

# A PAN-HUNGARIAN 'VESSEL RITUAL' IN ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** The Whitsun pilgrimage of Csíksomlyó has been attracting pilgrims for more than five centuries. Until the 1940s it was the most important pilgrimage place for the Seklers<sup>1</sup> and functioned as *the sacred centre of Transylvania, the easternmost bastion of Catholicism*. After the political changes of 1989 it has gradually turned into the most important Hungarian pilgrimage place. This transformation alone would not be of particular interest in itself, however, the history of Csíksomlyó contains several peculiar elements. The research concerning the history of the pilgrimage place reveal that the origin story of the pilgrimage site is an invented tradition which was meant to strengthen the arriving Seklers' unity and harmony.<sup>2</sup> According to Mohay, this is one of the first invented and constructed legends of the Hungarian nationalism taking shape from the 1780s on. The emerging sense of belonging in this legend helped the hidden and secret continuation of the pilgrimage during the years of the communist-socialist era. During the revitalization process from 1990 this sense of belonging has attracted about 4-500,000 Hungarian pilgrims every year, even though the pilgrimage site is situated 600 kilometres away from the Hungarian border, in the middle of Romania. The aim of this paper is to introduce the ideological transformation and reinterpretation of the revitalized Csíksomlyó pilgrimage of the past two decades connecting to elements beyond Catholicism. I try to answer the question of how and why Csíksomlyó became a pilgrimage place for different neopagan religious groups and how they reinterpreted the site, what is the reason for their presence?

**Keywords:** vernacular religiosity, syncretism, pilgrimage, Csíksomlyó

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As the history of the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage is well-researched,<sup>3</sup> in this present paper I only give a short overview. According to folk legends, Csíksomlyó became a pilgrimage site in 1567, when Hungarian king John II Sigismund Zápolya wanted to convert the Sekler population of the upper Csík<sup>4</sup> to Protestantism. The Seklers refused to abandon the Catholic faith and resisted. A battle took place on a nearby field, on Saturday before Pentecost, from which the Seklers emerged victorious. The Franciscans and the local population interpreted this as a sign of the benevolent attention of the Virgin Mary. Since then, this event has been commemorated by a pilgrimage when Seklers gather on Pentecost every year. After the Trianon Peace Treaty in 1920 that mutilated Hungary, Csíksomlyó has been in

1 Seklers (Székely) are people of Hungarian ethnicity living in Transylvania (Romania).

2 MOHAY 2000, 2009.

3 Most detailed MOHAY 2009.

4 Csík (in Romanian: *Ciuc*) was the name of a historic administrative county of Hungary until 1920. Csík is situated in the eastern part of Transylvania, in central Romania.

the territory of Romania.<sup>5</sup> The pilgrimages continued until 1949 when the communist power banned the Hungarian, Roman Catholic feast.

Against all prohibitions along with the weakening of the socialist regime, the first illegal Hungarian pilgrims appeared from the 1980s on. Besides the traditional pilgrimage ritual, the pilgrims arriving from Hungary started to help the extremely poor Sekler and Csango<sup>6</sup> families who hosted them by giving them books and clothing. After 1990 the pilgrimage evolved rapidly. The feast – repressed for 40 years – had to be reconstructed once again based on memories.<sup>7</sup> This fact alone would provide the change of the pilgrimage's content, as for practically 40 years it was not part of its history and for the rising generations the rituals and the symbolic dimension had to be constructed once again. This process was accelerated by the religious transformations taking place after the fall of socialism and the strengthening nationalism, religious nationalism, patriotism in certain subcultures in Hungary. Following the fall of communism, previously oppressed social tendencies have re-emerged. Froese asserts that "the collapse of Soviet Communism has brought about sweeping revivals of religion in most Eastern European and Soviet successor states".<sup>8</sup> However, it became clear that the push toward secularization under communist-socialist rule had been more or less effective. Traditional churches lost their organizing and normative role on a societal level.<sup>9</sup> Contrary to these processes, the pilgrimage at Csíksomlyó attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims every year. The sudden increase in the number of participants can be explained by the alternated modes of participating in the pilgrimage and the changes of inner motivations. Moreover, it has to be emphasized that live television broadcasting of the holy mass every year by the Hungarian TV stations (Duna TV, MTV) also popularized the ritual and strengthened the nationalist attitude in motivation. In the following, I will outline these possible motivations. I am aware of the fact that the findings cannot provide a full picture as I only interviewed a small proportion of participants and it is impossible to analyse all participants' individual religiosity.

