Invisible Borders

Christian–Neopagan Syncretism in Hungary

Religious freedom and religious pluralism in the postsocialist region led not only to the emerging of religious denominations by number but to the decomposition of vernacular religiosity. This transformation manifested in a religious syncretism mingling Christian teachings and symbolism with the emerging new ideologies. This paper aims to analyse Christian-Neopagan syncretism, the most articular segment of the process which often results religious conflicts in Hungary.

It is a well-known fact that no religion exists exclusively in its written, essential state; the cultural circumstances of the time, the historical and political characteristics of the given region and nation, as well as the individual demands of the believers are reflected in their everyday culture. This mechanism assumes the existence of a syncretic vernacular religion in all periods where, in addition to the predominant religious canon, elements foreign to it and often incompatible at the ideological level blend together, in most cases without individuals being aware of it. In our Central-Eastern European region pre-Christian elements could be found in the vernacular religion of earlier periods, and in the same way trends reflecting eastern philosophies or even wishing to revive elements of ancient shamanism have entered contemporary vernacular religion.

The present study aims to show through a few case studies various syncretic manifestations of Christianity and the neo-pagan orientation. However, due among others, to limitations of space this study cannot attempt to present the full picture because to show the intertwining of the neo-pagan orientation in the various

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1 This study was carried out with the support of OTKA grant no. NK 81502 and the HAS-SZTE Research Group on Religious Culture.
dimensions of contemporary Hungarian culture would be an undertaking exceeding our possibilities. In our region to a considerable degree the neo-pagan orientation did not appear principally as part of the process of religious revival but is linked more to the post-socialist reconstruction of national identity and national culture, in practice representing its religious dimension, and simultaneously combining almost all the dimensions of the broader reconstruction process. Although these dimensions can be distinguished from each other, there is no sharp borderline between them and varying degrees of fluidity can be observed.

As a consequence the study focuses mainly on the receiving aspect of syncretism that realises the merger of Christian teachings into the practically constructed, invented religious traditions that have appeared; it analyses the related symbolic representation, rites and attitudes. A number of case studies are presented in an attempt to throw light on the phenomenon.

The trends of syncretism

Similarly to the neo-pagan orientation, its syncretism with Christianity is also an extremely complex phenomenon. Basically, a distinction must be made between its two variants: 1) the presence of Christian-neo-pagan syncretism in the vernacular religion of Christian believers, and 2) the trend within the neo-pagan orientation that make use of Christian symbols and teachings and inserts them into its own theory. At the same time it must be stressed that in the first case the process of mingling does not so much blend neo-pagan elements in the stricter sense with Christianity but much rather involves a reinterpretation of certain chapters in Hungarian history, including the connection of the Hungarian people with Christianity, throwing a new light on the date and manner of the Hungarians’ conversion, reinterpreting the role of certain actors, giving rise also to a belief in the chosenness of the Hungarians and their prophetic awareness. The complex ideology of the trend and in cases its system of teachings constitutes a fundamental reinterpretation of Christian tradition and places Christian history on new foundations with an ethnic-specific focus through a strong process of re-mythologisation.

2 Naturally, this statement cannot be applied in general to all phenomena associated with the neopagan orientation.
3 Simply listing them is problematic. There are political and religious dimensions, the artistic dimension of reinterpretation of cultural tradition; its moral theses and philosophical dimension have been formulated, as well as the legal dimension, and the extremely rich mythological dimension. It has a very lively emotional dimension capable of evoking extreme sentiments, and a social dimension with various association and organisational forms. Merely to present the ritual dimension associated with the phenomenon would exceed the limits of the present study.
4 Hobsbawm (1985)
5 E.g. phenomena related to the revival of the shamanic tradition.
6 See, among others, the works of Badiny Jós (2002, 2003, 2005) or Szántai (2006, 2009), that write about Jesus’s Hungarian origin, or give a mythical reinterpretation of Hungarian history. One of their common features is the prophetic role of the Hungarian nation. It is practically impossible to list all the writings on the topic.
Syncretism in the vernacular religion of Christian believers

