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TRADITIONS IN DIALOGUE: CELEBRATION PATTERNS AMONG POLISH MIGRANTS IN ICELAND

Migration, living in another country exposes one to culture contact and initiates the integration process. The integration of migrants is usually discussed using an acculturation model in the form proposed for example by John Berry. Instead, in this article, I take the concept of intercultural communication as it better renders integration as a dynamic practice of reconstructing and redefining culture forms in the culturally diverse environment, where different lifestyles and values coexist. Importantly, as I try to show, taking the example of Polish migrants in Iceland, changing patterns of celebrations are not only influenced by the receiving culture but also by global images.

Key words: Migration, integration, patterns of celebration, global culture

1. INTRODUCTION

International migrations can be seen as a form of culture contact. When moving to another country, an immigrant encounters oddity, articulated in unfamiliarity of the space and landscape, strangeness of the language and local customs. He or she does not share common memories or experiences with people s/he meets in the new place. The situation of cultural contact can bring contradictory feelings – enthusiasm and curiosity on one hand or confusion, uncertainty, and misunderstandings on the other. This condition was given the name *culture shock* (Oberg 1960) or *acculturation stress*. Both of these concepts, although strictly speaking, are not medical, conventionally tend to be discussed as a form of disorder (Furnham and Bochner 1986). They refer to the psychological, somatic, and social difficulties that may result from cross-cultural interaction. Recognized symptoms include anxiety, frustration, hostility, bewilderment, homesickness, denial, lethargy among others (Furnham and Bochner 1986: xvi). Accordingly, the recommended remedy relies on clinical treatment – counselling, reassurance, and support (Bochner 1986).

However, culture contact can be understood in communication terms. There is no one definition of culture commonly agreed upon by anthropologists, but it can be defined as "taken-for-granted but powerfully influential understandings and codes that are learned and shared by members of a group" (Peacock 2001: 7). Thus, culture constitutes the communication grounds for a certain community, where others intentions seem evident and

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are interpreted without a trouble. Only contact with strangeness displays the local and conventional character of such a system of meanings (Bauman 1991). Due to migration, smoothness of communication gets disturbed. Suddenly one discovers that words, gestures or actions can be misread and confused. Hence, the crossing of physical distance translates into communication distance. Culture contact provokes to dialogue.

In this article, I examine the patterns of holidays and celebrations among Polish migrants in Iceland as an example of response to cultural contact and living in cultural diversity. How did moving to another country influence traditions brought from the home country? Do Poles keep their home customs or take over "Icelandic" ones? How did "Polish" traditions change their role and meanings in the new cultural settings? The article is based on ethnographical data that was mostly collected for my doctoral dissertation[1], but I also use some earlier material gathered for my master's work. The interviews were taken between 1996 and 2006 in Reykjavik as well as in other parts of Iceland, where Polish migrants resided.

2. CULTURE CONTACT AND ACCULTURATION

Confronted with new cultural settings immigrants undergo changes. These changes, initiated by culture contact, are discussed under concepts of integration, assimilation or acculturation depending on the theoretical affiliation of the researcher. Although culture contact has consequences on both groups in contact, many of the studies focus on the changes in the non-dominant one. Immigrants' adjustment is a complex process that comprises various phenomena, such as stereotyping, social, political and economic participation, spatial integration, social mobility, intermarriage, and identification (Grzymała-Kazłowska and Łodziński 2008; Lucassen *et al.* 2006). Since in this article I focus on changes in celebration patterns and approaches to tradition, I am predominantly interested in cultural aspects and individual responses to culture contact. Needless to say, how immigrants adjust depends on many factors, for example character of migration, reception of the host society as well as integration policies in the receiving country. Importantly, most of the contemporary integration policies leave immigrants freedom to perform their beliefs or traditions as long as they do not openly violate local values.

