

Abstract

This master thesis aims to describe the Lorien community, find out if it can be seen as a religious community, if it serves as a client cult, if it can be described as the centre of contemporary alternative spirituality and if common beliefs and practises increase the trust between community members.

The first, theoretical part of this thesis defines the term 'community' and summarises M. Scott Peck's book, *The Different Drum*, as community members still try to communicate with each other according to its principles. The thesis will also show the relationship between religion and spirituality, and briefly characterise the New Age milieu, as its thoughts are present in the Lorien. At the end of the first part, the thesis focuses on research dealing with the cohesion of different groups and their common practices and beliefs.

The second, practical part includes field research by the author of this thesis. Data were collected by participant observation and the method of semi-structured interviews with selected members of the Lorien community. We will find out from them the importance that the inhabitants attach to their community, common practices, and their own religious ideas. At the end of the second part, we summarise the data collected in the community, apply the theories presented in the first part to them, and show that all our research questions can be answered positively.

Key words

Community, M. S. Peck, religion, spirituality, New Age milieu, dancing celebrations, Peck's seminars, group cohesion.