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Volume 14, Number 1, 1992

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1082445ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1082445ar>

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Publisher(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (print)

1708-0401 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Salmi-Niklander, K. (1992). Festival as Ritual - Rituals in Festival: Symbolic Expressions in Modern Finnish Local Festivals. *Ethnologies*, 14(1), 31–46.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1082445ar>

Article abstract

A lively new tradition of modern local festivals began in Finland at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. This article is based on fieldwork carried out in 1983 on two local festivals. Both the ritualistic elements and the ritual meaning of these festivals as a whole are analyzed. First, the cultural modes of the modern Finnish local festivals and also the symbolic expressions typical to each of them are outlined. Then, the ritual meaning of these festivals is evaluated through a 'thick description' of two festival events. The goal is to make a holistic analysis of two local festivals utilizing (as well as testing) different anthropological (Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner) and sociological (Jurgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu) theories.

FESTIVAL AS RITUAL - RITUALS IN FESTIVAL: SYMBOLIC EXPRESSIONS IN MODERN FINNISH LOCAL FESTIVALS

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The New Finnish Festival Tradition

The global economic restructuring of recent decades has given birth to thousands of new local festivals as well as new meaning to traditional festivities everywhere. Immigrants who have had to seek employment in distant places are celebrated in local reunions when they return to their home towns.¹

A new tradition of modern local festivals began in Finland at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. Local identity became a matter of great interest at that time since extensive social restructuring and immigration threatened the existence of many local communities. This restructuring has altered local identity and festivals functioned as adaptive mechanisms, events that helped people cope with changing social circumstances.

The “festival boom” in local communities during that period referred to the rise of the so-called “Finnish summer festival”, a public celebration that attracted tourists. It featured performing arts such as opera, classical music, folk music, rock, jazz, drama or related workshops.

More recent local festivals have been quite different. First, they are not specifically for tourists, but mainly intended for local residents, including former inhabitants who come back for their vacation, as well as summer cottage dwellers. Second, these local festivals are not often mentioned in newspapers and on television, nor are they extensively advertised. Third, the programs for these local festivals are quite different from previous summer festivals which usually concentrated on a specific cultural theme, for example classical music or

¹ The meanings of modern local and regional festivals has been discussed by e.g. Peter Niedermüller, “Feasts, festivals and tradition in contemporary Hungary”, Irma-Riitta Järvinen (ed.), *Contemporary Folklore and Culture Change*, Helsinki, Finnish Literature Society, 1985. Maja Povrzanovics, *Carnival in the village — carnival on film: The parallel existence of folklore in Turcisce, Yugoslavia*, Papers I. SIEF, 4th Congress, Bergen, June 19th-23rd 1990.

revitalized tradition. A typical local festival today is a real cultural hodge podge of art, folklore, amusement, sports, religion and even politics.

In the anthropological literature, the terms "festival" and "ritual" have often been used interchangeably, when dealing with modern society. The ceremonial and ritualistic elements of festivities can be separated and analyzed; but often communal ceremonies may be dealt with as rituals in themselves.²

In the following, I shall analyze both the ritualistic elements of the modern Finnish local festivals and the ritual meaning of these festivals as a whole. First, the cultural models of the modern Finnish local festivals and also the symbolic expressions typical to each of them will be outlined. Then, the ritual meaning of these festivals will be evaluated through a "thick description" of two festival events.³ My goal is to take a holistic approach to the study of two local festivals utilizing and testing different theoretical approaches.

My fieldwork (observation, program recordings and interviews) was carried out in two Finnish parishes, primarily in 1983: the first one is Maaninka, an agrarian parish in Eastern Finland, which lost much of its population due to rural depopulation of the 1960's; the other is a parish in Southern Finland named Vihti, which lies only about thirty miles from Helsinki. Vihti was also a purely agrarian community, but there the great population movement of the 1960s had different effects than in Maaninka; Vihti has actually increased its population as the result of an influx of people from other parts of Finland. The industrialization of the surrounding area transformed this purely agrarian parish into a suburb of Helsinki.