Classical theories, such as acculturation theory formulated by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (Redfield *et al.* 1956) or Gordon's assimilation theory (Gordon 1964) are conventionally criticized for seeing the adjustment process as unilateral, gradually proceeding towards full acceptance of new cultural traits and values. However, already early studies like the one done by Thomas and Znaniecki at the beginning of the 20th century showed that immigrant groups tend to develop specific cultural patterns that differ both from the old and new ones (Thomas and Znaniecki 1996). Thus, more recent approaches try to avoid

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foreseeing inevitable outcomes of the adjustment process and instead identify different directions it can take and factors that shape it. For example, a popular model formulated in the field of cross-cultural psychology distinguishes two basic axes of the acculturation model – on the one hand it is the level of participation in the host society and on the other hand – the degree of cultural maintenance (Berry 2001). When intersected, these two axes give four possible acculturation strategies pursued by immigrants: integration (participation in the society simultaneously remaining culturally distinct), assimilation (participating accompanied by taking over the host identity), separation (limited participation in intergroup relations with high value given to cultural maintenance), and marginalization (lack of participation with simultaneous rejection of hitherto cultural identity). Even Berry's model seems to be more complex than classical assimilation theory, it does not differ so much with respect to the cultural values and practices brought by immigrants, assuming that they either preserve or abandon their native cultural identity and values.

Conversely, social psychologist Stephen Bochner (Bochner 1986) recognizes four possible responses to second culture influences. Those are: rejecting the culture of origin in favour of a new culture (passing), rejection of a new culture with retreat into the first one (chauvinism), vacillation between two cultures (marginal syndrome) and finally synthesizing two cultures that leads to a new identity, named by Bochner as "integrated", "bi-culture" or "mediating" personality (Bochner 1986: 349). This model could be disputed as assuming cultures as static units, however, what is interesting in Bochner's approach is that he conceptualizes discomfort resulting from culture contact as failed verbal or non-verbal communication rather than shock or stress as it is understood in many of the acculturation theories, thus he avoids medical terminology. He defined acculturation as second culture learning, meaning the acquisition of indispensable skills that allow for successful performance in the new society. Through participation and interacting an immigrant attains what Edward Hall (Hall 1998: 55) would identify as tacit aspects of culture, which are ones that are not learned in the usual sense but acquired in the process of growing up or simply being in.

Such an understanding of acculturation corresponds with theories of intercultural or cross-cultural communication, where culture is seen as communication and communication as ongoing negotiations of meanings (Hall 1998; Casmir 1999). One of the advantages of taking the intercultural communication approach to the study of immigrant adjustment is its dynamic definition of culture. Classical theories of acculturation or assimilation often assumed host cultures as undifferentiated and monolithic. To overcome this shortcoming, the concept of segmented assimilation was introduced. According to this theory immigrants assimilate to particular sectors of society (Zhou 1997). However, multicultural communication has a broader meaning, since it occurs not only as a result of intensified international migrations, but also as a consequence of growing global interconnectivity and the flow of ideas. Most of contemporary societies undergo transformations due to consumerism and global processes. Neither sending nor receiving cultures remain static. It seems important to recognize that immigrants are not only influenced by the values of the host but also ideas of the so-called popular culture. Moreover, transnational linkages and networks that immigrants continue to have with the home community facilitate maintaining native traditions vital (Basch *et al.* 1994; Levitt 2001). Consequently, applying the communication

approach to the study of immigrant acculturation helps us to see it as a dynamic process of reconstructing and redefining culture forms in a culturally diverse environment, where different lifestyles and values coexist.

Clearly, acculturation depends on the extent to which immigrants get involved in the new society or are exposed to interaction. Sociologist Leszek Korporowicz (Korporowicz 1995) recognized three different communication strategies that an individual may engage in a multicultural context. The first one aims to reproduce the code. Since any change in the code leads to its dysfunction, this strategy employs defense mechanisms to prevent change. One version of this strategy is affirmation of code as a value in itself. Therefore, we cannot speak about actual communication in this case. The second strategy refers to mutual adaptation of the codes so they would not conflict each other. Although this strategy is characterised by a certain flexibility, it does not allow for the re-evaluation of the codes. The third strategy consists of transforming the codes, which is not a simple aggregation of the elements, but a development of new meanings. It requires an open attitude and readiness for auto-transformation. As I argue, all these three strategies can be recognized among Polish migrants in Iceland and the ways they reconstruct or revise celebration forms. Before I move to Poles, a few words on the role of religious festivals in modern societies needs to be said.

3. FESTIVITY IN MODERN SOCIETIES

Holidays (holy-days) in its origin constituted a sacred time. They were an integral part of the belief system of a group, reflecting the rhythm of social life. The rituals were carried out in order to tame chaos and approve order and values in the community. Holidays were social obligations confirming membership in a group (Żygulski 1981: 36–38). They required preparations and were constrained to restrictive and repetitive ways of celebrating, sanctioned by tradition. Any deviation from or disregard of established patterns might have led to retributive consequences or exclusion from the group.

