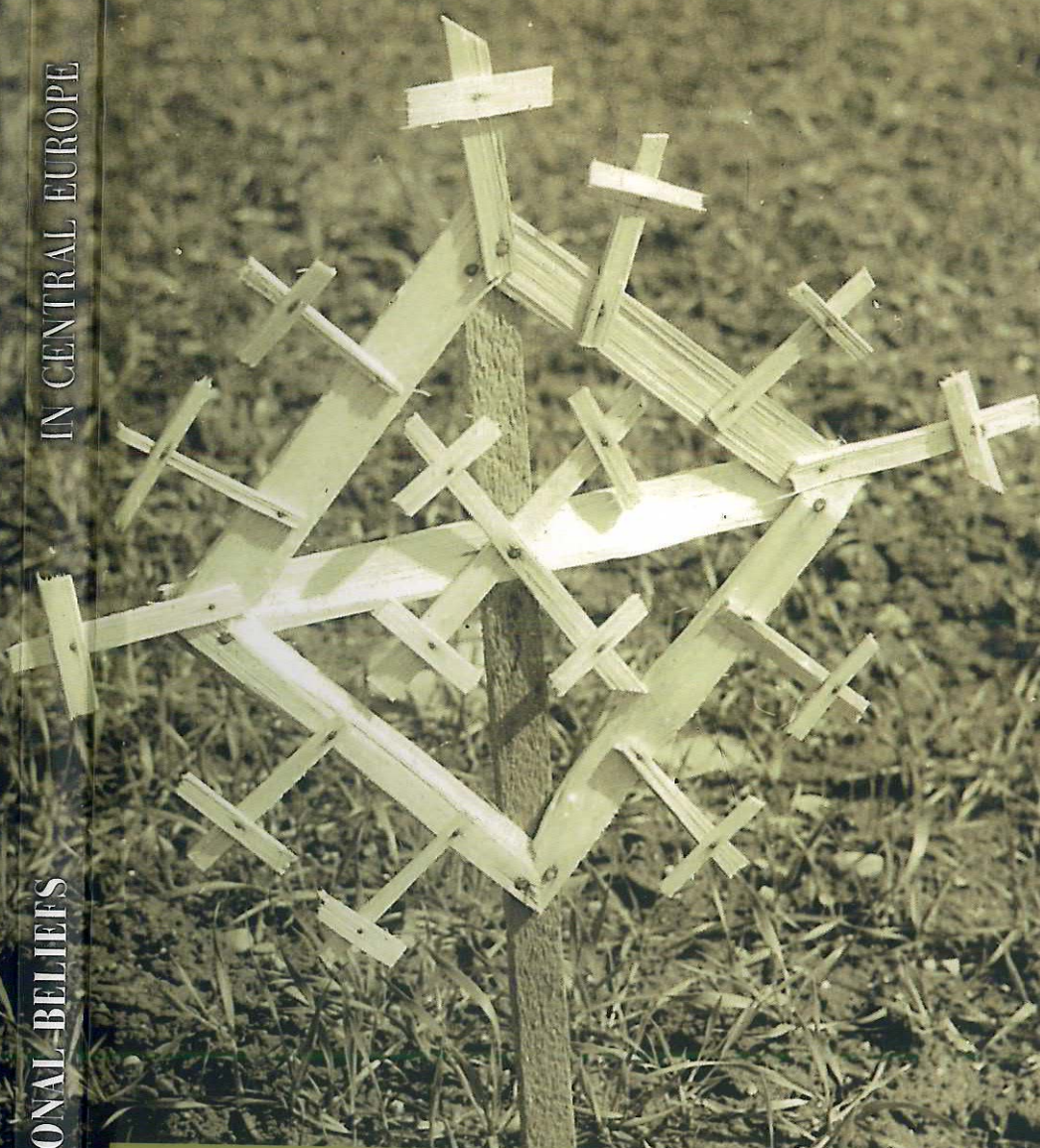




IN CENTRAL EUROPE

CHANGES OF TRADITIONAL BELIEFS



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2014



ETNOLOGICKÝ ÚSTAV
Akademie věd
České republiky, v.v.i.