The pilgrimage tours organized by travel agencies provide the experience of historical tours and pilgrimages at one and the same time. The mass need for the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage was soon discovered by Hungarian travel agencies and they offered package pilgrimage tours providing an additional cultural/historical flavour to the tour thus making it more attractive.<sup>10</sup>

5 The Treaty of Trianon (June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1920) mutilated Hungary. It lost 72% of its territory and 64% of its total population. The belief that territories, lost to its despised neighbours, might one day be re-annexed was kept alive in Hungary during the interwar period. During the Communist and Socialist times there were no public discourses on Trianon and it was not 'recommended' to deal with the fate and situation of minority Hungarians living outside Hungary. After the political transformations in 1989 the suppressed forms of irredentism and the feeling of togetherness with transborder Hungarians – especially with the Seklers in Romania – emerged from the collective memory.

6 Csangos (Csángó in Hungarian) are the easternmost Hungarian ethnographic group living outside the Carpathian Basin, mostly in the Romanian region of Moldavia.

7 MOHAY 1992. 26.

8 FROESE 2001. 251.

9 KAMARÁS 2003.

10 PUSZTAI 2004.

Recently the mass media reported that a travel agency provided a special train to the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage under the name *Székely Gyors* [Sekler express] and *Csíksomlyó Expressz*.<sup>11</sup> While in 2008, 400 pilgrims travelled in 8 coaches, in 2011, two trains – the Székely and Csíksomlyó express – transported 1600 pilgrims in 12 carriages each.<sup>12</sup> Apart from these changes, the locals and part of the pilgrims coming from far away still use the traditional means of transport, walking or travelling in horse carriages. The organized package tours transformed the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage towards religious tourism with an ambivalent attitude from locals and 'traditional' pilgrims.

...I am like my 82-year-old grandfather... His coming to the Csíksomlyó was not organized by a travel agency but the church congregation so they came praying and singing. Not with the Csíksomlyó or Sekler express. He did not bring home a kitch souvenir, but rather a birch branch. Those who did not come 'under the cross' those did not pray or sing on the way but thronged, streamed and rushed as they had to come and be there. I don't want to come again this way with such a crowd to Csíksomlyó... I have fears for the Transylvanians as after a while they will not feel that what we call today 'pilgrimage to Csíksomlyó' would be theirs.<sup>13</sup>

We shouldn't allow (it's sin) to the fools coming from Hungary to dispossess Csíksomlyó for themselves, we shouldn't give it to the extremists who drink themselves blind on the night before the feast and on the other day when they are wrapped up into Árpád-stripes flag shouting they themselves don't know what and then they go shopping for some kitschy wooden or ceramic stuff.<sup>14</sup>

The pilgrimage's turn to being a mass ritual, attracting half a million people inevitably entails the transformation of components and consequently the changes in motivations as well.

## The Transformation of Inner Motivation

In the pre-1990 period when religion was not tolerated, participation in the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage strengthened the pilgrims' idea of forming a living and a cohesive religious and ethnic community. From 1990 this local, ethnic-Sekler

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11 From 2014 under the name *Történelmi Székely Gyors* [Historical Sekler Express].