With the process of rationalization, traditions – once designating the-way-things-are – lost their quasi-natural status and became a subject of constant reflection (Habermas 2000: 10; Szacki 1971: 31). Similarly, religious holidays seem to lose their essential character, undergoing a process of laicization. They change their role and meaning along with general changes in the culture and value system. In modern societies, where progressive secularization pushed religion into the private sphere (Luckmann 1967), patterns of celebrating are rather a matter of individual choice, therefore related to projects of identity construction. They depend for instance on the importance given by an individual to tradition or ones religiosity. Frequently, detached from worship, religious holidays are gradually turning into family celebrations and part of leisure time[2] (Pleck 2000; Baniak 2007). It is not to say that

[2] This evolution in approach to holiday is somehow reflected in the evolution of the meaning of the word itself. The word *holiday* derives from Old English *hāligdæg*, literally meaning holy day and was used for special religious days. In contemporary British English, *holiday* generally refers to any break from work, free time, rest or recreation (Collins English Dictionary).

holidays are devoid of religious meaning, but they can be celebrated despite of religion; and often are. At the same time, as Joanna Tokarska-Bakir noticed, rituals are conventionally perceived as empty and superficial, which she argues reveals that contemporary man is "separated from a world that understood it [ritual – *Anna Wojtyńska*] without words" (Tokarska-Bakir 2006: 15). Many of the rites, which accompany holidays, have been recognized rather as folklore than powerful magical acts and as such subject to individual evaluation. Additionally, consumerism drowns out – as it is often complained about – the spiritual meaning of the holiday. "People brought new values to understanding such rituals – concludes Pleck – they saw them through the prism of their search for privacy, personal fulfilment, happiness, and individuality" (Pleck 2000: 4). Consequently, individuals or families can create their own canons, even if extensively drawing from religious or national traditions. Moreover, immigrants moving to another country are influenced by new traditions they encounter. They can find these forms not appealing or can be attracted by them and eager to incorporate them into their repertoire. In the following part I take a look at how Polish immigrants respond to culture contact, how they perceive Icelandic traditions, and how Polish customs acquire new roles and meanings.

4. CELEBRATING IN ICELAND

There are various kinds of holidays people celebrate. Some are related to life cycle, some commemorate historical events. In this article, I focus on religious holidays, such as Christmas or Easter that have been commonly incorporated into the national traditions in the Christian world thus simultaneously becoming public holidays. While Lutheranism is the state religion in Iceland, Poland is a Catholic country; still there are significant similarities in holidays' calendars, even if each nation has its own specific customs. For example, the Christmas Season in Iceland starts on the 12th of December when *jólasveinn* (a Yule lad) comes to town and leaves small gifts for children in the shoe left on the windowsill. Then the Season continues for thirteen subsequent nights with the last *jólasveinn* coming on the morning of Christmas Eve. In Poland, children receive small gifts under their pillow or in their shoe on the 6th of December. Both in Iceland and Poland the main celebrations are on Christmas Eve, when the family gathers to have a feast (dinner or supper) and then exchange gifts. However, while in Poland gifts are brought by Santa Claus, in Iceland each present is signed by whom it was given. One of the characteristics of the Easter celebration in Iceland is chocolate eggs that people are given to each other. The Season is also characterized by a long period of public holidays in both countries, which many people take as an opportunity for travel or recreation (Björnsson 1995). In Poland, Easter is often considered one of the most important holidays during the year. On Easter Saturday people commonly go to church to bless baskets containing a sampling of Easter food; the food that is blessed is eaten as part of the Easter Sunday meal (Ciołek *et al.* 1976).

Importantly, celebration patterns are not coherent across Poland as there are considerable differences between the regions and homes. Also, in Iceland families vary in the way they celebrate holidays. However, following my interlocutors I refer to "Polish" or

"Icelandic" traditions or customs, although "Polish" traditions do not have to be neither particular for Poland nor generally standard in Poland. "Polish" in this case means simply known from Poland and "Icelandic" – associated with Iceland.

Even without learning about Icelandic holidays, people often presuppose differences between the countries in their ways of celebrating:

> I even don't know how they celebrate holidays. To be honest, I have no idea because I was never interested so much in this. For sure otherwise than we (14/1998/4)[3].