In its functioning it differs from vernacular religion of earlier periods mainly in that it melds – unconsciously – theories and practices foreign to Christianity while at the same time it does not question Christian teachings. In this case the mingling can be observed in both ideology and symbolical forms and remains strictly on the surface, at the level of experienced religion, while it does not influence official church teachings, indeed a sharp dissociation originating from the highest level of the clergy can be seen. This dissociation reached its peak in a circular letter titled \textit{In harmony with the living faith of the Church} issued by the Hungarian Catholic Episcopal Conference on 19th September 2009. In this letter the episcopal body places the so-called ancient Hungarian syncretism in the context of the post-socialist Hungarian identity policy and religious awakening, as an undesirable offshoot of the awakening of national consciousness; the body identified the danger of this as being precisely its melding character: “This phenomenon is very dangerous also because it uses what appears to be a Christian religious language and can easily mislead even the practising believer. Among these are the unscientific claims about Jesus and the Virgin Mary. For example, the ‘Jesus was a Parthian prince’ theory, or the revival of the seers, shamans and other elements of the pre-Christian Hungarian belief system. At times it even draws on the noblest traditionalising movements to popularise paganism.” The circular letter itself reflects the spirit described in the Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Europe that, in contrast with the slogan \textit{aggiornamento}, placed the emphasis on caution regarding contemporary fashionable cultural trends.

In connection with this, in addition to writings in various periodicals, radio and television broadcasts, members of the Christian intelligentsia began to publish works on the neo-pagan orientation, intended as “enlightenment” and conscious dissociation from it. All these – especially the circular letter – evoked a lively response not only in religious public discourse. The letter may have found the majority of Catholic believers unprepared, in the absence of any prior information, while others were aware that they were not personally involved, but a minority felt that their identity had been violated and were prepared to accept confrontation in expressing their dislike. This was expressed most clearly in an open letter written by the well-known cardiac surgeon, Lajos Papp that attracted a multitude of comments which collectively reflected the nature of the process also appearing in a religious guise. That the phenomenon is basically linked to the reconstruction of the national identity can be seen in the fact that the comments mainly felt the contents of the circular letter to be offensive not for religious reasons but for their national identity. In addition, they gave a sense of the widening gap between the vernacular religion of the subculture concerned and

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7 Most of the cases affect Roman Catholicism, as the church with the greatest support historically among Hungarians and the longest past.
8 The circular letter did not arise in a vacuum but drew on a number of earlier episcopal communications at diocesan level.
the official, institutionalised image of the church that essentially lies in differences between the expectations towards the church as an institution and its real functioning on the part of adherents of the subculture, the religious demands and on the other hand the offer of the Roman Catholic Church:

“I know many big families who are regular churchgoers and at the same time also attend the events you condemn. ... I am afraid that if you oblige the churchgoing “Hungarianisers” to make a choice, many of them will choose the positive experience over the place that they find attractive but that does not bring them spiritual peace.”

The timeliness of the first trend in syncretism is confirmed by the presence of Christian symbols and believers at events, in cases in sacral spaces originating in contemporary culture that are basically associated not with their own religion but with the trend that the circular letter called ancient Hungarian syncretism. Examples of this are provided by the participants in the Light Chain ceremonies held on 21st December and at the Blessed Lady Celebration at Bősztőrpuszta and later at Apajpuszta, or visitors to the Attila Hill in Tápiószentmárton said to be the base of Attila the Hun and to have miraculous energy, or to the Carpathian Homeland Church in Verőce. Although the motivation for visiting these places and events is not principally religious, nevertheless in the rites and places with a sacral content they basically become participants in a religious space and action.

