

**Kyustendil Spring Day and Socialist Festivity:
the “Invention” of the Holiday (Part I)**

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(Summary)

The article examines and analyses the process of “inventing” Kyustendil Spring Day in the context of socialist festivity. Based on the local tradition of welcoming spring in Kyustendil, which integrates pre-Christian rituals related to the day of spring solstice, the Day of Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in the Orthodox calendar and *Mladentsi* in the folk calendar, the holiday is gradually “domesticated” by the socialist authorities in the late 1960s, purged of its religious elements and re-invented – engaged with “new, socialist content”. Having combined various festive forms, symbols and rituals and occupying various urban spaces throughout the years, the holiday eventually established itself as a successful “invented tradition” during the socialist period, including several elements: a beauty contest, a ceremony for handing over the symbols of spring, a carnival procession, a public celebration on the Hisarlaka hill above the town, and accompanying cultural and sports events.

Keywords: Kyustendil Spring Day; socialist festivity; festive calendar; carnival; beauty contest

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