Both of the festivals held in these towns are quite typical of modern Finnish local festivals — they have their origins in the early 70s and are held on a summer weekend. Moreover, each of them is organized by the cultural committee of the municipality. A modern local festival may last for a weekend or even for a whole week, during which time various events are organized for the benefit of different kinds of audiences. Saturday night is often devoted to popular family entertainment, whereas the more solemn events of Sunday are intended for elderly people.

2 The ritual elements of public festivals have been analyzed by e.g. Robert J. Smith, *The Art of the Festival*, Lawrence, 1975, and Alessandro Falassi "Festival: Definition and Morphology, Time Out of Time", *Essays on the Festival*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1987. Public festivals have been studied as rituals by e.g. Roland Grimes in "The Lifeblood of Public Ritual. Fiestas and Public Exploration Projects", Victor Turner, (ed.), *Celebration. Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, Washington D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982. Victor Turner has also discussed public seasonal rituals and the plural reflexivity typical to them. See *The Ritual Process. Structure and Antistructure*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969, p. 168-169; "Liminality and the Performative Genres", John MacAloon (ed.), *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle. Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, Philadelphia, 1984.

3 "Thick description" according to Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books, 1973, is microscopic 'diagnosis' of specific social situations and the analysis of cultural and social meanings.

Old and New Traditions

Modern Finnish local festivals have developed along with both the national and the worldwide interest for tradition that sprung up at the beginning of the 1970s. Scholars have tended to associate this movement with *folklorism*, defined as the application of the elements of folk tradition for ideological, commercial or artistic purposes.⁴

I have, however, found it difficult to apply the term folklorism, as it is usually defined, to the modern Finnish local festivals. The revitalized traditions seem to have quite a marginal role in the programs of these festivals which include such activities as speeches of visiting politicians and local beauty contests.

According to my observations, it is the older, larger summer festivals that have concentrated on revitalized tradition, not the local festivals. However, the modern local festivals definitely exhibit folkloristic qualities.

The purpose of modern Finnish local festivals is not so much to revitalize elements of folk tradition as to create new traditions out of a great variety of cultural elements. These new traditions can be, for example, a mud wrestling contest or the election of a honorary citizen, which are in no way associated with traditional Finnish culture, however, they may be repeated in local festivals year after year. The intention to create new traditions can also be openly expressed.

As a whole, local festivals can also be interpreted as a revitalization of organizational culture: by this I mean the culture of, for example, workers' and youth associations, which aim at educating the common people to make them become good "citizens". These mass organizations appeared in Finland at the turn of the twentieth century and sponsored festivals. They are still powerful, although younger generations now seem to be estranged from them.⁵

Organizational culture has combined different fields of culture, such as music, drama, political speeches, sports and amusements. This cultural variety is also found in modern local festivals, and gives them old-fashioned overtones.

Organizational culture is also an essential factor in the creation of modern local festivals. Although the organizational component of these festivals is most often a municipal committee, they could not be created without the often invisible work of voluntary organizations, such as farmer's and housewife's associations, volunteer fire brigades or local Lions Clubs. These organizations are usually responsible for practical work such as making coffee, grilling sausages or looking after the parking area, and sometimes they even create entire events. Competition

⁴ The concept of folklorism has been discussed especially by German ethnologists, e.g. Hans Moser, *Vom Folklorismus in unserer Zeit*, *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 2/1962.

⁵ The term 'organization culture' has been presented by Vesa Kurkela in "Musiikkifolklorismi ja järjestökulttuuri", *Music-folklorism and Organization Culture*, Helsinki Finnish Ethnomusico, Logical Society, 1989.

and tension between different associations can also be observed in local festivals, although the main goal of the organizers is to create co-operation between organizations.

