

mother of the recently arrived family afterward tells how they have to pay Enkhetuya half of their income to stay on her land. “We share with Enkhetuya,” she explains. But as we are not introduced to the Tsaatan concepts of shared economy, it leaves us with the impression that Enkhetuya is somehow exploiting her fellow people. It would have benefited the film to go deeper into the complexities of the economic relations between the Tsaatan families at the lake and to show in what ways the new economic opportunities mix with the traditional Tsaatan value of shared economy.

Still, the film gives a profound insight into the various tensions created through the commodification and commercialization of indigenous people and their traditions. One of the questions touched upon is whether faith can still be involved in a shamanic ritual when it is made into some kind of commodity in a tourist business. After participating in a rite performed by Enkhetuya, the translator of one of the visiting tourist groups poses this question with the words: “I was just wondering whether she really believes in it or not?” The film voices the translator’s partial trust in the authenticity of the ritual when she concludes: “You cannot really fake it.” Still, we are never presented with Enkhetuya’s own belief or potential disbelief in her shamanic practices, and the film does not address whether or not she considers her rituals to be more than a money-making business. Instead, it continues to voice her economic contemplations, leaving the viewer with the impression of a tradition that has been commercialized at the cost of belief. This might actually be the case, but I still maintain that it would have been fruitful to include Enkhetuya’s own perspective, as she might not perceive business and belief as a contrast. In fact, according to the Tsaatans of my knowledge, the participant or patient in a shamanic ritual is expected to pay the shaman for her services; otherwise, the outcome is not believed to have the desired effect.

*Shaman Tour* can certainly be recommended. Although an elaboration on the Tsaatan notion of economy and shamanic belief

would have been beneficial, the film still offers a valuable and intimate insight into the contemporary tension between indigenous people and global tourism. Finally, it should be noted that the film is technically impressive: the shots are well-composed, and the scenes of daily life, rituals, and the landscape around Lake Huvsgul are beautiful.

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TRENCSENYI, Klara, and Vlad NAUMESCU, dirs., *Bird’s Way*, 56 min., color. Bucharest: Libra Films, 2009.

*Bird’s Way* does not so much tell a story as spin a finely threaded web that gradually draws you in and leads you to piece together the fragments of images and people that are caught up in its strands. Narratives are hinted at, glimpsed, but never forced to fit into an artificial structure for the sake of convention.

The film is set in Romania’s Danube Delta, in the village of Periprava, home to a dwindling community of Old Believers. As one elderly character in the film explains, the Old Believers, descendants of Filip, an Orthodox bishop, originally came from Russia 300 years ago. After refusing to obey the religious reforms of Peter the Great in 1666, Filip and a small group of followers, who came to be called Lipoveni, fled Russia and eventually settled in the Danube Delta.

While that story is probably more folklore than fact, the history of this village is complex. The outskirts of Periprava, we find out, used to house political prisoners during communist times. Remnants of the dams that they had been forced to build in the 1950s can still be seen, alongside ruins of the prisoners’ barracks. One villager recalls hearing screams regularly coming from this area during her childhood. Her parents used to tell her they were just the sounds of birds.

Echoes of these legacies hover over Periprava like the flocks of birds that repeatedly

sweep across the sky in the film's elegant panning shots. History and memory are delicately intertwined in the cultural and geographical landscapes of *Bird's Way*. Some people believe that the dead prisoners have cursed the village and that the severe drought that is currently taking place is a punishment for the sins of those who still live there. Others see the lack of a proper priest in the village also as something of a curse. Fewer and fewer locals know how to read Slavonic; fewer and fewer people follow the Old Believer traditions. The village grows smaller. People leave. People die.

But in between the shadows of the past, the present is still very much alive. The recurring sound of ringing church bells serves as a leitmotif, marking both continuity and change over the passage of time. Elderly people shuffle along the roads to attend services. Women bake Easter cakes in an outdoor oven. Cows graze quietly in the mist. People ice skate on the frozen river. Friends and relatives gather together for meals outside in the sun, under the grape arbor. Fishermen cast their nets in the Delta, and fish are caught, cleaned, sold, cooked, and eaten. One enterprising man has come to Periprava from the city to turn the prisoners' dams into a fish farm, a potential spot for tourism, for making money—a place where, he says, he would eventually like to retire.

The film is haunted by the presence of children, both as symbols of the village's future and as products of its past. Children appear subtly in many of the shots, quietly playing by themselves, sitting with their parents and grandparents, sometimes looking searchingly at the camera. A discussion about a stillborn baby lends an eerie tone to a family gathering. A glimpse of a boy making a snow angel on a hushed gray-white landscape seems more solemn than playful. A scene with young siblings catching fish together is spirited but still somehow subdued. A little boy dressed in a makeshift priest's robe features in several shots. His imitations of religious gestures and songs evoke the deeply ingrained yet precarious status of the church in Periprava.

One young girl repeatedly appears throughout the film, not at the center of focus but almost incidental to the scene at hand. She weaves in and out of the narrative, attending the unfolding incidents of day-to-day life, silently inhabiting the edge of the frame. She is worldly and real yet also becomes a kind of apparition. She is simultaneously inside and outside the film, providing a wordless yet highly charged surveillance over the passing events.

The film is evidently well-researched, indicating rich ethnographic explorations over an extended period of time, yet it does not have the look or feel of a typical research film. It is edited kaleidoscopically, eschewing a linear sequence of passing hours or seasons. It conveys intimations of the history, present, and future of a community without recourse to voice-over, talking heads, or explanatory texts. *Bird's Way* is contemplative, a bit mysterious, containing associative leaps like those in a dream. After the film ends, its sounds and images will resonate in your mind for a long time.

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