

Société Internationale d'Éthnologie et de Folklore
International Society for Ethnology and Folklore
Internationale Gesellschaft für Ethnologie und Folklore



The SIEF Working Group on Ethnology of Religion

Conference **EXPERIENCING RELIGION:**
NEW APPROACHES TOWARDS PERSONAL RELIGIOSITY

June 1-3, 2010

The State Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw, Kredytowa 1 St.

Foreword

On behalf of the SIEF working group Ethnology of Religion, The State Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw, Poland, and the Department of Folklore Studies at Åbo Akademi University in Åbo/Turku, Finland, we are happy to welcome you to the international conference Experiencing Religion, June 1-3, 2010 in Warsaw.

The interest shown in the topic of the conference was extremely inspiring. We received a lot of applications, a group of four experts considered them and it was quite a hard task to make a decision. We do hope that you enjoy the conference and the trip to Warsaw, and we wish you a fruitful and pleasant time in Poland.

Conference organizers

Ewa Chomiccka

Ulrika Wolf-Knuts

The SIEF Working Group on Ethnology of Religion

Conference

Experiencing Religion: New Approaches towards Personal Religiosity

Warsaw, Poland

June 1-3, 2010

PROGRAMME

Tuesday June 1st

09:00 **Beginning of the registration**

10:00 **Opening of the conference**

Dr. Peter Jan Margry, Vice-President, SIEF & Meertens Institute, Amsterdam

Dr. Adam Czyżewski, Director of the State Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw

Session I

Chair Prof. Gábor Barna

10:15 **1/** Agnė Budriūnaitė (Lithuania): What are we investigating? From mystical trance to mystical experience

10:45 **2/** Birgit Huber (Germany): Religions as repertoire and enabler. A systematic approach for a phenomenology of “experiences of self-transcendence”

11:15 **3/** Urszula Idziak (Poland): The role of religious experience in the postmodern context of religion without religion

11:45 **Discussion, coffee**

12:15 **4/** Ghanna Loot (The Netherlands): The social reality of subjective transcendent experience

12:45 **5/** Agnieszka Halemba (Germany): Policing religious experience

13:15 **6/** Lionel Obadia (France): “Your own personal Jesus”? Contesting “individualization” as the main feature of the “modern religious experience”

13.45 **Discussion, coffee**

14.00 **Lunch break**

Session II

Chair Prof. Arne Bugge Amundsen

15:00 **7/** Andrew Yip, Michael Keenan, Sarah-Jane Page (United Kingdom): Being religious and being young. A multi-faith exploration

15:30 **8/** Jayeel Serrano Cornelio (Singapore): Being Catholic among contemporary Filipino youth

16:00 **9 /** José Mapril (Portugal & United Kingdom): The ethics of learning. Piety, politics and Islamic transnational movements in a Lisbon Mosque

16:30 **Discussion, coffee**

Session III

Chair Dr. Peter Jan Margry

17:00 **10 /** Éva Pócs (Hungary): The role of dreaming in personal religiosity

17:30 **11 /** Krisztina Frauhammer (Hungary): Virtual places of cult of modern religiosity

18:00 **12 /** Clara Saraiva (Portugal): A new religious experience. Afro-Brazilian religions in Portugal

18:30 **13 /** Anna Niedzwiedz (Poland): Religious experience among members of the family of Radio Maryja

19:00 **Discussion, coffee**

Wednesday June 2nd

Session IV

Chair Prof. Clara Saraiva

9:00 **14** / Frances Wilkins (Scotland): Gifts from the Holy Spirit. Contemporary song composition in North-East Scottish Evangelicalism

9:30 **15** / Orsolya Gyöngyössi (Hungary): Crossing the sacred and profane. The holy visions of a visionary from Hungary

10:00 **16** / Kathrine Kjærgaard (Denmark): Visual piety and personal religiosity in Greenland

10:30 **Discussion, coffee**

11:00 **17** / Peter Jan Margry (The Netherlands): Visionary culture, self and the other

11:30 **18** / Ruth Illman (Finland): Religious otherness in art. Experiences, emotions, encounters

12:00 **19** / Leonard Norman Primiano (USA): Sacred ephemera: Experiencing Roman Catholic "Holy cards" in the twenty-first century

12:30 **Discussion, coffee**

13:00 **Lunch break**

Session V

Chair Prof. Éva Pócs

14:00 **20** / Arne Bugge Amundsen (Norway): "Religious feelings and their value". Religious psychology in Norway anno 1817

14:30 **21** / Anders Gustavsson (Norway): The personal religiosity of a nineteenth-century peasant

15:00 **22** / Katya Mihaylova (Bulgaria): Experiencing religion in folk Christianity

15:30 **Discussion, coffee**

Session VI

Chair Prof. Ulrika Wolf-Knuts

16:00 **23** / Marion Bowman (United Kingdom): Personal, private, public. Negotiating and expressing personal religiosity in Glastonbury

16:30 **24** / Tuija Hovi (Finland): The narrative approach to neocharismatic Christianity

17:00 **25** / Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska (Poland): "I wanted to play Judas". Performativity as an element of personal religiosity

17:30 **26** / Gábor Barna (Hungary): A local pilgrimage feast and meeting of portable procession-statues and pictures

18:00 Discussion, coffee

18:30 Summing up of the conference

Thursday June 3rd

10:00 Formal meeting of the SIEF Working Group on Ethnology of Religion

13:00 Lunch break

14:00 Excursion

THE SIEF WORKING GROUP ON ETHNOLOGY OF RELIGION FORMAL MEETING

Thursday, June 3rd, 10:00-11:00

The State Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw, Kredytowa 1 St.

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Upcoming events and plans for 2010-2011.
 - * Publication of the Warsaw conference papers.
 - * SIEF conference in Lisbon, 18-21 April 2011.
Working Group proposal: Sacred Places.
 - * Other wishes for activities.
3. Election of a three members' board of the Working Group Ethnology of Religion.
4. AOB.
5. Ending the meeting.

