, AS RELATED TO JEW</div>

Let us bear in mind that Noah had three sons: apart from Ham and Japheth, there was Shem. The identity discourse of Belarusian *kolkhoznik*s features Jews as a crucial group to their image of themselves. Jews do not work on the land and are not Christians, but have been – and still are, in the collective memory – inseparably connected with peasants as well as with lords. Traditionally dealing with commerce, trades, and business intermediation, form the third vertex of the estate society-based triangle that structurises the *kolkhoznik* image of social universe. The stereotypical three-element structure: peasants–lords–Jews, whose third element, as is the case with the second, would not be confirmed as of today in terms of physical occurrence of traditional representatives of these feudal-patriarchal categories, continually functions as a model and seeks socially valid contents to fill it in. In the symbolic perspective, the image of Jew[28] co-shapes the collective identity of our contemporary dwellers of Belarusian villages according to the rules analogical to those prevalent in their ancestors' time. The negative reflection of the Jew stereotype highlights the distinctive features of the self-image of *muzhik* and *kolkhoznik*, whilst the *muzhik*–Jew relation, similarly as *muzhik*–lord, refers to the foundations of the construction of a traditional rustic image of

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[28] The issue of image (alternatively: model, stereotype, picture) of Jew in Polish culture, including folk culture, was first critically tackled by A. Hertz in his book *Żydzi w kulturze polskiej* (see, esp. 101–5, 253–87). Hertz was convinced that investigation of "what sort of an image of one group, and of each of its members, is reflected in the consciousness of members of the other group" and of "the mechanics of occurrence [of this image]" has a colossal bearing on apprehension of the intergroup and interpersonal relations". Therefore, it ranks "among the most interesting, and most important, issues in sociology and anthropology" (*ibidem*, 253). This author has consequently proposed a substantial and methodical proposition of a project of such research; cf. *ibidem*, 253–87. These issues have been followed up, based on ethnographic field studies, by two Polish works, in the first place: Alina Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej* (Warsaw, 1992); and, Paweł Buszko, *'Żyd Żydem'. Wizerunek Żyda w kulturze ludowej podlaskich prawosławnych Białorusinów. Miasteczko Orla* (Warsaw, 2012).

the social environment as well as to the place occupied by today's *kolkhoznik* within it.

When evoking the memory of the Jewish neighbours, their position and functions within the countryside social and cultural system, our interlocutors present them in relation to themselves; while talking about themselves, they compare themselves against the Jews, as they do with respect to the nobility or townspeople. First of all, Jews, as opposed to *us,* do not work on the land. This basic definitive feature of *kolkhoznik*, which constitutes his identity, is thus a feature a Jew would lack: "The Jews, they didn't do a thing. They kept the shops, and carried on trading. And our people, they drudged on the land." [B96Ozer.FJ]. The occupations of Jew, similarly to those of lord/master, situate him on the opposite pole from peasant. Like lord's occupations, the jobs done by Jew situate the latter at the pole opposite to peasant. Like lord, Jew is defined through his non-working on the land.

Dealing with, or *busyness*, are the area of activity ascribed to the Jew; it appears that the opposition to work is formed in this case of non-work which is conceived as *busyness*.

> They were dealing here: baking some rolls, or beer, some beer-house… They were dealing with some trade: a shoemaker's, a tailor's. Well, that's the sort they had. … Selling something, buying, some calf, or what. Yeah, that's the job they did. And they wouldn't do farm work. … They were incapable of it, I guess. [G98Nacz.WK].

Jews and land are mutually exclusive categories. Conversely to peasant, who is symbolically attached to the land, Jew never works on land; thus, by definition, he is *incapable* of doing such work, which, for one thing, heightens his inversiveness toward peasant and, for another, in a negative reflection, intensifies and confirms the settled status of the local peasants while also inscribing in the matrix of their identity an antagonistic opposition with respect to all those who *are wandering around* among them, *settling down* in the village or *arriving into* it.[29]

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[29] The opposition locals–non-locals, whose second segment extends, in today's *kolkhoz* villages, for all those who could potentially be included in the broad category of the *navolotch* (lit., 'those who have gadded about, roamed in') forms the basic mechanism for constructing the third definition field, beside the identity of peasant and Christian, for the *kolkhoznik*'s self-stereotype: his local identity.

