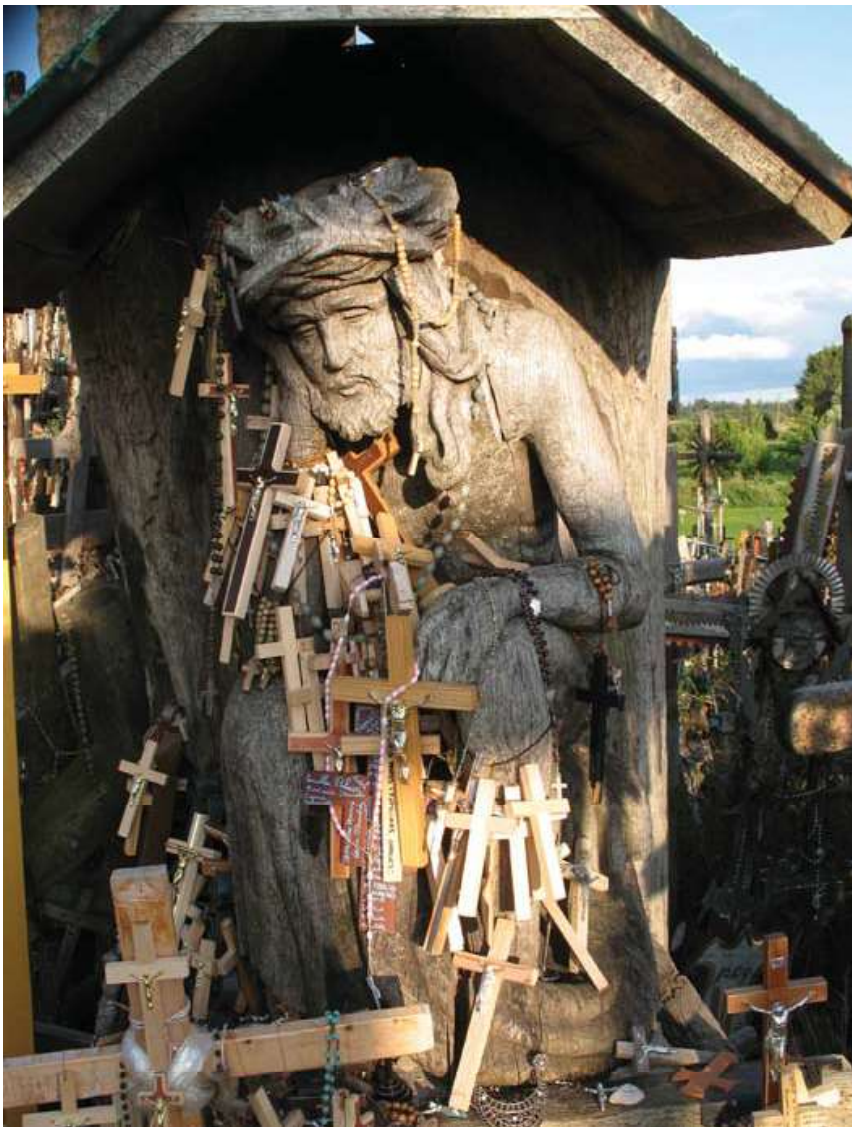
Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

The Coffin in the Attic

Gifts, Debts and the Catholic Church in Rural Lithuania

Lina Pranaitytė



LIT

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Gifts, Debts and the Catholic Church in Rural Lithuania

This book applies anthropological theories of gift exchange to rural Lithuania, which until now has been of interest to foreign anthropologists primarily from the point of view of postsocialist transformation. Inspired by Mauss's theory of the gift, the author argues on the basis of field research in a rural parish that donations, sacrifices and material and immaterial exchanges of many kinds enabled the Catholic Church to survive during the Soviet period and continue to underpin its operation in the present.

To believe is to be involved in a relationship, and exchange practices play a significant role in the creation and maintenance of such social connections. For a Catholic, the gifts of life and redemption constitute the backbone of one's indebtedness to God. Catholic obligations and roles are reproduced during the mass and *going to church* has long been their most important social practice. Fluctuations and long-term decline in church attendance are interpreted differently by clergy and laity. The latter emphasize the excessive time taken by the priest, different approaches to praying and certain rituals as the main reasons for not going to church. Prayers and acceptance of the Host play an important role for those who consider going to church a spatiotemporal and celebratory experience. Yet death is the topic that puts everything worldly into perspective and affects people equally. Funerals emerge as important manifestations of social connections. The soliciting of gifts on this occasion disguises obligatory transactions by presenting them as voluntary.

As it unfolds over seven chapters, this book builds on ethnographically documented exchanges between parishioners, the church, the clergy and the dead. In doing so, it fleshes out the significance of give-and-take practices for the Catholic Church's institutional and economic vitality.

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Cover Photo: *Rūpintojėlis* (Eng.: The Pensive Christ) in the Hill of Crosses in Lithuania (Photo: Lina Pranaitytė, 2009).

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January 2020, Heidelberg

Note on Transliteration

All the translations from Lithuanian to English are mine. This includes both quotations from Lithuanian scholarly articles and books and quotations from the interviews I conducted. In this process the peculiarities of the local dialect have been lost: the southern part of Lithuania is known for *dzūkavimas*, a particular way of speaking and using certain locally specific vocabulary, which is not possible to translate.

Notes on Terms

In this book '**church**' is used to describe (1) a building (or a complex of buildings), (2) a community of parishioners (individuals who consider themselves to belong to a Catholic community) or (3) the clergy. '**Priest**', or clergyman, is a male officiant who belongs to the hierarchical order of the Roman Catholic Church, performs Catholic religious rituals and usually serves the church that is allocated to him. Finally, the '**dead**' are the deceased with whom living parishioners are connected through bonds of kinship, marriage, partnership, etc.

I use the term **'parishioner'** in this book to describe people living in the territory that is ascribed to a particular church and its priest. As I will show in the following chapters, the participation of parishioners in exchanges with the church or the priest is as important as their non-participation. Therefore, throughout this thesis I use the word 'parishioner' to indicate both the members of the local parish church and those who are living in the territory of a parish but have minimal or no involvement in church activities and rituals.

'**Item**' in this book is used to indicate material objects used in exchange, including money, as well as immaterial objects, such as time, labour, services and prayers.

The close connection between time and space is fixed in the term '**spatiotemporality**'. Following Munn (1992, 1977), in this work the category of spatiotemporality appears as a multilayered and collectively derived paradigm that is socially constituted.

Throughout this book there appear **age-based categories** like 'grandmother', 'older' or 'younger' people. This is not intended to make biased, discriminatory judgements or indulge in age-based stereotyping of any sort. During fieldwork, people made great use of these terms to indicate broadly inter-generational relationships; they are thus found extensively in my ethnographic data. The word 'grandmother' is used in quotation marks when it indicates an age stereotype. In Chapter 6 the term is used without

quotation marks, as it describes an original kinship tie between a daughter, a mother and a grandmother.

While the terms '**ethnologist**' and '**ethnology**' are still recognizable to Lithuanians, to some readers of this book these terms might have little meaning at the present day. In Lithuania 'ethnology' has long been the generic term to denote scholars who investigate the national culture, primarily with reference to preindustrial rural life; it subsumes fields such as folklore and material culture, and can be compared with the Volkskunde tradition in the German-speaking world (nowadays more commonly known as '*Europäische Ethnologie*').

Abbrevations

b – Born
CRA – Council for Religious Affairs
Engl – English
EU – European Union
Int – Interviewed
Lith – Lithuanian
Lin – Lina Pranaitytė
Man – Man
Wom – Woman

Chapter 1
Introduction

The argument of this book is that Catholicism depends to a significant but so far underestimated extent on the relationships that are formed by its doctrines and exchange practices. By drawing on anthropological observations about gift economies, it can be shown that the Catholic Church relies extensively on a vocabulary and relations of exchange that are maintained through the circulation of material and immaterial items. Catholic apprehensions of death and the gift of life are central to the perception of an indebted human who enters into binding obligations through them. Even when empty, churches are often explained in terms of conflicting perceptions of give and take.

Although Roman Catholic rituals, scripture and explanations are linked in numerous ways to such notions as the gift, sacrifice, offerings and donations, its practices have so far been neglected by exchange theorists. Gift exchange in general has been studied mainly in relation to the non-Western, non-monetary gift economies of kinship-based societies and was frequently compared to what was presumed to be its 'other': money-governed exchanges in the class-based Western market economies of mainly Christian countries.[1] The latter have been analysed from the angles of consumption and commodity relations and have frequently been used as the opposite of gift relations. However, while the impact of Christianity remains significant for the analysis of capitalist societies (Weber 2001 [1930]), and while the analysis of exchange is one of the main ways of grasping the social, economic, religious and political relationships that organize society, what can be learnt about relationships in Catholic communities when they are approached from the perspective of exchange theory is still a neglected theme.

This book aims to answer this question based on an ethnography of Roman Catholics and their exchange practices in rural Lithuania. Instead of the two most popular perspectives used thus far to analyse Catholic

[1] A review of such studies is presented in Chapter 2

Christianity in the social sciences, namely secularization and folk religiosity, I intend to draw on exchange theory in order to show how Catholicism is reproduced in everyday life. Anthropologists have long been analysing how objects, individuals and groups are related. Exchanges of material and immaterial items have proved central to the organization of social life since the gift and the riddle of reciprocity were devised. In anthropological analyses, it is not merely the object of exchange that is emphasized, but more precisely what that object produces, the relationships and institutions a gift demonstrates and how an item in exchange becomes a means of social expression.

One of the most influential publications for exchange theorists up until today has been Marcel Mauss's monumental work *The Gift* (1990 [1925]), which has sparked what High calls a 'totemic debate' in anthropology (High 2012). However, what has often been neglected to date about this essay is the historical background of its creation. Mauss is said to have crafted his notion of gift exchange mainly as a response to two politico-economic perspectives and practices of his time: capitalism and socialism (Sykes 2005; Graeber 2000). Mauss's initial idea was to draw attention to a system that did not concentrate just on profit and wealth accumulation, goods and centralized redistribution. 'It is indeed something other than utility that circulates in societies of all kinds', he stated (1990 [1925]: 92). Gifts move between people, creating obligations to give, receive and reciprocate, and consequently form a system of relationships and institutions. Mauss saw gifts as objects of some value that can range from possessions and food to people and services. He also argued that systems of exchange were to be considered total social facts encompassing the political, economic and religious aspects of social life, and moreover that they were to be found in all societies around the world, past and present.

I chose Lithuania as a field site for researching Catholic gift exchange for the following reasons. Lithuania has experienced both types of economy to which Mauss's theory of the gift constitutes a response.[2] Lithuania can also be considered one of the most Catholic countries in Europe, with 77.2% (in 2011) of its population identifying themselves as Roman Catholic (Lietuvos statistikos departamentas 2012: 26). Finally, the Catholic Church in Lithuania is dependent on the donations it can collect from people.

By concentrating on exchanges between Lithuanian parishioners, the church, the priests and the dead, I intend to demonstrate how Catholic institutions and roles can be sustained. The focus is on the transfer and circulation of items rather than on their production. After all, exchanges of

[2] Lithuania restored its pre-war independence from the Soviet Union on 11 March 1990.

gifts, alliances, ceremonies and the like are as central to the existence of any group as is the reproduction of the economic basis of their existence (Bourdieu 1999 [1977]: 171).

The main questions this book asks are thus as follows: what relationships are created and affirmed in exchange practices among Lithuanian Catholics? And which Catholic doctrines enter into such created and maintained relationships? Throughout the chapters, the following additional questions will also present themselves: How did the Catholic Church maintain its position throughout the Soviet period, and how has it done so since Lithuania regained its independence? What is ritualized during the mass? Why is going to church loaded with assumptions about religiosity, and why is this important to some churchgoers and irrelevant to others? And what is the role of the dead and death in exchange practices among Lithuanian Catholics?

To answer these questions, I will draw on ethnographic data collected during just over a year of fieldwork in southern Lithuania. This included many hours of participant observation in churches, at cemeteries and during religious festivals, as well as during social events with a non-religious background and group meetings. I also conducted approximately fifty interviews, 42 of which were recorded, which usually lasted over two hours. Finally, archival material and media content were also analysed as a contribution to the data I use in this book.

The novelty of this book lies in its coupling of the two topics of Catholicism and exchange, which to the best of my knowledge has not previously been researched by anthropologists.[3] As such, this study contributes to both the anthropology of Catholicism and exchange theory. It also engages in the ongoing debate on exchange practices in postsocialist conditions, filling a significant gap in the analysis of the relationships between economics and religion through its focus on Catholicism and its emphasis on exchange rather than consumption.[4] Finally, this book is among

[3] Closest to my own work are those of Pina-Cabral (1986), who discussed reciprocal relationships of co-operation in a Portuguese peasant community and votive offerings as relations of exchange between humans and saints; Carrier (1995), who applied gift-exchange theory to the analysis of industrial society; Wanner (2005), who studied exchange and morality among postsocialist Ukrainians; Ledeneva (1998), who wrote on *blat* and informal exchange in a postsocialist society; Humphrey (1997), who focused on exchange, value and barter; and parts of Graeber's (2011) work analysing the relationship between debt and Christian morality.

[4] E.g. Humphrey (1995), Lankauskas (2002), Caldwell (2004a, 2004b), Wanner (2007, 2008), Klumbytė (2009, 2010), etc.

the few to analyse the Lithuanian religious field while positioning itself within other postsocialist studies of religion.[5]

In what follows, I first describe the geography of my research area. Then, having been born a Lithuanian myself, I reflect on the topic of 'anthropology at home'. I conclude this introductory chapter by describing the book's structure.

Research Area

From March 2008 to May 2009 I conducted long-term ethnographic fieldwork in the Varėna municipality in Lithuania (Plate 1). The southeastern part of Lithuania is also known as *Dzūkija* (or *Dainava*), one of five generally recognized 'ethnographic regions' in the country. During that year I lived in the village of Vilktaka, the centre of a parish containing fourteen villages in total.[6] My intention was to choose a village with a church as the place where I wanted to live and do most of my field research. I assumed, correctly, that the church would be at the centre of the exchange practices I wanted to study. The priest who served Vilktaka parish lived in a neighbouring parish, where I also gathered data.[7]

Vilktaka is the centre of the smallest locally administered unit (Lith.: *seniūnija*), which unites twenty-six villages with a total of 1,585 inhabitants occupying 55,000 hectares of land (data from *seniūnija* reports, 2008). Of these inhabitants, 745 were of working age, more than 8% being registered with the job centre. The year 2008 in Vilktaka *seniūnija* was marked by forty-five deaths and six births. In the last five years there were around fifty deaths and ten births per year. In 2008 more than 800 Vilktaka inhabitants were of pension age, more than half of the total population. Vilktaka secondary school (up to the tenth year) was attended by a hundred children.

Each village has a so-called village community (Lith.: *kaimo bendruomenė*) and a chairperson. However, the number of inhabitants in the villages of Vilktaka *seniūnija* vary from 734 all the way down to one, while the majority have around seventy.

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[5] Together with the contributions of, for example, Lankauskas' dissertation (2003), Ališauskienė's dissertation (2009) and Schröder's publications (e.g. 2012).

[6] The names of the villages as well as all the interlocutors quoted in this book have been changed.

[7] Since there was only one priest in my field site, I use the singular of this word throughout the book. Likewise, because of the presence of a commuting priest who was serving two parishes, I use the plural form of the word 'parish' at some points throughout this book.

Map. Map of Lithuania indicating the field site.

The area will be presented in more detail throughout the following chapters. At this point it is important to mention that, at the time of my fieldwork, not all the pasts of the region and its villages were equally remembered and represented either locally or internationally. Vilktaka village has a large Jewish cemetery, and the village has entered world history as a site of mass genocide. I included questions about the area's Jewish inhabitants in the Second World War in my questionnaire but could not gather much data about this issue, as people were not eager to talk about it with me. The

history of genocide in Vilktaka and subsequent dealings in the generations since then necessarily requires separate in-depth research.[8]

Anthropology at Home?

I was born in Lithuania (then the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic), acquired my education there, and Lithuanian is my native language. Consequently, I felt the need to de-familiarize my field site at least by distancing it geographically from sites that were familiar to me, like the city of Kaunas, as well as other places where relatives or friends lived. Geographical distance prevented me from too much familiarity as an 'insider' and allowed me to distance myself 'ideologically' (Peirano 1998: 117).

It was during fieldwork and the writing up process that I realized the broader implications of my initial idea of choosing an unfamiliar field site. I was taught to associate the proper 'field' with newness, with the idea that, in order to become a true anthropologist, one needs to work in areas where everything one experiences is experienced for the first time. This points to the importance of the 'positionality (or locality) of the anthropologist' (Ryang 2005: 146; see also Narayan 1993: 676). Conversely, during fieldwork I aimed at familiarizing myself with the people. To start with, I only took simple and comfortable clothes to my field site (mostly trousers, pullovers and flat shoes). In addition, as soon as I had to tell people where I came from, I said Kaunas, immediately adding that I had spent all my summers in the village of my grandparents.

The discussion about where anthropology is done and by whom runs through the general history of the discipline, which is largely grounded in regional specialization (Peirano 1998: 109-113). The importance of the 'location of the anthropologist as a fieldworker and writer' (Ryang 2005: 144) has influenced many debates among anthropologists in the second half of the twentieth century. The boundary between 'home' and 'field site' is even more blurred when we take postsocialist Europe into account: as Chris Hann notes, the 'self-proclaimed and highly politicized otherness of socialism reinforced an older tradition of orientalising the region and its inhabitants' (Hann 2014: 52; also Thelen 2011).

Ultimately, considering all the assumptions I had and their place in current debates in anthropology, I do not consider my field site as my 'home', despite admitting the advantages of speaking one's mother tongue in the field. I follow the idea that fieldwork is not a spatial practice between

[8] For further data and discussions on this, see 'The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania' (2014) (available from: http://genocid.lt/centras/en/) and their publications.

home (whatever that means) and other places of discovery, but a method that emphasizes the relationship between the fieldworker and the people she or he studies; in other words, it stresses the approach and not the subject matter (Peirano 1998).

Yet, one further detail must be mentioned. When the theory of gift exchange was developed, it drew on data from remote settings, historically also known as 'the field'. As stated at the very beginning, gift economies have often been discussed in anthropological accounts as being in opposition to the capitalist economies that govern the so-called 'West', the physical or intellectual 'home' of many anthropologists (Ryang 2005: 145-6). As such, my discussion of exchange practices and gifts in a Catholic country in Europe, while using the historically generated theory of the 'other', turns the observer's gaze from the 'other' back on to its place of origin. In this work I therefore hope to make a small contribution to what Chris Hann (2014: 51) has suggested anthropologists should strive at: overcoming the risk of othering postsocialist countries by devising new concepts and theoretical paradigms and instead drawing on existing scholarly traditions for a comparative analysis that leads to theoretical refinement.

Structure of the Book

The chapters of this book follow the chronological order of my actual fieldwork. Before the local people and I got to know each other, I approached the ways my field site was constructed by studying the spatial positioning of bodies and the circulation of exchange items. This is how Chapter 4 on the church as a house came into being. After several months certain events led me to understand the significance of going to church for people, a theme I address in Chapter 5. Into the middle of my fieldwork I noticed that the topic of death kept recurring in almost every interview I had. This suggested the theme of Chapter 6 and has influenced the title of this book. The deeper I dived into the reasons for exchange practices, the more it seemed that the notion of death was the underlying cause of many of people's actions and thoughts. In some respects, it was as if a coffin was being stored in every attic of every house I went to, ready and waiting for the right moment to be used, and simultaneously weighing (on) people's everyday experiences. The fact that coffins were indeed stored in the not so distant past made researching relationships involving death only more intriguing.

This introduction is followed by Chapter 2, which presents theoretical and empirical discussions on gift exchange, (in)alienation and Catholic indebtedness. In anthropological writings, in my understanding, the notion of the gift refers simultaneously to the exchanged object *and* the relationship

that is initiated between the exchanging parties and the object exchanged. Gift exchange establishes relations of indebtedness and mutual obligation for further reciprocation. In other words, the gift aims to fulfil social rather than utilitarian goals: what is given is not lost, but is socially reproductive. This is a condensed understanding of inalienation: to give away a possession, while also creating and/or maintaining a relationship. Nonetheless, exchange can still be oriented towards the goal of obtaining the desired returns and is used to structure social space. In the course of this chapter I show how the Lithuanian word *auka*, which unites the three English words 'sacrifice', 'offering' and 'donation', into one, corresponds to the theoretical notion of the gift. *Auka* indicates something given to others, it has various context-related values, it is both material and immaterial, and its transactions are directed towards social ends.

Further attention is paid in this chapter to presenting Catholic ideas on exchange, sacrifice and the gift. A primordial Catholic notion of indebtedness is the backbone of the relationship between humans and God. I position Catholic perspectives on exchange within Parry and Bloch's short- and long-term transactional cycles (Parry and Bloch 1989).

Chapter 3 presents the religious situation in Lithuania and reviews the research done on it. This discussion leads me to challenge the popular perceptions that rural people reflect less on religious content yet are more religious than people from urban areas. Drawing on ethnographic data, I elaborate on this issue and argue that the beliefs of 'grandmothers' should be approached as one of the country's inalienable possessions. In this chapter I also follow Bloch (2010) and Luehrmann (2011), who consider the analysis of colonial and Soviet contexts to be instrumental in the study of religion: what is this 'religion' that is to be eliminated? The discussion will show how Soviet ideologists used various social and administrative means to influence the spatiotemporal aspects of people's lives for the purpose of casting out religion as antisocial. To believe was considered being in a relationship, and such a relationship had to be eliminated.

The church was somewhere I could enter within the first few days of my arrival in the village and without knowing anyone in particular. I was able to observe its physical state and the movement of people within it. The church is central to analysing exchange transactions among Catholics. Therefore, Chapter 4 focuses on an analysis of when and why the church is needed and what the overall perceptions of it are. The use of exchange as a point of departure serves to grasp different and yet intertwined notions of the church as (1) a material object, building and symbol, (2) a community of believers and (3) a religious organization. Clergy and laity usually identified the church as a ritual space, which raises a question: what is ritualized within

it? While concentrating on the repetitive parts of each ritual, which always include the mass, I argue that the reproduction of the religious community rests on images of the household, family and kin. The different bodily positionings of men and women in the church's space also support the notion of the church as acknowledging the gendering of domestic roles. The discussion of ritualized kin ties during the mass shows why the Catholic Church defends a particular type of family form alone. To reproduce the church through the emphasis on an alliance between brothers and sisters, parents and children and their house – that is, the Church – is a way to reproduce Catholic obligations and ultimately the Church's economic life.

In Chapter 4 I also discuss how Catholic roles are established through the actions of giving and taking and such gifts as money, time and labour. Here the notion of the requested gift appears, which indicates expected and communal giving and shows the influence of such gifts on the management of the social space within Vilktaka parish.

Chapter 5 begins with an ethnographic moment I encountered roughly three months into my fieldwork. I was no longer an observer of masses but was asked to act like a Catholic, that is, to participate in the mass by going to confession and accepting communion. In this chapter I discuss the implications of going to church and argue that this action should be considered the most salient Catholic ritual. I analyse the empirical notion of the 'non-practising Catholic' and discuss why fluctuating attendance at church is interpreted differently by the clergy and the laity; while for the clergy low numbers of people in the church indicate a lack of belief, the laity emphasize time, different approaches to praying, the varying importance of rituals and the institution of the priest itself as the main reasons for not going to church. Prayers and acceptance of the Host in church play a significant role for those parishioners who consider going to church a spatiotemporal and celebratory experience.

In Chapter 5 I develop local perceptions of the 'full' and 'empty' church further. Going to church here emerges as a central social practice involving people in the inter-generational transmission of responsibility and of the obligation to maintain the church.

Chapter 6 originated during the second part of my fieldwork. In the stream of my interlocutors' thoughts I noticed that death was one theme that kept recurring. It 'moved' parishioners emotionally as well as physically, and it connected them with the church, the priest and the local community, as well as with certain places within the parish, like the cemetery. It became clear to me why, during funerals in the church, people skipped the mass and appeared near the church just in time to accompany the dead body to its grave. Funerals emerge as socially significant manifestations of links and

connections that are important to people, affirming relationships among the living, as well as between the living and the dead. I analyse this aspect particularly through the invitations that people exchange. As gift exchange is central to social reproduction, it is no accident that death-related practices are linked to various acts of exchange. As a result, death causes a series of social responses: new roles and relationships are established, kinship roles are reaffirmed, and obligations and duties are fulfilled.

Chapter 6 also contains a discussion of the relationships my interlocutors aimed at creating, affirming and maintaining in cases of death. I draw attention to several issues that have been neglected in previous studies of the subject. From an exchange perspective, the chapter describes how Catholics consider death to be an entity that takes (life, people, etc.) and that at the same time affects people equally (because everyone dies, and no one can take their accumulated wealth into the grave or the other world). The second important input regarding exchange concerns the power of requests, which influences the giving. Masses, prayers, invitations, participation in invited events, etc., are all items of exchange. Requested giving is a responsive obligatory act which is nevertheless often presented as a voluntary act.

The last chapter of this book is Chapter 7, the conclusion, in which I retrace the main arguments. I sum up my empirical discussions and point to the ways in which social interrelatedness is reproduced through *auka* among Roman Catholics in Vilktaka.

Chapter 2
Exchange: Theory and Practice

This chapter presents the etic and emic notions of exchange and gifts that will be used throughout this book. In the theoretical section on gift exchange the notions of alienation and inalienation are discussed. In the second section exchange practices in the field are presented. This is then followed by the comparison between anthropological and Lithuanian perceptions of the gift. In the final section the Catholic notion of primordial indebtedness is situated in larger webs of institutionalized exchange.

Gift Exchange

The analysis of exchange processes is one of the main topics that classics of anthropology such as those of Bronisław Malinowski (1961 [1922]) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969) engaged in. The input of French sociologist Marcel Mauss and his essay The Gift (1990 [1925]) into the analysis of social relationships has been one of the most influential since it appeared, right up until the present day. Over the years it has acquired 'for anthropology many of the qualities of a sacred text' (Parry 1986: 455). Sahlins (1974), Gregory (1980), Weiner (1980, 1992, 1996), Parry (1986), Carrier (1991, 1992, 1995), Godelier (1999), Polanyi (2001 [1944]) and Graeber (2011) have taken up Mauss's ideas and (re)analysed and (re)interpreted various forms of exchange practices and differing modes of transactions. They looked for ethnographic examples of gift circulation in order to find answers to the riddles of exchange theory, encapsulated in Mauss's famous triple obligation: to give, to receive and to reciprocate. From the very beginning anthropological discussions of exchange theory have tried to compare the non-monetary, non-Western gift economies in kinship-based societies with their presumed 'other': money-governed commodity exchanges in class-based Western market economies. These theoretical debates have lasted until today. The continued emphasis on the importance of this phenomenon for anthropological theory shows that

exchange processes are a processual, dynamic and universal part of social life.

A broad but nonetheless quite accurate definition of exchange in anthropologically oriented accounts is that exchange is a transaction of items between parties (individuals or groups) and that exchanged items can be both material and immaterial (Kapferer 1976). Items circulating in exchange are perceived as more than just objects and in theoretical debates are generally called gifts.

With the support of ethnographic material, Malinowski (1961 [1922]: 352) claimed that ceremonial gift exchange, like the Kula ring in the Trobriand Islands, consists of a gift followed by a counter-gift. These two transactions must be distinct in name, nature and time. The Kula presents a temporary and cumulative type of ownership (ibid.: 514), one that exposes 'a deep desire to possess' one of the two items in an alternating manner (ibid.: 510). As such, Kula exchange represents an 'inter-tribal relationship, with definite social bonds uniting a vast area and great numbers of people, binding them with definite ties of reciprocal obligations' (ibid.), and establishing rank and social distinction among those who participate in exchange.

According to Mauss (1990 [1925]), a gift is an object of some value: it can be a material object, but it can also range from food, possessions and land to women, children, charms, labour, services, etc. The received gift is at the same time a property and a possession, a deposit, a mandate and a trust, 'for it is given only on condition that it will be used on behalf of, or transmitted to, a third person, the remote partner' (ibid.: 22). A gift is one element in a wider system of relationships and institutions; that is, many more relationships are established with those created by gift exchange.

Gift exchange has been described as bearing on 'people's perception of and relationship with objects and others in exchange' (Carrier 1991: 110; see also Betteridge 1985). Gifts circulate as items in exchanges and cannot be measured according to some objective or universal system of value, since their equivalent is only context- and/or person-specific (Yang 1989: 45). Gift circulation follows the particular tactics employed by the participants in their exchange. Only they know and can orchestrate the flows of gifts.

Through its own rules of circulation, gift exchange establishes and confirms relationships (Sykes 2005). The analysis of exchange reveals more than just interpersonal or group relationships. Theorists agree that gift exchange exposes wider social links between the fields of the economy, politics and religion.

In my view the gift in anthropological writings refers simultaneously to (1) the object exchanged and (2) the relationships initiated between the

parties to the exchange, as well as the object and those who exchange it. It is the interconnectedness between these two aspects that has established the notions of alienation and inalienation in the understanding of exchange. I will introduce these notions in the following sections.

Alienation and Inalienation

While trying to untangle the riddle of the obligation to reciprocate, gift exchange theorists often invoke a comparison with monetary exchange. In fact, a large part of exchange theory concentrates on the dichotomy between non-monetary gift economies and money-governed commodity exchanges in Western market economies. It is in this theoretical discussion that the concepts of alienation and inalienation have become the core concepts that characterize and differentiate the two sorts of economy.

Inalienation is a part of gift exchange: a transacted object in the form of the gift places the transactors in a relationship of indebtedness, mutual obligations to repay and engagement in reciprocal cycles. Inalienation refers to reciprocal dependence (Gregory 1980: 461 and 1982: 12). The origin of this notion is the Maussian gift perspective, which states that the object transacted 'bears the identity of the giver, and after it is given it bears as well the identity of the recipient and of the relationship between recipient and giver' (Carrier 1995: 9). But inalienation does not only mean the attribution of personality to the objects involved in the exchange: it is the relationship that was triggered in the transaction of items with attached personal identities that is most important here (Gregory 1982; Strathern 1988; Mauss 1990 [1925]; Carrier 1995). This 'indissoluble bond of a thing with its original owner' (Munn 1977) is considered to cause an obligation to reciprocate: the cycle of giving, receiving and repaying must remain unbroken (cf. the notion of *Hau* in MacCormack 1982; Mauss 1990 [1925]; Godelier 1999). Moreover, as Carrier noted, 'saying that the gift is inalienably linked to the giver does not necessarily mean that the giver has the jural right to reclaim the object … or that the recipient has no right to dispose of the object' (Carrier 1995: 24). This means that there is a certain indebtedness between the transactors, as well as an obligation to reciprocate further.

Weiner, however, takes a different approach to inalienation. For her, inalienable possessions are imbued with the intrinsic and ineffable identities of their owners and are not easy to give away (1992: 6). She argues that 'certain things assume a subjective value that places them above exchange value' (ibid.: 6). Inalienable possessions are transcendent and do not circulate in exchange processes, but are 'in the mind of a person'. As such, inalienation controls the dimensions of giving, which she calls the paradox

of 'keeping-while-giving'.[9] Even though Weiner analyses this term from a slightly different perspective than her predecessors – emphasizing a female role in exchange in particular – her point of view remains similar to the understanding of gift exchange discussed earlier. For her, material possessions are more than mere items, their value stems from a 'background' social context, and they convey the identities of their owners, which in turn creates a sense of belonging. Yet Weiner broadens the argument about inalienation by pointing to possessions that endure beyond human lives and that symbolize historically significant items passed on within a bounded group, signifying status, identity, rank, authority, etc.

What stems from this discussion is that, even if an item is no longer with its owner, the bond it creates in transaction continues through time and space, and at a certain time some return will happen to the owner/giver. Therefore, the item might be far into the distance, but it carries a spatiotemporal bond that guarantees a return to the giver. In short, inalienation means giving away a possession in order to create and/or maintain a relationship.

Alienation, on the other hand, refers to separation (Carrier 1991) and commodity exchange. Items are not associated with transactors, nor do they indicate any past or future relationship between them (ibid.). In commodity exchange, objects are alienated from the transactors. A commodity relationship is understood as an impersonal relationship (ibid.) that identifies a state of reciprocal independence (Gregory 1980: 640; see also Osteen 2002) and the absence of debt (Gregory 1982: 61). According to Carrier, commodity exchange means 'voluntary transactions of things of equivalent value between people who are not durably linked to each other' (Carrier 1992: 193n).

The perception of alienation was introduced by Marx, who first linked commodity exchange with social pre-conditions (Gregory 1980: 640).[10] The term 'alienation' also refers to the use of money in exchange transactions.[11] It is largely assumed that money as a medium of exchange creates a tit-for-tat relationship since it symbolizes an equivalent value of the items circulating between parties. However, the involvement of money in a transaction does not automatically make it a commodity transaction. Money can be a part of a gift exchange. Money as a gift has been successfully analysed by Parry and Bloch (1989) as a relationship that links transactors to each other and transactors to objects. Ultimately it is this that defines

[9] For a critique of Weiner's position, see Mosko 2000.
[10] For further comparisons between Mauss and Marx, see Parry 1986.
[11] Cf. the notion of barter, which may involve money (Humphrey 1997).

whether commodity or gift exchange is involved (Gregory 1980, 1982; Carrier 1991).

Alienation and inalienation can broadly be called the 'products' of the exchange process. Both concepts signify ways of establishing relationships after the exchange has been carried out: they refer to a lasting personal element in transactions or its absence. Moreover, one needs time in order to identify an observed exchange practice correctly (Bourdieu 1999 [1977]).

Critical Perspectives on Exchange Theory

Recent studies engage critically with the neat and rather polarized descriptions of the gift and commodity. As Yan (2005: 258) notes, even though Mauss initiated the debate by taking a 'both-and' approach, most subsequent studies have adopted an 'either-or' approach to the commodity and the gift. Parry analyses cases from a Hindu context in order to show that there might be situations when the gift must be alienated and should never be returned (Parry 1986). A slightly different approach to the gift is that taken by Ssorin-Chaikov (2006), who analyses public gift-giving for the birthday of the Soviet leader Stalin in 1949. Ssorin-Chaikov speaks about performative and predictable gift giving and mentions 'forced obligation': rushed gift giving that is as if spontaneous, but in fact distances the giver from the act of giving.

Gell (1992) and Rio (2007) argue that often the term 'gift' already implies 'exchange' and 'reciprocity'. But this might not always be the case. Probably the most famous account of the idea of the gift 'with no strings attached' is Laidlaw's in his article 'The Free Gift Makes No Friends' (2000). Here Laidlaw follows Parry's analysis of a 'pure' or 'free' gift. A free gift, according to these theorists, avoids any establishment or maintenance of social relations and marks the deliberate absence of return or obligation between the parties, but nevertheless it is called a gift. While analysing the gift in religious contexts, Parry argues that the 'notion of reciprocity has been used so uncritically that it is often unclear whether what is being described is a matter of empirical fact, indigenous theory or anthropological assumption' (1986: 466). Parry was inspired by a comment of Lévi-Strauss, who wondered whether it was not the Melanesians themselves who were the authors of the theory of reciprocity elaborated by Mauss and Malinowski, the more so since this principle is not prominent in the literature on Africa (Parry references MacCormack 1976). This critical stand has led Parry (1986: 466-7) to point to the backgrounds of the theorists and claim that 'an ideology of the "pure gift" is most likely to arise in highly differentiated societies with an advanced division of labour', where greater indirectness of return exists. In the economy of scarce resources, gift

exchange has direct material significance for the expansion of social contacts (ibid.: 467). Parry also points out the underlying cultural roots of theorists from a Christian background. The theory of gift exchange was developed in a Christian world, which is an ethicised salvation religion. In Parry's view Christianity is more likely to encourage the separation of persons and things and therefore to enforce market exchange as a matter of pure utility. This observation blends into the critique of anthropology as a discipline and of the unrecognized Christian orthodoxies it perpetuates (Cannel 2005, Hann 2007), which often results in the 'ethnographic absence of Christianity' (Robbins 2007) from anthropological accounts.

Theorists searching for alternative terms in exchange theory have introduced the terms 'sharing' (Rio 2007) or 'one-way economic transfers' (Hunt 2012). But as Hann (2006a: 217) notes, one must look for 'more or less hidden "dyadic pathways" of exchange' and first listen to what the 'folk' have to say about exchange activities: 'If they say that, at some point, perhaps quite unspecified, some return will or should be made to the person who gives, then it is legitimate to speak of exchange. When it is not the case, then we should speak of sharing and transfers'.

With this quote in mind, I will discuss the gift in the delicate context of religious exchanges throughout this book. The 'spiritual' or 'godly' party in exchange has driven many gift-exchange theorists to define such concepts as sacrifice, offering and donation. Usually, gift giving to gods is perceived as a sacrifice, and sacrifice, in turn, has been considered alienable: a transfer of ownership, a destruction of property, a surrender of possession (Gregory 1980: 644-5). Sacrifice (for example, the killing of a pig; cf. Strathern 1988 or Rio 2007 on the denial of return) has been discussed as an instance of the completion of a transaction. I present the notion of sacrifice in more detail later in this chapter.

Spatiotemporal Meanings of Exchange

What Mauss (1990 [1925]) brought to anthropology with his account of the gift is the understanding that exchange practices are primarily aimed at social rather than utilitarian goals and that exchange encapsulates a concentrated picture of social relations intertwining religious, economic and political fields. The analysis of gift exchange shows that these are rather courtesies, assistances, rituals, feasts, etc., exchanged and political ranks which determine issues of honour and prestige. It is not the object of exchange that is emphasized, but what exchange produces. 'The gifts put a seal. … They give the two sides an identity', claimed Mauss (ibid.: 18). In other words, what is given is not lost, but reproductive (ibid.: 55). Even if exchange is carried out between two individuals, the wider perspective on

the whole cycle reveals an interchange between groups. It might seem that individuals exchange things on mere individual grounds, but according to Mauss exchange involves a group morality, given the collective nature of the contract that motivates exchange and is expressed in it.

According to Mauss, gifts are ideally voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but actually given under an obligation and with interest. He calls this an obligatory-voluntary gift exchange. What is the force that creates obligatory-voluntary practices? Mauss did not elaborate on this clearly. Does it involve an obligation to return, or is it a matter of 'group morality'?

At this point, the analysis of another French sociologist (and philosopher and anthropologist), Pierre Bourdieu, complements Mauss's work. His approach to human action, the incorporation of structures and their reproduction was most prominently analysed in his Outline of a Theory of Practice (1999 [1977]). For him gift exchange was at the forefront of explaining social institutions and the naturalization of the established order. What others have called reciprocity Bourdieu calls 'circular reinforcement' (1999 [1977]: 167), and he emphasizes the close connection between action and institution. In his understanding what is 'taken for granted', which he calls doxa, is always affirmed and reaffirmed: 'The self-evidence of the world is reduplicated by the instituted discourses about the world in which the whole group's adherence to that self-evidence is affirmed' (ibid.). According to Bourdieu, the dispositions of groups are confirmed and thus reinforced by both practices and institutions. Exchange practices (such as feasts or ceremonies) favour 'the circular reinforcement which is the foundation of collective belief', whereas institutions 'constitute collective thought as much as they express it' (e.g. language, myth, art) (ibid.). Therefore (exchange) practices and institutions are mutually involved in each other's production and reproduction.

Bourdieu further elaborates on the points and strategies employed by individuals in order to gain power. This aspect is underlined in the analysis of how exchange is carried out. Bourdieu turns the attention to the time or tempo of exchange. The interval or the lapse of time separating the gift and the counter-gift is a strategy by which the giver and receiver cleverly manipulate the exchange process, generating power and control. The period interposed must be neither too short nor too long. Compelling a delay or a deliberate 'spacing out of time' (1999 [1977]: 6) is a strategy in itself. It makes the obligated person a power player, as she or he transforms the

timing of the obligation to return into an unpredictable timing of return and therefore an exercise of power.[12]

Bourdieu's contribution to the theory of gift exchange is not centred on the notion of reciprocity and the circulation of items, but on the more general analysis of how exchange reinforces institutions and helps individuals exercise power and gain control. He uses terms such as 'time' and 'strategy' to exhibit multifaceted relationships among individuals and groups. For him, it is the manipulation of time or the tempo of exchange that is strategically managed by actors and creates a power play. Yet this strategy does not necessarily imply a controlled result: certain levels of uncertainty always occur 'over time', and outcomes can seldom be clear even for the actors involved in acts of exchange (Swartz 1997: 99).

The emphasis on the strategic management of time stems from Bourdieu's approach to human action as interest-oriented. It is in the interest of each individual to acquire more capital, since capital is at the root of all power struggles, and to aim to occupy a certain position within the social space. Bourdieu (1989) approaches space as a system of relations and a field of power. Geographical space can partially be compared to social space, since the closer agents, groups or institutions are situated within a space, the more properties they have in common. Spatial distance partially coincides with social distance. This is just one clarification Bourdieu provides. In pointing to other examples of one's position in social space, he invokes examples involving language: 'agents who occupy a higher position in one of the hierarchies of objective space symbolically deny the social distance between themselves and others, a distance which does not thereby cease to exist' (1989: 16). According to Bourdieu, even a negative saying as 'he is not so highbrow for a university professor' indicates distance and the recognition of that distance (ibid.). The position one occupies in social space provides one with a 'sense of one's place', which in interaction leads people to keep their common place and others to 'keep their distance', to 'maintain their rank' and 'not get familiar' (ibid.: 17). This strategy can be unconscious, as Bourdieu argues, and take the form of timidity or arrogance: 'Social distances are inscribed in bodies or, more precisely, in the relation to the body, to language and to time' (ibid.). A sense of one's place is the basis of all relationships that are lasting (friendships, love affairs, marriages, associations, etc.).

Social space tends to function as a symbolic space, a space of difference or differential distance (Bourdieu 1989: 20). Individuals and

[12] However, there also exist 'strategies intended simply to neutralise the action of time and ensure the continuity of interpersonal relations … (through, for example) "little presents" which are said to "keep friendship going"' (1999 [1977]: 7).

groups use various tools and strategies to negotiate their identities. These strategies can use such devices as insults, gossip, rumours, slander or innuendos, and they are used at various levels that aim at constructing a certain social reality. In Bourdieu's writings, the individual manipulates time and acts according to purposeful strategies (Munn 1992) with a view to the future and the expected returns from exchange networks. Time becomes a strategic tool of manipulation employed by individuals and groups in order to gain more of the various forms of capital (cultural, social, symbolic or economic) that enhance their respective social positions.

Bourdieu's perceptions of temporality and social space are therefore closely related to strategy in action. An individual (or 'agent', in his words) appears in his writings, as in Mauss's, as a representative of a certain group, even if the motives that guide the individual to exchange might appear to be purely personal to that individual. Exchange in both Maussian and Bourdieusian understandings is an action oriented towards the present and future acquisition of desired returns.