![Virgin Mary at the esoteric Attila-Hill at Tápiószentmárton](Photo by István Povedák, 2010)

The syncretic character of these rites, and thus the fact that they can be incorporated without difficulty into vernacular Christianity is demonstrated, among others, by the Carpathian Homeland Church in Vienna. The Catholic, Calvinist and Lutheran bishops did not attend the consecration of the site that had been planned as an ecumenical ceremony, citing the symbolism of the place as the reason for their absence. Despite this, when we visited the place we met a group from a big town belonging to the Federation of Christian Intellectuals (KÉSZ) who felt that,

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10 Extract from an open letter from Lajos Papp [http://jezusafeny.hu/component(option,com_fireboard/Itemid,58/func,view/catid,29/id,2711/](http://jezusafeny.hu/component(option,com_fireboard/Itemid,58/func,view/catid,29/id,2711/)) Last accesses on: 19.01.2014.

11 In the case of Attila Hill the motivation is to express national cohesion or the hope of recovery.
as Christians and Hungarians it was important to visit the site. The many rosaries, crosses, leaflets of the Catholic Mary Radio, the portrayal of Babba Mary\textsuperscript{12} on the ceiling and the entries in the guestbook all confirm the appearance that in vernacular religion all this is regarded as acceptable in spite of the official church position: “This is the Holy Church of the Carpathian Hungarian Homeland, even if it was not consecrated by the official Church, the Prayer of the Hungarian People and their song consecrated it in their place, because the radiation of the heart and soul and the Hungarian spirit has the power of consecration and blessing. May the love of God who created the Hungarians – Our Blessed Mother – and our Lord Jesus preserve the Church and our Holy Homeland!”\textsuperscript{13}

This same syncretic trend can be found in Tápiószentmárton, one of the most popular centres of \textit{esoteric health tourism} in Hungary. The message\textsuperscript{14} of Attila Hill in Tápiószentmárton that the place has healing energy with a beneficial effect on various disorders such as locomotors complaints and cancers seems to be so closely associated with the esoteric that we have not found any official statement on the matter by any of the Christian churches. Despite this, in the park dotted with “national” symbols (Szekler gate, carved grave posts, statue of Attila) in spring 2001 someone placed a statue of the Virgin Mary, together with a bunch of flowers and an “urn”, in gratitude for recovery. Since then many calendars portraying the saints and images of saints have been placed in the transparent cover of the urn, clearly indicating that the people who place them there must be Catholics.

\textbf{Christian elements in a foreign context}

When analysing the relationship of the contemporary pagan orientation to Christianity a number of problems may arise, the most important of which is the complexity of the trend. Among the communities classified in this category we find on the one hand neo-pagan groups in the true sense of the word that wish to revive pre-Christian tradition, as well as syncretic groupings drawing on several religious canons that meld, to various degrees, the tradition of Christianity mainly with a few elements and symbols taken from eastern religions.\textsuperscript{15} Accordingly, there are groups that do not regard themselves as either neo-pagan or Christian, and others that reject the accusation of neo-paganism. In the same way their attitudes regarding Christianity also vary, ranging from consciously anti-Christian rejecting above all the Roman Catholic Church as an institution, to trends that call themselves Christian and select among the Christian teachings and concepts. Others are striving to revive the

\textsuperscript{12} Babba Mary is the name used for the Virgin Mary among the Csángó Hungarians. The Csángós are the easternmost Hungarian ethnic group living in the territory of today’s Romania and Moldova.

\textsuperscript{13} Cited from the Carpathian Homeland Church’s guestbook opened on 4th August 2010.

\textsuperscript{14} For further details, see Povedák (2012, 2014)

\textsuperscript{15} In many cases this complexity is constructed according to the organisational principles of bricolage religion, that is, it may assume different forms from one individual to another, depending on the demands of the given person or small community. On the subject of the concept, see Swatos (1998).
shamanic, seer tradition, or follow teachings mixed with esoteric spiritism and draw only superficially on Christianity.