Summary

Reconsideration of locality in the discourse concerning the renewal of Hungarian Calvinist identity

Károly Zsolt Nagy

A református egyház gyülekezeteiben él, és a gyülekezetekből, azokra alapozva építi fel struktúráját. Így a reformátusok esetében nem egy egyháznak vannak gyülekezetei, vagyis helyi közösségei, hanem a gyülekezeteknek van egyháza. Ez az egyház szerveződésének alapelve a reformáció időszakától kezdve. A kezdetek idején a gyülekezet fogalma két lényegi elemből tevődött össze: az egyik a polgári közösség, a *communitas*, melyet – a felekezeti megosztottságot figyelembe véve többé vagy kevésbé – lefedve jött létre az *ecclesia*, mint egy apparuraji értelemben vett lokalitás. A reformátusság így első sorban helyi identitássá vált, annyira, hogy az egyház szervezeti alapegységének megnevezésére szolgáló „egyházközség” és a szakrális közösségre utaló „gyülekezet” fogalmak egyaránt a „helybéli közösség” értelmét felvéve szinonimává lettek. A *communitas* és *ecclesia* szoros kapcsolata azonban a 19–20. század fordulóján bomlásnak indult, s mára – néhány területet nem számítva – gyakorlatilag elveszítette jelentőségét. Számos olyan közösség van az egyházban, amelyik nem rendelkezik territoriális bázissal, ugyanakkor kétségtelenül „gyülekezetként” funkcionál. A református nyelvhasználat egészen az utóbbi időkig nem reflektált erre a folyamatra. Újabban azonban kezd elválni egymástól az egyházközség és a gyülekezet, s egyre többször kerül harmadikként melléjük a „közösség” fogalma. Tanulmányomban ezt a folyamatot mutatom be röviden, amellet érvelve, hogy a szóhasználat változása mögött a református közösségkép átalakulásának programja áll.

The symbolical language of decorated objects

Monika Kroječ

Dekorirani predmeti vsebujejo pogosto dodaten pomen in simbolično sporočilo. Z dekoracijo so želeli ljudje povečati njihovo vlogo ali zaščititi sami sebe. Medtem ko poslikave pogosto vsebujejo elemente

mitov in verskih predstav, so ornamentično često nosilci simboličnih vsebin. V prispevku so analizirana simbolična sporočila nekaterih ornamentov in poznavanje njihovega pomena danes.

Folk beliefs, folk religion, local religion. Research of folk beliefs in Hungarian ethnography

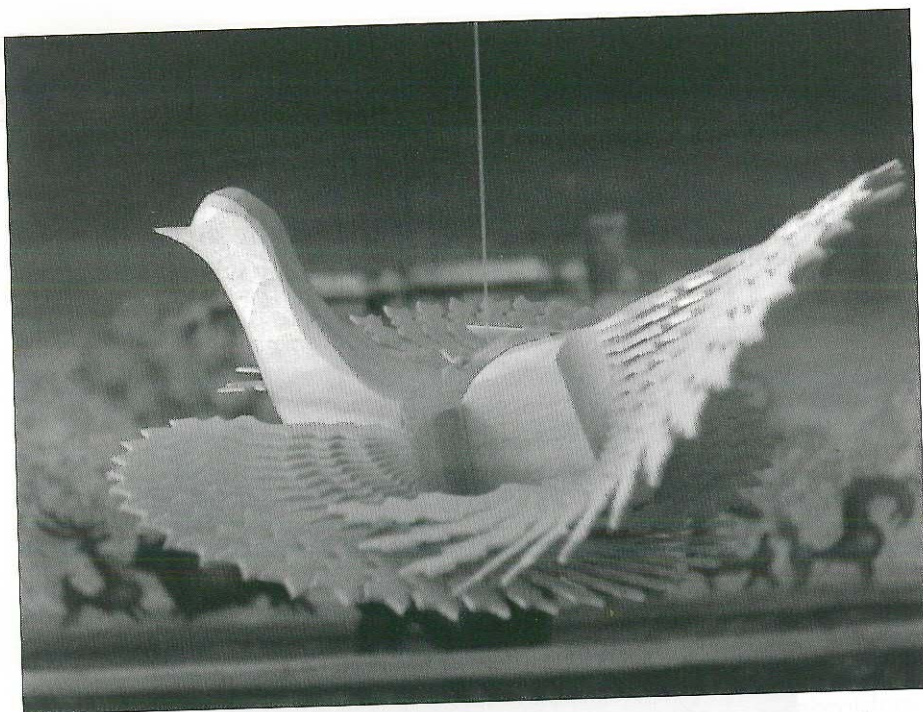
Laura Iancu

A magyar néphitkutatás hagyományosan a paraszti kultúra, vallástól megkülönböztetett hiedelemvilágának a vizsgálatára irányult. A néphitkutatás a 18–19. század fordulóján elsősorban a modern történelemtudomány egyik segédtudománya volt, szorosán összefonódva az őstörténet-kutatással, amely a nemzeti önállósodás egyik fontos politikai-ideológiai eszköze volt. A 19–20. század folyamán kibontakozó kutatást a magyar mitológia vagy magyar ősvallás rekonstrukciója határozta meg, ennek jegyében a gyűjtések és a vizsgálatok a nem-keresztény, de ősinek, pogánynak, népi eredetűnek vélt elemek felkutatására irányult. Csak a 19. század utolsó évtizedeitől kezdődően születtek olyan tanulmányok, amelyek a magyar néphitet önmagáért vizsgálták, amelyek a néphitet olyan szellemi hagyománynak tekintették, amely a magyar nép világképéről, kozmogóniájáról, morális és egyéb nézeteiről ad felvilágosítást.