Chair: Professor Dr. Ulrika Wolf-Knuts, President

ABSTRACTS

1/

Agnė Budriūnaitė

Vytautas Magnus University

Department of Philosophy

Kaunas

LITHUANIA

What are we investigating? From mystical trance to mystical experience

This presentation is dedicated to the main trends in contemporary mysticism studies. The aim of the presentation is to explore the possibilities of the investigation into the mystical experience from the interdisciplinary perspective. To this end I will 1) highlight the differences between the mystical experience as a trance and the mystical experience as a state, 2) analyze the concept of the mystical trance in the works of the scientists, 3) discuss the attitude of the mystics towards different extraordinary experiences and the mystical state, 4) analyze the influence of the tradition on the mystical trance and the mystical state, 5) search for the core of the differentiation of the authentic and inauthentic mystical experience. I will refer to the investigations of different scholars of mysticism (Robert K. C. Forman, Gregory R. Peterson, William James, Walter N. Pahnke) and the texts of Christian mystics (St Teresa of Avila, Jan van Ruusbroec, the author of the Cloud of Unknowing), who paid much attention to the mystical experience.

In my presentation I will state, that mystical trance is an intrinsic transient state, whereas a permanent mystical state involves external activity as well as some sorts of internal aspects of life. It embraces meditative and not meditative states, their reflection and everyday activity. The transient altered state of consciousness may be achieved by the different means and contemporary scientists embrace this possibility. The question of authenticity of the mystical experience is crucial here. The trances, induced by the drugs or psychotropic substances, meditation, physical strain, electric impulses or psychological insights, or the demonic experience of numinosum and illusory mystical trance are false mystical trances, in my opinion, and should not be named as such, contrary to the claims of some scientists.

The ambiguity of the concept of „the mystical experience” is evident in the character of the investigations. Most often mystical experience is understood as a composite and resolvable thing. It is possible to investigate the writings, the sociocultural environment or psychological characteristics of the mystics. It is possible to research the psychical and physical states when a person seeks for the mystical trance or after it, though it is impossible to foresee, interrupt or control the very trance. An isolated investigation of any of these conditionally distinguished parts of the mystical experience, however, cannot ensure enough information about the mystical experience as a whole nor become a ground for the theory about it. Quite a different character of the investigations unfolds when the mystical experience is considered as an integral and not resolvable into pieces experience of the whole life. There is an underlying attitude that the very essence of this experience stays incognizable because of its extent (it embodies the whole life) and because of its numinous aspect (relationship with the Deity) despite all research papers.

2/

Birgit Huber, Ph.D.

GERMANY

Religions as Repertoire and Enabler. A Systematic Approach for a Phenomenology of “Experiences of Self-Transcendence”

In this paper I discuss the issue on theoretical aspects of systematic approach concentrating in religious experience. It goes along with the theoretical conception which offers to be an alternative to recent characteristics of the sociology of religion. It is at the same time useful for comparative empirical research on subjective dimensions of being religious and on common traits in religious experiences.

Sociology of religion is still oriented on a functional approach towards religion, asking for the function religion has for the individual and for society and vice versa for the societal reasons for the existence of religion. This functional approach is highly determined by secularization itself. To overcome this reduction not the question about the necessity of believe for something has to be posed, instead it has to be asked for aspects which are inherent in believing and faith. The fitting questions are: What kind of experience is it that is articulated in form of believing and faith, and in what manifold figures does it exist? Are these experiences “functional” in the sense that they are existential necessary for human beings? To analyse this questions I will present in my lecture a phenomenology of religious experiences which is based on philosophical and socio-psychological considerations.

The presented phenomenology argues as follows (Joas 2007): In general religious experiences are a kind of experiences which does not have to be experiences of God per se. But without analysing them from a general point of view we are not able to understand what faith and believing are. These thematised experiences can be called “experiences of self-transcendence” (Joas 2001), i.e. experiences in which a person is pulled beyond the personal self and in which the fixation to the own ego is becoming loose. In principle every human being is able to experience such moments of self-transcendence. Religions can be interpreted as manifold repertoires of interpretation and articulation of experiences of self-transcendence, being developed during history. At the same time religious traditions and institutions make some kinds of deep experiences of self-transcendence possible which are inaccessible without religious knowledge and interpretation (e.g. the “sacramental experience” of Eucharist and Last Supper), in some cases even theological knowledge is needed. This knowlegde does by no means have to be explicit or reflexive. It is often implicit, being embodied (e.g. van Otterloo & van Tillo 1998) in formes of techniques of asceticism, of body postures, in singing and making music together.

To illustrate the discourse of (religious) experiences of self-transcendence I focus principally on the following questions:

- * What experiences are enabled or foreclosed by different religions and their explicit and implicit sources of knowledge, and how are they experienced precisely by the believers?
- * Which experiences do count as legal or illegal (Garriott & O'Neill 2008)?
- * How much recognition does the individual and subjective knowledge get which is generated by individual spiritual experiments?
- * What experiences can count as experiences of transcending the self, going beyond narcistic concentration on the ego?

Question two and three are particularly relevant for analysing the phenomena of “New religious movements” and “religious bricolage” (as e.g. in New Age) (Beck 2008).

Urszula Idziak, Ph.D.

POLAND

The role of religious experience in the postmodern context of religion without religion

In the proposed paper I will discuss two contemporary philosophical approaches of the Christian tradition both attempting to include personal religious experience in the language of postmodern theory. The first relates to Jacques Derrida's concept of „religion without religion“. This concept is based on the experience of an impossible relation with the other, where the conditions of possibility constitute simultaneously conditions of impossibility. In this case Derrida's interpretation of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac plays a pivotal role. Abraham's faithfulness requires the dissolution of every previous faith commitment. This peculiar faith without object, without reason, without hope remains a powerful experience that in the opinion of Derrida is capable of undermining every form of religion.

The second example comes from Jean-Luc Nancy's elaborations on deconstruction of Christianity. In Nancy's "philosophy of touch" he presents Christianity as the only religion that "gives an exit" from religion. Following his lines we can consider the „Noli me tangere" scene (meeting between Marie-Magdalene and Jesus after the resurrection) as the quasi-phenomenological description of an experience where the only positive content of God's message is his retreat (fr. *partance*).

The proposed discussion focused on philosophical insights developed by Derrida and Nancy demands a specific research attitude, that is to say, there is a need to envisage a specific methodology which is meant to explore the sense of such so-called religious experiences that don't involve any ritual, any visible form of cult, nor any social binding. Their purely negative character while catching the attention of deconstructive philosophers seems difficult to describe from the point of view of ethnography or sociology of religion. Therefore the postmodern understanding of experience should be confronted with the meaning of experience located in the lived religion context that is the main topic of the conference.

