

# Social Constructions of the Native Faith: Mytho-historical Narratives and Identity-discourse in Hungarian Neo- paganism

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## Abstract

*This thesis provides a detailed examination of the historical roots and national ideologies of contemporary Hungarian native faith movements, focusing specifically on the narrative boundary-setting mechanisms. In my historical research, based on the analysis of primary resources, I am looking for the roots of neo-pagan concepts in Hungary. In the narrative analysis of contemporary neo-pagan discourses, I examine the ethnic myths, historical memories, national ideologies and symbolic boundary-setting mechanisms. The thesis shows that native-faith myths (re)define actual group boundaries and reinforce current group identifications. In this way, neo-pagan nationalism contributes to the reformulation of national ideologies, national sentiments and 'groupist' ideas. I argue that the public success of native faith ideas is explicable by their fitting to broader group beliefs of contemporary ethno-nationalism.*

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## I. Introduction

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, 2012, at the national remembrance day of the Hungarian Revolution, a Tuva shaman performed a veneration ritual and cleansing ceremony at the Holy Crown in the Hungarian Parliament. Ojun Adigzi See-Oglu, who's all patrilineal descendants have been shamans, was invited to Hungary by Éva Kanalas, a Hungarian folk singer, self-made folklorist and shamanic music performer. According to national media accounts, after his first visit to the Hungarian crown a few days before, the shaman left the national assembly 'as a new man', and decided to make a shamanic ritual 'for the prosperity and well-being of the country'. As he got permission from the Office of the National Assembly, there was no obstacle to the act. During the ceremony, which was performed with drums and other ritual accessories around the crown, Kanalas was singing *Csángó* folk religious songs to the Virgin Mary or *Boldogasszony* ('Blessed Lady'). The performance attracted attention not just among the guards and the small audience, but, after the video uploads on Youtube<sup>1</sup>, in the wider public also. It called forth public contentions, particularly in the right-wing media. The arguments obviously were directed to the question of the cultural and political role of a South Siberian shamanistic practice in a Hungarian national context. The contested issues of ethnic culture, authenticity and sacred symbols are in the heart of this discourse, while the symbolic constructions and redefinitions of 'Christianity' and 'Paganism', 'East' and 'West', spirituality and politics, religion and nation signals the discursive stake.

In my thesis, I address the cultural and social background of this symbolic domain, which I will refer to as 'native faith movement' or 'ethnic neo-paganism'<sup>2</sup>. Various cultural practices

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqpMPdXGxdo&feature=related>

<sup>2</sup> Here I use the terms 'ethnic neo-paganism' and 'native faith movements' as synonyms.

emerge on this ground: the growing popularity of neo-pagan ethnic religions, ‘historical reconstructionist’ movements and ‘para-scientific’ aspirations provide ongoing social constructions of a ‘new’ national past. Participants of this heterogeneous milieu are fostering ethnic revival: not only remembering the glorious past, but also rebuilding it, here and now. In contemporary national mythologies, a unique ‘spiritual quality’ is ascribed to ‘native faith’. The movement’s legitimacy is based on a presumed continuity with the cultural heritage of pagan ancestors. As detailed historical continuity is broken for almost a millennium, native faith movements have to invent their own traditions. Hungarian neo-paganism is predominantly a countercultural phenomenon, based on older and non-traditional forms of national mysticism and cultural memory. Its two interconnected core ideas are the spiritualization of the ethnics and the articulation of a non-canonical cultural memory. The emerging paganistic historical narratives characteristically oppose mainstream historical canons. It plays a substantial role in reshaping social frames of remembering and myth-building. The imageries of the Pagan past have considerable effects on national cultural memory; they play a substantial role in reshaping social frames of social remembrance and myth-building. Their suggested remedy for the perceived crisis of post-socialist society is a unique mixture of cultural nationalism, alternative spirituality and the social networks of late-modernity.

The terms ‘native faith movements’ and ‘ethnic neo-paganism’ reflect to the double-faces of this phenomenon, which appeared across the post-socialist region in the last twenty years. On one hand, they are native / ethnic in the sense that they have an ethnic character and their beliefs are strongly correlated to ethnic group-beliefs, national ideologies and mythologies. On the other, they have a spiritual or religious self-definition and usually categorized as new religious movements. They link between religiosity with nationalism in a non-traditional

way: it is the (alternative) spiritualization of ethnicity and nationalization of contemporary spirituality. Their dual - nationalist and religious - character is expressed with different emphases in two definitions for the similar movements in the region: Simpson accentuates the character of the religious beliefs<sup>3</sup>, while Wiench underlines their traditionalist and national commitments as well<sup>4</sup>. As for a working definition, I specify the movements' character as countercultural revivalist nationalist movements, whose imaginary is based on a unique interpretation of ethnic proto-history, an alternative vision of non-Christian roots of ethnic culture and a spiritual concept of the nation.

While the various connections between religiosity and nationalism, historical roles and functions of national mythologies and the invention of traditions are regular subject of nationalism studies, Eastern European neo-pagan movements still less analyzed in the field. Previous researches on the Hungarian native faith movements are rare and fragmented also. First interpretations of Hungarian neo-paganism are published by Szilárdi<sup>5</sup>, Szilágyi<sup>6</sup>, Szilárdi and Szilágyi<sup>7</sup> from a religious science approach, and a few short ethnographic publications (which usually describe the movement as an ethnic revival and neo-shamanistic phenomenon)

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<sup>3</sup> "In Central and Eastern Europe Neo-Paganism is a movement made up of groups that see themselves as the legitimate continuation of the pre-Christian religious beliefs of their ancestors and/or geographical territory. Their concerns are typically immanent, earth-centered, and local." S. Simpson, *Native faith: Polish Neo-Paganism at the brink of the 21st century* (Zakład Wydawniczy "Nomos," 2000), 26–27.

<sup>4</sup> Contemporary Eastern European paganism is "a movement inspired by nature-based spirituality, stressing the need to return to ethnic or tribal identity, to re-Christian roots, to the old customs and indigenous values". P. Wiench, "Neo-Pagan Groups in Central-Eastern Europe," *GRUPÉS IR APLINKOS*, no. 2 (2010): 1.

<sup>5</sup> Réka Szilárdi, "Ancient Gods—New Ages: Lessons from Hungarian Paganism," *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009): 44–57.

<sup>6</sup> T. Szilágyi, "Sacred Characteristics of the Nation: 'Hungarianism' as Political Religion?," *Contribution to the REVACERN Young Researchers Exchange Programme* (2008).

<sup>7</sup> T. Szilágyi and Szilárdi, R., *Istenek ébredése: az újpogányság vallástudományi vizsgálata* (Szeged: JATEPress, 2007).

are available<sup>8</sup>. There are no detailed descriptions of the historical development and the current narratives and national ideologies of the pagan streams. Theoretical frames are not elaborated either, since other social sciences like social anthropology, sociology, memory studies and nationalism studies are still less involved in the narrow research field in Hungary.

Hungarian Neo-pagan movements' nationalism is understood by Szilágyi as a political religion, which emerged around the concept of 'sacred nation': "the central elements of which are the sacralization of the Hungarian nation, the idea of a chosen people, the designation of the national territory as a sacral space, and the inclusion of religious moral elements into political rhetoric."<sup>9</sup> Though the 'sacrality of the nation' can be a fundamental belief on the scene, further aspects of the national ideology and the provided identity-scheme of the native faith movements are still unknown. Neither the historical formation, nor the ideological variation along the different neo-pagan streams are described yet.

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a detailed examination of the historical roots and national ideologies of contemporary Hungarian native faith movements, focusing specifically on the narrative boundary-setting mechanisms. It will be shown that native-faith myths (re)define actual group boundaries and reinforce current group identifications. In this way, neo-pagan nationalism contributes to the reformulation of national ideologies, national sentiments and 'groupist' ideas. By the results of my thesis-research, I intend to contribute to the discourse about the contested relationship of nationalism and religions, while embedding this spiritual flirtation into the broader context of memory-practices and identity discourse about the nation. My core questions are the following ones: Where are the cultural – historical

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<sup>8</sup> Szathmári, B., "Táltosok a XXI. század hajnalán," *Napkút Kiadó - Napút Online kulturális folyóirat* (n.d.), [http://www.napkut.hu/naput\\_2003/2003\\_05/061.htm](http://www.napkut.hu/naput_2003/2003_05/061.htm). and Á. Kertész and A. Takács, "Újtáltosság Magyarországon az ezredfordulón," *Rubicon* 16, no. 7 (2005): 62-64.

<sup>9</sup> Szilágyi, "Sacred Characteristics of the Nation," 10.

roots of the contemporary movements; and what kind of group beliefs, ideologies and social values are expressed by contemporary pagan visions on the Hungarian native faith? My thesis research includes a historical reconstruction of the roots of neo-pagan groups, based on the analysis of primary resources, and a narrative analysis of neo-pagan texts and discourses, in which I am focusing on the symbolic boundary-setting mechanisms.

In looking for the roots of contemporary native faith movements, I have found several influential cultural streams and social locations. National mythologizations on native faith scene are influenced by numerous historical and cultural streams. Regarding the historical stability and mutability of myth-histories, *longue durée* features and shorter period characteristics are equally significant. Cultural adaptations of early-modern ethnic myths by modern nationalisms; its interplay with academic historiography and ethnology; legacy of anti-modernist nationalism; countercultures and nationalist adversaries of the communist regime and the circumstances of the transitions to post-socialism are the main stages, which represent the complex process, in which national constructions of the past have been transformed.

I have analysed the national and spiritual narratives of three local native faith movements. These currents (Badinyi's Sumerian ethnic mythological construct, Pap and Szántai's 'Holy Crown concept' and the *Yotengrit* movement) represent three rival visions and ideological frames: in the thesis, I refer to these categories as 'mythical protochronism', 'esoteric nationalism' and '*táltos*-faith'. The investigated topics are the pagan imageries of the native faith and national history, and the applied boundary-setting mechanisms, which are to identity, differentiate and characterize the Self and symbolic Others for the followers. I will argue, that while significant common features are detectable in all of them, the underlying myths, national concepts, group-beliefs are so different, that regarding the heterogeneity of

the religious, national and social concepts, the Hungarian native faith scene could be considered a unified ‘movement’ only with restrictions.

Scope of the present work has obvious limitations. In the description and interpretation of contemporary native faith phenomenon, my primary focus is on the narrative and ideological dimension. It is an apparently narrow aspect. Rituals play a significant role in the participants’ involvement, in the articulations of shared meanings and the formulation of new communities. Native faith movements are not based merely on ideologies and mythical constructs; religious practice and spiritual experiences are not less significant. However, as I cannot lean on well-grounded previous researches, I concentrate on the textual level and not the more complex ways of social practice. Furthermore, I don’t analyze personal life-courses, individual ways of identification, significations and re-interpretations of the native faith concepts either. The participant’s conceptualization of their social world, their value-choices and identification processes are not less relevant than the ideological supply, provided to them. Though significant differences are presumptive even among the members of the same native faith-circle, their analysis is beyond the limits of the thesis.

I examine the question of the formation and ideological connotations of Hungarian neo-pagan nationalism in the disciplinary frames of nationalism and memory studies. In the theoretical chapter, besides I locate the phenomenon to the context of invented traditions, political religions, national mythologies, and restorative nostalgia, I raise the question of a possible applicability of the concept of ‘religious nationalism’ to neo-pagan movements. In the third chapter, to provide a wider scope for the appearance of the Hungarian neo-paganism, I examine the international development of modern pagan movements. I underline the ideological and political differences between Eastern European and Western, ‘ethnic’ and

‘civic’ paganism, though I will argue that these regularly applied dichotomies are not unproblematic.

Fourth, fifth and sixth chapters are based on my historical and empirical research. In identifying the historical roots of the Hungarian native faith movements, I differentiated four streams, which influenced the contemporary view on the field. These are the popularizations of ethnology, particularly its concepts about Hungarians folk-beliefs; legacy of interwar *Turanism*, an anti-modern meta-political movement with pagan sympathies; the circle of emigrant ‘para-historians’; and the growing interest toward esotericism from the last decade of late-socialism. I understand the current worldview of the native faith scene as the result of an amalgamation of these cultural streams. As antagonistic currents emerged on the local native faith scene, I provide an analysis of their national narratives by focusing separately on the three main circles, I identified: ‘mythical protochronism’, ‘esoteric nationalism’ and the ‘*táltos*-faith’.

## II. Theoretical frames

The Gellnerian understanding of nationalism as a modern “political principle which maintains that similarity of culture is the basic social bond”<sup>10</sup> calls for detailed analyzes of the complex social processes of ‘nationalization’. The construction of ‘national cultures’ and intensive beliefs in the very existence, eternal life and enduring character of the nation fundamentally contributes to the legitimacy of (post-) industrial ‘nation-states. Gellner’s concept of invention was transformed to an interdisciplinary research paradigm, in which one of the main topics is the cultural and political construction of the central entity: the nation, as an imagined political community. For Anderson, the concept of nation is more an anthropologic institution; nations are imagined communities. While the dilemma about its ‘falsity’ / ‘realism’ may be less productive, the question of style, how nations are imagined is crucial<sup>11</sup>. Modern national imaginary is based on the invention of traditions: “invention of tradition attempts to structure parts of social life as unchanging and invariant”<sup>12</sup>. Inventions of historical mythologies and canonized national memories are crucial in the existence and popularization of modern nationalisms. While the question of historical continuity vs. the modern constructed nature of ethnic affiliations, identities and national groups might be fruitful, on the field of national ideologies, the sense of historical rootedness or ‘participants’ primordialism’<sup>13</sup> of the own group is substantial. Though the casual connotations of ‘tradition’ animate notions of cultural

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<sup>10</sup> E. Gellner, *On Nations and Nationalism*, 1995, 3.

<sup>11</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Verso Books, 2006), 6.

<sup>12</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm and T.O. Ranger, *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge Univ Pr, 1992), 2.

<sup>13</sup> A.D. Smith, *Nationalism and modernism: a critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism* (Psychology Press, 1998), 158.

stability, it is rather understandable as a ‘stabilizing’ ideological toolkit of rapidly changing modern societies.

Invented traditions become particularly functional in the troubled periods of rapid transformations, when previous social patterns are distressingly weakened and historic continuity had to be invented, even by creating a fictitious past. Continuity with the past became a central question after the Eastern European transitions of 1989-90. According to Hobsbawm, local nationalisms are among the beneficiaries of the new regimes<sup>14</sup>, as they provided ideological supply in the changing circumstances. The rapid rise and growing visibility of cultural nationalism (one of the predominant discourses in post-socialism) after 1989, called for various academic explanations. Apart of the fundamental influence of current social and political processes (identity-claims, projects and interests of various social actors, a current ideological vacuum, etc.), a reappearance of interwar social concepts and political language is widely presupposed. The “return of history” arguments call attention to *longue durée* factors. One-sided historical explanations hinted a picture of a resurrected interwar nationalism. This historiographic myth, depicted by Brubaker as the ‘return of the repressed’<sup>15</sup>, systematically underplays the specific circumstances of the transitions from state-socialism to post-socialism.

Regardless to the validity of historical / situative explanations of post-socialist nationalisms, significance of the past came to the force in the general forms of history-oriented identity-politics, contested social remembrance and inventive constructions of virtual histories. Though memory studies and a critical understanding of memory politics became fashionable

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<sup>14</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge Univ Pr, 1992), 173–177.

<sup>15</sup> R. Brubaker, “Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism” (1998): 15–18.

or even overused in the academic sphere<sup>16</sup>, national memory-politics, commemorative practices and historical rhetoric is a constitutive part of cultural nationalism undeniably.

Historical imaginaries, public history and memory-discourses about national and cultural heritage are influenced by several domains, interests and ideologies: scientific argumentations, cultural language-games, political projects, identity-politics and professional claims. Though the making of national history and national imagery is a complex social, cultural and political process, which includes the activities of numerous institutions, networks, social actors, knowledge producers and disseminators; ‘scribblers’ have a seminal influence on nationalist projects. Nationalism as a form of historicist culture demands the crucial contribution of intellectuals<sup>17</sup>. Representatives of academic historiography and archaeology have particularly significant roles: „For historians are to nationalism what poppy-growers in Pakistan are to heroin-addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market.“

Due to its institutional power, academic historiography has central position in making canonized history-myths. “Control of a society’s memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power”<sup>18</sup>. However, in the production of history and social remembrance, a limited diversity is always on the stage. Though academic and other forms of institutionalized representations have powerful influence on popular and everyday concepts and structural frames, cultural receptions have independent elements as well; personal and uncontrolled meaning-systems have certain latitude, even in totalitarian regimes<sup>19</sup>. Both within official historiography and in

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<sup>16</sup> D.C. Berliner, “The abuses of memory: Reflections on the memory boom in anthropology,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2005): 197–211.

<sup>17</sup> A.D. Smith, *National identity* (University of Nevada Press, 1991), 95.

<sup>18</sup> P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge Univ Pr, 1989), 1.

<sup>19</sup> K. Verdery, *National ideology under socialism: identity and cultural politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania*, vol. 7 (Univ of California Pr on Demand, 1995).

the alternative locations of remembrance, where the construction and transmissions of unofficial pasts take place, various, often contesting narratives and memory frames are present. One peculiarity of nationalism is that – while it could be theorized as a cultural homogenization process<sup>20</sup> - social scenes, where national symbols and emotions become vivid, could fundamentally differ, especially in late-modernity. Due to the institutional power of historiography, academically sanctificated, ‘legitimate’ memories and history-myths are discerned, armed and saved from the everyday memories, just as the ‘proto-scientific’ or ‘alternative’ ones. Scientific demarcation strategies (for example the Halbwachsian one between „particular“ collective memory and „universalist“ history)<sup>21</sup>, though problematized both within historiography<sup>22</sup> and philosophy of history<sup>23</sup>, stigmatize ‘unofficial’ representational forms and select among memories. Among the national self-validating myths in historiography, the most powerful ones could be the myths of origin. Mythologies of ethnogenesis, ethnic proto-history, concepts of medieval roots<sup>13</sup> and historical continuity of modern nations provide a discursive frame for national destiny, identity and characterology. Together with the symbolic constructions of national golden age, national decline and restoration, the concepts of (national) religion, divine electivity and spatial mythologies interconnect historiography to broader public discourses and identity-politics.

Post-socialist identity-politics’ demand for reformulated historical narratives and underlying myths provided a new significance for both official and alternative memory-frames. However, post-socialist society’s relation to their own past is regularly seen as highly problematic.

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<sup>20</sup> E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Blackwell, 1983).

<sup>21</sup> M. Halbwachs, *Halbwachs/Coser: On Collective Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>22</sup> H. White and W.T. Deininger, “Metahistory: The historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe,” *History: Reviews of New Books* 2, no. 5 (1974): 122–122.

<sup>23</sup> M. De Certeau and T. Conley, *The Writing of History* (Columbia Univ Pr, 1988).

Predominance of historicist identity-politics goes together with the maintenance of official taboos around traumatic memories; the public climate does not serve for ‘working through the past’. The lack of a critical apprehension toward the communities’ recent past and the incapability for a deeper historical self-reflexivity is subservient for the formation of nostalgic memories. Nostalgia does not really help the advent of a morally judgmental climate; while it gravitates to an imagined past, it can be seen as a selective rejection of memories. Susan Boym differentiates two idealtypical forms of nostalgia: the more personal ‘reflexive nostalgia’ and ‘restorative nostalgia’. The latter is „at the core of recent national and religious revivals. It knows two main plots — the return to origins and the conspiracy”<sup>24</sup>. It stresses *nostos* (home) and attempts a trans-historical reconstruction of the lost home by historical myths; and constructs a transcendental cosmology, a concept of Manichaeic battle of good and evil. While ‘reflexive nostalgia’ is depicted as and potentially playful and self-ironical, ‘restorative nostalgia’ „takes itself dead seriously”<sup>25</sup>. Dichotomy of a more creative, melancholic, harmless nostalgia on one hand, and a cramped, paranoid, aggressive nostalgia on the other, suggests a distinction between an ‘artistic’ and a rather ‘political’ temporal longing. However, they may have certain common psychological roots: both individual and national fantasies are connected to desires for ‘cultural intimacy’. According to Herzfeld, the feeling of intimacy is the fundamental appearance, authentic experience and further drive of cultural nationalisms among ordinary people. ‘Structural nostalgia’ is the fundamental sentiment behind the nationalist construction of a golden age. “Collective representations of an edenic order – a time before time – in which the balanced perfection of social relations has not yet suffered the decay that affects everything human.”<sup>26</sup> In the time of the glorious past,

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<sup>24</sup> S. Boym, “Nostalgia and Its Discontents” (2007): 453.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 455.

<sup>26</sup> M. Herzfeld, *Cultural intimacy: Social poetics in the nation-state* (Routledge New York, 1997), 148.

“the original nation once existed as a pure, unified and harmonious community”; while in the degraded present the nation’s primer goal is to “reverse the conditions that have caused its present degradation and recover its original harmonious essence”<sup>27</sup>.

The strategic manipulation of the past fits to a broader timeline, whereat critical discourses and future utopias can emerge. The “triadic temporal structure”<sup>28</sup> of nationalist rhetoric applies a historical narration of golden age, decline and future restoration.

‘(...) The construction of a glorious past serves two critical functions in nationalist rhetoric. First, as many students of the subject have noted, mythic images of the past strengthen the legitimacy and emotional appeal of nationalist movements. Secondly, and equally importantly, it is through these images of the glorious past that the initial definition of the nation is articulated.’<sup>29</sup>

While rival national memories are obviously divergent, they share fundamental common features and functions. Their knowledge structure, ideological patterns, favored argumentations, applied narratives, tropes and other rhetoric means are often alike, just as their basic commitment to historical identification and the current political role fulfilled by them. These actual functions are numerous; different ethnic memories can contribute to the ethnic hatred<sup>30</sup>; in other contexts their role is much more harmless and not necessarily connected directly toward intergroup antagonisms. Schöpflin, in his functionalist approach to national mythologies, emphasizes the diverse functions national myths can bear in different social circumstances, and he is underlining some positive aspects<sup>31</sup>. While he points out the

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<sup>27</sup> M. Levinger and P.F. Lytle, “Myth and mobilisation: the triadic structure of nationalist rhetoric,” *Nations and Nationalism* 7, no. 2 (2001): 178.

<sup>28</sup> Levinger and Lytle, “Myth and mobilisation.”

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>30</sup> R. Hayden, “Recounting the Dead: The rediscovery and redefinition of war massacres in late-and post-communist Yugoslavia,” *Memory and opposition under state socialism* (1993): 79–99.

<sup>31</sup> G. Schöpflin, “The functions of myth and a taxonomy of myths,” *Myths and nationhood* (1997): 25.

anthropological parallels between myths in general and national myths in particular, we have to take into consideration the characteristics of the latter in details.