The Jewish non-work is thus part of the rural–urban opposition as a determinant of what is non-rural but indispensable for the functioning of a rural environment. For a peasant to be able to work, the Jew must *be dealing*, exchanging the products of the peasant's labour for money and commodity. For the peasant to stay permanently in the village, the Jew must constantly move around, touring the villages and offering the settled peasants their services which enable to expand their relations with a broader social milieu. It is the Jewish neighbours of this sort, busy and mobile, in contrast to the peasants, that have settled in the memory of the *kolkhoznik*s.[30]

From the standpoint of a rustic stereotype, Jew, who never works on the land, always sides with the lord, as justified by the traditional system of social relations. The categories of lord/master and Jew are close to each other, often to the degree that they are potentially reciprocally replaceable as far as the relation to peasant is concerned. The area shared by Jew and lord is 'culture': after all, both are the *learned men*. Well-off Jews were commonly addressed *sir*; the title was also used when talking about them.[31]

> How did the men from the village address a nobleman? // 'Sir', they called him. … They said 'sir'. It's like the *tovarishch* ['Comrade'] with the *Russki*s [Russians] now. *Tovarishch*. // And, what were the Jews addressed? // 'Sir', same thing. [G93Waw.HD].

A perennially 'local' dweller of a *kolkhoz* village, when confronted with representatives of the *navolotch*, such as *tchernobylets*s (i.e. people displaced from the Tchernobyl zone), the *naezdne* ('arrivals') from Belarus or Russia, or the *osadniki* ('settlers') appearing before WWII in Western Belarus, reconfirms and reinforces the 'local' peasant identity whose core is contained in the chorus motif repeated by the *kolkhoznik*s: "I was born here, and will die here."

[30] "There were Jews before the war. Not here in our village, but in Radun'. And, they arrived, … bought out things here." [G93Pielun.JD]. "They're going on a Sunday. And they've already taken that calf, or that flaxseed. They were buying, well, everything. Eggs, hens were they buying. Then, we all carried [the merchandise] for them." [G93Pap.MS].

[31] Cf. the observations made in Podlachia (Podlasie) area in late nineteenth century: "Whereas the peasants and the petty noblemen approach the Jew on first-name terms, only reserving the 'sir' for those wearing European-style attires, the burgher calls him 'you' in plural, or, 'mister Mosiek, Jankiel, *etc.*'. … The unskilled-labourer class … often title him 'sir', or even salute him, if not, and I could see some single cases, kiss his hand" (Czarkowski, 'Wzajemny stosunek', 14–15).

Although the Jewish non-work: commerce, crafts, agency is not identified with the lordly activities, in a strict sense, it provides the Jew with easy gain – as the case is with the lord, but contrary to the peasant. The result is that Jew acquires the characteristic traits of the lord's image – primarily, affluence, education, and culture, all alien to the stereotypical *muzhik*. Jew is set by the interlocutors against *simple* peasant as an embodiment of reason and education. The opposition of competence (education) and lack of competence, which, related to the lord–peasant relation, is formulated in the oppositions *cultured* (*cultivated*) and *uncultured* (*uncultivated*) and *noble–simple*, here, in the Jew–peasant relation, is expressed in the oppositions: learned–unlearned, reasonable–unreasonable, which are reducible to a wise–stupid opposition.

> I respected the Jews, they were very wise, there were no stupid ones. [G97Czesz.TK].
> Jews were learned, read books, lived like humans. [B95Olm.KS].

In the stereotypical figure of Jew as evoked by our interlocutors, embodied is the 'classical mediation formula', expressed by Ludwik Stomma as: '$x = (y + z)$ and $(-y + -z)$'[32] – meaning that one belongs to the condition y and z and, simultaneously, to none of them. A Jew is not a lord – neither a nobleman nor a squire, who is related to peasant by a feudal hierarchical complementarity in the common land possession system. Yet, he has certain lordly attributes: does not do any farm work, or live in the countryside; his occupations require not the hands as much as the head fit. In our contemporary variant of the stereotype, as represented by the *kolkhoznik*s, he is closer to the modern professional 'master' than a post-feudal property owner. Neither is Jew a peasant, but he is the indispensable link of the exchange of goods and services between the rural and urban areas, being the precondition for efficient peasant labour. Remaining in strict touch with peasant, Jew breaks his isolation from the broader world. With such a traditional economic-and-social configuration, with its symbolic representation in the image of the world where the enterprising Jew is a pendant of the settled peasant, there cannot be a peasant without a Jew. The historical lords and Jews are long gone, but as

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[32] Stomma, *Antropologia kultury*, 154.

long as the traditional cultural model of peasant remains fundamental to the *kolkhoznik*s' collective identity, its constitutive elements are contained within it – i.e. the categories of lord/master and Jew, as the conceptual categorisation compartments that incessantly call for being filled with current contents of social life. The *kolkhoznik* of today is in incessant search for components of this peasant-lordly-Jewish arrangement, confronting his traditional image of the social universe with the altered environment, featuring no lords or Jews.

