

# Grape Harvest Festival in the Town – A Successful Format for Entertainment, Politics, Trade, and Consumption (The Case of Pezinok, in the Slovak Republic)

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## Abstract

This article focuses on a three-day town celebration called *Vinobranie* (Grape Harvest), which takes place in the public space of the town of Pezinok in Western Slovakia. This event is over eighty years old and was established by the representatives of the town in collaboration with the local wine-growing association, organised with the support of the state railway company. The grape harvest festival is a mosaic of various elements with symbolic contents, representing an impressive whole wrapped in an offer of a varied programme and consumption.

The study observes the changing form and structure of the festival from its origins up until the present day, as well as the dynamics of the range of its functions in the local community.

The author follows an ethnological perspective. She draws on historical archive documents and ethnographic materials. In her analysis, she applies the concept of festival (Waldemar Cudny's 'Festivalisation of Urban Spaces', 2016).

## Key words

town celebration, festival, grape harvest festival

## Acknowledgment

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## Introduction

The custom of celebrating the autumn harvest communally and joyfully is a stable element of the European cultural tradition, which has withstood the passage of time. This also applies to the winegrowing regions of Central Europe. In ancient history, grapes and wine themes were central to the ancient Vinalia, the Greek Dionysia, and the Roman Bacchanalia festivals, which were associated with the cult of the gods of crops. Such organised festivities, with feasting as part of the programme, full of artistic theatre experiences and oriented towards a large number of visitors, laid the foundations for the festival as a specific type of public event back in ancient times (Cudny 2016: 22–24; Naso 1942: 11). Modern times were characterised by wine feasts, games, and grape harvest festivals for workers on the vineyard estates of the nobility and the church. They were complemented by programmes composed with stylised references to antique feasts, staged folk customs, and costume parades. They aimed to present exceptional scenes and theatre for the landlords, their guests, and members of upper social classes (Weinhold 1965: 195).

During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, industrialisation caused the disintegration of traditional, status-based society, in which all aspects of life had been regulated by the system of positions and privileges. With the rise of modernisation and the development of modern society, the function of regulating the economy and distributing social privileges was taken over by the market. The status-based division of society changed into a class-based one, strengthening the centralisation of state power and the position of formal organisations (e.g. Keller 1997: 15; Beck 2004: 15). The ‘classical’, traditional form of association – the family – began to be replaced by associations, societies, and political parties (Gebhardt 2000: 27). The grape harvest festivals organised by the owners of large vineyard estates were followed by rural public festivals, economic exhibitions associated with the presentation of technological achievements in the field of agriculture, and feasts organised by towns and modern corporations for promotional or political purposes (Kilián et al. 2010: 352). Municipal or community-based harvest festivals in villages, with parades featuring elements of folk theatre, carnival, and singing and dancing, became very popular (Bauer 1954: 146; Kahounová 1975: 568; Drábiková 1989: 169).

The richness of popular festive winegrowing and wine events in the public space presents a certain paradox for ethnological thinking. In their synthetic works on viticulture in Central European countries,<sup>1</sup> ethnog-

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1 For instance, Helene Grün, Martha Bauer and Ewa Kubalek in Austria, Rudolf Weinhold in Germany, Václav Frolec in Moravia, Ema Kahounová-Drábiková in Slovakia, and others.

raphers describe the autumn harvest and the subsequent processing of crops as the hardest and the most responsible part of the year-long work of the farm and family. It is accompanied by hope and anticipation of the results, as well as fatigue from the work. There is hardly any time, space or mood for unrestrained celebration and exuberant feasting during this work. It is the very end of the harvest that is celebrated. The celebration in the house of the vineyard owner acquired the form of a rest with a toast, a hot lunch for the hired workers, or a party and gathering. In exceptional cases, in the years when the harvest was extremely good, helpers and hired workers decorated the last of the carriages of grapes to be taken from the vineyard home for processing with autumn flowers, fir branches, vine twigs, and coloured ribbons. In this way, they were thanking the farmer, who was anxiously awaiting the end of the harvest, and making him happy (Grünn 1988: 195; Bauer 1954: 70; Weinhold 1965: 192; Kubalek 2010: 178; Drábiková 1989: 110).

However, the 'other life' of these customs is much more substantial. The transformation of these ancient traditions, which governed the world of winegrowing work and the families involved, was influenced by the rise of industrialisation. The technological modernisation of winegrowing and wine production culminated with social modernisation. In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, winegrowing harvest customs, as a representation of the past and saturated with symbols, shifted into the area of popular entertainment and organised experiences.

The Austrian ethnologist Ewa Kubalek explored the transformations of the old forms of pre-industrial ritual acts and customs in the winegrowing areas of Lower Austria. She notes that, as a result of the radical change in society and the economy, many of them have survived until today, but have acquired new contents. In the context of the world of viticultural work changed by the spread of technology, they have taken up an important place in the marketing strategies of wine companies for promotional purposes, or they have become a type of popular entertainment culture (Kubalek 2010: 177). They usually occur in the form of references and symbols, as part of events with marketing, advertising, entertaining, or political objectives, either as a historical or traditional framework created for this purpose, or as a programme core and a highlighting element of the programme mosaic. Yet at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, grape harvest festivals with parades and dance parties were celebrated in the villages and towns of the region as a visible sign of the completion of the heavy work associated with the grape harvest and were meant to demonstrate externally the winegrowers' commonly felt identity. Today, they serve for wine advertising purposes and as a show for visitors (Kubalek 2010: 180).

The situation in Lower Austria shows that the more open forms of public festivities that developed in the context of modern society have lost their function of ritually maintaining the life of a group of winegrowers and promoting their fellowship, solidarity, and identity. As pre-arranged and thoroughly managed events, they have become a framework for pursuing the commercial intentions of the organisers – to promote wine and gain new clients – as well as a framework for an informal social experience or for meeting the participants' individual needs for entertainment. Their development illustrates the effects of the transformation process of the festive culture of modern society, which itself is subject to further internal changes (see Giddens 2000: 57; Bauman 2002: 271; Beck 2004: 122, 131, 133). Its transformations have also been recently recorded in the form of public grape harvest festivals in Slovakia, which are the central focus of this work. The aim of this study is to describe the manifestations of these changes and to explore the principles on which they have occurred.