A néphitkutatás nem olvadt be a 20. században kibontakozó népi vallásosság diszciplináris keretei közé, utóbbit ugyanis – a néphittel ellenkezőleg – nem állították szemben a hivatalos vallással. A népi vallásosságok olyan hagyományrétegnek tekintették, amely esetleges pogány, nem keresztény elemei ellenére is közel áll a hivatalos valláshoz.

A néphitkutatás hagyományos keretei a hagyomány változásának, és a nemzetközi szellemi áramlatok hatásának köszönhetően napjainkra gyökeresen megváltoztak. A változás sok szinten megjelenik. A legszembeötlőbb újdonságot a történeti források (pl. boszorkányperek) vizsgálata valamint a jelenkori vizsgálatokban a szociálantropológiai módszerek alkalmazása jelenti.

Előadásomban a rövid kutatástörténeti áttekintést követően a recens magyar néphitkutatás néhány kérdéséről, a vizsgálatok módszereiről, a vizsgálat témákról kívánok szólni.



Picture 19: *The Holy Spirit as produced today* (photo by M. Kropej, 2013).

As we can see from the above, it is clear that the traditional arts and crafts of today sometimes preserve old symbolical ornaments without knowing their original meaning. But in some cases the old symbols of the ornaments are still remembered among local inhabitants or the users of these objects.



Folk beliefs, folk religion, local religion. Research of folk beliefs in Hungarian ethnography

Laura Iancu

The research of Hungarian folk beliefs is of the the same age as Hungarian ethnography, unfolding in the 19th century, yet data – albeit discontinuous – on the history of Hungarian folk beliefs is available from much earlier times, in fact since the settlement of the Carpathian-basin. The research of folk beliefs was primarily an auxiliary science to modern history at the turn of the 18th and 19th century and was closely intertwined with pre-historic research, an important political and ideological tool in the forming of national independence. During the 19th and 20th century research was dominated by the reconstruction of Hungarian mythology or prehistoric religion, which postulated two fundamental questions: one was whether Hungarian prehistoric religion can be called Shamanism,² and the second whether the religion of the Hungarians taking the land can be compared to that of the peoples speaking Uralian or Altaic languages?³ In this spirit data acquisition and research was aimed at the exploration and study of peasant cultural elements distinguished from religion and non-Christian traditions, but thought to be ancient, heathen and of folk origin. After the turn of the century, the focus was turned to reveal Oriental parallels and Slavic loans. The experimental nature of early research is shown by the fact that in the 19th century the concepts of mythology, prehistoric religion, beliefs, the world of suppositions, superstitions, belief consciousness, belief constructions and folk beliefs bore synonym meanings.

The first significant synthesis of Hungarian folk beliefs was a work by *Arnold Ipolyi* published in 1854 entitled *Hungarian Mythology* (Ipolyi 1854), where the author arranged a large scale database of folk beliefs according to the following categories: 1. mythical beings and

² It probably was, at least it seems to be certain based on the Táltos tradition, belief of the double soul and the faith cast into the other world.

³ The issue cannot be determined. The religion followed by the Hungarians taking the land cannot be reconstructed on the basis of the data acquired during the Siberian and Altaic collection journeys.

specialists of magic,⁴ the structure of the world and its components,⁵ life and death⁶ and rituals⁷. Although *Hungarian Mythology* was met with severe criticism which resulted in Arnold Ipoly abandoning the research of folk beliefs, yet his work has its own imperishable merits. Ipoly was for instance the first to use witchcraft trials; in European religious ethnology he was the first to use the concept of the *impersonal spell* and so on.

Studies in folk beliefs dealing with prehistoric religion and ethnogenesis were shifted towards general ethnology by Géza Róheim. In his work published in 1925 under the title *Hungarian folk belief and folkways* he put a great emphasis on demonstrating and proving the Slavic impact (Róheim 1925). According to the final conclusions of his research the overwhelming majority of Hungarian beliefs are of European nature and/or origin. A distinguished follower of Róheim's approach is Éva Pócs, who confirmed the *Central European and Balkan* parallels of certain elements in the Hungarian belief system by archival sources (Pócs 2002).