4/

Ghana Loot, M.A.

Institute for the Study of Religion, Culture and Society

Haarlem

THE NETHERLANDS

The social reality of subjective transcendent experience

The possibilities of modern media and communication technologies make the message about religious and spiritual experience divergent. The central focus of this proposed paper is the communication of transcendent experiences. This paper starts from the point of view that contemporary religiosity or spirituality differs from religion by the stress laid on the subjective experience of transcendence. However, it questions the shift, as foreseen by Luckmann and others, to individualized/ privatized religious experience and a sacralisation of the self.

Spirituality is communicated by general culture in such a way that it overlaps the boundaries between religiously marked and non-religiously marked communication and „privatized“ and „public“ religion (Knoblauch 2009). This basic transformation of religion demands a re-conceptualization in terms of transcendence. By approaching religion as an evolving societal conversation about transcendent meaning and experience, it allows to grasp the social significance of religious communication, wherever and however it occurs, and therefore broadens the empirical and theoretical approaches of religious / spiritual experience in both public, and private spheres of everyday live. When communication makes things socially real, legitimate, and possible, then communication about transcendent meanings and experiences is consequential for the social reality, legitimacy, and possibility of transcendence (Besecke 2005).

An innovative approach of transcendent praxis generates a tool to locate and describe the communication of particular experience of transcendence. It follows a holistic approach of human interaction that concerns the communication of meanings in its broadest sense, through rituals, symbols, gestures, and routines, prescribed forms of behavior, ethics, myths, experiences and common knowledge. A multilayered approach of transcendent experience in the line of Luckmann (1990), Calhoun (2008) and Knoblauch (2009) is proposed. The relatedness of experience, in the sense that experience always refers to something, can be heuristically subdivided into various ranges of reference. The first sense of transcendent experience is self-transformation, this experience exceed the immediacy of space and time in that it refer to the past and the future and can be related to both the transformation of the self and the importance of a particular cultural notion of a personal higher good. The second sense of transcendence is the experience of the self embodied in commitment and connection to others opens up for non-instrumental relationships and is only accessible though the mediation of signs, gestures and communication. The third sense of transcendent experience is the dimension where the active participation and transformation in something that will live beyond the everyday social life becomes meaningful, this dimension refer to the boundaries of what is taken for granted or real by means of cultural communication.

This paper calls for extensive research of the cultural and social communication of these three senses of transcendent experience and asks whether and how these dimensions are articulated and related or coincide by means of communication in both main stream culture and particular cases in the religious and spiritual circuit.

References:

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http://www.ssrc.org/blogs/immanent_frame/, 28 January 2008.

Besecke, K. (2005). "Seeing Invisible Religion: Religion as a Societal Conversation about Transcendent Meaning". In: *Sociological Theory*, vol. 23, no. 2, 179 - 196.

Knoblauch, H. (2008). "Spirituality and Popular Religion in Europe". In: *Social Compass*, vol. 55, no. 2, 140-153.

Luckmann, T. (1990). "Shrinking Transcendence, Expanding Religion?" In: *Sociological Analyses*, vol. 50, no. 2, 127-138.

5/

Agnieszka Halemba, Ph.D.

GWZO, University of Leipzig

GERMANY

Policing religious experience

This presentation reflects on the ways in which personal religious experience is present, accepted, modified and/or rejected within institutionalised religious traditions. The ethnographic material stems from fieldwork conducted among Greek Catholic believers and priests in the Transcarpathian Ukraine. Interviews and observations were conducted both in Transcarpathian villages and towns as well as during domestic and international pilgrimages.

Greek Catholic believers lead and perceive their religious life in a variety of ways. For some participation in religious rituals is mainly about various forms group identity. For others religion primarily concerns questions of national identity and ritual participation does not have to follow from declaration of religious belonging. For yet other, smaller group including many priests, religion is equated with institutional church that has the right to decide on legitimacy of religious experience. Though for other believers, religion is mainly about personal experience of the sacred, inspiration for which they seek in various ritual practices and traditions, not necessarily supported by the church hierarchy.

Although obviously those various aspects of religious life are not exclusive and are in practice often combined in activities and perceptions of one person, their simultaneous presence may create tensions. Even if for social scientists it is long clear that religion is both about politics as well as personal experience, both about church organisation as well as individual search for spiritual fulfilment, for the church hierarchy and often for the believers as well, not all those aspects of religion are seen as equally legitimate. Hence, the questions asked by religious adherents: Should priests take on positions with regard to national politics? Who is to decide about ritual proceedings? What kind of religious experiences are seen as legitimate and by whom?

In this presentation the focus is on the strategies of control of religious experiences, especially with regard to the apparitions of Virgin Mary as well as participation in prayer groups that stimulate high emotional arousal. The main theoretical framework is provided by an elaboration of the modes of religiosity theory. One of the inferences that can be made from this theory is that highly hierarchical church organisations have to develop strict controlling tools with regard to high emotional arousal religious experiences, but they cannot completely dismiss or forbid them. I reflect on this thesis on the basis of my fieldwork material.

6/

Lionel Obadia, Ph.D., Professeur en anthropologie

Directeur de l'Ecole Doctorale des Sciences Sociales

Faculté de Sociologie et d'Anthropologie

Université Lyon

FRANCE

“Your own personal Jesus”? Contesting “individualization” as the main feature of the “modern religious experience”