12 See Figure 1. More trains would not fit into the Transylvanian train stations. The locomotive engine is decorated with the coat of arms of Hungary and with the image of different Hungarian historical heroes every year. (i.e. István Széchenyi, one of the most outstanding figures of Hungarian history. In 2011 – due to the Ferenc Liszt anniversary year – the great Hungarian composer's portrait was depicted on the train. In 2012 – on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of winning the world championship – the *Aranycsapat* [Golden team] the legendary national football team, while in 2013 the image of King Matthias was depicted on the engine.)

13 Mail 01.06.2010.

14 Mail 28.05.2010.

characteristic changed and the pan-Hungarian element has become stronger and stronger. One of the main reasons behind this is the fact that during the years of communism/socialism the issue of the Trianon Peace Treaty and the situation of transborder ethnic Hungarians was side-tracked from Hungarian public thinking. The sense of belonging and the regional and family relations remained and after a suppression of 40 years they appeared once more in an even stronger form. The national identity crisis after the destruction of national identity during the communist/socialist rule was compensated by the intensification of Hungarian national identity.

### **Religious Nationalism**

The interlocking of nationalism and religion is not a novel phenomenon in Hungary. These forms of manifestations were rather vigorous in the interwar period irredentism<sup>15</sup> leading to the spreading of religious nationalism in official and public religiosity and also religious elements were incorporated into nationalism and patriotism and functioned as religion for the wider public. During communism and socialism the former was constrained and the latter one oppressed. After 1989, however, both phenomena have gradually revived. The merging of nationalism and religion in Csíksomlyó is articulated through several examples. In spite of being situated in the middle of Romania there are only Hungarian-language religious services. The multi-national and supra-national Catholic nature, which can be experienced in several of Europe's pilgrimage places (e.g. Santiago de Compostela, Lourdes, Fatima) is not present here.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, a significant part of the pilgrims are not Catholic but Unitarian, Lutheran or Calvinist. The only possible ecumenical ideology that binds them together is their religiosity intertwined with nationalism. "People come here for themselves. This gives the power of this place. You see the signs of the settlements and you know almost the entire Carpathian basin is represented here. And everyone feels that we belong together, to one nation. Every individual needs to experience this feeling from time to time."<sup>17</sup>

In this sense the pilgrimage represents the historical unity of the Hungarian nation independent of political borders. The ritual appropriation of Hungarian national mythology's sacred places is performed through the celebrations outside the Hungarian borders. Consequently, the Virgin Mary, the symbol of the

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15 ZEIDLER 2009.

16 PUSZTAI 2004. 135.

17 VÖRÖS 2000.

Csíksomlyó pilgrimage site is not only a patron saint but *Patrona Hungariae*, a national symbol as well.<sup>18</sup>

The national character is partly institutionally articulated in the shape and construction of the open-air altar designed by the world-famous organic architect, Imre Makovecz representing the Hungarian coat-of-arms, the three-hills referring to the three mountain ranges of the Carpathian Basin, the Tatra, Matra and Fatra with the double cross on top. Although the symbol is an element of Hungarian coat-of-arms, in popular culture it is often used as an irredentist symbol refusing the Trianon Peace Treaty.<sup>19</sup> This national character is also articulated in several symbols carried by pilgrims during the ritual. C.f. the name of their settlements in national tricolours or the "Árpád-striped" flags carried by certain – not necessarily religious – groups.<sup>20</sup>

The changes evoke ambivalent feelings among Catholic pilgrims. Many are happy to have more and more people and they see the increasing number of participants as the sign of strengthening Hungarian religiosity. Others, mainly local, religious participants fear the loss of the original content.