According to the *eventisation* theory developed by the German culture sociologist Winfried Gebhardt (2000), changes in the world of holidays have acquired completely new dynamics in the late modernity period, which are associated with growing individualisation and pluralisation. In his view, the accelerating process of eventisation is characterised by five trends: the weakening of the binding nature and institutional legitimacy of holidays and festivals; the disruption of the social homogeneity of their participants; the rejection of the prescribed and binding elements in their content and the seeking of individual entertainment; an increasing offer of holiday events; and the creation or adaptation of these events for commercial purposes to maximise profits (Gebhardt 2000: 24–25). The last two of these processes – multiplication and commercialisation – have made the festive commonplace. Today, people no longer look forward to the holiday itself; rather than its content, they instead look forward to its form. A holiday evokes the feeling of community only if it takes form of a performance full of extraordinary, brand new adventures (Gebhardt 2000: 27; Pfadenhauer 2013/2012).

In this theory, social events which are created in advance with thorough dramaturgy, which are carefully produced and justified by the organisers in the media, and which are consumed by a large number of participants who seek an extraordinary cultural experience or entertainment and who, thanks to their participation and interaction, have the feeling of a temporary community during it, are defined as *events* (Hitzler 2011: 13, 15; for more details see Gebhardt 2000: 19–22).

The notional curve travelled by public grape harvest festivals on their journey to today's events, which are characterised by eventisation, has

been accompanied by changes in their content, form and functions.<sup>2</sup> Various interpretations and deliberate, more or less pretentious and ritualised, demonstrations of harvest customs in public, always in a form intended and controlled by the organisers, have become a background for mass entertainment and a tool with a wide range of economic and ideological functions.

### **Wine feast as a festival: Starting points for the analysis**

Stylised parts of customs and new versions of older festivities can also be found in 21<sup>st</sup> century wine festivals that correspond to the conditions of late-modernity life. They are carefully prepared events, consisting of a wide range of individual programme elements and offering visitors cultural, wine, and culinary experiences, relaxation, and entertainment. Nowadays, wine festivals are popular all over the world. They usually take place in winegrowing regions and are events that enable wine producers to present and offer a variety of wines for tasting. At the same time, they constitute popular tourist destinations (Cudny 2016: 25). In addition to festivals that have emerged in recent years or decades, there are also events that date back to earlier times. They have maintained their cyclical rhythm and remain tied to the same location. Their popularity has not declined despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that they have become increasingly commercialised and oriented towards providing extraordinary experiences and entertainment in recent decades.

This article focuses on the three-day town festival called *Vinobranie* (Grape Harvest), which is held in September in the public space of the town of Pezinok in Western Slovakia. This event is over eighty years old, and combines various elements with symbolic content, creating an impressive complex wrapped in an offer of gastronomy, consumption, entertainment, and a varied programme, and which culminates in a parade through the town. The festival celebrates the grape harvest and uses specific references to local history. The grape harvest festival is not an exceptional event in the Central European winegrowing zone (Drábiková 1989: 171) or within Slovakia. In Western Slovakia, similar harvest festivals are regularly held in the neighbouring town of Modra and in Rača, which is a city district of the capital city Bratislava.<sup>3</sup> In neighbouring Austria, similar festivals are held

2 Under the specific conditions of European history, grape harvest festivals also went through a stage of being used for political purposes during the period of modern dictatorships in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For more details on these topics, see: Popelková 2014: 321; 2016: 110; Popelková and Vlasáková 2009: 185–186.

3 See, for example, Modranské vinobranie. Tradičné obaračkové slávnosti; Račianske vinobranie 2018.

in towns situated along Neusiedler See in the federal state of Burgenland and in the winegrowing towns of Lower Austria (Bauer 1954: 145; Grün 1988: 247; Kubalek 2010: 179). As for the Czech Republic, such festivals are held in the towns of Valtice and Mikulov in Moravia and in Mělník in Central Czechia, to name some of the most popular.<sup>4</sup>

From the perspective of social sciences, thematic public festivities are closely linked to the structure and mechanism of the functioning of societies and the environments in which they take place. They are therefore the focus of attention, whether conceptualised as town holidays, invented traditions serving ideological purposes (Hobsbawm 1983: 13–14), modern rituals, or festivals. In recent decades, research into them has also evolved within event studies, where the field for interdisciplinary research is being dynamically extended under the title of festival studies (Getz 2010: 1). For the purposes of analysing my research data, in this work I use the inspiring festival concept elaborated by Waldemar Cudny for observing the process of festivalisation of a town from the point of view of geography and tourism (Cudny 2016: 16). I understand festivals as regularly recurring organised events that celebrate diverse community or global values, ideologies, identity, and continuity, which are created by people who are pursuing different goals. Whether their themes are locally specific, global, or completely marginal, whether they are repeatedly tied to a specific community and space or created for different places, festivals represent a precisely structured cultural performance, accompanied by marketing and consumption functions. Festivalisation, understood as a boom of festivals and their impact on people and their surroundings, is not a new phenomenon. It is closely related to the development of human culture, and results from the festival's social functions for the community and from the relationships between the festival and the environment in which it is held. The festival as a complex – its organisational structure, budget, programme elements and its impacts on the surroundings – is determined by the elements of these surroundings. It consists, for example, of organisers and their employees, participating artists, sponsors, politicians, and the audience – locals or foreign visitors and tourists. In addition, the festival is influenced by the economic environment, the infrastructure used for the purposes of the event, the media, the local or regional culture, the geographical environment of the festival, and so on (Cudny 2016: 2, 20).

According to Donald Getz, who deals with event studies in the context of international tourism and strategic planning, festivals have become permanent elements in both popular and high culture, which are part of

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4 See, for example, Mělnické vinobraní 2019; Valtické vinobraní 2018.

the entertainment business, marketing, and tourism, due to their ability to attract crowds and satisfy the human need to celebrate, generate experiences and emotional responses (Getz 2010: 2). Their principal features include variability, exceptionality and separation from work, the celebration of elements characteristic for the life of the given community and the relationship to the culture and religion of the local community. They consist of various social and cultural events, are linked to arts and culture, and are periodical. From time to time, they are combined with shows or competitions. They imprint significant features into the environment in which they take place often designed by the authors of the festival concepts (Karpińska-Krakiowiak 2009). Towns use them for their development, for enriching their offer of cultural activities and entertainment to citizens, and for the design of their brand externally (Cudny – Korec – Rouba 2012: 709).

During recent decades, we have observed both a qualitative and quantitative development of festivals and other types of cultural events within the urban environment. With the growing popularity of issues related to symbolic or experiential economy, the development factors of towns and cities now also include culture as the strongest of them. By working on its so-called cultural economy, elements of urban culture are used as a means of creating a coherent image and brand for the town from a business perspective. In this way, towns seek to improve their position on the map of towns and in the hierarchy of and competition with other towns (Eckert – Schmidt-Lauber – Wolfmayr 2014: 9–10). An event built on the promotion of local cultural attractions has thus become an important tool for the creation of a town's image (Karpińska-Krakiowiak 2009).