Still, the culture contact initiated by migration certainly results in confusion. Many Poles I have spoken to admit they were surprised by some practices pursued in Iceland and lack of others which are widespread in Poland. For example, it was a revelation that not eating meat[4] during Christmas Eve is not a common Christian or even Catholic rule. Here is how, one young girl recalled her first Christmas in Iceland, when she was invited with her sister to celebrate together with the family of her Icelandic boyfriend:

> We called our parents so that they would go to priest and say that there we had such situation and if we should refuse. Go but refuse to eat that meat? But priest said "no". He said it is only our tradition that we cannot eat [meat – *Anna Wojtyńska*]. For example, there is one Irish woman here. She is Catholic. And it was first time she heard that Catholics are not allowed to eat meat. So it is only Polish invention. And priest said that nothing would happen to us if we eat meat (40/2003/4).

Similarly, the enduring custom of blessing the food on Holy Saturday is practically unknown in most other Catholic countries, even if Poles consider it an integral part of church celebrations. Some Polish migrants accepted that this practice is not known among Icelanders since they are predominantly Lutheran, but were confused that it was not present in the Catholic Church in Iceland. Evidently, people are often prone to regard tradition as constant and authoritative. Then, migration exposes the local character of the customs, including elements that were expected to be religious rules universal for all Catholics, like not eating meat during Christmas Eve. Suddenly, it became clear for the girl quoted above that "it is only Polish invention" and that by participating in Icelandic traditional meal she does not break any sacred law that would lead to punishment. Sometimes such revelation causes uneasiness. Devoid of its indispensability Polish customs, pose a question whether to uphold or abandon them, while any choice asks for justification.

There are multiple factors that affect patterns of celebration among Polish migrants in Iceland. Besides the person's religiosity or attitude towards tradition, they are influenced by character of migration, length of stay, and frequency of contact with members of the host society as well. The majority of the Polish migrants arrived as temporary workers without any intention to settle, at least initially. Often they live together with other immigrants from Poland – family, friends or co-workers. Sometimes they are ac-

[3] The annotations by the quotations from the interviews specifies number of interview/year the interview was taken/number of years the person spent in Iceland at the moment of being interviewed.

[4] The duty of fasting in the Catholic Church was abolished already in 1983; however, the episcopate in Poland maintained fasting until 2003 and since then it is only recommended. Still, many families continue to constrain from eating meat on Christmas Eve and also try to not eat at all until evening supper.

commodated in facilities by the employers. However, many prolong their stay and some eventually settle in Iceland (Wojtyńska 2011). Therefore, people are differently exposed to Icelandic influences.

Expectedly, some Polish immigrants, especially those who left their families in Poland, preferably try to spend major holidays, like Christmas or Easter, back at home. Others, who recently arrived or who have limited contact with Icelandic society, thus have scarce knowledge about Icelandic customs tend to celebrate – if possible – as they were used to. Similarly, Polish traditions are commonly continued among those who live in Iceland with their families and extended families, even if they have been abroad for many years. People try to spend the holidays as they remember it was done at their homes, even if it requires some effort and earlier arrangements. For example, since people cannot find in Iceland all the necessary products required to cook traditional Polish dishes, some remember to bring them from Poland. One woman told me:

> I do everything like in Poland. I try to bring different things from Poland and I keep them till Christmas. I would bring mushrooms at first, but now I pick them up in Iceland. There are so many mushrooms here. But poppy seeds I am bring from Poland (27/2000/4).

It may seem that celebrating in a Polish way is just the most reasonable solution, but maintenance of old customs results not only from lack of knowledge about Icelandic traditions or lack of incentives or will to learn about them. Keeping Polish traditions has vital emotional value. It brings familiarity into unfamiliar space. It provides one with a feeling of stability in an insecure and novel environment. Moreover, celebrating in the Polish way or some of the Polish holidays unknown in Iceland integrates Polish community. For example, in small fishing villages around Iceland where many Poles find employment, the holidays may be an occasion when people meet and spend time together.

An important reason for upholding Polish traditions is that it appears more meaningful and more genuine. The only authentic way of celebrating holidays is to prepare for them in the way one always did. Only then one is true to oneself, in the sense what Ricoeur calls *la mêmeté*, identity with oneself over time. Otherwise, one breaks the continuity and connection with the past.