Narrative constructions of national myths reshape the visions on the past according to a modern, national interpretational frame. ‘Participants’ primordialism<sup>32</sup> is projecting the (national) social frames of modernity onto the past, and thus a historical lineage is given to prevailing social processes. Images of a glorious past “furnish the cognitive maps and mobilizing moralities of nations”<sup>33</sup>, just here and now. Among the significant functions of modern national myths, their contribution to ‘groupist’<sup>34</sup> concepts and group beliefs<sup>35</sup> could be underscored. While collective remembering connects the present with an imagined past, it (re-)defines and stabilizes actual group boundaries and reinforce current group identifications. The strength and importance of these mythical boundary-setting mechanisms are sometimes inversely proportional to ‘evident’ intergroup differences.

While most of the paradigmatic studies of modern nationalisms have tended to underline several factors in understanding the emergence and salience of their object, religion was not among the most investigated ones. The systematic underplay of the effect of religions could be a consequence of two interrelated concepts: first, the interpretation of nationalist ideologies as characteristically modernists projects; and second, an explicit or tacit adoption of the secularization thesis, which, generally speaking, locates religions to the historical past. In this context, nationalism was able to see as a substitutive factor, a cultural and political alternative

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<sup>32</sup> A.D. Smith, *Nationalism: theory, ideology, history*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge; Malden MA: Polity, 2010), 58. ‘(...) the participants’ vivid sense of the primordial nature of their own collective cultural identities’.

<sup>33</sup> A.D. Smith, “The myth of the ‘Modern Nation’ and the myths of nations,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11, no. 1 (1988): 1–26.

<sup>34</sup> R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups* (Harvard University Press, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> D. Bar-Tal, *Shared beliefs in a society: Social psychological analysis* (Sage Publications, Inc, 2000).

for traditional religions. “What then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning. (...) few things were (are) better suited to this end than an idea of the nation.”<sup>36</sup>

The unifying and separating forces in religions and nationalisms, the provided symbolic frameworks and cultural signification-systems, the ground for individual emotional and psychological commitment are parallel features; just as the ritual, mythological, linguistic and commemorative character of the nationalist mind can be seen as religious-based. These elements allow of the extensive use of religious analogies in understanding nationalism. The standard call for remembrance on national grounds has religious precursors and connotations<sup>37</sup>; the imperatives to remember are transformed into national obligations of secular morality. ‘Structural nostalgia’ of national longing is built on religious concepts also:

“Nostalgia for originary perfection is common to much nationalist historiography, as it is to religious narrative. Both explain the compromising of purity – the very core of cultural intimacy – in terms of the corrosion of time.”<sup>38</sup>

According to a sociological truism<sup>39</sup>, ethno-nationalism is essentially a post-secular political religion. The concept of political religions emerged in the interwar period, for an understanding of post-Christian secular totalitarian ideologies, which, according to the interpretations, in some of their features became ‘pseudo-religions’ or ‘substitute-religions’. Voegelin pointed out the gnostic nature of modern ideologies, as Nazism and Communism<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Anderson, *Imagined communities*, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Y.H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish history and Jewish memory* (Univ of Washington Pr, 1982).

<sup>38</sup> Herzfeld, *Cultural intimacy*, 150.

<sup>39</sup> R. Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches,” *Nations and Nationalism* (2012).

<sup>40</sup> E. Voegelin, *Science, politics, and gnosticism: two essays* (H. Regnery Co., 1968).

Gentile provided a comparative model for politics as religion. He discerns<sup>41</sup> the sacralization of politics from the politicization of religions by fundamentalism. Two main forms of the sacralization of politics are the formulation of civil religions with a democratic potential, and the totalitarian tendencies of political religions.

Brubaker discerns four models of representing the relationship of nationalism and religions, each connected with different research interests and questions. According to his typology<sup>42</sup>, in understanding nationalism, roles of religion range from analogies through historical origins and interpenetration toward specific forms of religious nationalisms. The four identified conceptual forms can be differentiated analytically, and in this way they shed light on a bunch of theoretical difficulties in understanding the presupposed religious character of modern nationalisms. The interpretational problems are partly originated in the ambiguities on the field: it is not always clear whether 'religion' is merely a fruitful metaphor in understanding nationalism and the strength of individual attachments to the concept, or more than it: a factual component of nationalist ideologies. Practically, the types can be slurring and overlapping, just as in Anthony D. Smith's account.

Smith interconnects the religious origins of nationalism, the current political use of religious language and the broader religious analogies of nationalism generally, while points out the significance of myths of ethnic election and divine covenant in several cases, particularly in the Judeo-Christian tradition<sup>43</sup>. He underlines the religious roots of nationalism. Biblical concepts of divine electivity were transmitted into several Christian ethnic groups' own national beliefs. Smith points out strong Christian connotation of different particular cultures

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<sup>41</sup> E. Gentile, *Politics as religion* (Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism."

<sup>43</sup> A.D. Smith, *Chosen peoples: Sacred sources of national identity* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2003).

in different historical periods, from the Late Ancient Armenia through Protestantism in the Netherland and England and Pietism in Germany to Afrikaans self-concepts. Smith shows that the credence in the putative sacred origin, providence and spiritual mission of the national community<sup>44</sup>, is extensive at the cultural fundamentals of modern nationalisms.

Smith qualifies the vitality of contemporary nationalisms' religious connotations, symbols and language games by revealing their very religious origins. Whether the role of religion has been transformed and became from an organic component of nationalism into a pool of symbols, a rich resource of nationalist ideologies, which are nevertheless essentially secular in their nature? This is Brubaker's interpretation. Though the previous simplifying secularist concept, which claimed a fundamental opposition of the two phenomenon (religion and nationalism) is outdated, Brubaker emphasizes that a core secular character of modern nationalism remains a substantial feature of it, in spite of the various modes how religions can underpin nationalism. The social ontology, imagery and political legitimacy of nationalism, with the very concept of 'nation' in its heart, developed on secular grounds, after various autonomous social realms differentiated form religion. According to this 'core' secularism thesis, functional differentiation in the modernization process embedded for the ideology of nationalism. In this way, despite the practical difficulties, Brubaker argues for a possible analytical differentiation between nationalism and religion:

“(...) nationalist politics - based on claims made in the name of ‘the nation’ – remain distinct from, even as they are intertwined with, forms of religious politics that seek to transform public life not in the name of the nation, but in the name of God.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> A.D. Smith, “Ethnic election and national destiny: some religious origins of nationalist ideals,” *Nations and Nationalism* 5, no. 3 (1999): 331–355.

<sup>45</sup> Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism,” 23–24.

In my understanding, the strongest challenges for this statement emerge at the fourth category of Brubaker's typology: in the case of 'religious nationalism as a distinctive kind of nationalism'. By focusing on Friedland's argumentation, Brubaker examines the conditions for conceptualizing religious nationalism as a particular type, an alternative for modern secular nationalisms. Friedland argues that nationalist programs join of state, territory and people in several ways, and one way is using the authoritative power of religion: this would be religious nationalism. For Brubaker, the existence of the alleged non-secular nationalism seems to be dubious, partly because of the controversial legitimacy claims behind it: a movement's fundamental point of reference may be 'God' or 'Nation', but the term 'nationalism' is reserved only for the latter. However, multiple legitimacies are relevant in several forms of nationalism and not only in the case of fundamentalist religious streams. 'Ethnic religions' and 'native faith movements' include those variants, which tightly interconnect the two abovementioned categories, 'God' and 'Nation' to each other. The 'Chosen people' and the adoration of the nation's own gods are such concepts, which tie nation and religion particularly intensely.

Current development of neo-pagan nationalism can be interpreted as a certain shift from 'interpenetrational relation' (political use of religious language and metaphors) and political religion (sacralization of the nation and politics) toward religious nationalism. Based on the longing of 'structural nostalgia', national mythologies and previous metaphoric religious connotation of nationalism, neo-paganism aspires for explicit religion-making on ethnic grounds.

### III. Neo-pagan ethnic movements in an international context

‘Neo-paganism’, ‘contemporary paganism’, modern ‘ethnic religions’ or ‘native faith movements’, representing a characteristic type of new religious movements, have emerged in the social context of twentieth century Europe. A general common point of different pagan movements is their basic aspiration for the reconstruction of and return to an imagined pre-Christian faith. But the way how it is imagined, can be numerous. Due to the heterogeneity and fragmentary of the international pagan scene, general descriptions and evaluations of the movement’s precepts are necessarily reductionist or even fallacious. Pervasiveness of individual *bricoleur* techniques makes difficult to discern typical and representative features; even basic religious, historical and social concepts are highly debated among the members and stakeholders of pagan communities. The fluidity and variability of the meanings of ‘being a Pagan’ is not independent of the young age of this religious movement; of the mistrust toward church-like authority structures and central canonizing corporate; and of the plasticity of the category ‘Pagan’, which can bear almost any modern allusions. The core precepts of paganism are not independent of the broader society’s processes, where these spiritual movements have emerged in. Worldly values, political ideologies and secular group beliefs have an evident input on the imaginary of new religions. These ideological ties are colorful: environmentalism, radical feminism, romantic indigenism and ethnic exclusivity can be equally influential concepts on paganism.

Though the current pagan revival can be understood as a global phenomenon<sup>46</sup>, its ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ types are regularly differentiated in the academic literature. Western paganism

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<sup>46</sup> M. York, *Pagan theology: Paganism as a world religion* (NYU Press, 2005).

is regularly considered as being emerged from the countercultural cultic milieu after the sixties, similarly to other new religious movements and alternative spiritualities. The parallel processes of the nineties in the post-socialist societies are usually strongly connected to ethnic identity-politics, similarly to their historical antecedents, the East and Central European pagan and native faith movements of the first half of the twenties century.

### III.1. Neo-paganism as a Western new religious movement

Pagan new religious movements of Western Europe and the United States were born on modern secular social grounds. Their program, which are directed toward a spiritual re-awakening, are interconnected with more general desires for re-enchantment<sup>47</sup>, re-sacralization and re-mythologization in modernity. The disappointment both in material value-systems and church-dominated forms of ‘traditional religiosity’ stimulated the pursuits of new modes and community frames of spiritual experience.

Cultural roots of modern paganism are similar to those of the western esoteric and modern occult revival. “New Age and Neo-paganism are best seen as two thought complexes, which may theoretically be distinct but show a very large overlap in practice.”<sup>48</sup> This eclectic network of popular spirituality<sup>49</sup> includes very different streams, regarding the social character and the cultural and religious concepts of them. However, they manifest a similar, revival-style religious impulse, based on esoteric, metaphysic, and Eastern tenets, and the mystical

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<sup>47</sup> C.H. Partridge, *The re-enchantment of the West: alternative spiritualities, sacralization, popular culture, and occulture*, vol. 2 (Tamp; t Clark Ltd, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> W.J. Hanegraaff, “The New Age Movement and Western Esotericism,” *Handbook of New Age 1* (2007): 37.

<sup>49</sup> M. York, *The emerging network: a sociology of the New Age and neo-pagan movements* (Rowman & Littlefield Pub Inc, 1995).

streams of all religions<sup>50</sup>. Heelas attributes great significance on the phenomenon, and hypothesizes a ‘spiritual revolution’<sup>51</sup>, which he considers as the religious aspect of a general ‘subjectivization trend’ of the Western societies; it is characterized by individual self projects and new directions of community formations. Though the centrality of the goal of ‘personal growth’ in the esoteric services fits to the presupposed individualization process of modernity, the ‘New Age’ phenomenon can be understood as a social movement also. Hanegraaff lays emphasis on the countercultural and millenarian roots of the movement<sup>52</sup>. Kemp’s ‘New Social-Religious Movement (NSRM)’ term accentuates the alternative quasi-movement character<sup>53</sup>, Colin Campbell’s early concept about the spiritual and anti-authoritarian ‘cultic milieu’<sup>54</sup> underlined its strong links to the cultural underground also.

Main stream of Anglo-Saxon neo-paganism, spread from the sixties, was generally connected to leftist counter-cultural movements as well<sup>55</sup>; its central social values have been connected to ecology, feminism and hippie-style youth cultures. A classical definition of paganism from the American pagan Adler shows the influence of this value-orientation:

„Most neo-Pagans sense an aliveness and ‘presence’ in nature. They are usually polytheists or animists or pantheists, or two or three of these things at once. They share a goal of living in harmony with nature and they tend to view humanity’s ‘advancement’ and separation from nature as the prime source of alienation. They see ritual as a tool to end that alienation. Most

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<sup>50</sup> J.G. Melton, “New thought and the New Age,” *Perspectives on the new age* (1992): 18.

<sup>51</sup> P. Heelas and L. Woodhead, *The spiritual revolution: Why religion is giving way to spirituality* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> W.J. Hanegraaff, *New age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (State Univ of New York Pr, 1998), 98–102.

<sup>53</sup> D. Kemp, *New age: a guide: alternative spiritualities from Aquarian conspiracy to Next Age* (Edinburgh Univ Pr, 2004), 96–97.

<sup>54</sup> C. Campbell, “The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization,” *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 5 (1972): 119–136.

<sup>55</sup> “(...) contemporary pagan scene is generally center-left rather than right-wing conservative.” York, *Pagan theology*, 163.–York’s general observation is based on American experiences.

neo-Pagans look to the old pre-Christian nature religions of Europe, the ecstatic religions, and the mystery traditions as a source of inspiration and nourishment.<sup>56</sup>

The most significant contemporary Western pagan movement - in numbers, reputation and international influence alike - is Wicca Church<sup>57</sup>. It was launched by Gerard Gardner, who was influenced by different traditions of western esotericism and Aleister Crowley's occultism. Distinct Wicca streams, as the 'Gardnerian Wicca' and 'Alexandrian Wicca', are based on similar cultural concepts and ritual practices: on the beliefs in the historical existence of a secret European magical tradition, which survived until modernity; the veneration of natural elements and dual God-pair with a feminine goddess; and the practice of 'magick' and 'energy-sending'. While Wicca is originated in and still the most popular in Anglo-Saxon societies, it spread internationally after the eighties and has local branches across Europe also.

The other internationally most relevant pagan movements are Druidry and Heathenism.<sup>58</sup> Druidry is emerged in the context of Celtic revival movements; though recently it has a more international face. Heathenism, or the 'Nordic tradition' is the most popular in Germany and Scandinavia. Though it has emphatically anti-nationalist streams as well, generally it has more accents on blood, cultural purity and ethnicity; symbolic references to Heathenism regularly appear among extreme right-wing and neo-Nazi subcultures.

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<sup>56</sup> M. Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America* (Penguin, 2006), 4.

<sup>57</sup> H.A. Berger, *A community of witches: Contemporary neo-paganism and witchcraft in the United States* (Univ of South Carolina Pr, 1999).

<sup>58</sup> P. Jones and N. Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe* (Psychology Press, 1995).

### III.2. Pagan movements in Eastern Europe

While paganism can be a non-ethnic and not exclusivist religion, the examples from the European half-periphery show a close link between religious desires and ethno-nationalist ones. Historical developments of ethnic pagan movements in Central and Eastern Europe determine the national group-beliefs and contemporary identity-discourses. The paradigmatic early ethnic pagan movements in the region emerged from the nineteenth centuries' intellectual, romantic and cultural revival movements. The exploration and appreciation of native folklore and mythology, a zealous search for the 'folksoul' of the given People, pave the way for religious revivalist movements in various countries. The early Scandinavian rediscovery of and mythical poetics on folk culture<sup>59</sup>, the Polish artistic movement '*Młoda Polska*'<sup>60</sup> are two movements of the many with very similar cultural programs. These movements pursued for a national (and spiritual) re-awakening, for a pure national culture with less external influence, based on the 'native faith'. In this sense, the region's ethnic pagan movements are revival movements, which aim the cultural purification of their national culture from non-native elements<sup>61</sup>. In their viewpoint, ethnic culture is threatened by corruptive influences. To avoid the vanishing and disappearance of it, a categorical returning to its cultural fundamentals is required. The defensive language of pagan revivalists is an offspring of romantic nationalism, while it fits into a general nationalist feeling and rhetoric

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<sup>59</sup> J.L. Greenway, *The Golden Horns: Mythic Imagination and the Nordic Past* (Univ of Georgia Pr, 2008).

<sup>60</sup> E. Manouelian, "Invented traditions: primitivist narrative and design in the Polish Fin de Siecle," *Slavic Review* 59, no. 2 (2000): 391–405.

<sup>61</sup> The idea of 'pure' tradition among Russian pagan groups is analyzed by V. Shnirelman, "Ancestral Wisdom and Ethnic Nationalism: A View from Eastern Europe," *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 9, no. 1 (2007): 46.

of social sub-dominance and vulnerability<sup>62</sup>. The Lithuanian *Romuva*<sup>63</sup>, the Latvian *Dievturi*<sup>64</sup>, or the Polish *Zadruga*<sup>65</sup> already represents a more nationalistic and more paganistic development. As ‘authenticity’, ‘return’ and ‘revival’ are core elements of these national vocabularies, cultural purity (in some cases with religious connotations) became a fundamental aim. Beliefs in a (national *and* pagan) golden age, which existed before the political and spiritual corruption of the nation, before the age, when old mores were exterminated and substituted for ‘alien’ ones, are salient among pagan sympathizers today also.

The Nazified version of German paganism has cast a shadow over the contemporary movements. The legacy of Austrian and German Ariosophy, Guido von List, the early German occultism, Wotanism and the Edda Society was not an insignificant element in the national socialist mythology and political religiosity<sup>66</sup>. Rosenberg and Himmler’s (and presumably Hitler’s) strong sympathy toward German paganism contributed to the justification of the Germanized version of Aryan mythology and the precepts of racial superiority. Even the NSDAP incorporated the racist occult ideas of the Thule Society<sup>67</sup>, in which Rosenberg had an influential membership. Nazi mysticism, though represents a distorted form, was not fully an arbitrary appropriation of modern occultism: Madame

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<sup>62</sup> H. Blumer, “Race prejudice as a sense of group position,” *The Pacific Sociological Review* 1, no. 1 (1958): 3–7.

<sup>63</sup> M. Strmiska, “The Music of the Past in Modern Baltic Paganism,” *Nova Religio* 8, no. 3 (2005): 39–58.

<sup>64</sup> A. Misane, “Inter-War Right-Wing Movements in the Baltic States and Their Religious Affiliation,” *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 46, no. 1 (2001): 75–84.

<sup>65</sup> Simpson, *Native faith*.

<sup>66</sup> N. Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: secret Aryan cults and their influence on Nazi ideology* (Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2004).

<sup>67</sup> J.A. Goldstein, “On Racism and Anti-Semitism in Occultism and Nazism,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 13 (1979): 65–71.

Blavatsky's popular Theosophy (one of the cardinal modern occult movements and a predecessor of Ariosophy), already provided a spiritual rationalization for anti-Semitism<sup>68</sup>, even if its universalist stand was not definitely 'racist in intent'<sup>69</sup>.

In the case of post-socialist Central and Eastern European native faith movements, the desired spiritual revival is interconnected with the conceptions of cultural nationalism. In this type, 'pre-Christian native faith', which is to be reconstructed, is primarily understood as a belief-system of an ethnic group or a territory. Though post-socialist pagan movements have slightly different significance, cultural character and political connections in each societies, they share certain fundamental features: the strong national identification of the adherents; the movements' inclusiveness in a larger memory-discourse and national group-ideologies.

Post-socialist neo-pagan or native faith revival phenomenon have emerged across the region<sup>70</sup>; from the Baltic states<sup>71</sup>, Russia<sup>72</sup>, Ukraine<sup>73</sup>, Belorussia, Poland<sup>74</sup>, the Check Republic, Slovakia, to Romania and South Slavic countries. In so far, we don't have a comprehensive overview of the region's movements, intensive anthropologic fieldworks are also rare.

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<sup>68</sup> Goldstein, "On Racism and Anti-Semitism in Occultism and Nazism."

<sup>69</sup> J.A. Santucci, "The Notion of Race in Theosophy," *Nova Religio* 11, no. 3 (2008): 37–63.

<sup>70</sup> Wiench, "Neo-Pagan Groups in Central-Eastern Europe."

<sup>71</sup> Strmiska, "The Music of the Past in Modern Baltic Paganism."

<sup>72</sup> M. Laruelle, "Alternative identity, alternative religion? Neo-paganism and the Aryan myth in contemporary Russia," *Nations and Nationalism* 14, no. 2 (2008): 283–301.

<sup>73</sup> A. Ivakhiv, "In Search of Deeper Identities Neopaganism and 'Native Faith' in Contemporary Ukraine," *Nova Religio* 8, no. 3 (2005): 7–38.

<sup>74</sup> Simpson, *Native faith*.

### III.3. Imagined dichotomies: 'Eastern' and 'Western', 'ethnic' and 'civic' paganism

Nationalist commitments of Eastern European pagan communities make a real challenge for anti-nationalist pagans and generally for the Anglo-Saxon sympathizers of the movement. However, as nationalist paganism is not absent in the Western world either, it could be more appropriate to differentiate between ethnic and non-ethnic pagan movements, regardless to their territorial positions. Wicca followers (the largest pagan group worldwide, which is especially strong in the US and in Great-Britain) are regularly far from ethnicized discourses and the majority of contemporary Anglo-Saxon pagans are consciously averse to ethnic exclusivity. According to York, “both politically and religiously, most — though certainly not all — Western Pagans are liberals”<sup>75</sup>.

On the other stand, most of the European pagan movements (with the partial exception of Britain) are rather representing an ethnic form. It is equally valid for the majority of local pagans from Scandinavia to Germany and to the Baltic and Slavic paganism. However, the picture seems to be more incoherent from a closer view. Non-ethnic pagan traditions are increasingly popular in that regions, where ethnic paganism is also a local supply, while there are dynamic processes of de-ethnicization<sup>76</sup> of ethnic religions ( for instance in the case of ‘core shamanism’ and Druidry), and re-ethnicization of ethnically neutral traditions (even in the paradigmatically non-ethnic Wicca context). The complex interrelations between ethnic identity-processes and new religious cults could be indicated by the exemplar of *Stregheria*-Wicca cults among third generational Italo-Americans; a case which can be interpreted as a

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<sup>75</sup> M. York, “Civil Religion Aspects of Neo-Paganism,” *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 6, no. 2 (2007): 255.

<sup>76</sup> R.J. Wallis, *Shamans/neo-shamans: ecstasy, alternative archaeologies, and contemporary pagans* (Psychology Press, 2003).

result of ‘symbolic ethnicity’<sup>77</sup> processes. Here, a medieval Italian witch-cult is appropriated and mixed with Anglo-Saxon feminist paganism to represent both ethnic minority-belonging and a symbolic resistance toward the closed and man-centered ethnic neighborhood<sup>78</sup>.

In this manner, the empirical validity of the mentioned dichotomies (‘Eastern’ - ‘Western’, ‘Anglo-Saxon’ – ‘European’, ‘ethnic’ – ‘non-ethnic’) are becoming more-and-more relative. However, the historical articulation of the different pagan movements can underpin the existence of discernable types. Strmiska differentiates two ideo-typical styles of paganism: “reconstructionist pagans romanticize the past, whereas eclectic pagans idealize the future”<sup>79</sup>. However, this distinction between an ideological (past-oriented) and an utopian (future-oriented) type of paganism could be questionable also, as both types interconnect a vision about the past with the criticism on the present and a positive faith in future possibilities. A typical ‘triadic temporal structure’ is a master narrative in both cases, in which a historical rhetoric of golden age, decline and future restoration is applied. ‘Reconstructionist’ narratives imply an alternative utopia, while futuristic hopes for a spiritual revival are expressed by the tropes of ‘returning’; returning to values and communities, which are seen as ancient archetypes. Though ‘reconstructionist’ and ‘eclectic’ styles are not incompatible with each others, a factual difference may be in the diverse emphases of identity-discourses and authenticity claims: in certain pagan movements, ethnic exclusivism and national mythologies are in the heart of contemporary tenets, while in others, multifarious individual self-actualization, syncretism and self-irony are more-or-less legitimate processes.