In this work, I analyse a grape harvest festival in its three developmental stages with the aim of pointing out the links between its development dynamics and changes in society. The definition of the festival suggests the components of the programme structure of a grape harvest festival, their place in its dramaturgy, and how organisers influence its stability or changes. Furthermore, I ask what the forms and functions of the viticultural customs used during the festival and the history of winegrowing as a cultural feature of the town are. By raising the question of which of the accompanying phenomena of the eventisation process are positively present in this particular case of a cyclical event, I study how the urban society of a winegrowing town responds to the challenges of late modernity.

The analysis is based on my study of written archive documents and photographs,<sup>5</sup> published specialist works, the local media, and internet

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5 Archive research at the State Archive of Bratislava, Archive of Modra Branch and at the archive and depository of the Little Carpathian Museum in Pezinok in 2011–2013 and 2018 (Archives IESA SAS, inv. no. 1467, 1515).



sources. The data comes also from my field research in Pezinok, which was conducted in the form of observations in the period 2014–2019.<sup>6</sup> Since 2004, I have personally attended the festival, conducting ethnographic observation and documentation. In 2013, I observed the meeting of the Grape Harvest Committee team at the Municipal Office in Pezinok with the permission of the town representatives. The combination of historical research and ethnography develops knowledge from both primary documents and secondary sources, which serve to reconstruct the previous state, with empirical findings on the current state of the studied phenomenon. Apart from informal conversations on the street and observing visitors' reactions, my research did not focus on the study of the participants' individual level of perception of the festival. My primary objective was to capture the dynamics of changes in the content and form of the festival and observe the realisation of the organisers' intentions in the dramaturgy and form of the festival. I reflected on my immediate impressions from observing the individual programme components of the festival, conducted an analysis of the audio- and picture documentation and made a concise description from the promotion documents and articles in the local media before and after the each festival.

Waldemar Cudny (2016: 20) emphasises that the existence of festivals is closely linked to the environment in which they are held. My interpretation is therefore based on a brief overview of the development of the town with an emphasis on its winegrowing features. After outlining the historical perspective, I shall describe the festivity in the various stages of its existence.

### **The winegrowing town of Pezinok – a historical excursion**

Situated around 20 kilometres north-east of the Slovak capital Bratislava, Pezinok is currently home to around twenty-four thousand inhabitants. It is a district town with a well-developed transport infrastructure, a business and industrial centre with public authorities and schools, and a venue for various cultural events of supra-local significance. In addition, it is a centre of the winegrowing region located in the south-eastern foothills of the Little Carpathians mountain range. Today, around 900 hectares of vineyards are cultivated within its territory, and there are around twenty wine-producing firms and family wineries (O meste 2020).

Wine intended for the market has been produced there since the Middle Ages. The impetus for the development of commercial urban viticulture and the wine trade was due to the economic interests of members of the

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6 Archives IESA SAS, inv. no. 1514, 1516.



Hungarian aristocratic families of the counts of Svätý Jur and Pezinok. At the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, due to their contacts with the management of the winegrowing estates of the Heiligenkreuz monastery, the counts introduced settlers from the area between Neusiedler See and Vienna to their estates in Svätý Jur. They were descended from local, originally Bavarian immigrants, who were winegrowers (Turcsány 2009: 48–49). The first wave of settlement was followed by several others. During this process, German winegrowers also settled in neighbouring Pezinok (Žudel 1982: 40), gradually creating the key layer of the local burghers. Viticulture reached its peak in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, thanks to which Pezinok acquired a high degree of feudal self-government (Hrubala – Pospechová – Wittgrüber 2005: 11–12). Winegrowing was firmly tied to the economy and organisation of the town, and to the functioning of its local structure (Lehotská 1982: 26; Čechová 2019: 15). Pezinok maintained its specific urban culture and, from the ethnic point of view, its Slovak-German character up until the Second World War.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the town began to lose its agricultural and crafts character and there was increasing focus on the development of trade, education, and industry as a result of railway transport. The declining winegrowing sector in the hands of a large number of small owners depended on unprofitable manual vineyard cultivation. In the situation of developing Hungarian capitalism, wine began to lose its competitiveness on the markets. Winegrowing was increasingly combined with work in crafts, trades, construction, and industry (Dubovský 1982a: 114).

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after overcoming the consequences of the extensive grape phylloxera pest, this sector began to stabilise and became mechanised. The town of Pezinok responded to the rise of modernisation with a railway connection, the development of its trade and industry, and shaped itself as an administrative and trade centre of the surrounding region (ibid. 115–116). This development was halted by the First World War, the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, and the birth of the Czechoslovak Republic. In the context of the interwar liberal economy, independent winegrowers were threatened not only by a lack of resources for investment in new technology, but also by the poor sales of local wines (ibid.: 133; Milov 1946: 16, 28). At the end of the Second World War, the town's German-speaking citizens were considered traitors and collaborators by the Czechoslovak government and were expelled from the country, and this caused major changes in viticulture in Pezinok (Dubovský 1982b: 148). Land previously owned by the local Germans was nationalised and assigned to so-called national administrators (Lehotská 1961: 140; Dubovský 1982b: 150). After the

communist coup in 1948, it became the basis for establishing a single administrative cooperative. All private winegrowers were gradually forced to enter into the cooperative or hand over all their lands under economic and political pressure. The production and sale of wine was nationalised (Dubovský 1982b: 155).

During the first decades of its existence, cooperative winegrowing was in crisis. Only later, thanks to massive state subsidies in the 1970s, did it go through a managed modernisation process, which gradually turned it into mechanised agricultural mass production. Landscaping brought changes to the cultural landscape around the town. The private growing of grapes ceased to exist or was reduced to the cultivation of cooperative vineyards in collective ownership and to the growing of grapes in gardens (Drábiková 1986: 567). Production and trade was organised by companies managed by the centrally planned economy.

The stark discontinuity in viticulture as a consequence of the breakdown of social and economic links at the individual level lasted until 1989, when the communist regime in the country collapsed. After more than forty years, private winegrowing and wine production business once more became established in the complicated process of post-socialist transformation of the agricultural sector (Danglová – Popelková 2003: 307).