I myself feel that it turned into being something else than a Christian feast. As if the pilgrimage was only an excuse for gathering Hungarians. Religiosity was replaced by – I cannot express it in a nicer way – Hungarianism. All in all, I believe this pilgrimage has long been connected to different ideas than it should be. It is not addressed to Catholics but all Hungarians.<sup>21</sup>

Csíksomlyó is the celebration of Catholics and of those who believe it to be trendy and a part of a real Hungarian attitude to participate. They receive holy communion without believing just because there is a great atmosphere. During the boring ceremony they smoke, have conversations and wait for the Hungarianist parts that really strengthen Hungarian identity...<sup>22</sup>

18 The cult of the Virgin Mary has been a dominant feature of Hungarian history for more than a thousand years. According to Hungarian legends the religious adoration of the Virgin Mary appeared in Hungary under the reign of Saint Stephen (1000-1038) the first King of Hungary. Hungarian Chronicles state that Bishop Saint Gerhard Sagredo was the first who advocated the veneration of the Virgin Mary instead of a certain ancient goddess figure, called *Boldogasszony*. On the feast of the Assumption of Mary (15<sup>th</sup> August) in 1038, following the death of Saint Emerich – the son of Saint Stephen – the King dedicated his land to the Holy Virgin who also lost Her Son. Due to this dedication Hungary became *Regnum Marianum*, the Land of the Virgin Mary. The Holy Virgin wearing the Sacred Crown on her head as *Magna Domina Hungarorum* was considered to be the source of all kinds of power. The figure of the Blessed Virgin as Patroness of Hungary (*Patrona Hungariae*) has been present both in "high culture" and in folk religiosity as well.

19 See for more details PÖVEDÁK 2011.

20 The "Árpád-striped" flag is a historical flag of Hungary. From the second half of the 1990s the "Árpád-striped" flag became politically ambivalent. In the prevalent rhetoric of left-wing politics, the flag was the symbol for the Arrow Cross (Nazi) Party during World War II and recently this symbol was re-invented by the radical right-wing groups. The website of the far right parliamentary party (JOBBIK) defines as "the most important symbol of Hungarian glory, liberty and unity of the nation [...], it symbolizes the message that Hungarians do belong together and we believe that as our ancestors, we will have the power and wisdom to tackle historical barriers and crisis." <http://jobbik.net/index.php?q=taxonomy/term/13&page=2> Latest access: 29.03.2010.

21 Mail 29.05. 2010.

22 Mail 28.05. 2010.

Similarly, the organizer Franciscans of Csíksomlyó also announce that they welcome anyone on condition that they do not use this centuries-old religious event to demonstrate their political affiliation and demonstrate their group identity alien from Christian values as these manifestations do not fit the fundamental values and role of the pilgrimage.<sup>23</sup>

### Political Motivation

Helping the fate of transborder Hungarians became an integral part of the post-1989 governments. Primarily the Christian-conservatives feel a duty and responsibility to promote transborder minority Hungarian culture. As the greatest number of minority Hungarians live in Romania, Transylvania became the symbol of all transborder Hungarians.<sup>24</sup> To participate in the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage is *a thing to do for all true Hungarian politicians*. The right-wing political organizations regularly organize pilgrimages for their party members and the photos of politician-participants<sup>25</sup> are covered in mass media. The participants of the pilgrimage tours organized by political organizations have a similar spiritual preparation for the ritual with the exception that the prayers and the religious state of mind are replaced by the preparation for a national experience. They read from Transylvanian authors or about Transylvania, and watch films of the Seklers history.<sup>26</sup>

Also the extreme right-wing paramilitary organization Magyar Gárda (Hungarian Guard) linked to the radical right regularly appeared using the revitalized symbols from the interwar irredentism. The organizations that wish to strengthen national “invented traditions” are also present (e.g.: MAG, Baranta groups).<sup>27</sup>

I must underline that in certain groups and in cases of individuals, the different motivations can certainly mingle featuring the characteristics of syncretic “vernacular religiosity”.<sup>28</sup> However, all the above mentioned groups leave for the same destination, for a Catholic pilgrimage site and try to behave and act as a pilgrim even though in the interviews they give an account of different motivations.