The greatest difference between the festivals of the mass organizations at the beginning of this century and modern local festivals is that the former used and reinforced the symbols of the organization, whereas in modern local festivals symbolic expressions are used to reinforce the identity of the local community. The need to create and reinforce symbols of local identity was sparked off by the creation of national symbols in the nation states of Europe at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶

The cultural forms used to express this national identity were, for example, public monuments and ceremonies. The new local festivals use symbolic expressions in the same way that nationalism has to strengthen national identity. In the festivals that I have studied, local identity is reinforced at the municipal level as a reaction to the centralizing tendencies of the national administration. Within each region the municipalities become the decision making bodies and this sometimes causes controversy. The tension between the center and the periphery is therefore also visible at the local level. The organizers usually attempt to involve the neighbouring villages in the festival, but often the dwellers of these villages see the parish festival merely as a manifestation of regional centralization. Many villages, of course, hold their own festivals, either as a part of the parish festivals, or independently.

Cultural models and symbolic expression

The traditionality of modern local festivals must be studied in depth and its characteristics fleshed out. Although all the elements of a festival may appear modern, its basic structure can have traditional roots.⁷

Three cultural models of Finnish public festivals can be outlined, which are common to both the local festivals and the national festivals which belong to the public sector. At this stage these models are hypothetical, since little research has been made of the historical development of Finnish public festivals during this century.

By "a cultural model" I mean a prototype of a festival that the organizers have in mind when they begin to create a new festival, and that the members of the audience also recognize when they decide whether they shall attend the festival or not, what they can expect from it and how they should behave while

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914", Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger, (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983.

⁷ The medieval tradition of parish festivals has also been revitalized in some new local festivals, Matti Sarmela, *Reciprocity Systems of the Rural Society in the Finnish-Carelian Culture Area*, Helsinki, Finnish Anthropological Society, 1969.

participating. When a cultural model is shared, both the organizers and the audience can relate their experiences of the festival and create new festivals by drawing from the same shared knowledge.⁸

The three cultural models of public festival are: the solemn festival, the social evening and the mass festival (see figure 1.) The most important factor that distinguishes these models from each other is the level of control exerted over the behavior of the audience. In a solemn festival the audience has to sit still and listen the whole time. The coffee break is the only time for social intercourse. The social evening is divided into two separate parts: to begin the audience has to sit still and listen, afterwards time is allotted for getting-together and dancing. At the mass festival the audience does not have to sit down at all, but can wander around consuming the different services of the festival, and it is the problem of the organizers to make the program attractive enough that the audience will follow.

	TRADITIONAL BACKGROUND	FORM OF PUBLICITY
Solemn Festival Social Evening Mass Festival	Church Bee Fair	Representational Demonstrative Production
	TYPICAL CEREMONY	DANCE
Solemn Festival Social Evening Mass Festival	Reverent ceremony Lottery Contest	No Yes (partly) Yes (essential part)
	ROLES OF THE AUDIENCE	GOALS OF THE ORGANIZERS
Solemn Festival Social Evening Mass Festival	Composed Composed/Moving Moving	Ideological Ideological/Economic Economic

All three of these cultural models have their roots in the far reaching sociocultural processes that developed in Finland during this century. Their historical links can be examined by applying the theory of the forms of publicity

⁸ Dorothy Holland & Naomi Quinn, "Culture and cognition", Dorothy Holland & Naomi Quinn, (eds.), *Cultural Models in Language and Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

formulated by Jürgen Habermas.⁹ The solemn festival is related to “representative publicity” in the same way as concerts, opera and theatre; the rising bourgeois class adopted these cultural forms from the feudal aristocracy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and developed them to reflect the power of the bourgeoisie. All these cultural events are presentations of “civilized” behaviour. They are characterized by ceremonial and high-flown conduct. The new mass organizations of workers and farmers have also adopted the solemn festival to reinforce the seriousness of their intentions.

The social evening is associated with “demonstrative publicity”.¹⁰ It was created at the end of the nineteenth century when the bourgeoisie started to spread their liberal ideology to the lower classes, and was continued in the work of mass organizations. The main goals of demonstrative publicity were the moral and aesthetic education of common people and the reinforcement of nationalism. In social evenings organized by Finnish mass organizations, the common people were educated to “civilized” festival behaviour; the audience was taught to sit quietly and listen, which was an important ability in the new organizational culture, and afterwards participants were rewarded with dance and buffet.