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<sup>77</sup> H.J. Gans, “Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, no. 1 (1979): 1–20.

<sup>78</sup> S. Magliocco, “Italian American Stregheria and Wicca: ethnic ambivalence in American Neopaganism,” *Modern Paganism in world cultures: comparative perspectives* (2005): 55–86.

<sup>79</sup> M. Strmiska, *Modern Paganism in world cultures: comparative perspectives* (Abc-clio, 2005), 20.

### III.4. Paganism: a guise for extreme nationalism?

As we have seen, certain neo-pagan movements, particularly in Eastern-Central Europe, ground their religious concepts on ethnic group-beliefs and nationalist ideologies. These features raise the question, whether paganism is not only an ideological frame and religious guise for extreme right-wing political actors. Though this interpretation can be legitimate in certain cases, the pagan and native faith scene may be too heterogeneous and the religious/spiritual values in most of the native faith communities too important for such a narrow reductionist interpretation.

The association from paganism to extreme political movements is certainly reasonable in certain historical and contemporary cases. Radical groups identify themselves as pagans and/or defined as such by others from America to Scandinavia, to Germany and to Russia. Other political radicals use pagan symbolism and cultural references without an explicit pagan self-definition. Extreme right political pagan beliefs usually contain elements of spiritual racism, racial purity and hierarchy, interracial contest, and they are often linked to implicit and explicit forms of anti-Semitism.

Occult-pagan Nazi mythologies survived the collapse of the Third Reich, and they infiltrated into several post-world war extremist subcultures<sup>80</sup>: from Julius Evola's metaphysic to Serrano's esoteric Hitlerism, American neo-Nazism and Satanist black metal scene. Paganistic far-right extremism is present in various countries. American racist 'radical religions' use Nordic and Germanic mythological symbolism<sup>81</sup>. Certain paganistic figures of

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<sup>80</sup> N. Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity* (NYU Press, 2003).

<sup>81</sup> J. Kaplan, *Radical religion in America: millenarian movements from the far right to the children of Noah* (Syracuse Univ Pr, 1997).

the Norwegian ‘black metal’ scene, like the notorious church-burning Varg Vikernes, are closely affiliated with extreme right movements<sup>82</sup>. ‘White Power’ youth culture (most popular in Germany and Scandinavia) fuses neo-Nazi, Satanist and Odinist (a Nordic Pagan religion) symbolism<sup>83</sup>.

Eastern European early pagan movements, as we have seen, represented folkloristic cultural nationalism. Their essentialist claims about the dignified and idiosyncratic ethnic culture can (but not necessarily) lead to the declaration of ethnic superiority. Thinking about ethnicity in biological terms is salient on the Eastern European pagan scene. According to Ivakhiv, environmentalist nature religion aspects and ethnic group-beliefs are interconnected by the concept of ‘territorialized ethnicity’, a belief that ethnic communities are natural and biological entities.

“East European Pagans perceive humans not as a distinct from nature, but as culturally or ethnically “rooted” within the natural world. Humans are seen less as a single, unified species, and more as inherently differentiated into blood-related collectivities that emerge out of specific histories of interaction with the natural environment.”<sup>84</sup>

Biologized concepts of ethnic affiliations may bear an implicit racist tendency. Though the scale from folkloric play to racist tenets and to national extremism is gradual, their confusion would be a fault. The most extremist Eastern European pagan groups are closely connected to the national socialist type of spiritual racism. They may be most prevalent in Russia. There, according to Shnirelman, the “only Neo-pagan political movement whose program does not include extreme anti-Semitism is the Russian Liberation Movement, but even its program

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<sup>82</sup> M. Moynihan, *Lords of chaos: the bloody rise of the satanic metal underground* (Feral House Los Angeles, CA, 1998).

<sup>83</sup> M. Gardell, “Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 9, no. 1 (2005): 130-131.

<sup>84</sup> A. Ivakhiv, “Nature and ethnicity in East European paganism: an environmental ethic of the religious right?,” *Religion* 32 (2002): 195.

‘contains implicit anti-Jewish articles’<sup>85</sup>. As a conclusion, Shnirelman depicts Russian neo-paganism as ‘a dangerous movement’<sup>86</sup>. However, other authors are much more cautious to provide such general overviews. Gaidukov differentiates the political movements utilizing Pagan rhetoric from the actual Pagan religion, while Aitamurto gives a sophisticated analysis of a Pagan umbrella organization, whose founding document explicitly refuses any xenophobic or ‘chauvinist’ elements in pagan religiosity.<sup>87</sup> About the reductionist political interpretations of Russian paganism, she critically notes:

“the term ‘nationalism’ has often been used in its most negative sense, occasionally functioning almost as an emblem in the condemnation of all Paganism as representing fundamentally chauvinistic or even psychopathological urges.”<sup>88</sup>

These misrepresentations in the literature often derive from a systematic underplay of the movements’ religious (and not particularly political) tenets; the exclusive accentuation of the extreme nationalist features; and an imperfect knowledge of the variegation in the movement. In my thesis, I would like to avoid these characteristic faults by a closer look to the variances and religious concepts of the analyzed Hungarian streams of the native faith.

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<sup>85</sup> V. Shnirelman, *Russian Neo-pagan Myths and Antisemitism* (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 1998), 9.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>87</sup> K. Aitamurto, “Russian Paganism and the Issue of Nationalism: A Case Study of the Circle of Pagan Tradition,” *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 8, no. 2 (2007): 184–210.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

## IV. Cultural-historical roots of the Hungarian native faith movements

National mythologies of the Hungarian native faith movements are based on their unique constructions about history, spirituality and ethnicity. If we comprehend their activity as a process, which is centred upon the invention of tradition(s), the types and resources of the applied building material is a relevant issue. 'New' memories are not created ex nihilo: "If the present affects the past, it is always along the line marked out by the past. Nothing is created; a selection is simply made among memories."<sup>89</sup> However, the constructive units and methods are continuously changed. The raw materials, ready at hand to construct a vision about forefathers' spiritual life, are including different substances with various origins. Academic interpretations, folk beliefs, religious and esoteric traditions, political myths, medicinal symbolisms, ideas of indigenous romanticism, modern-day conspiracy theories and individual fantasies constitute popular concepts on the native faith together.

In my attempt for a historical exploration of the roots of contemporary native faith beliefs, I differentiated four streams, which significantly contribute to their social success in the post-socialist period. They include the (1) popularized academic concepts about the Hungarians' ancient religion and folk-beliefs; the (2) legacy of interwar *Turanism*, an anti-modern meta-political movement with pagan sympathies and the birthplace of the first neo-pagan religious movement; (3) mythical constructions of extreme-nationalist emigrant 'para-historians'; and the (4) growing interest toward esoteric and mystical topics in the late-socialist 'cultic milieu'.

Though academic interpretations have their input on the public imagery of ancient religion, particularly on the figure and activities of the *táltos*, contemporary notions of the native faith scene have wider and multi-centred cultural background. "Besides an explanation of retaining

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<sup>89</sup> R. Bastide, "Problems of the collective memory," *The African Religions of Brazil* (1960): 253.

and forgetting”, the study of collective memory must include “an explanation of the metamorphosis of collective memories.”<sup>90</sup>

Cultural concepts about the native faith cannot be understood as merely misinterpreted elements or distortions of older memories, stored in the domains of folk culture. I consider the post-socialist tendencies on the native faith scene as an amalgamation of the discerned ‘traditions’. In the search for new identification patterns, spiritual experiences, ideological frames and explanation models, heterogeneous elements conglomerated. Disillusionment in the country’s ‘Westernization’, demand for the articulation of anti-modernist social values, receptivity toward conspiracy theories paved the way for a re-exploration of the cultural legacy of non-mainstream traditions, including ethnicist ideologies, folk-beliefs, esotericist worldviews and national mythologies. In my understanding, these are the grounds for a new and increasingly popular counterculture, which came into being in recent years.

#### **IV.1. Ethnological visions: academic reconstructions of the ancient belief-system**

Contemporary academic knowledge about the pre-Christian beliefs and religious practice is of the Hungarians is limited, hypothetical and contested. As the regarding (archaeological, historical, ethnographic and linguistic) resources are relatively rare, scientific reconstructions are not built into a unified and consensual frame so far.

Studies of the ancient religion have been hanging together with the eclectic concepts on ethnogenesis. On the whole, early hypothetical reconstructions didn’t fulfill regular academic

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 250.

standards and were generally based on folk etymology<sup>91</sup>. They strove to reconstruct the character of the native faith with comparisons with classical mythologies or with current ideas about the ‘Scythian’, Persian or Sumerian religions. Still today, even the basic features of the belief-system are unidentified. We don’t know exactly the early Hungarians’ cosmological concepts, neither the names nor the attributes of their supernatural beings. There are no archaeological representations about any gods or spirits; it is not clear whether they had a conception of godness, and if so, it was monotheist or polytheist.

However, based on comparative research methods and historical ethnologic interpretations, the religious science gradually accepted the conception of a shamanistic ancient religion, which was connected supposedly to Turk-Altai and Siberian. Among the reconstructions of the ancient religion, a new, folklore-based, research paradigm was begun in the mid-19th century’s romantic ethnology<sup>92</sup>, hallmarked by Arnold Ipolyi’s impressive and controversial ‘Hungarian Mythology’. The theory of Hungarian ethnic shamanism was elaborated in a psycho-analytical frame by Géza Róheim in the 1920’s<sup>93</sup>, but the milestone in the endorsement-process was Vilmos Diószegi’s ethnological contribution in the fifties and sixties<sup>94</sup>. His seminal work was based on Siberian field-researches; he employed his findings for a more extensive interpretation of the ethnographic data about Hungarian folk-beliefs.

Though the large majority of researchers accept<sup>95</sup> the shamanist character of the Hungarian native faith, its exact function and social location is contested. As the general definition of

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<sup>91</sup> V. Voigt, *A magyar ősvalláskutatás kérdései* (Budapest: Magyar Vallástudományi Társaság, 2003).

<sup>92</sup> L. Kósa, *A magyar néprajz tudománytörténete* (Osiris, 2001).

<sup>93</sup> G. Róheim, *Magyar néphit és népszokások* (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1928).

<sup>94</sup> V. Voigt, “Vilmos Diószegi and the Questions of Hungarian Religion,” *Acta ethnographica Hungarica* 48, no. 3-4 (2003): 301–311.

<sup>95</sup> I. Fodor, *A magyarok ősi vallásáról* (Budapest: Magyar Vallástudományi Társaság, 2004), 5.

shamanism as a ‘religion’ induce academic debates in international ethnology also, regarding the appropriate interpretation of the proto-Hungarian faith, the question, whether it was a ‘complex religion’ or an ‘ordinary belief-system’<sup>96</sup>, is raised. Another dilemma concerns the place of the shamanic elements in a larger religious context: whether the native faith is fully described by them, or they represent only a fragment of it. According to Voigt<sup>97</sup>, the pre-Christian ethnic religion should not be reduced to the ‘shamanic complex’; archaeological Gyula László argues that ‘over the shamanic level’, the conception of a Creator (‘*Tengri*’) had to exist. In spite of the significant uncertainties of the interpretation, it is clear that, regarding the native faith, the most elaborated current academic knowledge concerns its shamanic features: the Hungarian *táltos*-beliefs.

It is known<sup>98</sup> that at the time, when the conquering Hungarian tribes arrived to the Carpathian-basin, they still had spiritual men, who were called *táltos*. Though their social function and activity is uncertain, it is documented, 13<sup>th</sup> centurial chronicles still refer to ‘magicians’ as *táltos* persons<sup>99</sup>. Even before the Second World War, certain persons were still considered *táltos* by their local community in certain rural areas; that time they practiced weather-magic only. From the analysis of survival elements, linguistic interpretations and comparisons with Siberian shamanism, Diószegi depicts the following picture about the ‘original belief-

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<sup>96</sup> M. Hoppál, “The Role of Shamanism in Hungaiaian Ethnic Identity,” *Danubian Historical Studies.*, no. 3 (1987): 42.

<sup>97</sup> V. Voigt, “Shamanism in North Eurasia as a Scope of Ethnology,” *Shamanism in Siberia* 1 (1978): 59.

<sup>98</sup> M. Hoppál, “Shamanism and the Belief System of the Ancient Hungarians,” *Ethnographica et folkloristica carpathica* 11 (1999): 58.

<sup>99</sup> Pócs, É., “A magyar samanizmus a kora újkori forrásokban,” in *Ősök, táltosok, szentek : tanulmányok a honfoglaláskor és Árpád-kor folklórájáról*. Ed. by Pócs É. and Voigt V. (Budapest: MTA Néprajzi Kutatóintézete, n.d.), 77-120.

system'<sup>100</sup>: the *táltos* – besides other specialists, like *tudó*, *garabonciás* and *regős* – is a shamanic person, who is able to get a controlled ecstasy (*rejtezés*). The position of the *táltos* is reached by heredity or vocation; body-signs (born with teeth or extra-bones) designate predetermination and exceptional spiritual abilities. The process of becoming includes typical stages: after an initial resistance to the vocation, of the epileptic ‘shamanic disease’s’ various symptoms emerge, what is followed by the acceptance by the candidate. The *táltos* gained shamanic knowledge at a young age, usually at seven. He made a trance journey in a long, sometimes three days long dream. In dreamtime, he was transported, disjointed, checked for extra bones and rejoined by shaman ancestors. The main initiation trial was climbing the folk-tale ‘*égigérő fa*’ (‘sky-high tree’)<sup>101</sup>. Despite the Siberian and Central Asian parallels, numerous elements of the above belief-system are interpreted as ethnic marks<sup>102</sup> by the Hungarian ethnological tradition. In Diószegi’s opinion, the passive process of vocation was a Hungarian ethnic specificity in the region. Additional ethnic peculiarity is the shaman-fight in the forms of black and red bulls. Though relevant cultural similarities and connections are detected with neighbouring ethnic cultures by comparative research<sup>103</sup>, the significance of shamanic elements in the Hungarian case is regularly considered as an idiosyncratic complex in Central Europe.

After Diószegi, Hungarian researches about shamanism aimed the further elaboration of Siberian and Central Asia cultural parallels and deeper understanding of the symbol-system

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<sup>100</sup> V. Diószegi, *A sámánhit emlékei a magyar népi műveltségben* (Akadémiai Kiadó, 1958).

<sup>101</sup> M. Hoppál, “Traces of Shamanism in Hungarian Folk Beliefs’ in Shamanism in Eurasia, ed,” *M Hopp\aal*, Göttingen (1984).

<sup>102</sup> Voigt, “Vilmos Diószegi and the Questions of Hungarian Religion.”

<sup>103</sup> L. Kürti, “The way of the Táltos: A critical reassessment of a religious-magical specialist,” *Studia mythologica Slavica*, no. 3 (2000): 89–114.

and worldview. Currently, the Hungarian ethnology of religion, primarily the academic circle of Mihály Hoppál, has a significant role in international shamanic studies. The suggested picture about the *táltos* – shaman’s character has been slightly modified. While previously he was represented as a ‘hysteric’, neurotic and unstable person<sup>104</sup>, now he is seen a legitimate spiritual leader of his community. His social functions are enriched in current ethnological accounts: he is the person who cures, prophesies and saves the cultural traditions; a complex intermediary, who connects the past and the present, the individual and the community, humans and nature, living beings and the supernatural. It is quite clear, that this positive representation is grounded on, perhaps post-material and moderately modernity-critical social values. Similarly to the salient romantic representational forms of the shaman in the anthropologic literature<sup>105</sup>, the symbolic figure of the *táltos* is employed metaphorically to express various contemporary sentiments, concepts and ideologies. “Shamanism serves as a bridge and symbol, because it interconnects the traditions of the past with the present, and anchors the future of traditions.”<sup>106</sup> Hoppál regularly refers to the contemporary ‘mission’ of Hungarian ethnology in shamanic allegories and regularly applies a shamanic self-representation as a researcher: a contemporary intermediary, both in temporal (past – present – future) and spatial (east – West) dimensions<sup>107</sup>.

Besides the historical reconstructions, ethnology, particularly Hoppál, turns to the question of neo-shamanism and its ‘ethnic revival’. He attributes a positive function to this phenomenon,

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<sup>104</sup> Among others, this characterization is accepted by Voigt. „The shaman is a psychopath (in contrast with the sacral god-king who is originally a powerful warlord at the same time), incapable of political action (...) he makes no personal contribution towards the transformation of customs into ethics, morals, law and statues. Voigt, “Shamanism in North Eurasia as a Scope of Ethnology,” 66.

<sup>105</sup> D.C. Noel, *The Soul of Shamanism: Western fantasies, imaginal realities* (Continuum New York, 1997).

<sup>106</sup> M. Hoppál, *Sámánok Euráziában* (Akadémiai Kiadó, 2005), 50.

<sup>107</sup> M. Hoppál, *Tanulmányok Diószegi Vilmosról* (Budapest: Magyar Vallástudományi Társaság, 2003), 8.

and depicts it as a valuable alternative social movement in a ‘postmodern age’<sup>108</sup>, which is critical to ‘techno-society’. His academic interpretation of the social role of global neo-shamanism includes reflections about the potential for a shamanistic ethnic revival. “When neo-shamanism makes vanishing practices socially more prestigious, it can be a fine symbol and technique of the reproduction of ethnic identity.”<sup>109</sup> Hoppál invited Michael Harner, a leading figure of American ‘core shamanism’<sup>110</sup> to Hungary, where he organized shamanic workshops from 1986<sup>111</sup>. According to Kertész and Takács, this is the symbolic starting point of the Hungarian ‘neo-*táltos*’ subculture.<sup>112</sup> Hoppál’s books are regularly distributed in native faith events; has good personal connections with several Hungarian urban shamans or contemporary *táltos* persons. By his professional activity and engagement in ethnological popularization, he significantly contributed to the development of the local neo-shaman and native faith scene. In this sense, Hungarian ethnology had a ‘midwife role’ at the birth of local spiritual revival movements, similarly to the American anthropology’s contribution<sup>113</sup> (hallmarked by Harner, Castaneda and Felicitia Goodman) in the case of urban shamanism. However, these two stories have significant dissimilarities as well. The American urban academic shamanist revivalism provided a trans-technique, which was designed as adaptable independently from any particular cultural contexts and was elucidated toward a program of

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<sup>108</sup> M. Hoppál, “Shamanism in a postmodern age,” *Folklore. An Electronic Journal* 2 (1996).

<sup>109</sup> M. Hoppál, “Városi sámánok. Egy ősi gyógyítási módszer új arca.,” in *Síppal, dobbal... Hagyományos orvoslás az Európán kívüli népek körében*. Ed. by P. Babulka, L. Borsányi, T. Grynaeus. (Budapest: Mezőgazdasági Kiadó, 1989), 183.

<sup>110</sup> M. Harner and S. Harner, in *Core Practices in the Shamanic Treatment of Illness*, vol. Textbook of Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Wilkins and Williams. (Philadelphia, 2000).

<sup>111</sup> Szathmári, B., “Táltosok a XXI. század hajnalán.”

<sup>112</sup> Kertész and Takács, “Újtáltosság Magyarországon az ezredfordulón.”

<sup>113</sup> R.J. Wallis, “Altered States, Conflicting Cultures: Shamans, Neo-shamans and Academics,” *Anthropology of Consciousness* 10, no. 2-3 (1999): 41–49.

self-empowerment and therapy application. The narratives of the Hungarian ethnography offered an ethnic interpretational frame; a more complex ‘shamanistic worldview’ and the possibility of a life-reform program on ethnic spiritual basis.

## IV.2. Interwar Turanism

Hungarian Turanism represents anti-modern nationalist ideologies of the interwar period. It offered a renewed cultural scheme and a spirited language for identity-politics, including an idiosyncratic interpretation of ethno-history, an appropriation of race-theory, a reinforced mental map of symbolic geography and imaginations of the ancient religion. While most of the Turanist ideas were highly contested in the wider public sphere, they shaped public discourses about national character and identity. In the Hungarian case, the expressions of Turan and Turanism gained their particular significances in a historically resonant structure of meaning. Previous associations of ‘*kuruc*’ and ‘*szittyá*’ were considerably assigned to them; they primarily served to mark political opinions and cultural identity.

This cultural, political and economical movement from 1910 and 1944, was based on contested ideas about ethnic relationship with different ‘Eastern’ cultures in linguistic, cultural and race terms. The movement’s main objective was to reinforce Oriental connections. “Turanism is a natural expression of the national idea of the Ural-Altai ethnic family. (...) Its aim is to build a real connection of the ethnies, who tore apart from the Ancient Turan to Europe and Asia.”<sup>114</sup> Orientalism of the Hungarian movement was

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<sup>114</sup> Sassi Nagy Lajos’s and Zempléni’s definitions are cited by: L. Szendrei, *A turanizmus : definíciók és értelmezések 1910-től a II. világháborúig* (Máriabesnyő-Gödöllő: Attraktor, 2010), 19.

connected to cultural and political anti-Western sentiments. „Europe means dark land in Sanskrit” – writes Szépvizi Balás in 1925<sup>115</sup>.

Distinctive conceptions about Hungarian ethnogenealogy and ethnic kinship were in the heart of Turanism during its full history. Hungarian Turanists were looking for relatives and allies for the ‘lonely Hungarian nation’ among presupposed cultural and linguistic kin-ethnies: first of all, among the Finno-Ugric and Turkic-speaker peoples. It was both inspired and scared by European nationalist pan-movements, primarily by pan-Slavism and pan-Germanism. Hungarian Turanism was a significant stream of international Pan-Turanism<sup>116</sup> and was connected to pan-Turkism and to the Finno-Ugric ‘idea of ethnic kinship’, more popular in Finland and Estonia.

The term of ‘Turan’ originally referred to a broad geographical entity, the steppe territories North to Iran. As a linguistic umbrella term, constructed by Max Friedrich Müller, it signified a presupposed large language group (reabeled as ‘Ural-Altai’ and generally refused later)<sup>117</sup>. Emergent Turkology and comparative folklore studies applied it for a social-cultural space: the habitat of Turkic-Tatar speaker Central-Asian nomadic cultures. The imagined cultural area of Turan hadn’t got fixed boundaries. In the Hungarian visions, core territories were those, where Finno-Ugric and Turk peoples lived in the present or historically: Finland, Estonia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey and Central-Asian Turkic-speaker ethnic groups and

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>116</sup> According to frequent interpretations, the idea of modern Pan-Turanism was actually born on the ground of Hungarian Orientalism. J. Landau, *Pan-Turkism : from irredentism to cooperation*, 2nd ed. (London: Hurst, 1995), 2.