A good example of the ambivalent attitude to Christianity on the part of groups defining themselves as Christian is provided by the so-called Scythian-Hungarian Christian subculture that refers to the historical Christian churches as Judeo-Christian, while defining itself, as the real continuation of the legacy of Jesus – reflecting Ferenc Badiny Jós’s theory that Jesus was of Parthian origin (Badiny Jós, 2002, 2003, 2005) – as Hungarian, Chaldean or Scythian Christian. “Our basic tenet: he who revives Scythian-Hungarian Christianity is actually bringing God’s true, unadulterated Old Testament together with the true New Testament of Jesus that has been so falsified over the millennia, within the intellectual frames of the people whose forebears, as the sole possessors of Old Testament divine revelation were also given a historical task and responsibility, and they have been and are faithful to this responsibility right up to the present. This people was once called HUN-GAR, CHALDEUS, KOSITÁ, later HUN, then SCYTHIAN, PARTHIAN, and finally in their archaic language MAGYAR, the ‘people of MAG’... The facts of the historical and religious traditions of Scythian-Hungarian Christianity provide many-sided proof that Jesus and his disciples were not Jews (with the exception of the traitor Judas, who was not an apostle!)... Scythian-Hungarian Christianity rejects the reading of

16 Calling Christianity Judeo-Christian also implies an anti-Semitic attitude.
the Old Testament books as sacred documents, nor does it regard as authentic the four gospels today treated as Sacred Word, because they have been falsified repeatedly over the ages, passages have been added to them and others deleted. Nevertheless, out of critical considerations, it recommends the gospels of Matthew and John for reading, as both authors were direct disciples of Jesus, and their writings contain many essential elements of the teaching of Jesus.”[17]

The same fundamental reinterpretation and process of re-mythologisation can be observed in the case of the only monastic order founded by Hungarians, the Order of St Paul, with the interesting, seemingly self-contradictory element that a Pauline monk, Vince Árva and his two Pauline Order theories can be identified as the origin of the invented myth, namely that Pope Pius VI in a papal brief dated 3rd December 1784, Apostolicae Sedis auctoritas, in practice created a new Pauline Order. This, in his opinion had the result that the Pauline Order functioning today is not the same as the Pauline Order established by the Blessed Eusebius in 1250. He identified himself as the last member of the Ancient Pauline Order. “Rome accepted and approved my petition. Thus I am the only member of the Ancient Pauline Order. But the time is not suitable for reorganisation. Unaccountably, the Hungarian Bench of Bishops does not give its approval for the organisation of the Ancient Pauline Order.” (Árva, 2003)

Even so, his theory is also worth mentioning because in practice it provided the basis for the rapid emergence of the new mythology of the Pauline Order; in the works of Lajos Szántai they become white shamans (táltos),[18] who were the guardians of the Holy Grail in the Pilis Mountains,[19] then the Ancient Hungarian Pauline Order was formed as an institutionalised organisation based on the invented mythology.[20]

Among the sacral ures in the trend’s stock of concepts, it is probably the Blessed Lady (Boldogasszony) that comes to the fore most often. The obvious reason why it is so widespread is the Patrona Hungariae theory, according to which Hungary is the country of Mary and the Virgin Mary is Hungary’s protectress. But this is complicated by the fact that the name Virgin Mary is generally not included in the references that are almost exclusively in the form of Blessed Lady, Babba Mary. Even in this case the process is close to the Catholic religion, it has its roots in the thoughts of Catholic authors, such as the Franciscan Árpád Daczó.

In his books Daczó traces the origin of the word Babba back to the Sumerian language – thereby joining the historians of the ancient world who adopt an alternative approach, regarding the Hungarians as the descendants of the most ancient civilised people – assuming that the origin of both the word boldogasszony, and babba is the