The birth of the mass festival can be traced to the rise of the so called “production publicity”,¹¹ which in Finland took place on a large scale after the Second World War. Traditional social evenings no longer attracted a public that had become used to new kinds of popular culture through the radio and the gramophone. Since the money collected from the social evenings had been an important source of revenue for the associations, many of them started to organize large Midsummer dances, where thousands of people from far away would gather to hear and see popular singers and professional humorists perform. Also, many private entrepreneurs began to organize mass festivals either to make profits or to advertise their products.

Instead of educating the public, the organizers of these mass festivals wanted to meet the new expectations of the public. The main goal was to make the public consume as many of the services of the festival and spend as much money as possible. So the enjoyment and consumption, which were offered to the public in the social evening as rewards for proper behaviour have, in the mass festival, become the main obligation of the public. The birth of the mass festival also reflects a deeper sociocultural process — a society of citizens has been replaced by a society of consumers. This consumerism and attendant anonymity are the main components of modern mass festivals.

These cultural models can also be related to the festivals and social institutions in the traditional Finnish peasant culture. The Church has been the

⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, Darmstadt, 1962, p. 17-24.

¹⁰ Habermas, p. 252-255.

¹¹ Oskar Negt & Alexander Kluge, *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung*, Frankfurt am Main, 1978.

traditional equivalent of the solemn festival, and also the main scene of representative publicity in traditional peasant communities. The people attending church were also supposed to sit still and listen, even though they often did not obey these norms. The situation is different in the solemn festivals as well as in the divine services today. Only those people who attend are ready to respect the norms. The social evening also has an equivalent in traditional peasant culture; the "bees" or the work parties, for harvest or haymaking, followed the same scheme "first work, and then fun".

In a social evening, the notion of work means work for the public obediently following the program, whereas for the organizers it is expressed in the preparation of the festival. So the idea of work has changed from a necessity to a value in itself, and has become an ingredient of the festival. The so-called "spirit of the bee," the enthusiasm for voluntary work has been one of the main preoccupations in the development of the modern local festivals. The organizers of the festival in the agrarian parish of Maaninka were proud of the strength of this spirit in their community, whereas in the industrialized community of Vihti the organizers complained of the loss of it.

The fair can be interpreted as the traditional model of the mass festival. At the fairs, Finnish countryfolk could watch travelling tricksters, and the public was allowed to wander around and consume freely. The upper classes have also disapproved of fairs for the same reasons as for the modern mass festivals — their commercialism and bad taste.

How are cultural models with their forms of publicity related to traditional peasant culture? In the creation of new cultural forms, the traditional cultural models also have to be taken into consideration. The social evening can be especially interpreted as a creative synthesis of the cultural models of the festival in traditional Finnish peasant culture and the goals of the new mass organizations.

In the modern local festivals, both "pure" examples as well as combinations of these cultural models can be found. The popular festival events held on Saturday evening which I shall analyze later are combinations of a social evening and a mass festival. The more formal festival events held on Sunday at noon are quite typical of a solemn festival. With the help of these cultural models, I can also interpret some obvious shortcomings that appear in my research material. If a festival does not fit into any of these cultural models or their combinations, the result may be total confusion and embarrassment to both performers and audience.

Ceremonies

Finnish festivals are not visually or symbolically very rich, especially when compared to the carnivals of Central or Southern Europe with their colourful costumes and decorations. In contrast, Finnish local festivals are full of talk: long

speeches that audiences tirelessly listen to, drama performances and interviews, as well as the joking and chatting of official speakers.

Nonetheless, many elements of local festivals can be interpreted as symbols.¹² Local festivals are interesting objects of cultural analysis because the cultural forms and symbols in festivals are used both intentionally and non-intentionally. The organizers, performers and members of the audience have to have a common cultural code to create and interpret the messages.

Different symbolic expressions typify each of the cultural models of the public festival outlined in the previous section. The ceremonies in the local festivals may be classified into three types: reverent ceremony, lottery and contest.

The reverent ceremony includes the presentation of honorary awards to distinguished citizens and the laying of wreaths at soldiers' graves. In the reverent ceremony, respect is expressed for a certain person's life-work. Thus, it reinforces the social hierarchy of the community.