### Religious Syncretism and the Presence of New Religious Ideologies

One of the most visible changes in Hungarian public political and religious discourse is the sudden recruitment of patriotism and the elevation of nationalism

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23 <http://www.erdely.ma/hitvilag.php?id=67740&what=archivum> Latest access: 25.01.2014.

24 FEISCHMIDT 2005.

25 See Fig. 2.

26 VÖRÖS 2000.

27 MAG is a neonationalist, anti-globalization movement emphasizing back-to-nature ideology. Members of the MAG community organize “eco-villages”, cultural programs, religious rituals, scientific lectures. <http://magtar.hu/> Baranta is a newly invented Hungarian “traditional martial art style”. Besides practicing the invented Hungarian martial arts, Baranta embraces patriotic ideology as well. <http://www.usadojo.com/styles/about-baranta.htm> Last accessed 17. February 2014.

28 Term by PRIMIANO 1995.



into a sacred sphere. These new trends have interconnection with more cultural processes resulting in "Hungarianism" and "sacralization of the nation". This new complex phenomenon is present in mass culture, feast culture and might mingle with neopaganism in vernacular religiosity as well.<sup>29</sup> This can be seen from the fact that the Hungarian Catholic Bishop Conference wrote several Pastoral Letters which drew attention to the hidden presence of neopagan syncretism and Hungarianism among Catholic believers.<sup>30</sup> This new *bricolage* ideology can be clearly observed among the pilgrims of Csíksomlyó.

Besides Roman Catholicism, Csíksomlyó became the pilgrimage site of several "neopagan" denominations during the past two decades. These denominations usually organize trips for their members to the Roman Catholic Whitsun pilgrimage feast. The basis for the presence of new religions on the one side is based on the popular religious rituals and concepts that have continued in folk religiosity independently from the 'official', institutionalized practices for hundreds of years (i.e. the "waiting for the sunrise ceremony" or the veneration of the Virgin Mary as the goddess of the Moon).<sup>31</sup> On the other side this religious syncretism has been – strangely – strengthened by the works of a Franciscan monk of Csíksomlyó.<sup>32</sup> Daczó's writings try to explain the history of the feast and he claims the roots originate from the mythic pre-Christian past of Hungarians. Daczó emphasizes the connection between *Babba Mária* [Babba Mary]<sup>33</sup> and the pre-Christian Hungarian Goddess *Boldogasszony* (Happy Woman) and according to him the cultic place of Babba Mary was originally the sacred centre of the Sun Cult of pre-Christian Hungarians. However for Daczó, Babba Mária means much more than only a remnant of an ancient goddess figure that inculturated in the symbolic figure of the Virgin Mary. According to him the word Babba has Sumerian origins.<sup>34</sup> As this theory is written by a Franciscan monk<sup>35</sup> the non-Christian pilgrims and "neopagan" groups use his works as a canonized proof

29 For an overview see POVEDÁK-SZILÁRDI 2014.

30 The presence and the effect of the neopagan orientation can hardly be measured in Hungary. There are organized forms within frameworks of small religious movements (less than 1% of the whole society are members) but neopagan orientation is present in the social arena as a way of thinking and world-view, thus its effect is much more significant. Synthesizing the supposed and actual religiosity of pre-settlement Hungarians (before the settlement of Hungarians into the Carpathian basin in 896) with the sacralised principle of the nation subtly pervaded Christianity and politics as well. The emerging world-view evoked ambivalent reactions. Some consider it as a mission to nourish Hungarianness and Hungarian culture and believe that it perfectly harmonizes with Christianity interlinked with the emerging religious nationalism; others emphasize the anti-Christian and chauvinistic feature. This opposition can be traced in vernacular religiosity, but in the field of politics, education and science as well. POVEDÁK 2014a.