> I want simply to continue our Polish tradition, because I will always associate Christmas with beetroot soup with 'uszka'[5] as well as with 'pierogi'[6]. For me, there is no Christmas without this. And vegetable salad. It just has to be (14/1998/4).

Preparing Polish dishes evokes good memories of home. Understandably, people direct to different elements that are considered necessary. However, some of them are prevalent among Polish migrants, like for example the sharing of 'opłatek' (Christmas wafer), which is often send to them from Poland. During Christmas Eve people break off a small piece of the wafer and give it to one another along with a blessing. Interestingly, this tradition is even present in some of the Polish-Icelandic families. Other enduring customs are

[5] *Uszka*, literary meaning small ears due to its shape, are small dumplings usually filled with mushrooms.

[6] *Pierogi* is kind of dumplings with various fillings, for example cottage cheese, mushrooms, sour cabbage or meat.

blessing the Easter baskets[7] on Holy Saturday or painting or decorating eggs for Easter. At the same time, some other forms are gradually abandoned or forgotten.

Another explanation that was given for upholding Polish traditions was that it strengthens national identity.

> I rather do not participate in those Icelandic traditional holidays. Not specially. One can say I will stay Polish to the end, with Polish holidays in my mind (18/1998/9).

Here, Christmas or Easter, although part of the general Christian tradition, are clearly associated with Polish heritage. Indisputable, there is a link between religion and ethnicity (Babiński 2003). Commonly nations adapt one state religion together with its holidays' calendar and subordinate others. With further development of the states, universal religions are gradually nationalised. Religious holidays are usually public holidays. Eventually, "family events – says Elizabeth Pleck – are also affirmation of the national mission and celebrations of ethnic group identity and consciousness" (Pleck 2000: 11–12). The connection between tradition and nationality is also reflected in the will of the migrants to pass Polish customs to their children, so they would remember they have Polish origins.

The maintaining of old traditions has also been explained in terms of religious affiliation, even if the recalled customs are clearly local and not generally Catholic. One man who moved to Iceland as a teenager and lived there for twenty years commented:

> Because I am Catholic, so until now I have tradition that I don't eat meet on Christmas Eve. I prepare Christmas Eve in our [Polish – Anna Wojtyńska] way. But this is Catholic tradition, not Polish tradition (13/1998/20).

While Polish traditions are regarded as more intimate and relevant, the Icelandic ones often appear as foreign and artificial. It is well illustrated by the comment made by one woman about Icelandic customs related to two days preceding the period of Lent. The first day is called *Bolludagur* (Day of the *bolla*) when people commonly eat creamy puffs (*bollur*) and the second – *Sprengidagur* (Day of bursting) when one is supposed to eat bean soup until one bursts. She said:

> Well, of course I will have this cake on *Bolludagur*. On *Sprengidagur* I would have this soup. Of course, one eats it. But it is not as it is my holiday. It is not my tradition (25/2000/9).

According to definition, tradition is oriented to the past. It is sanctioned by constant recurrence. Even though people forget the very foundations of ritual; its meaning is embedded in repetition. Anything new is foreign or intrusive. Moreover, originally rituals were immanent in the world-view shared by a certain community, thus taken for granted by its members, but unreadable or irrational to outsiders. Consequently, as outsiders, Polish migrants perceive Icelandic rituals as superficial, empty, and illogical. They are detached from meaning and not convincing.

> Well, they do not have such... [Christmas – *Anna Wojtyńska*]. Of course, they prepare food and eat super together, but it is not so solemn like ours (25/2000/9).

[7] It was not possible to bless Easter baskets, until Polish priests started to have their mission in Iceland.

> But there is no such beautiful tradition here like our celebrations of Christmas or Easter in Poland (8/1996/5).

Icelandic holidays seem to be shallow, and sometimes are reduced in the eyes of Poles to insignificant elements:

> Here [in Iceland – Anna Wojtyńska] they only gorge with chocolate and this is Easter for them (26/2000/6).

Additionally, some remark that Icelanders hardly associate holidays with religion but instead reduce its role to leisure time, often used for travelling. Actually, similar changes in the meaning of religious holidays, has been observed in Poland and they are a part of more general transformations in modern societies (Baniak 2007).