The lottery as a ceremony is most successful in the intimate festivals of a small community. In a typical intimate lottery, prizes are presented with complicated ceremonies and almost everyone in the audience receives a prize.

In a lottery, members of the audience become performers if they are rewarded with a prize, otherwise their participation remains anonymous. In a contest, on the other hand, all participants have to become performers. The performance may be collective such as in a "tug-of-war" or individual and therefore more demanding as in a local beauty contest.

In all these ceremonies, symbols are used intentionally. In reverent ceremonies they can be wreaths on a grave, honorary banners, or certificates. A contest (for example, a tug-of-war) can express symbolically the tensions between different groups in the community. In local beauty contests, the same kinds of symbols are used as in their national and international equivalents (e.g. a crown). In these kinds of contests which take their models from mass culture,

¹² The concept 'symbol' is used of those nonverbal objects and actions that express concretely the ideas, attitudes and controversies apparent in local festivals (see Geertz, op.cit., p. 91-92). In this analysis concepts of both cognitive and symbolic anthropology are utilized, but I shall not deal closer with these fundamental questions. Festivals and rituals (as well as nonverbal behavior in general) have not been common subjects to cognitively oriented anthropology. I have used the term 'ceremony' for those elements of the festival which utilize stylized behavior and symbols. These elements could also be called 'secular rituals', but I have preferred to use the term 'ceremony' since these elements of the modern local festivals are usually not connected to any real changes in the lives of their participants, their tone being rather playful and even parodic. See Barbara Myerhoff, "We Don't Wrap Herring in a Printed Page. Fusion, Fictions and Continuity in Secular Ritual", Sally F. Moore & Barbara Myerhoff, (eds.), *Secular Ritual*, Amsterdam, Van Gorcum, 1977. Roger Abrahams, "An American Vocabulary of Celebrations", Alessandro Falassi, (ed.), *Time out of Time. Essays on Festivity*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1987.

the tone is serious and at the same time parodic, and they express the adoption of mass culture at a local level.

A lottery may be interpreted as symbolic exchange.¹³ Gifts are distributed randomly to the members of the community, and the profit goes to a common purpose. The difference between the lottery and symbolic exchange in the archaic societies discussed by Marcel Mauss is that in a lottery the gifts are distributed anonymously, therefore no one feels obliged to return a present.

Symbolic meanings of food and drink

The serving of food and drink in the Finnish local festivals is usually very simple. All that is offered is coffee served with cake or coffeebread, juice or lemonade for the children, and sausages grilled on an open fire. Can these simple forms of food and drink be interpreted symbolically?¹⁴ It is important to question why this particular food and drink is chosen as the basic fares, in a great variety of festivals.

When one considers the functionality of coffee and sausages it becomes obvious that they are not chosen because they are easy to serve. Making coffee and grilling sausages in outdoor festivals, often without electricity or running water, is not an easy task, nor are coffee and sausages the kinds of food and drink that are particularly appropriate on a warm summer's day. Supermarkets could provide alternative products which could be served more easily and which would not involve cooking. Thus, the reason for the popularity of coffee and sausages must be looked for in their cultural meaning. In any case, food and drink are used as symbols non-intentionally. Organizers, coffee makers and sausage friers as well as members of the audience treat this selection of food and drink as natural and self-evident.

Coffee plays an important role in Finnish culture, a fact which has also attracted the attention of the American anthropologist Frederick Roberts¹⁵ who conducted fieldwork in the Finnish countryside in 1970s. He describes the coffee ceremony as an integrating form of behavior that brings security to social

¹³ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift. Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, London, Routledge, 1990 (1960), p. 65-71.

¹⁴ The serving of food and drink have interested many symbolistically oriented anthropologists, especially Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings. Essays in Anthropology*, London, Routledge & Paul Kegan, 1975, p. 249-276, who considers meals as language that can be interpreted as well as verbal expressions. In the anthropological research about festivals the serving of food and drink has also been a matter of great interest, especially excessive eating and drinking have often been associated with festivals. See Henri Hubert & Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, Chicago, 1964.