31 TÁNCZOS 2010.

32 DACZÓ 2000, 2010.

33 Babba Mária [Babba Mary] is the traditional name of Virgin Mary in Csango folk religiosity.

34 DACZÓ 2000. 30-42. The Sumerian goddess 'BA-Ú' or 'BABA' was the goddess of birth and fertility and she seemed as the ideal equivalent of 'BOL-DOG ASSZONY' in both name and in function. In ancient Sumer language the word 'BAU' meant bounty, while 'DUG' also meant gladness. From this one can readily get 'Baudug' that is very similar to the Hungarian 'boldog', which also means gladness.

35 His theory is ambivalently interpreted by both academics and Franciscans.

of the archaic, pagan character of the place. This way his works are interpreted as the legitimate basis of their presence at Csíksomlyó.

The first appearance of paganism – especially neo-shamans – did not cause serious conflicts with Catholics because pilgrims considered them as a kind of “freak” people. The problems started in 2001 when one of the Hungarian bishops heard stories from the homecoming pilgrims about these “funny” shamans who said prayers to the rising sun.

I was totally shocked when the arrival of the members of the “Shamanic Church”<sup>36</sup> was announced on the loud speaker. A lot of real pilgrims put the question whether they were pilgrims at all. How does the Shamanic Church relate to the Roman Catholic Church? Moreover plenty of the Seklers did not even know that they are not the Catholic Church. They warmly welcomed the members of the “Shamanic Church” as any other pilgrims and they listened to their teachings on the ancient belief system of Hungarians. The Shamanic Church even rented the Theatre of Csíkszereda for 1000 follower shamans for their own entertainment. There were shamanic presentations like walking on fire and other curiosities amusing the locals. ... and then on the morning of Whitsunday the vigil prayers were interrupted by the nasally murmured öährrr ..öhrrrr sound of the shamanic ecstasy and the sound of the drums. They found the place, the peak of the “energetic mountain” ideal for their wedding ceremony. Their followers dressed in white performed a wedding ritual led by shaman-priests.

Four years ago some strange shaman-like people appeared and they measured the Somlyó-mountain with their magic sticks saying that their ancient, cosmic, saint or whatever energy flows, radiates or focuses there. Three years ago the first shamans appeared at the Salvator Chapel and they started their pagan rituals at dawn. The members of our community just prayed laudes there. Two years ago they appeared at the Cultural Centre of Csíkszereda and they had a common program there with the Folk Dance Company of Hargita County and then there were shamanic lectures, osteopathy, healing and so on. A year ago 400 shamans dressed in white shaman dresses processed along the pilgrimage. They organized firewalking in a secondary school, they organize Táltos (shaman) courses in Udvarhely throughout the year. Today they are preparing for giving lectures at Sepsiszentgyörgy, Kézdivásárhely and they are planning to come to the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage together with 1000 shamans.<sup>37</sup>

The presence of such neopagan ideologies during the pilgrimage led to the situation that the local Franciscans every year have to publish an article in the newspapers that the ritual place of the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage and all connecting

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36 The interlocutor refers to the Ósmagyar Táltos Egyház (Ancient Hungarian Shamanic Church).

37 Open letter from <http://maranatha.uw.hu/taltos2.htm> Latest access: 25.01.2014.



places are handled as liturgical places by authorities, thus every other ceremony is prohibited there. The police have the right to stop other ceremonies during the celebration of the feast. The regulation moderated the situation but syncretism is still visible. It seems that the multi-religious character is irreversible.

During the liturgy, before and after the holy mass the *táltos* drummers can't stop beating their drums. They went further but they still don't care about liturgy and the pilgrims.

That's why several grassroots movements emerged among the locals, trying to inform people about neopagan groups.

Dear Friends!

*Táltos* (Shamans) do not represent the Church of Jesus Christ!

*Táltos* want to bring back the ancient Hungarian pagan religiosity.

*Táltos* do a lot of things that provoke God.

God already forbid firewalking to the nations of the Old Testament!