With time, the consistent following of Polish tradition in Iceland starts to be questioned. One woman who resided in a small fishing village in Icelandic countryside, where not many Poles were staying, made such a notice when talking about Easter celebrations:

> [W]e paint eggs until now. And, we share eggs on the Sunday morning. But it is not the same. One needs to be then in Poland. (…) Somehow I miss this Polish atmosphere, when it is know that people do it in every home. Here, I know that nobody does it, only me (18/1998/9).

The important role of holidays is to build a sense of community. Repeating customs when they are disassociated from the context appears irrational. The woman quoted above had lived in Iceland already for nine years and she was married to an Icelander. Although at first she said she tried to keep Polish traditions at her home, later in the interview she admitted that approximately after five years she began to observe Icelandic customs. "It was more convenient" she explained. Moreover, at a distance it may be difficult to follow consequently holidays conventionally celebrated in Poland where they are generally talked about, where they are present in the media and market. Instead, migrants are subjected to Icelandic holidays, encountered at work or public spaces, displayed in advertisements, and shops.

Actually, in spite of people's declaration that they celebrate in the Polish or Icelandic way, I have observed that a majority of Polish migrants are selective and build on both traditions. So often it is a matter of how they perceive it than what they actually do. In many homes, people combine traditions, however sometimes it may be difficult and require making definite choices. For instance, it may be possible to have Polish and Icelandic dishes at Christmas Eve, but one has to decide whether Christmas gifts are from Santa Claus or from family. Some people would try to celebrate both Icelandic and Polish holidays, as for example eat doughnuts on *Tłusty Czwartek* (Fat Thursday) as it is done in Poland, and later have cream puffs with Icelanders on *Bolludagur*[8]. Or, prepare traditional Polish Easter breakfast, adding chocolate eggs which are inevitable in Iceland. These elements became sort of attractive variation from the ordinary routine. Frequently people follow their taste rather than some rules.

[8] Both Icelandic *Bulludagur* and *Tłusty Czwartek* (Fat Thursday) are the last days of carnival, after which Lent begins.

> The only thing I did [for the Christmas – *Anna Wojtyńska*] was the advent candles[9]. I like this tradition here (5/1996/5).

Many Polish migrants like Icelanders decorate their houses, particularly during Christmas, but also for Easter. Commonly, they regard it as Icelandic custom. However, one woman noticed:

> Now it is also in Poland. But for example when I was leaving in 1981, it was not there. Here [in Iceland – *Anna Wojtyńska*], these lamps are hung in the windows, candles are set. (...) Now when I watch television, I see it is also in Poland. Streets are decorated (12/1998/17).

It is common among Polish migrants to watch Polish television in Iceland. Also many keep various linkages with their previous homes. Thus, they follow changes that are occurring in Poland and innovations to the patterns of celebrations. Consequently, it is difficult to judge the source of influences, if they come from Iceland or Poland or maybe popular culture. Similarly, some migrants, specially the younger generation, adopt new days to the holidays calendar, such as Valentine's Day or St. Patrick's Day, that were until recently virtually unknown both in Poland and in Iceland. However, this trend should rather be associated with the process of globalization of culture and consumerism.

Another met practice is to recognizing Icelandic holidays as equivalents to the Polish ones, taking for example Icelandic *Bolludagur* for Polish *Ostatki*, the last day before the beginning of Lent. Or, calling Icelandic *Öskudagur* (Ash Wednesday) by Children's day, giving that during this day children in Iceland dress up in different costumes and often go to shops or offices collecting candies.

Furthermore, some of my interlocutors admit that they gradually adopted "Icelandic ways" of celebrating holidays. Specially, Polish-Icelandic couples or Polish families who have children attending Icelandic kindergartens and schools seem to have more reasons to favour local customs. Some of them even feel impelled to do so, as they are concerned about the well-being of their children. As one woman was explaining to me, why she gives her son small gifts for thirteenth subsequent days preceding Christmas in accordance with Icelandic tradition instead of one gift on the 6th of December as it is commonly done in Poland:

> Unfortunately, I have to respect 13th Santa Clauses because of my son. Otherwise he would be wronged, as all other kids would come next day saying „Santa Clause came and brought me this" (14/1998/4).