The approach that combines both Mauss and Bourdieu is also that presented by Parry and Bloch (1989). In their introduction to Money and the Morality of Exchange the two authors discuss short- and long-term transactional orders that are interrelated and mutually dependent. The short-term cycle involves individual, acquisitive activity, which may be driven by individual goals, even immoral gains, pleasure and enjoyment. But as long as it serves the reproduction of the long-term cycle, which is concerned with the reproduction and maintenance of the social and cosmic order, the balance is not distorted.

This analysis of exchange practices is at the heart of this book. Having revealed the emphasis that is placed on the broad dimensions of time and space in exchange, I will now present ethnographic data regarding exchange practices before coming back to short- and long-term cycles in the final section.

Exchange Practices in the Field

In this section I focus on the economy of the Dzūkija region and position my account within exchange theory. In the first part of this section I present a general picture of everyday economics in Dzūkija. Then I introduce the everyday exchanges I documented at the time of my fieldwork.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, before getting to know local people, I travelled around two parishes and concentrated on places I could access. My parallel readings on the history of the places and works of

Lithuanian ethnologists[13] on various customs made me aware of the specifics of the region. Almost every account accentuated the poverty of Dzūkija in comparison to other regions in Lithuania. The area of my fieldwork is said to belong to pinewood *dzūkai* (Lith.: *šilų dzūkai*, which is contrasted with *panemunių* and *gruntų*). The characteristics of this area are closely connected with its surroundings, geographical position and nature. It is a largely forested area, with pine-tree forests and sandy and therefore poor soils suitable for growing mostly buckwheat and potatoes, though it is also an area very rich in mushrooms and berries. The forests were previously used for beekeeping and hunting, which added to the household's maintenance. However, with local inhabitants slowly aging, these activities have become rarer.

Berries and mushrooms have been the main source of income for people in this area for centuries (Stanaitis 2001). In the past all family members, except for the elderly and children, went into the forests to pick mushrooms, in the high season even going with carts. Those who stayed at home processed the gathered goods: they cleaned, sorted and, in the case of mushrooms, threaded them together into circular garlands (Milius 2005: 30). To a large extent selling what has been gathered still adds to family budgets. At the time of my fieldwork people confirmed that they have their tracks in the forests, which they use to pick mushrooms. Some of them keep those tracks a secret even from their own family members (Plate 1).

The forests of Dzūkija are known to every Lithuanian who likes to go mushroom picking. One woman told me that she sometimes meets a 'woman from town', as she called her, in the forest nearby, who comes to pick mushrooms, sells them and in this way adds to her pension. This 'woman from town' was considered by my interlocutor to be in a more difficult financial situation because every month she had a lot to spend on bills. My interlocutor, on the other hand, had a house on her own land, received a pension and did not have many monthly bills to pay. In addition to forest goods, she also produced homemade vodka for sale or for the needs of the family.

[13] The use of this term is explained on page xi of this book.

Plate 1. A biscuit dessert in the shape of mushrooms.

Local homemade vodka must be added to the immediate associations with Dzūkija already mentioned. It has many local names in the region, as well as in the rest of Lithuania, but the type produced in the area of my field site is considered special. Tourists from other parts of Lithuania frequently asked locals about the possibility to buy it, as it is not legalized by the state and can only be bought through personal contacts.

The construction and maintenance of Dzūkija's regional characteristics by local governmental institutions encapsulates the basic attributes of what is typical of this region. Ethnographic distinctions are largely supported and forged by local ethnologists. This adds to the marketing strategies of both local and foreign tourism. The local dialect, buckwheat cake or meals with mushrooms,[14] homemade vodka, hollow beekeeping (Lith.: *dravinė bitininkystė*), unique nature spots and handicrafts are some of the features used as markers of distinction for Dzūkija.

However, the Dzūkija region is represented not only through the tastes of mushrooms, cranberries, buckwheat and homemade vodka, the aesthetic

[14] Typically with edible Boletus type mushrooms (*baravykai* in standard Lithuanian or *grybai* in the local dialect) and chanterelles (*voveraitės* in standard Lithuanian or *lepeškos* in the local dialect).

sights of nature or the smell of a pine forest. In addition to the local dialect, there is another aspect of this region that relies on sound, namely songs. This peculiarity is reflected in the fact that almost all the larger villages of the area have a folklore ensemble consisting mostly of older persons who are said to sing the songs of their parents and grandparents. Large groups of tourists who visit the region often also book an hour or two of entertainment with the local folklore ensemble.

In sum, the connections that are drawn between the people of Dzūkija and their economy are largely connected with nature and its characteristics. Some historical facts have added to the particularities of this region. Because the land is largely infertile and forested, this region of pinewood *dzūkai* was found to be unsuitable for creating collective farms under the Soviet regime. This has led ethnologists to argue that Dzūkija has more 'connections with the past' than any other region in Lithuania.

Issues concerned with exchange and gifts pervaded village life in various ways, and I was a witness and participant in many of these. The ordinary visits that a neighbour pays to another neighbour are marked by an exchange of gossip or a baked or other cooked meal. Co-workers often held work-related discussions and socialized over tea and snacks. Homemade food was positively valued on such occasions. In contrast, store-bought food was noticed less and not commented on. In the case of a larger get-together, like the village feast, different homemade foods were often compared. It was soon known to me who baked the best buckwheat cake in the area, who weaved the most beautiful fabrics, who sang the best, and who knew the most interesting stories.

Upon my arrival at the field site I first aimed at establishing relationships. Issues of exchange played a crucial role here. At the beginning of my stay in Vilktaka several people became interested in what I could offer them, both local institutions and the community. As a result, because I could speak English and was coincidentally present in the area just before the tourist season started, I was asked to join the local guides, which I did for three months. This work did not provide me with significant ethnographic data for this book, but it was definitely instrumental in establishing relationships, getting to know local areas and observing and contributing to their representation.

Nevertheless, for the rest of my fieldwork I felt like I was taking from the local people. Their openness and welcoming manner were always somewhat overwhelming for me. Luckily, I could at least balance what I received with material gifts, a little, which was possible because of my fieldwork budget, which set aside expenditure for 'gifts for informants'. Whenever I went out into the village, I always had something sweet that I

could give my hosts in case they invited me to sit at their table. At the beginning of my fieldwork I noticed Izabelė, a local ethnologist, bring such 'gifts' for those she visited. As they were always accepted, I did not experiment but stuck to items of exchange and the norms of giving that already seemed established.

Since I travelled a lot with Izabelė at the beginning, I observed many exchanges between herself and local people. The stories she collected, songs, photos and the like were all items of exchange, the 'givers' receiving acknowledgement and attention in return. While some people were openly proud of Izabelė's visits and interest, others were more modest, though they gladly shared the fact later with their neighbours.

Almost at the end of my stay I joined Izabelė one more time for a trip to a couple of villages she wanted to visit. She was looking for old, big scarves, and her co-worker's mother said she was ready to sell one. However, upon our arrival at a particular village we first stopped at the house of another woman who was said to weave girdles, another activity Izabelė wanted to document.[15] Towards the end of our stay Izabelė asked the woman whether any of her woven fabrics were for sale. The woman showed us what she had. Openly admiring the colours of two pieces of cloth, Izabelė asked if the woman would be eager to sell them to her, to which the woman answered positively. It was Izabelė's turn, and she asked how much she would take for them. The woman was not sure, thought for a while, was about to say something and then stopped herself. These were a rather strange couple of minutes, when an unvocalized price was governing the bargain. Finally, Izabelė took some money out of her wallet and gave it to the woman. One could see from the woman's face that she did not expect so much money and she probably would have asked for less had the bargaining gone on for longer. As the amount of money the woman received exceeded her expectations, she immediately added another item to the pile as a gift. While the woman went into another room, Izabelė whispered to me that in Vilnius such fabrics cost slightly less than she had actually given her.

Once their deal had been completed, I asked the woman whether she would be prepared to sell the other two fabrics as well, to which she also answered positively. She did not state a price, and since she seemed to be occupied with the girdle for Izabelė, I assumed that the price had already been fixed and gave her the same sum of money as Izabelė had. However, I was not given a girdle as a gift, because the woman and Izabelė were in a different relationship. They were able to anticipate the future collaboration

[15] 'Girdle' in Lithuanian is *juosta,* a long strip of hand-woven ornamented material that is worn around the waist, on the skirt or trousers by women or men when wearing national costume.

they might enter into, while I was being seen for the first time and was therefore not placed in either of the woman's circles.

I learnt two important things from this experience. First, exchange among parties who are familiar to each other differs from exchange among parties who are not: while Izabelė was known, it was my first visit in that particular village. Secondly, the monetary value of the woven fabric was negotiated then and there, although while deciding how much money to give, Izabelė used her knowledge of the prices of such fabrics in the capital, Vilnius.

Certain other forms of taking, giving and repaying were already fixed in the village before my arrival. I was introduced to them by local people in the course of my fieldwork. I remember going into a local shop and asking for a 1.5 litre bottle of beer. While handing me the bottle the saleswoman asked: 'To repay a man for some job?' 'Yes, indeed', I said, 'for cutting the grass'. Surprised by her guess, I figured I could also ask: 'Is this an appropriate brand of beer for such a repayment?' 'Yes, this one is good', she said. The beer was indeed gladly accepted by the man.

Get-togethers of several people to help finish a job for a neighbour were common in my field site. A couple of months after my arrival, I was asked to help plant potatoes in the field of an older adult woman I knew from church. I came at the given time, but found people working already. When Agota (b. 1932), the woman who asked me to come, saw me, she came towards me with a smile and said that she already had enough help. I could go. Then she immediately added that she would expect me to come another day. When we met again, she told me about the repairs that were to be done to her house and that her health did not allow her to clean up all the mess. I offered to clean for her, which she gladly accepted. After I had done so, I left. Later that week, when I visited Agota, she said she had something to give to me. She had spoken with her son the other day, and he suggested giving me some of her potatoes and jams from last year.

In general, the people of Vilktaka parish can undeniably be seen as givers. They have provided stories, songs, woven cloths, magic and folk medicine to many academics before me (ethnologists, biologists, folklorists, etc.). Indeed, the local people seemed quite comfortable in this role. I remember two interviews when I could not 'get through' with my questions: women were telling stories, which, it seemed, they had already told to someone and thought that this was what I wanted to hear too.

Certainly there were not only pensioners in my field site. I got to know not only Izabelė, but some other couples in their thirties. They had all finished their studies at university and were now living the sorts of lives they wanted. They loved the villages they lived in, adored the people around them

and respected their life histories. They were trying to preserve the heritage of the people and the area, which included the houses, the songs, the folklore, the food and the nature. As a result, local older persons and their younger neighbours shared not only a space of living, they also exchanged material and immaterial items. The younger people were often interested in the recipes and stories the older local inhabitants could tell them and the songs they remembered, while the latter openly expressed their joy that the village was not dying.

If one fails to participate in exchanges in the village, one will not be excluded from the community or social events, but to participate in interpersonal or group exchange is in one's own interest. Most of the exchanges I participated in were interpersonal in origin, while group transactions were mostly exhibited on occasions like village feasts, when guests, that is, groups of people from other parishes, villages or towns, were received. In such cases the village presented itself as a whole. In the case of one religious feast, an organ player and a choir from a neighbouring parish came and participated in the church ritual. After the mass everyone was invited to eat. The village celebrated this day by inviting more people to the evening event: a couple of singing groups were invited, and a local theatre group performed. After the performances were over and most of the audience had left, the performing parties prepared the table. Some of them contributed food and drink, others did not, but everyone stayed and partied together.

The above examples point to certain exchanges and items of exchange in Vilktaka and the neighbouring parish. Upon my arrival certain exchanges already had an established item and price (like beer for mowing the lawn or some sweet edible item to take along when visiting), while others were situational and concluded through discussions and common agreement (like Agota's jams and potatoes or Izabelė's purchased fabrics).

The purpose of this section has been to introduce exchanges that were not necessarily of a religious context, but which took place in the villages at the time of my fieldwork and helped to understand certain subtleties of giving, receiving and reciprocating. In the following section I set out the basis for my following chapters by discussing emic and etic notions of gift exchange.

Anthropological and Lithuanian Perceptions of the Gift

At this point I return to the theme of this chapter's first section, where theoretical conceptualizations of the gift were presented. Before I begin my ethnographic analysis of exchange and Catholicism in the following chapters of this book, I will first engage with the question: What are the differences

between anthropological and local Lithuanian perceptions of the concept of the 'gift'?

I shall start by first describing the peculiarities of certain words that will punctuate the whole debate. This primarily concerns the English words 'donation', 'offering' and 'sacrifice' and the Lithuanian equivalent of all three words, *auka*. The differences between the three English words are quite distinct.[16] An offering is a collection of (monetary) contributions during religious ceremonies. A donation is a gift given by individuals, groups or institutions, often for charitable purposes, and may include money, services or various material items. A sacrifice is closely related to practices of ritual worship when a special offering is made or to an individual act of giving up something important.

The word 'gift', however, has a Lithuanian equivalent in the word *dovana*. While analysing the everyday language of my interlocutors, I noticed that this word was always used to express something given for free, the local word being *dovanai*:

> So anyhow people would pay, would pay with rye, would pay with grain or something else, but they would pay. [The priest] would not pray for free (Lith.: *dovanai*) (Teofilė, resident of a neighbouring parish, int. 26.3.2009).
>
> No, he is not like that. No. If you do not have [money], he would bury for free (Lith.: *dovanai*). He would not take money. He has buried some like that, here, several drunkards. For free (Lith.: *dovanai*) (Aldutė [b.1950], int. 20.10.2008).
>
> The kingdom of heaven, which is given to them as a gift (Lith.: *dovanai*) (Extract from priest's sermon 4.6.2008).

In the first interview extract, a woman distinguishes between paying and *dovanai*, i.e. between giving money and giving something for free or as a gift. She says that people pay the priest because he would not simply pray for free; he needed to be paid. In the second interview extract, a woman talks about a previous priest who buried people for free or as a gift because they did not have money. Thus, even though the priest should have been paid for burying, he was kind enough to bury the dead without being paid, which he did as a gift to the bereaved, for free. The third quotation is an extract from the mass and shows that the word for a free gift is also used in the ritual language.

These quotations show that local use of the word 'gift' means something that is given for free and is furthermore opposed to something given as a payment. The local perception of paying resembles the

[16] I refer to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2014), and the Tildės Biuras dictionary (2014).

relationship of alienation, a relationship between exchange parties that is marked by reciprocal independence (Gregory 1980, 1982). In the anthropological literature, alienation is associated with commodity exchange: a voluntary tit-for-tat exchange, which does not bind the transactors in any durable relationship (Carrier 1992). However, despite the local notion of the gift as something free, and despite the anthropological debate which links money to alienation, people in my field site spoke of the money-gift (or the 'gift of money', as Parry and Bloch [1989] phrase it) as *auka*:

> Lin: What is *auka*?
> Man: Well, it's a gift (Lith.: *dovana*) – you give money or something to the priest, you *aukoti*.
> Woman: So it is even said to you when you say 'thank you for the *auka*'. So it is considered *aukoti*. It is *auka* if the priest thanks you (Married couple, residents of Vilktaka, int. 4.11.2008).

Auka is a gift, of money or some other item. With reference to the last sentence in the above quotation, I want to emphasize that the act of thanking by the priest (the recipient) means that he acknowledges and accepts the given item as a gift in the theoretical sense, or as *auka* in the words of my interlocutors. This quotation sheds light on a very important aspect of exchange: the acknowledgement of the giver, as well as of the given item by the recipient. Giving and receiving have taken place and have been acknowledged.

In exchanges that happened in the church between the parishioners and the priest, 'to give' was usually used interchangeably with *aukoti* or was replaced with verbs that have a precise meaning indicating a specific ritual activity:

> So then we give, some ten Litas, as much as we can afford. I gave ten, that much from my pension, some twenty (Woman on the cemetery in the neighbouring parish, int. 15.5.2008).
>
> I don't know. You give to the church, and that's it. It's up to a priest where he puts it (Ramutė [b.1964] int. 15.10.2008).
>
> [W]hen you *make a request* for the mass … when you *buy* the mass for the dead (Sigita [b.1962], int. 28.1.2009).
>
> As we say, one *buys*, *requests for* the masses. So this means, as someone said, "I came to buy the mass". [The priest] says, "The masses are *not to be bought nor sold*". That is, the mass can only be *requested*. You cannot sell or buy the mass (Aldutė [b.1950], int. 20.10.2008).

> This is really *not paying*, really not paying, you know, you are just *contributing to*, well, the upkeep of the church and the priest (Sigita [b.1962], int. 28.1.2009).

These excerpts show that several verbs are used to indicate the actions of giving or offering money to the church and the priest, and that in local usage the verbs indicate the act either of requesting a mass or of paying for it. However, this was once modified by the priest and one of the quoted parishioners: the priest is not to be paid for, nor are masses to be bought or sold. My interlocutors explained to me how the commonly used phrases 'to buy the mass' or 'to request the mass' should be properly understood. First of all, people come to the priest and say that they want to request a mass. In the above accounts the fact that they give some money to the priest while requesting masses is considered giving, but it should not be confused with paying. Thus the presence of money in this transaction between the priest and the parishioners does not make the exchange one of buying and selling. Giving money to the priest in this situation is not seen as a commodity exchange or a payment but as a contribution. For the parishioners it is not the amount of money that is important, but what the money they give guarantees: it ensures the upkeep of the church building and pays for the lighting within it, the priest, the altar servers and consequently the ritual and the prayer for their deceased relative. People emphasize the act of giving while requesting a mass, but not the given item itself. The money they give is not lost, it is reproductive (Mauss 1990 [1925]: 55). People stress the situation of giving and point to its social context and the social roles involved: the parishioner gives to the priest in anticipation of a mass. The phrase 'requesting a mass' also hints at a certain social contract with expected future continuation and not a one-off monetary transaction that ends then and there with money changing hands. In this way an emic distinction between gift and commodity exchange is emphasized: parishioners and the priest refuse to call 'requesting a mass' and giving money buying or selling and instead emphasize that what is given is a contribution. In other words, it is the act of giving that is emphasized, not the material item, the aim being to guarantee the social situation through the exchange of items.

To illustrate the ethnographic emphasis on the differences between anthropological notions of the gift and commodity exchange, I will present two more quotations from my interviews, which aim to define how *auka* is used by both the parishioners and the priest:

> The *auka* when one makes a request for the mass (Akvilė [b.1959] int. 19.2.2009).

> People who have already made a request come before the mass, so when they come, they bring only the *auka*. For [the priest]. You can give when you make a request, but mostly you come before that mass and bring the *auka* for that requested mass. … So when people request a mass, they tell which day and then on that day they come and give the *auka* before that mass (Aldutė [b.1950], int. 20.10.2008).

From these quotations it becomes clear that *auka* and 'requesting a mass' are closely related to religious practice. They reflect a certain customary religious action. People first come and request a mass, that is, they tell the priest when they want him to fulfill their request during the mass. When the day comes, before the mass, people come to the priest again and this time bring the *auka*, usually a certain sum of money. During the mass the priest fulfills the parishioner's request and prays for the dead of that family or the health of the living family members – whatever was the purpose of the requested mass. With the priest's fulfilment of the request during the mass, the 'contract' to provide the requested mass ends.

It should be noted that usually more than one person makes a request for the same mass. Of course, there might be cases when someone requests a specific mass, for example, for a wedding or a funeral. Such masses are also requested and *auka* is paid to secure that request, though in a higher amount.

The term *auka* has more meanings than just a certain sum of money given to the priest for a religious ritual. One of my interlocutors said, 'Bread and wine… But we also offer our own *auka* [during the mass]' (Akvilė [b.1959], int. 19.2.2009). She emphasized that *auka* carries a personal meaning, too. As another interlocutor explained, *auka* can be material as well as immaterial:

> What is *auka*? Well, it can be material as well as immaterial, spiritual. I think that it is devoting yourself in the name of the others. In the name of good. It can be *auka* in the form of a prayer, or time, or anything else. But it also requires some *auka* from me, you know. Because, if I can do something with pleasure, then… Well, it is also a certain *auka*, just a pleasant one. The other *auka* might require more efforts from me. It is of a different value then (Sigita [b.1962], int. 28.1.2009).

This woman indicated not only the material and immaterial *auka* (spiritual donations, as she said, in the form of time or prayer, for example), she also described the different values that such an *auka* can embody. Her *auka* is not always the same. One *auka* is pleasurable to make, the other is not so gratifying and therefore requires more inner resources on the part of the giver. Her *auka*, given to someone else, also requires a certain *auka* from

her. It follows that there is part of the giver in the *auka* they give. In Lithuanian there are two nouns, *atsidavimas* (Engl. 'giving oneself') and *pasiaukojimas* (Engl. 'self-sacrifice'), which describe precisely the part of the giver that is given away or sacrificed. This is an important aspect of *auka*, as it resembles the Maussian notion of the gift: material and immaterial items given in the form of *auka* bear some part of the giver.

Moreover, the interlocutor describes the different values with which her given *auka* is endowed. This enables us to decide whether her gifts are alienable or inalienable. One of my interlocutors provided a very clear description of why *auka* is needed. Akvilė ([b.1959], int. 19.2.2009) described the essence of the ritual mass in this way: 'the mass is the renewal of a covenant. … The covenant – a contract with God – was renewed through bloody or unbloody *auka*. … It was done in order to restore the link with God. … [During the mass] it is said: "this is the *auka* of the new covenant"'.

Her interpretation of the central Catholic ritual as a binding agreement that is renewed through an offering, donation or sacrifice does not differ from gift exchange as described by Mauss: the gift mediates relationships. The Catholic compact is repeated during each mass and is reinforced by material and immaterial items being exchanged. People renew their relationships with the church, the divine or the dead and their roles of priest or parishioner through the material and immaterial gifts that circulate between them.

It is important to mention at this point that in Lithuanian *auka* usually only indicates something that is given. *Auka* is not something one possesses or stores even in an immaterial sense, it cannot be acquired or kept, except when speaking about certain persons, roles or institutions that 'live' from *auka*, like beggars or the Catholic Church in Lithuania. One cannot give *auka* to oneself, only to others, which stresses that *auka* needs a social situation to happen: a giver and a receiver, at least, even if one of them is spiritual in essence. And although a person can be *auka*, this situation often involves death: for example, one can give oneself as an *auka* for independence (Lith.: *pasiaukojo už nepriklausomybę*), or be an *auka* of war (Lith.: *karo auka*). Auka can be requested (Lith.: *pareikalauta*), given (Lith.: *duota*) or carried out or done (Lith.: *atlikta*), and these things can happen just once or over a period of time.

To sum up, the Lithuanian noun *auka* and the verb *aukoti* bring the three English words donation, offering and sacrifice and their meanings together. *Auka* can be given to the church, the priest, the dead, beggars or God. *Auka* can be material or immaterial (prayer, time, etc.), and it can have different values: it can have a very personal meaning, and it can contain

some of the giver's resources to be given up. It follows that there is a part of one's person in one's given *auka*. Such a description of the given *auka* resembles the Maussian notion of the gift because the given item bears some part of the giver.

Auka can also be monetary, but as people emphasized, money does not turn the transaction between themselves and the priest into a transaction of buying or selling. People emphasize the act of giving rather than what is given. Even though some use the term 'to buy the mass', it is strongly held by both the parishioners and the priest that masses are not to be bought or sold. The appropriate wording for such exchanges between the parishioners and the priest is 'to request a mass', a phrase that reveals the nature of the situation of contract between two exchange parties.

In short, exchanges between the parishioners, the priest, the church and the dead reflect the theorists' notion of gift exchange, particularly because people emphasize the act of giving rather than the item or amount given. Their exchanges are seen as a form of social reproduction. Even monetary exchanges between the parishioners and the priest are considered gifts in the anthropological sense, as they aim to guarantee a socio-religious situation and a certain relationship between the parishioner and the priest. The term *auka* therefore reflects the anthropological notion of the gift.

Catholic Gifts, Debts and Inalienation

In this section I discuss Catholic doctrines from the perspective of gift exchange. In the Introduction to this book I argued that Roman Catholic dogmas, practices, scriptures and their clarifications are linked in numerous ways to the notions of exchange, gift, sacrifice, offerings and donations. Church rituals revolve around the depiction of godly powers, the life of God's son, which cyclically divides each calendar year, and around the enactment of offerings and symbolic sacrifices that maintain the relationships between humans and God.

In the first part of this subsection I discuss the centrality of such terms as the 'gift', 'offering', 'sacrifice' and *auka* in Catholicism and point to the established and affirmed relationships between the divine and human realms. In the second subsection I analyse the Catholic notion of redemption and sacrifice and point to the ways in which these divine acts create human indebtedness. The third and final subsection introduces cases of God's indebtedness and finishes with an explanation of why the concepts of short- and long-term transactional orders are useful in analysing exchanges between the parishioners, the church, the priest and the dead.

Catholic Notions of Exchange

Roman Catholic doctrines and ritual language use a number of terms denoting exchange. Words such as 'gift', 'offering', 'sacrifice' or the Lithuanian word *auka* are heard regularly during masses:

> Priest: Let us pray, brothers and sisters, that Almighty God the Father will kindly accept my and your *auka*.
>
> People: Let God accept this *auka* from your hands. Let it provide him with glory and honour, and spiritual benefit for us and all the church.
>
> Priest: Lord, let our devoted *auka* reach your throne (Extract from the mass, 15.8.2008).
>
> Look with mercy upon the offering of your church, upon this lamb, the sacrifice of which is propitiating... Let us be strengthened by your son's body and blood; revived by his holy spirit, we will be one body and one soul in Christ. Let us be given to you by him as an eternal gift (Extract from the mass, 15.8.2008).

During each mass, a certain relationship between God and humans is repeatedly invoked and therefore fixed: 'Thus we thank God for this infinite mercy and gift', 'Thy will be done', 'I believe in God, the Father, the Almighty', 'Thus we ask you, Lord, submissively…' (Extracts from the mass, 25.3.2009), 'Protect your servant, our Pope Benedict, our archbishop…' (Extract from the mass, 15.8.2008). A Catholic is almost constantly dependent on God's will. During conversations and interviews, my interlocutors also made links to Christian gifts and divine giving:

> The main Christian joys are the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Sigita [b.1962], int. 28.1.2009).
>
> Because everyone is very much gifted by God, but some develop it more, that gift, and some pour over it... A lot is given (Bilvienė [b.1944], int. 10.3.2009).

Perceiving the relationship between humans and God in terms of gifts, giving and the indebtedness that follows is not accidental, especially when seen in the context of the Christian story as a whole. The principal indebtedness of a Catholic to God is related to the most important gift he or she can receive – life. A human being enters this world as a transactor in a pre-established exchange system between a Catholic God and the people. In the vocabulary of exchange, a Catholic is God's inalienable possession.[17]

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[17] The notion of people being inalienable possessions is not new in anthropological writings, this being the point of Lévi-Strauss's famous contribution to anthropological theory when he treats women as the 'supreme gifts' (1969). Gregory (1980: 641) talks about a clan as a producer and people as the produced.

The relationship between the creator and possessor of the world and his creation and servants is confirmed in several everyday phrases that Lithuanians use. Such brief expressions may be uttered automatically, but their content is rather telling: 'Only God knows' (Lith.: *Dievas žino*) is used to indicate the limits of a speaker's knowledge about the future; 'God give…' (Lith.: *duok, Dieve*) is used when people want to emphasize something about a topic or a person, e.g. 'God, give health to you, you helped me so much'; and 'God, do not give this, God, do not lead to this' (Lith.: *neduok, Dieve*) in order to emphasize that someone does not want something to happen. A Lithuanian proverb says: 'When God gives teeth, he also gives bread' (Lith.: *Davė Dievas dantis, duos ir duonos*), which means that if God gives a child, he will also make sure that there will be enough bread for everyone.

Life as something given and predestined is also reflected in the folk understanding of fate and destiny (Lith.: *dalia, likimas*). In several folk stories, a predetermined situation that is difficult to influence through human power is illustrated by the metaphor of a cross that every human being is supposed to carry throughout life. In one such story a dissatisfied person asks God to give him another cross, to which God responds by letting the person choose from a pile of crosses. The person tries out several crosses, but none are comfortable or light enough. The only cross that fits and is therefore chosen from the pile turns out to be the one the person was dissatisfied with in the beginning.

Thus the Catholic doctrines and popular folk views of the relationship between humans and God are based on a number of terms for exchange. The inalienable gift of life turns the Catholic into a child of God and also into a servant of his or her 'Lord'. To develop and strengthen this empirical argument further, I continue this discussion by suggesting several theoretical insights.

Sacrifice, Redemption and Indebtedness

Anthropology's relationship with sacrifice is an intricate one in which Christianity is very much involved. Sacrificial violence, death, (im)purity, self-identification, chaos-order management, food and feasting, and spatiotemporal comparisons, have been among the most prominent points discussed in the majority of relevant works (see e.g. Girard 1977, Detienne 1989, Bloch 1992, Douglas 2003 [1966], etc.). Yet probably the most salient criticisms of the conceptualization of sacrifice have invoked the Judeo-Christian undertones of its various interpretations (Bloch 1992; Milbank 1996; Lambek 2014). The 'Christocentricity' (Milbank 1996: 99) of the understanding of sacrifice has led some anthropologists (e.g. Cannell 2006;

Robbins 2006; Coleman 2010) to ask: 'How can one write about Christian forms of sacrifice without simply reproducing Christian theology? (Mayblin and Course 2014: 311). I do not aim to provide anything new on the anthropology of sacrifice in the following paragraphs, but this topic needs to be clarified, especially in terms of *auka* and the gift.

In one of the most salient works on the topic, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions*, Hubert and Mauss (1964) discuss Christian notions of sacrifice. In their view, Christianity has changed the forms of sacrifice: instead of animals or humans being offered, the sacrifice of this salvationist religion consists of God himself. Contrary to some origin myths in which royal power is established by marriage or ritual defeat (Friedman 2001), the power of Jesus stems from his sacrifice and death. 'Christ's *ultimate* self-sacrifice [on behalf of all human kind] expunges the need for any further form of human sacrifice, but exacts, all the same, that all subsequent human actions be in some sense self-sacrificial' (Mayblin and Course 2014: 312, emphasis in original). Jesus' relationship with humanity is established and based primarily in terms of exchange: his life, retold in four different ways in the New Testament, pictures him as a healing, life-giving man whose passion and death were decisive in affirming a new relationship between humans and God.

Detienne (1989) and Heusch (1956) have criticized the notions of sacrifice in Hubert and Mauss (1964), as well as Evans-Pritchard's views (1956), as resembling the Christian understanding of it far too much. Although Hubert and Mauss originally presented their theory as an alternative to gift theory, the aspect of giving in sacrificial rituals cannot be dismissed so easily (Bloch 1992). 'Giving something is the lowest common denominator of rituals which have been called sacrifice' (ibid., 30). Bloch suggested treating the anthropological concept of sacrifice like the notion of totemism discussed by Lévi-Strauss (1963; cf. Bloch, 1992: 25). While not providing an explanation for either totemism or sacrifice as such, both authors are seeking explanations for what people call sacrifice and what they do not (ibid.).

Thus, did people in my field site make any distinction between gift giving and sacrifice? In this chapter I have already described how Lithuanians have a particular word that combines the English distinctions of sacrifice, offering and donation into one term – *auka*, which represents the anthropological notion of the gift. *Auka* can be material or immaterial, it can be 'invested' with the giver's intentions, feelings and personal expectations, it can bear some part of the giver, and it can have different values, depending on the giver and the situation. What the Lithuanian perception of *auka* emphasizes in particular is that it is given: it indicates the process of carrying

it out or making it, whether once or over a period of time. *Auka* is social in its practice: for *auka* to happen, there must be at least a giver and a receiver, even if this transaction is only in the mind of the *auka*-giving person.

In the quest to explain sacrificial ritual practices and their conceptualization, there have been continuous attempts to compare, generalize and sometimes draw rather evolutionary descriptions of sacrifices. What is important for this book, however, is that much of the literature on sacrifice is engaged in the quest to discover what type of offering sacrifice actually is: is it giving with an expectation of a return, or is it giving up someone or something, is it personal or rather collective, is it communion or communication, and is it self-sacrifice or is it a gift? What these discussions do not question, however, is the *giving* part. Accordingly I argue that it is this particular social aspect, rather than a focus on the item of sacrifice, that should be at the centre of social analysis.

Sacrifice's complicated situation within exchange theory might be related to its unresolved issues with reciprocity: how to think in terms of a reciprocal gift 'insofar as the original object is destroyed or dematerialized and hence cannot return as such' (Lambek, 2014: 431). I would argue that the gift does not need to return in the same material state for exchange and reciprocity to happen. What is more important in any exchange is not the item circulating, but the social situations it produces.

Perhaps it would be more instrumental to approach the Christian sacrifice from the perspective of debt. The Christian idea of Jesus' sacrifice is particularly interesting for academics engaged in exchange theory. As a starting point I would like to refer to one of my interlocutors, Sigita, who said: 'But you know, Christ said, "I came so that you would have life"' (int. 28.1.2009). Jesus' redemptive act is already the second time people have been given life, and they have become indebted yet again. This redemptive sacrifice of God's son is something people can never repay (Schneider 1990: 35). Or can they? As far as I can judge from the Catholic Church's structure, doctrines, rituals, organization of parishes and the exchanges that take place within it, it is sensible to sustain the indebtedness. I will explain why with reference to Graeber's insights on debt.[18]

In his book on the notion of debt, Graeber argues that human existence is a form of debt and that all major world religions use a similar framework of establishing relationships between the divine and human realms (2011: 56, 80). While referring to theorists of primordial debt, Graeber explains that the notion of debt is essential to the nature and history of human thought, which developed historically into a simple sense of social

[18] See Graeber (2011) for a more elaborate discussion of the links between Christianity and debt.

obligation and responsibility (ibid.: 57). This leads Graeber to the rather Durkheimian realization that 'our debt to the gods was always, really, a debt to the society that made us what we are' (ibid.: 58). Therefore, the sense of debt is first expressed through religion and only then the state (ibid.: 56). At this point, the redemptive sacrifice of God's son takes the discussion of debt on to another level. According to Graeber (ibid.: 80-2), the primary meaning of 'redemption' is to buy something back, to acquire something by paying off a debt. As such, redemption is presented as God's son's rescue of humanity from the burden of sin, guilt and eternal damnation. It is striking, as Graeber argues, that the core of the Christian message about salvation is framed in the language of a financial transaction (ibid.).

One of the fieldwork moments that left the greatest impression on me was what one priest said during a sermon: 'We are all in exile here. But where is our home, then? It is in eternity, which comes after death' (field notes, mass, 4.1.2009). I remember stumbling over this thought: why does the priest use the metaphor of exile to refer to human existence on earth, and how, then, do my interlocutors perceive of 'now' if true life, according to the priest, starts only after death? Although this perception of life as a place and time away from home is mainly the individual idea of a single priest that did not resonate with most of my interlocutors, I nevertheless found the notion of exile instrumental to my analysis of exchanges among Catholics. The idea has roots in the Catholic perception that salvation can only be achieved in another world. In eternity all debts become meaningless (Graeber 2011: 57). The notion of existence on earth as a time and place of exile makes particular sense if the relationship between humans and God is seen as a relationship of primordial indebtedness.

Graeber calls debt 'an exchange that has not been brought to completion' (2011: 121). Although the main idea behind debt is that it can be repaid and equality can be restored, achieving equality 'destroys the very reason for having a relationship, [as] just about everything interesting happens in between' (ibid.). Debt is a state between states of equality. The time a debt is endured is crucial because it is during this time that the logic of hierarchy unfolds: 'debtor and creditor confront each other like a peasant before a feudal lord' (ibid.). Graeber concludes that 'any ongoing human relations can only take the form of debts. … A world without debt would revert to primordial chaos, … no one would feel the slightest responsibility for one another' (ibid.: 126).

Christian debt is the backbone of the establishment of relationships between humans and God. Such indebtedness supports the empirical examples I have presented of why a Catholic feels dependent on God's will (discussed in the previous subsection).

Indebted God and Transactional Cycles

While the exchange relationships I discuss in this book are embedded in this larger condition of humans' primordial indebtedness to God, there are cases when God is made into an indebted transactor as well. In 'The Stranger, the Guest and the Hostile Host', anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers (1963) analyses hospitality and presents a situation involving a beggar. The beggar asks and is given something by a person he is visiting. Since the beggar does not have any material possessions with which to repay the donor, he thanks her instead: 'God will repay you'. In this situation of exchange a new party – God – is introduced, who is supposed to reciprocate the giver. At this moment God becomes indebted.

Pitt-Rivers's example contributes to my analysis in two ways. First, the topic of beggars and giving to them is well known in Lithuanian folklore, including my field site. It was a custom to give to beggars in exchange for their prayers for the dead in Vilktaka and neighbouring parishes until the mid-twentieth century (see Vaitkevičienė and Vaitkevičius 1998; also Samulionytė 1998). This ceremonial giving had a definite rationale behind it: as my interlocutors told me, previously there were no pensions, and therefore the poor and elderly were supported by the village community with food in exchange for their prayers.

Lithuanian folklore supports the idea of giving to beggars. There is a specific group of stories with the subject of God as an older person walking the earth disguised as a beggar and visiting people. To refuse to give to a divine beggar means misfortune. As certain old proverbs say, one of the best ways to ask something from God is to give to a beggar (Rekašius 1990). In the works of ethnologists, the *auka* that Lithuanians gave to the beggars are considered ritual acts primarily because of the different ways of giving, the different items that are given and the different times of giving (ibid.). For example, relatively little is given to the beggar who appears on one's doorstep on an ordinary day in comparison to the special dishes that are given at certain calendar festivals, which included large pieces of meat and loaves of bread being given to the beggars. As such, the variations in this kind of giving have a twofold meaning: the profane giving of everyday food suddenly collected for the unexpected beggar, and the sacred giving of especially prepared dishes for the beggars, which has a particular time, purpose and meaning (ibid.).

Secondly, the situation Pitt-Rivers describes is relevant to my discussion of exchange, as it draws attention to the idea that God can become a reciprocating party and can be indebted. This last idea is not particularly common in the Catholic worldview. As I have argued in this respect, life and soul are given and received, and a baptised person enters

into a pre-established Catholic exchange cycle, which is based on his or her indebtedness to God. God is a patron, and a Catholic turns into a client even before consciously choosing his or her religion because children are often baptised very early and at their parents' will. This leads a person to enter into an obligatory reciprocal relationship with God. In other words, the gift of life turns the 'newcomer' into an obligatory reciprocal transactor. The beggar's situation thus turns this continual indebtedness around, at least for a brief moment, and leads the giver to anticipate some sort of return from God. In the beggar's case, God enters the exchange cycle quite unexpectedly when the beggar initiates his exchange and ends up as one of not two, but three parties.

Thus in the Catholic relationship between God and the people, not only birth and baptism, but the whole sequence of the person's life and the perception of the other world become significant. The way a Catholic apprehends death becomes central to the perception of the indebted God who should repay.

At this point it is useful to link patterns of economic transactions with cosmology. The exchanges I have discussed could be related to Parry and Bloch's short- and long-term cycles (1989). According to these authors, there are 'two related but separate transactional orders: on the one hand transactions concerned with the reproduction of the long-term social or cosmic order; on the other, a "sphere" of short-term transactions concerned with the arena of individual competition' (1989: 24). The cycle of short-term exchange is the domain of individual activity, while long-term transactions are oriented towards the longer-term goals of social order, moral behaviour and community values. Long-term transactional orders are concerned with the reproduction of the timeless social or cosmic order, but they are also dependent on the short-term transactions of acquisitive nature and individual appropriation. The two cycles are essential to each other (ibid.: 25). What is important is that individually acquired money from short-term cycles must always remain subordinated to long-term cycles, which restore and maintain the ideal community order. As long as the gains of the short-term cycle are at least partly converted into the long-term cycle of reproduction, there is social approval. If the long-term cycle is used to acquire items for personal short-term transactions, the order is disrupted, and there is social discontent.

Although Parry and Bloch primarily relate the two cycles to money, their model can also be applied to other cases. In this book I use the concepts of short- and long-term transactional orders to describe exchanges between the parishioners, the priest, the church and the dead. As was briefly discussed above, and as will be presented at length in the following chapters, individuals have different strategies, motivations and gifts when it comes to

giving to the priest, the church and the dead, being part of Parry and Bloch's short-term cycle. However, people do not emphasize the item or amount given, but rather the very act of giving. That is, the material and immaterial gifts that are given are transformed into a morally acceptable long-term cycle which encompasses the church, the priest and the dead (as will be seen in the following chapters in more detail). Various exchanges of short-term cycles thus contribute to the upkeep of the long-term valued condition.

To conclude, the relationship between Catholics and God is based on a particular type of exchange: at birth and baptism the individual is made the carrier of the major gifts from God – one's soul and one's life. This existential gift creates human indebtedness to God, which is the basis of an indebted relationship between the giver and the recipient of the gift. From the moment the receipt of the Catholic's unpayable gift of life enters into a sequence of exchanges, he or she becomes a giving and asking party, strengthening the dependence on God's will. A Catholic gradually becomes God's inalienable possession. Throughout his or her lifetime, a person engages in various further transactions with God. Some instances, such as giving to beggars, can reverse the situation by creating certain debts that God should repay. To base the relationship between the divine and human realms on debt is essential for the Catholic Church because debt constitutes the ongoing relationship between the parties to the exchange. To be able to repay a debt means to restore equality between transactors and replace hierarchical positions with a situation in which the parties are equal. Clearly this is not how established relationships should be maintained. God's given life and Jesus' redemptive act are therefore the cornerstones of the Catholic Church's structure, rituals and values, which create and maintain indebtedness and obligations.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has introduced the theoretical and ethnographic notions of gift exchange. The analysis of how objects and individuals or groups are related has been at the heart of anthropology since its beginning. Gift exchange in anthropological writings refers at once to the object as well as to the relationship between the transactors and the objects. The interconnectedness of these two aspects has been conceptualized through the notions of inalienation and alienation. Both concepts describe the ways in which the relationship between the transactors is established. The concepts present a rather bipolar understanding of the social meaning of the object. Critics of such 'clean' dual descriptions of gift and commodity exchange pursue theoretical paths that have so far been rather neglected.

Exchange is analysed by Mauss (1990 [1925]) and Bourdieu (1989, 1999 [1977]) as the expressive act of both an individual and a group. The contradiction between these authors is that Bourdieu sees individual exchanges as a power play, while Mauss emphasizes the social rather than the individual utilitarian goals of exchange. According to Parry and Bloch (1989), these two contradictory aspects of exchange must be discussed together because they form an all-encompassing approach they call short- and long-term transactional orders. These authors argue for the interdependence between exchanges that are instrumental in accomplishing individual goals, but that from a long-term perspective contribute to the order of society as a whole.