*Táltos* just exhaust the hospitality and blindfoldness of people in Transylvania!<sup>38</sup>

Besides the "Ancient Hungarian *Táltos* Church" and other "neopagan" groups, the Goddess Church also regards Csíksomlyó as one of the most important sacred places in Hungary. The feminist denomination uses the theory of Daczó on the origin of the cultic place but in a partly reinterpreted manner. According to them the place was regarded as sacred long before Christian times as the temple of the Goddess, the Mother God stood there. They accept that the Csango name of the Virgin Mary "Babba" can originate from the Sumerian goddess "Bau" but they emphasize their "fertility" character and give a new meaning to the *staring at the Sun ritual* at Whitsunday dawn.<sup>39</sup>

Pentecost took up the place of the feast of love in May...Babba was the name of the Goddess of Love and condenses the energy of the lover Goddess. The swells of the Nagy-Somlyó Mountain and the gentle lines of pinewoods symbolize the figure of a lying woman. The Goddess manifests herself in nature and one of its most beautiful examples is the way the beautiful body of Babba unfolds toward her lover. On the dawn of Whitsunday the lover impregnates her in the image of the Sun.<sup>40</sup>

The members of the Goddess Church come in a procession to Csíksomlyó since the founder of the Hungarian denomination visited the place in 2007 and had

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38 Open letter from <http://maranatha.uw.hu/taltos2.htm> Latest access: 25.01.2014.

39 See Fig. 3-4.

40 Krisztina Veres' (priest of the Goddess Church) writing on Csíksomlyó. [http://www.isten-notemplom.com/files/in\\_csiks.pdf](http://www.isten-notemplom.com/files/in_csiks.pdf) Latest access: 25.01.2014.

visions there. She felt she was in Glastonbury. "I remained rooted to the spot and felt I was standing again in Glastonbury at the Waeryall mountain and I felt the presence of the hawthorn that broke into leaf and flower from the walking stick of Joseph of Arimathea."<sup>41</sup>

Since her visions, the Goddess Church regards Csíksomlyó as a place *where time and space cease to exist*. They basically perform the Catholic ritual with the difference that the most important element for them is not the holy mass but the staring at the sun ritual at dawn.

I liked the vigil as well. We went out to the garden at 5 AM and called Babba Mária. We got soaked and it was cold but we were singing and dancing around the fire and we laughed a lot. We were quite desperate and at last we saw the mighty bright aura appearing with the sun above the Nagy-Somlyó Mountain.<sup>42</sup>

It is worth mentioning that individuals connecting to neopagan or esoteric ideologies are not necessarily members of religious organizations. Concerning the fact that the ideologists of neopagan denominations often publish popular articles in magazines, semi-scientific literature, on the Internet or are present in television shows or at invented festivals, consequently their effect reaches not only the members of their denomination but a much wider strata. Moreover, their ideology is often associated with "Hungarianness" and closely connected with the "sacralisation of the Hungarian nation". The mutual elements in each trend of the non-Catholic pilgrimage are the emphasis on the ancient character of the Babba Mária cult that can be exclusively connected to the cult of the Hungarian nation.

That's why I have a tattoo with our Babba Mária, the true, the ancient Hungarian mother...We'll go there and there'll be at least half a million Hungarians. In spite of the Pope's lack of concern, we'll go and represent ourselves.<sup>43</sup>

The interpretation of the Carpathian Basin, the territory of Hungarians as a sacred place, being sacralised by the fact that the Hungarian nation lives there, is another shared ideological element.

Perhaps it would be better to find our true, authentic roots. On that score we have to turn to Mary, to the Babba, the real, the Hungarian to the bones. The Popes are apprehensive about her as well! Why are they afraid of her? Or are they afraid that it might turn out that Christ was Hungarian? 500,000 pilgrims yearly and Rome still doesn't say anything. The Catholic world echos with the name of Rome, Aachen, Medjugore, Lourdes, Pontmain, Knock, Syracuse but not a single word was said about the crowd of half a million

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41 [http://www.istennotemplom.com/files/in\\_csiks.pdf](http://www.istennotemplom.com/files/in_csiks.pdf) Latest access: 25.01.2014.