Noteworthy, she added "unfortunately", which would indicate it was not her wish, but rather necessity to avoid marginalization of her children. Many people use pragmatic explanations reasoning why they are taking over Icelandic customs. It can be just easier and more convenient. People often complain that preparing Polish Easter or Christmas is tiresome and time consuming. Moreover, some of the Polish women I have interviewed moved to Iceland at very young age thus did not have much experience of cooking and simply do

[9] It is common in Iceland to have a wreath with four candle lights representing four Sundays before Christmas Eve. Each Sunday a new candle is lightened.

not know how to prepare traditional meals. Rarely, somebody would use the argument that one should respect the host culture and therefore try to adapt to local values and traditions.

Evidently, moving to another country, learning new customs may also result in becoming distant from native traditions. Occasionally, people develop something that could be called an intercultural competence:

> Actually if there are any customs, it all depends only on me. If I don't like something or if I don't want something, then I simply do not do it. I am not this kind of person that sticks unconditionally to some traditions (22/1998/4).

It looks as if for some migrants the experience of living in a multicultural society is empowering and liberates them from the duty of following a convention and gives room for creativity. One woman married to an Icelander has told me:

> In Poland one has to eat carp on Christmas. I hate it. It is not good. Here I don't even try to have fish. We can make our own menu and eat for example reindeer meat (2010/6).

Icelanders commonly eat lamb or more recently grouse during the Christmas Eve dinner. The above example shows that another way of compromising between Icelandic and Polish traditions is by creating ones own tradition. After all, as one could say, the main purpose of celebrating is to spend a nice time together with one's family.

5. CONCLUSION

Migration, culture contact and living in the midst of different traditions can upset hitherto accepted codes, and incline individuals to dialogue, which then requires a re-evaluation of a native values, habits and customs. From the presented material, it becomes evident that Polish migrants in Iceland respond differently to culture contact and pursue diverse communication strategies. These strategies are also disclosed in the ways they celebrate holidays in Iceland. Some of the people I talked to reproduce the code, either because they have limited contact with local traditions or because they intentionally try to avoid interactions. Others, who have familiarised themselves with Icelandic practices may attempt to adapt two codes in order they agree together, for example by combining Polish and Icelandic customs or finding parallels and "translating" Polish traditions into Icelandic. Yet others acquire something that could be called culture competence and they attempt to create new codes.

The strategies are not fixed and are modified with time along with changes in the situation, motivations and plans of the migrants. Moreover, it often happens that people are inconsistent. Not only is there a gap between declarations and practice, but additionally the same person may say in one place that he or she celebrates just in "Polish way", while later admits that s/he "got into Icelandic traditions". Clearly, negotiating the meanings of the holidays is an ongoing project closely intertwined with the project of identity construction. Along with interpreting present encounters, migrants reconceptualise the past. Former

beliefs, values and ideas undergo at least a subtle change in form or function. Upholding Polish customs does not have to be a mere repetition, but brings feelings of familiarity, authenticity, and strengthens intergroup solidarity. As a result, the preservation of native culture may support the process of immigrant integration.

Significantly, changes in the celebration patterns among immigrants are not only influenced by the receiving culture, but also by global transformations – the secularization and „privatisation" of holidays. Consequently, freed from social sanctions, holidays can be the subject of individual choice and an expression of one's values. Faithful maintenance of old rites may represent traditionalism, while a more relaxed treatment of the customs reveals liberal attitudes. Thus, deciding whether to take over the host's ways of celebrating or continue the native ones displays the general value attached by people to tradition, not necessarily if they are prone to foreign influences.

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TRADYCJE W DIALOGU: WZORY ŚWIĘTOWANIA WŚRÓD POLSKICH MIGRANTÓW W ISLANDII

Migracja, życie w innym kraju prowokuje sytuację kontaktu kulturowego, inicjując proces integracji. Integracja migrantów omawiana jest najczęściej za pomocą modelu akulturacji, w formie zaproponowanej na przykład przez Johna Berrego. W niniejszym artykule używam koncepcji komunikacji międzykulturowej, która wydaje się lepiej oddawać integrację jako dynamiczny proces rekonstrukcji i redefiniowania elementów kultury w środowisku wielokulturowym, w którym współwystępują różne style życiowe i wartości. Co ważne, jak próbuję pokazać na przykładzie Polaków mieszkających w Islandii, na zmianę wzorów świętowania wpływa nie tylko kultura kraju przyjmującego, ale również treści kultury globalnej.

Słowa kluczowe: migracja, integracja, wzory świętowania, kultura globalna