### **Grape Harvest 1934 – a modern festival with a marketing purpose**

The first organised public grape harvest festival in the town of Pezinok took place on 28 September 1934 under the title *Vinobranie* (Grape Harvest). At that time, the town had a population of five thousand. In response to the crisis in wine sales, the municipal council of the town, the local winegrowing association and the management of the national railway company organised a promotion day for the wines of Pezinok. It was held on St. Wenceslas Day<sup>7</sup> and used references to the town's past, i.e. its historical privilege of being a free royal town. According to this privilege, the town's self-government could exercise the viticulture law within its territory by means of a viticulture authority. It could also collect tax on wine, set the dates of the closing of the vineyards and the start of the grape harvest (Dubovský 1987: 182). The aim of the organisers was to make use of the opportunities that the developing tourism industry offered to support the declining sector in modern times. The festival was meant to attract people

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7 State Archive of Bratislava, Archive of Modra Branch (hereinafter cited as SABA, Archive Modra), archive collection of the Chronicle of the Town of Pezinok, inv. no. 19, Peter Pivko *Kronika mesta Pezinok 1933–1943*: 106–107.

Riaditeľstvo štátnych železníc v Bratislave.

*Podte s nami*  
v piatok, dňa 28. septembra 1934

zvláštnym výletným vlakom na

## vinobranie do Pezinka

poriadané pod protektorátom pezinkej mestskej rady.

**Alegorický sprievod** oslavuje pokoskyňe bobary obráz vinohradníckych starých zvykov a v rámci rýchlo slovenská vinohradnícka výstava bude máľbou ukázkou ako sa pri tejto príležitosti vinohradníci veselia.

**Mestský park** a početné miestnosti arého zámku budú posmené vo vína, v ktorej budú každému dotolene archív hrôzo, keď zabude prichutno hrdakom.

**Vinohradnícka výstava** poskytne príležitosť k ochutnaniu známych vin.

**Vechty** v parku obkresia každého výborným pezinškim vinom z mestských prstov.

**Trh na hrôzo** dá príležitosť k nákupu lacného vybraného hrôzo.

**V zámoškej pivnici** avdite ako sa byne vino a ochutnate nullu.

**Vinohradnícka veselica** pobaví prstím programom.

**Na vinobranie** zavážia tiež hrôzo z Čech a Moravy, ktorí prídu zvláštnym výletným vlakom z Prahy, Brna a Olomouca.

Odhod vlak z Bratislavy hl. n. o 13. hod. odhod z Pezinka o 22. hod. **Gena zájazdu** v sedáčkoch a výstupov na veselice 9 Kč. Jazdenky vydávajú sa od rána o osobný pokladnice Bratislava hl. n. a v Čedoku, Doteľ, Carltoni.

→ **Vlak ide za každého počasia!**

Staatsbahndirektion Bratislava

*Kommen Sie mit uns*  
am Freitag den 28. September 1934 mittels

Sonderausflugszuges zur

## Weinlese nach Bösing

veranstaltet unter dem Protektorate des Bösinger Stadtrates.

Ein allegorischer Umzug durch die Stadt bietet ein reiches Bild einer Weingärtnerbeichte und im Rahmen dieses Umzuges wird eine slakische Weingärtnerhochzeit aufgeführt, um zu zeigen, wie sich die Weingärtner bei dieser Gelegenheit zu unterhalten wissen.

Der Stadtpark und zahlreiche Räumlichkeiten des alten Schlosses werden in einen Weingarten umgewandelt, wo es jedem erlaubt sein wird Trauben zu pflücken, wenn er hierbei nicht vom Haidoken erwischt wird.

Die Weinausstellung gibt Gelegenheit zum Kosten ausgereicherter Weine.

Die Buschenschänken im Parke erfreuen jeden mit vorzüglichen Weine aus den Stadtkellereien.

Der Traubenmarkt gibt Gelegenheit zum Einkauf von billigen und ausgezeichneten Trauben.

Im Schlosskeller können Sie sehen wie gepresst wird und auch Most kosten.

Die Weingärtner-Unterhaltung wird mit buntem Programme aufwarten.

Zur Weinlese kommen auch Gäste aus Böhmen und Mähren, welche mit Sonderzügen aus Prag, Brunn und Olmütz ankommen.

Abfahrt des Zuges ab Bratislava hl. n. am 13 Uhr. Abfahrt von Pezínok um 22 Uhr. — Preis des Ausfluges samt Abbrechen und Eintrittsgeld für Unterhaltung 9 Kč. Die Fahrkarten werden schon sehr angegeben, und zwar bei der Personenkassa in Bratislava hl. n. und beim Čedok, Hotel Carlton.

→ **Der Zug verkehrt bei jedem Wetter!**

Figure 1 Two-sided invitation to the grape harvest festival in 1934. The bilingual character of the invitation reflects the fact that Pezinok was a town with both Slovak and German population at that time. The combination of the festival programme and information about the schedule of trains in the content of the invitation suggests that the festivity used to be a marketing event with sophisticated logistics.

Source: State Archive of Bratislava, Archive of Modra Branch.

to the town and visitors, as potential clients of the wine business, were brought in by special trains.

The festival used and combined elements of authentic practice arising from the winegrowing community in the town, designed in a dramatic ritualised form constituting the skeleton of the festival. One such element was the announcement of the date of the start of the grape harvest by means of a municipal decree. Another element was the custom of ending the harvest with a drink and a treat, which was common on farms that hired workers to bring in the harvest. The workers would bring their employer the most beautiful bunches of grapes, sometimes tied together in a wreath (Weinhold 1965: 196; Grün 1988: 249, 257; Kubalek

2010: 177, 184; Bauer 1954: 149). They could have fun together in the farmer's yard at his expense (Milov 1946: 11; Drábíková-Kahounová 1982: 249; Popelková 2006: 554). The final practice was public harvest and dance parties, which were organised by associations or owners of pubs and separate from the customs of family farms.<sup>8</sup>

The historical motifs and the customs, enriched with new elements, were used pragmatically and staged for visitors of the 1934 harvest festival. The timing of the event corresponded to the actual period of the grape harvest. The sequence of the customs was combined into a single moment, since there are several busy weeks between the start and the end of the harvest. The elements and symbolism of the customs were creatively reflected in the decoration of the town: allegorical scenes and figures dressed in costumes in the parade through the town. They also appeared in a scene depicting vineyard guards pursuing thieves of ripe grapes and a meeting of courting couples in the vineyards. A vineyard as stage scenery was set up in the castle park in Pezinok. Youth groups dressed in folk costumes performed scenes of a rural wedding for official guests. Representatives of the authorities and members of the municipal self-government were seated on a raised platform erected on the square. Winegrowers brought a *crown* made of bunches of grapes, which was later presented to the representative of the regional office by the mayor of the town in front of the audience.