42 Mail 04.06.2010.

43 07.08.2010.

Hungarians returning every Pentecost at the altar of three hills of Csíksomlyó. If there's a miracle of God in the world nowadays it is in Hungary when we go on procession to our own sacred mountain at Pentecost.<sup>44</sup>

According to this ideology the Carpathian Basin has two outstanding transcendent centres: Csíksomlyó and Dobogókő in the Pilis mountains.<sup>45</sup> The two "energy centres" pulsate together. Both places have a distinguished role in the pilgrimage places of several new religious organizations. "There were two women who departed to Csíksomlyó on foot. I don't know how long the journey took but they arrived and they were waiting for the sun together with the pilgrims on the dawn of Whitsunday. The apparition of the Lady dressed in Sun. They carried the shining vision of the creation from the Pilis to the Babba Mária in their eyes."<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusion

It is not necessary to explain that the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage went through major transformations. The traditional Roman Catholic ritual gained syncretic character in late-modernity. As Paul Post emphasized in connection with post-modern pilgrimages, the fanning-out of the Christian ritual repertoire can be experienced in the case of Csíksomlyó as well. "The originally rather homogenous Christian ritual now broadens out over ecclesiastical, general religious, and secular profane paths."<sup>47</sup> Roman Catholics, the followers of other denominations, non-religious and nationalist pilgrims go on procession to Csíksomlyó. The most important common element of all kinds of rituals and motivations is the feeling of national togetherness, the strong emphasis on Hungarian historical identity and community. After the paradigmatic breaks of Hungarian history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage can be characterized as 'anamnesic loss'. "In the present, the past is celebrated in ritual with an eye to the future."<sup>48</sup> In spite of the fact, that the past is controversial, disputed and partly invented, the present is ambivalently interpreted, the future is ambiguous, Csíksomlyó as a "vessel ritual"<sup>49</sup> attracts increasing numbers of pilgrims every year.

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44 Post at [www.hetivalasz.hu/forum/taltosok\\_pogany\\_jobbik?scomm#169911](http://www.hetivalasz.hu/forum/taltosok_pogany_jobbik?scomm#169911) Latest access: 23.11.2009.

45 About new, syncretic, partly neopagan pilgrimage sites see Povedák 2014b. According to contemporary legends, when the Dalai Lama visited Hungary he said "the Earth heart chakra is in Hungary, more exactly in the area called Pilis." Although there is no real proof for this, the ideology states that there are several energy lines, which create invisible high energy nets around the world. The Earth's acupuncture points are found where these lines cross each other, similarly to the acupuncture points in the human body. The multiple line crossings are often referred to as saintly or sacred places. These include Stonehenge, Machu Picchu, the Cheops Pyramid or Dobogókő, the place where "the heart of the Earth beats."

46 NÉMETH 2010. 10.

47 POST 1998. 300.

48 POST 1998. 314.

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Fig. 1. The arrival of the *Csiksomlyó Expressz* (<http://kuruc.info/r/3/96567/>)



Fig. 2. Members of the *Új Magyar Gárda Mozgalom* [New Hungarian Guard Movement] radical right paramilitary movement at the Csiksomlyó pilgrimage ([http://ujmagyargardamozgalom.com/szekely\\_szakas\\_kepekben](http://ujmagyargardamozgalom.com/szekely_szakas_kepekben))





Fig. 3. László Tóké Bishop of the Reformed Church, member of the European Parliament at the pilgrimage in 2009 ([http://tokeslaszlo.eu/galeria/csiksomlyo\\_2009/](http://tokeslaszlo.eu/galeria/csiksomlyo_2009/))



Fig. 4. Staring at the Sun ritual with shamanic drums (Photo by Gabriella Fábíán)