¹⁵ Fredric M. Roberts, *Under the North Star: Notions of Self and Community in a Finnish Village*. A dissertation for the Ph.D., Graduate Faculty of Anthropology, The City University of New York, 1982, p. 241-261.

situations. Roberts also points to the flexibility of the coffee ceremony, a characteristic that is also evident in local festivals. In solemn festivals, coffee can be served in porcelain cups with many different kinds of cakes and biscuits, but in mass festivals simply from disposable paper cups. Moreover, the norms in drinking coffee vary. Traditionally the social hierarchy of a community has been expressed in the strict order in which coffee is served. This social order in serving coffee is also made visible in the most formal events of local festivals.

Sausage, on the contrary, is not connected with formality and decorum but with informality. It is usually served simply with a small wrap of paper around it. Consequently, sausage is not served in solemn festival events, but it is an essential part of mass festivals. In social evenings both of these basic foods may be offered, so in this way they can be interpreted as being intermediate between the solemn and the mass festival.

The serving of sausage brings up another problem with regard to Finnish local festivals. At home, fried sausage is often eaten with beer after a sauna. However, in local festivals, the serving of alcohol has not been allowed because of the strict alcohol legislation. Nonetheless, the habit of drinking alcohol secretly, "behind the corner" as we call it, has been a traditional part of Finnish festivals. In many parts of western Finland, however, a traditional home-brewed beer called *sahiti* can be served legally and has become a popular part of local festivals.

A common trait of both coffee and sausage is that if they are not consumed in the festival they cannot be reused. In this sense both coffee and sausage can also be interpreted as expressing, although modestly, the excessive consumption that has been connected with festivals.

Two Case Studies: What Happened on Saturday Evening?

In the previous section I have attempted to outline the symbolic expressions of the Finnish local festivals. In the following case study of two Saturday evening outdoor festival events which took place in 1983, these symbolic expressions are illustrated in concrete situations. Both of these events constitute just one event of a larger parish festival, but they have attracted the largest audiences, and in many ways been the highlights of the whole festival weekend.

The organizers of the festival in the rural commune of Maaninka have had to bend their principles somewhat in order to entice audiences. A nationally well-known popular artist is invited to perform on Saturday night every year, even though the organizers have otherwise tried to keep the festival as "homemade" as possible.

The Saturday evening events of the popular festival of Vihti were organized by the members of a sports car club and a volunteer fire brigade as a kind of "counter-festival" to the more solemn and traditional events organized by the

cultural committee. This festival was celebrated in a new population centre, where a large part of the population commutes to Helsinki and has moved to the community fairly recently.

The most obvious differences between these two festivals relate to the roles of the audience, the types of ceremonies and the expression (or lack) of erotic and sexual topics in their program. In the festival of Vihti the role of the audience was quite passive — simple attendance and adherence to the program. Only at the coffee break and during the dancing towards the end of the evening did opportunities arise for free social intercourse.

On the other hand, the program was replete with sexual motifs. These appeared most clearly in ceremonies, a beauty contest and a mud wrestling match that were the highlights of this festival. These contests were modelled on TV-entertainment, although the participants were local people well-known to the audience. In the beauty contest the erotic motifs were more of an insinuating nature. The speaker carefully kept the atmosphere of a family festival, but also engaged in erotically teasing exchanges with the competitors. In the mud wrestling contest, the sexual motifs were more direct, especially so when two wrestler girls, after completing their tussle, challenged any men from the audience to a bout of wrestling — there were no offers, but the invitation aroused plenty of amusement among the audience.

By contrast, in the festival of Maaninka the Saturday evening's program served only as a background for the lively social intercourse of the audience. The festival is one of the most important social events of the year. Many of my informants told me that it is the only occasion to meet old friends that come back to their home parish during vacations. The festival, held in a schoolyard, is followed by a large dance at a nearby pavilion, an event in which the audience may take the leading role.

In the festival of Maaninka, sexual topics were only touched upon by an outside entertainer who performed some offcolor jokes. His performance was, however, obviously rejected by the audience, as were also some other similar performances I observed at other events.