[17] Lajdi, Tamás: A Magyar Apostol Nemzetség Vallása [The religion of the Hungarian Apostolic Nation]. http://magunk.hu/. Last accessed on 20 January 2013. The ideology clearly also functions as a counterculture: “We are not interested in whether the state recognises us or not ... we ourselves do not recognise the state forms that exist in Europe today .... We live in the frames of the Holy, or Divine Kingship despite the fact that life around us is conducted in a distorted state form and legislation is based on an inhuman constitution.”
ancient Sumerian “Bau-dug-Asan” (giver of food, beneficent goddess) whose cult was preserved among the Hungarians and after their conversion to Christianity it was overlaid with the veneration of the Virgin Mary. “Just as she was the PATRONA HUNGARIAE from the time of Saint Stephen, before that, back through the millennia into the glorious past she was the BOLDOGASSZONY. In the dispersal of the descendants of Nimrod, after the 3000 years of glorious existence of the dynasty of UR, in the sea of peoples, who preserved the shaman people, so that the sober world today wonders at the miracle of their very existence? Who?! The Heavenly Mother!” (Daczó, 2000, 13.) Since this was written by a member of the clergy associated with the Catholic religion, the teachings became extremely popular among those who attribute a special, prophetic role to the Hungarian people. In addition Daczó’s theses were soon melded with a number of reinterpretations of the Catholic tradition (e.g. the new mythology on the Paulines). József Molnár V., regarded as the doyen of the trend draws not only on folk belief and the supposed ancient Hungarian mythology, he also uses esoteric elements. In his version Mary and Jesus are light-beings: “Our people believed this creative and guiding light to be the eternal female will and called it Boldogasszony. She was held to be a lover longing for seed and mother conceived of a light bird. ... She appears in the Boldogasszony, and the creative and guiding Light works in her and through her ... at the winter solstice, at Christmas midnight (again and again every year) Light-Christ, the living Law could be born into the world through her.” (Molnár V., 1992)

Parallel with all this, it appeared just as quickly among those who do not define themselves as Christians attached to one of the historical churches. Daczó too, has spoken out against these on a number of occasions (Daczó, 2000, 51; 2010, 28), but in keeping with the way a-la-carte religion is organised, they are ignored as incompatible elements. Nevertheless, independently of Daczó’s views, the figure of the Blessed Lady also appeared earlier in subcultures not attached to the Christian identity. The most significant of these is the circle that treats the Arvisura by Zoltán Paál (1997) practically as sacred writings. In these books the goddess Anyahita from the realm of Lady Káltes on Sirius becomes the quasi progenitor and great lady of the Hungarians, replacing the Virgin Mary in this position.

A good example of this highly complex group of phenomena is the ceremony of the Blessed Lady linked to one of the main syncretic rites, the National Assembly of Hungarians (MOGY). Its many layers can be observed also in the character of the event that contains political, religious and entertainment elements, while emphasising its independence from politics and its traditionalising character although its rites meld elements from disparate ideologies, from shaman drumming, through angel healing to reiki, and in a few cases even the Catholic pilgrimage.²²

²¹ The National Assembly of Hungarians is an annual three-day festival that attracts several hundred thousand visitors.

²² For an analysis of MOGY, see Povedák (2012).
Virgin Mary and Parapsychology at the MOGY (National Assembly of Hungarians) festival at Apajpuszta. (Photo by István Povedák, 2013)

Although from the expressions used for the programmes MOGY would appear to be an event reflecting a fundamentally Christian ideology, it has an essentially more syncretic set of religious tools. This mingling can also be seen in the MOGY symbol: the Abode of the Seven Blessed Women appearing on a background of the national colours has the symbolic shape of a tent, topped with a large double cross as well as the Sun and Moon.

The Abode of the Seven Blessed Women Tent at the MOGY (National Assembly of Hungarians) festival at Bösztörpuszta. (Photo by István Povedák, 2010)
At first the Christian historical churches appeared at the event with introductory programmes, and then in 2010 they launched a “pilgrimage” with several thousand participants to the Holy Right Thief chapel a few kilometres away to a mass celebrated by the Archbishop of Kalocsa. In 2012 the presence of the Franciscan, Csaba Bőjte famous for his actions to save children and his orphanages, and a talk he was to give occupied a central place in the advance publicity for the MOGY. This Christian appearance also seems to be strengthened by the fact that each year the MOGY is held on the Feast of the Assumption.