Within the opposition rural–urban, Jew is ascribed to town (small town), a category that entails a whole series of non-peasant positions in the *kolkhoznik* image of social structure. They are reflected in the connotation sequence: city/town–office–authority, where the folk interpretation of the social environment inscribes the figure of Jew on an obligatory basis, as a definitional 'active subject'. For, once *simplicity* is ascribed to village, and literacy (*gramota*) to town, only the latter may be the appropriate, definitional location for the learned Jew.

> In Moscow, where there's some manager, then most of them are all Jews. [G93Czesz.TK].
> They work in the shops, and who knows where they don't work, and in the managements they work, in the majority. [G93Radz.WZ].

Linking the stereotypical Jew with town, office, and authority extends to the past and embraces the present time. Jews were at power in Poland; they govern in Minsk, in Moscow, and elsewhere in the world, in the main. They rule in towns and cities, and in *kolkhoz*es too. Perhaps they are just assigned the ruling and governing exercises?[33] As is shown by the following account on a Jewish *predsedatel* of a *kolkhoz*, who embodies the feudal model of good lord, along with frequent

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[33] The folk-type thought seems convinced about it. Russian ethno-linguist Olga Frolova interestingly analyses, using the material of jokes, press releases and common utterances, the "presupposition whereby Jew ought of necessity to be a superior, hold a managerial position" and, regardless of it, the common conviction about an alien background of authority, as expressed by the formula "If he's on a top, then must be a Jew". To Frolova's mind, this feature characterises an anti-Semitic image of *Jew*-2 that "paradoxically co-appears in the modern Russian society" in parallel with the traditional and "ethnically tolerant image of *Jew*-1", see *eadem*, 'Evrei v soznanii sovremennogo russkogo obyvatelya', in Olga V. Belova (ed.), *Svoǐ ili chuzhoǐ? Evrei i slavyane glazami drug druga. Sbornik stateǐ* (Akademicheskaya Seriya, 11, Moscow, 2003), 240, 239–41, 243–6.

reminiscences of appearance of Jews in the cast of *kolkhoz* authorities, the interlocutors seem to give a 'yes' answer to this question:

> The Aronov man was the *predsedatel* in this place. A Jew also, and how good a man he was! The way he dealt with people was very kind. You'd go and ask, be it for a car, or anything, and he'd never refuse you. You know, he had a club built in every village. … And, he put things in an order, so, oh my-my! … The people were disciplined under him, and they worked well. Good, good people, the Jews! [M04Masz.AS].

In our time, a clerk, official or superior is excellently fit for fulfilling the stereotypical category of Jew; the linkage to the historical Jew is their doing mental work while doing no labour on land, and his social-hierarchy rank is higher than that of *kolkhoznik*. The mingling figures of professional, official, or specialist in services and trade, into a common category of 'symbolic Jew' is observable in the *kolkhoznik*s' utterances on the authorities, where the Jewishness of the functional workers in the *kolkhoz* and commune (*selsovet*) appears as their obvious, innate property. The conditions of this universal category of learned Jew, who does not work but just *deals with* things, can also be satisfied by, for instance, a Catholic trader not working in a *kolkhoz*, e.g. in Dubrovno county near the border with Russia.[34]

Having lost the semantic relation to the sphere of religion or ethnicity, *Jew* begins to mean, simply, 'the one who deals with trading (or commerce)'.[35]

As one listens attentively to our interlocutors' stories about today's door-to-door sales, giving residents of *kolkhoz* villages access to basic foodstuffs and convenience goods, and the opportunity to sell their own produce, it seems that the only difference between these stories

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[34] "[Neighbour:] He's not willing to *kolkhozise* but goes about trading, buy-and-sell. [Housekeeper:] Ah, Jews only deal with this. … See, like we have Zagadaj man with us now: he's a Pole himself, and he's got a German wife." [W99Baj.WD].

[35] "To become considered a Jew by a confessional or national majority, one nowise has to assume Judaism. The features making up the folkloristic image of the 'Yid-ish' all too often are in no way associated with the Jewish [religious] tradition. … They concern easy-to-discern elements distinct from 'the own' tradition: anything that is not 'own' thus gets a 'national-confessional' tint."; Olga Belova, 'O "zhidakh" i "zhidovskoĭ vere" v narodnykh predstavleniyakh vostochnykh slavyan', in *eadem* (ed.), *Svoĭ ili chuzhoĭ?*, 173.

and the accounts on pre-war Jews trading in villages is the second-rate details of historically changing realities.