The ceremonies consisted for the most part of reward-giving presentations for distinguished citizens. The highlight of the festival, which most of the audience followed, was the election of an honorary citizen. Earlier, those honored had been elderly farmers or bank managers, but this year the reward was given to a young baseball star who played on the team of the neighbouring town. This selection prompted lively discussion, both during the festival and afterwards. Most of the people I interviewed commented on it in one way or another. Whether the participants of the festival approved of the choice or not, it aroused debate about the opportunities for young people in the town; the question being is it better to stay in ones home town or to look for possibilities elsewhere?

These festivals have both reflected and created controversies, by means of which the sociocultural tensions of the two communities have been evaluated and expressed.¹⁶ In Vihti the main subject of discussion was the definition of "culture". People asked themselves if mud wrestling, beauty contests and other amusements should be considered culture or not, and whether these should get support from the cultural committee of the municipality?

In Maaninka there was strong opposition between those who supported commercialism on the one hand and those favorable to cultural and economic autonomy on the other. Travelling salesmen have not been allowed to come to the festival, since only the local organizations are permitted to sell food and drinks to the audience.

In Vihti the controversies between the various organizing groups were expressed openly in the festival. In Maaninka, on the other hand, opposing views have been expressed only indirectly, in private interviews. The organizers of the latter have wanted to give the impression of a harmonious, close knit and united community.

The differences between the two festivals can be interpreted with the aid of Pierre Bourdieu's¹⁷ concepts of "habitus" and "taste". The strong erotic and sexual motifs of the Saturday evening events of Vihti reflect the need for "controlled adventure" of the new middle class.¹⁸ This need becomes understandable when viewed in relation to the target-audience of the festival — families with small children and middle-aged couples, many of whom have moved to this fast-growing suburban town from different parts of Finland. The organizers of the festival have more or less managed to preserve the atmosphere of the family festival and also give the audience sufficient excitement.

The cultural board of Vihti represents quite clearly "the cultural goodwill" typical of the petty bourgeois, with the emphasis being on civilization and the admiration of "high" culture.¹⁹

The participants of the festival of Maaninka, farmers for the most part, do not seem to look for either controlled or uncontrolled adventure. Moreover, questions of good and bad taste and the definition of culture do not appear to be important in this festival. The festival of Maaninka, on the whole, can be seen as an expression of "the peasant taste" or habitus, the main component of which is

16 These controversies can be interpreted as social dramas, in which the social tensions of the community can be commented. See Victor Turner, "Liminality and the Performative Genres", John MacAloon, (ed.), *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle. Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, Philadelphia, 1984.

17 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Cambridge, 1984.

18 The habitus of the new Finnish middle class has been discussed by the Finnish sociologist Jeja-Pekka Roos, 'Studying the Finnish new middle class in a French dressing', *Elämäntapaa etsimässä*, Helsinki, Tutkijaliitto, 1985.

19 Pierre Bourdieu, p. 318-328.

the need for safety and cultural autonomy.²⁰ Elderly farmers, in particular, are suspicious of both “high” and “low” culture emanating from outside their own community. Furthermore, ceremonies such as coffee drinking and dressing up in one’s Sunday best seem to be more important to the elderly audience than the actual program itself.

Local festivals as public rituals

Victor Turner’s²¹ concept of liminal vs. liminoid experience applies well to the Saturday evening events of Vihti. The norms of everyday life, in cleanliness and expressions of sexuality, were tried or broken by the performers while the audience observed. Such actions, according to Turner are typical of the liminoid experience. The strong sense of a community, on the other hand, gave this festival aspects of public liminality.

The festival of Maaninka as a whole has had traits of public liminality, since it is a seasonal feast for the farmers after haymaking and also a reunion of the inhabitants of this small town. But no antistructure typical to liminality can be observed in this festival. The limits of decorum have not really been transgressed at all.

Some traces of carnivalistic inversion could also be observed in the Saturday night festival in Vihti; “the people’s second life”²² organized on the basis of laughter was created in this festival, although only by the performers and in an imaginative way.