This chapter has also made a connection between the notion of the gift and the Lithuanian term *auka*. The emic use of the word 'gift' (Lith.: *dovana*) among my interlocutors contradicts the anthropological notion of the gift because people in my field site use it to indicate that something is given for free. However, when the conversation turns to the items given, donated or offered to the church or the priest, the local notion of the gift receives a new name: in such contexts people use the noun *auka*. *Auka* can be material or immaterial, and it can be 'invested' with the giver's intentions, feelings and personal expectations. As a result, the *auka* bears some part of the giver. Furthermore, the word *auka* hints at the act of giving rather than the precise object or service that is given. As such, given and accepted *auka* aim at social reproduction rather than the exchange of items and services in a tit-for-tat manner. As a result, the emic term *auka* represents the etic category of the gift.

The final part of this chapter concentrated on Catholic notions of exchange, gift, debt, sacrifice and redemption. Here I discussed Catholic doctrines, practices and scriptures, and used my empirical field data in order to accentuate the numerous bases of the relationship between the human and divine realms. The argument I pursue is that the Catholic relationship between the people and God is established and affirmed through a number of terms denoting exchange. Catholic indebtedness to God is related to God's most important gift: life. The gift of life turns the Catholic into a child of God, a servant of his or her 'Lord' and an inalienable possession of God. Jesus' redemptive act is the second time people have been given life, and they have therefore become indebted yet again. His death affirms the existence of a new relationship between the human and divine realms. To sustain a debt between humans and God is important as long as this relationship endures.

Chapter 3
Catholicism in Lithuania

In this chapter I first present religions and their history in Lithuania. I then draw on current academic literature on Lithuanian Catholics. The differences between sociological and ethnological approaches to the research subject lead me to the topic of the geographical boundaries of religiosity. Similar to the alleged distinction between rural sites being more religious and urban sites being less religious is the popular perception that rural people reflect less on religious ideas, rituals and matters of all kinds, a perception I challenge. I also present my argument on the place of 'grandmothers' in rural areas and on Catholicism as the 'traditional' Lithuanian religion, which should be counted among Lithuania's inalienable possessions.

In the second part of this chapter I address religion in relation to the socialist and postsocialist periods. I start with Bloch (2010) and Luehrmann (2011), who allude to historical cases of 'religion' being identified and replaced or eradicated and the usefulness of such cases in the study of religion. Following Cannell's (2006) suggestion that researchers should be specific about Christianity, I question whether it is reasonable to mark out a category of postsocialist Catholicism.

Religious Issues

Being the last pagan country to convert to Christianity in fourteenth-century Europe, as it is known today, Lithuania became a border territory between the mostly Catholic and Protestant north-west of Europe and the Orthodox east. Legally there are ten traditional religious communities and associations in Lithuania: Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran, Evangelical Reformed, Greek Catholic (Uniate), Hassidic Jew, Mitnagdim Jew, Sunni Muslim, Karaite, Old Believers and Orthodox Christian. The state's recognition of a religious community or association as traditional means official acknowledgement of it as historically having a spiritual, cultural and social heritage (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2006).

Going through the list of traditional religious communities and associations in Lithuania enables us to take a short walk along the country's historical path. For political and diplomatic reasons King Mindaugas had himself baptised into the Catholic Church together with some of the nobility in the thirteenth century. This was followed by a large-scale baptism campaign among the inhabitants of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy in the late fourteenth century. Several dukes had been baptised as Orthodox (also mainly for political reasons) even before the official Catholic baptism of the Duchy. Old Believers migrated from Russia to Lithuania in the seventeenth century after being expelled from the Russian Orthodox Church and persecuted. Sunni Muslims (the Tartars) and the Karaites were also invited by the dukes to come and live in the Lithuanian Grand Duchy in the fourteenth century, while from the sixteenth century the Evangelical Lutherans and members of the Reformed church introduced biblical exegesis in the Lithuanian language and became great supporters and promoters of use of the local language in churches.[19]

Christianization and later the Reformation had a great impact on Lithuania's political, social, economic and cultural life. The Catholic Church played an important role in Lithuania from the second half of the nineteenth century, sustaining a sense of national identification during occupations and changes of political system (Sapiets 1990; Hoppenbrouwers 1999; Bruce 2000; Lane 2001; Baronas et al. 2002; Ališauskas 2006; Žemaitis 2006;). The strong position of the Catholic Church since the 1980s, particularly during the revival movement (*Sąjūdis*, the Reform Movement of Lithuania), stems from its own resistance to Soviet persecution and the atheist world-view associated with socialism (Sapiets 1990: 161).[20] In the late 1980s the demands for reform and democratization were accompanied by more open religious declarations, despite which the *Sąjūdis* movement and the Catholic Church did not come together[21], though they supported common ideals as potentially beneficial to both sides. The Catholic Church did not identify itself with the national movement as such, even though this movement was supported by Lithuanian Catholics and priests (Sapiets 1990: 155-62).

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[19] The Calvinists formed the majority in the country, while the Radvila dukes and their dynasty promoted the Reformed religion and its establishment.

[20] Some trust in the Catholic Church was lost during socialism. Several priests became informing or decision-influencing actors who helped to carry out Soviet government instructions on a parish level, though with little success (see Streikus 2006 for KGB activities in relation to religion in Lithuania; also Sužiedėlis 1988).

[21] Some authors argue for closer relations between religion and political actions; see e.g. Johnston 1992.

Nonetheless the prominent role that the Church played in the preservation and revival of a national identity during Soviet times, as well as in the liberation movement, won it the status of one of the most trusted institutions in Lithuania.[22]

Besides the state's acknowledged traditional religious communities and associations, there are also a number of non-traditional religious groups that may or may not be recognized by the state. These include Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Methodists, Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, and Tibetan and Zen Buddhists, to mention just a few.

According to the Lithuanian Constitution (Chapter 2, Article 25) there is no state religion in Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo kanceliarija 1992). Every individual has the right to have, form and express his or her own beliefs. The content of world-views is a private matter and is not controlled by the state. The Constitution lays down that freedom of belief and its expression affirms ideological, cultural and political pluralism in the Republic of Lithuania. However, the legal separation of church and state and the neutrality between them do not mean the lack of a relationship (Kuznecovienė 2003: 181; see also Luxmoore 2001; Rumšas 2005). The activities of any religious community, association or centre in Lithuania are supervised by the Ministry of Justice. International resolutions, such as the European Convention of Human Rights, designate the fundamental principles of religious freedom, leaving enough space for individual countries to decide how these principles should be interpreted in a particular juridical practice (Introvigne 2004; see also Barnett 2001).

Schröder and Ališauskienė argue that the historically dominant churches in Lithuania, such as the Roman Catholic Church, maintain their privileged position because of two advantages they enjoy over other religions: their social and political power, acquired through close alliance with political elites, and 'the entrenchment of the majority religion in the national culture, which makes it always appear as a more "natural" choice to the majority of people' (Ališauskienė and Schröder 2012: 5). The Catholic Church's relationship with the political class associated with the state provides it with financial and other advantages. With the emergence of

[22] Trust in institutions is researched mostly quantitatively in Lithuania, data from which appears in daily newspapers almost every month. The Church is usually listed together with other institutions such as the courts (including the constitutional court), commercial banks, the police, the president, parliamentarians, political parties, municipalities, the mass media, national defence and social security. Such sociological surveys at the time of my fieldwork were mostly carried out by the Market and Opinion Research Centre 'Vilmorus' and the Lithuanian-British Market and Public Opinion Company 'Baltijos tyrimai'.

religious pluralism after the renewal of Lithuania's independence, the country achieved religious diversity, but not religious equality (ibid.: 6-8).

Ališauskienė and Kuznecovienė (2012) conducted a content analysis of Lithuanian daily newspapers published two decades after the regaining of independence. The authors concluded that, in the first decade, the Catholic Church aimed at defining the boundaries of its participation in public life, in the course of which it became an active actor in politics. The Church aimed at expanding its powers beyond its confinement to church buildings of the Soviet period. The advantage of the Catholic Church over other religions in Lithuania is said to be primarily monetary.

The Catholic Church may have political intentions and may aim to occupy certain public spheres, but for the most part the everyday earnings of Catholic priests depend on two sources: donations from individual church-goers, and local church funds. International funds also play a role in the maintenance of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, but, like the other two main sources, those are generally not made public.

The majority of priests in Lithuania earn money from the masses and various rituals they perform. The Catholic Church supports priests who are not in a position to serve masses or perform rituals and therefore to earn such money. As one bishop commented on this issue to the press: '[Dioceses have] solidarity funds, which consist of the monetary shares each priest in the diocese brings in after receiving money for masses, baptisms, weddings and other services' (Smalskienė 2014). Dioceses financially support priests from small parishes as well, there being 'fewer masses requested in such parishes, and fewer funerals, while weddings or baptisms occur sporadically, sometimes every other year. Therefore, priests cannot maintain themselves' (ibid.). Several dioceses have become preoccupied with building sheltered housing for priests (Aleksėjūnaitė 2013).

All in all, therefore, the Catholic Church in Lithuania depends to a great extent on donations and offerings from parishioners. In this respect it is no different from other religious communities or organizations: the incomes of all religious communities, associations and centres come only from donations or the sale of assets obtained through charity (Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucinis Teismas 2000), these being the source of the earnings of clergymen, altar servers and maintenance staff. Although the Catholic Church in Lithuania is said to have strong political and financial advantages in comparison to other religious organizations, the everyday life of priests and their social security in old age depend on donations collected from parishioners. What this dependence entails and how exchange practices are carried out will be discussed in the following three chapters.

How Catholic Is Lithuania?

In this subsection I present two dominant trends in researching Lithuanian Catholics: the sociological and the ethnological. The outcome of this discussion reveals two different approaches to Catholicism and therefore two different perceptions of its significance to Lithuanians.

Lithuania is one of the countries in which the politics of atheism during Soviet times resulted in the official invisibility of religion. After the fall of the Soviet Union and Lithuania's orientation towards the West, the country was incorporated into several research programmes: European value study (1990), World value study (1997), Jugend-Werte-Vorschau (1997) and *AUFBRUCH* (a project that researched religiosity in post-Soviet countries in 1997) (Advilonienė 2005b; Mitrikas 2005; Žiliukaitė 2007). In 1999, Lithuania was placed among the most Catholic countries in Europe (together with Poland, Ireland, Italy and Spain) and had the lowest number of people not indicating any religious affiliation among the three Baltic States (Juknevičius 2001: 121).[23] Such studies have situated Lithuania in the context of different Western countries with regard to international religious dynamics and the general socio-cultural setting.

Lithuanian sociologists have engaged in various other research initiatives while untangling the relevance of Catholicism for Lithuanians. Their answers to the question of what constitutes Catholic Lithuania usually include a presentation of statistical rather than qualitative information on, for example, 'denominational dependence, religious identity (whether an individual considers him- or herself religious), participation in the life and rites of the religious community, the correspondence of religious ideas to actual religion and perceptions of the church' (Matakaitė 2003: 37). Sociologists have questioned the relatively high number of Roman Catholics in the country (e.g. Paškus 1998; Maslauskaitė and Navickas 2000; Matakaitė 2003, 2004; Advilonienė 2005a, 2005b; Žiliukaitė 2007) and argued for further distinctions to be made between formal and individual forms of religiosity. Matakaitė (2003), for example, distinguishes church and individual forms of religiosity, while Advilonienė differentiates formal

[23] In Latvia the percentage of people without a declared religious affiliation was 41% and in Estonia – 78%. An interesting point to note here is the fact that non-Lithuanian authors writing about the period of the liberation movement in the late 1980s (Sapiets 1990; Johnston 1992; Hoppenbrouwers 1999; Bruce 2000; Barnett 2001) talk about the Baltic States generally and specifically at the same time: the 'Three Baltic States' is like an umbrella term when discussing early postsocialist transformations, political and religious changes and their present relations. However, although the political histories of the Baltic States are similar, their religious histories are quite different: Lithuanians were and still are more religious than those in Latvia or Estonia (Bruce 2000).

(nominal) from real (inner) types of religious identification. Both authors see a gap between the types of religiosity they distinguish, which, they allege, reveals discrepancies between formal religious affiliation and actual religious beliefs and practices.

Church religiosity, according to Matakaitė (2003), is losing its previous importance. She defines this type of religiosity as a 'strong and emotional attachment to "parents' belief"; a lack of intellectual basis and reflection on religious doctrine; a certain morality, which emphasizes rites and rituals rather than evangelical ideas; mass participation and religious practices; and strong connection to the parish as a local community' (Matakaitė 2003: 37). Individual religiosity, on the other hand, is characterized by a choice of values, some of which contradict Church teachings or combine elements from other religions. The individual chooses religious services and feels like the creator of his or her own religion (Matakaitė 2004: 131; 2003). Consequently, individual religiosity is a construct of personal creativity and might not be situated within any religious frame.

Similarly, Advilonienė (2005b), drawing on quantitative sociological data, emphasizes that formal religious identification does not say anything about one's real religious identity, as she calls it. She indicates that the lower numbers of Catholic religious sacraments, such as first communion, confirmation, weddings and baptisms, as well as the declining number of entrants into the seminary, reveal the weakening of religious traditions in the country. According to Advilonienė, a part of the Lithuanian population 'identifies with Catholicism only formally, reveals this identity even if they have just been baptised, celebrates traditional religious festivities (Christmas, Easter) and does not feel an inner bond with religion' (2005b: 17). Referring to Luckmann (1967), Advilonienė adds that the changes in the religious field from 'church' to 'secular' encompass privatization and the decline in the institutional aspects of religion, which results in individual, non-church religiosity.

The latest sociological study of Lithuanian Catholics was carried out within the framework of a project that focused on secularization and public and private religiosity in Lithuania (Ališauskienė and Kuznecovienė 2013). Combining the results of sociological questionnaires with interviews from mostly urban areas, the authors tried to trace and interpret alterations and changes in contemporary religiosity. In their discussion Ališauskienė et al. (2013: 148-167) argue that empirical data justify use of the term 'secularization' in the analysis of religion in contemporary societies. Lithuania is no exception, and the authors ask which theories of secularization – those related to processes of modernization or those

dissociated from it – are most suitable for describing Lithuanian religious life. According to them, the professed Catholic belief of their respondents first of all defines a cultural rather than a religious identity: some of those who identify themselves as Catholics do not believe in traditional Catholic dogmas, such as the existence of paradise, purgatory or hell, but do believe in reincarnation and 'have their personal relationship with God, which does not need the Church or religious rites' (2013: 150-1). The authors also state that the perception of God 'which is followed by the majority of people who consider themselves Catholic is far removed from Catholic teachings' (ibid.: 150). Moreover, the religious aspects constitute only a minor part of the festivity's respondents celebrate (ibid.: 151). The authors conclude that Catholicism as a communal religion is in crisis, having become a cultural system which is not related to religious content (2013: 152).

Kuznecovienė et al. (2013) combine the discussion of data from sociological questionnaires with data from seventy interviews they conducted in 2011 and 2012. They argue that, for the majority of their informants, being a 'traditional Catholic' does not contradict the rather fragmentary practice of religion, which incorporates sacraments, church attendance more than once a month, praying at home and the celebration of traditional festivities such as Christmas, Easter, the Assumption or Pentecost, all of which centre around family and customs rather than religious content (ibid.: 177-8). The authors claim that interviews with 'traditional Catholics' showed that this is not a homogenous group and that the religiosity of such people can be grouped into orthodox or reflective Catholicism. Orthodox Catholics, according to them, acknowledge the basic principles of Catholic teachings and follow them, while reflective Catholics tend to reflect on their religious and life experiences and view aspects of Church teachings on such matters as divorce, cohabitation, abortion and perceptions of the afterlife or priesthood critically.

A recent edited volume by Ališauskienė and Schröder (2012) on religious diversity in post-Soviet Lithuanian society uses three analytical frameworks to examine the condition of religious plurality: hegemony, the market place and bricolage. The editors argue that it is only by analysing these three categories together that 'a full understanding of the social role of religion in late modernity [can] be achieved' (2012: 5). The first two frameworks help the editors to discuss religious institutions and the reproduction of collective identities, while the notion of bricolage is used to shift their perspective on to the individual level (ibid.: 4-5). To set out their argument in brief, while the postsocialist situation opened a religious market place in Lithuania and provided options for religious choices, historically established churches affected the individual level by hierarchically ordering

the choices individuals make in favour of the dominant religion. The effect is so firmly rooted that these individual choices seem 'natural' (ibid.: 5).[24] Thus bricolage, according to the authors, rests on a twofold situation: people choose fragments of belief systems and craft their own world views, even though they continue to identify with the religious tradition and participate in its rituals. However, in respect of this creatively patched understanding, they 'may be far removed from the belief system's doctrine' (ibid.).

The majority of sociological studies begin with an assumption that Lithuanian society has been affected by processes of secularization and that the role of religion and the whole individual conception of religiosity have changed radically since independence was regained (e.g. Matakaitė 2003, 2004; Juknevičius 2004; Advilonienė 2005a, 2005b). Lithuanian social scientists perceive the political and economic changes in Lithuania since independence from the totalitarian Soviet regime, the shift to democracy and the market economy and joining the European Union (EU) as *a priori* assumptions of the impact on Lithuania of globalization, secularization, individualization, the pluralism of world views and values, and social fragmentation. Starting with such 'self-explanatory' facts at the beginning of their papers, social scientists then move on to discuss their chosen topic: analyses of church vs. individual religiosity (sometimes also called the correspondence between formal and actual religiosity), of the importance of religion in everyday life, levels of dogmatic knowledge, etc. Lithuanian social scientists often use such phrases as 'individual religiosity' or 'invisible religion' to indicate a shift in religious practices and beliefs. Yet to argue for such a shift, one must first identify what existed before the change, a task that tends to be neglected. I can only presume that this original state is taken to be the religiosity of the rural populations, since in their articles scientists use such phrases as 'parent's belief' or 'communal forms of religion'.

Lithuanian ethnologists take a different approach, one that is not concerned with the distinction between a knowledge of Catholic doctrine and its implementation in everyday life. Instead, the majority of research done by ethnologists is descriptive rather than analytical. The focus is on folk religiosity and Catholic practices, like pilgrimage and songs (Motuzas 2003, 2006, 2007), the cult of Mary (Puidokas 2000; Mardosa 2004a; Motuzas 2005; Kairaitytė 2006b, 2010; Račiūnaitė-Paužuolienė 2009, 2013), images of God (Kairaitytė 2006a) and the sacramental use of water or fire (Svidinskaitė 1999, 2000). One of the main researchers on folk religion in

[24] This and other research on religious diversity in Lithuania often discusses the relationships between Catholicism and 'other' religions, such as Protestant churches (Lankauskas 2012) or new religious trends (Peškaitis and Glodenis 2000; Ališauskienė 2012).

Lithuania, Jonas Mardosa (1999, 2004b, 2012), states that conceptualizing folk religion is difficult precisely because of the variety of forms and contents of its object, which is tightly connected to the particularities of the local folk culture.[25] For ethnologists' folk religiosity is the study not only of religious manifestations, but also of the ways and forms by which it establishes itself in local folk culture. This approach highlights the everyday as the basis of any individual, familial or communal piety. Folk religion is perceived as asserting itself in various forms and practices of worship, individual or communal, the majority of which belong to local church practice, even though they are not a part of the liturgy (Račiūnaitė-Paužuolienė 2013: 253).

Lithuanian ethnologists tend to approach folk religiosity as a phenomenon that exists in parallel with the official religion. They see the latter as a formal ideological system that functions through the church hierarchy, institutions, doctrines and liturgy, while folk religiosity uses the same symbols and ways of expression, but interprets Christian doctrines in terms of people's concrete surroundings or situations (Mardosa 2012: 15; Motuzas 1997; see also Svidinskaitė 2001 for the folkways of using sacramental objects; Ivanauskaitė 2008; and Kairaitytė 2010 for the usual depictions of sainthood).

Ethnological research on religious matters is mostly conducted in rural areas and shares some rather ambiguous tendencies. On the one hand, it focuses on Catholic practices of folk religion and demonstrates their significance for the individual, family or local community. On the other hand, the Catholic domain is acknowledged, but only as an overlay to be set aside in order to reveal the remains of pre-Christian beliefs and practices, those 'traditional' world views that have been subtly covered over by Christian ones (Merkienė 1998; Klimka 1999; for more detailed discussions and illustrations see Marcinkevičienė et al. 2003, 2006; Marcinkevičienė 2009). The second trend is more popular, the reason for which is to be sought in the country's Soviet history. Because of the impact of Soviet ideology, ethnology was reduced to ethnography as a branch of history studies (Apanavičius 2009; Merkienė 2011). The topic of religion was eliminated from collected ethnographic materials because of the dominant atheistic world view, even though in practice it made up a large part of the material (Mardosa 2012). Thus, research on religion, beliefs, mythology and the like begins with the regaining of independence and the publicity given to

[25] The Catholic Church describes folk religiosity as the result of regional specifics (Liaudiškojo pamaldumo ir liturgijos vadovas 2003).

religion.[26] Since then ethnologists have become very much concerned with the documentation and publishing of pre-Christian remains. The reconstructed period of 'traditional' or what is also called 'ethnic' Lithuanian culture mostly covers the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. In their discussions ethnologists often use such Lithuanian words as *pasaulėžiūra* (Engl.: world view), *pasaulėjauta* (Engl.: sense of the world), or *pasaulėvoka* (Engl.: perception of the world) to reveal and encompass a more or less finished view of traditional rural Lithuanian culture.

The history of Lithuanian ethnology as a discipline adds another explanation to its particular focus on rural areas. During the Soviet period the discipline of ethnography (as ethnology was then called) encompassed two conflicting ideologies: socialism, based on the compilation of what were perceived to be the typical traditions of the 'labour masses' that supported the Soviet establishment, notions of social class and progress, and nationalism, based on the search for and documentation of an idealized past consisting of typical regional folk customs and what were perceived to be authentic survivals of traditional Baltic culture (Čiubrinskas 2001). Consequently, the object of ethno-studies, as Čiubrinskas argues, has become folk culture, which is most often associated with the village and peasants (ibid., 103). Similarly, Čepaitienė (2011) suggests that the origin of the discipline of ethnology in Lithuania was based on the discovery of the local 'other'. The peasant became the object of scientific research at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, which marks a transformation in academic approaches to rural inhabitants. The local peasant became the exotic local, the newly discovered 'other' who was interesting and valued because of his or her knowledge (ibid.: 83). As a result, research focused on folk customs and folklore, songs and stories, festivities and rituals, and everyday life. This created the image of a 'peasant Lithuanianness' and of its village people as the bearers of folk traditions. Descriptions and recordings of the rural past became the preferred field of research for ethnologists who wanted to collect as many authentic and typical remains of supposedly old and dying traditions as possible (Čiubrinskas 2001: 103-105).

Collection rather than analysis was the aim of Lithuanian ethnologists in Soviet times (Čiubrinskas 2001: 106). This approach turned the *kolkhoz* village into a romantic image of the keeper of 'Lithuanianness', to which a Baltic ethno-cultural depth was added (ibid.: 107). In the period of Gorbachev's perestroika, ethnic culture (Lith.: *etninė kultūra*) became a

[26] Only a very small part was published during Soviet times and only outside Lithuania by emigrated Lithuanian academics.

synonym for traditional folk culture (Lith.: *tradicinė liaudies kultūra*) (ibid.: 108). The regaining of independence and the country's integration into the EU has partly changed the perception of rural areas in Lithuania. The EU endorses difference, emphasizes the idea of unity through diversity and encourages rural governmental bodies to forge and promote regional characteristics, dialects, handicrafts, culinary heritage and the like. At the same time 'new Lithuanians' (Harboe-Knudsen 2010) and 'real farmers' (Mincyte 2006) were created with EU subsidies and development plans, which affected villagers' perceptions of themselves.

To sum up sociological and ethnological studies of Catholicism, the main reason for sociologists challenging the power of Catholicism in Lithuania is the difference they see between religious affiliation and the actual beliefs and practices of the religion they are documenting. The data they gather come mostly from urban areas and are primarily quantitative. Significance is placed on church attendance, the carrying out of Catholic life-cycle rituals, prayer, perceptions of priesthood and individual understandings of certain Catholic doctrines. Even when coupled with qualitative research (see Kuznecovienė et al. 2013) or ethnographic fieldwork (Schröder 2012), sociological accounts construct a homogeneous view of Lithuania's urban Catholics. Surveys reveal that some individuals call themselves Roman Catholic only because they have been baptised. However, according to sociologists, they do not demonstrate appropriate Catholic beliefs and practices. Their interview respondents tend to believe in reincarnation, selectively choose religious practices and adjust dogmatic ideas to their own needs. Such individuals are said to drift away from institutionalized or church religiosity and to choose fragments of admired ideological systems to craft their own religious identities. Lithuanians are presented as affiliating to the Catholic Church, while contradicting the Church's doctrine. This allows scientists to argue that the category of 'Catholic' should be perceived as a cultural rather than a religious identity.

At the same time, ethnologists also document the various ways in which the Catholic religion is understood and practised among mostly rural dwellers. Their analysis therefore differs from that of sociologists. They discuss aspects of folk religiosity, which they perceive as a range of individual, communal and local understandings and practices of Catholic Christianity, which may oppose official Church doctrines but most often coexist with them. Since in reality not all needs are met by institutionalized religion, practices and beliefs are adjusted to the concrete individual, family or community situations (Mardosa 2012). Therefore, ethnologists do not treat the variety of world views and practices as contradicting Catholic doctrines, but rather see folk religiosity as reinforcing the official religion.

Institutionalized religion and its impact on the individual's everyday life are taken into consideration in both fields. Both disciplines and their approaches to Catholicism seem to fit Munn's depiction of the spatio-temporal distinction between urban and rural sites, where 'rural and non-industrialised regions [are usually associated] with pastness while urban spaces are inflected with the progressive or future-oriented present' (1992: 114). Only when it comes to the question of 'how Catholic is Lithuania?' does the answer depend on whom the question is addressed to, sociologists or ethnologists.

Territories of Belief

There is one characteristic of my own field site that is 'known' to ordinary Lithuanians, as well as to certain academics. Since it is a rural area, it is generally assumed to be inhabited by people who are more religious. In this section I therefore focus on the territoriality of 'religiousness' (Lith.: religingumas) and question this presumption.

As in Soviet times, when religion was allowed in a very few specific places (e.g. the church or the seminary), at the time of my fieldwork some interlocutors created a social distance between themselves and 'more religious' (Lith.: *religingesni*) people. The latter, coincidentally or not, lived in rural areas. Even before I arrived in my chosen rural parish, I was aware of the stereotype that religion and religiousness are commonly associated with specific places, not only by people I met during fieldwork, but also by academics. The two trends in researching Lithuanian Catholics I presented in the beginning of this chapter, concentrate on two different sites, the rural and the urban. Sociologists base their research on quantitative data mostly from urban sites, while ethnologists carry out the majority of their research in rural areas. However, both sociologists and ethnologists document and discuss the same thing: the presence of so-called non-doctrinal beliefs and practices, or non-institutionalized religious forms among Lithuanian Catholics. The discussions that follow on from this are very different, however. Sociologists emphasize the discrepancy between institutional and individual religiosity and look for structural and functional reasons for this.[27]

[27] The distinction between types of belief is not new; see, for example, Whitehouse (2000, 2004) for a cognitive approach to the discussion of 'doctrinal vs. practical' expressions of religion, Badone (1990) on folk/popular religiosity, McGuire (2008) on religion as institutionally framed and lived, etc. Orthodox churches would also make an interesting study in this respect. Because of their decentralized forms of authority, these churches are considered to be diverse and largely shaped by local traditions, with distinctive patterns of authority and collective religious experiences (Hann 2007; Naumesku 2007; Mahieu and Naumescu 2008).

Ethnologists treat this discrepancy as a social fact and instead focus on the ways in which religiosity manifests itself locally. The fact remains that the different foci of the two disciplines on different sites and categories of person create and maintain images of rural communities as religious in contrast to the reflectiveness of secular urban individuals.

My data at least partly contradict this image. During fieldwork I heard the same stereotypes that recurred not only among urban and rural populations, but also among people who lived only in the rural field site. Whenever I met someone below forty or fifty years of age, they perceived themselves as different from other locals, mostly those aged over seventy, who were envisaged as the last remnants of the 'traditional villagers'. What makes them 'traditional villagers' is their life histories: they have lived in the area for the whole of their lives, were married and worked there and, more importantly, learnt everything from their parents and grandparents. Their knowledge is valued primarily because of this fact. The elderly in the village are therefore recorded and documented, interviewed and filmed. The perception of these villagers as 'exotic local others' (to use the slightly modified term of Čepaitienė (2011) is shared by anthropologists, students, television crews and many others, as are seen as the providers of what is assumed to be an authentic past that needs to be documented before it dies, together with them.

Even the children of these 'last frontier' villagers see their parents as the preservers of the past in this way. I remember a conversation with the chairman of one village community during a Midsummer's Night festival, while his mother and the rest of the local folklore group were sitting around the table and singing (see Plate 2). He said that those who were singing would die out, taking the tradition with them. No one will sing the songs like that anymore, and no one will bake bread in the fireplace anymore. I disagreed and pointed to the children running around, most of whom were singing along. However, he replied that this was not the same: the youngsters learned the songs from their teachers in the folklore groups, while those at the table had learnt them from their parents and grandparents. He added that most was now learnt either from books, recordings, teachers or folklore expeditions. That to him made all the difference.

This story was another illustration of the omnipresent approach taken by many Lithuanians towards the village and rural parts of that region. After all, we were celebrating Midsummer's Night in one of the villages in Dzūkija National Park, which gave a certain touch to everyone who lives in that area or visits it, as it was created with the idea of preserving Lithuania's natural and cultural heritage. It is presumed to be unique in many ways. This

uniqueness is recorded, documented and aired through diverse media channels and admired on various occasions.

Plate 2. ‘Exotic local others’ filmed by the national television crew.

The ‘exotic local others’ were conceived as the embodiment of values, and their perceived religiosity was a value in itself. For instance, Sigita, who was born in the area, was educated as a biologist in the city but now lives and works in Vilktaka, told me that she sometimes went to her parish church mainly ‘to see those grandmothers … the seventy-year-olds’, to see that ‘view that cannot be seen anywhere else’. For her, seeing these women in an unheated church in the middle of the coldest winter ‘strengthens hope and despair at the same time’ ([b.1962], int. 6.2.2009). An entrepreneur who was born in the parish and now returned to his parents’ place for holidays and weekends stated: ‘Sometimes when those three old ladies go to church, I say, “look, the guard is going”. They are the guardians of those old values. Because of which we still have something human’ (Džiugas [b.1953], int. 15.3.2009). For both of these interlocutors the ‘grandmothers’ who were going to church or were already there are embodiments and representatives of a type of belief which is aesthetic to look at, which is inspiring and which in turn reinforces their own belief.

Plate 3. Rehearsing for national television just before a live show.

That the 'grandmothers', their presumed religiosity and the church space are closely connected was also emphasized to me by a former teacher of religious classes in Vilktaka's school. Akvilė (b.1959) said she once took her pupils and their parents to the capital, Vilnius. They went to a late afternoon mass there, 'and they were so surprised to see so many youth there and so many people. They were surprised because in the village there is an attitude that the church is a place of grannies (Lith.: *bobutės*), that is, a place of headscarves' (int. 19.2.2009).

Another local, a former head of local government there, made a direct connection between the grandmothers and their religiosity. She told me:

> Sometimes you communicate with those grandmothers from the villages, who in fact are dying one after the other… But this is wealth dying. Our spiritual wealth (Lith.: *dvasinis turtas*). And when you speak with them, you feel like you load up. Because I think this is religion, which gives this upsurge, this spiritual wealth (Bilvienė [b.1944], int. 10.3.2009).

As the accounts above show, seeing the parish 'grandmothers' in the church is connected to assumptions about their beliefs. Their presumed religiosity

makes them even more exotic. They are envisaged as guarding certain values that are close to extinction.

Plate 4. Observed by 'non-exotic locals' from behind a fence.

To illustrate this point further, I introduce an extract from my field notes. Two photographers from the area were interviewed for a national television programme, one of whom I happened to know. Both had worked for a long time in villages in the area in which I did my fieldwork. They had documented many local inhabitants in various situations, from everyday work to festive celebrations. Their pictures usually appeared in a local newspaper. In this particular television programme, the photographers spoke about their experiences working in the area, the people they had worked with and those they had visually documented. They particularly emphasized the simple, poor, daily round of older persons they worked with and those good, sparkling eyes they had:

> A grandson comes to visit and wonders at his grandmother, who has not seen much, who has no education. But he does not think that this grandmother has grown and sustained a family from that humble patch of land, has fed and has let her children go into education [His

> brother adds:] The worst thing is not the poor every day, but the poor spirit (Field notes, 9.3.2009).

The 'grandmothers' have become sources of aesthetics and inspiration for others. Their presumed belief constitutes a spiritual wealth that belongs not only to them, but also to others: it is 'our spiritual wealth', as Bilvienė said. Older people in rural areas are therefore a highly researched resource for anthropologists and folklorists, one that became available after the fall of the Soviet Union's atheist regime. To turn this gradually towards theories of the gift and exchange practices, the 'grandmothers' from the villages are, in a way, turned into inalienable possessions of their country, as well as of certain academic disciplines. Together with their presumed religiosity, the 'grandmothers' stand for the dynamics of icons of permanence and loss, which Weiner (1992: 7-8) ascribed to inalienable possessions and which are therefore not easy to distance oneself from.

The Catholic belief of the grandmothers was a part of their inalienation. However, at the time of my fieldwork this belief was placed into a specific category and distinguished from another type of Catholicism, that of younger and more educated individuals. I discuss this in the next section.

Knowledge and Ignorance

Whenever I approached a 'church-goer grandmother', one of the most common sentences I heard was: 'Oh, dear child, what can I tell you? I do not know anything!' Yet upon continuing conversations about events in the village's past or present, it quickly became clear that my interlocutors had no lack of stories to tell. During fieldwork I thought that the repetitive introductory sentences people usually met me with were nothing but acts of modesty, timidity or even low self-esteem. However, after going through my field notes, and especially in light of the academic discourses discussed above, I understood that here was a topic that is not restricted to a particular geographical location or age group, namely the place of knowledge and ignorance in religion.

In the previous subsection I argued that Catholic belief is often thought of as being located in rural areas, in a specific age group and, due to the differences in male and female life expectancy, also in a gendered group. However, this is not the whole picture concerning the presumption that rural areas are areas of greater religiosity. The argument I present highlights an overarching premise of religiousness (Lith.: *religingumas*). To begin, I return to my discussion of sociological studies of Lithuanian religiosity Some of the most common topics in these studies include the distinction between church and individual religiosity and the correspondence (or to be

more exact, the lack of it) between affiliation as a Catholic and the usual practices and beliefs people reveal to social scientists in questionnaires or interviews. According to sociologists, the distinction between communal and individual religious practices shows that Catholicism has become a cultural identity that may not even be related to its religious content. This distinction has led academics to distinguish between orthodox and reflective Catholics. The level of 'dogmatic knowledge' of the religion one claims to be affiliated with is the problem most often indicated in such studies. But does this distinction coat the notion that orthodox Catholics are those who know their religion and its doctrine and that reflexive Catholics cannot share a decent amount of information about the religion they affiliate themselves with? How should we measure knowledge of religious doctrines? Is there a test that sociologists include in their questionnaires? And why does a Catholic who believes in the possibility of reincarnation need to be denominated as 'some sort of Catholic' and not just a Catholic?

In the previous section, I discussed how 'local exotic other' villagers were valued because of their knowledge. This has been documented especially by Lithuanian ethnologists. In my field site this documentation was the reason for the employment of several workers by a state institution. But there was one case when the 'local exotic others' were considered not to know: they were said to have 'traditional belief' or 'churchly belief', to use the exact expressions of Akvilė (int. 19.2.2009). According to Akvilė, this 'traditional' belief was learnt once in individuals' lives from their parents and – most importantly – unreflectively accepted and practised throughout their lives. Therefore, it was a somewhat different belief than those of my interlocutors who spoke to me about 'traditional belief'.

Akvilė was not the only person in my field site who thought in this way about 'church-going grandmothers'. Older persons in that area were generally thought of as having been socialized into Catholicism from childhood and not to have reflected on what they believe in. They were regarded as going to church more often than other inhabitants, living their lives according to the church and the priest's teachings, but not thinking too much about them. 'But it is not their belief; it's the priest's belief', said one parishioner in his early thirties to me once. In the summer of 2008 I met him, his wife and their two children almost every Sunday in church.[28] In making this comment he was referring to the older persons in church with the aim of differentiating his going to church from theirs. Another local institution worker once said that the 'church-going grandmothers' 'believe in what they have been told to believe. They do not reflect on that'. I asked about the

[28] They spent summer months in their village house, while the rest of the time they lived in the capital, Vilnius.

difference 'if in the end both of you believe in God?' I did not get an answer, although our conversation continued on the importance of just how one acquires one's own belief.

The 'local exotic others' were therefore said to have a different belief than others. 'Grandmothers' belief' was considered to be based on ignorance. The source of this ignorance in religion did not rest on any successful test of their knowledge of religious doctrines. Their belief was different because it was not a reflected belief. Reflection meant thinking about one's own religious ideas, their sources and subsequent interpretation of doctrines in relation to personal experiences. This understanding was based on the idea that one must acquaint oneself with one's belief; one has to get to know one's religion. Such conscious reflection was understood as a primary source of one's knowledge of religion, its doctrines and the reasons for its practices, while the lack of reflection was connected with the notion of being ignorant about religion.

In sum, according to some of my interlocutors, it is not so much living in a rural district that makes older persons more religious, but their presumed lack of reflection on, and therefore knowledge of, religion. This assumption is based on the idea that the inhabitants of rural areas have a religious identity that is not subjected to change. The opinions of my interlocutors that I have presented here illustrate a popular approach: the elderly have a religious identity that is depicted as something rigid because, once it has been established, it is present in the person throughout his or her life. The belief is that the 'grandmothers' in the church are only enacting the beliefs they were once educated into; they are not thought of as reflecting on what they believe.

In fact, I never heard anything about the need to reflect on religious matters from any of these 'older' interlocutors. However, contrary to popular perceptions, these allegedly 'unreflecting' parishioners did reflect on religious matters; they simply did not emphasize it. The perceived ignorance of the villagers was not a 'not-knowing', but concealed a more careful approach towards religious matters: maybe the events in the Gospel happened, maybe they did not, maybe I got help from God and maybe I did not. 'God knows' (Lith.: *Dievas žino).* This was one of the most popular of their comments in such contexts. What others might perceive as ignorance turns out to be uncertainty. The reason why I heard 'I do not know anything' from people in my field site was because they were uncertain about religious ideas in general. But this uncertainty had little impact on their church attendance or on stories of the help they had received from the Virgin Mary and others. It turned out that belief and not-knowing did not oppose but complemented each other.

Hence the significant factor might be not a specific religion and its dogmas, specific area, age or gender, knowledge or ignorance; it might well be belief in general. When the Lithuanian-born semiotician Greimas justified his study of Lithuanian mythology, he argued for a different perception of the concept of belief:

> Belief is not a categorical, but a relative concept: people typically more or less believe in something and do not – believe or do not believe. 'God, I believe, help me in my disbelief!' – is the prayer of a famous saint, which could compel 'believers' in the definitions of such genres to give a thought (Greimas 2005 [1979]: 37, translated from the Lithuanian; see Behar 1990 for a similar argument).

For Greimas, therefore, the issue was not in the 'realness' of *laumė* (a female mythical creature) or in a belief in her helpful or harmful powers. Belief in the existence and non-existence of such beings go hand in hand, according to Greimas, but this does not weaken the analysis of the myth. His focus was therefore on the social context of the stories, on the power relations between gods and humans, household matters, rituals and the like. Similarly, in his essays on Christian myth, Leach argued that '[the] myth, like the rite, does not distinguish knowledge from ignorance. It establishes categories and affirms relationships' (Leach 1969: 96). On a similar note, Hauschild (2011: 12) has argued that a Catholic is created by baptism and not by the doctrines that people believe or do not believe. Following these authors and their approach, which emphasizes roles and relationships rather than certain religious knowledge, I too will focus primarily here on the relationships that people in my field site create and maintain in their practices of exchange.

However, there is one fact that people from my field site knew for sure, and that is that everyone will die. The fact of death was an undeniable truth. It was the event that put everything into perspective. 'We die and we see', was what they said when summing up their approach to religiosity. In this sense, death was my interlocutors' dogma, gospel and origin of interpretation.

'Grandmothers' and Catholicism as Inalienable Possessions

As a conclusion to this section on religious issues in Lithuania and Vilktaka, I will concentrate on two main topics I have discussed so far: 'grandmothers' and Catholicism. I have already argued that 'grandmothers' should be perceived as inalienable possessions. In light of the discussion in the previous section, I ask whether Catholicism itself has not become an inalienable possession of the country of Lithuania as well. Coming back to the 'grandmothers' and their perceptions of the Catholic religion, their kind of Catholicism was different because it was presumed to have been

unreflectively accepted for generations. From Weiner's point of view of inalienable possessions, Catholicism has been 'handed down' from one generation to the next, accumulating value in time and space. Legally Catholicism is described as a traditional religious community in Lithuania precisely because of its 'historically contained spiritual, cultural and social heritage'. Furthermore, the Catholic Church has been closely linked to claims for independence from the Soviet regime and has therefore gained the status of one of the most trusted institutions in contemporary Lithuania. The past does play a role in the perception of inalienation, since, according to Weiner, to speak about inalienable possessions is to speak about its 'cumulative identity', which reinforces the constitution of its legitimation (Weiner 1992: 10-33).

Coming back to what is presumed to be the source of ignorance in 'grandmothers' belief', it was precisely the 'handed down' and allegedly unreflected aspect that was understood as making all the difference. This 'handed down' Catholicism, understood from the Maussian perspective on the gift, bears the identity of the giver and of the recipient, as well as the relationship between the recipient and the giver. The fact that the grandmothers' Catholicism was opposed to the more reflective and therefore 'knowledgeable' Catholicism of my other interlocutors does not diminish Catholicism's inalienation. The dynamics of permanence and loss, according to Weiner, are situated precisely in the notion of change, which in its turn is closely related to the reproduction of the social order (1992: 9): 'Social value must be created to prevent or overcome dissipation and loss' (ibid.: 15). The notion of social value is encapsulated in the relationships that people tend to keep with the Church, the clergy, their dying grandparents and the like. Sociologists have repeatedly shown which rituals are important for Lithuanians who call themselves Catholics: baptisms, marriages, funerals and calendar festivals. I suggest that the fact that these rituals are important to Catholics points to social relationships that are meant to be kept, not to ignorance of certain Catholic dogmas on the part of a certain category of believers or to the diminishing relevance of institutions.