<sup>117</sup> Winternitz analyses the interplay of nationalism and the Turanist linguistic theory: J. Winternitz, “The ‘Turanian’ hypothesis and Magyar nationalism in the nineteenth-century,” in *Culture and nationalism in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe*, vol. ed. by Roland Sussex, J. C. Eade. (Columbus: Slavica Publ. : Humanities Research Centre Australian Nat. Univ., 1985), 143-158.

Japan. Because of its proto-history, Bulgarians were also considered to be a Turanic nation, and sometimes the category was implied to the Mongolian, Manchu and Chinese peoples also.

Turanism was not a homogeneous social movement; rather an unfixed network of ideas than a stabile and unified ideology. Though its institutional existence lasted only three decades, historical transformations of Turanism were remarkable. The subsequent stages of the movement<sup>118</sup> - from the 1910s' academic Orientalism and Hungarian expansionist hopes<sup>119</sup>; through direct economic and war interest; foreign policy's postwar allies-searches for the 'Hungarian cause'; its increasing lean on race-theory and the same-time growth of anti-German sentiments; toward the formation of a pagan religious community, a persecuted 'sect' status and the criminalization of its adherents<sup>120</sup> – suggests a process of gradual radicalization.

Most radical branch of Turanism was represented in the organizational frames of *Magyarországi Turán Szövetség* ('Hungarian Turan Association'). This stream has developed its Turanist race-theory.<sup>121</sup> Besides its salient cultural criticism toward 'Western individualism' and the renunciation of the Western type of modernization; the unique visions about ethnogenealogy and ethnic kinship, it made place for a new-born: the revived

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<sup>118</sup> É. Kincses Nagy, *Őstörténet és nemzettudat, 1919-1931* (Szeged: József Attila Tudományegyetem Magyar Őstörténeti Kutatócsoport, 1991).

<sup>119</sup> "Let us turn to the East, Hungarians! To the East, on national, scientific and economical fields! (...) Our purpose is the study of the Turanic kin-nations, the connection-buildings with them, a ruling role for the Hungarians in the Turanic nation-family on scientific and economic fields." (P. Teleki, "Bevezető," *Turán* (1913): 3.)

<sup>120</sup> Present-day sympathizers of Turanism suggest that adherents of the Turanist Church were drafted to forced labour service in Ukraine. Though I haven't found any academic reference about it, it's conceivable as we know similar abuses on other 'sects' during the war-years. See D Agoston, "A Pogány torony," *A magyar őstörténeti kutatások gyűjtőhelye*, n.d., <http://ostortenetunk.blogspot.com/2009/03/pogany-torony.html>.

<sup>121</sup> Hungarian version of scientific racism became increasingly important. As Gyurgyák epitomizes the Turanist racist dilemma in a sarcastic way: "How can we fall back on the fundamentals of race-theory, as non-Arians?" J. Gyurgyák, *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok: a magyar nemzeteszmé és nacionalizmus története* (Budapest: Osiris, 2007), 231.

nationalist paganism. In the circles of radical Turanism, a continuous discourse ran about ethnic origin and historical lineage. Colorful assumptions were drawn up about ethnic ancestry: Turan, as the ancient homeland of all human culture and the origin of each momentous civilizations, the Turanic nature of the Sumerian, Assyrian, Etruscan and ‘Ind-Scythia’ cultures: variations on the theme of imagined prehistory proliferated. Among the more extreme ones, we can mention the concept of Atlantisian origin of the Turanic race<sup>122</sup> (their high civilization was believed to be ravaged by their ancient enemies, the Semites) is an interesting antecedent of later national esotericism<sup>123</sup>. A not less surprising finding (which was originated from a Hungarian immigrant in the States) about ethnic kinship between proto-Hungarians and Native Americans was supported by a leader figure in the movement. Certain conspiracy theoretical concepts emerged in this context, such as the beliefs in the academic scholarship’s ‘betrayal’ against national pride<sup>124</sup> and the false indoctrination of the population; equally commonplace beliefs under state-socialism and in post-socialist Hungary.

The ground of cultic-religious activity represented a new ideological concept, social form and public location for Turanism. Current international context provided adaptable fresh Western examples for a national myth-building on pre-Christian foundations. “As a demonstration for its ‘modern’ nature, the Hungarian Turanist Movement was associated from the thirties with the characteristically similar German movements of pan-Germanism and Wotan cults, which heroized ancient Germanness, and also with Italian movements which tied on the Roman

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<sup>122</sup> I. Farkas, *A Turanizmus. Doctoral Dissertation* (Budapest, 2003), 138.

<sup>123</sup> The topos of Atlantis in the fantasies of Hungarian ethno-genesis is re-emerging; it represents an even more general themes of the ‘spiritual initiation of the nation’ and the ‘lost civilization’. See Z. Paál, *Arvisuraiszólás : mondák, regék, népi hagyományok a palóc kézművesek világából* (Budapest: Püski, 1998).

<sup>124</sup> Baráthosi-Balogh, B., *A magyar nemzet igazi története* (Budapest, 1937).

Empire.”<sup>125</sup> The movement of *Turáni Egyistenhívők* (‘Turanist Monotheists’) was founded in 1934. It stood for anti-Christian sentiments; claimed a historical continuity with pre-Christian past, symbolized by Koppány; and imagined the proto-Hungarians’ religion as monotheistic (and as such, non-barbaric by common standards). Only fragments are known about their religious ideas and practice. As most of the sources are external and highly critical descriptions, the movement’s public representation and not the belief-system what is revealable of them. Its broader political and intellectual perception was strongly negative and renouncing. “The educated middle class ridicules the Turanist idea, because it sees only white-horse sacrifice and paganism in it.”<sup>126</sup> Typical characterizations<sup>127</sup> show a shamanistic – paganistic revival; the reports talk in a sarcastic way about shamans as spiritual leaders, religious sacrifice of white horses and bloody initiation rituals even for small children.

A protestant priest, Béla Muraközy, have anticipated the religious re-direction of Turanism already in 1921: “There is a danger that Turanism will touch ground on the dunes of ancient paganism”<sup>128</sup>. Pagan orientation might be an inherent tendency of Turanism; a logical outcome for this anti-modern national imagination. Regarding the anti-Westernism, religious symbolism of its Orientalism; its commitment to ancient, taintless ethnic purity; the context of political religiosity; a feasible impact of Aryan occultism<sup>129</sup>, this option is quiet plausible. Turanist ideas at least partly survived and developed in the Western emigration. After the 1990s, in certain domains of cultural ethno-nationalism, some adherents rediscovered the Turanist tradition and considered it a relevant antecedent. Among other social, cultural,

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<sup>125</sup> Farkas, *A Turanizmus. Doctoral Dissertation*, 132–133.

<sup>126</sup> Farkas cites official records of the Turan Társaság from 1938. Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Cs. Fazekas, *Kisegyházak és szektakérdés a Horthy-korszakban* (Budapest: TEDISZ, Szt. Pál Akad., 1996).

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., note 183.

<sup>129</sup> Goodrick-Clarke, *Black sun*.

political and spiritual influences, the historical legacy of interwar Turanism served as an important resource for nationalist pagan revival after the fall of state-socialism.

### **IV.3. Emigrant 'para-history'**

While Turanism, as a movement or as a more-or-less legitimate array of cultural and political concepts, had to cease to exist in Hungary after 1945, its concepts haven't died out without any marks. Turanist discourse, fragmented than ever, migrated to Western (or rather Southern, especially Latin American) Hungarian Diasporas; together with several figures who belonged to interwar Turanism, or were just sympathizers of it. The movement had its own life, different articulations and 'development' in these decades. Its aforementioned heterogeneity was reduced in certain degrees. The two connecting characteristic forms of 'Cold War' Turanism were the 'scientific' activities of its adherents and a further development to a religious discourse.

Main concern of emigrant amateur historians was the exploration of 'real' ethnogenesis of the Hungarians, and to give an 'authentic' national history, an alternative for canonized, academic interpretations. The primer meaning of Turanic kinship was not a geographical family any more, but a historical lineage of the Hungarian ethnics. An 'alternative', heretic 'national science' has emerged in the networks of the nationalist emigrational communities. The personal aspirations to serve the 'Hungarian cause' by available means, led to a national identity discourse. This social-psychological state of mind is the '*plennitis*' trauma, as - following László Németh's literary description - the professional sumerologist Komoróczy sarcastically calls it; its symptoms are described as the deep homesick turns into a fantasy-world of ancient homes and kin-languages, where every acquired language seems to be a

version of the mother-tongue.<sup>130</sup> Its preferred genre is the rich repertoire of etymological dilettantism.

The participants usually claimed to use scientific justification methods, while their activity is generally considered weak pseudo-scientism by academic standards. The discourse included sharp anti-academic attitudes and conspiracy theories about the purposive adulteration of national history by strangers and enemies (the Jews, the Vatican, the Habsburgs, the Germans, the Aryans, the Russians, the Communists, the traitors), whose purpose is to steal the national past, pride and identity of the Hungarians. Para-scientific forms of ‘archaeology’, ‘historical research’, ‘linguistic’, ‘folklore’ and ‘religious studies’ were represented in this heretic national science. A few authors already had a documented participation or a link to interwar Turanism in Hungary; others may get closer to it only in the emigration. While most of the ‘para-researchers’ were self-educated in the sense that they hadn’t got a usual academic background at all or not in those fields where they worked in later, there were some exceptions.

Main concerns of the emerged heterogeneous concepts were the Hungarian ethnogenesis, the localization of the ‘ancient homeland’ and the identification of historical or contemporary ‘kin-ethnic groups’. While the answers for these questions varied significantly, common feature of these theories is that “they take out the Hungarian nation from its Central European particularity, and put it to ‘big’ events of the main stream of history, if though the complete reformulation of world history is necessary for it”<sup>131</sup>. As any historical reconsideration, which was believed to justify the desired national grandness, was welcome in this nationalist network, the acceptance of the original Turanist concept of Eastern parentage was not a

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<sup>130</sup> G. Komoróczy, *Sumer és magyar* (Budapest: Magvető, 1976).

<sup>131</sup> Szilágyi and Szilárdi, R., *Istenek ébredése*, 57.

necessary condition for a legitimate participation in the discourse. Adorján Magyar, who was connected to the pagan movement of *Turáni Egyistenhívők* before the war<sup>132</sup>, substituted the concept of oriental ethnic ancestry to protochronist ideas about an ‘ethnically Hungarian, Carpathian-basin primordial civilization’<sup>133</sup>.

Most popular alternative theory was built on the supposition of Sumerian ancestry of the Hungarian ethnic group. While these concepts had historical antecedents and it was spread in the interwar period also, it became a primer concern only in the emigration; beliefs in a Hungarian – Sumerian kinship separated from the larger Turanist concepts. The *Sumír – Magyar Társaság* (‘Sumer – Hungarian Society’) was formed in Buenos Aires in 1951. Primer inventor of the theory of direct Sumerian lineage was Ida Bobula. Her claims about the linguistic, historical and cultural similarities between the Sumerian and Hungarian culture were popularized in several publications between the fifties and seventies, either in English<sup>134</sup> and Hungarian<sup>135</sup>.

Other emigrant authors received positively the concept of Sumerian origins also, and though they regularly contested certain details and methodological question of Bobula, the main idea became hegemonic in the alternative ethno-science. Tibor Baráth, a well-known and talented historian before the war, who became a functionary in the Hungarian extreme right Arrow Cross regime<sup>136</sup>, turned to the question of Hungarian – Egyptian - Sumerian ancient history<sup>137</sup> in his Canadian emigration. Viktor Padányi, an anti-communist emigrant in Australia

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<sup>132</sup> A. Magyar, *A lelkiismeret aranytükre: adatok a magyar ősvallás erkölcsstanából* (Duna Könyvkiadó Vállalat, 1975).

<sup>133</sup> Magyar, A., *Az Ősműveltség* (Magyar Adorján Baráti Kör, 1995).

<sup>134</sup> I. Bobula, *Sumerian affiliations: A plea for reconsideration* (Selbstverl., 1951).

<sup>135</sup> I. Bobula, *A sumér-magyar rokonság kérdése* (Ed. Esda, 1961).

<sup>136</sup> Gy. Borbándi, *Nyugati magyar irodalmi lexikon és bibliográfia* (Budapest: Hittel, 1992).

<sup>137</sup> T. Baráth, *A magyar népek őstörténete (Prehistory of the Hungarian people)* (Vol, 1968).

published several books about his personal interpretation of Hungarian prehistory. In his point of view, the Hungarians were the representatives of free, noble and mobile horseman cultures, in contrast to the Western settlers' more peaceful civilization. He refuses the application of the 'nomadic' term, because associates inferior, barbaric resonances to it. He supports the theory of Sumerian origin, but combines it with the idea of Finno-Ugric kinship: "Our nation is the Western descendant of the Sabirs with some Onogur elements. Its ancient home-land is the Caspian-region, south to the Caucasus, the big reservoir of the Sumerian - Turanic nations. (...) Our language's core entities are the 6000 years old Sumerian 'roots', similar Sumerian 'roots' are in the Vogul and in the other {Finno-Ugric languages}."<sup>138</sup>

Félix Pogrányi-Nagy, a government officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the forties, who additionally had taught language courses of Sumerian and Etruscan in the Turanic Association before and during the war, articulated his theory<sup>139</sup> about the Etruscan - Sumerian – Hungarian linguistic kinship from the thirties. This hypothetical language family was expanded in his Argentinean emigration: the constructed group of 'Asianus' languages (i.e. the ancient Greek, the Basque and the American languages of Maya, Kechua and Amhara<sup>140</sup>) became descendants of the Sumerian and close relatives of Hungarian and other 'Ural-Altai' languages. According to his historical imagination, Latin America was colonized by the Mayas and the Sumerians in consecutive steps.

The most known representative of the 'Sumerian paradigm' is Ferenc Badinyi-Jós. This ex army officer, begun to study the Sumerian language and history after his arrival to Argentina in 1946 and developed the alternative concept of ethnic lineage further. He argued that the

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<sup>138</sup> V. Padányi, *Sumír-magyar nyelv lélekazonossága* (W. Coburg, Vic.: Turáni Tört. Társ., 1961), 24.

<sup>139</sup> D. Gheno, "A magyar lenne a mai etruszk?," *Magyar Nyelv* 100, no. 4 (2004): 490.

<sup>140</sup> S. Csőke, *Perui aymará és quechua nyelvek uralaltáji nyelvi rokonsága: bevezető tanulmány* (Buenos Aires: Turáni Akadémia, 1969).

Etruscan and Sumerian scribes can be read in and only in Hungarian<sup>141</sup>, and made the basic statement even stronger: according to it, the Sumerian and the Hungarian are not simply kin-languages, but they are the very same<sup>142</sup>. He underlined the possibility of a Hungarian - Sumer ancient homeland in the Carpathian Base.

In addition to the roughed alternative concepts of ethnogenesis, which claimed for a scientific recognition and legitimacy, there were alternative epistemological and cultural registers in interest as well. Besides the aforementioned ‘scientific’ aspirations, the religious tendencies of national imaginary also revived. The processes of spiritualization did not separate sharply from the ‘scientism’ and usually remained implicit. Concepts on the origins of the ancient ethnic religion, character of the native faith, its historical position and relation to other beliefs and political powers were regularly discussed by several authors. The genuine faith of the Hungarians and proto-Hungarians was in the heart of Badinyi’s historical imaginations.

Mátyás Jenő Fehér, an emigrant historian and ex-friar of the Dominican Order provided a seminal view on the medieval, post-Christianization destiny of the Hungarian native faith for the ‘alternativists’. Fehér, who was as a church-historian in Hungary, emigrated to the West and settled in Argentina in the sixties. From 1967, he published several books about the *Collectio Dominicana*, or ‘*Kassai Kódex*’. He claimed, that a previously unknown codex, which includes a great number of court records from medieval inquisition suits, was found by him in 1944 in Kosice. The records depict a picture of a centuries-long merciless church policy, to annihilate that-time folk healer *táltos* persons. According to Fehér, they were the revival representatives of the pre-Christian native faith, whose function was secretly save the sacred ethnic tradition. “The inquisition was directed by aliens, out of the body of the nation; they strove to repress the ancient Hungarian faith and heresies and caused serious damages to

<sup>141</sup> F. Badinyi Jós, *Káldeától Ister-Gamig* (Budapest: Ósi Örökségünk Alapítvány, 2002).

<sup>142</sup> F. Badinyi Jós, *A sumir - magyar nyelvazonosság bizonyítékai* (Budapest: Orient Press, 1996).

the Hungarians.”<sup>143</sup> Credibility of Fehér’s material is highly dubious; according to the majority of academic historians, *Kassai Kódex* is a complete forgery<sup>144</sup>. This work is referred regularly by the ‘alternative historians’ as verification to their concepts on the character of the spiritual men and high-morality of the native faith, just as to the negative depiction of the Christian church.

Though national mysticism was generally in the heart of the nationalist para-historiography, actual religious questions distinctly came to the front in some cases. Badinyi-Jós’ lifework exemplifies it pre-eminently. Badinyi’s anti-Semitic criticism of the Roman Catholic Church and his concepts about the early Hungarians’ religion led to the idea of a national (and apparently non-Jewish) Christianity<sup>145</sup>. After Badinyi-Jós’ come-back to Hungary in the nineties, he proposed the establishment of the ‘Hungarian Church’<sup>146</sup>. Badinyi-Jós, similarly to other figures of the Turanist emigration, became icons and regular reference-points in the nationalist counterculture and Pagan scene of post-socialism.

#### **IV.4. Development of the spiritual cultic milieu**

Demand for ‘ethnic spiritualities’ was not exclusively a post-1989 construction. Before the transitions, new forms of nationalism and alternative religiosity already spread in diffuse social networks; the two phenomenon (countercultural claims for suppressed spiritual meanings *and* new forms of national identities) interconnected in certain cases. Some of these social scenes and lifestyle-groups – as Kürti referred to them, parts of the early ‘cultic

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<sup>143</sup> M. J. Fehér, *Középkori Magyar Inkvizíció* (Buenos Aires, 1967), 5.

<sup>144</sup> “26. A „Kassai kódex” hitelességéről”, n.d., [http://mek.oszk.hu/03300/03301/html/bgkvti\\_4/bgki0426.htm](http://mek.oszk.hu/03300/03301/html/bgkvti_4/bgki0426.htm).

<sup>145</sup> F. Badiny Jós, *A káld-pártus hagyomány és a magyarok Jézus-vallása* (Budapest: M. Ház, 2005).

<sup>146</sup> F. Badiny Jós, “Magyar egyház”, n.d.

milieu<sup>147</sup> - might be the social wombs and direct antecedents of contemporary pagan nationalist movements.

Spiritual activities and cults of the late-socialist period had heterogeneous origins, sources, types and forms. Most of the activities are connected to alternative subcultures of the era, as to the fields of alternative and folk medicine, contemporary esotericism, urban spiritualities, Eastern mysticism and philosophy, parapsychology. As we can see, in some cases the interests in ethnic culture and national history are connected to Western type post-material activities and popular ways of self-actualization.

The history of new religious and spiritual movements under the socialist system is not yet elaborated systematically. Most scholars agree that because of the monopolistic, materialist-atheist character of the official ideology, closed boundaries and limited access to cultural alternatives, Eastern societies were almost intact from the ‘spiritual revolution’ of the West; the ‘New Age’ phenomenon had a delayed arrival to the region, after the democratic transitions<sup>148</sup>. However, alternative spiritualities were present in the Eastern bloc, particularly in its last two decades. Though the interest in them usually cohered with a countercultural status, Potrava - in spite of the evident differences – points out important similarities between New Age and Marxist ideology<sup>149</sup>: both are millenarian movements, social utopias, whose aim is to liberate the person from ‘false consciousness’, which can explain the growing popularity of esoteric beliefs in the late-socialist period.

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<sup>147</sup> L. Kürti, “Psychic phenomena, neoshamanism, and the cultic milieu in Hungary,” *Nova Religio* 4, no. 2 (2001): 322–350.

<sup>148</sup> D. Hall, “Peculiarity of the New Age Movement in a Catholic Country: The Case of Poland,” in *CESNUR 2003 Conference, Vilnius, Lithuania* ([http://www.cesnur.org/2003/vil2003\\_hall.htm](http://www.cesnur.org/2003/vil2003_hall.htm)), 2003.

<sup>149</sup> B. Potrata, “New age, socialism and other millenarianisms: affirming and struggling with (post) socialism,” *Religion, State and Society* 32, no. 4 (2004): 365–379.

In socialist Hungary, necromancy<sup>150</sup> and spiritist séances, perhaps as remnants of the interwar bourgeois occult fashion<sup>151</sup>, survived in informal social networks. Furthermore, alternative, unofficial spirituality became an optional lifestyle for political opposition. In his detailed account about the cult around Béla Hamvas between the sixties and eighties<sup>152</sup>, Farkas shows a formulating esoteric networks of marginal intellectuals; countercultural figures, who were attracted by the eclectic and previously unknown forms of spirituality. By the growing interest in Buddhism, the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Institution of Buddhology became a focus point for all the people with a general curiosity toward the occult and magical traditions<sup>153</sup>. Astrology, magic, alchemy became more-and-more popular from the eighties. Certain spiritually understood forms of alternative medicine (radiesthesia, bio-energetic healing, renewed folk healing, bone setting) (re-)appeared also around 1980<sup>154</sup>. The fashion of sci-fi clubs, yoga<sup>155</sup>, and ‘Silva Mind Control’ already shows the beginning of a new era. Under the last years of the socialist regime, with the spreading of esoteric bookstores and publishing houses<sup>156</sup>, alternative spirituality became a commercial product and arrived to the mainstream popular culture.

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<sup>150</sup> Szojka, E., „Ez csak egy passzió” – filmaz asztaltáncoltatás népi/populáris formáiról Szacsavay Éva–Tari János: „Fába szorultlélek” – a szellem történeti dokumentációja,” *Tabula*, no. 1 (2010): 119-126.

<sup>151</sup> Farkas, A. M. and Mund, K., “Technicizált spiritualitás, avagy a modern okkultizmus kulturális szemantikája,” *Liget*, no. 9 (2002).

<sup>152</sup> Farkas, A. M. and Mund, K., “Rekviem egy elveszett mítoszért,” *Valóság*, no. 8 (2001): 51-64.

<sup>153</sup> A. M. Farkas, *Buddhizmus Magyarországon* (Budapest: MTA PTI Etnoregionális Kutközp., 1998).

<sup>154</sup> Kürti, “Psychic phenomena, neoshamanism, and the cultic milieu in Hungary.”

<sup>155</sup> Kamarás, I., “A vallási globalizáció és a helyi sajátosságok jegyei a magyarországi új vallásjelenségekben,” *2000*, no. 5 (2001): 9.

<sup>156</sup> Domokos, Á., “Populáris ezotéria és az olvasás piaca. Doctoral dissertation”, 2007, doktori.btk.elte.hu/lit/domokos/diss.pdf.

Because of the almost complete absence of written sources about national mysticism in socialist Hungary, research possibilities are limited. It is known from personal memories that there was an intellectual interest and a low-scale cult<sup>157</sup> around ‘*Arvisura*’<sup>158</sup> and its scribe, the steel mill-worker Paál Zoltán from the seventies. Paál, who had written thousands of pages long esoteric prehistory of the Hungarians and the ‘Hun blood-association’, claimed that his work had been born after the recital of a Mansi shaman’s grandson. This alleged inheritor of his ancestors’ shamanic knowledge fought as a Soviet soldier in Hungary, when he initiated Paál to the nation’s secret past.