Today, any superior or official can be a Jew, as can be a man from the town, a trading Gypsy, a Catholic, or even a *kolkhoznik* neighbour: anyone who would be situated, in terms of the *kolkhoznik* interpretation of social environment, outside of the traditional peasant circle of land and work thereon; anyone who would be associated with education and power, or ascribed to things urban, to the category of those *dealing*, busy and moving, acting as a mediator between the *kolkhozniks'* local microcosm and the outer world. What such figures display is

> the image of a *Jew*-2, describable as an open-ended system, as opposed to [the traditional, ethnically tolerant] *Jew*-1. The former's most important features are: first, intellectual (non-religious) knowledge; second, wealth, money; third, authority and influence. … The reference group for the image of *Jew*-2 consists of rich entrepreneurs, individuals associated with the authorities, intellectual elite, scientists, and artists. The pragmatics of this image, which establishes the relation between the object of utterance and the speaker, can be described as 'the speaker's position is socially lower than that of the object of utterance'.[36]

And this is why the category of Jew, frequently merging into one with the category of lord/master, remains for modern *kolkhoznik*s an indispensable instrument of negative determination of the identity of their own community – an identity that has invariably been perceived as incarnation of social inferiority.

"The image of Jew … did not form a margin of culture but rather, its integral part", as Alina Cała has found.[37] Like the identity of peasant as farmer is impossible without an image of Jew doing no farm work, there is no identity of peasant as a Christian without an image of Jew. Like the 'negative' Jew must impersonate non-peasant features from the standpoint of peasant who constructs his stereotypical 'peasantliness', on the same principle, in order for peasant to self-determine as a Christian, he must do it in a relation to a mythical non-Christian Jew (or, in the extreme variant, anti-Christian Jew). Conceived as symbolic and definitional antagonists of Christians, Jews have been, and have remained, irreducibly inscribed in the mythical order determining

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[36] Frolova, 'Evrei w soznanii', 245–6.
[37] Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda*, 9.

the foundations of a religious worldview and religious identity of the Christian *kolkhoznik*s of both denominations.

The stereotype of non-Christian Jew whose "identity is fulfilled in the 'original scene' of the Passion getting repeated",[38] is deeply ingrained in the identity discourse of the *kolkhoznik*s. It is domesticated in the Catholic and Orthodox religious folklore: in the songs, apocryphal prayers, charming sicknesses away. The image of the death and resurrection of Jesus, constitutive as it is for the Christian identity, is not evocable without the image of Jews-the-deiciders being simultaneously evoked – as, for instance, in an Orthodox Easter song: "Thy Son was stolen by the Jews, // And crucified by them, // Christ resurrected, Christ resurrected, Christ resurrected." [G94Radz.TS]; or, as in a spell charm-away formula recorded in a Catholic-inhabited village: "Like Lord Jesus suffered badly from being captured by the Judases, it is no less tough to bear the suffering from enemy's evil eyes." [G97Dyl.BS]. The texts being referred to are exhaustively documented in the literature;[39] the functioning of these petrified mini-narratives is evidence that the myth they evoke has been permanently updated in the interlocutor's consciousness.

> What is the faith that the Jews profess? // They have a faith of their own. // Are they Christians? // No, they spanned Lord Jesus on the cross, didn't they. How could they be 'Christians'? [G94Fel.JU].

However, this aspect of the *kolkhoznik* identity discourse, which constitutes antagonistic, mutually exclusive identities of Jews as non-Christians and Christians as non-Jews, does not exhaust the function of the Jew stereotype. The genealogical aspect is no less important: after all, the background of Christians is Jewish. "There were such, yeah, just like Jews, and then these people were christened – and, [they have turned into] the Christians." [G98Szaw.JS]. For a *kolkhoznik*, christening is the ritual of transformation of a Jew into a Christian, repeating the mythical precedent of the baptism of Christ:

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[38] Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi. Antropologia przesądu (z cyklu: Obraz osobliwy)* (Seria z Wagą, Warsaw, 2008), 308.

[39] E.g., for the regions of Vilnius and Bratslav, cf.: Zowczak, *Biblia ludowa*; for Polesia, cf. Taty'ana A. Agapkina, Elena E. Levkievskaya, and Andreĭ L. Toporkov (eds.), *Polesskie zagovory (v zapisyakh 1970–1990 gg.)* (Traditsionnaya dukhovnaya kul'tura slavyan. Publikatsiya tekstov, Moscow, 2003).

> In Jordan the river, John the Baptist christened Lord Jesus. That's why there is faith now. You need to christen. Oh yes, children are christened. And if a child is unbaptised, then he's a Jew. Hence, the baptism. [G98Gin.AWD].

In these interlocutors' concept, the difference between Christian and Jew consists in being or not being baptised. Although they meet the basic condition of being humans defined as 'beings who believe in God', unbaptised Jews are not part of the Christian environment: they do not believe in Christ, and their unbelief boils down to not recognising the baptism. Therefore, "if a Jew assumes the Polish faith [i.e. Roman Catholicism], you need to christen him; and if an Orthodox, you don't need to, for he's christened already." [G93Pap.AW]. The Christian–non-Christian opposition, constitutive for the Christian–Jewish dissimilarity, gets reduced to baptised–unbaptised.