Scholars in Religious Studies, and especially Historians and Sociologist, nowadays zealously support the theoretical claim that the religious sphere is subjected to “individualization” processes (be it labelled “privatization” or “subjectivation”). While sociographic analysis brings to light, in “The West” and elsewhere, the impact of such processes, religious organizations, whether historical churches or new religious movements put emphasis upon the exploration of the “innerness” or “deepness” of religious feelings. The comparison between several empirically-informed case studies (French Islam, Israeli Judaism, Asian Buddhism, Mexican Catholicism...) demonstrate that, locally speaking, the “individualistic” dimension of the “modern” religious experience is no more prominent than the “collective” one. Nevertheless, both religious adherents and practitioners, and scholars paying attention to their speech, suggest that the contemporary times are those of an open-market of religions, subjected to the individualistic logic of consumption, for the satisfaction of personal “needs”. Moreover, the contemporary cultural model of the emancipated “Self” is a powerful ideological force, compelling religious organizations to adjust with this yardstick of “modernity”. But, without disregarding the historical achievement of the narcissistic ideal of modernity, “individualistic-oriented” religious discourses can merely relate to a strategic adaptation to modern ideological frameworks, and not necessarily to the effective dissolution of the durkheimian-inspired social forms of religious moods and behaviors. Subsequently, a post-modern and reflexive epistemology in Social and Religious Sciences entails a critical revision of the inclusive models of “modernity” and “religious experience”, and especially the neo-liberal prototype (in both the economical and philosophical meanings of the term) supposed to exemplify contemporary changes in the religious sphere. A particular attention must be paid to the ways by which “ancient” or “traditional” religions have been constructed as “collective” and “devotional”, in order to legitimate the so-called “individualistic” and “reflexive” religious modernity. This paper therefore addresses two critical questions to the issue of the so-called “individualization” of religious beliefs and experience. On a first hand, to what extent the “private” or “personal” religiosity relates to modernity? A retrospective and cross-cultural glance at some “non-modern” forms of religious experience uncovers the existence of similar features before modernity or elsewhere. On the other hand, and as a consequence, what are the chances for the individualistic and “experiential” emphasis in contemporary religiosity to pertain to a change of focus in Religious Sciences (from the “social” to the “individual”, from “tradition” to “modernity”), further than a change of psychological inclination of religious practitioners and adherents?

7/

Andrew Yip, Ph.D., University of Nottingham

Michael Keenan, Ph.D., Nottingham Trent University

Sarah-Jane Page, University of Nottingham

School of Sociology & Social Policy

University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM

Being religious and being young. A multi-faith exploration

This paper aims to highlight some empirical and theoretical themes, drawn from an ongoing research project entitled Religion, Youth and Sexuality: A Multi-faith Exploration (www.nottingham.ac.uk/sociology/rys). The project, aiming to recruit 600 participants, is currently in its data collection stage, which involves the employment of questionnaire, in-depth interview, and video diary.

Theoretically, the paper draws on the concepts of „everyday religion” and „lived religion”, popularised by scholars such as Ammerman and McGuire. In essence, it aims to explore how young people (aged 18-25) from six religious traditions – Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam – understand and live their religious faith in a primarily secular British society. The paper focuses on the participants’ individual strategies to make sense of their lives not only as religious believers, but also as young people.

The paper presents qualitative and quantitative data, addressing two primary themes. The first theme focuses on the participants’ religious orientation and beliefs. Preliminary analysis shows that, regardless of religious tradition, the picture is complex, demonstrating inter-religious similarity and intra-religious difference. Therefore, religious faith can for some offer a „canopy of meaning” – a primary resource from which individuals draw in their everyday lives. Others, however, may be more inclined to draw upon other sources (e.g. popular culture, peers) in addition to their religion as the referential framework for life.

The second theme the paper addresses relates to the participants’ understanding and management of sexuality. As with the first theme, participants occupy different positions across the conservative-liberal spectrum, both in terms of belief and practice. Thus, it is impossible to construct an ideal type for each religion. This is an important reminder that the temptation to essentialise and totalise a religion or a religious believer (e.g. an oppressed Muslim woman) is empirically unfounded.

In sum, the paper demonstrates that, in contemporary society, religious and sexual identities – are multi-faceted and intertwined; a product of negotiation, contestation, and change.

8/

Jayeel Serrano Cornelio, Ph.D. Candidate

Department of Sociology / Asia Research Institute

National University of Singapore

SINGAPORE

Being catholic among contemporary Filipino youth

One of the most interesting trajectories in the sociology of religion recently is the turn to the self. As individuals are exposed to varying sources of information, the religious socialization of the individual becomes variegated. One of the observations made in the West is the rise of alternative spiritualities even among adherents of established traditions like Christianity. The secularization thesis that argues for the decline of religion, therefore, is not pre-programmed with modernization. This same research interest in religious identity underpins my thesis: What does being Catholic mean to the contemporary Filipino youth? Does being Catholic still matter to them? If so, in what ways? If not, how come? Such questions are pertinent given the dominance of Catholicism in Philippine society.

Drawing from qualitative data from undergraduate students involved in Catholic organizations in Metro Manila universities, this paper will present the emerging themes surrounding the religious identity of the contemporary Filipino youth. One can say, at the very least, that the Catholic subjectivities young Filipinos carry are heterogeneous and hence demand careful analysis.

As a contribution to this conference, the paper will present the issues that make this empirical research essential. For one, exploring the religious identity of the Filipino youth will unravel the different ways by which Catholicism is made sense of and lived out in everyday life today. It is worth noting that the idea of “experiencing” faith - more than merely believing it - is heightened among them.

In addition, the selection of respondents in this research offers an interesting angle. As undergraduate-members of Catholic organizations, the carefully selected respondents possibly offer the subjectivity of young Filipinos who may in the future be the society’s opinion-leaders as they are well-placed in their respective careers and within the Catholic Church. Hence, the future make-up of the adult Catholic believers in the Philippines may be projected.

9/

José Mapril, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow

CRIA-ISCTE and Sussex University

Lisbon

PORTUGAL

The ethics of learning. Piety, politics and Islamic transnational movements in a Lisbon Mosque

In this paper I want to argue that personal religiosity could be approached as a discursive formation. What is at stake is not so much effective changes in religious experience of specific believers but what is said and done by certain agents and actors about the importance of personal religiosity in the process of ethical self fashioning.

This argument is based on fieldwork carried out among an Islamic revivalist movement - the Tablighi Jama'at (lit. informing or notifying community) - in a Lisbon mosque. This movement, created in Deoband in India, in the 19th century, has today important transnational activities in South Asia, Africa and Europe. Although their main centres are located in countries such as UK, Belgium or France, Portugal has also received some of their activities in the last years. Here, as elsewhere, they carry out da'wa (lit. invitation) activities all throughout Portuguese mosques in order to call Muslims to the "proper" Islamic practices. The main objective of these circuits is to re-new the personal ritual practice of Muslims themselves in order to produce what they call and define as "good" Muslims and thus change personal religiosity and experience in the contemporary world.