However, if we look behind the symbolic dimension we can discover many of the ambivalences of contemporary vernacular Christianity in Hungary. The tent bearing the name of Abode of the Seven Blessed Women was at first called a chapel, then in 2009 after the Archbishop of Kalocsa protested, it was changed to abode. The official interpretation of the symbolism of the structure can help to understand what was behind this. “…we are building the Chapel of the Seven Blessed Women next to the Tree of Life. The chapel is a circular church in which seven branched tree trunks as columns support the ... 12 m high sacral space. We will portray the Blessed Lady of the Fruit, of the Moon, etc., on the columns. As these columns will be arranged in a circle, they also mark out the Centre where the eighth column stands with the double cross (ONE) at the top. The Sun and the Moon will be placed on either side of the arched entrance.”

The structure imitating a yurt of the nomadic Hungarians, last erected in 2012, thus combines the figure of the Virgin Mary/Blessed Lady from Hungarian vernacular religion with the motif of the tree of life and the double cross that, as the text reveals, appears not as the traditionally recognised Christian symbol but as an archaic Hungarian rune sign with condensed content meaning ‘one’, referring to the one God. If, besides all this we take into account the appearance of the personified Centre and the healing space foreign to the Christian concept, it becomes clear that this is a melding of diverse religious canons. This is also confirmed by the ritual events of the sacral space: the fires lit at each sunrise and sun set and the two clearly sacral high points, the ceremony of the Holy Crown and the “visit to the country of the blessed ladies” on Assumption Day.

On the first of those occasions baranta\textsuperscript{24} performers accompanied by rhythmic whip cracking place a replica of the Holy Crown in the centre of the tent where visitors can then pay their respects to it. It is a popular idea among the members of the complex subculture studied that the Holy Crown is regarded as a transcendent object, the embodiment of the nation and the Hungarian homeland. Under esoteric influences the view has also appeared that the Holy Crown has energy that is closely related to the fate of the nation. In addition, the crown and the double cross also express the unity and indivisibility of the nation and homeland, that is, it functions for them as a symbol carrying additional irredentist meaning signifying the rejection of the Treaty of Trianon.

\textsuperscript{23} http://magyarokszovetsege.hu/content/hetboldogasszony-kapolna-boesztoperpusztan
Last accessed on 20 January 2013.
\textsuperscript{24} Baranta is a newly invented, “ancient Hungarian” combat sport.
If we observe the phenomena printed with initial capitals in the description of the Abode of the Seven Blessed Women, personifying them, we find a uniquely Hungarian bricolage religion in which natural phenomena (Sun, light) appear as transcendent existing things, side by side with Mary (never with Jesus!), the God-mother (not the Mother of God!), the Blessed Women, and the personified sacral ethnic space of the national religion and its names.

The events in the sacral space cannot be analysed from a single angle either. In 2013 new sacral centres were created in the new venue of the event that was moved to Apajpuszta, but the symbolic beginning of the three-day event in the sacral centre, the Abode of the Seven Blessed Women Tent now existing only as a wooden structure, was the Feast of the Blessed Lady in which various healers took part with the focus on femininity and women. “We begin the celebration beside the Abode of the Seven Blessed Women at the rising of the Sun, greeting the Birth of Light with Csángó songs of Mary. … After the noon bells – as the Light reaches its peak – we create a tableau vivant with the help of visitors to the puszta. With this the viewers become active participants in the event, as they form the borders of Mary’s Country. The people dressed in the folk costume of different regions, surrounded by the banners of settlements and regions become the body of the nation. Setting out from different regions, women dressed in the finest folk costumes come together and proceed around the whole Carpathian Homeland. This procession around the country by the female force is accompanied by folk songs to the God-mother and prayers of our great historical figures. When all the Blessed Women of our Heavenly Queen have come together—when the sun is at its height at 12:48, literally clothed in the Sun, in the fullest Light—they process into the Abode of the Seven Blessed Women accompanied by the singing of the participants. This Arrival Home symbolises both the assumption of Mary, and the fact that our successive forebears all returned to the same place: under the sheltering cloak of our Blessed Lady, into the Country of Mary.”