> Our manager had his child christened, and he was later called to the office, and they say, "What did you christen the kid for? That's not the way you should do it, is it." And he, that, "I wouldn't have him christened, but the mother said she's not going to bring up a Jew. Then, what could I do?" // So, she's not going to bring up a Jew? // Yes, bring up an unbaptised Jew is not what she'd do. You need to christen him. [G94Fel.JU].

This anecdote, referring to the period when religion was fought in the Soviet Union, pertinently shows that in the *kolkhoznik* image of the world, Jew is an unbaptised person, and unbaptised person is a Jew[40]. Baptism is, in turn, a ritual act that constitutes man as a social being[41] – in particular, as an individual once and for all ascribed to a specific faith-nation (*vera-natsya*) (Orthodox, that is, of *Russki [Ruthenian]*

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[40] The procedure of identifying an unbaptised person as Jew is primarily known from the ritual formula: "We have taken a Jew/pagan, and now we have brought a Christian", uttered by the godparents after return from christening; the custom was widespread in Slavdom territory (and elsewhere in Europe); cf. Jan S. Bystroń, *Słowiańskie obrzędy rodzinne. Obrzędy związane z narodzeniem dziecka* (Cracow, 1916), 131–2. For the concept of a „strong identification of Jew as an unbaptised person and, more importantly, vice versa" in Bratslav Land, cf. Dagmara Klosse, 'Sakramenty i sakramentalia jako źródła mocy', *Polska Sztuka Ludowa. Konteksty*, lii, 1 (1998), 60.

[41] The receptive function of Slavic birth rituals focused around baptism (and aimed at "adopting the child for a social union") is covered at length in Bystroń, *Słowiańskie obrzędy*, 76–141.

faith, or Catholic, that is, of *Polish faith*).[42] The instruction 'you need to christen' is the crucial imperative for a Christian *muzhik*'s identity, its defining norm. "A child is born, and then you know, the stuff… You need to christen him, or he will become a Jew." [G98Gin.AD].

Baptism is the symbolic core of the *kolkhozniks*' identity, a supreme value constituting this identity. 'We, people, the Christians' ('christened/Orthodox people'): this self-identification formula of Belarusian peasants, attested by old historical sources[43] and, first thing, appearing in numerous religious and apocryphal texts,[44] extending to Orthodox (Uniate, in the past) as well as Catholic believers, still functions nowadays: "What is a *nation*? // It's people. … We all are Christians". [G97Pap.MB].

Quite importantly, the formula in question is often encountered in a variant that refers to baptism – the metonymical core of Christianity, rather than the Christian nature of a group/individual:

> There's God (*Bog*) that we have, you have the God the Lord (*Pan Bóg*), and that's it. And besides, everything is the same. … Because we are the christened people. Yeah, the Catholics are christened, and the Orthodox too. [G97Skr.JP]. There's one faith amongst all of us, there's one faith amongst all the christened, that's what I think. [H03Aleks.AW].

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[42] This pre-modern mechanism of identification of individual with a group, characteristic to the *kolkhozniks*' identity strategies, has been dealt by me in, i.a., the articles: 'The *natsyas* of the Grodno region'; *eadem*, 'Pozasakralne funkcje pacierza. Z obserwacji etnografa na pograniczu katolicko-prawosławnym na Grodzieńszczyźnie', *Etnolingwistyka*, xii (2001), 85–100; *eadem*, '"Nacja" i "nacjonalność"'.

[43] Early-modern East-Slavic sources "often refer to phrases such as 'the Christian kinship' denoting members of the Eastern Church, or 'the Latin kinship', for believers of the Latin Church. The word 'Christian' denotes in East-Slavic sources 'inhabitant of the Ruthenian land'." As Ya.A. Sprinchak puts it, "This new semantic shade of the word Christian (Orthodox-faith believer, inhabitant of Ruthenian land), set against the meanings of *inoplemennik* [member of another tribe] or *inoverets* [person of a different faith], appeared in as early as the pre-Mongolian period" (quoted after Henryk Paszkiewicz, *Powstanie narodu ruskiego*, ed. Lidia Korczak [Rozprawy Wydziału Historyczno-Filozoficznego – Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 87, Cracow, 1998], 60–1, 240).

[44] As, for instance, the aetiological legends, which have the *Orthodox peasants* [*krest'yane*] stemming from Adam's knee; cf. Nikita I. Tolstoy (ed.), *Slavyanskie drevnosti. Etnolingvisticheskiĭ slovar'* (5 vols., Moscow, 2004), iii, 317. The qualifier *christened* virtually obligatorily appears alongside the man's first name (or replaces it) in the charm-away, protection prayer, etc. formulas; cf. *ibidem*, 310; Agapkina, Levkievskaya, and Toporkov (eds.), *Polesskie zagovory, passim*.