10/

Éva Pócs, Prof. em.

University of Pécs

Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology.

Pécs

HUNGARY

The role of dreaming in personal religiosity

I examine the role of dreams in the emergence of religious experience in a Hungarian, Roman Catholic community in Romania. In this community certain types of dreams provide an opportunity for direct communication with the Christian otherworld and its figures. These types of dreams play an important part in filling the emotional function of sacred communication, such dream narratives are highly personal, emotionally charged accounts. The most important groups of narratives examined are:

1. Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints appear in the dreams as healing, comforting and protective beings usually at the time of unexpected blows, conflicts, illnesses or fear of death. These dreams are the manifestations of the protective function of religion.
2. When norms of the individual, the family or the community are transgressed, Christ or the Virgin Mary appear as agents of warning or sanction, representatives of the normative function of religion.
3. Dreams about experiences in the other world where a sacred figure shows the suffering of sinners in hell or purgatory. Such dreams have a very important normative role aiming to deter people from a sinful life and at the same time serve to strengthen and prove faith.

11/

Krisztina Frauhammer, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Sándor Bálint Institute on Research of Religions

Szeged

HUNGARY

Sacrality without borders. Thoughts on virtual cult sites

Beyond everyday existence there is an area known as the transcendent or sometimes as the sacred. It cannot be grasped, it falls beyond the borders of human perception. Nevertheless it shows itself in many ways and so it can be experienced, for example as it is manifested in this world. The manifestation of the transcendent also has another perspective. In this the focus is on the individual and his openness. It is this openness that makes the individual capable of noticing the divine presence manifested to him in everyday life. He perceives that he can name, for example, feelings and situations where the transcendent was able to influence him to perform actions with which it could reach him. This perception can be grasped, we have tools whereby we can describe it and show it. Such tools can be the rites, their prayer, song and liturgical texts, pilgrimage, etc. These mark the frames of the manifestation of the transcendent. The individual enters into contact with the transcendent within these frames, drawing on the experiences acquired in the community, that is, on his sacral preparedness.

Apart from occasions of individual prayer, until the recent past this sacral communication had a very concrete, definable place: the spaces of churches, chapels, monasteries and other sacral buildings. With the spread of the Internet the borders of these spaces for communication, including sacral communication, have extended far beyond the real frames listed above and the steady spread of virtual cult places can also be observed. The result of all these circumstances has been the emergence of very individual, very eclectic devotional techniques

12/

Clara Saraiva, Ph.D.

Universidade Nova de Lisboa

Lisbon

PORTUGAL

A new religious experience. Afro-Brazilian religions in Portugal

The Afro-Brazilian religions that entered Portugal in the last 20 years are becoming more and more popular. The temples are full with Portuguese followers that, after going through the initiation processes, become important in the organisation of the religious community and, with time, may themselves become priests. Most of them previously believers in the Catholic Church, many now turn to the Afro-Brazilian cults, which they refer to as allowing them to have new “religious experiences”. Their discourse on the different aspects of this new “religious experiences” involves the possibility to communicate directly with the supernatural, something which they complain was never allowed by the Catholic church. An important part of this “direct relationship” deals with trance and possession, a religious experience that most find “new and exhilarating”.

Drawing on field work conducted in Portugal, in temples and with followers of these cults, this paper will explore some of the aspects of this new “Portuguese experience” (which also includes some aspects of New Age) and will draw on the discourses individuals develop around this new religious possibilities, especially when confronted with the history of past religious experience in Portugal.

They refer to both the rules imposed both by the Catholic Church and the catholic priests, who, as religious intermediaries, detained the primacy of that relationship and never allowed lay individuals to establish a direct relationship. They also remember how, during the decades of the Salazar dictatorship and catholic hegemony, up until the 1974 revolution, any attempt to try new religious experiences was persecuted, and even going to a consultation with a *bruxo* had to take place in hiding.

13/

Anna Niedzwiedz, Ph.D.

Jagiellonian University

Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

Krakow

POLAND

Religious experience among members of the family of Radio Maryja

This paper will focus on the religious experience within a community organized around Catholic Radio Maryja in Poland. The radio has been established in 1991 by redemptorist father Tadeusz Rydzyk and is broadly infamous for its radical national, right-wing opinions, its involvements in political fights in post-communist Poland, and its anti-semitic, anti-global, anti-liberal attitudes. Those aspects of Radio Maryja have been broadly analyzed and discussed among Polish sociologists and publicists.

In this presentation, however, the main focus will be put on the religious experience among listeners of Radio Maryja. I propose that one of the most important dimensions attracting listeners to Radio Maryja is its religious offer. In its daily schedule the Radio includes not only live-broadcasts of religious services, but also prayers (for instance rosary, Divine Mercy rosary) which are led and shared by listeners who call the studio and pray loudly taking part on air. It is also important to realize that the Radio extends far beyond its studio, organizing regular religious meetings and pilgrimages of its listeners. The biggest gatherings take place at Jasna Gora shrine during an annual pilgrimage of Family of Radio Maryja and the annual pilgrimage of Young Listeners of Radio Maryja.

I will emphasize that the character of the religious experience shared by members of Family of Radio Maryja has to be considered in the analysis of this phenomenon. Sensual experience, emotional devotion, social dimension of this piety recalls the schema of traditional folk religiosity described by Polish ethnographers. Even the name Radio Maryja recalls the central figure of traditional Polish popular religiosity – Virgin Mary. The mingling of religious experience with national ideology has been one of the characteristic features of traditional Polish piety. In that context I want to stress that the Radio has built its power on very traditional, long-lasting structures forming religiosity and religious experience of a significant part of the Polish society.

Another issue which deserves deeper consideration is the role of new media in shaping religious experience. Traditional Polish popular religiosity was based very strongly on a sensual experience connected with „mediating objects” (cult of images) and „mediating spaces” (shrines). Nowadays radio, internet and TV influence the ways people experience and express their religion. The question here to be posed is if and how the new situation changes the traditional religious experience, and how traditional popular Catholicism adopts new media and frames them within its sensitivity.