A well-known art-historian, Gábor Papp popularized Paál’s work in the early eighties<sup>159</sup>. In the subcultural networks of Papp’s supporters, shamanic practices were attached to the reinterpretations of national history. By this time, different spiritual and esoteric practitioners proclaimed that they were ‘*táltos*’, or at least some believers considered them to be one. When Michael Harner, an American neo-shaman guru came to Hungary, he already arrived to a social scene, where colorful beliefs and hopes were connected to ‘alternative spiritualities’. Some participants associated the newly acquainted techniques of ‘core shamanism’ with the re-exploration of ethnic folk culture, beliefs and medical practices.

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<sup>157</sup> „In the seventies, We’ve got a secretfully circulated 50-60 pages long typed text from one of our fiends... it was the *Arvisura*.” K. Friedrich, *Társok-tetőtől a bosnyák piramisokig* (Budapest: Szakács G., 2007), 104.

<sup>158</sup> Paál, *Arvisura-igazszólás*.

<sup>159</sup> Kürti, “Psychic phenomena, neoshamanism, and the cultic milieu in Hungary,” 336.

## V. Contemporary pagan communities and social spaces in Hungary

In this chapter, I describe and characterize the most significant and influential representatives and communities and institutions of the Hungarian native faith scene along their religious-ideological types. Below, I differentiate (1) native faith new religious movements and informal communities of alternative spirituality (2) and the representatives of ‘public paganism’, whereat religious symbolism and pagan historical references are prevalent without explicit religious activities.

Public meanings of ethnicity, national identity and cultural legacy are constructed in a distinct, but internally heterogeneous cultural network. In this complex process, different social and virtual locations, actors, organizations and informal groups participate. By their various activities, texts, ritual and secular practices, communities, emotions, attitudes, group-beliefs and ideologies are constructed. Churches, spiritual communities and non-religious actors contribute to the sense-making process alike. Contemporary native faith scene in Hungary is colourful or even kaleidoscopic. As the native faith movements lack a common church-like hierarchy, individual concepts can flourish without effective central pressures to fit them into one direction. Participants and mediums of the alternative ethnic spiritual discourse are numerous and varied. Individual stake-holders, followers, sympathizers and their communities compose a fluid field. Their relationships are divers: the groups and actors fertilized by the ideas of others’; they reflect on the concepts which were developed by rival groups, while contestation for public recognition is salient among them. Native faith communities often define themselves compared to other circles. In spite of the variations in self-representations, multiple memberships in the communities are prevalent: individual participants are usually connected to more-than-one group at the same time. Communities of native faith followers compose a fluid network ‘Hubs’ of this network are multifarious:

manifestations and publications of new religious movements, spiritual leaders, ‘historical reconstructionist’ communities, para-scientific, meta-political and political actors, mainstream and esoteric publishing houses overflow the ‘traditional’ and ‘new’ media.

For a typology of the Hungarian neo-pagan religious communities, Szilágyi and Szilárdi applies a two-dimensional model<sup>160</sup>. On the platform of the groups’ self-representation, they differentiate the predominantly neo-pagan movements from syncretistic ones with heterogeneous religious elements; and the groups based on national traditions from those, which are based on other cultural traditions. Here, I suggest an alternative heuristical typology, which is narrower and wider than theirs at the same time. Narrower, as my focus is only on ethnic neo-paganism, so I don’t analyze those pagan movements, which don’t identify themselves as the followers of a Hungarian native faith (i.e. the Hungarian Kelta-Wicca Church, the *Sodalitas Mithraica* and the followers of ANKH or Druidry). And wider, as I am not concerned exclusively on churches, but include the less-organized informal native faith communities and the ideologists of ‘public paganism’: actors without any explicit religious activity.

## V.1. New religious movements

Among the pagan churches, I refer to seven religious organizations, which had or aspired to get an official Church status before the enactment of the new Hungarian Church Law in 2012. These are the ‘*Árpád Rendjének Jogonalja Tradicionális Egyház*’, ‘*Ősmagyar Egyház*’, ‘*Ősmagyar Táltos Egyház*’, ‘*Hun Univerzum Egyháza*’, ‘*Magyar Vallás Közössége*’, ‘*Ezoterikus Tanok Egyháza - Szent Korona Egyház*’ and ‘*Yotengrit*’. While the officially

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<sup>160</sup> Szilágyi and Szilárdi, R., *Istenek ébredése*.

recognized churches had certain institutional benefits before the new legislation, this status did not mean, that they were necessarily the most influential religious movements.

The heterogeneity of ethno-pagan churches shows a scene with eclectic views. Behind the varied religious concepts, influences of different cultural traditions and idiosyncratic mythical constructions, they diverge from each other in the character of their main activities. Religious practice is not the only and sometimes not the main pursuit of the churches. Commercial enterprising, ideological propagation, publishing and healing are supplementary functions for some of them.

Though there are no creditable public data about the membership, the probably most influential two churches are the ‘*Ősmagyar Táltos Egyház*’ and the ‘*Yotengrit*’. Both of them are developed gradually from *táltos* communities (*see below*). *Ősmagyar Táltos Egyház* was formulated by András Kovács-Magyar. Kovács-Magyar has been a successful healer in alternative medicine, who established a ‘folk healing centre’ (*Energia Gyógyító Központ*) and later an esoteric educational institution (*Táltos Iskola*). Thousands participate / follow his open-air ceremonies, public lectures and TV performances. While the opinion about his personality and authenticity are contradictory in the wider native faith movement (he is oft-referred as a businessman, a ‘TV-táltos’), his enterprise is obviously flourishing, at least in economic terms. Religious doctrines of his church are eclectic. Elements of Western esotericism, Christianity, Hinduism and nationalist para-history are mingled in them, while the concepts of Turanism, Sumerian descent, Hun mythology are used to propagate the popular conceptions on the sacred nature of *Pilis* mountains.

Additional ethno-pagan churches are less-known for the wider audience. *Ősmagyar Egyház* and *Magyar Vallás Közössége* are either connected to Turanism (the latter is directly the inheritor of the interwar ‘*Turáni Egyistenhívők Közössége*’) and to the post-Turanist Hungarian emigrants. Their common reference-points are Badinyi-Jós and Ida Bobula; main

difference between them is in their attitudes toward Christianity: while *Ósmagyar Egyház* consider Christianity as a legitimate part of the ancient religions of the Hungarians, *Magyar Vallás Közössége* is explicitly dismissive toward it<sup>161</sup>. The *Árpád Rendjének Jogalapja Tradicionális Egyház* ('The Legal Ground of Árpád's Order Traditional Church') was formed in 2009. It refuses the Christian Churches and has references to the Turanist legacy (particularly to the Turanist emigrants, like Adorján Magyar and Viktor Padányi) also. Furthermore, this pagan intellectualist stream is connected to the extreme conservative Traditionalist philosophy, to Alain de Benoist's anti-modernist *Nouvelle Droit* and sympathizes to his concepts about a common Indo-European paganism. Further small churches represent a more esoteric stream of the native faith. The *Ezoterikus Tanok Egyháza - Szent Korona Egyház* ('Church of Esoteric Beliefs – Sacred Crown Church')<sup>162</sup> is a fringe mixture of national esotericism, parapsychology and conspiracy theories. The tenets of the *Hun Univerzum Egyháza* ('Church of the Hun Universe')<sup>163</sup> are a mélange of national mythology, esoteric para-science or 'new science', and UFO religions.

Certain pagan streams did never endeavor to become official churches, though have had a significant religious - spiritual activity. The process of institutionalization, similarly to general trends among new religious movements and alternative spiritual communities, is not necessarily a priority of the groups. Helen Berger has argued that the Weberian model of 'routinization' has limited applicability to neo-pagan communities<sup>164</sup>. The informal circles of alternative spiritualities, which are belonging to the native faith, have typically emerged

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<sup>161</sup> R. Szilárdi, "A magyarországi neopogány közösségek," *Debreceni Disputa* 5, no. 5 (2007): 114.

<sup>162</sup> "Ezoterikus Tanok Egyháza: Spiritualitás és belső béke", n.d., <http://ezoterikustanokegyhaza.hu/page.php?48>.

<sup>163</sup> "Terembura periodical - Universum - Universitas", n.d., <http://terembura.xoo.hu/u/startlapok/startpage.htm>.

<sup>164</sup> H.A. Berger, "The Routinization of Spontaneity," *Sociology of Religion* 56, no. 1 (1995): 49–61.

around one or more spiritual leaders. These charismatic figures are frequently considered by their followers as present-day *táltos* personalities. Some of them have a national reputation, while others act only in their local community. Their recognition and legitimacy among the followers is based on their charisma, the attributed healing and spiritual power, ritual efficiency and authenticity. *Táltos* – circles hasn't got definite boundaries, neither permanent membership. Most of them have regular gatherings on a weekly base; in addition they organize collective nature-pilgrimages and healing occasions. The participants make together different rituals (rituals of initiation, rites of passage, sweat lodge and fire walk ceremonies, fertility, healing and purifying rites, either for the advance of the nature, the participants, the collectivity or the nation), perform shamanistic drumming, practice the techniques of meditation and spiritual self-development, and participate in the regular ceremonies and healing cures. While the performed ceremonies are usually led by the *táltos*, ritual roles are not divided strictly. The audience actively contributes and participates in the events. By various trans-techniques, the *táltos* assists the participants in their spiritual journey and self-development.

The most well-known contemporary *táltos* persons are Zoltán Sólyomfi, István Somogyi, Fehérholló Öskü and András Kovács-Magyar. Main steps of Kovács-Magyar's personal career were already depicted above; his route from alternative medical practice through a professional development of esoteric business toward a native faith church is unique on the field. Sólyomfi and Somogyi represents the first generation of contemporary *táltos* with a neo-shamanistic practice. Both of them were among the first participants of Harner's neo-shaman workshops in the eighties. Somogyi later established an alternative theatrical company, the *Arvisura* Theatre, and developed his personal shamanic technique. He regularly organizes shamanic trainings in Cserkút, a small village in the countryside, with fasting, consciously searched visions, community drumming, fire walking rituals and sweat lodge

ceremonies. According to an earlier detailed description<sup>165</sup>, the circle of his followers can be characterized as a mixture of underground counter-culture, Buddhism, esotericism and national mysticism. Sólyomfi, a well-known *táltos* for a wider circle due to his performances, public rituals and shamanistic music albums, applies the symbols of Hungarian ancient religions and mixes them with certain North American Indian traditions. He has a multi-stepped educational system for the adherents and makes regular workshops also. In the last years, his teachings got closer to *Turanism*: he began to refer to the pre-Christian ethnic religion as the alleged Scythian *Tengrism* religion, and turns for inspiration to the worldview of Central Asian cultural groups, which he considers kin-ethnies. Fehérholló Öskü was originally taught to the shamanic and meditation techniques by Somogyi, later he has evolved his own personal style. He runs *Tűzmadár Táltos Dobkör* ('Firebird *Táltos* Drum-Circle'), a popular workshop with regular events in Budapest. Szemző Gábor represents a new *táltos* generation. His rituals and interpretations fuse different syncretistic elements with more esoteric emphases. He claims that he was initiated to the ancient religion by Imre Máté, the *Yotengrit* leader. Over these spiritual leaders and their circles, there are further *táltos* persons, who are less-involved and less-known in the Budapest native faith scene. One of them is Attila Heffner, a 'musician-*táltos*' and drum-maker in Northern-East Hungary, who applies a mixture of Hun-Scythia ethno-mythology, yoga and his interpretation about Hinduism.

## V.2. 'Public paganism'

Behind church-like organizations and informal spiritual communities, the native faith scene includes further social locations. When I use the term 'public paganism', I refer to various sites, whereat though religious symbolism and pagan historical references are prevalent; these

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<sup>165</sup> Adorján, E., "A szellem ökológiája. A városi samanizmus egy budapesti csoport vizsgálatának tükrében." (Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, 1999).

elements are not connected directly to explicit religious or spiritual activities. Representatives of this wider category include ideologists, public writers, publishing houses, periodicals, parahistorians, disseminators, cultural and meta-political organizations and their public events. Their main activity is providing public significations, interpretations and ideologies about ethno-history, the pre-Christian cultural legacy, native faith beliefs, national character and the concepts of sacred ethnicity. Here not spiritual practice and religious services are the most important contributions, but the formulation of an identity-discourse.

Distinction between public and religious (or spiritual) paganism is not always clear. The application of religious metaphors is predominant in any of them; public pagan writers regularly urge for a spiritual reawakening or even initiate social movements toward this aim. The colorful programs of public pagan events, where lectures, performances, and the supply and consumption of niche products and services are among the main attractions, include the spiritual performances of a *táltos* and/or their communities. On the other side, *táltos* persons and church leaders regularly refer to pagan ideologies, which were developed by ‘public pagan’ writers. However, the main ideal-typical *differentia specifica* of public paganism is the absence of a central ritual practice and the lack of a clear native faith-based religious self-definition by the representatives. While public pagan ideologies are not less heterogeneous than those of the religious/spiritual pagans, a common ground for the different streams is the commitment toward spiritualized ethno-historical concepts.

The two largest public events of public paganism are *Kurultáj* and *Magyarok Országos Gyűlése* (‘National Assembly of the Hungarians’). *Kurultáj* is traditionally the name of a regular Kazak tribal meeting. Nowadays, it is the appellation of the largest public meeting of contemporary sympathizers of the Turanist ideology. *Kurultáj* was initiated by a young population geneticist, András Zsolt Bíró, who executed researches among members of the

small *Madjar* tribe in Kazakhstan. He claims that he managed to prove a close biologic and cultural connection between them and the contemporary Hungarians. On these grounds, he doubts the *Magyars*' belonging to Finno-Ugric ethnogenesis and propagates a Turanian - Scythia alternative. Ten thousands of visitors attend the annual summer *Kurultáj* festivals in the Hungarian *puszta*, where 'historical reconstructionism', performances of martial art, historical archery, ritual events, ethno-folk concerts and nationalist consumer culture is celebrated in an Orientalist style, among large yurts. The festival has good reputation on the political right ; its honorary patron is a FIDESZ-delegated vice-president of the Hungarian Parliament. *Magyarok Országos Gyűlése*, organized in *Böszörpuszta*, has detached from *Kurultáj* for personal reasons, but the ideology and outlook is very similar to it. These festivals, just as certain further similar, but less popular events interconnect different and otherwise more-or-less separated local communities with pagan sympathies.

Other organizations are dedicated to the regular dissemination of information about the nation's pre-Christian cultural roots and ethnic legacy. Regular lectures, workshops, semi-institutionalized educational forms and 'folk colleges' concern the imagined cultural heritage of proto-Hungarians. Studying Hungarian runes (*rovásírás*) became more-and-more popular in recent years. Friedrich and Székács, who published several books about this contested topic, developed a protochronist idea about the Hungarians' peculiar role in the cultural revolution of writing<sup>166</sup>. Now, numerous courses are provided across the country, while certain municipalities transcript their settlement's name on signposts by *rovásírás*. Center of *MVSZ* ('Hungarians' World Association', an official, state-run meta-political institution, which is dedicated to deepen cultural connections with Hungarian Diasporas) is one of the institutions, where alternative views on the ancient culture are regularly presented. *Göncöl*

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<sup>166</sup> Friedrich, K. and Székács, G., *Kőbe vésték, fába rótták..* (Budapest, 2005).

*Szabadegyetem* is one of the many for-profit esoteric schools, whereat native faith tenets are in the heart of the education. Kovács-Magyar's *Táltos Iskola* supplies a 12 semester long spiritual and alternative medicine training. *Nagy Lajos Király Magánegyetem*, a controversial non-accredited 'private university', has been dedicated to national revival and the dissemination of alternative historical theories. Badinyi-Jós got a professor seat there also; the departments of Hungarology, Art History, Ethnomusicology and History-Archaeology are the employer of other pagan ideologists, like Gábor Pap, Lajos Szántai and József Molnár. The radical right political party *Jobbik* has also established its own educational institution, the *Attila Király Népfőiskola* ('King Attila Folk High School'). István Kiszely, a well-known physical anthropologist, self-made 'hungarologist' and propagator of the Hun – Sekler – Hungarian continuity-theory was the leader of it. When he was identified as a previous long-time informant of the communist secret service, the post was taken away from him.

For getting a bunch of information about the native faith and its current understandings, it is not necessary to be involved in a private or unofficial educational institution. Esoteric, radical right and historical publishing houses, bookstores and mediums circulate a respective number of publications. Two further online TV channels (*Ezo.tv* and *Lelek.tv*) also provide various materials and transmit concerning programs on a daily base. While national media is generally far away for pagan ideologists, there are exceptions: the near-to-*FIDESZ* Echo TV has a weekly opinion-program, whereat the anchorman disseminates the concepts of 'sacred nation'. A large audience is reached by the radical right political online pages, and some of them (*hunhir.hu* and *szentkoronaradio.hu*) give place for the regular exposition and discussion of native faith tenets. Proliferation, diverse interpretations and transformations of native faith concepts are particularly significant in the online pages of 'new media'. These mediums effectively contribute to the development of a multi-participant discourse, in which the

opinion leaders, internal divisions, stakes and authenticity claims can be different of the ones of traditional discourse spaces.

## **VI. National narratives of native faith movements**

The various ideological, spiritual and new religious movements of the Hungarian native faith scene adopted, fabricated and reformulated eclectic concepts and national mythologies. These narratives are based on heterogeneous spiritual visions, historical ideologies and national group-beliefs. Most sensitive topics are the questions of ethno-history and the 'native' religious legacy; different depictions of national history and relations to its determining forces; and the opinions on the appropriate and 'authentic' ways of current religious and ethnic revival. Standpoints on these issues vary across current streams of the native faith; furthermore, their analysis may provide a fruitful perspective for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

By the accepted ethno-religious concepts, I discerned three heretical categories. These are the following ones: (1) religious protochronism (concept of proto-Hungarian Ancient high-civilization); (2) national Christian esotericism; and (3) contemporary *táltos* faith. In the following chapter, I provide an interpretation frame and descriptions of the narratives of three distinct native faith circles. Each of them represents one of the three types, regarding their notions on the ethno-religious legacy. The investigated streams are Badinyi's network with the myth about Sumerian ethnic origins; Pap and Szántai's national esotericism; and Máté's *Yotengrit* movement.

For a comparative investigation of these narratives, I scrutinize the mythical constructs and identity-language of these movements by analyses of their underlying myths, historical narratives and boundary-making mechanisms. Self-identification and characterization of the

‘symbolic others’ along narrative boundary-setting mechanisms is performed through historical accounts and reflections to contemporary cultural, social and political processes. Conceptions of ethnogenesis, ethno-history and ethnic spirituality; characterization of the ancient religion and its relation to spiritual powers; imaginaries of a historical process from a national-spiritual golden age, through a subsequent crisis and decline toward a necessary regeneration in the present and the next future; are the main topics of these boundary-making narratives. Positions on these issues are more-or-less characteristic to the particular native faiths movements.

Ideal-typically, symbolic demarcations of the ‘self’ and the ‘otherhood’ have three aspects. The first dimension is the opposition of the native faith and other worldviews. The main representative of the latter category is generally Christianity, as the majority-religion in the region, but there are other religious or spiritual antagonists for current pagans, like esoteric and new religious movements. The second category of otherness is drawn through ethnic and national lines. Binary opposition of Hungarians and non-Hungarians is a general scheme in native faith discourses. Concepts about membership criteria in national communities and relating group-beliefs may conduce to the formulation of distinctive national ideologies. The third type of separation acts differentiates the respective stream of the particular native faith movement from other branches of contemporary paganism. The groups’ legitimacy-claims, based on their contented authenticity, possessed ‘spiritual capital’ and national adherence, are rendered as compared to rival native faith circles.

The levels of self-differentiation (identifications in the relation to non-pagans, foreigners and other pagans) are only partially separable empirically. The term ‘ethnic religions’, another academic jargon for neo-pagan movements, illuminates the inherent connection of ethnic and religious affiliations in our context. According to native faith ideals, the categories of ethnic

co-members at one hand, and brethren in the faith at the other, should overlap as much as possible. Believes in alien (i.e. not the native) god(s) are understood as a basic discrepancy; an anomaly, which is to explain and dissolve. A possible narrative solution is to query the sincere national identity of compatriot members of alien religions; they can be depicted as non-Hungarians, not-enough-Hungarians or manipulated Hungarians. Another possibility is to characterize those religions as not so alien at all; they may have common grounds with the native faith, emerged from them or perhaps even we invented them. Native faith narratives are appropriate for the symbolic exclusion of certain groups from the national community, and for an imagined extension of the nation to include external cultural forms either.

Overlapping boundary-making mechanisms are prevalent in the self-differentiation strategies in relation to other native faith streams also. Negative portraits about the rival movements are drawn along the criticism toward their religious and national adherence. Statements about spiritual authenticity of 'Us' and 'Them' are expressed together with concerns about genuine national commitments. Inauthentic pagans are often considered as inauthentic Hungarians. Religious, national, and organizational boundary-setting mechanisms can be understood as correlating and mutually depending circles of social definitions, strategies of symbolic inclusion and exclusion.

## VI.1. Religious protochronism and the ‘Sons of Heaven’: the Badinyi-circle

Derivation of the Hungarian nation from magnificent ancient civilizations is a salient concept on the native faith scene. This idea, while imagines a splendid past for the nation, characterizes the Hungarians as the founders of great and powerful cultural units and contribute seminal cultural achievements to them. This idea could be called ‘protochronism’, after the Romanian term, referred to mytho-historical ‘Dacology’. Ethnic protochronist concepts in the Hungarian case focus on an alleged Sumerian-Hungarian ethnic lineage. Furthermore, they consider Christianity as the ethnic religion of the proto-Hungarians. The concept of ‘religious protochronism’ is integrated with the beliefs of ‘divine electivity’ of the ethnic group. Hungarians are seen as the ‘Sons of Heaven’, the chosen nation of God.

The early form of this idea has emerged in interwar Turanism, and was spread and elucidated further in the emigrational communities in the sixties and seventies. The main promoter of this concept was the ‘alternative Sumerologist’ Ferenc Badinyi-Jós. He argued that the Sumerian scribes can be read in Hungarian language<sup>167</sup>. Later, he even claimed that the Sumerian and the Hungarian are not simply kin-languages, but they are the very same<sup>168</sup>. Badinyi’s anti-Semitic criticism toward the Roman Catholic Church led to the idea of a national (and apparently non-Jewish) autochthonous Christianity<sup>169</sup>. After Badinyi-Jós’ come-back to Hungary in the nineties, he proposed the establishment of the ‘Hungarian Church’<sup>170</sup>.

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<sup>167</sup> Badiny Jós, *Káldeától Ister-Gamig*.

<sup>168</sup> Badinyi Jós, *A sumir - magyar nyelvazonosság bizonyítékai*.

<sup>169</sup> Badiny Jós, *A káld-pártus hagyomány és a magyarok Jézus-vallása*.