The volume published by Vilmos Diószegi in 1967 with the title *The world of beliefs of the heathen Hungarian* is seen by academia as one written with the intention to correct and refute the statements by Géza Róheim. Using data obtained on a lengthy field trip to Siberia, Diószegi intended to reveal the Oriental parallels of Hungarian folk beliefs (Diószegi 1967).

Beside the research of prehistoric religion, studies investigating Hungarian folk beliefs themselves were born in the last decades of the 19th century, considering folk beliefs a spiritual tradition providing information on the *worldview, cosmogony, moral* and other views of the Hungarian people. Numerous studies deal with the figures in the Hungarian world of beliefs, in particular the *Táltos, the Witch, the Incubus; calendar habits* (for instance the *regölés*, a form of vernacular minstrelsy), with beliefs related to *transition rites, agrarian rites, magic action* of farming and livestock husbandry, etc.

The first comprehensive review of the research history in Hungarian folk beliefs was prepared by Sándor Solymossy for the publication

⁴ Gods, spirits, devils, witches, priests.

⁵ Animals, plants, celestial bodies, natural phenomena.

⁶ Soul, afterlife, funeral.

⁷ Enchantment, idol, offering of sacrifice, oath.

entitled *The ethnography of the Hungarian people*, along two major ranges of topics: 1. superstitious beliefs and procedures,⁸ and 2. the prehistoric Hungarian world of beliefs.⁹ The next summary is associated with the name of Tekla Dömötör, who outlined the *history* of Hungarian folk beliefs in her work entitled *The world of beliefs of the Hungarian people* (1981) focusing on the major topics and areas of the world of beliefs (Dömötör 1981). The history of research into this discipline and the structure of Hungarian belief systems was last reviewed and outlined by Éva Pócs in a monographic volume of *Hungarian Ethnography Vol. VI* published in 1990, putting the data accumulated so far on folk beliefs into a new context. Since the publications of the series *Hungarian Ethnography* are deemed to be works of textbook relevance in university courses and public institutions, the systematisation set up by Éva Pócs is a determining factor in folk belief research along the conventional lines. This system categorises Hungarian folk beliefs or the world of beliefs according to the following categories: world view, supernatural beings, humans with supernatural endowments, the structure of the human world, means and fields of magic (Pócs 1990: 527–692.). The history and techniques of vernacular healing belonging to this, (were) summarised and systematised by Mihály Hoppál (Hoppál 1990: 693–724).

Although the problematics of the relations and connections between religion and folk beliefs and the framework of the lay cult of certain churches appeared in domestic research at a pretty early stage (Bálint 1938), the study of these issues was postponed by the folkloristic research methods unfolding from the mid-20th century onwards, directing the attention of the trade onto the connections between folk beliefs and fairy tales, sagas, customs. An autonomous discipline was specialised – certainly not only within Hungarian ethnography – to study lay cults, namely *folk religiousness*. Though folk religiousness focused primarily on the examination of the vernacular practices and forms of awareness of the formal adopted religion, attention was also paid to practices and concepts of *other origins* (i.e. non-Christian/formal) or of spontaneous origin encountered in the belief and practices of peasantry, which – according to the scientific view of the era – provide the same function as folk beliefs and religion and jointly constitute the system of religion in a community. Through the research of phenomena not falling

⁸ Magical forms of day to day acts: healing, evil eye, love spell, fortune telling.

⁹ Animism, Totemism, Shamanism, mythical beings.

within the scope of the authority of the church (for instance individual rites, fasting, the use of ecclesiastical sacraments for magical purposes, incantations, archaic folk prayers, apocryphal, para-liturgical traditions etc.) vernacular religiousness also affected the research of the area connected closely to folk beliefs. Yet the two distinct disciplines separated in ethnography, creating an asymmetric, biased relationship between them. Attention to the investigation of the phenomena lying at the crossing points of folk beliefs and vernacular lay cults was turned at the beginning of the 1970's, primarily by looking into incantations and archaic folk prayers. Though many emphasised and confessed inseparability of the individual layers and areas of religion, the distinction made between *folk beliefs*, *vernacular/folk religiousness* and *doctrinal religions*, and thus the autonomy of their respective studies have remained intact up to quite recently. More recently studies are conceived in Hungarian ethnography which define formerly artificially separated layers in religion as a single unit, and describe it as a single system. This approach is represented by the *local religion* paradigm, very popular in the English-speaking world (Christian 1981; Stewart 1991), which is applied these days in Hungarian research as well. According to the concept of local religion "all non-dogmatic teachings which operate beside the doctrinal religion, complementing it, can also be considered as religious, (...) since the point of all of them is the same: they organise human experience into a sensible system and offer explanations and action programmes".