In addition to the five thousand visitors from the vicinity and from the outlying regions, who came to have fun, admire the beauty of the town and taste the local wine, there were also a number of politicians, officials, and journalists. People sold grapes and there was a wine exhibition accompanied by wine tasting. Visitors could drink freshly squeezed grape must. The parade on the square, as the ritual part of the harvest festival, was followed by folk festivities in the courtyard of the local castle. Guests drank wine and had fun until late evening.<sup>9</sup>

The municipal council made pragmatic use of its contacts with the railway company management to arrange for visitors to get smoothly to Pezinok and back to their homes when the festival was over. To promote the event, it used a mass communication tool – a documentary film, which was financially sup-

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8 SABA, Archive Modra, archive collection of the District Notarial Office of Modra 1925, inv. no. 93/1925–2950/25; Archives IESA SAS, inv. no. 1509, interviews with winegrowers: 6; SABA, Archive Modra, archive collection – Collection of posters, Grape Harvest Festival and Assembly of the Democratic Party 1945 and Grape Harvest Festival Pezinok, inv. no. D-20/1946.

9 SABA, Archive Modra, archive collection – Chronicles of the Town of Pezinok, inv. no. 19, Peter Pivko *Kronika mesta Pezinok 1933–1943*: 108–109.

ported by the Regional Office in Bratislava.<sup>10</sup> The film presented the event by means of a montage of pictures depicting romantic stage scenes, the decorated town, the town's coat of arms and the ancient historical monuments, museum artifacts related to viticulture, the crowded railway station, and visitors having fun while drinking wine.<sup>11</sup> The final accounts of the festival showed a financial profit for the town, which was perceived as the laying of a foundation stone for its permanent establishment.<sup>12</sup> However, despite the founders' declared intention to repeat the event in Pezinok each year, it was held only once before the Second World War, in 1935, and did not take place at all during the war.

### Grape Harvest Festival 1958–1989: The celebration of socialist viticulture

The grape harvest began to be celebrated again at the end of the 1950s, replacing the attempts of the post-war management of the nationalised agriculture to organise harvest festivals in wine-growing towns. The grape harvest rhythm was restored in 1958. By decision of the district authorities, Pezinok and the neighbouring town Modra took turns at organising the event at two-yearly intervals until 1989. The event was re-named after the region that includes the two towns – the *Little Carpathians Grape Harvest Festival* (*Malokarpatské vinobranie*). It was not initiated by the self-government, associations and entrepreneurs, and its purpose was not marketing. The festival was organised by the municipal national committee under the auspices and control of the state and (Communist) Party bodies in the district. Even this first post-war grape harvest event took the form of a festival. It was held over two days and consisted of various activities.

10 SABA, Archive Modra, archive collection Obvodný notársky úrad, administratívne spisy 1934, inv. no. 10156/1934 a administratívne spisy 1935, inv. no. 429/1935.

11 The background of the festival consisted of picture representations of Pezinok as a town with a prevailing historical winegrowing culture. The camera authentically documented the festival with shots of ladies and gentlemen walking around, a group of men standing by the press and tasting grape must, and staged dramatic scenes in the vineyard. It also offered views of the allegorical parade, men sitting at the wine bar and drinking wine, as well as the act of guests of honour receiving bunches of grapes from winegrowers dressed in traditional costumes. The pictures alternated with captions describing the content of the scenes and finally stating that “The celebration during the big visit was a great success.” (*Vinobranie 1934*. [black-and-white documentary film without sound, duration: 5.58 min.]. Archive of the Little Carpathian Museum in Pezinok, archive collection CD and DVD, inv. no. 1/2013.)

12 SABA, Archive Modra, archive collection Obvodný notársky úrad Pezinok, inv. no. 3, Mesto Pezinok, Zápisnica obecnej rady 30. 11. 1934 a Zápisnica mestskej rady 29. 11. 1935.

It was prepared by various organisational teams coordinated by the lead commission of the local national committee, which was responsible for the organisation, dramaturgy, and production,<sup>13</sup> including media promotion.<sup>14</sup> The preparation of the festivity was more formalised in the years that followed, and the supervision of the course and content of the event was shifted to supralocal bodies.<sup>15</sup> It became a platform for the presentation of the work and political achievements of the communist regime and of its agricultural mass production. The proven form, which drew on winegrowing traditions and the ancient historical glory of the town, was in the hands of new actors, who attempted to create a festival of cooperative winegrowing, filled with content that was to conform to socialist ideas.

The central element of the programme, which was spread over three days from Friday to Sunday, was the allegorical parade on Sunday. Under the title *From the Life and Work of Our People*, it led from the castle to the square and ended in front of the raised platform. It was accompanied by a commentary that was broadcast by the local radio. The first part was a political display of workers.<sup>16</sup> They marched through the town, carrying flags (Czechoslovak and

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13 In 1959, twelve work committees worked intensively on the preparation of the grape harvest festival: committees for transport, accommodation, finance, culture and promotion, technical, information, supplies, catering, sports, wine exhibition, agricultural exhibition, and allegorical parade. (SABA, Archive Modra, archive collection of the Municipal National Committee of Pezinok, Vinobranie Pezinok 1959 file).

14 In addition to promotion and news releases on television, radio and the press, the organisers established cooperation with the *Vinařství* monthly magazine on winegrowing. One of the accompanying events of the festival was a discussion with the editors; a separate volume of this nationwide specialist periodical was dedicated to the grape harvest and winegrowing in Pezinok (*Vinařství* 52, no. 9, September 1959).

15 The details of the preparation of the festival in the 1970s and 1980s are contained in the agenda of the district committees for the grape harvest festival (SABA, Archive Modra, archive collection of the Municipal National Committee of Pezinok, Vinobranie 1975, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1983). The course and the programme of the festival are documented in photo albums and collections of photographs, posters, and leaflets (SABA, Archive Modra, archive collection – Photodocumentation Collection of the Town of Pezinok and Collection of Posters; Archive of the Little Carpathian Museum in Pezinok, archive collection Grape Harvest Festival Photo Albums, inv. no. 2003/268, 269a, b, 270, 271, 272b, 85/1984).