The Three Isms

In this section of the chapter, I deal with three nouns containing the suffix '–ism': Catholicism, socialism and postsocialism. The most significant parts of this discussion for the rest of the book focus on the interplay between religion and politics.

Religion and Socialism

The Soviet system aimed at the standardization and predictability of Soviet life through the normalization of all forms of space, temporality and language (Yurchak 2006). This imposed homogeneity (Humphrey 1995) stemmed primarily from the system's monopolization of power and its suppression of groups or individuals. Throughout the socialist years the governments of the socialist republics continuously engaged in identifying, labelling and suppressing their internal enemies (Chari and Verdery 2009: 25). Their idiom of difference covered religion, gender, class and national identity (ibid.: 26). Even though for communists it was class enemies who were the worst, a position that led to 'class racism' in socialist regimes (ibid.), religion was identified as another significant force that polluted the public sector. Communist atheist propaganda associated religion with superstition, submission to a divine will, inertia, passivity and fearfulness, while Marxism was presented as a scientific, rational viewpoint encouraging control over one's destiny, with new rites and festivals that brought creativity, limitless scope for action and fearlessness to the people (Dragadze 1993: 151). For Marxist-Leninist ideology and scientific atheism, religion in both its institutionalised and its popular forms was a competing ideology (Caldwell 2005: 21). Therefore, socialism's aim from the very beginning was to eliminate religion in order to 'make a space' for its own ideology.

Maurice Bloch (2010) has suggested that in studying religion it is useful to take account of cases in which attempts have been made to eradicate it. He is mainly referring to the history of missionaries and the problems they faced in different contexts: 'what was that "religion" they were to destroy?' (2010: 5). Bloch argues that colonialist history is useful for scholars engaged in questions of religion for one major reason: the analysis of such contexts hints at what missionaries and colonialists considered native religion, where they identified its sources and dissemination, and what they aimed at putting in its place. In her book *Secularism Soviet Style,* Luehrmann (2011) asks two very similar questions to Bloch's: When political activists engage in an anti-religious struggle, what are they fighting against? And what can Soviet atheist campaigns contribute to our understanding of religion? Following these two authors, I will discuss Soviet history in order to reveal the places and times when religion was considered to be manifesting itself (Bloch 2010: 4).

Despite the various religious backgrounds of the countries that constituted the Soviet Union, its legislative system was unitary. The most important laws were considered to be the 1918 Decree separating church and state, the 1936 Soviet Constitution, which guaranteed freedom of conscience, and the 'Law on Religious Associations', which dated back to

1929 and was revised in 1932, 1962 (the height of the anti-religious campaign launched by Khrushchev in 1959-64) and 1975 (Sawatsky 1976). The aim of the party and state leadership was to separate the religious realm from the political organization of the community (Luchterhandt 1985).

The Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) was formed in 1965 for the purpose of 'carrying out the policy of the Soviet State towards religion', a policy laid down by the Politburo and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (ibid.: 61). Official information about the functions and powers of the CRA were not provided, but as is now known from leaked documents from the 1970s and available archival data, the local offices of this council regularly called on 'local executive committees to provide information needed for their annual reports to the republican government and to the headquarters of the CRA in Moscow' (Corley 1999 [1996]: 277). The CRA was attached to the Soviet Council of Ministers, whose authorized local representatives 'had the last (and very often the first) word in all important questions of church organization, appointments, finance, economics, training institutions and publishing' (Luchterhandt 1985: 57). For example, in the case of Lithuania it was the CRA commissioner who had 'the final word in the appointment or dismissal of parish priests, in the choice of candidates for the post of bishop or diocesan administrator, in the choice of lecturers at the priests' seminary and the selection of applicants to the seminary' ('Lithuanian Catholic Priests…' 1987: 102). Only a limited number of candidates for the seminary, lecturers and applicants were confirmed by the state authorities. Likewise, priests were discouraged from making visits to parishioners' homes to collect donations or perform rituals (e.g. last unction), and they were not allowed to visit other parishes to help in annual local festivals ('Declaration of Lithuanian…' 1976: 50). The priesthood was kept under tight government supervision.

The CRA had an official ruling with regard to the catechizing of children and their participation in religious rites (e.g. boys serving at mass, girls taking part in processions) ('Declaration of Lithuanian…' 1976: 50). Theological education was allowed only in seminaries. There was no religious education in kindergartens, schools or institutes of higher education. The evangelization and religious education of children and young people was 'actively discouraged' (Walters 1983: 12). Preparation of children for church rituals (e.g. first communion, confirmation) could happen only in the private sphere. Various methods were used by teachers to uncover details of religious adherence and the practices of schoolchildren and their parents by means of questionnaires or conversations (Matchett 1974: 14).

The financial management of religious communities and associations was subject to state supervision. Religious organizations had no legal personality and did not own property. Special parish administrative bodies were created, which leased church buildings. A lot of churches were confiscated and transformed into concert halls, galleries, factories, storage spaces and even – as in the case of one church important to Lithuania country-wide – into a museum of atheism. Similarly, religious associations could not conduct any social or humanitarian work or missionary activities (Walters 1983: 12).

Publishing, the circulation of religious literature and media dissemination of religious content were forbidden. Officially there were no religious newspapers or books (only underground), and no religious information was broadcast on media like radio and television. Films and plays were censored before their release.

Church attendance and masses were monitored, recorded and reported to special state organs, primarily because they were regarded as disseminating and reproducing religious ideas. Equally important to monitor and report were life-cycle rituals such as baptisms, first communions, confirmations, weddings and funerals. Special attention was paid to children and their participation in such rituals.

The content of sermons (‘Secret Instructions…’ 1973), ‘methods used by the clergy to activate religious life’ (Corley 1999 [1996]: 277), the ‘overall financial management activity of religious communities’ (ibid.), ‘attendance at churches and prayer houses, congregation numbers and serving personnel’, and ‘birth, marriage and death statistics for the district [and] town’ (ibid.) – all this information was gathered by the CRA.

The CRA also had the ability to interfere administratively in church life (ibid.), and ‘[a]ll but the most ordinary day-to-day activities of the religious communities required state approval’ (Luchterhandt 1985: 57). All of these actions territorialized and marginalized religion and its place in society. Restrictions of place prohibited religious rituals and processions from taking place outside the territory of the church, and priests were confined to the respective territories of the church and the religious communities they served. There was no option for priests to earn a pension.

The aim of the Soviet Union’s organs and specific tactics with respect to religious communities were to limit the religious communities’ scope for action in society as far as possible (Luchterhandt 1985: 55). The Soviet Union’s policy towards religion was fuelled by the expectation that with the building of socialism religion would die a natural death (Matchett 1974: 13). For this reason, after WWII there was no organization in the Soviet Union devoted solely to atheist propaganda (Luehrmann 2011: 8). Conversely,

almost everything was directed to the 'atheist upbringing' of the Soviet population (Pankhurst 1982: 295). '[M]embers of the Communist Party, teachers, doctors, scientists and others in positions of authority' were expected to have and exhibit an atheistic world view (Luehrmann 2011: 1-2). Atheist education was spread by various means in schools, universities, houses of culture and collective farms.

The contradictions of Soviet politics rested in the legal right to freedom of conscience, the separation of church and state and the vested administrative interference in religious organizations and their activities that existed in parallel to these provisions. The Soviet government interfered in the organizational life of religious groups and sought to control their internal affairs. Religious communities were the only legally permitted organizations that could not be completely integrated into the communist system (Luchterhandt 1985: 56). Therefore, various official and unofficial control mechanisms and disciplinary measures were developed to keep religious activities restricted to specific domains.

All things considered, religion under socialism was identified as being closely interwoven with the political, educational and social-humanitarian institutions of society. Special attention was paid to the priesthood, publishing and the financial management of religious associations, as well as the monitoring of church attendance and life-cycle rituals. Religion was perceived as ideology in competition with the implementation of communist ideology. It was also considered to have institutional and popular forms (Caldwell 2005). Thus, in the case of the Lithuanian Catholic Church, the atheist vision was the rooting out of religion simultaneously from institutional and everyday religious practice through social and administrative means of control. The Soviet state aimed at altering relationships, especially those between individuals and 'significant nonhuman agents' (Luehrmann 2011: 7). Attention was placed on casting religion as antisocial and as associated with isolation. The relationships with deities, saints and spirits implied in religious ritual were considered threats to human solidarity (ibid.: 8).

As in the other republics of the Soviet Union, the Catholic Church in Lithuania was controlled 'by a similar combination of administrative methods and the application of social pressures against believers' (Read 1975: 9). Lithuania had one of only two Catholic seminaries in the whole of the Soviet Union, which was maintained exclusively from the gifts of individuals, but whose student numbers were regulated by the state (Lithuanian Catholics Appeal… 1976: 45). The Catholic Church's relationship with the Vatican was reduced to a minimum (Read 1975: 9). However, the election of the Polish cardinal Karol Wojtyla as Pope John

Paul II in 1978 caused a stir among the Soviet authorities because of the possible revival of Catholic activity in traditionally Catholic regions, especially Lithuania. The authorities therefore initiated special measures to counter the Vatican and its 'eastern policy' (Corley 1999 [1996]: 278-9).

Lithuania was the only republic in the Soviet Union with a majority Catholic population. Of around four million Catholics in the Soviet Union, almost three million lived in Lithuania. In the 1940s, just before the Soviet invasion, 85% of the population of Lithuania were Catholics, and the Catholic Church had 73 monasteries, 85 convents, four seminaries and many charitable organizations (Sapiets 1979). With annexation by the Soviet Union, Catholic monastic establishments, religious organizations and publications were abolished. Thirty percent of the clergy, four out of five bishops and almost all the monks and nuns, together with over 200,000 Lithuanian citizens, were deported to work camps in Siberia or killed (ibid.).

However, as the Keston College journal stated in the 1974, far from dying, religious life in Lithuania was 'undergoing some kind of renaissance' (e.g. Matchett 1974). The 1970s saw the public suicide of a student in Kaunas, followed by protests against the state. Subsequent suicides in opposition to the Soviet regime followed in other places in Lithuania. 1972 also saw the publication of the underground journal *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*, which reached the West and provided much of the material for the journal *Religion in Communist Lands* (Matchett 1973). The spring of 1972 in Lithuania was just the beginning of organized protests and signed petitions (Read 1975: 10). Lithuania was considered 'one of the most active centres of religious dissent and samizdat in the USSR', with the majority of the Lithuanian Catholic clergy organizing petitions to the state authorities signed by, in one case, 148,000 lay people (Sapiets 1987: 200). Consequently, a number of 'extremists', 'extremist clergy', 'religious fanatics' and 'enemies of Communism' were imprisoned or exiled to labour camps and charged with anti-Soviet activities (e.g. Sapiets 1983).[29]

There are several aspects of this discussion that are particularly important for my coming argument. The Soviet government approached 'religion' first of all as publicly visible and institutionally interrelated with the political, educational and economic spheres. The state kept a close watch over church attendance, masses and the maintenance of churches. Priests and rituals were restricted to church territory, and the clergy were officially forbidden to visit homes of parishioners in order to collect donations. To be religious was seen as being in a relationship, and this relationship was defined as anti-social and as threatening communist solidarity.

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[29] The Council for Religious Affairs classified Catholic clerics (and clerics of other denominations) as 'pro-regime', 'centrists', or 'extremists' (Corley 1999 [1996]: 280).

Religion and Postsocialism

After regained independence, the Lithuanian government confirmed the religious spheres that had previously been targeted by the Soviet Union's atheist campaigns. The churches were returned to their congregations, attendance at masses and their content was no longer a matter of concern to special government organs, the Catholic Church re-engaged in charitable activities, religious classes were reintroduced into schools, and theological departments returned to universities.

Although atheism was intended to replace religious festivals and symbolisms with socialist ones, a process in which the state became of primary importance (e.g. Caldwell 2005; Peris 1998; Tumarkin 1997), this strategy did 'little to conceptualize how people dealt with the shifting social significance of religion or atheism' (Luehrmann 2005: 36). Postsocialist ethnographies provide an interesting view of the similarities of socialist politics in the economic and religious fields. For example, even though the socialist government normally persecuted secondary economic activities, they did not cut off all access to them (Verdery 1991: 423). Its treatment of religion was similar (see Kligman 1988 for examples of how religion was used in building socialism). To a great extent, it was only specific individuals in specific professions and state positions who were required to exhibit an atheistic world view. The continuous struggles of the Soviet government against religion show that atheism had never become completely predominant in the Soviet Union (Luehrmann 2005). People adjusted their lives to a new regime and its expectations. But was this only a socialist strategy?

Dragadze (1993) speaks about the refashioning of religious life during socialism, while Luehrmann (2005) endows the postsocialist period with a sense of things being recycled. Socialist and postsocialist changes both meant shifts in public domains according to which private lives had to be redesigned. Anthropological accounts provide a complex picture of how religion was approached on the state and individual levels during socialism. These accounts show that atheist propaganda was to a great extent just a surface ideology. Postsocialist studies of religion, on the other hand, often indicate a radical change: state-enforced atheism is opposed to postsocialist religious revival. This contradiction may be rooted in spatiotemporal perceptions of the post-Cold-War world (Verdery 2002; Brandstädter 2007; Chari and Verdery 2009). For example, scholars from Western academic circles tend to approach post-Soviet Lithuania from the angle of structural change in political, economic and other public domains. Lithuanian academics, on the other hand, have different concerns. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Lithuanian ethnologists plunged into the documentation of

'dying knowledge', which was not allowed to be collected under the Soviet regime. Sociologists, on the other hand, shifted to the fashionable Western approaches of that time, positioning Lithuania in global discussions while at the same time grabbing opportunities for foreign funding.[30] The construction of the idea of Lithuania thirty years into its recreated independence continues to fall somewhere between a focus on its past and the building of its future. The everyday still receives relatively little attention from social and humanitarian scientists.

Can We Speak of Postsocialist Catholicism?

There is one issue left in this section that needs to be addressed. Cannell suggests being as specific as possible when discussing Christianity (2006: 7), primarily because of its historical complexity. She adds that the interest in colonialism and postcolonialism has required a more nuanced view of 'local Christianities' (ibid.: 11). In light of this insight, is it possible to talk about the anthropology of postsocialist Christianity, or in my case postsocialist Catholicism? What could be so specific about a postsocialist religious subject for anthropologists?

Dudwick and De Soto acknowledge that their edited volume *Fieldwork Dilemmas* (2000) originated from a shared experience among colleagues who had the same feeling: there is something 'peculiarly post-socialist' about research in postsocialist societies. This acknowledgement apparently extends to religion. Studies of socialism report individuals and groups opposing the state and its imposition of power. The socialist economy was followed by a secondary economy, public behaviour hid deeper streams of opposition to the regime, and pre-socialist customary behaviour continued to be practised behind closed doors. What Muslim and Christian believers shared under socialism was the practice of domesticating religion (Dragadze 1993, Hann 2006b) and the refashioning of religious

[30] The Lithuanian scholar Gečienė (2005) explores 'some of the problems involved in using Western theoretical models to explain the process of social and cultural change in post-Communist countries. Up to now sociologists from the newly independent states have not generally offered theoretical analyses of the societies they inhabit…. There is, however, an increasing tendency for them to use, or rather to strain, Western models in examining local conditions. This approach has often been justified by the view that societies emerging from the collapse of the Communist regimes are following the path of Western countries… That Western sociological concepts have become so fashionable in post-Communist intellectual discourse has had a profound impact on research grant and publishing opportunities, and thus on academic career trajectories. Politically and ideologically coloured topics are now the focus of attention, leading sponsors to support the analysis of such topics at the expense of other equally pressing, though perhaps less effectively marketed, issues' (2005: 75-6).

identities to take account of the system. What socialist and postsocialist projects showed is how flexible and adaptable people can be.

The socialist past has provided another point for Robbins's (2007) arguments about why Christianity is about (dis)continuities. The Soviet Union's atheist ideology was intended to leave a prominent imprint in the history of Christianity (and religion in general). However, judging from numerous ethnographic accounts, it seems to have failed to do so, providing another argument for why Christianity is about continuity. Postsocialism began with the re-emergence of backdoor religiosity into the public domain and showed that atheist propaganda was to a great extent only a surface ideology. Religious content was reconnected with social, educational and identity-building practices in postsocialist countries. This quite quickly created diverse religious situations and resulted in power differences between churches, denominations and various religious movements. Postsocialist societies quickly became a target for the secularization debate, which placed former socialist countries in the context of worldwide religious peculiarities, rather than emphasizing their postsocialist uniqueness (e.g. Pollack 2006; Borowik 2006; Agadjanian 2012).

Yet considering Cannell's suggestion, is it worth speaking about the field of postsocialist Christianity, or Catholicism for that matter? If we take critiques of postsocialism into account, which treat it as a grand unifying theory that tells us little about everyday individual or group experiences, and which, furthermore, is approaching its limits (Hann 2006c: 1), then the answer is no. But if we consider the fact that, even though the ideals of socialism were not met in reality, the imprints of a socioeconomic and political project such as this have become part and parcel of the state, as well as of personal histories in all former Soviet-bloc countries, then the answer is yes.

Concluding Remarks

The first part of this chapter has provided a general picture of religions in Lithuania, a literature review of the topic and significant ethnographic insights into the differences between urban and rural, religiosity and the classification of Catholics. In linking my ethnographic data with a discussion of sociological and ethnological accounts, I have criticized the ascription of religiosity to rural dwellers and 'reflective' religiosity to urban or more educated Lithuanians. I have also questioned academic attempts to define and group Catholics, especially on the basis of their presumed lack of dogmatic knowledge. In my understanding, social scientists cannot measure knowledge of religious doctrines and consequently label Catholics on that

premise. I also argued that Catholicism in rural areas should be treated as an inalienable possession of Lithuania as a country.

In the second part of this chapter I discussed the three big–isms: socialism, postsocialism and Catholicism. The main aim of describing the Soviet Union's attitude to religion was initiated by Bloch and Luehrmann, who suggested treating attempts to eradicate religion as interesting historical sources – what and where were considered to be religious? The Soviet government's primary political goal was to make and enforce distinctions between religion and other spheres of social life. The public and political spheres were a major target. Although the world views of the generation that came of age during the Soviet period never became an entirely private affair, the Soviet system struggled to access or influence the domains of family and kinship, which had the primary influence on the formation of that world view. Instead, the Soviet Union's politics of religion were aimed at reducing the public visibility of religion, as well as its social-humanitarian, educational and publishing practices. To believe was treated as being in a relationship with the divine, the sort of relationship that had to be eliminated.

Chapter 4
The Church

Since my aim was to research Roman Catholics, my background first led me to look for a field site with a church. I ended up in a village which was even named after the church: Vilktaka is a church-village, or *bažnytkaimis* in Lithuanian. The word denotes a village with a church, and as such differentiates it from other villages that do not have one. In the case of Lithuania, the church-village is usually the centre of the parish and includes several surrounding villages that do not have one. The history of Vilktaka suggests that a village with a church has its own characteristics: 'a particular centre of attraction, it was the centre of culture all the time', said Vytas ([b.1934], int. 22.10.2008), a local man born in Vilktaka.

The word 'church' in Catholicism is commonly used to describe a specific type of religious building, the clergy and its hierarchical and centralized body, or the religious community. In the descriptions of what the term 'church' means, people in my field site often referred to it as 'the house of God' or 'the house of believers', while media reports usually equated the word with 'the house of prayer'. These descriptions encapsulate the three pillars of the Catholic Church: the deity, those who believe in it, and the act of addressing it. What these descriptions have in common is the word 'house'. In Lithuanian, the word *namai* merges the notions of home and house, but does describing the church as a home-house involve ascribing domestic and household characteristics to it?

This chapter stems from the beginning of my fieldwork and analyses the notions that surround the word 'church', as well as indicating the practices that are most salient in its (re)production. After arriving at my field site, I was able to enter the space of Vilktaka church from the first Sunday and could observe the rituals and exchanges that happened in and around it. I focused on the items of exchange in the church space, the bodily positioning of the parishioners and the ritual of the mass and its content. Most of this chapter consists of a case study of Vilktaka, but in some parts I also rely on material from a neighbouring parish.

In the first section I present local definitions of the church. During interviews people described the church as a house and compared its life with those of their own homes. Here I discuss the material and immaterial exchange items that constitute the church-house. In the second section I move from the tangible side of the church into its intangible inside and discuss the ways in which Catholic religious practices, beliefs and rhetoric reproduce the church through categories that are usually associated with domesticity, kinship and the household. Although the parishioners primarily associated the priest with the material upkeep of the church, his sermons and rituals supported household associations and formed the community based on relations of spiritual kinship. At the time of my fieldwork, the Lithuanian Parliament was also engaged in producing definitions of such terms as family, household, marriage and parenting. I compared the state and local conceptions with those of the Catholic Church. Parishioners' definitions of the church also led me to notice that the church housed gendered domestic roles: the 'master' priest controlled the collected moneys and paid the bills, while women were engaged in organizing, feeding and aestheticizing. I conclude this chapter by invoking exchange practices and their role in the reproduction of the church.

The Church as a House

The official embrace of Christianity in 1387 in the then Grand Duchy of Lithuania happened through the baptism of political leaders, mass baptisms of inhabitants and the building of churches. Converting the country and its landscape into Christian and, about 560 years later, Soviet variants happened in a very similar manner: unwanted places were abolished and particular practices rejected. Today, 'Lithuania's most important sanctuary' (Katalikų interneto tarnyba 2013) the Vilnius Cathedral Basilica, stands on a former pagan site which half a millennium later was cleansed of Christian religious symbols by the Soviet regime and turned into an art gallery. In the liberation period, at a meeting of the Reformed Movement of Lithuania (*Sąjūdis*) in 1988, the cathedral was declared as having been returned to the congregation. There are over seven hundred Catholic churches in Lithuania today for the 77.2% of the population who call themselves Roman Catholic (Lietuvos statistikos departamentas 2012).

One of these churches stands in Vilktaka. First built in 1770 (more than 380 years after the country's official baptism), it burnt down and was rebuilt in the late nineteenth century. At that time the church stood at the centre of the village, with the houses of local inhabitants around it. However, these were also the years when a railway was built in Vilktaka, approximately three kilometres away from the church. As a consequence,

today the village is framed by two wooden representatives of the nineteenth century: a yellow church on a hill near the pine forest and a small railway station with several houses behind it (Plate 3). The almost straight road that connects these two buildings is densely framed by houses with a maximum of two storeys. The majority of these houses are inhabited by people who have been born in the village and have lived there all their lives or who have moved there from neighbouring villages for marriage or work.

Plate 5. The church of Vilktaka, as Vytas put it, 'looks rather good in comparison'.

While representing time and historical change in the development of the village, the church of Vilktaka has a specific local significance as well. Birutė ([b.1942], int. 20.10.2008) described the church as a house of believers, while in another interview Aldutė stressed the transcendental aspect: 'The church is the house of God. And a Catholic has to maintain the church' (Aldutė [b.1950], int. 20.10.2008). Birutė and Aldutė describe the church as a house that belongs to two subjects. Responsibility for maintaining it rests with 'believers' (Birutė) or 'Catholics' (Aldutė).

It was a common understanding among my interlocutors that one needs to donate to the church for its upkeep because 'the church has its economic activity and, as it is said, its own life' (Liudas [b.1938], int.

20.10.2008). The process of donating money for the church's upkeep forms part of the Catholic mass. When at a certain point the priest starts the liturgy of sacrifice, one of the altar servers takes a wicker plate and carries it around the church to collect money. This act is called 'the collection' (Lith.: *rinkliava*) by my interlocutors, and the money collected in this manner is considered to be for the upkeep of the church:

> The money for church purposes are *auka* that are thrown into the box. And also, this collection in the church, when one goes around with a little plate (Liudas [b.1938], int. 20.10.2008).
>
> The Sunday *auka* go to the altar servers. This is for the upkeep of the church (Aldutė [b.1950], int. 22.10.2008).
>
> When the *auka* are collected [during the mass], those are said to be for the altar servers. The sacristan, the cleaning personnel (Danutė [b.1939], int. 19.11.2008).

Offering money during the collection in the course of the mass or placing it in boxes near the entrance and the smaller altars is conceived as money for the upkeep of the church-house. Furthermore, some people in the parish are equated with this notion of upkeep of the church-house. The work done by the priest's helpers – altar servers, the sacristan and the cleaner – is work for the benefit of the church and is therefore paid from the moneys collected from those who come to the church. Since the collection is usually done during the mass, only those who are present in the church can give money. At other times, the church is kept locked.

Given that the monetary offerings from the parishioners constitute the sources of upkeep of the church-house, people perceived that it was the building of the church and its condition that initially reveal the material subsistence of all the parishioners:

> We are very poor, scanty in comparison to other regions. The church shows everything. … Well, one can notice that the way people live, the way the church and the priest live (Liudas [b.1938], int. 20.10.2008).
>
> This parish, well, it's sandy, let's say it's of moderate wealth, also size. … But despite this our little church looks rather good in comparison [to others] (Vytas [b.1934], int. 22.10.2008).

Local residents Liudas and Vytas equated the life parishioners live with the life the church-house lives. Comparing their church to other churches means comparing the local material subsistence of parishioners with the material subsistence of other parishes. The church in this context emerges as a representative house of the parish:

> Well, when you go somewhere else, mostly the Šalčininkai region, that church is huge. The Kalesnykų church is even bigger. … When

> you enter – you gasp: oh! There are very big churches, old churches, but huge churches. … These are really maintained churches. … People there donate money, and they maintain the church very much (Morta [b.1973], int. 18.12.2008).

Morta, another local who was born in Vilktaka and lives there with her family and two children, named a couple of churches she has visited which took her breath away with their size.

Similarly, to the houses of parishioners – which are structured into public and private spaces, that is, rooms that have a more performative function and are there to host guests, and rooms that are more protected from visitors – villages (and parishes) have different public and performative spaces, as well as several key objects that serve for representational purposes. The church building is one of these objects.

In the course of my fieldwork the parish church underwent a new development, which literally spotlighted it in the landscape: lights were installed so that it could be illuminated for several hours from dusk until midnight. This initiative was launched by Sigita (b.1962), an active parishioner who had been born in a neighbouring parish, studied in Vilnius, but now lives in Vilktaka and works there as a biologist. Sigita was inspired by the comment of a visiting friend who remarked that 'the church is sinking in the darkness' (int. 6.2.2009), but it could be illuminated for locals as well as for visitors so that they could appreciate it more. Sigita's friend pointed out that in foreign countries and elsewhere in Lithuania churches are illuminated. Sigita organized people to erect the illumination in a couple of days and also found a way for the priest not to pay the additional 50 Litas (approximately €14.50) per month for the electricity. By the time my fieldwork ended the proposal had been sent to the municipality to add the expense to its account, since the local government was already paying for the illumination of other churches in the area.

Soon after these new developments, the illuminated church was evaluated by the locals. One parishioner donated 100 Litas (approximately €29.00) out of her scarce family budget to pay the electricity bill for two months. To leave her house in the evening and see the illuminated church in the distance was a symbol of hope for the woman, lifting out of her difficult everyday experiences. The church's new look also earned it fresh appreciation locally.

Another ethnographic example of how the church building is situated and recognized in the parish is its boundaries. Anthropologists writing on the topic of spatial structuration argue that people usually become aware of a significant space only when its boundaries are violated (Low and Lawrence-

Zúñiga 2003). In my field site no one violated the church's boundaries, but there were events that triggered communal understanding of what they were.

Sigita looked for a place to rent after her flat was taken back by her landlord. After unsuccessful endeavours to find somewhere more or less permanent, she attempted to move into the parsonage, which was standing close to the church and had been uninhabited for a while. She approached church officials with a request to rent the parsonage and suggested reconstructing the rather shabby-looking house as part of her rent. By the time I left the village the negotiations about the rent were still going on, though Sigita had moved in and started reconstruction with the help of friends. She soon revived the parsonage. Coincidentally one of the most important parish events came up, and several locals as well as guests from another parish gathered in the parsonage for a two-course lunch prepared by Sigita and a couple of Vilktaka women.

However, some parishioners were not very pleased with Sigita moving into the parsonage. Passions about the parsonage had arisen before, when there was a plan to turn it into a funeral home. At the time, this discussion had been left unresolved. Now, the idea of someone moving in into the parsonage was seen as just another step towards privatizing it. However, the improvements to the look of the parsonage were noticed even by these critics, since a deserted parsonage just behind the church fence had a negative impact on the image of the church itself.

The example of the parsonage shows that the word 'church' may also extend to other buildings, in this case the parsonage and the land nearby. The concerns that were expressed about someone moving into this part of the church ensemble and the fear of its possible 'privatization' show that a church is not considered to be a private house but one belonging to the parish. The donations and offerings of parishioners for the maintenance of the church-house make it a communal property, one that is also (and therefore) carefully supervised.

Even though the above stories of the parsonage, the church's illumination and its upkeep indicate that it is a parish property; it does not make it public property. The way people speak about the church and describe their contributions to the upkeep of it, how passionate they are to make others understand what is wrong with church affairs, hints at certain feelings of 'home' being attached to it. In this respect, these other than monetary ways in which people contribute to the upkeep of the church shed further light on why it is also a house inscribed with the characteristics of a home.

Material items that contribute to the upkeep of the church (other than money) include bread, berries, fruits, mushrooms and other edible items used

for the liturgy of sacrifice, as well as home-made snacks and drinks from parishioners' homes for gatherings after religious services. Others include flowers (home-grown and brought into the church for decorations), fabric for the altar (woven at home) or wood (from a private forest) for a new cross. Further immaterial items include time, physical labour, prayers, singing and other non-material contributions to the upkeep of the church or a more festive ritual flow. They are usually of a more personal nature, but they can also be made in a communal manner, as when parishioners meet on an ordinary work day on the church grounds to clean the surroundings of autumn leaves or to practice hymns. Such communal gatherings to carry out a certain task are often first requested by the priest.

This led me to notice a rather contextual aspect to gift-giving: requested gifts. Such gifts can be asked for in public or in private, but in both cases, they are explicitly uttered and anticipated. In some instances, priests approach parishioners in order to ask for additional monetary donations. The reason and the specific purpose of the requested collection of money is announced:

> When it is said that it is a collection for a roof to be renovated or repainted, so you give again. This goes separately (Ramutė [b.1964], int. 15.10.2008).
>
> If for larger [repairs of the church], so additional collection is done (Liudas [b.1938], int. 20.10.2008).
>
> We contribute all the time when there are collections done, for example, to do some work. Last year the belfry was renovated, so we contributed one hundred Litas (Akvilė [b.1959] int. 19.2.2009).

In some cases, the priest or other active parishioners can pay visits to private houses and ask for monetary contributions from parishioners. A concrete sum of money is named as well:

> Wom 1 (b.1922): Well, he has fixed the church, very much. … Those benches are all his and the altar is his. Everywhere. Well, people have stacked.
>
> Wom 2 (b.1920): Have stacked money. … Whoever lives two in a family gives a hundred and who is single fifty Litas (int. 24.10.2008).

The two widows quoted here showed me a framed picture on the wall containing a coloured A4 sheet of paper with an image of the church and words of thanks from the priest underneath. The amount of money contributed was also indicated. This was not the first time I had seen such a picture in parishioners' homes. People were eager to point them out to me.

On other occasions, at the end of the mass the priest would ask the parishioners to do some work around the church, and parishioners would

organize a work-team. I have never seen the priest participate in such communal work, but he always thanked people at the end of the mass for their contributions, donations and the like:

> I did not tell you in the beginning, I forgot, but today's donations go to the Vilnius Seminary. So thank you for them. Also thank you to everyone for other *auka*, the food, thank you (Priest quoted from field notes, 23.11.2008).

The priest's requested gifts and communal giving by parishioners hint at the existence of distinct roles and are a way of managing social space in the parish by means of exchange. The priest maintains his position as distant from parishioners by not becoming too familiar with others and not working with them, while parishioners 'keep their place' (Bourdieu 1989) through the tasks they fulfil.

Bourdieu (1989) approaches space as a system of relations and a field of power. The position one occupies in social space provides a 'sense of one's place', which in interaction leads people to keep their common place and others to 'keep their distance', to 'maintain their rank' and 'not get familiar' (ibid.: 17). Social space tends to function as symbolic space, a space of difference or differential distance (ibid.: 20). The individuals, groups and names that are designated are instruments of strategies which agents (as Bourdieu calls them) use while negotiating their own identities. Like Mauss, Bourdieu sees an individual as a representative of a certain group, even if the motives that guide the individual to enter into an exchange might appear purely personal to that individual. Exchange in both Maussian and Bourdieusian understandings is an action oriented towards the present and future acquisition of the desired returns. In other words, an individual acts towards the expected returns from exchange networks.

Requested gifts are therefore a strategy to influence and keep certain roles and social distances intact. The request from the priest, its fulfilment by the parishioners and the priest's public expression of gratitude, which he expresses verbally at the end of the mass or hands out in written form, are all steps in an exchange relationship. A 'thank you' in these situations thus also indicates the completion of a transaction.

The 'Master' Priest and His 'Household' Church

At the beginning of the previous section I mentioned Birutė's description of the church as a house. Birutė was born in 1942 in another village in the parish and was exiled to Siberia as a child. Shortly after her return to Lithuania she moved to Vilktaka because of her marriage to Liudas, a man who had been born there. In an interview I conducted with the two of them, Liudas added to his wife's perception of the church: 'If he is the priest today,

so he has to be the master (Lith.: *šeiminykas*). If you look at, for example, [our house]. The doors fall down. Who will take care of it? The neighbour won't come. It's the same [with the church]' (Liudas [b.1938], int. 20.10.2008). Liudas compared the priest and the church to himself and his house. His house is his own business as its owner and inhabitant, and a neighbour is not expected to do the chores for him. The neighbour in this context is someone who lives in another household and who indicates its boundaries. Hence the church is not only a communally maintained house, a house with boundaries, but also a house with a master.

Perceiving the priest as the master of the church-house draws attention to his responsibilities and duties. According to Liudas, the priest runs the church financially because he has the means to do so: 'The priest is the first string, he has the capital, he keeps the money'. The money donated by the parishioners is kept and allocated by the priest. The money that the priest keeps makes him the 'head' of the church's 'household'.

It would have been correct of me to translate the word *šeiminykas* that Liudas used not as 'master', but as 'housekeeper', or in this particular context as 'church-keeper'. These two meanings highlight the economic side of the church as a unit within the parish as well as the domestic tasks that the church household requires, which the priest either runs himself or organizes others to take care of.

Yet what Liudas's comparison between the church and his house reveals is that parishioners actually compare the issue of how to run a church with the everyday subtleties of running their own households: there is someone responsible for a home-house who has the capital to do so. Parishioners finance the church's household expenses, but the way these are collected and distributed is the responsibility of the priest. The priest pays the bills and salaries of the altar servers and cleaners. Their activities within the church are recognized as labour for which they get paid. The role of the priest in fact does not fall out of this perception. People know when and what money goes into the priest's pocket: 'When you request a mass for the dead, that money, it is said, is for the priest. Also, when there is a funeral, this [money] is also for the priest' (Aldutė [b.1950], int. 22.10.2008). Consequently, the church is compared to an ordinary household, though it functions more as an enterprise through its activities.

Even though, as pointed out in the previous section, the way a church looks draws attention to the material subsistence of the parishioners, the role of the priest and his responsibilities are always mentioned first when evaluating the church's interior and exterior. And this despite the fact that the Catholic Church requires its priests to change parishes every five or so years:

> Well, when he was here, so you see for yourself how the church looks. It's only because of him. When he wanted to make those benches, some got angry, as if why this is needed... And now, if it were not [because of him], they would be sitting on the ground. Yes. So, he was quite active, demanding … But he did it (Danutė [b.1939], int. 19.11.2008).

This 'active' priest was replaced by another, but the work the former did, the changes he implemented in the church, remained and are still visible today. As noted by Danutė, it was the priest who collected additional money from the parishioners in order to initiate substantial renovations. His input and the parishioners' money made a joint contribution to the changes in the church. However, although the priest changes, the church stays with the parishioners, thus providing them with the right to speak of the church as their house, or 'our little church' (Lith.: *mūsų bažnytėlė*).

The priest at the time of my fieldwork was criticized by some in the parish for taking too little care of the church. One door was wobbly, and a leaking waterspout had damaged a wooden corner of the church. The priest was very much involved in the spiritual revival of the parish instead, as a result of which others in the parish adored him. However, his involvement in the spiritual side of the parish did not undermine the notion of the church as a household, since the language he used during masses supported the idea of the family: 'My beloved' (Lith.: *mylimieji*), 'Brothers and sisters', 'God the Father', '[we should] rehabilitate the family through the image of the holy family' (Sermon, 19.3.2009), etc. He furthermore equated being in the church with being at table and compared the acceptance of consecrated bread and wine with the spiritual feeling of having eaten and being full. Once after communion he looked at the faces of those who did not go up to receive the sacramental bread from his hands and said: 'How could I let you go hungry?' The roles that the priest plays during the mass incorporate those of the master of the church who hosts people and feeds them, while in addressing his parishioners he reminds them of the kinship ties that link participants in the mass to one another and to the deities.

Before I explain further the ways in which the parish priest transformed the church into a spiritual household, I will describe how ordinary parish households and families were created and how they were conceptualized by the Lithuanian state at the time of my fieldwork. The following discussion will help me compare the physical and ceremonial construction of the households in the parishes I researched.

Families and Households

In 2008, the Seimas (parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania engaged in heated discussions of what constitutes a family. Confirming the notion of 'family conception', a colloquial expression used in public debates to describe the Seimas Act, it declared that the family is based on heterosexual marriage (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2008). Families were categorized into expanded, large, harmonious or incomplete. For the state of Lithuania, a family was only a 'complete' family if it consisted of a married heterosexual couple with or without children. As the most important social institution, the role of the family was to ensure the complementarity of genders and generations and therefore to vouch for the fullness of interrelations. The notion of gender complementarity meant recognizing both male and female originality, dissimilarity and therefore their complementarity to each other. The notion of 'family conception' also affirmed that relationships between a man and a woman are to be established on the basis of respect, trust and responsibility, while procreation should be based on love. According to the proposed Act, such a family ensures the best parenting space and provides numerous advantages for the development of children.

This idea of 'family conception' was met with criticism from non-governmental organizations, academics and ordinary citizens (single mothers in particular), who called the suggested family model a return to the Middle Ages. Yet, to a great extent the Seimas Act just represented the already existing norms of heterosexual discourse. Whenever Lithuanian mass media discuss interpersonal relationships among Lithuanians, it depicts two heterosexuals whose relationship is supposed to be based on love and trust. Long-term relationships are expected to end in cohabitation, marriage, family life and children. The state government and mass media advocate the idea that both women and men are incomplete when single.

One ethnographic discussion of Orthodox Christian life in an urban setting and with an underlying gender dichotomy appears in Renée Hirschon's study (1998 [1989]) of Greek refugees from Asia Minor. Hirschon noted that adult men and women were considered incomplete in themselves, since it was only their relationship with another person that created a totality and complementarity (1998 [1989]: 219). Such complementarity, she further explained, entailed interdependence, which defined not only what men and women did, but also their symbolic and spiritual qualities. One scene in which the 'expectations associated with the complementarity of gender roles based in the family' were enacted was the house (ibid.: 220).

In Lithuania the Catholic Church was one of the most active supporters of the 'family conception' and heterosexual marriages. In a

conversation with the Archbishop of Kaunas just before the enactment of the Seimas act (int. 22.5.2008), he confirmed to me that the Catholic Church supports the idea of the family being created on the basis of marriage. He also defined the family as a value and the act of supporting 'family conception' as an act defending values. To provide more substantial information about the importance of marriage and the family, the Catholic Church in Lithuania introduced premarital courses for couples who want to get married in church. The courses included topics such as the wedding sacrament, family planning and the concept of the family discussed from psychological and social angles. Such courses were meant to strengthen the families that were about to be created and to protect them from divorce. The project of premarital courses centred on the socio-religious reproduction of the 'family' as a conjugal couple with or without children. As a matter of fact, premarital courses had been launched before the 'family conception' reached the Seimas for debate, thus revealing that the Catholic Church had been engaged in drawing up a notion of the valued family before the state established it legally.

Although Lithuanian families are subject to many more bureaucratic and legal acts defining their constitution, the rights of children or older persons, property inheritance and the like (e.g. Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania, enacted by Seimas in 2000), the stimulus for the 2008 version of 'family conception' largely rested on what some politicians considered to be the alarming demographic situation in the country. Low birth and high death rates, the high number of divorces and youth emigration were main sources of concern (Kalnius 2008 [1995]: 7-12).

Lithuanian ethnologists have long witnessed change in Lithuanian families and households. This is largely due to their disciplinary focus. 'Now the village is not the same', concludes ethnologist Vyšniauskaitė her book *Lithuanian's Home* (2004: 152), which describes village surroundings, farmstead buildings, dwelling-houses and their interiors at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. As the oldest woman (b.1919) in one parish village told me: 'Very few people are left now [in villages] … There is one, there are two [points to different directions] … Only a few families, maybe three or four. Otherwise, I am alone' (int. 9.6.2008). Another woman complemented this point of view in a different interview: 'Neither children nor young ones are left here. Everyone is in town' (b.1936, int. 26.3.2009). Due to migration to the towns for work and education, Lithuanian villages are now inhabited mostly by the elderly. The presence of just a few residential families points to a troubling future for the village. It is this change in the population of rural areas that is mostly emphasized by local people, as well as by academics.

The Preface to an edited volume, which resulted from an ethnological conference dedicated to the Lithuanian concept of home and habitable surroundings, states:

> *Namas* (Engl.: house), *namai* (Engl.: home) are first of all associated with the buildings …, [but also] with the farmstead and all of the buildings that belong to it…. *Namai* is the whole environment, the farm and its land …. *Namai* in the traditional world view is the essential, fundamental value, equivalent to family and parents (Šatkauskienė 2007: 4-5).

Ethnological work centring on the notion of home as a house emphasize it as an all-encompassing space. They talk about Lithuanian village houses as spaces which are both mundane and sacred:

> Home (Lith.: *namai*) was everything for a person: a place of birth and family creation, a school for children and a shelter for the elderly, for care and a deathbed, everything which today has been dispersed to various institutions and which we cannot gather into a single unit in our towns and cities" (Martinaitis 2007: 26).

Martinaitis, a Lithuanian poet who participated in this ethnological conference, said that the house of a Lithuanian rural dweller was a sacred place, a home-church (Lith: *namų bažnyčia*) where important sacred ceremonies took place, where there were prayers and singing, where there were specific sacred places that could not be violated (2007: 26). Another ethnologist's view complements Martinaitis' understanding when she cites the words of a Lithuanian archbishop from the sixteenth century who strictly encouraged priests not to baptise children or marry people in their homes, but insisted on the rituals being carried out in church (Vyšniauskaitė 2004: 89).