<sup>170</sup> Badiny Jós, “Magyar egyház.”

Similarly to other figures of emigrant para-historians, like Bobula, Fehér and Móricz, he became an icon and regular reference-point in native faith circles until the present times.

Badinyi's para-historical arguments apply various modes of justifications. His relation to his mythical object is complex: in his texts, he alternates between the roles of the researcher, the believer and the prophet (while he was arguably a modern myth-constructor). He does not hesitate to ascribe cosmological truth-values to the (re)constructed beliefs; the features of para-scientific, mytho-poetic and religious discourse intrinsically related in his writings. Besides his own, at least dubious, mythological and linguistic researches and other para-scientists' publications, he refers to medieval chronicles, forgeries, pieces of nineteenth centurial romantic historiography, and certain academic results, such as Gyula László's archaeological 'double incoming hypothesis'<sup>171</sup>, which weighs up the possibility of a pre-896 Hungarian presence in the contemporary territory.

### **Ethnogenesis and the ancient religion**

In his ethno-mythology, Badinyi speaks about the sameness of the Sumerian, Sabir, Hun and Hungarian ethnies. He depicts Hungarians as the autochthonous Carpathian-basin population, though locates another ancient homeland of the nation in the Mesopotamian land of 'Subir' also. The co-existence of the two homelands doesn't seem really problematic to the author; he claims that the Hungarian-Sumerian civilization was the original settler in both areas. The idea of locating the Hungarian-Sumerian land of origin in the Carpathian Basin would, by the same token, make Hungarians not only the first settlers in their present-day habitat, but also the founders of one of the oldest and greatest civilizations in world history. This mytho-theory comes in useful for territorial claims also, as the Hun Empire's appearance is understood as

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<sup>171</sup> Gy. László, *A "kettős honfoglalás"* (Budapest: Helikon, 2004).

the Hungarians' second arrival to Central Europe: "they re-conquered the Carpathian Basin on the basis of their ancient rights (...) the people of the Huns and the Magyars always want to return to their ancient land in the Carpathian Basin."<sup>172</sup>

Territorial claims for the Carpathian-basin are justified by spiritual arguments. The desired takeover is a sacred mission, licensed by divine support. The concept of 'chosen nation' is substantiated by a Sumer motif's interpretation in the context of *Turul* mythology. The invented myth of origin states that the Hungarians came from Heaven; their ruler, the vicar of the 'King of Heaven', has divine powers and he is to fulfill divine responsibilities. They "ruled the people by God's laws and executed the orders of the Sun-God, the God of the Magyars, actually the one God." According to Badinyi, the concept of sacred kingship contributed to the maintenance of the Hungarian unity and by the activity of this power they managed to destroy the European armies.

Badinyi's concepts about the ancient Hungarian religion are not less ingenious. The idea of divine electivity is connected to a fundamentally revised religious history of the Middle East, including a de-Judaized picture of Christianity as an ethnic religion of the Hungarians. "Nestorianism, which began in Byzantium, was actually the ancient *Mágus* religion, revived by Jesus, which took the form of Manicheism in Persia and which fit in well with the Byzantine Christianity." According to this Hungarian-centered version of Christianity, Jesus and Peter were Sumerian magicians who spoke Scythian, the ancient Magyars were Jesus-believers, while their spiritual leaders, the *táltosok*, were Christian magician-priest. This is the ancient 'magus' religion, the monotheist belief-system of the early Hungarians.

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<sup>172</sup> In this chapter, I reconstruct Badinyi's ideas primarily from one of his essays in English. Where I don't indicate specially, the quotations are from F. Badiny Jós, *The godly conquerors* (Canberra, A.C.T.: Magyar Egyház, n.d.).

Besides its monotheistic characterization, the native faith is represented as the highest form of mystical wisdom, esoteric knowledge and nature-mysticism. The presupposed religious marks (veneration of natural elements; a cosmological way of thinking, advanced knowledge of astronomy) suggest a society with a healthy, positive attitude and good will. Badinyi charges the ethnic group with exceptional mastery in esoteric knowledge and beneficial application of spiritual techniques: “The collective name for the ‘*mágus*’ (‘magician’) was *MAG-AR*” In the author’s imagination, These altruistic people showed an exceptional religious tolerance: they allowed for the believers of alien religions to practice their own religion and gave place to the communities of the Byzantine Orthodox Church, the Nestorian religion; there were even Buddhists among them.

### **Historical narrative**

Ethno-history from the ancient times until what Badinyi calls ‘the second incoming to the Carpathian-basin’ in 896, is represented as a long period of undisturbed harmony: an epoch of freedom of the will of the people and of national unity. The symbolic event of the celebrated national golden age is the conquest under Árpád: it created a marvelous prosperity until István’s accession. National decline begins with forced Christianization; this process is represented as the starting point and direct cause of a millennium- of foreign dominance. István is ascribed the role of the main antagonist and the destroyer of genuine ethnic traditions as he “abandoned the holy traditions of the ancestors (...) kicked aside the Holy Constitution of the Blood Union and so the Hungarians became a nation without roots”. Badinyi regularly uses the phrase of ‘genocide’, the contest between the Christian Church and the native faith being, in his view, a war between “foreigners” and “the nation”. Due to the subsequent foreign rule, the previously free Hungarians became servants, disunity and fratricidal wars emerged among them. Badinyi’s beliefs about rootlessness, discord, subjection and servility

of the nation are expressed by the ‘dying nation’ metaphor; a central trope of his disapprovals toward the attributed long-term effects of Christianization.

István’s political work is seen as submission to alien powers, to ‘Judeo-Christianity’ and German forces; it is the paradigmatic “anti-national” betrayal. Badinyi understands it as a meta-historical determination: this is the ‘*Saint István complex*’, many centuries of suffering, which the Hungarians had to endure under foreign rule. In his narrative, the whole of the mediaeval and modern history is rewritten along these interpretational lines. This conspiracionist mytho-historical grand narrative interconnects different epochs in a common frame: an eternal foreign war against the nation with the support of internal traitors. The extinction of the Árpád-dynasty (explained here as a conscious extermination); defeat at the battle of Mohács; all the fallen revolutions from the 1514’s peasant revolt to 1956; the Habsburg rule, the power of ‘foreign aristocracy and kings’, the absolutism of the post-1848 Bach regime and Marxism: are all understood by the same code. Martyrdom is one of the major narrative tools: the residual pagans, Koppány, and the early modern and modern revolutionists from Dózsa through Rákóczi to Kossuth are seen as martyrs, who fought for the same national cause. The death of Koppány, Imre, Gyula and Vászoly (who was blinded and had liquid lead poured into his ears) are attributed to the “merciless law of the Old Testament in Roman Christianity”. For Badinyi, the ruling houses after the Árpád dynasty were all oppressors and, under a merciless totalitarian rule, the Hungarian people were the oppressed.

Throughout these texts, references to the legacy of national freedom fighters are applied to set example for contemporary resistance against the nation’s enemies. The present is characterized as the inevitable time for changes. Though the provided program has obviously an elemental political character, a non-political, spiritual rhetoric is applied for mobilization.

The strong calls to overrun national disunity are drawn up by imperatives for a spiritual revival.

“Hungarians! What are we waiting for? Let us stand with honor before the Sun, with the beliefs which were the strength of the Árpadian ancestors. (...) There can be and there will be a Hungarian regeneration but only if we first revive the memory of Great Árpád the Conqueror, with the strength of the true Hungarian traditions. The guiding star of the Hungarians will again be the spirituality of Árpád and the glory of the spiritual traditions.”

Badinyi speaks with a messianic tone:

“Even if I remain alone, the cuckoo in the great Hungarian forest, sounding a warning, I still wish you to hear my voice because I am calling every Hungarian to come to the aid of the nation which is standing at the edge of the grave. I am calling every Hungarian to a spiritual rebirth in honor of his ancestors because he, who is able to join with God in the rebirth of the love of his ancestors and his past, becomes immortal. This applies both to the individual and to the nation.”

This political prophetism includes jeremiads on current conditions, calls for individual and collective spiritual re-awakening, a necessary return to the genuine faith of the community and augury of a forthcoming national resurrection.

### **Boundary-setting**

Narrative boundary-making in the Badinyi texts goes along two parallel lines: the categories of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ are defined by national and religious depictions. Adversaries of the nation along history are seen as foreigners *and* Christians. These two manifestation forms of ‘them’ are actually two aspects of the same eternal enemy; they are united in serving the long-term symbolic Jewish conspiracy. The construction of the symbolic other by Badinyi takes place in the general frame of an inherently anti-Semitic worldview and conspiracy theories. By the symbolic exclusion of Western Christianity from the genuine national tradition and its agents from the national community, historical and contemporary actors are sorted into two anachronistic parties: everybody has to take sides between Árpád *or* István; the boundary is not permeable.

While the presupposed nature-religion character of the Hungarian native faith is represented as the manifestation of a non-violent, tolerant worldview, Catholicism is considered an essentially politically oriented religion. Criticism toward the historical role of the Catholic Church includes nationalist conspiracionist ideas (i.e. enforced monastery life for the Hungarian princesses in the Middle Ages) and, interestingly, communist historiographical topos (church as the supporter of ‘feudal capitalism’). Badinyi’s grudge against Christianity is formulated in a barely hidden anti-Semitic language, while the historical accounts are embedded in an unambiguously anti-Semite worldview. The merciless God of the Old Testament is behind the Inquisition of the Roman Church proceeds; the Catholic Church acts against the Hungarian nation in the name of “*Jehova*, who orders them to kill believers of other religions”. In this presumption, the Catholic Church secretly serves Jewish interests: “The international nature of the Christian (Judeo-Christian) religions will never aid the Hungarian regeneration because they all teach that the Jewish nation is God’s chosen people.” As we have seen, the concept of ‘ethnic chosenness’ is not denounced on a theoretical level; Jews are simply replaced for Hungarians, the ‘Sons of God’. In this imaginary, the ‘Judeo-Christian’ Church altered the original Bible and ‘judaicized’ the image of the historically Sumerian-proto-Hungarian Jesus. Detachment of the figure of Jesus from Western Christianity allows transferring the positively approved ethics of the New Testament to the Hungarian native faith, while the refused Christian Church is represented as an institution of moral insanity, whose power is based on illegitimate claims and historical forgeries. The Church “was not established by Jesus of Nazareth but by the Rabbi, Saul (...) The liturgy was based on the renewal of the Hebrew rites of sacrifice, reflected in the sacrifice of Jesus.” Not just the history of religion, but also the history of the modern nation is revised in the same fashion. Depictions of the depreciated historical figures regularly include anti-Semite metaphors. It happens even to the symbolic antagonist, István: “The young István, when he

adopted Judeo-Christianity, became King of the Hungarians and was anointed with oil according to the Jewish custom.”

A main topos along the writings of the Badinyi-circle is the presupposed conscious adulteration of national historiography by those who are considered as adversaries or traitors. According to these beliefs, the nation’s enemies manipulate historical memories by false representations; their motivation is to justify their presence in the country and choke the feeling of Hungarian nationalism. They depict an undesirable portrait about the otherwise heroic ancient legacy, while groundlessly glorify Saint István. The ‘pagan’ term for the denomination of ancient ethnic religion is rebuffed by Badinyi, due to its derogatory connotations. He argues that the ancestors were ‘godly conquerors’ and the possessors of a cosmological wisdom, and he suggests to refer them simply as ‘non-catholic’. Claims about anti-national forgeries are regularly attributed to Jewish – Christian conspiracy again. The alleged historical manipulations include the views about the Hungarian runic scripts and the concepts of Finno-Ugric ethno-history.

“It became a duty of the Church to destroy any relics of the ‘pagan’ past, just as the conquistadores destroyed the culture of the Incas in South America and the Mayan and Aztec cultural wonders in Central America, under the pretext of spreading Christianity. (...) the Árpáadian runic script, which was carved on wood, was burned by the priests of the new religion.” By the parallelism with native-American high-civilizations, Hungarian ethnic legacy acquires a further light of mystery, reputation of high morality and prestigious enemies. The alleged systematic destruction of the ancient runes would prove the barbarity and ‘anti-Hungarianism’ of the Church. Furthermore, it would also provide an explanation for the absence of old-time remnants of the ‘*rovásírás*’; an archaeological anomaly for nationalists, for whom the runes have high symbolic prestige. The vehement refusal of the

Finno-Ugric origin of the Hungarian language is one of the oldest traditions of alternative concepts of national ethnogenesis and national mythologies. Badinyi depicts ‘Finno-Ugrist’ and other academic modern-day historians as national traitors, who “play a leading role in the reviling of the ancient Hungarians” by supporting ‘an ideology of the Habsburgs’. “(...) the nation is standing at the edge of the grave. The historians are already singing the funeral dirge. They are competing with each other to present the ancestors of the Hungarians in the worst possible light to the foreigners and to the Hungarian youths.”

Critical attitude towards academically approved historical narratives and the parallel suggestions for an alternative vision show the general national mythical frames of the Badinyi-circle. National character is depicted in pronounced binary oppositions: Hungarians are represented as genuinely ‘godly’ (and not pagans), highly-civilized (and not barbarians), possessors of advanced knowledge (and not primitive). Their ancient culture is shown as a victorious civilization; which stands closest to God, has a cosmological significance and a particular link to Jesus. Its harmonic relation to nature, just as its peaceful and tolerant attitude is based on divine power. Sacred fundamentals of the nation guarantee the maintenance of unity and brotherhood of the ‘Sons of Heaven’. The break-up of national golden age is the result of alien machinations and internal betray; as the strength of Hungarians is assured by the native faith, the foreigners strike to annihilate its spiritual power by forced Christianization. Adversaries of the nation (Western Christian churches, Habsburgs, Marxists, international powers, ‘Hungarian-speaking foreigners’) serve the secret interests of the main antagonists: the Jews. The last millennium of national history is the long period of oppression by them, though the genuine spirit of the nation appears again and again in the acts of truthful Hungarians, martyrs and revolutionists along the centuries. Return to the native faith, to the

very traditions of the community is the provided solution for abating all these miseries; it is the following way for a national resurrection.

Badinyi's ideological paganism, which lacks any connecting ritual practice, fits into the general worldview of anti-Semitic conspiracy-theories. In a certain sense, this is a logical end-product of them. The totalistic exaggeration of the imagined Jewish power and presence; the parallel demonization and desacralization of the Jewry; and the sacralization of the own nation are all included in Badinyi's mytho-historical constructions. The topos of 'Christianity as a Jewish invention' paves the way for seeking alternative religious foundations for this extreme nationalism. The anti-Semitic criticism of the Roman Catholic Church led to the development of mythical constructions about a Sumerian – Jesus-believer syncretistic ethnic tradition, a paganistic *and* at the same time essentially Christian national native faith. This conception, as a national ideology, supports the ideas of Hungarian 'protochronism', feelings of civilizational greatness, and justifications of territorial and symbolic claims.

## VI.2. 'Holy Crown' and esoteric mytho-history: the Pap – Szántai circle

The esoteric nationalist current of native faith movements is formulated around a close network of 'alternative science'. Emblematic figures of this esotericist 'hungarology', 'symbology' and historiography are Gábor Pap, Jajos Szántai and József Molnár F. As I have briefly noted in a previous chapter, they are among the most notorious ideologists of the native faith, due to their regular publications and public lectures. Szilágyi and Szilárdi<sup>173</sup> describe this group as the second generation of the alternative researchers of ethnic origins. They characterize them by their commitment to the analysis of ethno-folk-culture, ethnic traditions and national flavor. In my understanding, their *differentia specifica* is in the esoteric, 'astro-mythological', mystical interpretation of national territory, culture and history. While it is an idiosyncratic understanding of the divinity of the nation's sacrality, this synthesis is influenced from various directions: para-historiographic publications, the stream of radical modernity-criticist traditionalism, astrology and esoteric conspiracy theories are among the sources. This circle has widespread publications and regular public appearances. The periodical called *Dobogó* and online TV, just as the *Két Hollós* bookstore and lecture hall is linked to Szántai's and Pap's native faith circle. Szántai regularly leads cultural tours and pilgrimages to different locations - from Transylvania through the 'Bosnian pyramids' to Greece and Egypt – which he considers important to Hungarian history and spirituality.

The major issues they tackle in their lectures are heterogeneous: unusual interpretations of folk beliefs, history of art, Christian legends, national symbols, secrets of the Pilis Mountains, sharp criticism of the academic science and a national re-appropriation of Heribert Illig's 'phantom time hypothesis' are among the regular issues. The common interpretational frame for these topics is an esoteric conception of the Hungarians as a sacred nation with

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<sup>173</sup> Szilágyi and Szilárdi, R., *Istenek ébredése*, 64.

divine empowerment and a spiritual mission. National history is considered as a spiritual process for cosmic aims. It is understandable only by decrypting the esoteric codes in it; the signs are in the complex ethno-symbolic signage systems.

### **Ethnohistory and the ancient religion**

About the early history of the Hungarians, the Pap-Szántai-circle accepts the Hun-Scythian – Avar – Hungarian continuity theory of the general native faith ideology, but the ethnogenesis is a relatively less accentual question in their writings. Their imaginations about the ancient ethnic religion are framed by their ideas on the cosmic significance of the nation and its habitat. They conceptualize a Scythian ancient religion with a Christian character. According to Molnár<sup>174</sup>, Hungarians were always monotheists; he imagines a pagan-Christian syncretistic belief-system with the reverence of *Fény Jézus* ('Light Jesus') and *Boldogasszony* ('the Blessed Lady'); and the powerful activity of *táltos* priests. Szántai describes<sup>175</sup> a native skull-religion (which he justifies by referring to archaeological findings of ancient trepanation and etymological derivations of the word *koponya* (skull) from the name of *Koppány*) with a complex shamanistic – mystical background. He attributes plural origins to the organic native belief-system. In Pap's account<sup>176</sup>, it was a unity of *táltos*-beliefs, Buddhist-Manichaeic tenets ('the original Christianity', in his views), a 'Hinduistic' philosophical stream and the Zarathustra religion.

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<sup>174</sup> Molnár V., J., "Adalékok a magyar mitológiához," *Dobogó*, n.d., <http://www.dobogommt.hu/dobogo/irasok.php?id=20050101092803&nev=Moln%E1r%20V.%20J%F3zsef>.

<sup>175</sup> Szántai, L., "Koppány kupája," *Tengri.hu*, n.d., [http://www.tengri.hu/hun/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=294:koppany-kupaja&catid=8:ajanlottirodalom&Itemid=6](http://www.tengri.hu/hun/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=294:koppany-kupaja&catid=8:ajanlottirodalom&Itemid=6).

<sup>176</sup> Pap, G., "A Pilis-szindróma," *kincseslada.hu*, n.d., <http://www.kincseslada.hu/pilis/content.php?article.91>.

Though representatives of this stream speak about a religious and ritual shift at the national Christianization by St. István, at the same time they presuppose a fundamental continuity between the pre-Christian and Christian national faith. Szántai refers to the medieval accounts of Werbőczy: “The Hungarians are originally Christian, though not because of Rome; but they got it directly from God.” The identification of the figure of the Blessed Lady with Virgin Mary, the supposition of an autochthonous Jesus-belief, the derivation of *táltos* knowledge from ‘the One and Almighty God’, a mystical Christian ‘angeologic’ interpretation of national myths, (i.e. of the motive of the ‘miraculous stag’) paves the way to a Christian appropriation of the ancient beliefs. Regarding the relation of Christianity to the native faith, the most significant boundary-setting issue for the Badinyi-circle, this stream takes different sides. Szántai and his supporters provide a model of peaceful cohabitation. “István has never destroyed the ancient *táltos* religion of Jesus and the *Turul*-dynasty; it survived at least for another five centuries. (...) in the Carpathian Basin, the two philosophies are complementing each other peacefully.”<sup>177</sup>

The divine energy, spiritual power and cosmic mission of the nation are seen as connected to the consecutive activity of certain symbols and persons, who interconnect the profane world with celestial processes. In these presuppositions, sacredness is definitely active, permanently functioning (and not only based on a previous divine promise), national (connected to and appears in the sacred geography, sacred organizations and symbols) and channeled toward the maintenance of the Hungarian state.

### **Historical narrative**

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<sup>177</sup> Szántai, L., “Sárkányok, táltosok, királyok,” *kincselada.hu*, n.d., <http://www.kincselada.hu/magyarsag/content.php?article.297>.

Both István and Koppány, the two antagonists at the time of Western Christianization, are seen as positive figures and legitimate parts of the Hungarian spirituality. In this opinion, the ritual order has changed, but not the essence of the religion. In the eyes of Szántai, István and Koppány manifest the same mystical program, in spite of the factual conflicts between them. A presupposed mystical Catholic mission after the ritual turn channeled the spiritual powers of the ancient religion to the sacred kingship. After that, the divine mission of the Hungarians was connected to their sacred kings. Medieval history is seen as a continuation of the pre-Christian esoteric program; the two mentors and symbols of this continuity have been the *Pálos Order* (the only Hungarian-established Christian Order) and the Holy Crown.

In this mythical construct, Jesus, the early Hungarian monarchs, the baptized kings and the mysticized Pálos Order work for the maintenance of national sacredness alike. Kings of the Árpád dynasty (or the ancient ‘*Turul dynasty*’, as Szántai refers to it) are originated from Jesus. They were initiated *táltos* persons, riding physically on their *táltos* horses of the folktales. „When the break-up of the Árpád dynasty is already seen from precursors, certain knowledge is to be transmitted; this is why the *Pálos* order was launched in the *Pilis*.”<sup>178</sup> The Order’s secret mission was to keep and transmit the ancient religion of the Carpathian-basin; it „maintains the mighty ancient-Hungarian axis”. Szántai’s accounts about the order depict the *Pálos* friars as *táltos* persons, who were initiated in the caves of the *Pilis*. He associates them with the Egyptian pharaohs, the hermetic tradition and alchemists, while states that they were mystically consubstantial with Christ. He claims that these ‘high, beautiful men’, who were all the members of the original Hungarian aristocracy, possessed the ‘elixir of life’ and were immortal. *Pálos* friars, these sacred intermediaries of ancient traditions to a Catholic context, are described as strongly connected to the political institutions of the Christian

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<sup>178</sup> Szántai, L., “A Pálosok,” *Programfutár*, n.d., <http://www.benkedesign.hu/?q=node/317>.

kingship. “The existence of the *Pálos* friars is always parallel to the life of the Hungarian kings. When a king dies, the abbot follows him in a few months. The kings are the primary protagonists, they conduct the life and destiny of the nation, but there is always beside the *Pálos*. (...) The conclusive source takes us back to the crown.”<sup>179</sup>

The Hungarian crown’s mythical interpretation is one of the most characteristic contributions of the national esoteric stream to the native faith ideology. The Sacred Crown has been a complex symbol of the Christian Hungarian kingdom for centuries. From the late medieval period, according to the “Doctrine of the Holy Crown”<sup>180</sup>, the crown itself had personhood as a legal entity; regularly the crown was considered as one of the nation’s divine symbols. Native faith mythologies of the Holy Crown are compounds of Christian, esoteric and para-historiographic concepts. They attribute a sacred nature and spiritual power to the crown, even as to a physical object. This idea was developed in the eighties by Gábor Pap, who, as an art historian, was charged by state institutions to scrutinize the crown, when Hungary had gotten it back from the U.S. He hypothesized that the crown carried divine power, and it “conducted divine energy to its bearer just as a shamanic crown”. According to his current views<sup>181</sup>, the Crown is a divine energy-mediator, “her operation is cardinal in the salvation history”. He refers to ‘radiesthesia’ analyses, which “found an immeasurably high-level, unknown type of energy radiating around (...); the energy arrive at the point, where the cross joins in to the Crown”.