16 The scenario of the first part of the allegorical parade of the Little Carpathian Grape Harvest Festival in Pezinok on 21–22 September 1975 had 40 pages. Its form was approved by the district committee three months in advance. The document described in detail the front of the parade and its 33 images (SABA, Archive Modra, archives of the Municipal National Committee of Pezinok, box 14, Vinobranie 1975, Okresná komisia vinobrania 1975).



the Soviet ones), pictures of the founders of Marxism-Leninism, and banners. The platform for the guests of honour was extended to foreign diplomats, Czechoslovak political representatives, officials from the district, regional and national authorities and agricultural institutions. They gave speeches and watched the parade, which had been carefully prepared several months in advance. Taking over the role of grape farmers, the guests of honour received grape crowns in the form of huge bunches of grapes from women in folk costumes, who were workers from the single local agricultural cooperative. The political part of the parade always instrumentalised one chosen topic, such as round anniversaries of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army or the anniversary of nationalisation. During the preparation of the scenario and the artistic design, its content and message were subject to a thorough vetting by the local and regional bodies of the Communist Party. Partial ideas were executed to the smallest detail, with no room for improvisation. Production companies, individual agricultural cooperatives, schools, and interest organisations from the town and municipalities within the district were in charge of the execution and performance.

The core of the second, cheerful part of the parade consisted of allegories of historical references to themes related to the feasting of the ancient god of wine Bacchus and to the Roman import of grapevines to the Carpathian region (Kahounová 1975: 568). In the parade, they followed the floats of socialist manufacturing companies which, by means of figures and charts on posters, presented the results of their production and their execution of the socialist plans. The individual agricultural cooperatives from the district were able to present themselves less formally. On decorated horse-drawn carriages or on trucks and tractors labelled with the name of the given cooperative or municipality, they offered the audience improvised scenes from the grape harvest and the pressing of the grapes, parties in wine bars, feasts, and dance parties. They revived them by dressing in traditional clothing, music and singing, wine drinking, and the consumption of local specialties.

The grape harvest festivity of this period took the form of a festival – an organised event (of several days) with a central theme around which various programme elements were concentrated, which took place simultaneously on several stages and at several places in the town's public area. The complementary elements and accompanying events offered informal content over which the political centre and the Communist Party had limited control. These consisted of the historicising representations of the allegorical parade, the street performances of folklore groups, the sale of wine and the traditional slightly fermented grape must called *burčiak* in the wine bars of individual agricultural cooperatives, fair stalls selling food and beverages, craft products and other short-supply industrial goods, entertainment



shows at the municipal amphitheatre, wine competitions and wine tasting, exhibitions of fruits and animals, sports events (riding contests, football matches), as well as agricultural and art exhibitions, dance parties with music played by brass bands, carousel attractions and evening fireworks. Thanks to these elements, socialist grape harvest festivals attracted tens of thousands of visitors to the town and enjoyed widespread popularity in the region, in spite of their central, significantly propagandising message.

### Grape harvest festival in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Experiences, fun, and consumption

After the political upheaval of 1989, this festival continued even in the problematical situation of post-socialist transition. The organisation of it, now devoid of political content, was taken over by the self-governments of Modra and Pezinok, which took turns in holding it for the following fifteen years. Since 2004, the festival in Pezinok has been held around the 20th of September each year, with the aim of developing tourism<sup>17</sup> and promoting the town more widely, with an emphasis on its winegrowing aspects. It takes place in the historical and wider centre of the town, which is closed to traffic from Friday to Sunday, with some accompanying events held as early as Wednesday. The general programme structure has not changed; there is, however, much more space for a range of exceptional attractive experiences and the undisturbed entertainment of all visitor groups. The festive time in the town thus acquired a previously unknown quality of an unlimited stream of mass consumption accompanied by relatively cultivated entertainment.<sup>18</sup> The now unnecessary raised platform for political guests was replaced with two mounted stages with quality sound and illumination immediately after 1989. They are intended for the key ritual parts of the programme and for music performances of different genres. They are

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17 For more details see: Netradičné tradičné Vinobranie. Program Vinobrania 2004. *Pezinčan* 38, 8: 3. This change corresponded to the trend initiated by the town's leadership at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and led to the multiplication of events in the town. In 2003 and 2004, the town welcomed the Hodokvas multimedia festival, which was held as the first open-air event on the meadow on the outskirts of the town and was visited by 8,000 people (Štefčíková, Andrea. 2004. Vo štvrtok kraľoval na Hodokvase punk. *Pezinčan*. 38, 8: 1). The burden created by this large-scale music event to the adjacent parts of the town was justified by the town leadership with the fact that it brought "great media promotion and a financial effect for the town and its inhabitants, especially for the shops and services" ([r]. 2004. Poďakovanie za pochopenie. *Pezinčan* 38, 8: 1).

18 The organisers' efforts to primarily provide entertainment and art are expressed by the newspaper headline: Three Days of Joy, Fun, and Art – Grape Harvest Festival 2016 ([r]. 2016. Tri dni radosti, zábavy a umenia – Vinobranie 2016. *Pezinčan* 49, 10: 1).

located on the central square in front of Pezinok Castle as the best accessible places for thousands of spectators. Stands offering local and global culinary specialties, fruit, wine, and burčiak have been supplemented by the tents of private producers, and the area for artisan goods has also grown.

The structure of the grape harvest festival is made up of stable programme elements. The theme of the thousand-year tradition of viticulture and glorious past of the wealthy winegrowing royal town is reflected in a ritualised narrative form. Its parts take place on stages or in the streets of the town centre. On Friday, late afternoon, the *First Gulp* takes place on the stage in front of the castle, with a performance by the town representatives and guests – mayors of the neighbouring villages and towns and also mayors of foreign sister towns. It is accompanied by historicising scenes with costumes, drumming and fanfares, and the use of ritual archaic language for the ceremony. The speeches on the stage commemorate the events related to the granting of royal municipal privileges to the town. The event opens with a speech by the mayor, the ceremonial handing over of the key to the town to the ancient god of wine Bacchus for three days, and ends with a toast. After the toast, the glass goblets are ritually broken for good luck.



Figure 2 The *First Gulp* at the grape harvest festival in 2007. At the beginning of the official programme, all festival actors are presented on the stage, from the symbolic figure of Bacchus up to the mayor of the town as the festival organiser. Photo K. Popelková.

After that, the mayor and his entourage pass through Radničné námestie (Town Hall Square), where the *Opening of the Municipal Wine Bar* takes place. The *Blessing of the Wine* by priests is held on Sunday. This part of the programme, as an element of sacral symbolism that the grape harvest festival acquired only after the fall of communism in 1990, has been held on the stage in front of the castle for many years. In 2019, after the election of a new mayor of Pezinok, the first in eighteen years, this ritual, which is called *Ecumenical Thanksgiving and the Blessing of the Crops*, moved to the main stage on Radničné námestie. It took place after the parade and was attended by two Evangelical priests, one Catholic priest, the mayors of Pezinok and the neighbouring villages, and the chairman of Bratislava Self-Governing Region.