Ethnological attempts to present the Lithuanian rural past in relation to the changes of the present-day are materialized in various museums across the country. At the time of my fieldwork there was one house in Vilktaka that was open to those interested in the *dzūkai* way of life: the ethnographic museum. The house stood not too far from the train station. It was a rather big old house in comparison to the majority of the local one-storey houses dating from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. The entrance was situated in the middle of the house. The room on the right, which originally must have been a space for festivities, had been turned into an office for the museum director, while the left part of the house, the kitchen and the bedroom, had been transformed into an exhibition space. The kitchen has a fireplace for cooking food, a table with benches and a couple of other pieces of furniture. The table is covered with a white tablecloth, and a loaf of dried bread and a wax candle stand on it. With ten people standing in this little

kitchen, it is very difficult to see anything, therefore the guide lifts the items he is talking about. After a couple of stories and strange events in the life of the past have been related in the local dialect, the guide asks everyone to move to an even smaller room where a bed and a wooden dowry box stand and a cradle hangs from the ceiling. Everyone finds the old-fashioned underwear fascinating and gets to touch the hand-woven cloth from the dowry box. After a couple more stories and questions from the audience, everyone walks outside. The excursion is still not over. Other buildings belonging to the local farmstead are shown. Interesting stories are told while people move through the space and observe the home implements exhibited there.

Vilktaka ethnographic museum presents everyday material items from the past inhabitants of the house. The houses of the present-day local inhabitants are usually one-storey square wooden houses with a kitchen and two other rooms, a cellar and an attic. From the porch one always enters straight into the kitchen. This is where I had most of my interviews. The kitchen is the space where neighbours who casually drop by sit and exchange news. The other two rooms are often divided into a space for sleeping and a space for guests and festivities. In short, the house is structured into a space for the everyday and a room in which to host guests.

I remember a conversation with Laima, a woman in her early thirties who lived in another village in the parish with her husband and two children. They had a small house which could itself be transformed into a beautiful ethnographic museum. Laima told me that some people who have houses in the area, especially those from town, change their interiors into something very different. She gave an example of one woman we both knew who had recently had a village house rebuilt. She had fitted a shower with new tiles, the walls had been torn down to open up the space of the living room, and the fireplace had been removed from the kitchen, being replaced by an electric cooker and other kitchen appliances. Laima also remembered how her family was invited for tea to a neighbouring house belonging to people who come from town for the weekends or holidays: ‘We drank tea and listened to a CD of Sting’. In her opinion, this does not really fit her idea of a village setting. She then told the story of how their family friend once came for a visit and how, having travelled in India, he taught Laima to make ginger tea. She liked it and made it for her husband once: ‘He sipped the tea, put the cup on the table and said that such teas do not belong in this village’.

Laima’s story indicates that the exterior and interior of one’s house are expected not only to represent a stylistic unit, but also to be similar to the other houses and the standards of living of those around one. The story about the tea indicates that ideas of what belongs in the household may be

negotiated between its occupants. Laima's story is also one of how the younger inhabitants of the area perceive a house and home as representing a certain attitude towards life, including modes of material subsistence and the values that need to be preserved.

A complementary angle to how younger generations approach their homes, houses, family lives and rural lives is that presented by Jonas (b.1976). Jonas had moved to Vilktaka from the city and settled in the house his wife's grandparents had lived in previously. Jonas and his wife Neringa had made a conscious choice to go and live in the countryside. They had found jobs in the area that reflected their education. They loved their house with its family history. Neringa intentionally left the three letters of the Three Kings above the entrance door that had been placed there when her grandmother was still alive. For special occasions, she used the old fireplace to bake. Although Jonas and Neringa altered the house to suit their family's needs (e.g. the bathroom with the toilet), they changed very little in the kitchen, bedroom or living room.

Jonas and Laima's cases are those of two local married couples in their thirties with children and their chosen lifestyle. While these couples were occupied with issues of everyday work and family routines, Izabelė had slightly different concerns. She was trying to make decisions about her future marriage. Izabelė found support from different sources: her parents' and grandparents' life stories, her recently married sister and her own values and aims in life, which had to correspond to and complement those of her future husband. In all her considerations, there was one more important aspect that played a central role, and that was affection. Izabelė paid a lot of attention to her possible conjugal future in a rural district, to the image of herself and her future husband as a couple, to issues that might complement that and to those that might create problems. In short, a lot of things had to be considered. In the meantime, Izabelė was also concerned to find a place of her own. She already had her preferences about the village and was contemplating her financial ability to buy a house there.

These three cases shed light on the way family life and household matters are evaluated and lived in practice in my field site. They indicate the social and individual influences that reconfigure and direct people in their decisions about family life and its creation.

The aim of this section has been to describe how the concepts of home, house and family were reproduced at the time of my fieldwork. Like the Lithuanian state, local inhabitants associated the family and the complementarity of gender roles with the household and the home-house. For these people the family is an important social unit, although not

necessarily one that impacts on the birth rate. Rather, they saw the process of creating their families and households as reproducing values.

Having presented the state and local rural perceptions of home, house and family, I will now turn to a discussion of how comparable they are to the relationships that Catholic Church emphasizes.

Spiritual and Ritual Kinship

Like the state-propagated family model, the model of the Catholic Church also advocates love, marriage, relationships of trust and parenting. In what follows, I elaborate on each of these points.

(a) The 'master' of the church, the priest, chooses his profession because of his love and devotion to God, which requires celibacy and is opposed to non-celibate relationships. In one sermon the parish priest designated two kinds of love: spiritual love was prior to bodily love, but both were envisaged as ways of establishing relationships and achieving completeness (Lith.: *pilnatv*ė) (field notes, 25.3.2009).

At the time of my fieldwork, rumours spread that the priest 'had suffered from women' and that this was the reason why he had chosen his occupation: conversion and the choice of celibate lifestyle were the changes a man who had been 'burnt by women' went through. The priest, now in his late forties and not even ten years into his priesthood, indicated to his parishioners that prior to his current position he had followed a different kind of life. He was said to have been an entrepreneur, whose failures in this respect had directed him on to the path of a convert and a priest. Even if these were just rumours, the celibate way of life that the priest had chosen was opposed to non-celibate relationships between a woman and a man. His having been 'burnt' by one kind of love had led him on to the path of a different kind of love.

(b) Both church and family are constituted through alliances or marriages, which incorporate notions of kinship, labour, the accumulation of capital, property relations and a defined group of successors. For example, the rings worn by some Catholic nuns serve as signs of belonging and signify relationships with God and others. In the catechism the Catholic Church is called the 'Fiancée of Christ' (Katalikų Bažnyčios katekizmas 1996), which expresses the idea of the community being in a close and intimate union with God. Family and kinship terminology is consolidated during the mass by the priest's references to the family, such as 'brothers and sisters', or the usual addresses to 'God the Father' or 'Mother of Christ'. Furthermore, the clergy is a hierarchical institution, with specific obligations towards church property.

(c) The household of the church is created on the basis of trust. This characteristic is reflected in restrictions on access to the church, since only a few people have keys to the church-house and can open it for others. This also links the church to the perception of it as a property and a possession that cannot be visited, taken or even touched by everyone.

(d) Finally, the church and family centre are involved in the notion of parenting. The ideological basis of Catholicism is oriented towards the reinforcement of such categories as God's children, God the Father, his son Christ and Christ's mother Mary. God's teachings on how to best live one's life are followed, or at least known, since they are repeated during each mass. Moreover, Catholics are made aware of the consequences of misbehaviour.[31] The notion of parenting in Catholicism lies in the characteristics of God the Father's children coming from the same background and therefore being related to each other through family ties of brotherhood and sisterhood.

At the time of my fieldwork, the priest liked to emphasize that the person is born twice: there is a biological birth and a spiritual birth, the latter taking place during baptism. Baptism establishes spiritual parenthood (see Goody 2000). As Hauschild (2011: 12) argues, it is baptism that creates a Catholic, not specific dogmas that people believe or do not believe:

> Baptized, made a godchild, first communion, engaged, married, mother or father themselves, godparent him- or herself and finally anointed, dead, blessed and buried, maybe gone up to heaven – the course of a Catholic's life is marked by religious and popular rites (Hauschild 2011: 13).

Such rites not only mark the life of the Catholic, primarily they establish various roles. And, if there is a role, it not only needs its creation rituals, but also acts that reproduce it. I argue that Catholic life-cycle rituals and masses establish, repeat and maintain familial, kinship and household relationships and roles.

Jack Goody argues that Christianity has been engaged in family affairs since the beginning of its institutionalized life. In his book *The European Family* (2000: 2) Christianity is mentioned already in the third paragraph, in which he argues that 'the church, in the process of converting, introduced a number of changes that transformed the earlier patterns of domestic life'. The specific norms of domestic behaviour included a ban on close marriages and the introduction of godparenthood. 'Spiritual kinship, godparenthood, is often treated as a form of "ritual kinship"' (ibid.: 29-30). Historically, the church has attempted to attract people as both givers and receivers and has

[31] Almost everyone in my field site knew that there are ten commandments a Catholic should follow.

'joined the family' whenever it has initiated changes in the distribution of wealth by inheritance and was included as an heir (ibid.: 36-8). All this has strengthened the Church financially.

Jane Schneider (1990) also sees Christian rituals as generating interconnectedness. She indicates the use of familial terms such as 'brotherly love' and 'children of God' to describe the idea of a united congregation, despite differences in status. As for the latter, Schneider invokes Goody (1983) and his analysis of why the papal institution supported the subordination of kinship obligations to the ideas of the Christian family and Christian love: the goal was the interception of 'strategies of heirship', so that ecclesiastical institutions could accumulate donated properties and, through 'brotherly love' and kinship, nurture the formation of a certain social order (Schneider 1990: 36). Related to this, Malinowski (2001 [1927]) saw human relations as being primarily formed in the processes of parenthood and kinship. Relationships between parents and children, husband and wife, and brothers and sisters are the social bonds that form and compel social organization. Family and kinship ties create the sentiments of unity and loyalty.

In sum, anthropologists see Christian rituals as generating interconnectedness within the congregation by establishing ritual kinship and obligations towards the church, which in turn support the institution financially. Previously presented perceptions of family and household by the Lithuanian state, the Catholic Church and Vilktaka locals primarily highlight the responsibility for reproducing certain values.

Along with the spiritual kinship roles and the interrelatedness that Catholic doctrines and rituals (re)produce, there were other roles within the church that were rather prominent and added to the perception of the 'church's household'. I will address these in the next section.

Women and Domesticity

What really brings the functioning of Vilktaka's church close to the notion of the household is the influence of women. Women are engaged in all sorts of activities in and around the church. During my fieldwork, it was a woman who cleaned and decorated the church and who organized other women to sing during the mass. In most cases, the same woman also planned a more festive flow of rituals for special occasions and asked people to participate in processions. A sister of the priest was always next to him in church and during his trips away, and she also ran his domestic life. As discussed earlier, it was a woman who had rebuilt the parsonage and put it back into use. These were the women who cooked food and created a hospitable environment for guests and locals after church ceremonies. Mostly it was

women who gathered to clean the church's grounds and who took care of the graves. Women planted flowers in their gardens to be able to bring them to church at a later date and decorate the altars. It was a woman's job to weave the cloth for the church altars. And, last but not least, the majority of church-goers, as well as practitioners outside the church, were also women.

Of course, differences in female and male life expectancy play a vital role here, but it would be wrong to disregard the female domination of parish life by merely acknowledging their longer life expectancy, especially if one considers the general roles that men also occupy in and around the church. Certainly, there were men on the church premises, but though men seemed to go to church, the spatial positioning of male bodies in church demonstrated the differences between men and women. Several men always (except for winter) stood around smoking at the churchyard gate and sometimes in the car park or sat on benches along the churchyard fence and chatted all through the mass. If they did go into the church, they sat in the right pew at the back (see Needham 1973 for the conceptualization of left and right in gendered terms). In processions around the church they were at the front, carrying flags and other items that the priest needed. Of course, the priest and the altar servers were also male (for a gendered division of labour in religious and rural contexts, see e.g. Davis 1984; Pine 2000).

The spatial organization of female and male bodies around and inside the church sheds light on some specifically gendered activities that resemble the division of labour in the domestic sphere. The work women do belongs to their more or less 'traditional' roles, such as cleaning, decorating, cooking, hosting guests, etc. The fact that, for example, during a procession around the church very little conversation and negotiation over the sequence of this ritual and male and female spatial organization happened attests to the fact that roles had already been established (Ardener 1993; Skar 1993).

In a study of everyday rural life in Lithuania, Harboe-Knudsen (2010) notices that there has been no substantial shift in work tasks between men and women and that both are occupied in fulfilling rather traditional gender roles. But the assumption that women lead their lives in the shadow of men is misleading, since 'women were in many instances "pulling the strings" in the household' (2010: 249) and often ran the households 'either by directly taking over the organization and supervision of work, or by controlling the household "from behind"' (ibid.: 250).

Thinking of female parishioners in my field site, I could not agree more. Even though women did not take leading roles in the church, neither their influence on the male exercise of power and authority (Ardener 1993: 9) nor their recommendations for and control of public male performances could go unnoticed. I vividly remember an interview with Birutė and Liudas

in which they were both quite careful in expressing their opinions about the newly occupied parsonage. At their request, I had to turn off my voice recorder several times. Liudas was eager to voice his opinion about church matters, but during our conversation he was often stopped by Birutė, who even grew angry when he became too open in vocalizing his personal opinions, which she thought inappropriate. Aldutė too usually directed her husband's public activities and speeches. With her lovely smile and laughter, she often shrugged off statements of his that she thought inappropriate: 'Ah, you drank too much! Eat some soup instead of talking' (field notes 22.10.2008).

The responsibility for the household that women in rural areas bear, the supervision of their family members and their proper public performances can be observed in the church space too. Women organize men and children for processions, and it is women rather than the priest who host guests from other parishes. In general, I often observed that, while the priest acts out his role, the stage and his acting are set, organized and supervised by women. To illustrate this, I will present an extract from my field notes (5.10.2008; see also Plates 6 and 7):

> It is the day the three crosses will be consecrated in a village in another parish. The crosses have been rebuilt at the same spot where the old ones had stood. I arrive about an hour earlier than the consecration is due to start. Upon my arrival I already notice all the preparations people have made from the early morning: the crosses are decorated with flowers and little white aprons, a table nearby is covered with a white tablecloth, and men are bringing more benches for the older persons to sit. Further preparations are happening inside the houses. Several women, like Izabelė and Laima, start bringing the dishes to the table: two big curd cheeses, two bowls of 'bear's honey' (Lith.: *Meškos medus* or *Darycinis medus*), white bread, sandwiches with meat, two jugs of cold fruit drinks, sweets and two types of buckwheat cake. As Izabelė tells me later, the village has been divided into two groups: those who prepared the table and the dishes, and those who did not contribute. Later, after the ceremony, when everyone was invited to eat, those who had not contributed dishes started leaving. However, some were stopped by a couple of women, who personally approached those leaving with the promise that 'there will be enough for everyone'.

Female and male activities in the church space can be put into perspective by means of a popular folk-saying among Lithuanians: the man is the head, but the woman is the neck that turns the head in the desired direction. This reflects the relationships between the Catholic deities too. When describing

the connections between God and Mary, people called Mary the mother of Jesus and also the 'maidservant of God' (Lith: *Dievo tarnaitė*). Mary, in this view, is like an intermediary between humans and God and can address human requests to God. Hence, the articulation of female roles in the church space also has a religious basis.

Plate 6. Women set the table for the consecration of a village cross.

Aspects of Marian images in Christian culture have been discussed by Turner and Turner 2011 [1978]. They argue that the Catholic perception of Mary usually entails the belief in her being able to intercede with God on people's behalf: 'Jesus Christ is often referred to as "mediator" and Mary, the angels and saints, as "intercessors"' (ibid.: 157). Mary is perceived as the new Eve, the two women being structurally connected and occupying a role as the mothers of corporate, collective humanity, one standing for physical humanity, the other for spiritual humanity (ibid.: 156, 171, 210). In addition, Farrell argues that 'the hierarchical structure of the church and its division of labour is based very clearly on a biologized concept of sex and gender' (Farrell 1990: 339). Cosmological principles of how men and women are symbolically linked are also at the forefront of Bourdieu's discussion of the organization of the house space (1970). Instead of identifying the structural

organization of the house, he focuses on social practices that use domestic space to produce and reproduce existing relations between the genders. The cases I have presented above suggest that the church serves as a place that reflects and reproduces gendered activities: women tend to be engaged in various organizational duties, while men are often there to perform them.

Plate 7. Women prepare the stage for the priest to act. Later they host people by sharing out the food among the guests and local residents.

To sum up, anthropologists agree that Christian churches are organized around the notions of the household and relations of kinship and that they are significant in attracting people as givers and receivers (to use Goody's expression, 2000). The ethnographic data I have presented here demonstrates the significance of these roles and their reproduction in the church space and in the course of church rituals. What was particular about this empirical support to the production of Catholic ritual and spiritual kinship were the simultaneous discussions among politicians of what constitutes the Lithuanian family. The alarming birth and death rates caused the state to become engaged in Lithuania's future. As a consequence of this concern, the first steps politicians took were to redefine the concept of the family. Families were categorized and the reproductive and interdependent functions of their members were emphasized. The Catholic hierarchy approved of this

state initiative as protecting values. This was no accident, I should add, because heteronormative family relationships constitute the basis on which the Catholic Church is built.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter started with a view of the church as a house of parishioners, believers and Catholics in a particular area, who maintain their church with monetary donations and other material and immaterial contributions. The parish church emerges as a result of 'place-based alliances' and exchanges (Battaglia 1992), which connect the material and immaterial contributions of the individuals of a particular locality. Parishioners literally constitute the church from bits and pieces of their homes: homemade food, homegrown flowers, home-woven fabrics and the like. The parish church is carefully looked after and maintained; it has to be cleaned, decorated and generally kept in a good and presentable condition. The church and its grounds are perceived as objects representing the parish. Depending on its condition, the church interior and exterior prompt reflections on the wealth of the parishioners, which can be compared with the situation for other churches. The church and its buildings are not private, but the property of the parish. This particular understanding does not clash with the view that it is the priest who is primarily responsible for the state of the church. Although Catholic priests move from one parish to another, the church always stays with the parishioners, giving them the understandable right to speak of it as 'our church'.

Gifts in theory are exchanged objects, parts of created and sustained social relationships. But which relationships precisely are sustained by exchanges with the church? Although priests were named by my interlocutors as masters of the church's housekeeping role, they were also those who created the church household from within. The priest equated being in church with being at table, and he compared acceptance of the sacramental bread and wine to the spiritual feeling of having eaten and being full. The roles the priest played during the mass incorporated those of the master of a house, who hosts people and feeds them, while in his address he also reminded church-goers of the familial and parental ties that link them to one another and to the deities. This is a way to relate people to each other on familial and therefore familiar grounds. During the course of the mass the priest made repeated use of important kin terms: father, mother, son, brother, sister. When linked to marital connotations in Catholicism, these parental and filial terms added up to encompassing all groups usually associated with the term 'household'. Consequently, the church as a household is (re)produced through familial, parenting and filial relationships. The church

has controlled access to it, it is established on the basis of parishioners' labour and accumulation of capital, and it too has a defined group of inheritors.

Christianity has been recognized as establishing familial and kinship relationships from its very beginning (e.g. Goody 2000). During my fieldwork the Catholic Church and the Lithuanian state were preoccupied with how to conceptualize the family and households yet again. The Lithuanian state described the family as the foundation of society's development and as a guarantee of the nation's well-being and survival. The same familial and kinship ties and household notions help to sustain the institution of the church. After all, the family unit is related to the establishment not only of kin ties and obligations, but also of property rights. Thus, the reproduction of the church through the terminology of family and kinship, notions of alliance and brotherly/sisterly love, marriage or parenthood is also a way to reproduce its economic relations.

In addition to the perception of the church as informed by particular notions of home, household and kinship, I have also argued that, like any parish household, the church is sustained mainly by female organizational skills. It often seemed to me that women set the stage for the priest to act his role as a ritual master, while everything else, from cleanliness and the decorations to practical involvement in the ritual proceedings, was organized by women. The aesthetics of the church, its beauty and the parts of a more festive ritual flow were all practices that women engaged in. This made the space of the church one of 'housing' the extension of gendered domestic roles (Hirschon 1998 [1989]).

This chapter has also described a rather contextual gift-giving aspect within the church context: the giving that is initiated by requests from the priest. Such requested gifts, as I call them, show that giving can be influenced, expected, contractual and communal. Requested gifts demonstrate that the priest and the church are dependent on the parishioners, their labour force, the time they can devote to the church and the like. In addition, requested gifts showed how social space is managed in the parish. For example, the priest would request certain work to be done, absent himself from the communal work party, but thank everyone afterwards. I consider this a strategy to influence certain roles and keep them intact. Requested gifts are therefore a way to manage social distance within the parish. Such gifts are acknowledgements that parishioners and priests have distinct roles and contribute to the church in different ways. Important here is this twofold result: the maintenance of social relationships, and at the same time social distances between roles maintained by means of exchange.

This chapter has provided a partial answer to the overall aim of this book, which is to trace the relationships of church participants in exchange. I have argued that the ideological reproduction of Catholics takes place through rituals and have emphasized spiritual kinship and notions of the church as a home-house. This chapter has also provided data on how people regard the objects that circulate between them, how social relations are maintained through exchanges of material and immaterial items and how roles are kept intact. People emphasized the act of giving to the church rather than what or how much they give. Their gifts to the church in the form of money, time, labour or other material or immaterial items of exchange are means to ensure socio-religious contexts. The reproduction of social relations is also, by the same token, the reproduction of the economic life of the church.

The following chapter continues the ethnographic focus on Vilktaka's parish church. I elaborate further on the theme of gift exchange as mediating relations, affirming roles and reproducing economic bases, as well as addressing the moment when exchange is neglected and deliberately avoided. This will shed light on the importance of church attendance, as it reveals the ambiguities associated with an 'empty' church.

Chapter 5
Yes to God, No to Church

Relevant to this chapter is the Plate 8. It shows the entrance to the mass on All Saints' Day, 1 November 2008, in a neighbouring parish to the one I was doing fieldwork in. The church at this service is far from empty. On the contrary, there are so many people present that some have to stand outside. In addition, there are about ten men smoking and talking in the car park with scattered groups of people at the cemetery visiting family graves. However, according to some parishioners, the majority of people just mentioned are not going to church. Even those present in the church building are not, since this day is one of those particular holidays in the calendar that are usually marked by a higher number of people in the church. 1 November is an important day in Lithuania. As at Easter and on Christmas Eve, the churches are full of people to an extent not seen on ordinary Sundays.[32]

This chapter discusses the most salient issues I was able to document with regard to church attendance. I analyse the meanings attached to going to church and the issues related to the empirical notions of a 'full' and 'empty' church. Following Garriott and O'Neill (2008: 388), I ask not 'who is a Catholic?' but rather where, when and how people speak about who is a Catholic.

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the significance that is placed on going to church. I start this section by presenting my own example of church-going and the requirements of a Catholic as I was introduced to them. Following this I discuss a popular self-definition Lithuanians use – 'I am a not practicing Catholic' – and ask why going to church is perceived as a display of belief.

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[32] There were more people on Mother's Day, 15 August (The Assumption of Mary), Pentecost and on 2 November as well. 'Ordinary Sundays' usually saw fifteen to fifty people in the church.

Plate 8. The Day of All Saints (1.11.2008) in the parish neighbouring Vilktaka. So many people attend the church that several have to stand outside. Nonetheless, according to my interlocutors, the majority of these in the photo are not 'going to church'.

In the second section, I describe how visitors to the mass repeatedly complained to me that a two-hour ceremony would be too long and too much of a burden on their bodies. Several of them said this to the priest. However, the priest was not eager to shorten his service. I consider this difference to be a clash of perceptions and a conflict of exchange. The priest felt he was giving something during the mass that his congregation was not willing to receive. Instead, people regarded the priest as taking up too much of their time. As a consequence, the church was often empty. Subsequently, I elaborate on this emptiness as again viewed differently by the priest and the audience. The priest only considered the overall number of people attending his service. His congregation, however, had a different perception of what constitutes going to church. Even if the church was not empty, people would consider it to be so because of a lack of younger people present. For them a full church meant not only a quantifiable amount of people, but also a multi-

generation audience. For church-going informants the collapse of the church was a matter not of the general absence of people and their donations, but of the absence of a specific age group. I argue that this indicates a misunderstanding that forms the basis for a much more radical difference between parishioners and the Church hierarchy, which can be summed up in the words of one of Vilktaka's parishioners: '"Yes" to Jesus, but "no" to the Church' (Sigita [b. 1962], int. 28.1.2009).

In the third section I elaborate on the reasons for this low church attendance, perceived as an empirical fact and the territorialisation of praying. Although clergy and laity both saw the church as a preferred place for praying, not every parishioner could attend church on ordinary Sundays. The reasons given included the need to travel long distances, the lack of transport, age and health, none of which, stopped parishioners from praying outside the church. In this section I discuss the most common places and times for group or individual praying and address the significance of prayer in exchange practices.

Going to Church

Already on the first day of my arrival at my field site, it was pointed out to me that the priest provokes ambivalent attitudes within the parish. One institution worker gave me my first fieldwork advice: 'Yes, research Catholics, but do not talk to the priest!' Explaining his advice, he told me a story about friends of his who liked to hitchhike, but who avoided being picked up by priests because, as I was told, they would rather walk a few kilometres on foot than ride in a car with a priest and have to listen to him. This man never went to church throughout my fieldwork and in fact was living in a town nearby and commuting to Vilktaka just for work; but this did not stop him from having an opinion about the priest.

In the previous chapter, I mentioned that I was able to enter the church premises from the first day of my arrival at the field site. In that chapter I discussed the data I had gathered from listening to the content of the masses, the exchanges I documented and the observations I made about the way the church space was constructed. However, I did not mention my personal reflections about my participant observation in these respects. I will start with this.

During my fieldwork there turned out to be a certain time of the week that I preferred to avoid: from one to three o'clock each Sunday afternoon. That was the time for the weekly masses in Vilktaka church. Dressing warmly, because the church is never heated, and going to church on that day and at that time became a sort of suffering for me. This feeling was related to my own past and Catholic upbringing. While I was never forced to go to

church, every time I went I hardly understood the sequence of events and rituals there. Thus I sympathised with my interlocutors, who told me: 'You say so because you do not feel God in you.' We would engage in a discussion, and I had my interlocutors make me the subject of their enquiries as much as they were of mine. The fact remains that I did get dressed and go to church. Why? Because I was too curious not to. I had to see with my own eyes how many people would come to church when it was minus twenty outside to spend two hours in a place that did not seem much warmer. More importantly, going to church and participating in the weekly masses was the only ritualized joint activity for many parishioners who call themselves Roman Catholics. Therefore, I could not miss it. Plus, the weekly mass was the only time I could listen to what the priest said in order to understand his teachings and point of view better. Otherwise he was always travelling, running from the church to his car and a week later from his car into the church.

How I Became a Church-goer

Once, in summer, almost three months after my arrival in the field, I finally got to exchange a couple of sentences with the priest. I asked for some of his time to talk about the two parishes he served in. 'Saturday, after the mass', he said. After that mass, everyone slowly left the church, but I remained sitting. There was only one woman in the church besides me sitting there, and she was in the first row on the right. I noticed that she always sat there, with a look of concentration on her face and her eyes fixed on the altar. After the priest saw the last two parishioners off, I was invited into the sacristan. We sat in a small room full of furniture. Every horizontal space was occupied by books, sheets of paper and other items. I introduced myself again and said that I would like to know more about the parish. He said he could not tell me a lot and instead asked me about my own relationship to Jesus. I shrugged while trying to think of an answer. But it quickly became clear to me that I was not expected to answer. Instead, from that question and my lack of an answer, and for the whole hour that followed, I became the recipient of a monologue about the advantages of believing in Jesus. I had no chance to ask anything else.

After some time, I heard a noise from people behind the door, and the priest gestured that our conversation was over. I thanked him for his time, and he replied 'With God' (Lith.: *Sudie*). I left the sacristan and saw two people in the church. One was the altar server, with a face indicating that he would not harm a fly. I was puzzled because I did not know why he was still there. I thought it was the priest who locked the church and felt sorry that he had had to wait an hour. Then I saw the face of the woman sitting in the first

row. I realized that she must be priest's sister and that they always travelled together to another parish, where they lived. Hers was not a happy face. I mumbled some words of apology. As I moved towards the door, she followed me. She talked in a raised voice, and we stopped at the stairs: 'Who are you? Why did you want to speak with the priest? Researching Catholics? What Catholics? I have not even seen you going to confession!' I went home in a state of shock. All I could think of was this situation. I could not remember every word, but I clearly remembered her saying 'young woman', 'not clear', 'what do you want from the priest?' I understood that I was still unknown to the church-goers as an anthropologist interested in Catholicism. I had under-estimated the strength of village gossip. I was seen rather as a woman who regularly attended the masses, but who did not act like a Catholic: I did not go to confession, nor did I take communion. In addition, I was always trying to talk to the priest, waiting for him to leave the church after the mass to ask for some time with him. Because all these things came together, I had been treated not only as someone suspicious, but as a woman who wanted to seduce the priest.

After this event I tried to be polite and friendly to the priest's sister whenever I saw her, though without much success. But there was one person who turned things around. Aldutė (b. 1950) was the first person I interviewed after the above event had happened. I kept going to church and paid more attention to my 'more Catholic' public behaviour. I went to confession once in three months and accepted communion from time to time. But it took me some time to approach people I did not know. I was afraid that the suspicions of the priest's sister had spread. After all, it was the beginning of my fieldwork and I wanted things to work out. A couple of months passed, and I did not receive any allusions about myself from my already established contacts, so I decided to aim for the most active and what seemed to me the most important woman in the church, namely Aldutė. Whenever the church was open, I saw Aldutė there. She cleaned the church and was the organizer of the choir group. She also organized men, children and other women for ritual processions around the church. She decorated the church according to the liturgical calendar and was probably the most smiling face in the whole church. She was energetic, was everywhere and always there for each mass. In short, I wanted to interview her.

One afternoon, I went to Aldutė's house. As I made my way across the garden, she came out to greet me. I was invited to a small brick building in the middle of the garden separated from the main house and used for everyday tasks like cooking, preparing food for the animals, or to sitting down to chat with neighbours. On that particular day cabbage soup had been cooked there, and during our interview her son brought over a basket full of

mushrooms to be cleaned. Aldutė's husband popped in and out of the little kitchen, sometimes adding a thought or two to our conversation.

It was one of the most pleasant interviews I had. Aldutė was very open and smiling as always. Towards the end of our conversation, the topic of the priest's sister came up. I said that I always see her with the priest. 'Yes, yes. Maybe a bit too much sometimes. She is very afraid that he might stray' (int. 20.10.2008). I told Aldutė briefly about my encounter. Aldutė nodded her head and said: 'She asked me who you are. "She makes a pass at priests. Who is she? This one, who always comes to the church."' So I thought and said, 'Oh, a very fine girl. Who knows, young ones, maybe she wants to arrange some time for a confession.' We talked about confession for a while, but the theme was not forgotten, and we came back to it. Aldutė expressed her positive impressions of me, and we ended our conversation over a bowl of cabbage soup. Next time I met Aldutė was at the religious parish festival (Lith.: *atlaidai*). During the gathering after the mass in the parsonage, I got to sit next to priest's sister. She apologised for our last encounter and said that she had spoken with Aldutė. She now knew what I was doing.

Priest's sister and Aldutė were very important in priest's life, including the Virgin Mary, whom he adored and which he admitted on several occasions during the masses. While Aldutė took care of the church, his sister was there in his day to day life, organizing everything from the heating in the house to the food on the table. However, despite the turn in my relationship with these two women, on whom the priest relied, I hardly exchanged a word with the priest again afterwards. On those occasions when I managed to approach him again he was extremely economical with his words or simply answered my question with another question, again directed at my spiritual life.

Nine months later, almost before I left the field site, I tried my luck one last time and contacted the priest by phone (field notes, 20.3.2009). I again asked if I could have access to the church books. He didn't know. He would think about it. It was a busy time, with Lent and Recollections. After Easter. But after Easter I was leaving the village. He really wanted to rest now. So, with greetings to his sister and God's blessings, we hung up.

Later I learnt that I was not the only one whose access to the church house was restricted. At that time, another woman who worked for the parish had tried to see the church books, but without success.

The church therefore remained a closed and protected institution, which is another reason why I mainly speak from the angle of a church-goer and as a participant and observer of exchange cycles. I entered the sacristan several more times, but only briefly, for as long it took to make a request for a mass to be said for the dead. My position was that of a regular church-goer

who acquired as much information about the matters of the church and had as much verbal contact with the priest as the rest of the congregation. This is why my data reflect the views of those for whom the priest remains a distant figure, which is what has brought me to the conclusions I will elaborate on next. This helped me understand what constitutes going to church.

Who Is a 'Non-practicing Catholic'?

Going to church was the most common Catholic practice in the rural parish. Any socio-religious activity usually took place in the church space. However, going through my field data, another level of importance in going to church revealed itself. In this part of the chapter I focus on these complex other meanings of going to church for my interlocutors.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, in an interview about donations to the church, the Archbishop of Kaunas distinguished between those 'who practice belief more actively' and those 'who practice their belief very rarely and come [to church] only to marry, baptise children and practically are not present in the church'. The first group, according to him, 'knows exactly where the donated money goes', while the second 'thinks that the church is some sort of private company, which provides services, does business and gets money for it' (int. 18.6.2008). The archbishop stresses that the presence of people in the church is related to the practice of belief and the gaining of knowledge, or what in other parts of the interview he called 'religious consciousness' about how church life works. Going to church for him meant being present in the church and practicing belief, along with gaining 'religious consciousness'.

One of the parishioners expressed a similar idea of what constitutes going to church: 'I used to go [to church in Soviet times]. My husband – no, he went for the funerals, Easter, Christmas.' Going to church only on special occasions, like certain life-cycle rituals or calendar festivals, meant the same to both the church official and the parishioner: not going to church. The meaning of going to church was often highlighted by my interlocutors themselves, even though I would not ask them about their habits in going to church directly. This was usually the case when I inquired about religious affiliations: the answer I was often given was: 'I was baptised as a Catholic, but I go to church only once or twice a year' or 'I'm a Catholic, but not a practicing one'. Religious affiliation is rooted in Catholic baptism, while the second part of religious identification starts with 'but' and therefore contrasts with the previous statement. The notions of 'not practicing' and 'going to church only once or twice a year' points to something people consider important to mention.

In addition to the uses of going to church presented above, Morta indicated another aspect of what the presence of people in the church means for her. In the following quotation she talks about her participation in a Polish-minority mass in a different region:

> The Poles are more religious people, as far as I know, as far as I have been to their masses, so they are truly very religious. Why? Well, there are more people. Truly more, because I tell you, when I was there in summer, there was hardly a place to sit. Even though the church was not small, [it was] a big church (Morta [b. 1973], int. 18.12.2008).

For Morta, in comparison to her parish, a high number of people present in the church during the mass represented a generally higher level of religiosity. For her the presence of someone in the church signals that person's religiosity.

The circumstances of the Soviet past did nothing to undermine this association. Crossing the church threshold at those times was significant. The Soviet state's strategy was to territorialize religion in order to draw clear-cut boundaries between the political and religious spheres (Luchterhandt 1985). The church fence was the boundary not only for the priest, but also for those who might follow him in his faith. Coming to church was risky, whether for schoolchildren, teachers or those working in state or government bodies. It could give one to a negative note in a personal file and could lead to the loss of a position or of party membership, as well as to public humiliation, especially in the case of schoolchildren. The presence of one's socialist body in certain spaces was related to having or lacking the support of the socialist system.

Socialism was highly performative. Particular attention was paid to the public performance of socialist bodies, dead bodies included (cf. Verdery 1999). The story Agota (b. 1932) told me illustrates this more explicitly. Soon after her husband's death, Agota was approached by her spouse's colleagues with a suggestion that the dead body not be brought into the church but taken straight to the cemetery. Agota was assured that if she agreed all the funeral expenses would be covered, and her husband's workplace would guarantee transport and an orchestra to lead the procession into the cemetery. 'I will not betray the cross', she responded, and brought her husband into the church and paid for the funeral out of her own savings. For the socialist state the deceased's body had to retain its socialist function, alive or dead. The fact that it performed according to the widow's wishes is another story, to which I will come back in the next chapter.

Another complementary mark of the balance between socialist and religious performativity are the manoeuvres in time and space that my

interlocutors engaged in. People who publicly had to remain exemplary socialist figures, but who were not so quick to brush aside their religious lives, chose to change the time or place of their preferred rituals:

> Lin: I heard that some people went to church at night [in Soviet times].
> Wom: Yes, yes, to baptize children and so on. Well, those who wanted, but those who had work … Anyway, you needed to explain. So many [did that] at night.
> Lin: Did you baptise your children?
> Wom: We baptised them.
> Lin: But not in secrecy?
> Wom: No no. We were not [employed] by any government, no, we were not prohibited from anything (Petraitienė [b. 1924], int. 4.11.2008).

Several of my interlocutors who had positions in state-controlled institutions told me that for certain rituals they either went to the local church at night, or chose to go in the daytime but went to a bigger town and a different priest. For example, they chose to baptise their children in the local church, but at night, but went to get married in another town or the capital during the day, making sure that only a few very close relatives would accompany them. The night instead of the daytime and the anonymity of the town rather than a close community space were allies for those who wanted to coordinate the two spheres, the socialist and the religious. What is important about these stories is that in the socialist past, as in postsocialist present, one's presence in the space of the church has the same meaning: going to church is a testimony, a display of belief.

As we saw earlier, I caused a great deal of confusion to one regular church-goer, the priest's sister, because she saw me in church every Sunday for almost three months: consequently, I should have been of the same belief as her. Why, then, did I not perform accordingly and go to confession or communion? The answer to this question draws attention to two connected issues. One of them relates to the behaviour expected of a person who is inside the church, while the other is the assumption that going to church also means participation in the mass, and not only observing it. I will address both of these issues in the third section of this chapter.

To summarize, the phrase 'going to church' (Lith.: *eiti/nuveiti* į*/in bažnyčią/-ių*, *eit bažnyčion*) was used in my field site to imply: (a) crossing the boundary of what is perceived as the church space; (b) being present in the church space (which includes the car park); (c) being present at the mass; (d) going to church more often than just on calendar holidays or at life-cycle rituals; (e) acquiring religious knowledge; (f) and, in general, the practice

and testimony of belief and/or religiosity (see also Behar 1990). Conversely, 'not going to church' meant (a) going to church only on special occasions, like weddings, funerals, baptisms and calendar festivals (Christmas, Easter, All Souls' Day and the like); and (b) literally not crossing the boundary into the church space.

I had to skim my interviews and check one more time whether the phrase 'going to church' was always used without indicating the mass, as indeed was the case.[33] Whenever people mentioned something specific about the mass, they used the phrase 'participating in the mass' (Lith.: *dalyvauti mišiose*). People used to say 'I am going to church', not 'I am going to the mass'; or 'I am not going to church, anymore', not 'I am not participating in the mass anymore'. Turcotte argues that the principal action defining Catholic identity is attendance at the mass (2001: 509). The dichotomy between regular mass-goers and those who absent themselves is based precisely on this premise. My ethnographic data, which leads me to argue that going to church is perceived by some as automatically incorporating participation in the mass, supports Turcotte's statement. For my interlocutors, however, both ordinary people and the church hierarchy, it is not the mass, but going to church that is the principal action defining Catholic identity. After all, going to church is also mentioned as an important practice by people who define themselves as 'non-practicing Catholics'.

The 'non-practicing Catholic' is generally someone who was baptised as a Catholic, but who goes to church only on certain occasions, once or twice a year, only for weddings, baptisms and funerals, maybe also for All Saints' and All Souls' Days, Easter and Christmas. Going to church was an important practice that the 'non-practicing Catholics' thought they had not been doing sufficiently. After all, church attendance, not participation in the mass or involvement in the ritual, was emphasized by the archbishop when he distinguished between these different types of Catholics. According to him, going to church is equivalent to the practice of belief.

Those parishioners who were absent from church during the mass were also the sole concern of the priest in Vilktaka, who called them non-believers and voiced his unease to those participating in the mass. The priest usually paid attention to the number of people at mass, whom he often called

[33] After a random selection of four interviews, here is what I found: 'when you go to church' ('kai va dar aini in bažnyčių', Agota [b. 1932], int 6.6.2008); 'If you went to church with your mother when you were a pioneer, then you were bullied' ('Jeigu nueini bažnyčion su mama, jeigu tu pionierius, tai linčiuodavo', a daughter-in-law of Petrulis, int. 27.3.2009); 'No, we did not really go to church' ('Nu kad ne, kad nelabai ajom bažnyčion', Danutė, b.1939, int. 19.11.2008); 'I do not go to church anymore' ('Aš jau bažnyčion nenuveinu', Laima, b.1922, int. 8.10.2008).

'the blossoms of Vilktaka', that is, those who helped him bring back the other parishioners with their prayers. It was not the belief of these church-goers, their perceptions of the deities or their knowledge of the ritual of the mass that he emphasized; all that was probably taken for granted. The level of belief, as we know already from the archbishop, is primarily rooted in church attendance.

Consequently, going to church appears to be an important action which defines and differentiates people who are called or call themselves Roman Catholic. Having in mind the significance of going to church, it is this, not participation in the mass, that becomes the most important Catholic ritual in an anthropological sense, as it is attendance in the church space that bears 'differentiating and integrating' qualities (Bell 1992).

Priesthood, Beliefs and Rituals

In this section I focus on empirical cases of people not going to church and the reasons behind their selective church attendance or even neglect of church rituals in general. In this discussion the time and location of praying were significant factors. As perceptions of what is meant by 'full' and 'empty' churches are also relevant, I illustrate how these are perceived differently by the parishioners and the clergy.

'Yes' to God, 'No' to the Church

As I would make my way to church for Sunday mass, I was one of fifteen to fifty people who did so on a regular basis. The other roughly seven hundred parishioners did not go, and that is only the figure for Vilktaka. The parish actually consists of fourteen villages, all smaller than Vilktaka. Thus, the discussion above indicates that the majority of the parishioners did not go to church. But were they all non-believers, or rather 'non-practicing Catholics'? In what follows, I discuss some of the reasons for interlocutors going or not going to church in order to demonstrate that the distinction between believer and non-believer is in fact insufficient to explain why some attend church and others do not.