Various Catholic Marian folk songs and prayers formed the central part of the ceremony; in places the texts were altered to make them “more fitting to the Hungarian people”. The changes ranged from simple word replacements – in the Catholic hymn to Our Blessed Lady “do not forget the poor Hungarians” to “do not forget the blessed Hungarians” – to prayers reflecting the syncretic teachings – e.g. “Blessed Lady of the Hungarians, our shaman king, protector of Saint Ladislas, make our ancient Hungarian Religion the shield of all Hungarians … Great Lady of the Hungarians, Mistress of the Moon, Babba Mary, be our protector in our task by the grace of the God-parent … Great Lady of the Hungarians, who teaches us to praise and serve the Lord for our own salvation, help us to be worthy to receive the Light-Christ …” – and the complete rewriting of the Lord’s Prayer: “Our Father and Mother! You, who are beyond us and in us. Blessed be thy name in the double trinity! Thy kingdom come to everyone in Peace, Love and Truth. Thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us Your sacred bread and living wine each day, and as we perfect others, perfect us too in Your truth. Bestow on Us Your goodness, so that we may do the same with

25 http://www.bosztorpuszta.hu/boldogasszony-%C3%BCCnep-puszt%C3%A1ban
Last accessed on 9 January 2014.
others. Free us from the evil one in the hours of temptation, For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. For ever and ever!"²⁶

Summing up

Besides the case studies presented here, the Christian-neo-pagan syncretism has countless examples worth analysing that could not be discussed here due to limitations of space. However, summing up even on the basis of the above it is possible to trace the essential features of the process, the most important of which is the symbiosis with the reinterpretation of national identity as a sociocultural process, many manifestations of which can be observed. On one hand, building to a considerable extent on 19th century research precedents, as part of a process of reinterpreting and re-mythologizing history and the past, there is an emerging demand for the reconstruction of archaic religious forms that can be associated with the Hungarians, centred around the chosen, prophetic people. As a consequence of being chosen by God, the whole phenomenon acquires religious features that strengthen its fluid character. This process results in a syncretism that wishes to dissolve the Christian-pagan syncretism that began more than a thousand years ago, in order to find the archaic, pure form but in reality can only lead to more syncretic accretion on the already existing syncretic religious forms.

Despite all this, the method used for the adaptation of Christian symbolism can be clearly observed: it takes certain elements out of context and interprets them from a new angle to give them new meaning. Then when this reinterpreted element is returned to the original context it casts doubt on the whole and adjusts the meaning to itself.

The main driving force behind the creation of the contemporary myths is basically the process of reconstruction of identity. The demand for sacrality also plays a determining role and in many cases can be interpreted as a kind of compensation rite, as escape from the profane reality of everyday life with the focus on the “invented” mythology brought to new life.

The syncretisation is thus one-sided, it does not basically originate from Christian vernacular religion but later appears as a process in contact with it at several points, motivated in part by the desire to use the Christian (Catholic) teachings as a basis for legitimation. This can be observed in the vocabulary, the use of concepts as well as in the visual representation and symbolic forms. The results are prayers changed in a few details, symbols that are partly given new meanings that basically throw light on three new characteristics. Firstly the demand and grassroots movement for social renewal; secondly as a consequence the individual construction and the bricolage character arising from individual demands; and thirdly the superficiality existing at the level of vernacular religion that is able to rise above the variability and self-contradictions resulting from the multitude of individual constructions. It is due to this latter effect that the whole phenomenon has survived and has not fragmented among the small groups often holding contradictory teachings.

²⁶ Szabó Andrea Asharti, 13 August 2013.
Bibliography


Иштван Поведак

Невидљиве границе
Хришћанско-неопагански синкретизам у Мађарској

Религијска слобода и религијски плурализам у постсоцијалистичким земљама условиле су не само умножавање религијских деноминација већ и раслојавање традиционалне религиозности. Ова промена је испољена кроз религијски синкретизам у коме је дошло до прожимања хришћанских учења и нових културних и политичких идеологија. У раду се анализира хришћанско-неопагански синкретизам, који се појављује као кључни сегмент процеса трансформације, који често условљава религијске конфликте у Мађарској.

Кључне речи: народна религиозност, неопаганизам, религијски синкретизам, народно Хришћанство