In the festival of Maaninka, on the other hand, both the organizers and the audience have consciously rejected all carnivalistic traits as well as expressions of sexuality. The local festival was originally created as an opposition to the so called “carnivals” of the neighbouring towns: these carnivals (e.g. a well-known “Strawberry-carnival”) were organized in many Finnish towns for purely commercial purposes in the 1970s. Finland has not had a tradition of public carnivals, although some seasonal rituals have had carnivalistic tendencies.²³

The lack of carnivalism and liminality does not mean that the Finnish local festivals should be viewed as degenerate. The festival of Maaninka, in particular, represents an originally Finnish way of celebration and should therefore be analyzed on its own terms.

20 Jeja-Pekka Roos, *Elämäntavasta elämäkertaan. Elämäntapaa etsimässä 2*, Helsinki, Tutkijaliitto, 1988; p. 32-40.

21 Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play*, New York, 1982.

22 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 8-11.

23 E.g. the Finnish mummers’ carnival has been discussed in Carsten Bregenhøj & Urpo Vento, *Nuutti. A Finnish Carnival*, Helsinki, Finnish Literature Society, 1975.

The rejection of carnivalism and liminality can also be viewed as a means of cultural resistance. In my case study, it can be explained as resulting from the strong influence of popular organizations in the Finnish rural communities. Moreover, the ambivalent attitude towards alcohol and expressions of sexuality in the modern local festivals can be understood by the strong influence of certain popular movements. The temperance movement, for example, was strong in the above mentioned popular organizations and it succeeded in removing the earlier "wild" habits of festivity to quite an extent.

Changing festivals

The local festivals are cultural means that express the changing social situation of these two communities. The history of these two parishes is quite similar. Both of them have been wealthy agrarian areas with many large farms and mansions. The structural change of Finnish society has, however, led to their development in totally different directions. The organizers of the festivals look for different aspects from history that would assist their respective communities to adjust to the changed and changing situation of today.

In the agrarian parish of Maaninka, the organizers want to emphasize the wealth of their parish in former times and also the important position it has held for the province and even for the whole nation. However, they have also adjusted to its new situation in that the festival has been created as a meeting place for both the residents still living in the parish and for former residents who have moved away. In this way, the local festival has an important social function.

In the industrialized parish of Vihti, the organizers do not need to look to the past for wealth, because economically both the present and the future of the area seem quite promising. Instead, they have sought to prove that this community also has had culture and traditions in the past which now have either been forgotten, or are of little interest to the new inhabitants in the area.

The organizers wanted to adjust the festival of Vihti to the present situation so that the traditions and history of the parish could also be taught to the new residents. However, this goal was not achieved and the festival remained mainly a nostalgic meeting of the old inhabitants. The Saturday evening events are an exception because they were especially intended for the inhabitants of the new population centre.

The new festival tradition now seems to be changing, as the first generation of organizers and festival goers of the modern local festivals is giving way to a younger generation. When I visited the festival of Maaninka last summer after a break of seven years, I found it had changed in many ways. For instance, the Saturday evening event had changed to the extent that the audience mostly sat down and followed the program, and gave a fairly positive response to an outside entertainer who performed jokes about sex and alcohol.

I was unable to visit the festival of Vihti again, since it ceased to exist only a few years after I had carried out my fieldwork. The reasons for this development can be understood if we look at the significance of both festivals. The festival of Maaninka has a definite social meaning for the community and draws large audiences year after year, even though there have been failures in the program and in the organization; the festival of Vihti, on the other hand, did not have the same kind of social importance for the audience. It ceased once the controversies between the organizers became too strong and they could come up with no new ideas. "Natural selection" of new local festivals seems to determine which of them can survive across generations and outlive changes in cultural attitudes to become living and established new traditions.



Making coffee is women's work both in festivals and in everyday life.
(Vihti 1983.)



Children's traditional performances are popular in Finnish local festivals.
(Maaninka 1983.)



In a mud wrestling contest the norms of everyday life can be broken by the performers.
(Vihti 1983.)