I saw Ramutė (b. 1964) in church just twice, or more precisely only once, since on the second occasion, as I was going to Sunday mass, she was already leaving before it started. We met on the stairs. Our hello was brief: her youngest daughter, aged three, was not the happiest church-goer that day. The next day I visited them at home and asked her about Sunday. Ramutė said she had had to leave, since for her children the mass was not a time they would feel occupied and would therefore remain silent. Moreover, the priest was always late, and by the time he arrived and began the mass she

had to leave the church because of the noise her children were making. She complained at the lack of a separate space in the church where children could be left with a nanny so that their parents could have some peace in the mass. She said she really envied those who could sit in church during the whole mass and just think, pray and participate without disturbance.

When I touched on such contemporary issues with the church during an interview with Vytas (b. 1934), he started listing the dates when he usually goes to church, mainly the major calendar festivals and family rituals. Since he is a singer in a group that accompanies the deceased into the church and to the cemetery, his attendance record amounts to approximately four times a year:

> For us it is not a very comfortable time to go to church. On Sunday we have a pancake day in our family. That is, since our son and his family live not too far, that is the day they come. … I do not go to church every Sunday, somehow more at home. It is also the same every time, every Sunday. On a festive day some priests come… But usually the priest is late, and it is cold in the winter. Sitting outside with a prostate is not healthy. One also needs to go outside, you cannot do it in your pants. So there are a lot of circumstances (int. 22.10.2008).

Vytas cites family rituals and health issues of a completely different kind to Ramutė's as the main obstacles to going to church. A third interlocutor who gave reasons for not going to church was Morta (b. 1973), whom I saw in the church probably as many times as Vytas. She was there on Palm Sunday, for a funeral, and on a couple of Sundays when her mother asked for masses for their family's dead relatives:

> I do not know how to tell you. I believe in God in my own way. For example, when I go for a walk in the forest, so every morning I say prayers. … The priest for me [can give] anointment, or something else, an absolution, but God is in my heart. How much he has helped me or not, I do not know. But this is my attitude. You can go to the church every day, you can sit there and pray. But I don't know, for me it is different, and that's it (Morta [b. 1973], int. 18.12.2008).

Morta emphasizes her own relationship with God. Although she acknowledges the role of the priest as important in certain life-cycle rituals, her belief in God depends on praying rather than on regular church visits.

Finally, Izabelė never attended a mass at any time during my fieldwork. She did get married in church that winter, but in a different parish. She chose an old church nearer to her actual place of birth, an old wooden church with a large stone outside. She told me the legend of this mystical stone, which was said to be the tail end of the grass-snake king,

who tried to hide itself in the earth. The grass snake is an important pre-Christian symbol in Lithuanian mythology. Izabelė therefore found that church very special. For the wedding she wore a green dress, and the groom played guitar and sang a song for her during the ceremony. The priest allowed the ancient ritual of covering the head before the altar to take place, while Izabelė's friends (including myself) sang the appropriate folk song. Her golden ring was marked with Baltic symbols. In short, Izabelė got married in a place that was charged with something she always sought to combine: pagan (pre-Christian) beliefs and practices with Catholic ones. 'I select what I need and what I do not from belief. And I do not necessarily need certain church rituals in order to feel good. It is not those that lead me to harmony' (Izabelė [b. 1980], int. 26.3.2009). Why could she not have done this in the parish church where she was living, I asked. The role of the priest is very important to her, she explained, and she could not have had the ceremony she wanted with the Vilktaka priest.

I lived with Izabelė in one house for the longest period of my fieldwork, and we often met to chat. She never had the highest opinion of the priest, not only because he was hardly there to speak to, but also because he was always late. It was her to organize the consecration of the crosses in one village, and she invited a film crew to record it. She said she had asked specifically for the priest to be on time, but we had to wait for him for almost two hours. Since then, she only gave a sigh whenever the priest came up in conversation.

For several parishioners, conversely, the priest was a messiah (e.g. Agota, Aldutė), while for others he was 'a sick person' (e.g. Vytautas). The majority, however, simply accepted him for what he was and always showed their understanding of the fact that he was basically someone who served two parishes. But the priest's habits of being late and holding masses that were far too long were the major issues everyone mentioned. 'I will start going to church when the priest starts holding masses normally', said one man in his forties to his wife when she teased him about him joining her once. Indeed, I saw the man on the church grounds only once, when he was there for a child's first communion.

Hence, the priest was the most sensitive topic and the culminating point from which, in what follows, I draw my conclusions for why so many parishioners behaved in accordance with Sigita's saying: 'People say "yes" to Jesus, but "no" to the church' (int. 28.1.2009). I have generalized Sigita's phrase for the title of this section as well as this chapter by replacing Jesus with God, since God was mentioned more often by those who did not go to church.

Parishioners perceive belief in God differently from the archbishop and the priest. Their practice of belief is not necessarily related to one's presence in church, but rests on praying outside the church. For example, in this section Morta acknowledged that she always prays before her walk in the forest to collect mushrooms or berries; my other interlocutor, Agota, prays whenever she finds time during the day, while Sigita always says the rosary before falling asleep and prays while driving. Since praying played a big role for my interlocutors, I will address its significance in the next section.

The Spatiality and Temporality of Praying

The priest understood that not going to church did not always mean not believing in God or not performing any religious practices. Once in his sermon he voiced his opinion: '[There are] people, who say "I believe, but I do not go to church, I do not confess and I do not receive communion". This is not belief. Such people are tepid, they are neither hot or cold.' When asked about people who do not need church in order to approach God, the archbishop expressed a strong opinion as well: 'If a person is not going to church regularly, we can say that he is not praying that much' (int. 22.5.2008). That is an interesting remark on the part of the archbishop because it is precisely praying that people mentioned when they talked about their not going to church. What is not properly acknowledged in this distinction between 'church-goers' and 'non-church-goers' – between the church as the place of prayer and more individual practices of belief – is that both sides are defined by their different approaches to the location where praying occurs.

Mauss (2003) defines prayer as a collective as well as an individual religious act, one that combines belief and ritual. A prayer for Mauss is social in its content and form. Therefore, even the most personal prayer is not free from social influence. Understanding a prayer in this way highlights its social origin, thus blurring the ethnographic distinction between individual and institutional approaches to how belief should be practiced. After all, one is taught how to pray, and consequently knowing how to pray is the result of religious socialization.

With this in mind, would the archbishop and the priest still be as categorical in dividing Catholics, their beliefs and practices? What their division is based on is something more fundamental: they aim to define the time and location at which religion should be practiced. Having people pray in the forest or behind the wheel of a car is not entirely acceptable, since for the clergy the church offers the only appropriate space for this ritual activity, one that is also controlled. The interest of both groups – those who say 'yes'

to God and 'no' to church, and those who say 'yes' to both – is to emphasize the importance of the location and time of rituals, practices and displays of belief. However, if the location and time of praying are among Catholicism's distinguishing features, what are the implications of this for the villages in the same parish as my field site that did not have a church (see Plate 9)?

Plate 9. Joint prayers at the cemetery of a village without a church.

Praying was also significant in the lives of the parishioners from the neighbouring villages, even though there was no church they could take a short walk to. Their religious activity was centred on prayer, but restricted to their homes or cemeteries. One woman from a village without a church told me:

> Everyone prayed. In October everyone prayed at home, jointly and every evening. You come back [from work] and you do not want anything, but still you go and pray together. Or, I remember, God, when my husband was alive, Lent came and we would not go to church, so the time of the mass comes and we both pray, speak the whole rosary, litanies, stations of the cross, we sing, we pray (int. 26.5.2008).

I vividly remember my visit to one Vilktaka inhabitant ([b. 1920], int. 24.10.2008), when I found her sitting on the bed and praying with the rosary. She said she does that most of the time, as, because of her age and health, ordinary domestic chores and praying are her sole activities of the day. Home served as a place for personal prayers, as well as communal gatherings like rosary clubs or joint organized praying with neighbours in May and October, even in Soviet times. During my fieldwork I made four trips to events when parishioners from villages without a church organized themselves for joint prayers at the cemetery or in someone's house (see Plate 10).[34]

Plate 10. One parishioner showing her paraphernalia for praying at home, namely a rosary and a prayer book.

Either because of limited mobility or lack of health, those not going to church were not tepid (to use the priest's expression), nor not praying (to recall the archbishop's presumption from the beginning of this subsection). In the end, the difference in praying between villagers living in a place with or without a church was merely spatial.

[34] 'Morkaus diena' (25.4.2008), Father's Day (2.6.2008), All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day (1-2.11.2008).

How, when and where to pray, to address God and practice belief, are therefore at the centre of the distinction between church-goers and non-church-goers. The absence of the non-goers, made up of those who could potentially visit a church in their own village, raises questions about the legitimacy of the clergy in describing how the relationship with the divine can be affirmed and sustained. The clergy also contradict themselves in this regard, as they accept the absence of people from villages without a church and the alternative ways in which some of them practice belief, but not in the cases of others. As such, the presence or absence of villagers in the church space is not a sign of their lack of belief, but above all a physical as well as an ideological contestation of the church, challenging the right to the embodiment of religion and its practice in a particular location (Pina-Cabral and Pine 2008: 4).

Nevertheless, those who go to church on special occasions indicate in doing so that selected rituals remain important to them. Attendance at mass on holidays and special occasions suggests that the church's importance as a ritual space has not declined and represents no sharp distinction between the generations. This prompts the conclusion that the church remains an important marker for calendar festivals, as well as life-cycle rituals. Furthermore, church rituals tend to be closely related to family and relatives. As such, family and kin remain integral to church attendance on particular occasions, since important family events are times when the majority of kin gather in one particular place. Not least, these are also times of increased mobility, as parishioners in my field site could be taken to the church in the cars of their children or grandchildren.

That said, church attendance between significant events falls into another category, that of individual religiosity and practice. This suggests that there is a selective aspect to church attendance and that the significance of church rituals in individual or family lives is also selective. For some people, to hold a communal ritual in church is not of particular relevance for their belief. In addition, to be present in certain spaces takes up time. These are among the reasons for the emptiness of the church in Vilktaka. As noted already, people do not mind praying when they wake up or saying the rosary at home, but going to church and praying there often takes too much time out of their daily lives. They do not want to spare their time for the priest, who is most often late and holds masses that are too long in their view. 'In a mass there should be not a word out of place', one nun, who was visiting Sigita, told me once. This was her answer to my questions as to whether she attends mass while in the village, since she said that her lifestyle as a nun requires she says masses every day. She was not in favour of the priest's handling of words. His words were not 'in place' and took more time than she could

spare being in the church space. Thus, like the locals I describe above, the nun chose not to go to mass at all. All of those I have described in this section did not go to church for different and often personal reasons which had little to do with belief, but were concerned with time and one's presence in a certain space.

Empty or Full: What Constitutes Church Value?

For the parishioners, the present-day decline in church attendance in comparison to their childhood years signals a confusing change. People did not pay much attention to the fact that the village population had fallen and that during the holidays, when their children and grandchildren gathered in their houses, the church was full and people were even standing outside. Their complaints were directed at another issue. The absence of people from the church for some parishioners meant a threat to the church's existence. For them an 'empty' church is a church without children and young people, and therefore a church without a future:

> Man: [Our grandparents] built the church. And now, dear God, there is no one to go to church. No one to give respect to Christ. …. Here, this is what is happening. There are people, but where are people? … Empty church! Here, my line will die out, and the church will be empty. Empty church. Young people do not go. Woman I: They are not going, and they will not go.
>
> Woman II: The young stay at home (Petrulis [b. 1943], int. 27.3.2009, his wife and a female neighbour).
>
> There were more …. And now there is not a single child. We will die out, and there will be no need for a church (Teofilė [b. 1936], int. 26.3.2009).
>
> Everyone is saying that we will die out and our church will collapse (Anelė [b. 1931], int. 8.10.2008).

The value of the church accumulates down the generations. This is why in the first quotation Petrulis refers to his grandparents, who built the church. Now that there is no one to go to church and 'give respect to Christ' anymore, there is also no more respect given to the ancestors. As we saw in Chapter 4, parishioners constitute the church from bits and pieces of their homes, from material as well as personal resources, such as time, work and ideas. From their autobiographical histories and memories, the local parish church emerges as a place of personal and communal importance. So when older parishioners say that the church is empty, they are expressing their fear that there will be no one to go to church and that after their death it will collapse. The church thus represents both past and present and for some parishioners also a certain future.

Bourdieu (1999 [1977]: 178) argues that a family's patrimony includes not only their land and tools of production, but also the network of alliances and relationships that have to be kept up and regularly maintained, 'representing a heritage of commitments' and 'a capital of rights and duties built up in the course of successive generations'. The quotations above show that for some parishioners the church is a representation of their parents and grandparents; the church house is inscribed with time and notions of descent and inheritance. Worries about the fate of the church reflect the concern with the transmission of parish property, because as Hann argues, '[i]nheritance is best conceptualized broadly as the intergenerational devolution of valuables, including many forms of *inter vivos* transfer' (2008: 146). For older adults, seeing younger people going to church makes them feel confident that the church will be taken care of. To have or lack people in the church is closely related to the 'haves' and 'lacks' of the church in general: it depends on the 'haves' of those who come to church, on what is exchanged, and on the donations and offerings people make to maintain the church. As such, going to church is a social practice directly related to the church's financial gains, especially as the Lithuanian Catholic Church is sustained solely by the donations of those who come to church.

The church therefore becomes a symbolic space of inscribed time, a space that has witnessed generational change and major life-cycle rituals. It is a space for birth (baptisms, the spiritual beginnings of life) and death (funerary rites and commemorations). Here the church receives attributions of locality, belonging and historical as well as personal value. With the church's history and the ever-growing cemeteries around it, the church represents former generations and their contributions to its condition. Such inscribed notions turn the church into an inalienable property of the parish. Its value is created by it being passed on from generation to generation and therefore acquiring 'transcendental value' (Weiner 1992). Its present-day generational 'emptiness', conversely, represents its problematic future.

To sum up, going to church means not only maintaining the church house with one's offerings and donations, thus preventing its collapse, also keeping up social relations with the generations before you: people are engaged in an unspoken contract, an obligation to take care of the church. To go to church is to maintain the 'heritage of commitments' and generational duties. For some parishioners the adjectives 'full' or 'empty' therefore refer primarily to the different generations of those who are present in the church. A full church is a space with a significant number of people who can supply the church with economic value not only today, but also in the future. Consequently, a full church is not only a space with value, but also a space with a future.

The House of Prayer and Consecrated Bread

There was a particular time in that year of me going to church that I really enjoyed: the masses in the week before Easter. Still today I have an image of the Maundy Thursday mass, the most captivating and enchanting mass I have ever been to. It was way past sunset and the church was almost all dark, only the dim light above the altar and the candles on the side altars being lit. There were no whispers among the twenty people in the church, just a particular cohesion in that silence when everyone looked towards the altar with concentration. The priest talked from time to time, but even his voice was restrained. He did not use a microphone. The crucifix was covered with a black see-through material. The altar crucifix was covered too. People queued up to kiss Jesus' feet. Maundy Thursday did not follow the usual sequence of the mass, but nonetheless it went exceptionally smoothly. And until today I still do not know what it was in that week and in that particular mass that made everyone in the church so involved. Was it the similarity between the priest's emotional involvement in the ritual and the behaviour of his parishioners; was it the theme of the mass – death – which almost everyone can relate to; or was it the end of my fieldwork and the anticipation which came with that? Probably all of the above.

I would therefore like to acknowledge the possible shortcomings of my fieldwork, my methods, my personality and my ignorance, which might have hindered me from understanding and analysing something very important to the church-goers. Not all of these momentous feelings of enchantment were documented to the same extent. There were several parts in three interviews and a couple of personal conversations where people spoke about feelings that were difficult to put into words. But such experiences were moments that people vividly remembered and which, in their view, served as proof of some power beyond them.

Was my going to church and participation in church different from those of the parishioners? Yes and no. I went to church like others did: I took my physical body there and like others did so because I wanted to know more about Catholicism. But my going to church was different from those of the parishioners because I did not fully participate in the mass, I was not as engaged in the prayers as many others, and I did not treat my acceptance of the consecrated bread with the importance it had for several other parishioners. What is emphasized is that going to church is not only about positioning your body in the space of the church, but also about bringing something Catholic to it, namely the soul, which is given to the Catholic by God and is supposed to be reunited with Him during the mass.

I guess it is safe to say that going to church is not the same for everyone who is present in the church, a position my interlocutors indicated

to me themselves. Therefore, in the next section of the chapter I will address the qualitatively different aspects of going to church and the significance of a common prayer in church and of the consecrated bread for people in my field site.

The Quality of Church-goers

'I am participating in various brick churches, how to say, material churches', said Sigita ([b. 1962], int. 28.1.2009), and she named six of them. But in each church, according to her, she experiences different feelings, which basically depend on the different people who gather in those churches: 'From drug addicts to Members of Parliament, all dressed up. But, you know, they are all looking for the same thing.' Sigita's participation in various churches allows her to compare them, which is what she does when she engages in elaborate explanations of which churches she likes and when she likes to go to them. She emphasizes that it is not only the material subsistence of the parishioners and their donated money that add up to the image of the church (as discussed in Chapter 4). She links the 'kinds' of people who gather in the church and the kind of 'character' of the church these people therefore give it.

Sigita was not the only one to express an opinion about the differences between church-goers. In fact, this emerged during my first fieldwork interview with the archbishop when the consciousness (Lith.: *sąmoningumas*) of church members and their beliefs, not the number of church-goers, were indicated as being the future strength of the Catholic Church (int. 22.5.2008). The idea that going to church might be valued differently in quality was also indicated to me by Agota (b. 1932), a Vilktaka local who considered herself a strong believer.[35] Agota once told me not to sit at the back of the church (private conversation, 2.9.2008). She said she had been watching me and felt obliged to tell me that the place where I usually sat during the mass was the place for those who are afraid of God. She cited herself as an example, saying that she always tries to find a place at the front of the church, somewhere closer to the altar, since this is where, she said, 'you can feel God's light best'. She referred to the last sermon during which the priest compared people who come to church. According to the priest's interpretation of one Bible reading, there are those who bring only their bodies to the church to show off their clothes and those who bring their souls and participate in the ritual. For Agota my bodily presence in the

[35] Her name was also mentioned several times when people told me about others I should talk to.

church showed where God was present inside me. Was I close to God, or was I rather afraid and therefore hid at the back of the church?

Agota's remarks showed me that there are spaces within the church that, although occupied by an individual, say something about his or her relationship with God and involvement in the ritual. In other words, spatial positioning reveals the church-goer's qualitative aspects. In addition, Sigita told me that for her the bodily positioning and posture of others in the church says a lot about them:

> It is very visible who went to church their whole life, eighty years, you know [and] others who have come in for the first time, probably only today, you know, and feel timid. Others, you know, have their certain role in the church, like singing or attending to the priest (Sigita [b. 1962], int. 28.1.2009).

In the course of my fieldwork I discovered that the parish church is indeed structured into spaces of varying use and meaning. The entrance to the church and the area around it, as well as the back of the aisles, were usually occupied by those who come to church occasionally. I found the last aisles to be the best place for observation, especially in cases when I did not know whether it was time to kneel or stand up, cross myself or start singing. In such cases I could always count on people in front of me. The female choir was always in the balcony of the church and only came down to receive communion. The majority of men sat in the last rows to the right (looking from the entrance towards the altar). If at the beginning of the mass the priest saw people sitting on the benches near the confessional, he knew that there was someone there who wanted to confess, which was not always the case. In addition, the priest and his altar servers had the sacristy for their use, which was at the side of the main altar. The middle of the church was more or less for everyone's (limited) use.

The church space was divided into various smaller spaces, which attested to the occupants' roles, concerns and closeness to God. The church starts at the entrance, and the closer one is to the altar, the more one's bodily positioning in the church space represents one's strength of belief and commitment. The entrance of the church (Lith.: *bobinčius*) was usually dark and unlit, in contrast to the middle area and the most highly illuminated part, the altar space. Interestingly, the lights in the church coincided with the presumed presence of the divine light, as mentioned earlier by Agota: the closer to the altar you are, the closer you are to God, and the more light you are in, the more divine grace you receive (see also Campbell-Jones 1979). In other words, there are central and peripheral spaces within the church building. The centre of power is the altar, and the peripheries are the entrance and the back of the church, that is, the places furthest away from

the altar. The altar is also the space of speech, while the rest of the church is designed as a space for listening and accepting the divine element.

Therefore, one's bodily positioning within the church is a conscious (as in Agota's or my case) or unconscious (according to Sigita's observations) expression of one's belief and doubt. This, and one's acceptable involvement in the ritual, are significant indications that one is a regular church-goer. Let us recall at this point the incident I described earlier in this chapter, where I concluded that being present in church also means participation in the mass and not just its observation. Bodily positioning inside the church space for a regular church-goer, as for the clergy, says something about the person. This rests on the notion that coming to church is not only a matter of bringing your body with you and positioning it in space. Going to church is also about bringing your 'Catholic' soul to it. According to Catholic dogma, the soul is reunited with God in the mass and the prayers, one's acceptance of the consecrated bread playing an important role in this reunification.

Prayer and a Host

To begin the theme of the significance of prayers and Hosts, I will introduce two Vilktaka inhabitants, Jonas (b. 1976) and Bilvienė (b. 1944), who discuss reasons for going to church and the significance of prayer in their lives.

Jonas (b. 1976) moved to Vilktaka after his marriage to a local woman with whom he had studied in Vilnius (as noted in Chapter 4). He never went to church while I was doing my fieldwork, for reasons already noted regarding the priest. However, he considered himself religious and usually prayed for his dead mother and brother, for his family, etc.:

> Lin: What is the mass according to you?
> Man: Common prayer. That is how it should be, but in reality it is the fulfilment of an obligation [Lith.: *prievolės atlikimas*]. …. Not everyone, of course, but some people go to church to fulfil the obligation, because God said so. Not for themselves, not that they were better, but because there is the law of the Church, which says to go to church every Sunday, and because the priest blames you during confession. But [masses] should be a common prayer and not the fulfilment of an obligation. Sometimes it depends on the priest, depends on the church, also depends on the parishioners, but sometimes you are in the mass and you feel like you are fulfilling some standard obligation. …. Sometimes you feel like in a common prayer.

> In reality the mass is as follows: different people gather together and do what the priest says. Ideally it would be that people gather together and pray in order to strengthen their sensations and maybe even strengthen belief. This common prayer should rally a much stronger sensation [Lith.: *pojūtis*] that it can achieve something. That is how it should be, but you feel like that very rarely during the mass (int. 21.2.2009).

Jonas sees the mass in two different ways: ideally it should be a common prayer that strengthens belief, but in reality he sees going to church as the fulfilment of a Catholic obligation and the priest's commands. However, Jonas got married in church because, as he said, it is only there he thinks a marriage should happen. He continues: 'The church is needed to strengthen belief; let us say it is a place where you can pray in peace, think about religion, disconnect from the world and so on' ([b. 1976], int. 21.2.2009). All these aspects related to the church hint as to the spatiotemporal significance of going to church I have already discussed. To go to church, according to Jonas, is to assign time and to experience the territorialisation of certain rituals and their effects.

Time to think and pray, which the mass in the church is said to ensure, are also considered to have an effect on one's belief. At this point I recall Ramutė, when she said she envies people who can sit in the church in peace and just pray, while she has three children to look after and cannot afford to do this. Jonas's words 'disconnect from the world' allude primarily at the spatiotemporal relevance with which mass in church is associated. Going to church is not an ordinary act, but rather something special and celebratory. It is no accident that several people in my field site differentiated between ordinary and church (Lith.: *bažnytiniai*) clothes. What has been added to the perception of going to church so far is the emphasis on one's involvement in the ritual and its effects on individual belief.

Bilvienė (b. 1944) was exiled to Siberia when she was one year old, together with her mother and other siblings, because her father had participated in the resistance movement against the Soviet occupants. She returned from Siberia to Vilktaka when she was already eighteen years old:

> I found this way by myself when I came back from Siberia. I was exiled when I was one, and so many years I had not seen the church. Well, my mother would tell, but to hear and to see are different things. And when I was half grown-up, eighteen years old, my mother took me [to the church]. After two years she died here. But she took me [to the church] and I was thinking, Oh God, this is boring! You stand and you think 'let it end quickly'. … But then life, apparently… after my mother's death, after her saying 'I will die and

> there will be no one to pray for me. I have raised four children…' So since I was the youngest, I thought, I should at least learn the prayers. … And so I thought, I will at least fulfil this wish of my mother, prayers are needed. There was this old priest. I went to him and said that I need some literature, I need prayers. He looks at me, and I went on that I just need 'Our Father', which I know not fully and 'Hail Mary'. So I learnt prayers and went for the first communion myself. … Such was my way, a rather difficult way. So good when all this is inculcated from childhood (Bilvienė, int. 10.3.2009).

Bilvienė's story makes several points I have already addressed in this chapter, about going to church, ritual, participation in the mass and time. For Bilvienė, to learn a couple of prayers without a pause was not important for herself and her 'way', as she calls it, but to know how to pray was primarily significant in order to fulfil an obligation to her mother. As a grown-up she chose to learn the prayers in order to fulfil her mother's wish. Children know how to pray for their dead parents. It was this aim of maintaining the obligations of kinship that led Bilvienė to the priest, prayer books and her First Communion. Her relationship with God followed from her relationship with and obligation to her mother. As she indicated further into our interview, 'mother is my first God'.

We learn some characteristics of prayer from Bilvienė's case that also emphasize Mauss's (2003) insights, quoted earlier. First, prayer is social, i.e. one learns how to pray. Secondly, prayer is individual as well as collective. The pressure to learn how to pray that this woman faced was primarily social: it was her mother's wish to have her children pray for her. What Bilvienė's case highlighted for the first time in this chapter is that prayer is considered a means to maintain kin ties and meet kinship obligations to the dead.

Both stories also show that people emphasize prayer as a significant element in maintaining their relationships, whether with God or with one's deceased family and relatives. The power that prayer during the mass has or at least should have adds further to the significance of prayer. Prayer in the church, and I would add from other conversations too (e.g. with Agota) acceptance of the Host, are significant elements of going to church, which generate a spatiotemporal experience, leading people to 'disconnect from the world' (to use Jonas's expression). The coming together of these elements make one's presence in the church a celebratory act, one that people link directly to the strengthening of their belief. After all, as Hauschild argues:

> The consecrated Host is not seriously offered on the Internet or on a television set; there you can only observe the mass like an ethnologist or like a theatre spectator does, but you do not partake in this act and its presumed benevolent effects. This drive for authenticity and localization must be taken seriously if we want to understand and explain the behaviour of Catholics (and that of devotees of other world religions) (Hauschild 2011: 14).

In other words, Hauschild emphasizes the relationship between going to church and the genuineness of taking part in the ritual. With rare exceptions, church is the only place in which to receive the Host. Going to church thus means joining others in a ritual that cannot happen elsewhere. One partakes in the act of the mass, one joins with others and experiences the mass with them. This also Jonas emphasized: mass is a common prayer that strengthens his belief, his relationship with God and his relationship with the community. Prayer and consecrated bread are inclusive parts of the mass: they are territorialized, as are what are presumed to be their benevolent effects.

Baquedano-López (1999) argues that praying creates a practice of communication and a special social space because through prayers people not only link the human and spiritual realms, they also relate their own personal experiences to the experiences of others. Indeed, prayers in church during my fieldwork included personal requests accompanied by praying for others: the ill, the dead, the church hierarchy (the Pope, the archbishops, etc.) and the parish. Moreover, Sigita told me that the rosary circle she belongs to prays once a day for specific purposes, which are also related to the parish and its territory more widely. She prays for the recently dead, the families of the parish and the priest (int. 28.1.2009). In other words, prayer is a communicative act because it connects people with others, whether human or spiritual beings (Baquedano-López 1999: 197; see also Robbins 2001: 906). Prayer is also an invocation and performance of this social act (ibid.). In addition to the fact that praying can be individual as well as collective, Baquedano-López argues that prayers can also be commoditized: they are requested, exchanged and bought (1999: 198). However, this does not apply to the Host.

Consequently, the emphasis that the clergy puts on going to church and praying and accepting the Host there is about the spatial acknowledgement of a social act. It adds a performative and celebratory aspect to the social relationships people want to maintain. Going to church means giving your time and spatially orienting yourself in relation to others.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have focused on two groups of people: those who went to church almost every Sunday, and those who did not go to church at all or went there only on special occasions. Presenting my own personal experience as a church-goer and focusing on a common self-definition Lithuanians use to define their religiosity – 'I am not a practicing Catholic' – I have discussed why going to church emerged empirically as a significant Catholic practice. From the beginning of the chapter I have followed Garriott and O'Neill's (2008: 388) suggestion not to ask 'who is a Catholic?' but rather where, when and how do people speak about who a Catholic is. To sum up the empirical data, clergy and laity both see going to church as a practice, a display and testimony of belief that is also closely linked to the acquisition of religious knowledge.

In this chapter going to church has also emerged as a principal action defining Catholic identity. It is not the strength of belief or knowledge of Catholic dogmas that people emphasize when defining a Catholic. Rather, they mention the times, festivities and occasions they go to church. Going to church defines and differentiates people who are called or call themselves Catholic, and it is precisely for this reason that this action should be considered from an anthropological perspective on rituals (Bell 1992).

Having discussed the meanings and significance of going to church for both clergy and laity, I moved to the topic that was the sole concern of the church hierarchy – people who are not going to church. In my field site this group constituted the majority, although it was not a homogenous one. Some of the non-church-going parishioners did not care about Catholicism, while others gave numerous reasons for not going to church. A dislike of the priest, bad health or a lack of transport and very personal issues were among the reasons I documented. For this group of people, belief in God was not necessarily related to one's presence in the church, but rather to praying outside it. While presenting the cases of praying that people from villages without a church usually engaged in, I came to the conclusion that both sides – the church-goers and the non-church-goers – are defined by their different approaches to the location and time of praying.

My ethnographic data support Mauss's claims that praying combines belief and ritual, that prayer is social in its content and form and can be an individual as well as a collective act (2003). I argue that the emphasis the clergy put on the territorialisation of praying is the reason why the majority of the parishioners who called themselves Catholic did not go to church. I approached this situation from an exchange perspective. While the priest often described his part in the parish as one of giving (the Host, divine wisdom, the qualitatively valuable time of the mass), his parishioners were

often not eager to receive accordingly and instead portrayed the priest as taking up too much of their time. Hence, the reasons for not going to church had little to do with the presumed lack of belief or not praying, and more to do with time and one's presence in a certain space.

However, for the church-going parishioners it was precisely this spatio-temporality of praying – that is, praying in the church space and at the time of the mass – which was most significant. Such parishioners emphasized the time of the mass as qualitatively different and suggested that going to church is not the same for everyone who is physically present in the space of the church. It was stressed that going to church is not only a matter of bringing your body to a particular space, but also bringing something very important in Catholic belief – the soul – into the church.

Both groups, those who go to church (more or less every Sunday) and those who do not (i.e. those who go to church only on special occasions) indicated the spatiotemporal relevance of going to church. For both groups this is a special celebratory act that hints at the relationships that people tend to keep and maintain. After all, praying and the acceptance of consecrated bread emerge as key reasons why people attend mass; that is, both common prayer and the Host are closely connected with church attendance. The localized benevolent effects of prayer and the Host (Hauschild 2011) play an important role in the production and reconfiguration of Catholic social space. Through prayers people relate to others and connect the spiritual and human realms (Baquedano-López 1999). Therefore going to church is a spatial acknowledgement of this communicative act and adds a performative and celebratory aspect to the social relationships people want to maintain. Going to church means not only giving your time and bringing your soul and body into the church's space, but also relating yourself socially to others.

Last but not least, in this chapter I have presented the empirical notions of the 'full' and 'empty' church. The clergy often defined empty churches in terms of quantities of people. To the people in my field site, to talk about an 'empty' church did not mean the overall number of people, but the presence of different generations in the church. By emphasizing the lack of younger people in the church, they voiced their concerns that after they had died there would be no one to take care of the church anymore and it would collapse. This reveals the close link between the church as a material space and its connection with social practice. Following Bourdieu (1999 [1977]: 178), I treat going to church as the patrimony of the Catholic family, representing the heritage of the commitments, rights and duties that have been built up in the course of successive generations and have to be maintained. Going to church relates people socially to the generations before them and the offerings and donations that have sustained the church. The

economic value of the church emerges as a matter of an *inter vivos* transfer and the obligations that come with it (Hann 2008).

All in all in this chapter, going to church, praying and accepting consecrated bread have emerged as items in exchange primarily because of their close links with the relationships they are aimed at maintaining.

Chapter 6
Death and Relationships

> People don't go to church. There are a lot of such people. But as soon as one dies, what happens? Before anything else, to the priest! … And the priest cannot say no, he has no right to refuse. He does what he has to do (Petraitienė [b. 1924], int. 4.11.2008).
>
> The majority of people don't go to church. But as soon as someone from the family dies, they go. They go to the priest and ask the singers so that… so that they are buried like everyone else (Danutė [b. 1939], int. 19.11.2008).

Like Petraitienė and Danutė in these quotes, several people in my field site pointed out the contradiction, as they saw it, that people do not see the need to go to church and sometimes openly despise the priests, but as soon as someone from their family dies, the priest and the church are immediately resorted to. Death was what changes people's preconceptions. During my fieldwork I noticed that some people would skip the funeral mass and arrive at the church just in time to accompany the body to the grave. In another case, the whole village gathered near the cemetery to accompany the body to its grave, even though the deceased person had not lived in the area for decades.

In Chapter 3, in relation to religious knowledge, I already mentioned that death was my interlocutors' dogma and gospel, the reason for their perceiving their lives in particular ways. Death was of the greatest importance in people's world views and religious arguments. During my fieldwork I simply could not ignore the significance ascribed to death-related issues, communally as well as individually. Death 'moved' parishioners emotionally as well as physically. It connected them with the church, the priest and their deceased relatives and neighbours, their family graves and communal practices of commemorating. In this chapter, I will therefore approach the issue of death and the significance of the dead from an exchange perspective.

What was it about death and the dead that mattered in particular? I searched for an answer to this question in the course of my fieldwork in various sources: during interviews and conversations, during participant observation in cemeteries and church masses, in the works of anthropologists, in archival materials on funeral customs and beliefs, and in Catholic dogma. As in previous chapters, where I discussed the relationships that are either affirmed or neglected among Lithuanian Catholics, in this chapter I again focus on the main questions of this book: what relationships are created, maintained and affirmed in exchange practices among Lithuanian Catholics, and which Catholic doctrines are parts of those established relationships?

In the following discussion, which includes a compilation of archival material and an analysis of ethnographic materials from my field site, I will show that death is an entity that takes (life, people, etc.) and at the same time affects people equally (because everyone dies). The other exchange-related issue regarding death concerns the power of requests in the acts of giving. Requested giving is a responsive obligatory act, which is nevertheless often presented as a voluntary act. By responding to such requests, people affirm their relationships.

Finally, funerals are discussed in this chapter as socially significant manifestations of the relationships that bind the living and the dead and place the emphasis on the significance of relationships among the living. I discuss how the person who is about to die engages in numerous activities so as 'not to overburden' his or her family and relatives with social obligations. The preparations that people engage in before their deaths include the choice of a grave plot, engraving one's date of birth on the gravestone, preparing the clothes they want to be laid out in in the coffin. Preparations also include returning debts and attempts to keep up relationships with others. I argue that funerals include such aspects as the life one has led, the way one has died and the preparations one undertakes in anticipation of one's upcoming death.

Beliefs and Practices Concerning Death

In this first section of the chapter I introduce my data in three steps. First I present the general approach to death in Lithuanian public discourses. Then I discuss archival data in relation to my argument. Afterwards, I move to the last and longest part of this section, which focuses on my ethnographic data.

The Politics of Death in Lithuania

In everyday discourse in Lithuania, death is approached as simultaneously both restricted and omnipresent. Death is largely excluded from the home and located in institutional space, being medicalized and subjected to the

authority of hospitals or undertakers. The biopolitical management of death by these institutions, as Langford notes, 'negates the social existence of the dead' (2009: 682). At the time of my fieldwork I noticed that children were often kept away from events like funerals. However, at the same time death is everywhere and affects everyone, children included. Deaths are broadcast via mass media tools, crime news does not lack details about deaths, and computer games make it possible for players to become heroic killing agents. During my fieldwork one Lithuanian commercial television channel and national television moved the evening crime news from seven o'clock to eleven o'clock in order to protect younger audiences from possibly harmful information. The amount of visual and audible information about various kinds of death that is made available to Lithuanians is part of everyday life. However, not every death is publicly important. That depends largely on whether the death has personal, social, or even national significance.

To illustrate the public manipulation of death topics, I will present the way the mass media approached certain subcultural groups at the time of my fieldwork. Particular attention was paid to specific youth subcultures and their distinct approach to matters of death. For example, Goths, Metal music fans and Emo in Lithuania favour to a greater or lesser extent the symbolism and images of death (or reversed versions of symbols, such as an upside down cross or a crucified devil) and the philosophy related to it (see Ramanauskaitė 2004). In particular, the Emo subculture's interest in the exalted anguish, poeticism of blood and self-harm has received mass media attention since several teenage suicides, although the relationship between the suicides and this subculture was not proven. For these subcultural groups certain approaches to death are a way to distinguish themselves from what they call popular culture and its values. Yet, the demonization of the subcultural 'other' on the grounds of their approach to death and its symbolism suggests that matters surrounding death are not universally accepted and that public representations of death differ.

Thus, death practices can be political, as they create dead bodies that do not require in-depth reporting, as on the daily crime news, while others, like Emo teenage deaths, require value-laden reports and in-depth analysis. In other words, some dead bodies still continue to lead social lives, while others are immediately forgotten.[36] This brings me to *The political lives of dead bodies* (1999) in which Katherine Verdery questions the attention given to bones and corpses and the (often manipulative) activity around them in postsocialist countries. The politics of burials, as Verdery argues, are an arena of continuous struggle over meanings and the significance of dead

[36] Cf. 'Worthy and Unworthy Victims' in Herman and Chomsky (1988: 37-71).

bodies (1999: 13, 24). Her ethnographic insights are easily applied to recent historical events in Lithuania. As Verdery claims, there is nothing particularly postsocialist about the different treatment the famous or nameless dead have received in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Politicized funerals and reburials are instrumental in rewriting the past and creating new states. But more important, according to Verdery, are the temporal orders and value systems that are frozen into public material representations of significant deaths. Certain dead people are construed as socially significant and their funerals or reburials become socially meaningful, particularly because of the public visibility they create around definite values (ibid.: 19-20).

Indeed, the late 1980s and early 1990s in Lithuania were marked by the re-evaluation of the past through dead people: the bones of exiled Lithuanians under Stalinist rule were brought back and reburied in their family graves in Lithuania. Soviet statues were publicly destroyed, and cities and streets were renamed. As a result of such public reconstructions of independent national space and time in Lithuania, entire social categories and individual histories were reassembled (Verdery 1999: 20). By approaching state-making through the significance of dead bodies and cosmological practices that relate the living to the dead, Verdery, like others before her, presents nationalism as an aspect of kinship, spirits, ancestor worship and the circulation of cultural treasures (ibid.: 26). The particular link between funerals and kinship will be addressed in this chapter.

Archival Data

Lithuanian ethnologists have written a number of studies about death-related beliefs and funerary practices in Lithuania.[37] Their attention has largely focused on perceptions of death, the soul and the rituals of the wake and burial. Many ethnological articles and books on the topic of death draw upon the archival materials of the Department of Ethnology in the Institute of History in Vilnius. This archive stores ethnographic material collected mostly in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The material gathered in the 'Card index of beliefs' mostly comes from the rural western, northern and eastern parts of Lithuania. The southern part was under Tsarist, German, Polish or Soviet governments for several hundreds of years. Having read most studies on death-related practices and beliefs in Lithuania, I was familiar with some of the archival material I flipped

[37] E.g. Balys 1981; Buračas 1993; Vyšniauskaitė 1993; Marcinkevičienė 1997, Vaitkevičienė and Vaitkevičius 1998; Dundulienė 2002; Vyšniauskaitė, Kalnius and Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2008.

through. However, my archival search had a different aim: I did not want to collect the pieces of the puzzle in order to reveal general ideas about death, but rather to group them into practices that reveal some sort of relationship. In short, I wrote down everything that indicated relations of binding or separation, interaction or disaffiliation, in order to shift the focus from death folklore to the emphasis on relationships or their absence.

(a) Archival material showed that in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Lithuania the soul was associated with breathing and that the approach of death was often signified by changes to one's breathing. It was believed that the soul leaves the body with the last two breaths, one from the chest and the other from the throat.[38] Consequently, the soul leaves the body through the mouth.[39]

Beliefs about souls entail certain perceptions: that all human beings have souls,[40] that souls are eternal,[41] that souls think and speak with God at the time of death.[42] A common belief is that the soul stays with the body for three days,[43] separating from the body and leaving the world after the funeral mass has been held and the church bells have tolled.[44] Beliefs about purgatory entail that the soul goes through suffering in the actual place the deceased had been living.[45] In the local dialect of southern Lithuania purgatory is called '*čyščius*'.

People consider they are haunted primarily by the spirits of suicides or murder victims,[46] while the very appearance of the spirit to the living is considered an act requesting an *auka* in the form of prayers or masses.[47] For one thing, folk beliefs encourage a couple of actions to be undertaken to calm the spirit which is not at peace: to pray for the soul, touch the spirit with a sanctified object or make a request for masses to be said for the dead. In the case of a persistently haunting spirit, the advice is to handle the body of the deceased by exhuming it, cutting off its head and putting it near the

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[38] Lylavėnų k, Tauragės v, Tr., LTA 1284/83/.
[39] Ricieliai, Liškiavos v, Al.aps., LTA 374e (1185).
[40] Ricieliai, Liškiavos v, Al asp., LTA 374 (1186).
[41] Ricieliai, Liškiavos v, Al aps., LTA 374 (1192).
[42] Cepeliškių I k. Salako v, Zr., LTA 1483/56/; Giepaičių k, Vegerių v, Mž.,LTA 1546/118/; Girkalnio v, Rs., LTA 1415/53/; Juodkėnų k, Girkalnio v, Rs., LTA 1291/15/; Lylavėnų k, Tauragės v, Tr., LTA 1284/8/.
[43] Vosyliškio bk, grinkiškio v, Kd., LTA 1403/265/; Šiaulėnų v, Šl, LTA 1300/496/.
[44] Ricieliai, Liškiavos v, Al. ap., LTA 374d (2023); Nariūnų k, Salako v, Zr., LTA 1487/205/; Malinavos vk, Aukštadvario v, Tr., LTA 1289/216/.
[45] Bučių k, Laukuvos v., Trg., LTA 2331 (83)22).
[46] Užkalnupio k, Raseinių v, Rs., LTA 1300/530/; Šiaulėnųv, Šl., LTA 1300/500/; Avinuostos k, Salako v, Zr., LTA 1593/100/; Bileišių k, Dusetų v, Zr., LTA 1418/866/.
[47] Avinuostos k, Salako v, Zr, LTA 1593/98/.

feet so that the dead cannot reach it.[48] These actions demonstrate the close links between the soul, the body and the relationship of dependence between the living and the dead.