The route of the allegorical parade on Sunday leads from the castle to the building of the municipal office on Radničné námestie.<sup>19</sup> In the place where the parade begins, commentators present the individual parts of it to the audience with a microphone. The parade is led by majorettes, drummers and swordsmen dressed in historical costumes, or by a brass band playing music. They are followed by the bearers of the town's coat of arms and flag, dressed in clothes in the colours of Pezinok's green and red historical flags, and bearers of the coats of arms of Bratislava Self-Governing Region and Pezinok's sister towns abroad – Neusiedler am See (Austria), Mosonmagyaróvár (Hungary), Mladá Boleslav (Czech Republic), and Isola (Slovenia). Two young men dressed in the colours of the town carry a huge bunch of red grapes hanging on a steel structure. They are followed by the mayor in a ritual gown and with the chain of office around his neck, accompanied by his deputy and local councillors. The mayor is sometimes also accompanied by an important guest or by the parish priests of Pezinok. He is followed by members of the European Winegrowers' Knighthood from Pezinok in ritual dark-blue coats, and then by the representatives of the local miners' association with a flag and by volunteer firefighters. The parade continues with delegations and groups of various associations from the neighbouring municipalities, designated by boards showing the name and the coat of arms of their respective municipality. Their representatives are dressed in historical costumes or in traditional dress. They walk alongside allegorically modified cars, ride horses, or sit in horse-drawn carriages decorated with green vine twigs with grapes and colourful ribbons, or carry a large, harvested bunch of grapes. Some groups are accompanied by musicians;

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19 *Vinobranie Pezinok: História a súčasnosť*. [documentary film, duration: 27:32 min.]. Archive of the Little Carpathian Museum in Pezinok, archive collection CD and DVD, Produced by © TV Pezinok, s. r. o., 2013, for the Town of Pezinok.

their members sing, others offer visitors roasted goose, grapes, and burčiak or wine from a jar. The parade also includes representatives of regional institutions, schools, art and tourist associations, brass bands and folklore associations, followed by delegations from sister towns abroad. Pezinok is represented in the parade by representatives of associations, sports and interest organisations, sitting or standing in a decorated carriage drawn by the horses of the god of wine Bacchus, who is dressed in a red coat, wearing a golden headband decorated with grapes and holding a goblet of wine. His female companions, bacchantes in ancient tunics, pour wine for visitors from jars. Next up is the decorated tractor of the Association of the Winegrowers and Winemakers of Pezinok, a local swing band playing music in a car, and, finally, a large group of veteran car enthusiasts.



Figure 3 Tractor with the logo of the Association of the Winegrowers of Pezinok within the parade during the grape harvest festival in 2005. The presentation of the association by means of a tractor decorated with vine twigs and ribbons refers both visually and symbolically to the tradition of decorating the last carriage of grapes leaving the vineyard.

Photo K. Popelková.



The parade passes through the town along a street lined with spectators. Its participants merrily communicate with them and dance and sing during stops in the streets. People greet each other, joke, and drink wine and burčiak together.

The mass character of the festival can be attributed to its wide range of attractions, which attract tens of thousands of visitors to enjoy the comprehensive experience, which has elements of a traditional feast. The town's proximity to the capital city Bratislava and the good transport connections play an important role. The citizens of Bratislava make up a significant proportion of the visitors. The town of Pezinok carries out the entire project itself with the support of dozens of sponsors. The preparation of the event is the task of the committee, which works closely with the mayor and the management of the town's cultural centre. The town's income comes from fees paid for rented spaces by the owners of sales stands and fair attractions, and visitors are not charged entrance fees.<sup>20</sup> The main ritual parts of the festival are combined in the programme with events of a specialist, educational, artistic, and entertainment nature. There are also presentations by winemaking companies, marketing programmes, competitions, exhibitions, concerts, popular music bands, carousel attractions, and fireworks on Saturday evening. Every day, food and beverages are available from stands on the street until late at night.

In the 1990s, in the context of celebrating work in the vineyards, the organisers of the grape harvest festivals accentuated in their speeches and in the programme structure their support for returning the vineyard lands to their original owners and for the development of private viticulture. The winegrowers and winemakers of Pezinok began to shift their marketing and business activities to business associations or to their own firms. They stopped demanding large subsidies from the local government. In this process, the popular wine competition and public wine tasting gradually disappeared from the festival programme. Since the times of socialist grape harvest festivals, wine tasting had always been held at the castle courtyard on Saturdays. Several local winemaking firms began to organise individual wine tastings on their own premises or in tents in public spaces, independent

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<sup>20</sup> In a survey of visitors in 2007, 68% of the respondents declared that they attended the event each year; 78% of them rated the atmosphere with the highest mark. What people lacked most was more seating, access to drinking water, more sanitary facilities, parking places, and rest areas. The estimated number of visitors that year was 220,000. The grape harvest festival had 14 accompanying events, with 60 ensembles and 500 performers performing in the cultural programme and 49 groups participating in the allegorical parade. (For more details, see: Lupová, Eva. 2007. Aké bolo Vinobranie 2007. *Pezinčan* 40, 10: 8.)

from the official programme. In this situation, the town management took advantage of the flexible programme structure and included in the programme the official *Opening of the Municipal Wine Bar* in 2001. During the festival, it thus symbolically commemorates the historical privilege of the town to sell its own wine, and reflects concern about present-day viticulture and about the traditional form of this part of the programme. In the changed conditions, new space has been created for the presentation of regional wines, although it is less spectacular. It takes place within the intimate environment of the municipal wine bar on the square, and, in 2019, it was even held in the alley adjacent to the square.



Figure 4 Wine tasting during the grape harvest festival in 2019, taking place within the town's public area. The holding of this activity can be understood as an effort of the town's representatives to strengthen the presentation of Pezinok's position as the centre of the winegrowing region.

Photo K. Popelková.

This change did not fundamentally break with the structure of the festival. However, to fulfil its new function – as in several previous cases – the mosaic of festival events was transformed, and the emphasis placed by the actors on the individual events also changed.

The flexibility of the structure was also tested by a one-time modification of both the festival and the traditional programme in 2018 (MsÚ 2018: 1), when the parade as the core part of the festival was shifted from Sunday to Saturday. The reason was that the municipal leaders took a pragmatic decision to use the space and time for another event – the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Slovak Mining Towns and Municipalities. Pezinok is a town with a mining past and is a member of this group. For logistical reasons, the parade had to take place on Saturday. This fact complicated the organisation of the event, but enriched the festival with various ritual, specialist entertainment programme elements related to mining themes. In addition, it attracted new visitors to the town on account of its unusual programme. For three days, Pezinok was under the rule of not only Bacchus, but also the patron saint of miners, St. Barbara, to whom the mayor handed over the second key to the town on Friday.