14/

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SCOTLAND

Gifts from the Holy Spirit. Contemporary song composition in North-East Scottish evangelicalism

In his article, „A Song from the Holy Spirit”, published in *Ethnomusicology* in 1980, Jeff Todd Titon discusses the concept of song composition not through a conscious process of writing or borrowing of material, but as the result of an altered state of consciousness such as a dream, vision, or trance. Within the Christian context, „Folk Christians” - believing that a portion of the Holy Spirit is inside them - are known to acquire song texts during times of particular spiritual intensity. This may be when they are praying, singing, preaching, giving testimony, or reading the Bible. Usually associated with the Baptist or Pentecostal denominations, they „believe in the existence of a body of powerful songs which have been received from the nonhuman world” (Titon, 1980, p. 224). The aim of this paper is to further explore this songwriting process both theoretically and by documenting instances where it has taken place in recent years among contemporary Christian songwriters living in North-East and Northern Isles Scottish coastal communities. These coastal regions are known for their history of evangelical revival movements and the strong presence of denominations including Baptist, Brethren, Pentecostal, and Salvation Army. Presenting examples from four different singer-songwriters living in the region, I will explore the manner by which their songs are acquired, the effect of the immediate environment on each composer, and the importance of personal experience of „God” or the „Holy Spirit” during the compositional process. In addition to this I will consider to what extent the subject matter of each song roots is reflective of the region. In the case of all three songwriters, the centrality of God as a guiding force in acquisition of song lyrics and melodies sets them apart from many non-Christian lyricists. Using extracts from interviews conducted during fieldwork between 2005 and 2008, and recorded examples of the songs, the aim of this paper is not only to explore the concept of song acquisition through spiritual and personal experience, but to draw parallels between the songwriters and those discussed by Titon with regard to denominational affiliation, compositional process, environmental influence, and spiritual experience.

15/

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HUNGARY

Crossing the sacred and profane. The holy visions of a visionay from Hungary

Visions, transcendental impulses and apparition of saints constitute a special category of religious experiences. Unlike the high-organized systems of the Church, the visionays are in a kind of religious illegality: mostly they separate themselves and keep their experiences to themselves because of the fear of incomprehension. My study is based on the stories of a Roman Catholic clairvoyant living in a middle-sized agricultural town (c.a.18.000 inhabitants) in southern Hungary. She has been having visual and auditive perceptions in the Church of Our Lady since 2003. Along the directions of Christ and the Virgin Mary she recognized her mission in the human society. The lack of the religious education and the general immoral lifestyle of today inspired her to fight for the soul of the youngsters. She used to write letters to the state services (department of education, etc.) asking for obligatory bible classes and attached religious education. Her natural modesty and silent, contemplative temperament restricts her from organising (or leading) a religious group or enunciating her experiences in a public sphere.

The sacred experiences became integrated in her everyday life. For her the sacred and profane world have the same level of reality. The holy visions give her not only delightful visual experiences but mission, advices and instructions too. The only way she can express herself and share her experiences with her environment is through drawing: after a strong emotional and visual experience (which appears only in the church, during the Holy Mess) she tries to draw what normally would be undescrivable by words. Only during the interviews is she forcing to put the visual expressions into words and coherent texts. The aim of my essay is to examine how these transcendental experiences change and shape the way of living and thinking of the clairvoyant. Can we recognize any influence on the people living around her? The results could bring us closer to understanding the connection between the message of visions and the convictions of this religious person.

16/

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DENMARK

Visual piety and personal religiosity in Greenland

A national investigation of the use of religious pictures in Greenland (the big, sparsely populated Arctic island at North-eastern corner of the North American Continent) carried out through 2004-05 has shown, that there are religious pictures in more than 75% of all Greenlandic homes. There are thousands of pictures of Jesus as the good shepherd, just as there are thousands of pictures of the Heart of Jesus, the Heart of Mary and of guardian angels. - These pictures are a part of a vernacular religious practice. People look at Jesus and they address themselves to him in prayer, they tell their children not be afraid, because Jesus is protecting them. The pictures are also an important part of a system, which provides social security and social coherence. Pictures are exchanged at weddings, baptism and birthdays, just as they wander from generation to generation. The Greenlanders are of Lutheran denomination but many of the pictures transcend the usual denominations. Apparently they are of limited significance in a pictorial context. My paper proposes to examine visual piety and personal religiosity as a central part of religious life in Greenland since Christianization of the Greenlandic Inuit in the 18th century.

17/

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THE NETHERLANDS

Visionary culture, Self and the Other

During the 1940's and 1950's of the 20th century the catholic community in the Netherlands was confronted with a hausse of Marian apparitions, professed by visionaries receiving messages from heaven. Several texts have been handed over, stating, reproducing, summarizing or interpreting the visionary's experiences and messages. In this paper a close reading of some of the texts produced in close circles around Dutch visionaries or by the visionaries themselves, will be discussed. I will analyse how these texts are constructed and how these deal with the phenomenon of religious experience. What are the differences in the articulation of religious experience by the visionary him- or herself, which narratives can be discerned and what kind of attribution of religiosity is brought up by the reporter or annalist, who is often a representative of the church. From this perspective I will determine how the narratives of personal religious experience are constructed, manipulated, transformed and eventually deconstructed in order to enhance the values of authenticity, to recast the messages and events in more formal repertoires of the church or to reject its supernaturality.

18/

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FINLAND

Religious otherness in art. Experiences, emotions, encounters

The increasing demand for emotionally fulfilling experiences of faith seems to be a characteristic feature of contemporary religiosity, coined by a move from “finding truth” to “finding or being oneself” (Furseth, 2006). Heelas and Woodhead (2005) locate this development in the so-called “massive subjective turn of modern culture”, which is a turn away from institutional hierarchies and traditional religious authorities and towards a life directed by subjective experience. Religion is understood as an old-fashioned and rigid term and many people prefer the open and experimental notion of spirituality. Growing significance is thus attached to the personal existence space – states of mind, memories, feelings, dreams – and to the ability of each individual to decide for herself how to best nurture the personal project of inner, holistic development. Hence, Charles Taylor (2007) claims, we are currently living in a post-secular culture.

In this situation, art appears to provide an increasingly popular channel for expressing and experiences religion, in line with the post-secular watchwords of embodiment, engaging all senses and abandoning pure rationality as a life norm. The aim of this paper is to present and analyse the role of art as a channel for interreligious dialogue. What benefits can be obtained by presenting religious otherness in photography, multimedia art, literature or music? Does the creative approach enhance the experience of interreligious understanding? Can intellectual, emotional and spiritual horizons be expanded by help of art?