(b) The approach of a death is usually prophesized from signs during the funeral, the burial of the dead or the Christmas Eve dinner. Such beliefs are closely related to agriculture, as extended families may live in one farmhouse and pursue economic activities in common. However, even more they reflect beliefs about the liminal phase of the person who is about to die, which might in turn affect other members of the family and the household.

Archival material shows that prophesizing about death during a funeral includes signs such as earth falling into the dug grave[49] and grave collapses.[50] The squeaking of the ceiling, the table or the house beams signifies an approaching death, too. There are a large number of beliefs about signs of death that one can read from the strange behaviour of birds and animals. Other signs can be read from the deceased: if the mouth of the deceased opens[51] or the eyes do not close (especially the right one)[52] someone in the family will die soon. What is interesting are the words that are used in such records: it is said that if the eyes of the dead do not close, then the dead will 'eye out', 'take away' or 'take along' someone else from the family. If the master of the household dies, then the family should expect another disaster, usually associated with the cattle dying soon afterwards. It was said that in this way the master takes his own dowry.[53] In order to avoid this, family members must go to the stables and quickly tell the cattle and the bees about their master's death.[54] Also neighbours and relatives should not lend anything from their own household (e.g. milk, honey) because the dying

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[48] Kabelių valsč, Gr., LTA 794/58/; Seirijų v, Al., LTA 1741/61/; Karklynių dv, Keturvalakių v, Vk., LTA1349/107/; Demeniškių k, Seirijų v, Al., LTA 1741/61/; Ricieliai, Liškiavos v, Al ap., LTA 374d (2033); Pagelažiai, par, Vepriai, Ukm., LTA 600 (11); Apkartų k, Salako v, Zr., LTA 1569/62/; Nakūnų k, Utn v., LTA 405 (231/8); Šakiai, LTA 600/29/; Žiukliškių k, Dusetų p, Zrs., LTA 780/ 357/; Šalinėnų k, Antalieptės v, Zr., LTA 1277/ 308/; Ariogalos v, Kd., LTA 1633/70/.

[49] Leipalingio apyl, Sn., LTA 610/54/; Kalesnykų par, Lyd., LTA 600/99/; Iš Marcinkonių, LTA 725/315/.

[50] Taliunų k, Pušalotas, Pnv., LTA 600/162/15.

[51] Kalesnykų par. Lyd.,LTA 600/98/.

[52] Viekšnių v, Mž., LTA 1416/6/55; Naujamiestis, Pnv, LTA 444/627/; Švenčionėlių par, Švenčionių aps., LMDI 648 (15); Višakio-Rūda, Mrj., LTA 507/31/372/.

[53] Sedos par, Telšių aps, užr.M.Untulis, LMDI 194(5).

[54] Ilginykų k, Merkinės v, Al., LTA 1572/292/; Ricieliai, Liškiavos v, Al aps., LTA 374e(1184).

person will take the fortune and affect the wealth of that household by taking the surplus away when he or she dies.[55]

Prophesizing about an upcoming death also takes place on Christmas Eve: the upside-down spoon on the table or the absence of a shadow on the wall tells that that person will die during the upcoming year.[56]

(c) The archival material in the 'Card index of beliefs' showed that people used to put material items in the coffin together with the dead. Such items largely depend on the person and what one used to do: if the deceased was a drunkard, people put in a bottle of vodka, if a tailor scissors, if a smoker a pipe with tobacco. Sometimes people put a little bit of money in, just in case the soul needed to pay for something.

(d) The deceased return to the place he or she lived at and appear in the dreams of the living (usually in the dreams of relatives, though they might also appear to the neighbours).[57] By appearing, the deceased person either asks for something[58] from the living or gives them certain information or both. This information can be read from the signs and symbols of the dream. These include the way the deceased person appeared in the dream, which also indicates the state the deceased is in: if she or he appears wearing black, looks sad,[59] asks for food or complains, then she or he is not well in the other world. This is a sign to the living that they must fulfil the needs of the dead by giving something to the beggars and asking them to pray for the soul or make a request for masses to be said for that deceased person in the church.[60] The dead might also provide information about the afterlife, but only information they are allowed to impart.[61]

On All Souls' Day (2 November) the souls of the dead return to the places where they lived[62]; they come from the cemeteries[63] and ask the living to pray for them.[64] However, there are certain actions a person can take in

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[55] Kalesninko par, Lydos aps., LMDII 666 (38); Ricieliai, Liškiavos va, Al., LTA 374c(1616); Ricieliai LTA 374c (1615).

[56] Baltiškė, Liškiavos v, Al.a., LTA 374 e(2922); Ricieliai, Liškiavos v, Al., LTA 374c(1560/9); Alytaus aps., LTA 773/333/; Roicių k, Seirijų v, Al., LTA 1423/224/; Raitininkų k, Merkinės v, Al., LTA 1434/84/.

[57] Šiaulėnų v, Šl. LTA 1300/495/; Malinavos vk, Aukštadvario v, Tr., LTA 1289/215/; Čepeliškių I k, Salako v, Zr., LTA 1483/249/.

[58] Užkalnupio k, Raseinių v, Rs., LTA 1300/522/.

[59] Jautmalkių k, Kruopių vl., LTA 2272(18).

[60] Švenčionėlių par, Švenčionių aps., LMDI 648(16).

[61] Andruniškių k, Imbrado v, Zr., LTA 1048/61/43

[62] Pavarėnio k, Varėnos v, Al., LTA 1310/286/; Also Šiaulėnų v., Šl., LTA 1300/509/, Petkaičių k, Tauragės v., Tg., LTA 1284/291/.

[63] Krokialaukis, Al, Simno v.. LTA 600/197/20.

[64] Avinuostos k., Salako v., Zr., LTA 1593/ 142

order to invoke a deceased person to appear in one's dream: for example, to bring a handful of earth from the deceased's grave and put it under the pillow.[65]

In sum, the documented beliefs and practices concerning death that were stored in the archives of the Department of Ethnology in the Institute of History in Vilnius reveal a connection between the living and the body and soul of the dead. A person who is about to die is considered to be in a liminal phase, in between the worlds of the living and the dead. Farmers consider death a menace, as it takes not only the person, but also cattle or another vital source of family life. As we have seen, people also put some material items into the coffin together with the deceased. However, relations between the living and the dead do not end with the funeral. The deceased return to the place where they lived and appear in the dreams of the living with requests.

Thus, the connection between the living and the dead starts already before the moment of death. The soul of the dead, the body of the dead and the actions that the living take before and after death are vital to ensure proper separation from the world, to avoid threats to the living and to guarantee a good and lasting relationship between the living and the dead. Most importantly, the archival data support the idea of exchange theory that relationships are created and maintained through the actions of giving and taking material (e.g. wealth of the farm, items in the coffin) and immaterial items (e.g. prayers, mass services or proper burial). They also emphasized the power of requests by the dead, which have to be followed by an *auka*: the living request a mass, pray or in other ways attend to the deceased's requests.

Data from the Field Site

All these mentioned beliefs about death, souls and funerals were recorded during my fieldwork, except for the soul speaking with God at the hour of death and the handful of grave earth being placed under the pillow to encourage the soul of the dead to appear in a dream. But there is a lot more to the topic of death and exchange that I recorded during my fieldwork. In the following paragraphs I will present additional ethnographic information to support my arguments about the relationships between the living and the dead and about death-related exchange practices.

(a) Prophesizing about death. There is a belief among Lithuanians that if a person sees or starts communicating with the dead, then the dead are coming to take the living, that is, someone will soon die. Such stories also

[65] LTA 600/150/19

include dreams about the dead, especially when people see the dead inviting someone to come with them.

A story Agota (b. 1932) told me provides further details. Agota dreamt about her deceased husband fifteen years after he had died. 'My Petras has been in purgatory for fifteen years. [Lin: How would you happen to know such information?] So tell me, Linute, how would I know that? (Laughs). Because before his death he promised to come and visit me three times. One morning…' And Agota starts telling her story about the time she heard and felt her deceased husband walking in their home. Agota's son, with whom she shared her experience, interpreted his mother's story as a sign that his deceased father had come to take her. He called all the family and relatives and invited them to spend some time with Agota while she was still alive and in a way say goodbye to her. 'When I entered my home after work in the potato field that evening, all the relatives and family members were there. Ah… I had not seen such full and nicely decorated tables even on my wedding day!' Agota is still alive, but her story reveals a custom the family, relatives and the local community engage in when a death is anticipated.

Badone (1987) has written about such death-related folklore among Bretons and, following previous authors, uses the local term *intersignes* for precursors of death. *Intersigne* narratives include dreams, waking visions or natural phenomena, like the actions of birds, dogs and horses, or noises heard in the night. *Intersignes usually* achieve their full significance after death, particularly after unexpected deaths. Gathered into one narrative, they reconstruct and interpret personal experiences. Badone suggests that the *intersigne* is closely related to the concept of fate. In her study this idea does not rest on the Christian concept of God's will, but refers to an ordering force in the universe, which predetermines and controls events in human lives. Because of the predetermined nature of one's life, the forewarnings that people experience are less surprising to them.

To my knowledge, the belief in *intersignes*, or 'death-lore' as Badone calls it, is an outcome of oral customs to narrate the last days of the deceased during the funeral by describing some personal experiences. During my fieldwork people retold such stories, which are often remembered in particular detail, in order to justify a death even years after it had happened. In such instances people pay particular attention not only to unusual nature signs or dreams, but also to unusual behaviour on the part of the person who is about to die. For example, Anelė (b. 1931) once told me about her neighbour, who came to visit her after a long time to return something he had borrowed. The neighbour died soon afterwards, and Anelė interpreted his unexpected visit and returning an item as his way of coming to terms

with this world before leaving it. Anelė then said that her neighbour must have felt his coming death, as he had tried to leave this world without regrets, debts or unfinished tasks. What is interesting in this case is the dying person's desire to keep his relationships with the neighbourhood intact. I consider this act to be an alternative to the last communion. There is a difference between the communion given to the dying by the priest at the last unction, which is oriented towards the dying person's relationship with God, and the relationship with the community that the person initiates herself or himself before dying.

To return to the story of Agota and her vision of her deceased husband, the reaction of her son was a misinterpreted *intersigne*, which was followed by an attempt to reunite the family and relatives while the person who is about to die is still alive. The son's quick reaction to his mother's vision also points to the changed status his mother entered immediately after imparting her vision to her son. Badone (1987) sees such situations as the points in time that change the status of the person: for example, the ill person is no longer considered to be someone who may recover, but enters a liminal state between the living and the dead.

Intersigne narratives were very common among my interlocutors. Their stories about upcoming deaths, which are retold in the past tense, not only indicate the intention to reconstruct the past as a meaningful experience, they also show the great uncertainty that surrounds the possibility of death. Although death may be predicted, it still remains uncontrollable. That is, people do not know when they, their family members or neighbours will die, but they can recognize an approaching change with the aid of signs and culturally established interpretations.

(b) Items in the coffin or grave. A school director at Vilktaka told me a joke-like story about a person from the village who asked for a bottle of vodka to be put in his coffin. 'Whether it is a joke or whether it is true I do not know, but this is what people told me', he said. To put some items in the coffin together with the deceased is nothing new, as archaeological data from graves confirms. In fact, the whole of pre-Christian Lithuanian history displayed in museums is represented through the items found in excavated graves.

At the time of my fieldwork the most common items that people put into the coffin were a picture of a saint and a rosary, both placed in the arms of the dead, which were crossed on the chest. Sometimes wedding rings were also buried with their owners, and in times before corpses were prepared in a morgue, people used to put some herbs or salt underneath the body.

Plate 11. The excavated grave and its decoration.

The inside of the grave itself at the time of my fieldwork was not always left plain either (Plate 8), but might be ornamented with flowers, while a candle and a cross were arranged in a little arc above the deceased's head. Candles that had been left burning near the coffin during the wake were also taken to the cemetery and were either put in the grave or lit on the grave.

(c) Cemeteries and the commemoration of the dead. Although every dead body is buried in a standard-sized grave, cemeteries across Lithuania are far from being plain compartmented fields. On the contrary, they vary in the size and colour of the gravestones, the trees and flowers, and their low surrounding fences and benches (Plate 9). People take the standard grave and turn it into a visual and aesthetic sight for the bereaved, as well as for visitors to the cemetery. Why do graves matter to the family, the community (religious or local village) or the state? Is this aesthetization of the grave only a recent phenomenon?

The cemeteries in Vilktaka parish vary in size and style, representing materialized local historical changes. Some cemeteries look as if they are about to lose even those five people who still take care of the graves there.

Other cemeteries are attractions for tourists, with their old carved and painted wooden crosses. A tourist guide would tell that, before stone gravestones became popular, people in the area used to erect such tall wooden crosses on graves. Once the bottom of a wooden cross had decayed through moisture, the damaged part would be cut off and the remaining cross would be left standing for several years till it finally disintegrated completely.

Another tourist attraction, one that has fascinated a number of ethnologists as well, concerns the local tradition in one particular village of burning old crosses for a week from 1 November. People whose relatives have been buried in the cemetery gather to pray around the fire (Plate 10). This village is known across Lithuania for this tradition, which is presented as very old. A couple from a neighbouring town whom I met on the first day of such a week of prayer told me that they come every year, even though they do not have anyone buried there. They like the community atmosphere, which is not to be found in any other cemetery, they told me. On the following two days I visited two other cemeteries that also had such a fire, around which people prayed for the dead, though these communities and their cemeteries were not generally known to the public.

As virtually the biggest cemetery in the parish, Vilktaka's cemetery is an eclectic one: it combines old and sometimes neglected graves, the shape of which is difficult to recognize, with big family graves, uniting three grave plots into one fenced-off piece of land with a large gravestone or two. At first glance one notices a couple of 'eye-catchers' in the cemetery: the separation of confessional communities and the differences in grave organization and decoration. The physical separation of confessional communities in Vilktaka cemetery is materialized by the gravestones: Catholic gravestones face the church, while Russian Orthodox gravestones are oriented the opposite way to the Catholic graves.

Plate 12. A cemetery in Vilktaka.

I frequently asked people why this is so, but I did not get an answer from any of my interlocutors. It was only the Russian Orthodox priest who explained it to me. Orthodox believers are buried with their feet oriented towards the gravestone or the cross, which itself must face the east. Catholics usually place the gravestone or the cross over the head of the buried person, while the body must be buried so that the feet point towards the church. The Catholic belief concerning this is that on the Last Day of Judgment, when the dead will be resurrected, they can go straight to the church (I found this belief in my fieldwork data as well as in the archives).[66]

[66] Marcinkonių par, Gardino aps., LMD III 129 (3/15); Kvetkų apyl., LTA 2236 (34).

Plate 13. All Saints' Day prayers in the cemetery around the fire.

The embellishments of the graves are an important, but not a very old practice in Vilktaka parish. As several of my interlocutors told me, the increased attention being paid to the grave's aesthetics and beauty is a rather new phenomenon, one that started shortly before independence was regained. One Vilktaka woman, Danutė ([b. 1929], int. 19.11.2008), called the practice of decorating the grave a fashion. In an interview she told me that from her childhood she remembers modestly decorated graves. People used to put some branches of white lilacs, fir or rowan on to the grave, which served as its only decoration. Another woman from a neighbouring parish (b. 1936) expressed a very similar opinion:

> Lin: Were the graves so looked after and decorated as they are today?
> Wom: No! I remember no one looked after the graves so much. My father used to say, 'Let's go, children, to the cemetery, All Saints' Day is coming'. So we rake old leaves and everything else from the grave, we stick in a candle if the earth is still not frozen…. Otherwise the leaves would catch the fire. No one looked after the graves so much previously (int. 26.3.2009).

Sigita was also of the opinion that decorating the graves started in the late 1970s, when people moved to the towns and cities, and the graves of their parents remained as their only link with home:

> A lot of people from the towns buried their parents here, and this parent's grave is their connection to their soil, their land, you know. This [grave] is probably the only place which still links them, because probably someone else now lives in the house. I think this close connection to the soil has influenced that. You know, Lithuanians are a nation of agriculturalists, farmers. Of course, there is always respect for the dead as well (Sigita [b.1962], int. 28.1.2009).

I also recorded Sigita's allusion to 'respect for the dead' and its link to taking care of the grave among the younger generation of Vilktaka inhabitants. Morta (b. 1973) gave me other than merely respectful reasons for looking after the graves:

> You know, people talk. If you do not take care of the grave, then people start talking: 'Look, the graves are standing all overgrown with grass'. So people do all this in order to reduce such talking. Only this. That is how I perceive this issue (int. 18.12.2008).

As I observed in repeated participant observation in the cemeteries, there is probably nothing that can invoke the pity of a cemetery visitor like a neglected grave. People who have family graves next to a shabby looking grave usually take care of the latter as well. They consider it an act of respect for the dead, as well as providing some additional decoration enhancing the overall care of their own grave.

To sum up, though everyone is allocated a standard-sized grave, the gravestones and the practice of decorating the graves with (real or plastic flowers, candles, lanterns, low fences and the like) are all an outcome of individual and social reasons. Even though people invoked fashion, respect for the dead and social encouragement in order to avoid gossip as the main reasons they decorated their graves, in practice these embellishments had more mundane and kinship-oriented reasons. Usually people feel obliged to take care of the grave. For example, children, siblings and other relatives of the deceased are the first in line to make decisions about the erection of the gravestone and subsequent care of the grave. A lot depends on internal coordination among family members and relatives, which starts with the organization of the funeral itself. Taking care of the grave is just one of the many responsibilities that come with the death of a relative. Money, time and opportunities to be present in the cemetery often enough to keep the grave in a visually acceptable state are among the obligations that families and relatives of the deceased have to reckon with.

The visual aspect of cemeteries largely depends on local history, family preferences, personal aesthetic choices, beliefs and customary behaviour while commemorating the dead (Plate 11). This last aspect is particularly important, as people directly link the notion of commemorating the dead with the grave. Thus, honouring and remembering the dead is materialized in the aesthetically decorated grave.

(d) Masses and prayers. In the following paragraphs I continue to explore the topic of the commemoration of the dead, but now focus on other practices that fulfil the function of remembering. Commemoration of a deceased member of the family not only includes more or less regular visits to the cemetery and caring for the graves; it also includes prayers, requesting masses for the dead and celebrating certain calendar festivals.

Another way of remembering the dead is to keep pictures in one's house of close family members, usually with a black ribbon tied on to a corner of the photograph. The span of time one keeps it for is very individual.

Annual commemorations of the dead are held on All Saints' and All Souls' Day (1 and 2 November), as well as Christmas Eve (24 December). On Christmas Eve the dead are remembered and respected in two ways. The most common practice is to leave food on the table after the dinner because 'the souls come to eat, the souls of the house, those who have left the house, those who have died' (Morta [b. 1973], int. 18.12.2008). However, if someone in the family had died that year, a plate would be put on the table specifically for him or her.

The most common calendar festivals for commemorating the dead are the first and second of November, days which in Lithuanian are customarily called *Vėlinės*. Strictly the term refers to All Souls' Day (2 November), but in everyday language it is often used to refer to both days. These days are dedicated to visiting cemeteries, lighting candles on graves, participating in masses in the church and if possible visiting relatives living close to the cemeteries.

Plate 14. Graves decorated for *Vėlinės*.

As one of the archives recorded, 'The commemoration of the dead is done when one pays money to the priest and he holds the masses. During the masses all relatives pray for the dead'.[67] Requests for masses for the dead are something I recorded quite often during my fieldwork. When I explored this process in more detail, I made two requests for masses for the dead of my own family as well. Masses for the dead are ordinary Catholic masses said in church, except that during the mass the priest reads out the names of the deceased. Everybody prays for the souls of the dead whom the priest mentions. During the first year after a death, according to my interlocutors, the bereaved should request masses for the dead after the first month, six months and one year. However, some practice masses for the dead every month. 'This is what one wants', Agota explained to me. Morta told me that requesting masses are just one way to commemorate and respect the dead:

[67] Avinuostos k, Salako v., Zr., LTA 1593/110/

> Not only the masses…. The person invites some neighbours, some relatives come, and there is the table, the singers, and this is how the commemoration of the dead happens…. That is how the closest people are respected…. I consider this the respect and commemoration of the dead. The person has lived and left here (Morta [b. 1973], int. 18.12.2008).

Jonas (b. 1976) added what requesting masses for the dead meant to him:

> This is the wish to render some service to your beloved deceased one, so you request masses so that the priest will pray. As if to calm your conscience that you did something. Maybe it was needed, you do not know. That is what I think (int. 21.2.2009).

Jonas called the requested masses and prayers for the soul of the dead 'some service' to the deceased.

Plate 15. The overfilled container near the cemetery fence of Vilktaka after clearing old leaves and flowers from the graves.

All in all, the times when relatives or family members request masses for specific dead people are predictable and differ. One can expect masses for the dead several times in the year right after death and at least once a year

after that. Cemeteries and churches are always busier on Mother's and Father's Day, as well as before and during All Saints' and All Souls' Days.

(e) Dreams about the dead and the notion of the other world. The rather unpredictable nature of requesting masses for the dead stems largely from the dreams about the dead that the bereaved have. During my fieldwork I heard and recorded a lot of stories about how my interlocutors communicated with deceased members of their family in dreams. People interpreted what they saw and heard.

Morta (b. 1973) told me that she considers dreams about the dead to be a type of request: 'I think, for example, when you dream [of the dead] and you are asked to do something. Well, [the dead] requests something, asks something from that world'. She said she had not had such dreams herself, but she described a dream her mother had:

> My mother dreamt of this one person, a man… And he says, 'Look!' (That is how she is dreaming). He says, 'one part of the table is loaded with everything, and people are celebrating there, they are happy, and the other side of the table is empty. Look how people are feasting, and I am sitting at an empty table'. … So this means that he is requesting something, that means that no masses were requested for him, there was no table (int. 18.12.2008).

Information about the state of the dead is often read from the signs or symbols that appear in a dream. These include whether the deceased person is wearing black, is sad, asking for food or complaining. This means that the deceased is not happy in the other world. This is a sign that the living should quickly fulfil the needs of the dead by praying for their souls or requesting masses to be said in church. As Sigita told me, 'masses are considered the highest form of prayer that are most helpful to the dead. The dead cannot pray for themselves, so we pray during the mass for them'.

My interlocutors dreamt of deceased members of their family or neighbourhood and considered these dreams to be true. People were quite sure that neither religious books nor the authorities (e.g. priests) can provide a true answer to the question of what the afterlife is like because 'nobody has come back from there and told us' (Liudas [b. 1938] and Birutė [b. 1942], int. 20.10.2008). According to my interlocutors, the only true information about the afterlife is gathered from dreams about the dead.

In this context I vividly remember an interview with Danutė ([b. 1939], int. 19.11.2008). Danutė was in a choir and was present in the church almost every Sunday. It was only in our interview and in her retelling her dream that Danutė expressed doubt:

> When [my husband] died, I don't know, maybe after half a year I am dreaming… I told this dream only to a couple of women, but I remember it clearly. Because you often forget dreams! But it seems like I am in a barn, somewhere high up, and I see he is coming inside the barn. And I know he is dead. I say, 'Jonas, where are you walking? You are dead!' So I say: 'Tell me, you were not a believer, so tell me, how is it there?' He says: 'Who does not believe – not so well. If I endure these two years, then it will be good'. That is true, I dreamt it so. So I say there is something, then. Some force, some power, something. Something is probably there.

My interview with Danutė was a fieldwork moment that led me to realize an important point: an individual believes and does not believe, sometimes at the same time. Their doubts may not have an influence on their church attendance, the importance they place on some rituals and the like. Belief is not 'inculcated' once in a lifetime, as was often emphasized by some of my interlocutors when talking about the 'church-going grandmothers'. Belief is situational, and dreams about the dead play a role in it.

Stories of dreams about the dead had similar patterns. By appearing in a dream, the deceased person was either asking for something or imparting information about the other world. Very commonly the living asked the dead the same question: 'Is there a God?' And the dead always provided the same reply: 'I cannot tell you', or 'You will die, and you will see for yourself'. In attempts to calm their curiosity about the other world, people gave promises to each other: 'If I die first, I will come in a dream and tell you. If you die first, you will come in my dream and tell me'. Anelė (b. 1931) was still waiting for her brother to appear in her dream and answer some of her questions. They had made this deal close to her brother's death. 'But he never came in my dream', Anelė complained to me.

My interlocutors considered dreaming of a deceased person an act of communication. Parts of such communications with the dead are influenced by how the living approach the fact of death. For example, the popularly used phrase 'not letting the dead go' reflects a strong level of attachment to one's memory of the dead, which also attaches the soul of the dead to the world of the living for too long.

However, despite taking dreams about the dead seriously, people try to maintain a separation between the worlds of the living and the dead. The separation of this world and the other world, to which the soul of the dead belongs, starts in the immediate hour of death and continues throughout the funerary rituals. Of course, certain ritual practices depend on the way a person has died, for example, a sudden death caused by an accident or a suicide might influence the funeral and later commemorative practices. Yet

to keep the order between the worlds of the living and the dead intact means that communication between them cannot happen too often.

The common perception among my interlocutors is that no one can come back from the other world. As Petrukė (b. 1936) argued:

> How it is said: on earth, as it is in heaven. Like in the prayer. But how it is there, no one can tell. Now people know everything, America, foreign countries and all the countries, but no one discovered the other world. No one has come back and told us (int. 26.3.2009).

In his book *About Gods and People* Greimas (2005 [1979]: 161), a Lithuanian-French semiotician and expert in Lithuanian mythology, says that the perception of the world of the dead as something one cannot come back from emphasizes the clear-cut boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead. If a living person finds out the secrets of the other world, she or he will die. This is a common narrative in various folk tales and magical practices. There are ways to find out about the future (e.g. with the help of some magical actions during funerals or Christmas Eve), but that means entering the non-human sphere and therefore paying for one's curiosity with one's death. But to find out something through dreams does not fall under this category. As Greimas argues:

> Sleep is a different form of life, another life, which happens when a person is sleeping, which one can perceive from the remembered dreams. Understandably, life in sleep and life in death are not completely different. … A dream in ancient Lithuanian language meant 'sleep' … and this parallel life form is no worse than 'real' life (Greimas 2005 [1979]: 170-1, translated from Lithuanian).

In an article about Lutherans in western Lithuania and their conception of death as sleep, Sliužinskas (2012) argues that this perception has a dogmatic background drawn from the New Testament (quotes Mt 9, 24; Jn 11, 11-14). This is also supported by a local custom of preparing the dead person's body for the wake so that he or she seems to be sleeping. The dead body is dressed mainly in white, wears no shoes, just socks and is covered in a white blanket with one hand visible placed on the chest. Thus prepared for the wake, the dead person seems to be sleeping. This local practice of relating death to sleep is declining, however, as Sliužinskas (2012) argues.

Belief in death as a form of sleep or rest of the body until the day of resurrection was nonetheless also prominent among my interlocutors as well. They did not emphasize the notion of sleeping that much, but used other expressions that linked death to rest for the body. After all, the most common Catholic prayer for the dead says: 'Eternal rest, grant unto them, O Lord/ And let perpetual light shine upon them./ May they rest in peace./

Amen'. Furthermore, the notion of 'eternal rest' can be visually verified in every cemetery because almost every gravestone has engraved words that refer to it. In addition, if in everyday conversations a dead person is mentioned, it is customary to add immediately 'eternal rest' (Lith.: *amžiną atilsį*) to his or her name.

All in all, dreams and the knowledge gained from them influence daytime religious practices. After dreaming of the dead, one prays or requests masses. Dreams are materialized in one's waking life, thus making dream demands initiating and legitimizing daytime actions (Schnepel and Ben-Ari 2005: 158).[68] As Ariès remarked, it is acceptable for the living to be close to the dead in churches, parks and markets, provided the latter remain asleep (2008 [1977]). Thus, society permits the dead to return, but only on certain days set aside by custom. Even masses and prayers, according to Ariès, are a way of keeping the sleep of the dead undisturbed (ibid.).

(f) Kinship and the dead. One aspect has not been emphasized in this section, and that is the relationship between funerals and kinship. People in my field site agreed that they participate in funerals and commemorative acts mainly to respect and honour the deceased, as well as his or her family. In this part I focus on such affirmations of relationships among the living in the case of death.

Sigita told me how it surprises her that many relatives have hardly any communication among themselves, they do not go to church masses and the like, 'but because of the dead they all gather every half a year or every month' (int. 1.28.2009). When I asked why, Sigita added that in her opinion this is a 'way to purify the relationship with the deceased, which you do not manage to do otherwise. … It's the same as lighting candles: …taking care of the graves and visiting the graves'. Interestingly, funerals are as much as about relationships among the living who have been bereaved as between the living and the dead.

As the anthropologist Čepaitienė (2010) argued when researching Lithuanian conceptions of kinship, funerals and the rituals associated with them are a manifestation of kinship. 'In the words of my interlocutors, the funeral is the most important and ultimate meeting of the kin, which continues later on various occasions while visiting the graves' (ibid.: 19). Čepaitienė adds that 'Death and funerals are not only kin gathering events. They are the experience of kin, when the dead become symbolic connections or relationships that bind the living kin... [T]he dead link the living relatives'

[68] See Schnepel and Ben-Ari for different strategies of how people bring together the dialectics of day and night, dreaming and waking; or Tedlock (1991) for anthropology's contribution to discussions of the communicative contexts of dream-sharing and interpretation.

(ibid.: 20). Although I agree with Čepaitienė's findings, in practice one cannot participate in a funeral unless one has been invited by the bereaved family. Those who are closest to the deceased inform the other relatives, friends and neighbours. Information about the wake and the date of the burial follow and serve as an invitation or indirect hint that the informed person (and in most cases her/his family) should participate in the funeral. The invitation to the dinner after the burial is yet another matter, which depends on the financial resources of the bereaved family. For this reason, an invitation to the dinner after the burial is usually given to the selected invitees individually.

I would add to Čepaitienė's insight that the deaths of the closest family members, like parents, siblings or children, affect those social relations that are important to the living. Besides the relatives, those who are informed about a death may also include best friends, neighbours or employers, who will convey the information to the co-workers. While best friends of the bereaved usually participate in the wake, the burial and sometimes also the dinner, co-workers fall under a different category. Their participation in the wake and, if possible, the burial are an expression not so much of respect and honour for the dead as of support for the bereaved.

Another point I take from my observations refers to the common topics of conversation among participants at the funeral: 'In the future, let us meet earlier than near the coffin and on such sad occasions'. This is one sense in which funerals have a joyful aspect, as those who attend them are glad to see each other, exchange some information and catch up on their lives. Promises are then made to meet up while everyone is still alive.

To conclude, participation in funerals expresses relationships that bind the participant to both the deceased and the bereaved. People say that it is an honour and respect what their participation in funerals primarily represents. I argue that there would be no participation without people being invited to the wake, the funeral and the dinner after the burial. Invitations to funerals are significant in gift-exchange terms because they are exchanged between the parties and affirm the relationships that bind people: relationships of kinship, friendship and collegiality. A funeral is a manifestation of connections, expressions of relationships that the deceased is still able to influence.

Furthermore, the material I have presented above is an ethnographic example of Bourdieu's notion of 'circular reinforcement'. Bourdieu argued that any institution has to be affirmed and reaffirmed and that this happens through action and practice. It is the institution of kinship that is confirmed and therefore reinforced by invitations to funerals and subsequent participation in them. Invitations and participation are important in gift-

exchange terms because they are given, accepted and returned. In other words, they reinforce group and individual adherence to them in circular fashion.

(g) Concluding remarks on the collected ethnographic data. To conclude this part, I shall briefly resume the main points that have been made. There are no contradictions between the archival material I discussed earlier and my ethnographic data. The topics I discussed added further significant points about the relationships that are established and maintained between the living and the dead, as well as those that are affirmed among the living.

I began with Agota's case and her son's misinterpreted *intersigne* to show how the living try to get together and spend some time with anyone who is expected to die shortly. In this context I presented the case of Anelė's neighbour, which revealed that it is not only the living who try to make good or affirm their relationship with the person who is about to die; the latter tries to keep relationships with the living intact as well by repaying debts, finishing unfinished jobs, paying visits and the like. I then moved on to describe the material items that are placed in the coffin or grave together with the dead. This part led me to address the surface of the grave as well, which is decorated by the bereaved in various ways and plays an important part in expressing respect, honour and attention to the dead. The grave connects the living and the dead and is a significant plot of land in the rituals of commemorating the dead.

In the discussions about the importance of the grave, another set of relationships emerged. The grave and its embellishments are an outcome of the obligations and organization of kinship. Those who are closest to the deceased are also those who express, and are expected to express, care, honour and respect towards the dead. Attending to the requests of the dead and inviting other people to the funeral are obligations placed on the children, parents and siblings of the dead. Funerals are therefore a scene in which the affirmation of relationships is enacted. Furthermore, invitations to funerals and the dinner after the burial, as well as participation in such events, are other ways to confirm and reinforce such relationships. To cite Bourdieu, they are 'circular reinforcements' of institutions, groups and adherence to them.

Funerals and the Powers That Impact on Them

In this section I use ethnography to support the argument that the anthropology of death should also include someone who is getting ready to die. In order to shift studies of death from the popular focus on funerals and burial rituals, I will discuss three main topics: (1) the powers behind dead

bodies and the manipulation of corpses and bones by the living to emphasize social values; (2) the ethnographic example of one funeral, where three generations, including the person who is about to die, are engaged in planning it; and (3) practices that are concerned to 'tame' death, where I present in more detail the material and immaterial preparations for their upcoming deaths my interlocutors were engaged in during their lifetimes.

The Powers behind Dead Bodies

As a starting point I return to Agota's husband and his funeral in Vilktaka, which took place in Soviet times, and which I discussed in Chapter 5. Agota received an offer from her husband's colleagues to bury his body in the cemetery without bringing him into the church for the funeral mass. If she had agreed, all the funeral expenses would have been covered by her husband's employer. However, as a Catholic Agota refused to bury her husband in the 'Soviet style'. When Agota told me this story, she did not mention whether or not her deceased husband had other wishes about his funeral. In her story only two parties negotiated over the deceased and his funeral: Agota and her husband's employer. Unlike the story of Neringa, which I will present in the next section and which describes how three generations became involved in planning a funeral, Agota's example shows that the dead person's body is primarily at the disposal of the bereaved family. According to the employer, the life the deceased had led had to be taken into account in organizing his funeral. Because Agota's husband worked for the Soviet government, he had to perform his death in the socialist way even after his death. His funeral became a political and religious battleground. In the end Agota had the last word, and the Catholic tradition of her family prevailed.

Agota's story highlights several points about funerals and their control. First, the dead body and the funeral must represent the life the deceased has led. Secondly, the family or close relatives usually have the last word in how the funeral will be organized. Consequently, unless one leaves explicit wishes about how one's funeral will proceed, one cannot be sure how one's body will be handled after death.

Looking at Agota's husband's funeral from an exchange perspective, what is interesting is the push and pull between the two negotiating parties. The employer offered Agota money and other material support (like transport) to help her organize the funeral, but only under the condition that she would do so in accordance with atheist practice. Agota, on the other hand, prioritized her own idea of what the funeral should be like and told the employer: 'I will not betray the cross'. She was in a different relationship, a Catholic one, which she evidently did not want to betray. Nevertheless, in

the negotiations over the funeral the marital relationship proved the most important. The employer could not simply take the deceased's body and bury it. Funerals are a family affair, and Agota had the last word about how her husband's body would be buried and what values it would represent: those of the Soviet state or the Catholic Church.

As a complement to the topic of the powers that control funeral proceedings, I will add one more archival record to this theme. Documentation indicated that if the body of the deceased is that of a 'lover', as it was called,[69] then it is carried out of the home not through the door, but dragged on the ground over the threshold.[70] This report suggests the existence of a powerful moral community, as discussed by various folklorists and novelists writing about nineteenth- and twentieth-century villages in Lithuania. Women are particularly subjected to strong social control. The archive shows that it is the village community and not the individual family members of the deceased who took decisions regarding the treatment of the dead body. In this case the 'lover' did not deserve proper treatment during the funeral. Instead, a communal performative act was performed, directed to the larger village community rather than the deceased person.

The archival record and Agota's husband's funeral show that funeral proceedings are expected to make reference to the life the deceased has led. Moreover, there is one more condition that can affect how the funeral is organized, and that is how one dies. Thus the funerals of those who have committed suicide fall under a special category.

It has been a practice of the Catholic Church to bury suicides outside the cemetery fence. During my fieldwork I witnessed one funeral where the suicide had been buried in the cemetery and the priest was present (however, the priest was from another city, where the deceased had lived latterly). I was told that each case of suicide is interpreted individually and that a lot depends on the family, the particular case, the priest and the Church authorities. One other case concerned the head of a local folklore group who had been a respected person in the village, so she was given an ordinary funeral and burial.

Other recorded cases of suicides buried in cemeteries were provided to me by the priest of the Orthodox Church from the city outside the parishes of my research. This Orthodox priest was occasionally present in Vilktaka, particularly in cases when Orthodox Church members had to be buried. When I asked him about the burial of suicides, he replied:

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[69] Probably indicating a woman in a non-marital relationship

[70] Anykščių vl, Ut., LTA 2298 (165/35).

> If someone has lost her/his mind and killed her-/himself because of that, so we bury that person just like everyone else. If the person was healthy and the family wants to bury a suicide in the cemetery, then permission from a bishop is needed. The bishop usually lets us decide about that. But you know, we are not God, it is not for us to decide. We had a case in Vilktaka where a person fell from the balcony. Some said he jumped, some said that there was a company of people… But a person is nobody in the eyes of God, only He is the Judge (int. April 2009).

Based on archival material and the stories my interlocutors told me, decisions about the funeral arrangements for suicides are not taken as strictly as in the past. Nowadays, although the body of a suicide might not be taken into the church, it can be buried in the cemetery and have a priest carry out the ritual. Each case of a suicide is considered on an individual basis, and a lot depends on the priest and his views.

Suicides can also be considered heroic and be endowed with state-wide importance if they are represented as a fight for freedom or against political repression. Two cases of resistance to the Soviet system in Lithuanian history can be presented in this context: the self-immolation of Romas Kalanta in 1972, and the Lithuanian partisans who blew up their hiding place and themselves during the Second World War. In retellings of such stories in popular discourses the word 'suicide' is often omitted and the expressions 'burnt himself' or 'blew themselves up' are used instead.

The way Catholics treat suicides shows how dead bodies can be instrumental in affirming religious doctrines and social values. Yet, the oft-remembered morale behind the different treatments of suicides by Catholics is that as one does not own one's life, so one cannot decide to end it as an individual. The beginning and end of life are 'known' and controlled only by God. This is an important argument, which I discuss at greater length in relation to exchange theory in the last section of this chapter. However, one detail must be emphasized here. The notion of the determination of life or fate among Lithuanians rests on the preconception that one dies because one's 'time ends' (Greimas 2005 [1979]: 201). The duration of life is something only 'God knows', as my interlocutors would say. Consequently, the individual cannot decide when to end his or her own life. This understanding is also at the root of the belief, recorded in the archives, that the soul of a person who committed suicide wanders on earth until the 'right time' comes. The life granted to the individual has to be lived until the end (ibid.: 202).

As discussed in this subsection, there are two main points that influence funerals: the life the deceased has led, and the way he or she died.

Unless there are no pre-death instructions from the deceased, funerals are organized by the bereaved family.

Another important point that has emerged from the previous discussion is the perception that life is a possession of God. I will pick up this topic later in this chapter. Before doing so, I shall continue to discuss the powers that influence funerals and describe the example of three generations being involved in organizing the same funeral.

Three Women and a Funeral

The interest of the following story of three women and a funeral is that it provides a glimpse of how a Catholic grandmother and mother was treated by her non-religious (as they consider themselves) daughter and granddaughter.

I met Neringa a couple of weeks after her grandmother's death. I wanted to learn more about the funeral and what she thought about it after some time had elapsed. Neringa's grandmother lived with her daughter (Neringa's mother) for several years, most of the time being ill and bedridden. She passed away just before Easter 2009. Neringa expressed the hope that her grandmother was now happy, as it is believed that people who die in the so-called 'Big Week' before Easter are lucky.

Neringa's grandmother made preparations for her own funeral in advance. She gathered together every item that was needed for her to be laid out in the coffin: underwear, dress, shoes, rosary and a picture of a saint:

> It was actually very good [that she has prepared all her clothing in advance], because when we saw those dresses offered in the funeral home, they were all hideous: pink, violet, green, whatever you want! [And her own dress was] tidy and the way she used to wear them… And that picture [of the saint] was also chosen from a pile, I do not even know, but it was a gift from some priest, it was brought from somewhere, a very special one… She asked [to be buried] specifically with it (Neringa, int. 2.5.2009).

While contextualizing her grandmother's preparations for her own funeral, Neringa told me that it was a customary among her relatives and neighbours in the village to prepare for the funeral. Such preparations for one's own funeral are common in other parts of Lithuania as well. The topic of where and how one wants to be buried is a rather popular theme for discussion during visits to cemeteries. Families are usually aware of the desired grave plots or a preference for being cremated.

While staying at her daughter's place, thirty kilometres from her home village, Neringa's grandmother came up with the idea that her dead body should be laid out in the hall of a funeral home (Lith.: *laidotuvių namai*).

Neringa told me that she and her mother had tried to oppose this idea. They argued that Neringa's grandmother has her home in the village, where she had lived most of her life and where all her neighbours live who would come to her wake. 'So I will sit near you here alone?', asked Neringa's mother. But Neringa's grandmother was sure about her decision, as she did not want to overburden her family members with the burial.

Both Neringa and her mother wanted a 'traditional' funeral, as they called it, given the background of their grandmother and mother. They wanted to lay her out in her own house in the village she had lived in all her life. There is a custom in relation to an upcoming death in Neringa's grandmother's village: the preparation of certain objects, final visits of relatives or neighbours and the communal seeing-off of the dying person. These relationships with neighbours and members of the family are very significant in the preparatory phases of one's own death.

However, changes have been introduced to these customary communal practices with the medicalization of death and higher numbers of funeral services being offered. Some people were relieved to find that funeral homes can take care of everything from the dead body and its preparation for the wake to the dinner after the funeral. But others think that funeral homes are associated with a degree of consumer-type behaviour and even of profaning the whole process of saying goodbye to a dead member of one's family. In relation to this, Neringa told me of an example from her grandmother's funeral. Her grandmother had collected sanctified wax candles for her funeral while she was still alive, but the funeral home would not allow them to be lit in the hall for the reason they produced black smoke, which might have ruined the ceiling. Therefore Neringa and her husband put all the wax candles on the grave after the burial.