Figure 5 God Bacchus and St. Barbara in one of the key moments of the opening ceremony of the grape harvest festival in Pezinok in 2018. Their presence at a single festivity reflects the links between the winegrowing, wine-producing, and mining traditions of this town.

Photo K. Popelková.



The Saturday parade was enriched with visually attractive, uniformed delegations of all Slovakian mining associations and miners from the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, and other countries (over 900 people altogether). They paraded in miners' uniforms under colourful flags and greeted the citizens of Pezinok with the traditional miners' greeting *ždar boh!* (God bless you!) in several languages.

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Pezinok has strategically focused on its development as a centre of culture, tourism, festivals, wine, and culinary tourism, and it has also adapted its strategy of organising the grape harvest festival. The town offers experience, entertainment, and relaxation to its citizens, and enables its interest groups and urban subcultures to present themselves in the programme and contribute to the building of a positive image of the town. To this end, it makes use of its *well-established name* and brand, and the popularity of the festival. With this platform, the town seeks to attract, host, and entertain visitors, so that potential tourists remember Pezinok from their experiences of the grape harvest festival and return throughout the year.

Even at the end of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, its organisers define it as predominantly a traditional festivity with the aim of commemorating and celebrating the long local tradition of winegrowing. Today, the grape harvest festival is complex and has a multi-layer structure. Its content is subject to constant change, and it is oriented towards a supra-local visitor clientele. It is symbolically and factually firmly rooted in the environment where it originated and from which it recurrently draws incentives for novelties.

## Summary

The grape harvest festival in Pezinok is a secular, cyclical autumn festival with a regional impact. The nature of the festival (Cudny 2016: 32–33; Cudny – Korec – Rouba 2012: 709) is due not only to the structure and programme offer, but also to the method of organisation of the event, from the preparation of excellent dramaturgy, production and technical support for the entertainment for visitors to the media coverage and promotion. The festival attracts visitors with the promise of a well-organised experience. The three-day open-air event, which takes place in the town centre, is organised and financed by the town, and its form is influenced by the elite in the town's leadership. Since it began in 1934, it has been primarily focused on promoting wine and viticulture, and its key idea is to celebrate the end of the grape harvest.

Even though the town has grown grapes and produced wine since the Middle Ages, the grape harvest festival as an urban festivity required people to allocate special time to this event. It has never been an authentic custom of the group that work in this field, but an invented tradition with new functions, which correspond to the needs of the present. The custom has been imitated in other contexts, acquiring a performative representation, and has become part of other events and contexts as a captivating performance for the audience. The grape harvest festival has been created as an imitation of a celebration, the celebration of a part of the local community, i.e. winegrowers. The whole town symbolically declares itself such a community, acting as the heir of a glorious history and taking on the role of the farmer celebrating the harvest.

Even though the title suggests wine and grapes as the main themes, the audience is strategically attracted to attend live concerts of popular music. Along with the traditional character of the key programme elements, in order to attract visitors, the festival also creates space for the enjoyment of popular and global culture, consumption, and entertainment by means of an offer of art performances and attractions. The accompanying events also include exhibitions of fine art, handmade artisan products, various art workshops, and folklore.

The structure of the grape harvest festival has been continuously complemented by new programme elements, depending on the message that the town has needed to deliver to the participants. Since its origins, there have been several periods when the cyclical character of the festival has been interrupted. Contemporary organisers have repeatedly followed on from previous traditions as a new beginning and elaborated on them in their breadth. The flexibility of its structure is evidenced, among other things, by the fact that, even though the grape harvest festival was created and until recently existed as a secular event, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the organisers, in pursuit of deepening its traditionalism and sacral symbolism, incorporated religious elements into it. The last time the stability of the structure was tested was in 2018 when a miners' celebration was included directly in the core part of the festival. The programme line in the form of its key points and the symbolic management of the event remain unquestioned and preserved.

The development of the specific position of Pezinok within the region and the presentation of its qualities appears to be the main developmental function of the grape harvest festival. Viticulture is still an important and widespread type of employment and business in the town. This determines the strong presence of winegrowing and wine themes in the festival programme at the factual and symbolic level, and also the close community,

i.e. the festival relationship. Along with the winegrowing traditions and customs as intangible elements of the town's culture as parts of the programme, the organisers also make use of the tangible culture contained in the authentic space of the town's historical centre, where the festival takes place. Both components are an indispensable part of the festival atmosphere and the combining of them into an impressive whole is aimed at both visitors and inhabitants in the form of their experience of the event. With such commodification of the selected elements of culture, the organisers instrumentalise the thematic feast to consolidate and enhance the identity of the local urban society.

Since it began in 1934, the feast has been primarily intended to promote wine and winegrowing, and its main idea has been to celebrate the end of the grape harvest. During the socialist era, its structure and main idea were adapted primarily to serve a political goal – the promotion of the regime and its achievements in large-scale agricultural production. The feast has a direct link to the structure of political power and power relations even today, as documented by the efforts of the town mayors to moderate the libretto of the feast. They also influence it (e.g. by means of words addressed to citizens in the local media or speeches directly from the festival stage, and also by the selection of sponsors and the guests invited from among important politicians), and also the symbolic form of its individual ritual parts. Through the traditional context and historical reminiscences along with the cultural and consumer offer, the local elite seeks to legitimise its position in the local society.

The on-going eventisation of the grape harvest festival as a social event can be best documented through the recorded manifestations of commercialisation and multiplication (Gebhardt 2000: 26; Pfadenhauer 2013/2012). Since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the town's leadership has actively supported the growth of the commercial aspect of the grape harvest festival. Its efforts to invite the most popular guests to take part in the programme and to offer the widest range of experiences, in order to and attract as many visitors to the town as possible, have sidelined or completely removed from the programme the traditional competition exhibition and public wine tasting. Nevertheless, it has been rewarded by the high number of entities paying rent for areas intended for sales and the operation of attractions, by the revenues of local restaurants and accommodation facilities, and also by the advertising success of winemaking companies. The duration of the festival has lengthened with the organisation of accompanying events during the week that precedes the traditional extended weekend dedicated to the grape harvest festival. The offer of experiences has grown in terms of quantity, and the dramaturgy of the event has been enhanced by the

addition of new programme elements. Finally, the most significant manifestation of the multiplication of holiday culture through the example of the studied event is the change from the biannual rhythm of the staging of the festival to an annual one. This change suggests that, even in the late modernity period, the grape harvest festival is not on the decline and remains interesting for those who use it as a functional tool to realise their interests and for visitors seeking an exceptional atmosphere and exciting adventures.

July 2021

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