The empirical analysis is based on interviews conducted with musicians, writers and visual artists around Europe who in their professional work focus on religious pluralism. Some of these artists, who have their roots in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, move comfortably within the traditional frames of their own religion while others have given up a personal religious commitment, opting instead for the position of the distanced observer or for the explorative field of spirituality. From these different points of departure, the artists give their views on the question: how can experiences of religious otherness be expressed in art?

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19/

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Sacred ephemera: Experiencing Roman Catholic “Holy cards” in the twenty-first century

The term “holy card” can be applied to several different types of religious and artistic objects within Roman Catholic culture: from fifteenth-century images made from wood blocks to seventeenth-century two-color engravings; from eighteenth-century hand-painted cut-outs and parchment to nineteenth-century lace-bordered lithographs; and from twentieth-century colored and gilded chromolithographs to digitally designed and laminated cards of the twentieth-first century. The historical and contemporary usage of such cards as sacramental object, memorial artifact, collectable, or eBay commodity is the subject of this paper. A traditional Catholic conception of sacred ephemera perceives certain pieces of printed paper and words as more than something beautiful to look at, or even significant in their communication of a feeling or lesson. They are “sacramentals”, a Catholic belief that makes everyday paper holy. Observing these holy objects from the perspective of visual piety as alive with their sacredness, they are sensed as anything but ephemeral. For Roman Catholics, holy cards exemplify American theologian David Tracy’s concept of the “sacramental imagination”, a way of seeing, feeling, experiencing God in all things. Yet recent developments in the tradition of holy card design and exchange indicate transformation in twenty-first century perception of the holiness of image, if not the holiness of object. This paper will discuss such changes with particular attention paid to the new rituals relating to contemporary American Catholic funeral. Illustrated with images of cards from the last century both from Western and Eastern Europe and America, special attention will be given to the contributions that folklore and folklife scholarship on the study of holy cards, particularly the work of Adolf Spamer, Don Yoder, Yvonne Lange, Gerald Pocius, Pierre Lessard, Alain Vircondelet, and Gabor Barna.

20/

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NORWAY

Religious psychology in Norway anno 1817

In 1817 the Norwegian lay preacher Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824) published what might be read as the first book on religious psychology in Norway. After a very active period as lay preacher and founder of a vivid and widespread Pietist movement in Norway and partly in Denmark, he was prisoned in 1804 and not released until 1814. After his release he spent much time analysing what his own and his followers' "religious feelings" actually consisted of, what were the signs of such feelings, and how their lasting value could be measured. The result was the 1817 pamphlet "Religious Feelings and Their Value". In this book Hans Nielsen Hauge compares his own experiences with those of his followers, whom he had encouraged to write down and send to him descriptions of their "feelings". Hauge's analysis has many elements and lines of investigation, and it is an astonishingly rich source for studying early 19th century religious mentality in Norway and Northern Europe.

21/

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NORWAY

The personal religiosity of a nineteenth-century peasant

My paper has to do with the detailed diaries and letters written during his lifetime by the peasant Jakob Jonsson who lived in Röra parish in western Sweden between 1795 and 1879. Emphasis is here laid on material written between 1866 and 1879. Jonsson placed a religious interpretation on the events of daily life. This fundamental religious standpoint was always apparent in his analyses of contemporary events of a both joyful and sorrowful nature, as well as in his reflections on the future. The significance of prayer is evident. During a critical drought in the summer of 1874, Jonsson cries out, "Help us, almighty God!". Clinging to one's faith in God was vital to any attempt to cope with severe outer anxieties and uneasiness for the future. By placing developments in God's hands, Jonsson gained comfort and inner strength. Even after the bad harvest of 1868 he was able to write that "God has been with us through all of this". When he experienced success and the granting of his prayers, he always remembered to praise God for such blessings.

Intercession was experienced as being an effective measure for combating any anxiety he might feel for other people's wellbeing. Jonsson wrote letters to his friends giving them spiritual advice, especially when they found themselves in critical situations. If any of them fell ill, they were advised to contact a doctor who would act as "a source of help in the hands of the Almighty". When epidemics raged, Jonsson spoke of the angel of death as being on a murder rampage. A religious approach could, however, help to evade such difficulties. The moment of his own death he surrendered with full confidence into "the hands of our merciful Father".

The popular world of conception was also regarded in a religious context. This is evident when he writes about weather signs, for example. "It is the might and the power of the Lord that control both the weather and other matters and not at all the effects of the new moon and suchlike", as he noted down in 1871.

The Sabbath as a day of rest, which was an important element in the west-Swedish revivalist movement, is often referred to in Jonsson's notes. One never ground grain in the watermill on Sundays, for example, even if plentiful water was flowing through the millstream. Jonsson gives a religious interpretation of this day of rest with the phrase: "It appears that the Master of all Nature, our almighty God and Creator, even wishes the water (i.e. the mill-water) to have a day of rest on the Sabbath".

All of the emotional expressions found in Jonsson's written material indicate that it differs from that which is commonly expressed in other Swedish peasant diaries dated to the late 1800s. This increases the importance of his diaries. The contents of some Danish peasant diaries correspond more with Jonsson's observations than the preserved Swedish examples do, in that they ponder on matters and not only register them. This is an indication of the influence of religious revival movements. Influence of this nature is also obvious in Jonsson's material.

22/

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BULGARIA

Experiencing religion in folk Christianity

The paper traces some specific changes in the interpretation of the Christian doctrine in folk/ popular Christianity. It is noted that the folklore “degrades” and profanes the holiness of God, St. Godmother and the other saints. In the folk texts the saints participate in ordinary interrelations and kinship ties between themselves, similar to the relations between humans - a feature, which is not characteristic of the supra-human, holy nature of the Christian Pantheon.

Another characteristic of folk Christianity is the accent on the ethnic aspect and the “ethnocentricity” of Christian religion in its folk version. The magical thinking, which is typical of the popular religiosity of the patriarchal peasant, is also pointed out - magic is an integral part of the peasant’s everyday life, but at the same time it coexists harmoniously with his faith in Jesus Christ and the saints.