In this esoteric frame, the troubled medieval history of the Hungarian state and its dynasties are radically rewritten. A direct connection is claimed between the destiny of the crown and

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> L. Péter, “The holy crown of Hungary, visible and invisible,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 81, no. 3 (2003): 421–510.

<sup>181</sup> Pap, G., “A Szent Korona,” *Dobogó*, n.d., <http://www.dobogommt.hu/dobogo/irasok.php?id=20050101092791&nev=Pap%20G%E1bor>.

the nation: “If the crown is blocked or it is abroad, the country is in trouble also.” Imagined adversaries of the Hungarian nation are believed to consciously pursue to ‘decode’ the crown: “Before the death of Joseph II, certain pictures were changed on the crown. Due to the (political) manipulations of it, the program of the Holy Crown is weakened or modified.”<sup>182</sup> Similarly, conditions of the *Pálos* order are coherent with the position of the nation. Glorious kings were all supported by the order, while weak rulers rejected. In the medieval mytho-histories of Szántai, King Mathias was the last momentous majesty.

“The *Pálos* friars collected the energy for the community for centuries to make grounds for Hunyadi Mátyás. (...) Attila, the first one, set off the Hungarian’s mission in the Carpathian Basin; and Mátyás is the second Attila, who closes it, while he launched something for the future. He is Mátyás the righteous; he will wait for us at Doomsday. One cannot bypass Corvin Mátyás.”<sup>183</sup>

Mátyás, ‘the last *táltos*-king’, is considered as the core of the history-long esoteric program. Hun ethnogenesis of the Hungarians, Christian salvation and eschatology and national kingship is incorporated in his myth. Attempts to the maintenance of spiritual kingship fall down with the death of Mátyás, the last medieval ruler. “All the ravens” (symbols of the *Pálos* order and of Mátyás also) “of the Carpathian Basin fled to Fehérvár, to the center of Hungary.”<sup>184</sup> The fulfillment of the setback is the Turk occupation of the country, which is understood in spiritual terms also. Szántai holds that the occupation is the result of the external weakening of the nation’s divine protection. The catastrophic defeat of the Hungarian armies at the battle of Mohács is the consequence of astral-mythological tendencies: “a flowed water-course is not able to cause a cosmic catastrophe, only a flawed *Aquarius*

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<sup>182</sup> G. Pap, “*Angyali korona, szent csillag*”: beszélgetések a magyar Szent Koronáról (Jászberény: Jászsági Művésztelep, 1996).

<sup>183</sup> Szántai, L., “Mátyás és a Pálosok,” *kincseslada.hu*, n.d., <http://www.kincseslada.hu/pilis/content.php?article.86>.

<sup>184</sup> Szántai, L., “A Pálosok.”

program”<sup>185</sup>. According to these mystical imaginaries of warfare, Turks demolished the *Pálos* monasteries completely to abolish their beneficial powers.

While the elements described above only partially represent the whole construction of national spirituality, they show the invention of a complex mytho-historical imaginary. From an external point-of-view, it looks like a surreal vision of an alternative reality. For the ideologists of this mythology, ‘real’ history is beyond the material and factual level; for a deeper understanding, a/the scientific tools have to be merged with esoteric revelations, ‘dream-work’ and the possession of the fundamental spiritual code.

### **Boundary-setting**

‘Symbolic otherness’ in the narratives of Pap and Szántai’s national esoteric stream is represented as malevolent aliens; liberal global forces and manipulators of modern mass-society; agents of academic science; and those representatives of the native faith, who want to choose between the Christian and pre-Christian legacy. The presupposed common ground for these adversaries is their conscious aspiration for a spiritual destruction of the Hungarian nation.

The circle’s esoteric historiography could be considered a ‘national Da Vinci code’-project: the possession and manipulation of the (esoteric) key of national history is decisive for current position in a cosmic order. The magical attribution of divine power to symbols and language makes the representation of history spiritually significant. Different historical views are not considered merely as false or improper, but as conscious falsifications. Variations in the historical descriptions are the result of a broad anti-national, esoteric conspiracy. “Those who attempt to demolish (deny, chop or re-label) us, know everything about us and our spiritual mission.”

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<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*

The total refusal of academic science and the sharp criticism toward rival alternative native faith conceptions are framed as a spiritually relevant activity: a debunking of the multifarious practices of malicious powers. The dichotomist opposition of the rightful, if though not verifiable views on one side and the morally corrupted and spiritually subversive false representations on the other hints the application of a fundamentally Manichaeian worldview to the national discourse. According to Pap, Szántai and their followers, rival opinion-leaders are the antagonists of the nation, who act in knowing the real esoteric stake. “It is a diabolic game: the same data, which hint the moral-political elevation of a nation, with tiny machinations can be put as the ‘proofs’ of our awkwardness, eternal and fateful helplessness and moral-political minority.”<sup>186</sup>

In discrediting the manipulators of history and national pride, Pap appropriated and re-interpreted the notorious German representative of alternative historiography Heribert Illig’s conspiratory ‘phantom time theory’<sup>187</sup>. As both of them attempted to fundamentally rewrite the history of the Middle Ages by showing that mainstream historiography is based on forgeries, it is not surprising. However, Pap has provided a completely transformed interpretational frame: in his opinion, the motivation for the enormous international counterfeit was a contest for the symbolic possession of the Carpathian-basin. He claims, that three centuries from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (that supposedly never happened) were constructed to provide a heroic past and mythical fundamentals to Western Europe and to steal the Hungarians’ real heroic past. “It makes a sacred principality where it never existed (...) But if anywhere really was a sacred kingship, it was in Hungary.”<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, by

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<sup>186</sup> Pap, G., “A Pilis-szindróma.”

<sup>187</sup> H. Illig, *Das erfundene Mittelalter: die größte Zeitfälschung der Geschichte* (Econ, 1996).

<sup>188</sup> Pap, G., “A kitalált középkor,” *Dobogó*, n.d., <http://www.dobogommt.hu/dobogo/irasok.php?id=20050101092792&nev=Pap%20G%E1bor>.

claiming that the early Middle Ages were fictitious, Pap intends to prove the Hun – Hungarian continuity and doubts the early Slavic influence in the region.

The adversaries of the national spirit are imagined as interfering powers opposed to the contemporary revelation of the spiritual connotations of national history. These antagonists are denoted with several epithets and recognized in very different forms along history. In different epochs, they are the agents of the Byzantine Empire, Rome, the Germans, the Ottomans, the Habsburgs and the Slavs. Certain personalities (Luxembourgian Sigismund, Joseph II, and others) are particularly referred as the servants of these debauchery forces, but their real character is demonstrated by debunking their general position. They are the representatives of the alien, ‘Indo-European rationality’. Refusal of foreigner cultural streams is expressed by the rhetorical tools of antiglobalism and anti-westernism. Criticism toward global media-culture, consumerism and mass society shows the appropriation of the language of antiglobalist conspiracy theories: “a new world order is initiated in Paris and the USA (...) this is what globalism means”<sup>189</sup>. Regular damning of ‘American idiotism’ and critical characterizations of the contemporary society are based on extremely conservative keywords. The political ideological background of this esoteric stream is thus a radical and conspiracionist antiliberal and antimodern nationalism.

In this narrative, the manipulated public of the Western societies stands in contrast the inherited superior spirituality and worldview of the Hungarians. The ‘Indo-European formal rationality’ and materialism of Western-style mainstream science is opposed by the ‘organic culture and ancient wisdom and spiritual endeavor of the native faith. The national revival is legitimated by references to a long and varied line of spiritual legacy from ‘original Christianity by God’, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, through Buddhism, Manichaeism, Hinduism,

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<sup>189</sup> Szántai, L., “Mátyás és a Pálosok.”

Zarathustrism, the Inca, Egypt and other high-civilizations to mystical traditions of hermeticism, alchemy, and the notorious *táltos*-beliefs.

Among the native faith movements, Szántai's stream is "highly critical of other Hungarian Ethno-Pagan shamans and groups"<sup>190</sup>. As the appropriate representation of the native faith and ethnic traditions has spiritual stakes in itself, rival conceptions are not merely refused, but considered as belligerent and spiritually wicked. On these grounds, the eclectic New Age movement is – rhetorically - boycotted in its totality. On the Hungarian scene, the *Yotengrit* movement, the neo-shamanic healers, *táltos*-circles and the local representatives of Hungarian traditionalism and the '*Nouvelle Droite*' are sharply criticized. Latter circle is depicted as a 'violent group, which is financed from abroad'. Besides these groups, there are particular denunciations against those who contrast the figures of Koppány and István. As antagonistic views between the Christian and Pagan cultural legacy are seen as inducing national disunity, the concept of an anti-Christian native faith is considered anti-nationalist and totally refused.

Main ideological contribution of the analyzed Pap – Szántai stream to the Hungarian native faith is their construction of an esoteric national historiography, which provides a mystical interpretational frame for the complete national history. Because of the presupposed perennial activity of national spirituality, conceptions of a particular golden age haven't emerged in these mytho-poetic constructions. The idea of a historical moment of the beginning of a necessary spiritual decline is nevertheless formalized: it is represented as the end of national independence, hallmarked by the death of King Mátyás and the Turk occupation.

'Mission' of the medieval kingship is mythicized as a permanent endeavor for the fulfillment of the ancient national mission. The pagan – Christian difference is not essentialized in this narrative. Rather, the beliefs in the secret spiritual commitment of the *Árpád*-dynasty, the

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<sup>190</sup> L.A. Hubbes, "A Comparative Investigation of Romanian and Hungarian Ethno-Pagan Blogs," *Social Science Research Network*, 2012, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1984597](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1984597).

activity of the Holy Crown and the *Pálos* order represent an essential continuity over pre-Christian and Christian times. As this invention appropriates and manipulates both Christian and pre-Christian cultural conceptions, it is a syncretistic solution for all those, who wish to avoid choosing between the Pagan and Christian identification options. This imaginary about the native faith is based on a trans-historical concept of the sacred nation; although its sacrality is manifested in different forms along the centuries, essentially it remains the very same. National history is explained in the frame of the activation of this sacred power and the machinations by the national adversaries. Here, spiritual stake of world history is the subsistence of Hungarians as a community of divine electivity versus the tragic victory of maleficent spiritual powers.

### **VI.3. Táltos faith: the Yotengrit movement**

In recent years, *Yotengrit* became one of the most influential native faith new religious movements in Hungary. While this ethnic religion is considered by its adherents as the heir of what they hold to be an ethnic pre-Christian belief-system, from an external point of view it rather seems to be a syncretistic belief-system. By using Strmiska's terminology, one could say that while *Yotengrit* implies 'reconstructionist' rhetoric, its general character is 'eclectic'<sup>191</sup>. Ethnic folk traditions, interpretations of academic archaeology and ethnology, Buddhism and Goddess cults of Western paganism have their imprints on both the current religious concepts and rituals. Elements and an idiosyncratic appropriation of these various traditions were compounded primarily by the leader of the movement, Imre Máté.

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<sup>191</sup> Strmiska provides an analysis for the distinction between 'reconstructionist' and 'eclectic' approaches regarding the pagan context. Strmiska, *Modern Paganism in world cultures*, 18–22.

This charismatic man in his seventies, graduated with a degree in history, Finno-Ugric linguistics and ethnology. After his active participation in the 1956 national revolution, he migrated to Germany, became a businessman and a poet, and worked for the Radio Free Europe's Hungarian section. When this Renaissance man moved back to Hungary after the 1990's transitions, he settled down in his region of origin and set off the *Yotengrit*<sup>192</sup> movement. In time, he stated that he was personally an initiated *táltos* and the 49<sup>th</sup> "főbácsa" (leader of the 'táltos order').

In his books, he describes his imaginary about the spiritual traditions and reconstructs an ancient ethnic religion ('*Böön*') and its philosophy. The cosmology, mythology and philosophy he provides are based on a dualistic worldview: a masculine God (*Gönüz*, from the Turk word of 'Gön', Sun) and a feminine Goddess (*Ukkó*, who is identified with the folk beliefs' *Boldogasszony*) are worshipped as figures, representing ancient sexual principles. Concepts of gender equality are among the main *Yotengrit* tenets, just as democratic family relations, and calls for free love and sexuality. As ecological values are significant also in the movement, it can be stated that, among the Hungarian native faith groups, this movement is the closer to the post-material social values of Western type's pagan communities, which I have described in the chapter on the international pagan context. Values of religious tolerance are emphatically suggested for the native faith believers: dogmatism, extreme traditionalism and modernity-criticism are clearly refused in the books of *Yotengrit*, just as any allusions to the exclusive possession of a 'godly truth'.

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<sup>192</sup> The term '*Yotengrit*' refers to '*Tengrism*', a Central Asian native religion. *Tengri*,(sky, infinity) is a hypothesized ancient ethnic term for the Goddess. For contemporary Tengrism in Central Asia, see M. Laruelle, "Religious revival, nationalism and the 'invention of tradition': political Tengrism in Central Asia and Tatarstan," *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 2 (2007): 203–216.

Máté promotes a less nationalist and more liberal ancient religion to follow, than Badinyi and the national esoteric circle. He depicts the ancient and ‘authentic’ Hungarian ethnic traditions as being essentially inclusive, tolerant and liberal. “Everything is allowed, as long as it does not hurt others.” – reads the major ethical imperative of his religious community. Máté’s tone is uncommon, compared to the sharply anti-liberal and modernity-criticist native faith ideologists: “the French Revolution’s proverbial slogans appear in the ancient Hungarian religion: freedom, equality, fraternity.”<sup>193</sup>

### **Ethno-history and the ancient religion**

Máté does not refuse the Finno-Ugric ethnogenesis completely. Although he denounces the ‘provocations and the one-sided manifestations’ of Finno-Ugric linguists, he integrates this concept to his own ideas about the multi-directional ethnic origins of the Hungarians. He supports the concept of a common Ural-Altai linguistic family, and accordingly the parallel diffusion of Turkish and Ugric cultural patterns. In his view, Hungarian culture descends from an ancient Nordic Eurasian culture and it is the most authentic modern representative of what he calls ‘Uralic worldview’. He depicts this cultural source as a common European legacy, an ‘ancient European humanist philosophy’, which survived the longest among the Ural populations. In the cultural typology of Máté, Uralic worldview is opposed to the more violent Southern civilizations of the East-Mediterranean region. “Northern Eurasian peoples’ achievements are incomparably momentous compared to those of the comfortable climates.”<sup>194</sup> Hungarian culture is depicted as the last revival of a peaceful, humanitarian, creative and harmonic worldview; the ‘genuine’ European legacy.

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<sup>193</sup> I. Máté, *Yotengrit: a rábaközi tudók (sámánok) szellemi hagyatéka* (Győr: Palatia, n.d.), 23.

<sup>194</sup> I. Máté, *Yotengrit 2.* (Budapest: Püski, 2006).

In addition to his conceptualizations of these cultural-historical types, this author/leader attributes antagonist values to the Hungarian and the alien, ‘Southern’ legacy – for Maté, these are clearly irreconcilable. As he originates Christianity from the Southern and Eastern cultures, which he considers merciless, these are represented, accordingly, as external and non-authentic in a Hungarian context: Christianity is essentially incompatible with the ancient worldview. Christianity, the main antagonist, is presented as an alien philosophy, associated with Manichaeism and the moral dualism of other ancient Iranian religions.

Máté conceptualizes the arrival of the Hungarians to the Carpathian-basin as a cultural challenge for Christianized Western Europe. “It was a shock for the feudal Christian Europe that the Hungarians suddenly appeared in its heart; Hungarians had more advanced military and logistics and had taken a philosophy, which was thought to be already eradicated from the continent. It was a philosophy of freedom, even for the oppressed women and peasants.”<sup>195</sup> Although national messianism is not a central concept in Yotengrit, it is part of the implicit narrative: Hungarians, the genuine Europeans, “with some fortune, would have been able to give back its original, human face to Europe”.<sup>196</sup>

### **Historical narrative**

National golden age is located in the ‘pagan times’, i.e. the period before forced Christianization and the break-up of the Hungarian “tribal alliance” (*törzsszövetség*). In Maté’s account, the symptomatic historical event of the repression of the native faith is the Hungarians’ defeat at the battle of Lechfeld. It is the starting-point of the consecutive, millenary national decline. The subsequent centuries are represented as a grim persecution

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<sup>195</sup> Maté, *Yotengrit*, 18.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

against the followers of the old beliefs. In his account, Máté restates the concepts of the emigrant Mátyás Jenő Fehér's dubious 'Medieval Hungarian Inquisition'. In both Fehér and Máté's interpretations, the alleged 'Magician trials' of the late Middle Ages were initiated against the representatives of the native faith: those who were identified as *táltos*. 'German forces' are blamed primarily for the waves of inquisition the author describes: Gertrud of Merania and John the Teuton, who "established *Militia Christi*, the first *ÁVH*" (State Protection Authority, the fearful communist secret service of the 1950's Hungary).<sup>197</sup> The ethno- and church politics of the *Árpád*-dynasty is condemned by *Yotengrit*: it is seen as a collaborator in the elimination of the national traditions, a mimic of Western Europe, whose rule was based on an alien aristocracy.

Similarly to rival native faith mythologies, constructions of the character and function of shamanic *táltos* persons is crucial in the *Yotengrit* narratives also. Similarly to other native faith accounts, Máté differentiates the two figures. In his understanding, the shamans share certain marks of 'media-professionals', i.e. they manipulate the ritual audience sometimes, the *táltos* is shown as a higher, 'sacral-level' priest. He claims that the founders of the 'Indo-European worldview' were the *táltos* persons.

After Christianization, their activity survived in a modest context and form. Their function was the maintenance of the 'pagan' tradition in a hostile milieu; lurking *táltos* persons succeeded however in saving the native faith tradition in an authentic form. Their 'internal emigration' produced an externally visible folk healing activity, while they, claims Máté, created a secret, exclusive organization for handing on the complete teaching of the ancient 'Bööñ' religion. The head of the organization was the '*bácsa*', the leader of the *táltos*. In this way, the authentic Hungarian philosophy is shown as having been transmitted along the

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<sup>197</sup> I. Máté, *Yotengrit: a rábaközi tudók (sámánok) szellemi hagyatéka* (Győr: Palatia, n.d.), 31.

Christian times in hidden circles, particularly in certain areas in the countryside, like the swampy Hanság and Rábaköz, Máté's narrow homeland. .

The applied historical account mirrors controversial processes of continuity and rupture. The forced Christianization is understood as a radical break in the ethnic tradition, the outset of national decline and foreign dominance in the country. Christianity as the 'repressive other' is the dominant rhetorical tool throughout the narrative. At the same time, the tropes of a 'secret *táltos* organization' allow the innovation of the 'continuity' thesis, although this continuity appears then as being 'hidden', 'sub-cultural' or esoteric. The conscious program of cultural resistance and the anticipation of the appropriate timing in 'internal emigration' maintained the suppressed religious-philosophic legacy in an intact, taintless form. The desired revival program can be launched in an authentic way, whenever the historical circumstances seem suitable for it.

According to Yotengrit beliefs, this time, perhaps inevitably, is the present. As the oppression of the native faith is seen as a systematic devastation of national self-consciousness over a millennium, the spiritual return may not be postponed. Máté's diagnosis about contemporary Hungary depicts a community-deficient, egoistic and anomic society. He identifies the absence of historical knowledge and the loss of national identity as the crucial symptoms. As a spiritual remedy to these flaws, he suggests that the ancient tenets should be made public again, by himself who, he claims, was summoned by the *táltos* community to accomplish this task.

### **Boundary-setting**

The boundary-setting narratives of the *Yotengrit* movement describe a distinctly anti-Christian self-identification and the prevalence of post-material social values. The ideology they

promote is eclectic: liberal statements go hand in hand with communitarian, anti-materialist and anti-globalist declarations and expressions of certain nationalist beliefs. He differentiates ‘freedom-loving liberal’ from ‘unscrupulous cosmopolitans’ and identifies himself with the first one. The movement’s national concept and rhetoric is self-contradictory. Measured by native faith standards, Yotengrit-nationalism is quite modest. Conceptualizations of a more-inclusive, non-extremist, philo-Semite identity-politics are amended by anti-Islamism and a stigmatizing ethnic rhetoric. Self-differentiation from other pagan groups shows the refusal of radical nationalism, extreme ethnic mythologies and spiritualities which they deem to be commercialized, inauthentic performances.

The main antagonists of the nation in *Yotengrit*’s narratives are the Christian Churches. They are presented as repressive of human emotions, sexuality and individual freedom; as the ‘feudal ideologists’ of an anti-feminist, hierarchical society. The criticism toward Christianity is the sharpest against the Church; while the preaching of Jesus’ teachings are not claimed to be antithetic to the native faith, yet the ‘Paulian Church’ definitely is.

The strong anti-Christian conceptualizations in the historical narratives described above hint a primarily religious distinction line. Implicit concepts of ‘self’ and ‘other’ fundamentally emerge along religious lines. The clash between mediaeval Western forces and early-Hungarian armies are explained not so much by specific national interest, but rather religious ones. In Máté’s account, the real stake at Lechfeld was the destiny of the ancient Indo-European philosophy, which would have been unrespectable from a Christian point-of-view. Criticism toward Christian Churches is based on moral justifications: they are characterized as being violent, intolerant and oppressive, while native faith is represented as a peaceful, liberal and humanist tradition. The purported tolerant character of native faith is figured as an ethnic mark, which is claimed to be detectable in the high morality of the noble ancestors along

national history. According to Máté, native faith prohibited conquering wars, because of the killings, “this is why our ‘home-forming’ forbearers did not obliterate the groups, whom they found in the Carpathian Basin. All of the other, ‘home-conquering’ nations obliterated the indigenous populations.”<sup>198</sup>

While this rhetoric proceeds from a concept of a religious-philosophical binary opposition, it has obviously contributed to the reinforcement of national characterology and group-beliefs. *Yotengrit*'s national concepts are practically inseparable of the religious ones. Because of the betrayal of the native faith, the Árpád-dynasty is depicted in dark shades. The medieval Christian Hungarian kingdom is straightforwardly eliminated from the positively approved historical traditions. For the national prefiguration of *Yotengrit* in the Middle Ages, a secret organization, a *táltos*-order had to be constructed. As a ‘nation’ and its ‘philosophy’ should be harmonious, Christian Hungary is a self-contradiction in the *Yotengrit*'s conceptual frame.