Michał Federowski has recorded the following reply to the question 'Where do we originally come from?', as formulated by a nineteenth-century peasant from Western Belarus:

> Old folks say, once upon a time our land used to be wild forest; some pagans lived in it and they didn't believe in God. And who we came from? They say, until Jesus Christ there were no other folks but Jews; further on Jesus baptised them, so until this day we, their offspring, are Christians.[45]

Such is the essence of the myth of the origin of *muzhik*, the Christian; it is reducible to the formula 'we are christened Jews'. The researcher doing field research in Belarusian territory a hundred years later finds the myth to be of unfading vitality. And, to no surprise: the mythical grounds given for a peasant identity might only disappear together with it. As long as the Belarusian *kolkhoznik*s perceive themselves as Christians, they shall bear in mind that they have become Christians resulting from Jesus, the Jew, having been baptised. Jesus himself – "a Jew before he was christened" [G98Gin.AWD] – became a *Russki* or a *Pole* once he was baptised, just like any other *kolkhoznik*.[46]

> Jesus Christ – a Jew, he, not a *Russki*. He didn't want to be a Jew, and converted to the *Russki* faith. And the Jews didn't like it that he'd been converted. And had him crucified. [H03Mauc.HD].
> Why do you call it 'Polish faith'? // It's Polish faith because of the Christians. Jesus the Lord established baptism, all for the Polish faith. // And so, Jesus was a Pole? // Jesus the Lord was a Jew. Once Saint John the Baptist dawned, then Jesus said, "Make me christened." … Polish faith is because the christening went on. Lord Jesus established the christening. That's Polish faith: Jesus the Lord, baptism, everything. [G98Gin.AD].

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[45] Michał Federowski, *Lud białoruski na Rusi Litewskiej. Materyały do etnografii słowiańskiej zgromadzone w latach 1877–1894*, iii: *Baśnie, przypowieści i podania ludu z okolic Wołkowyska, Słonima, Lidy, Nowogródka i Sokółki*, pt. 2: *Tradycye historyczno--miejscowe oraz powieści obyczajowo-moralne* (Cracow, 1903), 3. (The quoted passage is translated by Jerzyna Słomczyńska).

[46] In the area where other Christian confessions appear, other variants are countered – as, for instance, in Bratslav Land. According to the Catholic people of Vidzy, Jesus the Jew 'converted to the Polish faith' together with his mother, following his baptism in the Jordan; the local Orthodox say he assumed the Orthodox faith, whereas the Old-Believers claim that "Jesus got baptised according to their ritual, by being immersed thrice in the water"; cf. Klosse, 'Sakramenty i sakramentalia', 59.

The baptism and the Passion of Jesus form the mythical origin from which Christians stem. While being baptised in the Jordan, Jesus the Jew turned into a Christian, which for the specifics-anchored folk thought means a *Russki* or a *Pole*. His Passion, in turn, commenced the christening of his followers, splitting the Jews, who had until that mythical moment remained homogeneous, into those who got baptised and those unbaptised. Some 'made themselves Christian', whilst some others 'remained Jewish'.[47]

Jews cannot possibly be detached neither from the baptism nor from the cross of Jesus. They cannot possibly be 'discharged' from the founding myth that constitutes the identity of Christian peasant, described as *krest'yanin*, *muzhik*, or *kolkhoznik*. The Catholics, *christened to be Poles*, and the Orthodox, *christened to be Russkis*, have their mythical archetype in Jesus whom they have converted, together with his mother: "They've converted. They've converted! They've converted Our Lady, and Jesus the Lord converted they have." [G98Gin.AWD]. The figure of Jesus, a mythical archetype of converted Jew, embodies Jew and Christian in one, integrating the oppositions: the faith of unbaptised Jews and that of baptised Jews. A Christian defines him/herself through an opposition to (a) Jew – and vice versa: a Jew is defined by opposition to (a) Christian. The *kolkhoznik* discourse of the identity of *muzhik* as a Christian is based on the definitional formulas: 'Jew is a non-Christian', 'non-Christian is a Jew', and, 'Christian is a non-Jew'. What it moreover says is that Christian is a baptised Jew (similarly to Jew being a potential Christian). There is a Jewish portion in the identity of the former, and a Christian one in that of the latter. Both identities are ambivalent, which is justified by the myth of their origin and, simultaneously, by a folk anthropology which perceives man as a being torn between good and evil. Christians and Jews alike are inscribed in the holy history. Jews play a positive and a negative part in it: those who believed in Christ originated

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[47] "And they … would not admit Christ, would not admit the faith, all those ones were Jews. … And later on, once Christ came over, as Jesus the Lord stood [dial., 'began'] making miracles […], they did not all believe. Some did not believe and murdered Lord Jesus." [G97Mej.FK]. "And Jesus Christ came and said that he wanted the faith to be Christian, but the people did not consent. Some went to the Christian one, they wanted and accepted his faith, whilst others stayed. The Catholics stayed, and those who sit and say their 'boo-boo, boo-boo' prayers [i.e., Jews]." [H03Aleks.HK].