The paper also examines the “folklorization” of the main Christian categories, using the example of the sun - punishment opposition. The specific interpretation of some Christian notions in folk texts is shown through the opposition heaven - hell. The theses are illustrated by examples from the folklore of both Orthodox and Catholic Slavs.

23/

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UNITED KINGDOM

Personal, private, public. Negotiating and expressing personal religiosity in Glastonbury

Glastonbury, the small market town that has been dubbed the „epicentre of New-Age England“, is in fact home to a variety of religious paths and spiritual seekers. In this „spiritual laboratory“ it is possible for people to have many experiences induced in different ways (eg drumming, dancing, chanting, meditating, praying, singing) within different contexts (eg in a church, in the Goddess temple, in the street, in a Druid gathering, in a meditation group). Whereas in more „traditional“ contexts the individual's repertory of interpretations of experience might be limited by local cultural tradition and the prevailing religious ethos, in the contemporary milieu - and especially in a place like Glastonbury - the individual repertory becomes potentially vast.

This paper is concerned with how, in contexts of such pluralism and simultaneous multiple worldviews, the individual articulates personal experience; how experience is interpreted and negotiated within and between different worlds of meaning; and how community is perceived and performed in such a context.

24/

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FINLAND

The narrative approach to neocharismatic Christianity

At the moment, Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is the most expansive form of Christian religion in the world. The focus of its doctrine is the idea of charismata, i.e. the gifts of the Holy Spirit, for example speaking in tongues, healing and prophecy. The latest outstanding boom, the Neocharismatic Movement, includes numerous branches as well as culturally, locally, socially and even individually accommodated versions of them. The theme that all variants of the movement share is the importance of personal experience of encountering the Holy Spirit. This experiential emphasis makes it a very dynamic and flexible religious movement, even though simultaneously, it represent Christian fundamentalism in the sense that the Bible is regarded as the ultimate truth and authority for a believer.

In Finland, the number of nondenominational and independent Neocharismatic communities has rapidly grown since the end of the 1990's. These congregations are usually rather small, including 20–100 members. I got acquainted with a local Word of Life congregation representing an international Neocharismatic branch, the Faith Movement, by interviewing its members and visiting their meetings. The interview material revealed that in a religious community, where religious experience is regarded as a passport to membership, personal narratives have an important role in constructing religious conviction as well as in maintaining and reconstructing it as an on-going process. The ritualised tradition of witnessing (telling about one's personal experience of the Holy Spirit) is an eloquent collective indicator of it. Over and above ritual witnessing, personal experience stories about trivial everyday events interpreted within the Biblical reality, also in a casual conversation, play an important role in both identity construction and collectivity in a community of believers.

Within psychology of religion, interdisciplinary approaches are gradually gaining more footholds in addition to traditional psychological quantitative methodology of experimental, correlation and survey studies. Narrative inquiry as a qualitative approach opens up new points of view to lived religion. It has been used in combination with coping theory and social psychology of perception and it serves well supporting the constructionist understanding of religiosity. In my own narrative study that I wish to introduce in the conference I have concentrated on the question of the performative power of experience stories within the Neocharismatic tradition. To be more precise, I have studied how Biblically interpreted personal narrative as the shared sacred reality turns to be an active and reproductive process of religious identity-building.

25/

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POLAND

“I wanted to play Judas”. Performativity as an element of personal religiosity

Performance theory is more and more often applied in studies dealing with contemporary religiosity. However, one term introduced by this theory - namely performativity - seems to be especially useful in analyzing particular kinds of religious experience. It significantly enriches the interpretation of one's commitment to playing a role in Passion Plays. In Poland Passion Plays became one of the most expressive events accompanying Easter and active participation in them, above all playing a role, is understood as an act of personal piety.

What might be surprising here is the fact that the deepest reflection and conscious approach to the role does not only concern acting out positive characters - the Apostles, Mary and above all Christ - playing those roles for Christians is perceived as natural. Playing negative characters requires much more spiritual preparation and involvement - for instance Judas, since an actor representing and thus, somehow, becoming Judas must answer himself a fundamental question of whether playing Christ's traitor is an act of piety.

In two cases of those Passion Plays investigated by myself Judases not only answered this question positively, but moreover they had chosen this role for themselves and carefully considered how to present character of Judas to an audience. And that is a moment when the concept of performativity comes on the stage. The way of acting Judas, reflecting upon this role and applying effects of this reflection to the performance, all are elements of a very personal religious experience. And it is performativity which makes this experience deeper. Paradoxically a public event - performing on a stage before an audience - strongly contributes to development of personal religiosity and self-consciousness of one's religion.

26/

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HUNGARY

Beyond representation. A local pilgrimage feast and meeting of portable procession statues and pictures

A rather big wooden statue of the Pietà is standing in a chapel of the Franciscan church which is regarded as a miraculous statue and is visited by many thousands of pilgrims during the year. The main pilgrim feast is 15th September, the day of the Sorrowful Mary. The Franciscans are present in Gyöngyös (Hungary) since the 14th century. Their church and cloister was renovated many times during the centuries. The monks were expelled from the cloister between 1950-1990. After 40 years exile they returned back in 1990.

Portable statues, banners, confraternities in their special costumes were part of procession ceremony. Using of these objects were driven into background in the last decades when traditional pilgrimage feasts have lost their attractive forst.

The Franciscan monks in Gyöngyös are succeeded in forming a new pilgrim feast inviting again the portable statues from all over the Carpathian Basin. Portable statues and pictures arrive from about 50 – 60 settlements followed by groups of the so called „girls of Mary”. Especially in the age of the Baroque there was a great habit to use portable statues, pictures and flags, representing the great respect and cult of God and the Virgin Mary. This habit was preserved in many settlements in North-Hungary and was renewed in 2006 when the Franciscan monks invited the „girls of Mary” with their portable statues to join the pilgrim feast.

Aim of the paper is to documentate, interpret and analyze the construction of a renewed feast of pilgrimage and its role in the religious practice on different level, the parish and the monastery, the town, the closer and wider vicinity. This reformed/invented pilgrim feast luckily combines the individual and communal devotion. The paper analyzes the solemnly outward show/happaning/ experience and the spirituality beyond. The reformed feast has renewed both the pilgrimage and the parish life involving hundreds of people into the preparation.

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