Although Neringa's grandmother did not want to overburden the members of her family with organizing a funeral for her, Neringa and her mother emphasized the 'traditional' funeral they wanted her to have. In the following extract from our interview, Neringa cites reasons why her grandmother in the end died not at her home, but in hospital:

> [My mother] just could not watch how she was suffering, so she thought [maybe doctors] might at least help her; not because they can save her [from death] or something like that, but only so that it would be easier for her. So this is the only reason she was taken to the hospital where she died. But well… there is this coldness [in the hospital]… I think that a person should leave from one's own home (Neringa, int. 2.5.2009).

Neringa points to the distinction between the institutional environment, which is cold, and the home environment. 'Even though you probably do not feel anything there, … I would not like to lie there', said Neringa.

As shown in this ethnographic example, changes brought about by the institutionalization of death have modified local funeral rituals, especially with regard to space: village vs. town, own home vs. daughter's home, home vs. hospital and finally home vs. funeral hall. In her story Neringa acknowledged the personal as well as communal significance of dying in one's own home and opposed it to the impersonality and 'coldness' of institutional dealings with the body and customs:

> When [my grandmother's] sister was dying, so women [from the village] came to her house for maybe a week. It is said that they go for mortification [Lith.: *eina maryt*], when it is clear that the person will not recover anymore and will die. So everyone gathers, says goodbye to the person while the latter is still alive, you know. And in these funeral homes you come to an unfamiliar space, it is alien to everyone (Neringa, int. 2.5.2009).

If someone is about to die, relatives and neighbours gather in their house to spend some time together, pray and sing. In other words, people come to part with the member of the community while she or he is still alive.

Yet despite the respectful attitude shown to a dying person's past, Neringa's story also shows the importance of carrying out the deceased person's will. In the end the wake for Neringa's grandmother was carried out the way she wanted her funeral to be. Neringa's Catholic grandmother had to be buried respectfully. Therefore, not only did Neringa and her mother organize a funeral in the church, with an invited organ player and a singer (because Neringa's grandmother had been a member of the church choir group for many years), they had to modify their own ideas of a proper funeral to conform to the grandmother's wishes, as well as the requirements of institutions like the hospital and the funeral home. As a result, Neringa's grandmother died in hospital 'among strangers', as Neringa said, had her wake in the funeral home's hall, wore her prepared items and had her religious objects in the coffin with her. The funeral mass took place in her parish church, and the sanctified wax candles that had been collected but that were not allowed to be lit during the wake were placed on the grave in the cemetery.

In the end, Neringa's grandmother's funeral was the result of many agents and circumstances coming together: the deceased's preparations in advance (clothes, rosary, picture of the saint), the background of the deceased (Neringa and her mother took into consideration the village's custom), hospital restrictions (not allowing relatives to stay overnight in the

ward, no candle being lit immediately near the deceased), the deceased's will (to have her wake in the funeral home and thus save the trouble for the family), the funeral home's requirements (not to light natural wax candles), the customary funeral mass in the parish church, the invited organ player and singer for the mass, and Neringa's idea of putting the wax candles on the grave.

In sum, this case describes approaches to death over three generations, as well as how the different generations dealt with the past of the deceased. It reveals the active agency of an individual as an organizer of her own funeral and the importance of fulfilling the deceased's wishes, which is significant in establishing proper relationships between the living and the dead. This ethnographic example also shows that funerals are expected to reflect the life the deceased has led.

The Coffin in the Attic: Taming Death Practices

In this subsection I will add further ethnographic examples that illustrate how one might make preparations for one's own death. Such practices might be material as well as immaterial, as I will show. I begin with two quotations from my interlocutors:

> Well, it was done like that… My grandmother [prepared] clothes [in advance], those for death, [for lying] in the coffin. Her sister, who died here, she had a coffin for many years in the house, but later, when you know – nicer coffins appeared, she [did not want that old one and] was buried [in a newer coffin] (Neringa [b.1978], int. 2.5.2009).
>
> [In our village] there is a cross, a black cross. When a person dies, that cross remains [with the deceased and the family]. And then waits for another person to die. So then this cross is stored with another person.… When my brother died, we wanted to leave the cross after the funeral with an old person 84 years old. He has only one son, who works in Vilnius. And he only comes for visits. And [that son] was so afraid of the cross, he would not take it out of the car! Dear God, so [my son] took it away. He said: '[The cross] will not remain with you. We will leave it here [with your father]'. 'So my father will die then!' [Laughs] … But this is how this cross goes around… This has been done since the year dot (Danutė [b.1939], int. 19.11.2008).

The first quotation is about a coffin in the attic that someone decides to store at home and about further preparing the items needed 'for the last trip' (as it is phrased in the local dialect). Throughout their lives Neringa's family members have been altering the material items accumulated for the funeral:

dresses were taken out of the closet from time to time, put on and examined to see whether a visit to the tailor was needed. As Neringa told me, her grandmother changed her shoes at some point as well.

In the second quote, Danutė describes the village custom of storing a black cross in the house of a recently deceased person or of the oldest person in the village. This practice adds to Neringa's story and emphasizes that the material items stored at home might not be personal, but might be local ritual objects used during all funerals in the village. Because Danutė's brother did not live in his home village anymore and was brought back there just to be buried in the cemetery, there was no one from his family available to store the black cross. Thus Danutė and others decided to leave the cross with the oldest person in the village. However, this decision was rejected by the son of the oldest person, who did not want his father to die. Danutė's laughter at this point shows the generational differences in approaching death and its symbols. Yet, both Danutė's intention to leave the black cross in one of the village houses and the son of that house's occupant refusing to take the cross show that ideas about death are infused in certain material objects and need to be 'tamed' first.

Both quotes describe how people engage in both material and immaterial preparations for death. Still, the fact remains that not everyone stores their coffin in the attic, and not everyone, as we saw in Danutė's quote, is comfortable with the fact of death in the first place. Although everyone acknowledges the inevitability of death, not everyone is eager to engage in preparations for it of the sort described above. Death is a universally known fact, but it always creates a quick surprise when people hear about it. As Ariès argues, death can be tamed and ritualized, but it is never experienced as a neutral phenomenon (2008 [1977]). Nevertheless, I have borrowed the notion of 'taming death' from Ariès (ibid.), as it seemed to suit my ethnographic examples very well. In my usage, taming death implies making various preparations for one's own death in advance, the bereaved ritualizing the immediate moment of death and further actions of commemoration.

Agota's (b. 1932) mother taught her to think about death nine times a day. Of course, such advice might have more to do with the religious teachings of how not to intend to sin and to live one's life so that a sudden moment of possible death might not condemn you to eternal sufferings and a long purgatory. However, this instruction adds to the general picture of how death is perceived in the lifetimes of my interlocutors. They think about it on an everyday basis, they may even have a material object reminding about it in front of their eyes, like the coffin in the attic or the cross, and they look after the dying person at home and prepare for their own funeral.

Simmel argues that death 'gives form to life, not just in the hour of death, but also in continually colouring all of life's contents' (2007: 74). This idea fits my own ethnographic examples: death is present in the lives of my interlocutors from childhood, yet people engage in various practices to help them get used to the idea of death, that is, they tame it. Most of my interlocutors at some point in their lives lived together with members of older generations and cared for them when they were about to die. They were near the person when she or he died and had witnessed various practices during funerals from early childhood. Yet, people still adopt different beliefs and practices to get used to the idea of death. Some engage in the organization of their own funerals more than others. They choose a grave plot and engrave their names and dates of birth on the gravestone, leaving a space empty for the date of death, and they inform their families about their preferences for the funeral, thus preparing for their own funeral.

These are just several examples of how people want to influence their own future funerals. People indicated to me that by doing this they did not want to burden members of their family and relatives, especially since funerals can be expensive. Here again, as in the case of Anelė's neighbour, described above, it is clear that funerals are not necessarily a matter for the bereaved alone because the person who is about to die is engaged in establishing what is seen as a degree of social justice.

To sum up, the dead body is at the disposal of the relatives and the local community. Despite having made preparations for the funeral in advance, the deceased cannot be completely sure about what happens at his or her own funeral. However, there is one set of beliefs that directly affects the treatment of the dead body and the funeral proceedings: if there are pre-death wishes, they must be fulfilled. The respectful attitude towards the deceased's wishes is influenced by the notion of the soul as present and active. The soul might be at peace, but it might also become a haunting spirit. Responsibility for how the soul of the dead will turn out rests with the living and their proper establishment of their relationship with the dead.

Death and Exchange

There is a great amount of anthropological literature dealing with the topics of death and exchange (Malinowski 1954 [1925]; Hertz 1960 [1907]; Fabian 1972; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; etc.). In this section I will focus on those aspects of the theoretical literature that correspond to my own ethnographic data and emphasize the aspects of exchange I have found lacking in these theories so far.

Equality in Death

In this chapter I have so far described the material items that people put into coffins or graves together with the dead. Not that much is in the end put into the coffin, except for a rosary and a picture of a saint, and maybe a ring or another item that has personally been requested.

Lithuanians have a saying: 'You will not take it with you into the grave' (Lith.: *Į kapą nenusinešĩ*). That is, one can accumulate as much wealth during one's life-time as one wants, but no one will be able to take it into the grave or indeed the other world. Death is envisaged as something that makes everyone equal because rich and poor alike all die.[71] In this respect death is seen as an egalitarian, equalizing force. Contemplating this further, it becomes clearer why these are the relationships that people first of all aim to maintain before death. In this chapter I have presented the examples of Agota and the misinterpreted *intersigne* of her son, who thought that his mother was about to die. This resulted in Agota's relatives gathering to feast with her while she is still alive. In this chapter I have also drawn attention to a very common topic that is discussed during funerals among those attending it, namely the promise to meet up earlier than 'on such sad occasions'. During funerals a lot of people come together, and most of them do not meet regularly or met for the last time at another funeral. Promises are thus made to meet the next time while everyone is still alive. In addition to the importance people place on relationships among the living, I also discussed two cases in which those who were about to die aimed to rectify their relationships with the living. Anelė's neighbour paid his debts just before his death, while Neringa's grandmother's primary aim in organizing her own funeral was not to overburden her family with it. Neringa and her mother, as well as the (grand)mother who was about to die, aimed at fulfilling their obligations to each other.

As all these ethnographic examples suggest, death-related practices are mainly about the formation of relationships between the living and the dead. Wakes, funerals, burials and commemorations of the dead are social arenas that represent various ties, past and present, that link people and are where obligations are particularly prominent.

Requested Gifts

This particular name for this category of gifts is suggested by two of my own ethnographic examples. First, the dead are said to request something from the living through dreams, as I have discussed in this chapter in a number of

[71] Compare with: 'Everyone is equal before the law'.

places. The other recorded case was discussed in Chapter 4, when I described how the priest asked for extra money from his parishioners by personally coming to their homes, or the priest officially asked parishioners to come and help clean up the church grounds. Yet, the more I analysed my fieldwork material, the more cases appeared to fall under the category of requested giving.

My category of requested gifts gathers together all the exchanges that the living engage in after being asked to do so. These can be gifts the living give to the dead, but there might also be gifts the living give to the living as a consequence of their relationship to the dead. For example, people give to beggars or priests to ask prayers to be said for the dead. Similarly, coming to someone's funeral might be an obligatory as well as a voluntary act. Obligation arises from the receipt of an invitation: if an individual is not personally informed about the death of someone they know and the subsequent wake and funeral, then he or she will not come to these events. Accordingly, if an individual is informed about the wake and the funeral, then that individual is expected to attend one or both of these events. Attending the funeral is thus an obligatory gift after receiving an invitation. This obligation to participate might not be openly expressed, but it is voiced as voluntary participation and thus as a recognition of the honour of the deceased or support to the bereaved. Mauss emphasizes that gifts are voluntary and obligatory at the same time (1990 [1925]). Invitations to participate in potlatches were as important to the Kwakiutl as actual participation. Invitations are thus requests to participate or be present, and they must be fulfilled in order to maintain the relationship with the one doing the inviting. Consequently, coming to the funeral is an obligatory gift after receiving an invitation – a request to participate, which is, despite everything, often represented as a voluntary act.

The result of requested giving is usually a reaffirmation of the relationship with the person asking. As Kan noted in his discussion of potlatches, participation in them confirms group membership (1996). According to my own observations, obligations to participate are even stronger if there are kinship or friendship ties with the deceased or with the bereaved who have extended the invitation. Participation in such cases is simultaneously confirmation of an existing relationship and a future-oriented act to maintain that relationship.

Another important set of obligatory behaviours linked to death are the duties of the relatives. Those closest to the deceased are those who organize and take charge of the funeral and invitations to it. They are also the ones who are most affected by the duties of mourning. In Chapter 5 I have discussed the role that prayers play in maintaining people's relationships

with their dead relatives. In the context of this chapter too, prayers were considered a means whereby relatives fulfil their obligations to the dead.

The ethnographic data discussed in this chapter support the idea that relatives have obligations and add another important angle to it. It is not only the bereaved who feel obligations towards the deceased relative: the person who is about to die also feels obliged not to overburden the family and relatives with the problems that death and the organization of the funeral might create. As with Neringa's grandmother's preparations or the coffin in the attic, people aim not to leave too many arrangements to their bereaved relatives, but prefer to take matters into their own hands. To prepare for one's own funeral is a way of easing the 'burden', that is, the duty or obligatory responses of one's relatives. The very phrase 'not to burden' that my interlocutors used in fact supports the notion that the bereaved do have obligations and duties towards their deceased relatives.

Anthropologists have pointed out several aspects of the obligations that related people feel towards each other in the context of death. Durkheim (2001 [1912]) argued that mourning is a rite that manifests collective rather than personal obligation. Hertz (1960 [1907]), too, pointed to the social obligations that are evoked by death and that are expressed during funerary rites. He argued that a dead person is still part of a society and that the living are therefore obliged to take care of and respect the deceased. Death, according to Hertz (1960 [1907]), is a transitory state of a certain duration (see also Van Gennep 1960 [1909]), while the length of the mourning period varies according to the degree of kinship. Mourning, as Malinowski argued (1954 [1925]), is usually carried out by means of visible signs associated with grief and has a certain aspect of public display. Rosaldo claimed that the work of grieving occurs in both obligatory ritual acts and everyday settings (1993 [1989]). Similarly, authors have approached mourning as work (e.g. Rosaldo 1993 [1989]), or as a duty and an obligation to express sorrow (Hertz 1960 [1907]). Moreover, mourning is largely a female duty, a form of emotional work and therefore frequently gendered work (Scheper-Hughes 1992). Morta's words, 'people talk', cited in an earlier subsection, resonate here, as they emphasize the social rather than the personal aspect of taking extensive care of graves.

In sum, the purpose of this section has been to draw attention to the power of requests in acts of giving. As I have shown, requested gifts can be influenced by the living as well as the dead. In many cases behaviour in response to a request is an obligatory social act, which is nevertheless often presented as a voluntary act. Invitations to and participation in events are good examples in this respect. Consequently, it is the social rather than the individual aspects of obligatory giving that need to be sufficiently

acknowledged. In responding to requests to give or participate, people affirm and maintain their social relationships.

Death Takes, Life Is a Gift

Although I have suggested that death is largely understood as an equalizing force, in certain situations it is also understood as taking: it takes life, people, cattle, sources of income and the like.

Drawing on archival data and my own ethnography, I have presented instances in which this perception is most frequent. The death of a person has an impact on the household, and the dead can come to take the living (see also Vaitkevičienė and Vaitkevičius 1998). As archival data suggest, death can not only take people, it can also affect cattle, bees or other sources of livelihood (cf. Bourdieu 1970). Even the households of relatives or neighbours should be careful for a certain period of time in order not to see their wealth negatively affected. Such beliefs, I have argued, are interwoven with agriculture and extended families. Beliefs I ethnographically recorded dealt with a particular scenario of dreams about the dead: the dead invite or take the living with them. Such dreams were understood as signs of an approaching death.

The perception of death as 'taking something' is largely related to the perception of life as a gift. In this chapter I have described cases of suicides in the context of the underlying Catholic notion that one cannot decide about the end of one's life, since life is not in one's personal ownership. Being born is understood as something received, something given. Belief in the predetermined aspect of life is reflected in the archival record stating that the souls of suicides are thought to wander in this world until their time comes. The idea of life as a gift influences the notion of the soul alone, while the biological body falls into a different category, since that is perceived as the property of the person.[72]

The relationship between life and death reveals itself in another instance as well: when people say that someone has paid the highest price, they mean that someone has died. Thus life as a gift given by God in general appears to have the highest worth. However, this understanding that one is

[72] The other common discussion that links the themes of death, body and the gift of life is that concerning transplants from bodies that in medical terms are considered dead, or brain dead to be more precise. I have no field data to support the relationship between the two themes, therefore I will not discuss this topic in any more detail. However, it is worth mentioning that the phrase 'gift of life' acquires a new meaning, value and moral evaluation in the context of organ donations. The life that has been prolonged or, in more popular terms, the life that has been saved is treated as a gift. It thus blurs the line between the gift of a body part and the gift of life in a more general sense.

paying the highest price is closely related to the perception of sacrifice. Christian dogma helps us clarify this point. Here I refer to the significance of Jesus' crucifixion. God's son's death is said to bring humans into a new relationship with God. Jesus' sacrificial death reunites humans and God. However, Jesus' death not only gives, his sacrificial and redemptive death not only reaffirms the relationship between humans and God, it also makes humans indebted to God. As Hubert and Mauss (1964) as well as Schneider (1990) noted in relation to the sacrifice of the Christian God, the sacrifice of the divine is something humans can never repay. This brings me back to Chapter 2, where I discuss primordial indebtedness.

Concluding Remarks

Death, funerals and mourning have long been of interest to anthropologists. In various anthropological studies death appears as an individual as well as a collective matter. In this chapter, I have described the relationships that my interlocutors aimed at creating, affirming and maintaining in cases of death and have introduced relevant archival and ethnographic data collected during my fieldwork.

There are several reasons why I have incorporated archival material into this chapter: it serves as background information before I introduce my fieldwork material and also corresponds to the data I gathered during my fieldwork. It also positions certain beliefs and practices historically while demonstrating their continuity temporally and spatially (since the archives summon up the data collected at various periods of time and in various regions of Lithuania). Moreover, the data constantly appeared in the Card Index of Beliefs. I have summarized the archival material concerning death, the deceased, the soul, the other world and various funerary practices. First, the archival material reveals that the living are responsible for establishing a proper relationship with the dead and influence the fate of the soul. Secondly, people communicate with the deceased through dreams (in some cases through hauntings or signs in nature). And finally, one of my most important findings in the discussion of the archival material supports my fieldwork data and the argument I pursue in this chapter: this concerns the requests the living receive from the dead and their fulfilment, which I refer to as requested gifts.

In general there were no contradictions between the archival material and my ethnographic data. The latter has rather added significant points to the relationships established and maintained between the living and the dead and emphasized the roles that requests, invitations, masses and prayers play in relation to exchange practices. Furthermore, it emphasizes the significant link between funerals and kinship. Funerals appear as social arenas

manifesting ties that link living participants to each other as much as they are manifestations of ties that link the living bereaved and the dead. Invitations and subsequent participation in funerals and commemorative practices are instrumental in reaffirming these contacts.

A Lithuanian saying about the limited amount of material items one can put into a coffin allows me to emphasize the significance of the relationships that people cultivate instead. I began the ethnographic discussion with an account of misinterpreted *intersignes* of Agota's son and her relatives gathering to feast with her while she was still alive. In relation to that I presented Anelė's neighbour's case, which revealed that it is not only the living who try to rectify or affirm their relationship with the person who is about to die, but that the latter tries to maintain relationships with the living as well. As a result, the person who is about to die initiates the return of debts, finishes unfinished tasks, pays visits, etc.

I then described the material aspects of funerals and the commemoration of the dead in a section about the items placed in coffins and graves, as well as the section on how graves are decorated. Cemeteries and the graves of family members are important sites of commemoration of and relations with the dead, which also make the respect and care for the deceased in visually aestheticized graves materialize. Respect and honour for the dead, participation in funerals, commemoration masses and caring for the grave are therefore activities manifesting important ties of kinship.

In this chapter I have also shown that a person who is about to die engages in material and immaterial preparations for his or her own funeral. Although this is a way of influencing one's own funeral, such pre-death involvement also reflects a desire to ease the 'burden' of death for the bereaved. The notion of a burden emphasizes the fact that the bereaved are obliged to undertake certain actions in the case of the death of a family member.

Finally, my ethnographic data have shown that the dead and the living communicate through dreams and that the symbols and signs of those dreams influence the actions of the living. Dreams about the dead provide veritable information about God and the other world, more so than the day-time masses, the priest or the scriptures. The relationships in which the dead and the living are engaged are created and maintained in several steps: (1) rituals that accompany dying and funerals, (2) commemoration rites, and (3) carrying out the requests of the dead. Although the worlds of the living and the dead can exchange information, the cosmological order cannot be broken, that is, the two worlds remain separate. The separation of this world and the other world, to which the soul of the dead belongs, starts at the immediate moment of death and all through the funerary rituals.

Commemorative rites, on the other hand, affirm already established relationships. As I have argued in a number of places in this book, it is not the item given but the act of giving that is most important. Thus, it is not important how much the flowers for the grave cost, but it is important that they are present on it. This is important for the grave's carer, as well as being a sign of attention for the dead that is materialized for other members of the community to see.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

Based on ethnographic data, this book has shown how Catholicism maintains itself in a society to a significant and so far underestimated extent by means of the relationships formed from exchange practices and Catholic doctrines. I began with two observations, which led me to the idea for my fieldwork. First of all, although Catholic doctrines, scriptures and their explanations, as well as rituals, are abundant in connotations of the gift, sacrifice and exchange, thus far Catholicism has been neglected by exchange theorists. Secondly, I adverted to the historical background of Mauss's notion of the gift, which has been a response to the two leading conceptualizations of property in his time: the communist and the capitalist. Mauss's *The Gift* (1990 [1925]) drew the reader's attention to an alternative type of economy existing in societies around the world, past and present. He approached social relations between individuals, groups and institutions by means of items and their exchange, a particular type of ownership and the (re)production of social obligations.

These two observations taken together suggest a question: was it not these gifts, donations and exchanges of material and immaterial kinds that kept the Catholic Church in Lithuania active under different economic systems (in Soviet as well as capitalist periods)? Based on ethnographic research, this book is an analysis of social interrelatedness and its reproduction among Catholics in southern Lithuania.

In what follows I will return to the similarities between the theoretical notion of the gift and the ethnographically prominent concept of *auka*. After this I will remind readers of the various gifts and *auka* that people exchanged in my field site and discuss how Catholic roles and institutions are reproduced through them. I then position the various exchanges from my field site in short- and long-term transactional cycles and end this conclusion with reflections on the conceptual and ethnographic significance of studying (post)socialism, Catholicism and gift exchange together.

Auka and the Gift in Social Reproduction

My interlocutors described the gifts they gave to the church, the priest, the dead, beggars and God using the noun *auka*. *Auka* is used for the monetary contributions that are collected during religious ceremonies (offerings), the gifts (monetary or service) given to the church or the priest (donations), or something valuable and precious someone has given up (sacrifice). As discussed in Chapter 2, the Lithuanian noun *auka* and the verb *aukoti* bring the three English words donation, offering and sacrifice together. *Auka* can be material (money, food items, wood, cloth, etc.) or immaterial (prayers, time, physical labour or service). Furthermore, *auka* can embody different values, depending on the efforts required by the giver. Interlocutors spoke about 'our own *auka*' or 'spiritual *auka*' in the sense of devoting oneself in the name of others or in the name of good, which in Lithuanian is sometimes also called 'giving oneself' (Lith.: *atsidavimas*) or self-sacrifice (Lith.: *pasiaukojimas*). For *auka* to be given, one needs a giver and a receiver. *Auka* can demand resources from the giver and can be invested with the giver's intentions, feelings, personal expectations and the like. It follows that there is a part of the person in the *auka they give*. This perception of *auka* resembles the Maussian notion of the gift, in which the given material or immaterial item also bears some part of the giver.

Auka can also be monetary. However, according to my interlocutors, even if *auka* consists of money, giving money to the priest does not turn the transaction into mere buying or selling. As one of my interlocutors put it, money is just a means to ensure something happens: giving money guarantees that the priest has enough to pay for his petrol and will arrive at the church to say the masses and pray for the deceased. Parishioners who request a mass and therefore give money to the priest refuse to call this transaction buying and instead describe the items given as a contribution, which ensures that social roles will be maintained. The priest too argued for the correct use of words when requesting a mass: masses are not bought nor sold. As such, given and accepted *auka* are perceived similarly to Mauss's conceptualization of the gift because the *auka* aims at social reproduction rather than the exchange of items and services in a tit-for-tat manner.

Auka and *aukoti* are also words that are used plentifully during the main Catholic Church ritual – the mass. In fact, one of my interlocutors described the essence of the mass in this way: 'the mass is the renewal of a covenant.… The covenant – a contract with God – was renewed through bloody or unbloody *auka*.… It was done in order to restore the connection with God.… [During the mass] it is said: "this is the *auka* of the new covenant"' (Akvilė [b. 1959], int. 19.2.2009). The interpretation of the central Catholic ritual as a binding agreement that is renewed through *auka*

recalls Mauss's description of the gift: *auka* mediates relationships. The Catholic compact is repeated during each mass and is reinforced by the material and immaterial items that are exchanged. People renew their relations (with the Church, the divine, the dead) and their roles (of priest or parishioner) through the material and immaterial gifts that circulate between them.

In sum, ethnographically *auka* characterizes the act of giving rather than the object or the service given. The item of exchange is important only to the extent that it secures a socio-religious situation and relations between the parishioners, the priest, God and the dead. Given and accepted *auka* display social contracts, ensure social situations, and provide the two transacting parties with their identities and roles. *Auka* given to the church in the form of money, time, labour or other material or immaterial items of exchange is thus not lost, but is socially reproductive (Mauss 1990 [1925]: 55). Consequently, the perception of the most common word used in exchanges among Catholics in my field site – *auka* – is equivalent to the Maussian notion of the gift.

The Affirmation of Relationships

Having stated the importance of the reproduction of relations in and through *auka*, I now turn to the Catholic doctrines and practices that help form these cultivated relationships.

The Church, the Priest and the Parishioners

In their descriptions of what the word 'church' means, people in my field site often referred to it as 'the house of God' or 'the house of believers'. In Lithuanian, the word for a house is *namai,* which denotes both home and house. In Chapter 4, I analysed exchange practices between the parishioners and the church-house and argued that describing the church as a home-house means ascribing domestic and household characteristics to it. The discussion showed that various material and immaterial items circulate in such exchanges: home-woven cloths, home-grown flowers, time spent cleaning and decorating the church and its surroundings, personal involvement and participation in the more festive flow of rituals, homemade food, money, prayers, singing, collecting berries and mushrooms in the local forest and the like. These items of exchange either come directly from the homes of parishioners or are an outcome of individually invested time and energy. Consequently, the parish church is constituted by parishioners' homes, household items and activities. It is no accident, then, that people identify a direct link between their *auka* and the church, as well as the state it is in:

people perceive it as undeniable that the economic resources of the parishioners are reflected in the church building and its condition. The parish church is thus a building representative of the parish. It conveys information to locals and visitors to the area about the wealth of the parishioners and their contributions to the maintenance of the church. For these reasons Vilktaka church is compared with other churches.

However, the church-house is not the responsibility of the parishioners alone. The 'first string', as one of the parishioners put it, in the economic life of the church is the priest, who is also called the master of church-housekeeping. The collection and allocation of *auka* makes the priest the 'head' of the church household. The priest pays the bills and salaries of the staff, organizes the maintenance to be done, etc.

In addition to the material maintenance of the church-house, the priest creates the church household from within. In the mass he hosts and feeds the people, he equates being in church to being at table, and he compares acceptance of the sacramental bread and wine to the feeling of having eaten and being full. When the priest addresses people during the mass, he does so in words that remind church-goers of the ties of kinship that link them to one another (as brothers and sisters) and to the deities (e.g. God's children, God the Father, Mother Mary, etc.). The close relationship between the ordinary parish household and the local church becomes even closer in light of what is stressed during each mass: familial and marital ties, brotherly and sisterly love and parenthood. Hence, the reproduction of the Catholic Church and the Catholic community in the parish happens through the repeated organization of church-goers into a spiritually familial unit that shares God the Father's consecrated bread and wine. Catholic interrelatedness rests on the reproduction of such familial, kinship and household relationships elicited during the mass.

The Catholic Church in Lithuania depends financially on the material and immaterial *auka* of its parishioners. By reaffirming ritual kinship during each mass, Catholic practices and doctrines also reproduce financial obligations towards the church household. After all, the family unit is related not only to the responsibilities of kinship, but also to property rights (Hann 2008). It was no accident that the church hierarchy and the priest in my field site emphasized the significance of church attendance: to lack people in the church is directly linked to the failings of the local church in general. Thus, to go to church is to support the church-house with one's *auka* and to prevent its collapse.

However, as discussed in Chapter 5, the way the clergy described an empty church differed from the way the people in my field site judged its emptiness. The clergy emphasized the overall quantity of people present in

the church, while for parishioners their church was empty because it lacked a specific generation. Through their stress on the lack of young people present, parishioners expressed their concern that after their death there will be no one to take care of the church and that it will collapse. A full church is thus a space with a significant number of people who can supply the church with economic value not only today, but also in the future. This approach reveals a close relationship between the church as a heritable parish property and its tie to social practice. Going to church is therefore an important Catholic practice, one that is also associated with inheritance of the commitments and obligations that are to be maintained (Bourdieu 1999 [1977]).

In addition to the local perception of the church as a parish house sustained by a spiritually linked familial unit and its financial input, there is another set of Catholic doctrines that contribute to the upkeep of the church: the relationship between Catholics and God (discussed in Chapter 2). For Catholics the human relationship with the divine is based on a particular type of exchange: upon birth and baptism the individual is made the carrier of the major gifts of God – one's soul and one's life. These existential inalienable gifts create human indebtedness to God, which is, moreover, at the root of a subordinate relationship between the gift-giver and the gift-receiver (Graeber 2011). The inalienable gift of life turns the Catholic into a child of God and also his servant. From the moment he or she receives this invaluable gift of life, the Catholic enters into a sequence of exchanges that turn him or her into a giving and asking party. This strengthens one's dependence on God's will. Furthermore, Jesus' redemptive sacrifice is the second time people have been given life, which has made them indebted yet again.

Sustaining humans' indebtedness to God is crucial for the Catholic Church because debt establishes an ongoing relationship. Being able to return a debt means replacing the hierarchical positions between transactors and restoring equality, in this way breaking the continuity of the relationship (Graeber 2011). The inalienable gift of life given by God, Jesus' redemptive act and human indebtedness all therefore form the bedrock of the Catholic Church's structure, rituals, values and exchange practices.

Going to Church: Time and Social Space

In my analysis going to church emerged empirically as a significant Catholic practice (discussed in Chapter 5). Both laity and clergy saw it as a display and testimony of belief that is directly linked to the acquisition of religious knowledge. The Soviet anti-religion campaign and its monitoring of church attendance do not contradict this.

People in my field site describe their Catholicism with reference to the number of times they go to church. It is not the strength of belief or

knowledge of Catholic dogmas they emphasize when defining themselves as Catholics. Rather, they cite the times, festivities and other occasions on which they go to church. Going to church is an important practice that 'non-practicing Catholics' thought they were not doing enough of. It is the practice of going to church that defines and differentiates those who are called or call themselves Catholic. For this reason, this action should be considered the main Catholic ritual in an anthropological sense (Bell 1992).

However, during my fieldwork most parishioners did not go to church. Their reasons were diverse and ranged from poor health and the lack of transport to dislike of the priest. Very rarely did people provide a belief-related reason for not going to church. Rather, it was time and presence in a particular space that were at the centre of the conflict of exchange between the parishioners and the priest. While the priest often described his role in the parish as the one who was giving (the Host, divine wisdom, the qualitatively valuable time of the mass), his parishioners were often not eager to receive and instead portrayed the priest as taking up too much of their time. The roles and obligations of the priest and the parishioners were renegotiated through time and presence in a church space, which became items in exchange: they defined each group's position and served as a resource in the production and reconfiguration of the Catholic social space. Consequently, going to church appears as a spatial and temporal acknowledgement of the respective roles of the parishioners and the priest. Going to church means not only giving your time and bringing your soul and body to the church space, but also relating yourself to others socially and spatially.

This is not the only exchange that keeps social relations between the parishioners and the priest intact. In Chapters 4 and 6 I introduced the category of requested gifts, a powerful tool with which to manage social relations within the parish as well. As one example of a requested gift I presented a working rally: one of those many times a year the priest asks parishioners to carry out a particular piece of work. He then absents himself from the communal working group, but thanks everyone during the mass afterwards. I consider this a strategy to influence certain roles and keep them intact. The priest maintains his distance from the parishioners by not working with them, while the parishioners affirm their positions through the tasks they fulfil.

Requested gifts and communal giving are therefore ways of managing social distance within the parish. Such gifts are acknowledgements that parishioners and priests have distinct roles and contribute to the church in different ways. The result is twofold: keeping up social relationships and at the same time maintaining a social distance between the separate roles

through exchange. Communal giving also demonstrates that the priest and the church are dependent on the parishioners, their labour and the time they give to the church.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the location and time of praying are central to the clergy defining church-goers and non-church-goers. For some parishioners, belief in God is not necessarily related to presence in the church, but rather to praying outside the church. For other parishioners it is specifically the time of the mass and the common prayers that provide reasons for their physical presence in the church. The emphasis that the Catholic clergy places on going to church, praying and accepting the Host is therefore about the spatial acknowledgement and maintenance of a socio-religious relationship.

Participation in the mass, moreover, can be qualitatively different for every individual present in the church. This varying qualitative difference in one's church attendance emphasizes yet again that it is going to church and not the mass itself which is most important for Catholics. After all, it is this particular activity that is mentioned by the clergy and the laity when describing Catholics and their obligations.

The Living and the Dead

There are other relationships that relate people to the priest and encourage their going to church, which, together with the strength of certain Catholic doctrines, further influence exchanges: relationships between the living and the dead. The death of a family member is a time when even non-church-going parishioners attend masses and ask the priest to pray. I emphasized two main points about the relationship between the living and the dead in Chapter 6. One relates to the actions that those who are about to die undertake in order to prepare for a proper relationship between the living and the dead. Preparations for one's own funeral show that the relationship between the living and the dead (the soul) starts earlier than at the moment of death. Secondly, the relationship between the living and the dead does not end with the burial of the deceased, but continues through commemoration rites, caring for the grave, prayers and dreams. Kinship obligations become most salient and are publicly exhibited precisely during and after funerals.

People in my field site engaged in various material and immaterial preparations for the day of their death. Among their preparations were the choice of clothes, a coffin and a grave plot, as well as having their name and date of birth engraved on the tombstone and the like. Other preparations, which occurred closer to the day of death, might have included returning debts, paying visits to neighbours or relatives, finishing unfinished tasks and organizing their own funerals further. The person who is about to die usually

presents such actions as a desire 'not to burden' the bereaved family members and thus emphasizes kinship-related duties. Calling the organization of a funeral a burden just strengthens the fact that the bereaved are obliged to undertake certain actions at the deaths of family members. When the person who is about to die relieves his or her relatives from obligations, she or he cares about the future relationship between them. The saying about the limited amount of material items one can put into a coffin emphasizes the significance of the relationships that people cultivate instead.

By properly carrying out funerary and commemorative rites and caring for the grave, people establish and reaffirm relationships between the living and the dead. The aestheticized grave is an important material site commemorating and showing respect for the deceased. After the burial, the ties that bind the living and the dead continue through dreams and prayers. In dreams the dead inform the bereaved about the need for prayers and special masses. This directly influences the exchange practices the bereaved undertake. People stress that praying is a significant element in keeping up their relations with the dead because it is by praying that people reiterate specific social connections. In this book prayers appear not only as an item of exchange, but also as a means to meet one's kinship obligations to the dead.

All in all, funerals and participation in them are an affirmation of the relationships that bind the living and the dead as much as they emphasize relationships among the living. I observed that participation in funerals is sometimes contradictory, as it is voluntary and obligatory at the same time. Attending a funeral is sometimes an obligatory gift after receiving an invitation. However, people do not openly communicate this obligation. Instead, it is voiced as a voluntary expression of honour for the deceased and as support for the bereaved. This is precisely how Mauss (1990 [1925]) defined the essence of the gift: it is obligatory-voluntary. Invitations are thus requests for participation that must be fulfilled in order to cultivate a relationship with the person doing the inviting. Obligations to participate are even stronger if there are ties of kinship or friendship involved. Consequently, invitations to funerals are significant in gift-exchange terms because they confirm an existing relationship and are seen as an act that maintains it for the future.

Furthermore, I have discussed invitations to participate in funerals as an illustration of Bourdieu's 'circular reinforcement' (1999 [1977]; Chapter 2 and Chapter 6). Invitations are often exchanged and circulate among people and groups, in this way making their relations continuous and reciprocal. Invitations and participation are important in gift-exchange terms because they are given, accepted and returned. In other words, they are ways

to confirm and reinforce groups and individual adherence to them in circular fashion.

The ethnographic material has shown that death-related practices emphasize the significant aspects of exchange that masses, prayers, requests and invitations have for people in my field site.

One last aspect regarding death is related to belief in general. Chapter 3 discussed how religious belief is sometimes ascribed to rural areas and women over seventy. My empirical data opposes such stereotypes and the perception that people either believe or do not believe. Belief and uncertainty were not opposed, but complemented each other. 'We die and we see' was a common expression among my interlocutors. Ultimately approaching death and the stored coffin in the attic put everything worldly and related to life into perspective. It was not particular Catholic doctrines or the frequency of church attendance that were the primary sources of interpretation about life, but the undeniable truth that death will treat everyone equally anyway.

Short- and Long-term Transactions

I position the exchanges I have described between the parishioners, the priest, the church and the dead in respect of Parry and Bloch's structure of short- and long-term cycles (1989). As presented in Chapter 2, these two separate transactional orders are vital to each other. Short-term transactions are individual in nature, are acquisitive and may have competitive goals, but they are a substantial part of long-term transactions, which are oriented towards long-term social, moral and cosmic orders. What is important is that short-term cycle gains must always be subordinated to the long-term cycle of reproduction.

As it appears in this book, individuals have different strategies, motivations and gifts they give to the priest, the church and the dead. These can be considered short-term transactions. Likewise, people may have different personal preferences about the times they go to church; they may prefer one priest over the other; they may formulate their own approach to God or believe in reincarnation. But simultaneously people see themselves and their actions in terms of a long-term cycle and position their actions in the wider perspective of the relationships they want to create, maintain and reproduce. As a consequence, people may not go to church and openly declare their agnosticism, but at the same time they donate money to the parish church and regularly visit their deceased mother's grave.

Other long-term transactions include the tactics people in my field site followed during Soviet times, such as baptising children at night and getting married in a church in another town. These secret actions may have been

ways to preserve a government position and avoiding records being entered into personal files. But the fact that such secret choices were made despite the state's atheist indoctrination demonstrates that people positioned their short-term secret actions within a long-term moral perspective.

Furthermore, my ethnography showed people prioritizing the act of giving over what or how much is given. People say that it is not the money and its amount that are important, but what that money guarantees: money secures the church building, its lighting, the altar servers, the priest and consequently also the ritual and the prayers. It is the act of giving alone, not the particular material or immaterial gift, that is socially reproductive because it displays social contracts and affirms the relationships, roles and identities of transacting parties. This leads to the conclusion that giving gifts is aimed at sustaining the morally acceptable long-term cycle that encompasses the church, the priest and the dead.

Lastly, short- and long-term transactional orders do not contradict Mauss's argument that even though exchanges may be carried out by individuals, it is group morality that motivates exchange and is expressed in it. These short-term transactional orders are carried out by parishioners, but such exchanges are perceived as a substantial part of long-term transactions, which are oriented towards the long-term social and moral existence of the parish and the church.

(Post)Socialism, Catholicism and the Gift

In this book I have drawn on material about anti-religious historical campaigns in order to learn more about 'religion' (Bloch 2010; Luehrmann 2011). I have discussed the Soviet atheism campaign and the 'religion' it was combatting. The analysis in Chapter 3 revealed that, while waiting for religion's 'natural death', the communist government engaged in administrative and social means of controlling and ultimately eliminating religion from the institutional and everyday life of society. Religion was identified as closely interwoven with political, educational and social-humanitarian institutions. The Soviet tactic with regard to religious communities was to limit as far as possible religious communities' scope for action in society. This included their public visibility (e.g. church buildings), as well as their catechizing, publishing and charitable activities. The evangelization and religious education of children and young people were discouraged and monitored, as was the production and circulation of religious literature. Religious communities could not officially engage in social-aid functions. Church masses were considered occasions for the dissemination and reproduction of religious ideas. Therefore, church attendance was observed, and masses were recorded and reported.

Furthermore, religion was seen as represented in buildings. Many churches were therefore transformed into stores, factories, galleries, etc. Religion was also seen in ritual acts, like going to church and participating in masses, baptisms, weddings and funerals. Because of this, the Soviet state territorialized and marginalized religious practices and the priests' scope for action. And last but not least, the Soviet anti-religious campaign approached 'being religious' as 'being in a relationship'. The ultimate aim of the Soviets was therefore to alter relationships, especially those of individuals and divinities, saints and spirits, which were considered threats to human solidarity.

The postsocialist period reinstituted the understanding of 'religion' in Lithuania: church buildings were officially returned to congregations, politicians and religious leaders openly manifested their co-operation, individuals received legal support in freely expressing their religious world views by going to church and attending masses unmonitored. People were able to publish and distribute religious literature and rebury their exiled relatives in Lithuania without being considered enemies of the system.

However, what remains unchanged from Soviet times into independent Lithuania is the fact that the incomes of religious communities, associations and centres come from donations or sales of assets obtained through charity. This is the source of the earnings of priests, altar servers and maintenance staff. Even though for communism religion was a matter of the creation and maintenance of relationships, the atheism campaign did nothing to address such economically vital Catholic practices as give and take. The significance of exchange practices for the Catholic clergy, parishioners and the latter's deceased family members and how this guarantees the life of religious communities and the clergy was neglected by the communist government. Therefore, as this book has demonstrated, exchanges between parishioners, priests and the dead were and remain vital for the survival of the Catholic Church in Lithuania.

In conclusion, this suggests a different approach to the study of contemporary religious groups. The Catholic Church is allegedly the wealthiest institution in the world and, on the basis of this book, it is safe to say that the gift economy has always been a vital source of its strength. Politically and economically it is powerful precisely because of the relationships created by its doctrines and exchange practices. Historically the Catholic Church has been known for maintaining a balance between taking and giving (Goody 2000) in respect of the collection of *auka* and its charitable activities. It is time to approach this world religion from a different angle to understand how it establishes relations among people. I suggest that it does so through acts of gift exchange between parishioners,

the church, the priests and the dead, acts that mediate relationships and (re)produce Catholics and Catholicism.

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