Christians; those who did not believe consequently killed Jesus, and had to remain Jews. The convert Jew, the model for Christian, and the deicider Jew, the model for Jew, are equally indispensable for the *kolkhoznik* identity myth which operates a game of countertypes and, as any archaic myth does, tells a story of combat of good and evil. As there is no day without a night, and no life without a death, there can be no Christian without a Jew.

IV

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

Anthropological analysis and interpretation of the Belarusian *kolkhozniks*'s identity narration find, first and foremost, that there is a long continuance of certain cognitive structures that categorise the contents of social reality at the turn of the twenty-first century according to certain pre-modern patterns. The latter ones date back to feudalism and often prove deeply archaic. This taxonomical order, which allows today's Belarusian *kolkhoznik*s to classify and name their social universe according to the rules applied by the generations of their ancestors, is strictly intertwined with the order of a myth, which adds it an axiological dimension and provides tools for a 'meaning-conformant'[48] interpretation of the world. In the post-Soviet, *kolkhoz* and post-*kolkhoz* realities of what is Belarus today, not only the old rustic values are found to be persisting: the same is true for the oppositional cognitive categories immersed in a mythical worldview, such as: peasant–lord/master, peasant–Jew, Christian–Jew, *Pole (Polish)–Russki* ('Ruthenian'), which, while structuring the perception of a changing social environment, enable the group to construct a durable image and ethos of themselves. These *longue durée* cognitive-and-axiological structures cause the contemporary *kolkhoznik* to continue his ancestors' identity model. The self-definition of *muzhik-kolkhoznik* – as was the case with the serf peasant before emancipation, or with the farmer and farmhand afterwards – describes him as a simple and hard-working man, as opposed to the lord, and as a man working on land, settled and baptised, as opposed to the Jew. Hence, similarly to their ancestors, the Belarusian *kolkhoznik*s of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century are, primarily, a simple and assiduous 'local' Christian people.

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[48] Stomma, *Antropologia kultury*, 131.

Among the core values constituting the sense of identity of former *muzhik*s, and the *kolkhoznik*s and post-*kolkhoznik*s of today, whose life goes and is contained within the local family and neighbourly communities founded upon habitual bonds, we cannot discern or identify a nation (in the modern common sense of the term), a homeland or native country, a state, or (a) language(s). It is labour, that comes to the fore (as they primarily perceive themselves as a collectivity of *hardworking people*), along with land (those working on the land versus those dealing with other things), and God (those believing in God, baptised people, versus non-believers/non-Christians). Their historical memory contains the contents, and builds upon the values, different from those characterising national communities in which the memory is integrated around a codified message of the tradition. What we deal with here is a mythical, fatalistic story about the lot of hurt and harmed people, one that affirms human solidarity focused around life and endurance. It is an unheroic story about the people who waged no armed struggle in the name of some values their community would have adhered to, as in national heroic myths; what has fallen to their lot was that they suffered as non-culpable victims in the scenarios executed by forces, powers and ideologies external to them. The core of the story under discussion is definable as

> an idea … of peasant community with its characteristic thrift and diligence, prudence, insignificance and fragility, combined with incessant renewability and indestructibility, which means, permanence, even if facing the violently pounding waves of history.[49]

The collective identity of Belarusian *kolkhoznik*s is thus composed of a founding myth featuring innocently harmed people who were created, devised, in order to occupy the lowest position in the social hierarchy, the other component of this myth being the norms and values of the peasant ethos as inscribed in the perennial philosophy of endurance.

The Soviet *kolkhoz* system, which petrified the model of the serfdom farm of yore, operated as a peculiar freezer that inhibited the economic, social, and mental modernisation processes. Hence, what we encounter today in Belarusian *kolkhoz* and post-*kolkhoz* villages is one of Europe's last preserves of pre-modern mentality. This is why the collective identity of Belarusian countryside, in its

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[49] Sulima, *Słowo i etos,* 163.

contemporary *kolkhoznik* shape, has permanently been a peasant post-serfdom identity, marked with a strong stigma of the former estate society, and inextricably intertwined with a mythical worldview and a linguistic image of the world, woven with stereotypes. At the same time, it is a universal and humanistic peasant identity, with its anthropology focused on the relationship between man and the Sacred.