Today 'classical' folk belief research, i.e. the investigation of the world of beliefs found in the culture of the peasantry separated from religion as such, cannot be seen as typical in the form as it was pursued by researchers in the 19th and 20th century. The causes of this shift are manifold, basically due to science policies and of a social nature. With the anthropological methods gaining ground the emphasis was put onto the *complex* examination of a culture or a community. Additionally – as it was referred to above – (a part) of the scientists questions the tenet that folk beliefs were independent and autonomously operating systems, they do not accept its separation from the religion as a whole. Finally, the elimination and transition of the lifestyles and the medium carrying folk beliefs, the peasantry, entailed a slow process of immersion into oblivion and extinction of folk beliefs of not total elimination.

A typical form of Hungarian folk belief research is the insertion of short descriptions or analyses into monographic adaptations, where authors discussing certain phenomena in culture dedicate separate chapters to folk beliefs. Such works include for instance the research of the linguist professors János Pétek and Attila Szabó aiming at the *Vernacular botany in Kalotaszeg*, where the pair of authors recorded beliefs related to the use of plants (Pétek–Szabó 1985). Less frequently it also happens that an independent volume is dedicated to present the system of beliefs of one community or another, for instance the book published by Vilmos Keszeg in 1999 entitled *Beliefs from Mezőség*. It can be stated that a general tendency puts the *belief* itself into the forefront of research instead of systems (magic, supernatural beings, etc.) or traditions (folk, elite), considering that beliefs would cover world views (mythology) and actions of belief (magic), in fact it constitutes a substantial element thereof. Belief is defined as a form of *awareness and practice* anticipating the existence of mythical beings and impersonal witchcraft, while research systematises the practical manifestations of this form of consciousness by analysing the associated objects, texts, acts and attitudes. According to the prevailing theories belief has functions which render it to be a form of awareness in parallel with religion and science, which also entails that the latter cannot replace it.

Studies of folk beliefs based on ethnographic field research focus roughly on three ranges of issues: organisation of systems around belief knowledge,¹⁰ the narrative 'nature' of beliefs¹¹ and the (contemporary) function of beliefs.¹² The range of extension for folk belief studies, focusing traditionally onto communities and minor regions was narrowed down these days, today the systematisation of the belief knowledge of a person or family, examination of the concepts created from a belief being (for instance a clairvoyant, seer, traditional healer, orthodox pope, etc.) is more typical.¹³ Another strongly marked direction is the study of general topics within *religious ethnology* connecting to folk beliefs (such as obsession, divination, vision, pilgrimage and movements etc.) in an *interdisciplinary* manner by the exploration and use of various historical sources. In this field an outstanding work is the seven volumes of the series *Religious ethnology concepts in interdisciplinary approach* edited

¹⁰ See for instance Keszeg 1991: 122–124.

¹¹ See for instance Czégényi–Keszeg 2001.

¹² See for instance Komáromi 2009.

¹³ See for instance Pócs 2001a.

by Éva Pócs. Each of these publications deals with a unique feature of folk belief and religion, such as: *ecstasy, dream, vision; soul, death, other-world; microcosmos – macrocosmos; blessing and curse, miracle and witchcraft; masque, transformation, initiation; demons, seers, saints; magical and sacral medicine*. Beside ethnographic and anthropological analyses related to religious phenomena, the volumes also include studies on religious history, literature, music, history and history of arts, medical, theological, etc.

A distinguished theoretician of Hungarian folk belief research, Vilmos Keszeg puts it in his writing on the beliefs of our age as follows: “man can be understood and interpreted from the side of his beliefs”, and he does not subscribe to the line of evolution from magic to religion and science, in his view these forms of consciousness live side by side and assume or perform different functions. According to Keszeg the belief research in our age should focus on features where beliefs are present in the mind of the contemporary people, in the world of our days as a *living and acting reality*. Beliefs of our days include such banal and ingrained concepts, convictions the worth of reality of which is never questioned, which are followed instinctively, routinely. For instance: “many are convinced that victory needs *force, braveness and firearms*, (...) but also that it needs something else as well, to be provided sometime by *prayer*, sometimes by a *token*, or a *gesture* ensuring good luck”. As an example, he recalls the case of the Israeli pilot colonel aeronaut (48) who in the beginning of the year 2003 took the Bible and some additional mascots into the space to bring good luck. According to Keszeg the *media*, the *net culture* are areas where a paradigm shift in belief research may take place (Keszeg 2005: 3–6), although studies to this effect are still to be seen.