But what is a nation in this understanding? Máté's public statements imply an inclusive national concept. He resists any narrow biological definitions of the ‘ethnie’, just as radical anti-Semitic manifestations. In this less radical nationalism, although he gives utterance to the beliefs of national superiority (“They made gutless that nation, which can show off more talent than any other nations in Europe!”<sup>199</sup>), these statements are not in a central position. In his essay ‘*Why I’m not an anti-Semite?*’<sup>200</sup>, he reacts to the widespread anti-Semitic precepts among contemporary native faith believers; the manifestations of Jewish-hatred are explicitly refused. But, perhaps interestingly, his argumentation is formed by ‘ethnic’ and ‘traditionalist’ rhetoric tools of national characterology: Anti-Semitism is condemned as inauthentic in a

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>199</sup> I. Máté, *Yotengrit 4*. (Budapest: Püski, 2008), 45.

<sup>200</sup> Máté, I., “Miért nem vagyok antiszemita?”, n.d.

Hungarian context, while tolerance is supported because of its 'genuineness'. "The 'Jewish' is not an ethnicity, but a religion. It is one of the oldest religions in a Hungarian context. Belonging to a Christian community or denomination is not a condition of Hungarian identity. Nor economic, nor religious forms of anti-Semitism are natural in the Hungarian political ethics. They were imported by foreigners."<sup>201</sup> According to this exposition, economic anti-Semitism was arrived from Germany, while its religious form from Eastern Slavic countries. The article ironically points out both the refusal of anti-Semitism and the appropriation of a national rhetoric, which easily stigmatizes any rival concepts as 'alien' and inauthentic. For the gestures of symbolic inclusion of the Jews to the nation are paradoxically attached to the exclusion of others: the assimilated ones, the Germans, the Muslims.

When Máté distances himself of the extreme nationalists, he appropriate their linguistic tools, and claims that Jewish-hatred is primarily propagated by semi-assimilated aliens, who boast about their Hungarian identity. Máté refutes popular anti-Semitic conspiracy theories: "Those opinions, which claim that the Hungarian Jews act against the Hungarian nation or the Hungarian state, are groundless."<sup>202</sup> But this ostensibly anti-nationalist statement is continued in a perhaps surprising way: "Though unfortunately it cannot be said about The Germans in Hungary." But his main ethnic concerns are about a growing Muslim influence; an attitude which would be perhaps less peculiar in the more islamophobic Western European context than in Hungary. He practically suggests a replacement of the Jews as the main antagonists of the nation to the Muslims ("Anti-Semitism is strengthened by the Arabs to baffle us, while the number of mosques in Budapest emerged from 2 to 23 in recent years"), and connects the antipathy toward Islam to the feelings of anti-globalism and anti-capitalism.

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<sup>201</sup> Máté, I., "Alkotmány /Constitution Plan of the Yotengrit/", n.d., <http://yotengrit.hu/hu/article/alkotmany>.

<sup>202</sup> Máté, *Yotengrit 4.*, 58.

The audience's receptiveness for Máté's personal political attitudes is questionable. But what this picture does suggest is that *Yotengrit*, while it is considered a modest movement regarding its nationalism, its language tools match into a nationalist worldview and representational forms. Its narrative features make its tenets and some of its tenets appropriate to a right-wing and extreme right adoption and implementation.

While Máté is critical toward some academic interpretations, notably those which, according to him, fail to understand the deeper worldview behind the surface of folk beliefs; his criticism is directed primarily toward certain rival native faith ideologists. He ridicules the amateurish spirit, the groundless construction of national myths while he claims about himself that he does not “make up for a defect artificially, but brings the legacy of our ancestors to the light”<sup>203</sup>. He caricaturizes the urban ‘blacktop-*táltos*’, who act without real historical memories and replace “real spirituality with hocus pocus”. He sharply condemns extreme nationalist native faith currents: “They make Hungarians out of everybody, from Jesus to the Booted Cat.”

By distinguishing his group from rival projects and currents of the native faith movement, conspiratory beliefs are applied to question rival groups' national commitment. “I am sure that a Muslim money-aristocracy will be smuggled into the country; I think *Kurultáj*<sup>204</sup> will be one of the gates where it will come across.” Criticism is directed toward those native faith ideologies which propagate Pagan-Christian syncretism and a Manichaeian ethnic religion,

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<sup>203</sup> Máté, *Yotengrit*, 18.

<sup>204</sup> *Kurultáj*, as I have characterized previously, is an annual festival and the largest public event of Hungarian Turanism currently.

especially Szántai's national esotericism: "They put Mani's mask on Christ's face (...) one step forward and we are already in the territory of Islam"<sup>205</sup>.

#### **VI.4. Narrative analysis: Similarities and differences among the native faith movements' national ideologies**

Below, I compare the main attributes of the mytho-historical narratives and boundary-setting mechanisms of the three analyzed native faith movements. I identify the common patterns and distinctive features in the three cases; I have found four particularly significant aspects, which depict the basic differences between the groups: these are the attitudes toward Christianity; concepts about the accepted cultural legacies, expressed by the dispositions to the symbolic figures of István and Koppány; concepts about the main antagonists and 'symbolic others'; and the national concepts of the groups. I argue that regarding their national ideologies, significant dissimilarities are detectable. Differences between a relatively modest and an extreme, 'conspirationist' nationalism are connected to the modalities between religious and ideological 'public' paganism. However, even the national beliefs of the most modest stream into the nationalist worldview of the Hungarian radical right. The public success of native faith ideas is explicable by their fitting to broader group beliefs of contemporary ethno-nationalism.

Comparing the narrative characteristics of three Hungarian native faith movements, I have found that all of them put emphases on certain fundamental topics: issues of the ethno-religious legacy, national history and contemporary social processes. I interpreted the

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<sup>205</sup> Máté, I., "Hét teve hetvenhét változatban. A 'Nyirkai jóslat' magyarázata", n.d., [http://www.hnsz.hu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1136:nyirkai-joslat&catid=36:belfoeld&Itemid=37](http://www.hnsz.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1136:nyirkai-joslat&catid=36:belfoeld&Itemid=37).

standpoints of each streams by pointing out their boundary-making efforts. I presupposed that they provide ideological frames for their followers by symbolic boundary-setting mechanisms. Rhetorical self-identification and characterization of the ‘symbolic others’ is performed through religious (native faith vs. other religions), national (Hungarians vs. non-Hungarians), and organizational (‘our circle’ vs. rival native faith streams) boundary-setting mechanisms. Strategies of symbolic inclusion and exclusion are not independent of the movements’ mythical constructs, religious beliefs and national ideologies.

In spite of the apparent differences between the underlying myths of Sumerian / Hun / Uralian origins and religious concepts, there are elemental similarities between the narratives of the three movements. One of them is their common concept about a ‘normative’ togetherness of ethnicity and spirituality. They construct religious fundamentals for the ethnic group and search ‘authentic native tradition’ in the ‘ancient religion’, however they imagine the latter. By ascribing religious character to the nation, the latter is sacralized by them, though not necessarily in an explicit way. The concept of ‘sacred nation’ is manifested in its strongest form in the case of Sumerian ethno-mythology, where not only divine electivity, but divine origin is attributed to the Hungarians. The national esoteric stream ascribes the nation with a direct divine connection across the Holy Crown, while the polytheistic *Yotengrit* does not emphasize particular ethnic access to an almighty God, though Hungarians have protecting spiritual figures also: minor gods and *Boldogasszony*.

Common tendency is the supposition of a spiritual ethnic peculiarity and the attribution of world-historical significance to the Hungarians by connecting their history to great civilizations, esoteric programs, or cultural types. However, the modalities of the myths are not insignificant. Badinyi’s protochronist Sumerian mythology rewrites the complete ancient history of Europe and the Middle East to make a distinguished place for the Hungarians in

religious history. National esotericism imagines a Manichaean contest between divine Hungarians and their uncharacterized enemies. In *Yotengrit's* historical myth, Hungarians are depicted as the heirs of genuine Europeanness. In the historical narratives, a structurally similar temporal order is provided: the common time-sequence includes a spiritual – national golden age, a subsequent decline and a possible revival in the next future. The triadic temporal structure in native faith narratives draws a historical line from ancient harmony through historical corruption toward the present time of spiritual awakening. Though the temporal localization of the imagined golden age are not the same in the three cases (*Yotengrit* and *Badinyi* places it to pre-Christian times, while esoteric nationalism links it to King Mátyás), their nostalgia is structurally similar.

Regarding the boundary-setting mechanisms, I have found four aspects, in which the characters of the examined native faith streams can be discerned. One of them is their attitude toward Christianity, particularly to Western Christian Churches. Further are the accepted national heritage, articulated in the historical narratives; the representation of the symbolic other: which groups / social forces are characterized as the main antagonists; forth aspect is the national ideology, particularly the inclusivity/exclusivity of the national concept.

As pre-Christian beliefs are in the center of native faith ideologies, attitudes to Christianity are crucial to all streams. According to the fundamental concept of the native faith movements, a 'nation' had and should have again her particular 'faith'; ethnic culture has its proper expression in the ancient religion. A Christian Hungary is seen as an anomaly in this frame; it has to be changed by de-Christianization, or, alternative hypotheses are necessary to develop which would show that Christianity is not alien as much. In *Yotengrit's* program, Christianity is not compatible with the native faith at all, as they are old-time antagonists. National esotericism's historical narratives write about a 'peaceful cohabitation' between

Christianity and the native faith in the Middle Ages; Christianization is not a total rupture in national history, but the continuance of the ancient spiritual program of the Hungarians in a new level. Secret mission of the *Pálos*, a national Christian order, is to maintain the divine protection over the nation; national forms of Christianity are part of ethnic spirituality. According to the concepts of mythical protochronism, though Western Christianity is the antithesis of the native faith, ‘genuine Christianity’ is imagined as the ethnic religion of the proto-Hungarians, the real chosen nation. In the two latter groups, Christianity is connected to the ethnic tradition; in this sense, on the level of mythical constructs, mythical protochronism and national esotericism provide a syncretistic, Pagan-Christian ethnic concept. With the exception of *Yotengrit*, the imagined heritage of ‘genuine’ Christianity is included to the native faith.

In articulating their different positions toward Christianity, all streams differentiate Church and religiosity from each other; dispositions toward Jesus, ‘Jesus’s teaching’, or ‘original Christianity’ are separated from the attitudes toward the Western Christian Churches. Jesus is imagined by Badinyi as a proto-Hungarian ‘*Parthus* prince’, he is the symbolic antecedent of the Hungarian *Turul*-dynasty for national esotericism, and an accepted philosopher in Máté’s account. ‘Original Christianity’ is the ancient religion of the Hungarians in the Sumerian ethnic myth, it is an important part of the Manichaean native faith for Pap and Szántai, and clearly differentiated from the ‘Paulian Church’, though not ethnicized in *Yotengrit* narratives also. In contrast, Western Christian Churches are depicted with dark colors in *Yotengrit* and the Badinyi-circle and neutrally in national esotericism. The rhetorical distinction between Jesus’ original faith and the Church’s institutions is a common point along native faith movements; it accommodates potential native faith followers who have a Christian religious background and turned away from their original confessions.

Native faith historical narratives represent the concepts about what are considered by them as the honorable national heritage. The above-described positions toward the historical role of Christianity determine the opinions on the symbolic personalities of national history. The different stands are articulated by characterizations of István and pre-Christian symbolic figures: Árpád and Koppány. Badinyi and *Yotengrit* clearly refuse 'István's legacy' and call for a return to the times before him. On the other hand, national esotericism includes both the pre-Christian and Christian streams of ethnohistory and sees the two antagonists as positive figures and legitimate parts of national spirituality. They sharply condemn those, who contrast them; a choice between the programs symbolized by these figure would disunite the nation in Szántai and his followers' opinion. Norms of national unity are predominant and the concept of 'sacred nation' is applied to the Christian nation also.

Boundary-setting mechanisms distinct the in-group from out-groups in various directions and on various levels. Examples for religious, ethnic and ideological modes of self-differentiation are present in every stream; in this way, depicted out-groups are numerous in all cases. However, imagined otherness is tended to be manifested in the representations in one central symbol. The main antagonists for the movements are located diversely. As I have already underlined in the chapter about mythical protochronism, in Badinyi's narrative the main adversary is the Jewry. Xenophobic and anti-clerical attitudes are formulated with anti-Judaic allusions. My interpretation was that the constructed Badinyi-mythology is a logical end-product of anti-Semitic conspiracy-theories. The narratives of national esotericism characterize the symbolic other as malevolent aliens, liberal global forces and manipulators of modern mass-society. This language includes anti-Semitic connotations also, but, as we can see, this representation of the enemy is more diffuse and more ideological than Badinyi's one. The most complex picture about symbolic others is drawn by *Yotengrit* leader Máté. For him, Christianity is the primary adversary, but Christianity is rather depicted here as an antihumanist, oppressing worldview

and not a category of people. Máté criticizes others – ‘Muslim and German forces’ – but these groups are not really seen as representatives of the same enemy. From Badinyi through national esotericism to *Yotengrit*, representation of the symbolic other is getting more nuanced, fragmented and less essentialized.

The identity-language, articulated by boundary-setting mechanisms, characterizes the national concepts and national ideologies of the examined streams. As I have striven to show, regarding the inclusiveness / exclusiveness of the national concepts, the significance and strength of conspiracy-theoretical elements, anti-Semitism, illiberalism and intolerance, anti-Westernism and anti-globalism, there are certain modalities between the three currents. While all of them could be considered as nationalist ideologies, *Yotengrit* represents the more inclusive (or rather less exclusive), anti-anti-Semitic stream. It doesn't refuse liberal principles completely and its depiction about the adversaries of the nation is the less essentialized. The other two movements manifest conspiratory worldviews with anti-Semitic beliefs, and propagate anti-liberal, anti-globalist and anti-American claims. As *Yotengrit* is belongs to the new religious movement of the native faith, while national esotericism and mythical protochronism to the ideological ‘public paganism’, I conclude, that the more extreme nationalism is connected to those native faith streams, which are more ideological and less religious. The relatively modest nationalism of *Yotengrit*'s religious paganism suggests the verification of the previously hypothesized distinction between the religious-spiritual and the ideological ‘public’ forms of contemporary paganism.

Though, as we have seen, *Yotengrit* represents a less radically nationalist stand among native faith movements, its narrative still fits into a nationalist worldview and broader meta-political discourse of the radical right. Its narrative features make its tenets and its certain artifacts appropriate to a right-wing and extreme right adoption and implementation. Main native faith

emphases are consonant with the worldview of contemporary radical nationalism in Hungary. Anti-Americanism and anti-Westernism, a rhetorical refusal toward the political field generally and regular attributions of national treason toward its actors, norms of national unity and parallel fears of dissention, hopes of a future national re-awakening: these features more-or-less characterize the nationalist right from the right-wing of *FIDESZ* to the *Jobbik* and other radical groups.

The very factor, which makes the native faith's concepts appropriate to the utilization by the ethno-nationalistic discourse, is probably its historical narrative. Above, I have already referred to the 'triadic temporal structure' of the nationalist rhetoric, which, in the case of native faith movements, delineates the Hungarian history as the subsequent periods of a (spiritual) golden age, decline and a future restoration. All the examined streams depict the recent past and the present as the time of moral corruption; it foretells a forthcoming civil war and the devastation of half of the population, and (after the recurrence to the ancient beliefs and ethnic Gods), a cathartic renaissance of the nation. It is the exposition of a national messianistic program.

The above mentioned conjectures represent certain familiar tenets of defensive nationalism, beliefs in the very existence of antagonistic motivations against the nation from different directions. By the native faith myths, a spiritual goal-achieving is attributed to the 'eternal enemy'. In this way, the imagined political and economic contest is supplemented with a deeper, transcendent dimension, which can explain the hidden nature of the conspiracy and put Hungary to the very centre of the clash between the forces of Good and Evil. Native faith narratives ascribe sacrality to the in-group, while demonize and profanize its imagined enemies.

In all the three concepts, native traditions are repressed by alien forces. Representation of the own group as repressed is a fundamental feature in all examined narratives. What are the behind the emphatic memories for the pagans' subjection? In my interpretation, remembrance on the oppression provides symbolic authority for the successors. Invoking the ancients' persecution for their traditionalism, faithfulness and national fidelity provides a moral credit, but also patterns for contemporary adherents. The rhetoric of suffering and martyrdom may have various functions, individual, countercultural and the national level also. First, it can serve as moral and spiritual justification for all those, who feel their current social position marginal in the contemporary society. Self-identification with the dominated, the suppressed, the marginal, provides moral power, while feelings of historical depth are attached to these sentiments. Second, it provides a high prestige and a historical pre-figuration for a countercultural status. Underground, countercultural features are important reference-points in the self-imagery of present-day native faith movements. Current countercultural position of the native faith becomes a legacy of ancient souls and a probable curse on truthful persons, who don't give up the 'Hungarian cause'. And finally, historical persecution, current symbolic marginalization, social subordinatedness is the concept, which makes native faith a proper metaphor for national destiny. In the nationalist domain, which surrounds the native faith movement, the general feeling and rhetoric of social sub-dominance and vulnerability<sup>206</sup> is regularly articulated. The topos of the 'passion of Hungary' ascribes a passive agency for the nation and suggests the lack of historical responsibility for its destiny. The self-representation as sub-dominant, regards to the entity of the whole nation: 'The nation is in opposition' – this common political conception of the nationalist wing illuminates a central

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<sup>206</sup> Blumer, "Race prejudice as a sense of group position."

attitude of the native faith movement: a prevalent and implicit minoritised self-identification, in spite of the fact, that they belong, as ethnic group members, to the vast majority.

The public success of native faith ideas is explicable by their fitting to broader group beliefs of contemporary ethno-nationalism. As I have made an attempt to demonstrate that this structural and content-matter correspondence includes similarities in the conceptions of political religiosity and memory-discourse, narratives of conspiracy and treachery, just as the norms of national unity and fears of dissent.

## VII. Conclusions

Contemporary native faith movements and national mythologies show the crystallization of a countercultural cultic milieu, a social site, where different spiritual and political beliefs, narratives and identities are developed and expressed. A unique ‘spiritual quality’ and ethnic character is ascribed to native beliefs, and nowadays it provides a ground for sentiments about national spirituality. It interconnects and mutually strengthens the two regular fields of ‘restorative nostalgia’: recent national and religious revivals. The tropes of ‘national pagantry’, or ‘native faith’, have a growing influence on the national imagery of the broader radical right scene in the country. Neo-pagan nationalism provides the current context of individual identity-building, public narratives, national rituals, mythologies and cultural memories for an increasing number of social actors. By mytho-historical constructions of the nation, neo-pagan nationalism claims for an alternative, ‘heretic’ collective memory and develop heterogeneous concepts about ‘divine electivity’, ‘ethnic chosenness’ and the ‘sacred nation’. On the field of Hungarian neo-paganism, the formation, performance and fixity of national identity-languages and group ideologies is a core dynamic. A common fundamental feature for the distinct native faith movements is their similar ambition to legitimate their own religious views by referring to an ancient ethnic past and to the alleged ethnic religions; to construct an alternative ethnogenesis with an ‘original’ belief-system; and to call upon a return there.

In looking for the historical roots of contemporary native faith movements, I have identified four distinct cultural units. In my understanding, the most significant cultural influences are the pagan stream of the interwar anti-modernist and anti-Western *Turanism*; the alternative science and proto-historiography, which emerged in the Hungarian Diasporas before 1990 and arrived in the country after the transitions; the cultic milieu of esotericism; and academic

ethnology. I consider the development of native-faiths beliefs as an amalgamation of these various impacts.

Most of the Hungarian neo-pagan movements represent the 'Eastern' and 'ethnic' forms of contemporary paganism. While certain general features of late-modern alternative spiritualities, new religious movements, and urban shamanism are influential on the spiritual concepts of Hungarian streams, these elements are appropriated in an ethno-national ideological frame. Local native faith ideologies have a strong commitment to nationalist group-beliefs, national mythologies and political religiosity. While the Hungarian movements are comparable to other East-Central European pagan movements, they have their own characteristic. The content and emphases of the accepted national mythologies and the particular references to ethnic folk beliefs are obviously unique. Among them, I underline the significance of the *táltos*; a common, though differently understood and applied master-symbol for every native faith currents in the country. The deep inclusion of shamanistic beliefs and practices to the native faith spirituality are unique in Central Europe. Moreover, further peculiarity of the Hungarian scene is the wide aspiration to invent mythical bridges between Christianity and the native faith. The conceptualizations of the ancient ethnic religion as an early Christian belief-system represent a syncretistic ambition. However, this tendency is rather an implicitly or explicitly anti-Semitic national myth of divine electivity, and national protochronism than a postmodern example for 'religious bricolage'. The last specificity of the Hungarian scene in an international context is its growing popularity in a larger, not particularly religious social circle. Native faith imageries of the Pagan past have considerable effects on the radical right cultural memory; they play a substantial role in reshaping social frames of social remembrance and myth-building. In my understanding, it is the result of two connecting phenomenon: the presence of a non-explicitly religious,

ideological form of the native faith and the neo-pagan myths' fitting to a broader nationalist discourse.

Spiritual experiences and ritual practice are not necessarily attached to the contemporary native faith movements. Ideological paganism, or as I referred to it in my thesis: 'public paganism', is based on national mythologies and conceptualizations of the Hungarians as the 'sacred nation'. By underlining the social significance of public pagan events, information resources and media coverage, I have suggested that the countercultural, 'alternative' imaginaries of the pre-Christian past get to a wider nationalist public, whose otherwise would not be interested in extraordinary religious concepts. While the general academic researches focus on the 'religious' native faith communities, I suggest a 'zoom out'; the mutual investigation of new religious movements, informal circles of alternative spirituality and public paganism may provide a deeper and wider understanding of the contemporary semantic, identity-politics, and ideology of the native faith.

For a basic classification of the different conceptions, streams and rival supplies of the contemporary native faith in Hungary, I applied a two-dimensional coordinate-system. While the first dimension designates the religious-ideological (or public) character of the examined groups, the second shows the different views on the character of ethno-religious legacy. I have identified three mythical constructs: 'mythical protochronism' 'national esotericism' and 'táltos-faith', and analyzed the narratives of one stream of each mythical stream. I have investigated their underlying myths about the ethnogenesis and the ancient religion; their narratives about the national history; and the boundary-settings in the provided identity-languages. Conceptualized national ideologies, social memory frames and mythologies hang together in each case. Regarding the heterogeneity of the accepted myths, social values, attitudes and national concepts, native faith is not a united movement. Now I consider it a

discursive frame for expressing, performing and contesting national identities, group values and political ideologies, in which the main emphases express a unique combination of spiritual, national and political concepts.

Though all examined streams of the native faith can be considered nationalist, the range and modalities are not insignificant. In my case-studies, I have found a correlation between the position in the ideological ('public pagan') – religious dimension and the degree of nationalist extremism. It can be hypothesized, that spiritual experience-centered native faith streams generally less nationalist than the ideological streams.

At the same time, even the relatively modest nationalist streams' narratives are consonant with the worldview of contemporary radical nationalism in Hungary. I have argued that the public success of native faith ideas is explicable by their fitting to broader group beliefs of contemporary ethno-nationalism. This correspondence includes similarities in the triadic temporal structure of historical memory, proneness for nostalgia, a mythical predisposition, narratives of conspiracy and treachery, norms of national unity and fears of dissent. I have argued that historical persecution, current symbolic marginalization, social subordinatedness is the concept, which makes native faith a proper metaphor for national destiny.

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