There is no doubt, however, that the Belarusian countryside has been gradually changing in the post-Soviet period; this process of change calls for more research which would address the transformation of the local population's collective identity. I am nonetheless convinced that an anthropological interpretation of the traditional model of identity of Belarusian rural areas, which has been grasped and observed here probably in the last moments of its existence, not only enriches our knowledge of the sources of contemporary Belarusian collective identities but also offers an inspiration for an in-depth recognition of the entire collectivity, understanding its present-day shape, and consideration of its tomorrow.

INTERLOCUTORS:

B95Olm.KS: man, 70, Orthodox; Olmany, Stolin county, Brest region; cond. by A. Engelking, 1995.

B96Ozer.FJ: woman, 80, Orthodox; Ozernitsa, Luninets county, Brest region; cond. by A. Engelking, 1996.

G93Czesz.TK: woman, 59, Catholic; Chesheyki, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by D. Życzyńska-Ciołek, 1993.

G93MMoż.IP: woman, 66, Catholic; Malaye Mazheykava, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by K. Kolasa, 1993.

G93Pap.AW: man, 70, Catholic; Papernya, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by A. Engelking, D. Życzyńska-Ciołek, 1993.

G93Pap.JW: woman, about 70, Catholic; Papernya, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by A. Engelking, 1993.

G93Pap.MS: woman, 71, Catholic; Papernya, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by A. Engelking, 1993.

G93Pielun.JD: man, 66, Catholic; Peluntsy, Voronovo county, Grodno region; cond. by J. Cichocki, 1993.

G93Radz.WZ: woman, 58, Orthodox; Radivonishki, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by J. Straczuk, K. Dołęgowska, 1993.

G93Ser.MM: woman, about 80, Catholic; Serafiny, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by K. Dąbek, 1993.

G93Waw.HD: woman, 70, Catholic; Vaverka, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by A. Engelking, 1993.

G94Fel.JU: woman, 78, Orthodox; Feliksovo, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by K. Dołęgowska, 1993.

G94Kras.MJ: man, about 70, Catholic; Krasnovtsy, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by K. Dołęgowska, 1994.

G94Radz.TS: woman, 73, Orthodox; Radivonishki, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by A. Engelking, 1994.

G97Czesz.TK: woman, 63, Catholic; Chesheyki, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by M. Krzanowski, 1997.

G97Dyl.BS: woman, 62, Catholic; Dylevo, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by M. Just, 1997.

G97Mej.FK: woman, 78, Catholic; Meyry, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by D. Kołakowska, 1997.

G97Pap.MB: woman, 68, Catholic; Papernya, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by A. Engelking, R. Banasińska, 1997.

G97Roub.AR: woman, 65, Catholic; Rouby, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by D. Kołakowska, 1997.

G97Skr.JP: man, 65, Orthodox; Skrybovtsy, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by M. Krzanowski, 1997.

G98Gin.AD: man, 69, Catholic; Gineli, Voronovo county, Grodno region; cond. by M. Roszczyk, 1998.

G98Gin.AWD: husband and wife, 69, Catholics; Gineli, Voronovo county, Grodno region; cond. by A. Engelking, J. Wudarski, 1998.

G98Mick.RA: woman, 74, Catholic; Mitskantsy, Voronovo county, Grodno region; cond. by M. Roszczyk, 1998.

G98Nacz.JK: man, 72, Catholic; Nacha, Voronovo county, Grodno region; cond. by K. Łebkowska, 1998.

G98Nacz.WK: woman, 70, Catholic; Nacha, Voronovo county, Grodno region; cond. by A. Engelking, 1998.

G98Szaw.JS: woman, 77, Catholic; Shavry, Voronovo county, Grodno region; cond. by D. Kołakowska, 1998.

G99Pap.SK: man, 75, Catholic; Papernya, Lida county, Grodno region; cond. by A. Engelking, 1999.

H03Aleks.AW: woman, 80, Orthodox; Aleksitchy, Khoyniki county, Gomel region; cond. by I. Alunina, O. Linkiewicz, 2003.

H03Aleks.HK: woman, 78, Orthodox; Aleksitchy, Khoyniki county, Gomel region; cond. by D. Diakiewicz, J. Getka, 2003.

H03Mauc.HD: woman, 80, Orthodox; Maliya Aucyuki, Kalinkovichy county, Gomel region; cond. by R. Likhashapka, I. Mazyuk, 2003.

M04Masz.AS: woman, 84, Orthodox; Mashkovo, Gorki county, Mogilev region; cond. by A. Engelking, I. Alunina, 2004.

W99Baj.WD: woman, 78, Orthodox; Bayevo, Dubrovno county, Vitebsk region, cond. by A. Engelking, O. Lobachevskaya, 1999.