

## THE SACRED SLED HILL

### ANALYSIS OF A NEONATIONALIST VERNACULAR MEMORIAL PLACE

*“I saw lots of children here today cheerfully asking their parents about Transylvania... cheerfully taking photos, laughing... everyone enjoyed themselves.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“I believe – that the created world was conceived in love – everything that can be found in it is for us and when we begin to speak the language of love – it also becomes perfectly understandable.”<sup>2</sup>*

**Abstract:** The study analyses the circumstances that brought about the syncretic memorial place in an area of concrete-panel apartment buildings in Szeged, a city in the south of the Hungarian Great Plain, its symbolism, the characteristics of the mythology used in the course of its construction and its reception in the local culture. The investigation of the “vernacular memorial place” created by a bottom-up, grassroots movement throws light on the operation of the religious dimension of neonationalism, the origin of the new myths, as well as the characteristic complexity of ethnic paganism – at once neonationalist, pseudo-historical, seemingly Christian and neopagan – and its reception in the local culture.

**Keywords:** ethnic paganism, contemporary paganism, neonationalism, religious syncretism, pseudo-history, vernacular memorial culture

In 2008, residents in the extensive area of concrete-panel apartment buildings were surprised to see that a “tree of life” several metres tall had been erected on the previously neglected Szeged “sled hill” surrounded by ten-storey buildings and mainly used for sledding in winter and sunbathing in summer. Over

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1 Comment on the site: [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged\\_hirek/mi\\_koze\\_a\\_vertonak\\_a\\_szekelyekhez/2171965/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged_hirek/mi_koze_a_vertonak_a_szekelyekhez/2171965/) [What does Vértó have in common with the Szeklers?]. Accessed on 11 August 2016.

2 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2013. 4.

the years, with permits from the building authority of the Municipality of Szeged, the number of statues erected on Vértó Hill<sup>3</sup> rose steadily with eight Szekler gates<sup>4</sup>, wooden grave markers, and a monument representing the Szekler Hymn, turning it into a *vernacular memorial place* that some people call a “Szekler open air museum”,<sup>5</sup> or in the words of its creator, a “temple of souls erected on the sacral kurgan”<sup>6</sup>. A common feature of the monuments erected in the Vértó district of Szeged is that they are basically representations in a public space of the historical and religious ideas of János Apró Juhász a far-right local politician<sup>7</sup>. Given that the project reflects the reading experiences of Apró Juhász<sup>8</sup> in Hungarian alternative history, the mythology it embodies does not coincide with the views of “academic” history, and the statues erected did not have the approval of the official historical consultation committee. Consequently, Szeged Vértó is a vernacular memorial place based on “individual or vernacular” knowledge differing from “official knowledge”, an individual interpretation of the increasingly popular new Hungarian mythology<sup>9</sup>, an analysis of which can give an insight on one hand into how the mythical dimension of neonationalism, the new Hungarian mythologies are present in the local space and community thinking. The following study is an attempt to describe the “kurgan” sacralised by the person who created the vernacular memorial place and his community to interpret the ideology behind it through the rites held there and the information given on the mythology represented, and to present the reactions of local society manifested in local public space.

3 Vértó means „Blood pond” in Hungarian. The name refers to the slaughterhouse that stood there until the early 20th century.

4 Szekler gate is wooden gate, carved by hand in a tradition passed down through generations among Szekler people (Hungarian ethnic group in Eastern Transylvania, today Romania).

5 GONDA, Zsuzsanna: Székely vicc. [Szekler joke]. *Délmagyarország*, Accessed on 5 August 2010. [http://www.delmagyar.hu/jegyzet/szekely\\_vicc/2171982/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/jegyzet/szekely_vicc/2171982/)

6 This name was first used in the booklet for the “Arise Hungarians!” Autumn Equinox Gathering held on 18–20 September 2015.

7 János Apró Juhász became a member of the Szeged self-government council in 2002-2006 on the basis of the radical, far-right MIÉP [Hungarian Justice and Life Party] compensation list, then after his exclusion from the MIÉP he became a member of the local government in 2006-2010 on the basis of the list of his own Independent City Federation – Hungarian Association. His name became known nationally for the Timișoara scandal, when as a member of the Szeged delegation and the municipal cultural committee on an official visit to the twin city he became drunk and made an irredentist speech on the reoccupation of Transylvania then (according to the press report) vomited under the table. For more detail on this, see: <http://index.hu/belfold/miep0108/> Accessed on 5 August 2010.

8 As he calls himself: “Apó”, Szöged–Csanád-(Ajtony)-Torontál Őrzője [“Father”, Guardian of Szöged–Csanád-(Ajtony)–Torontál.] The name is a fake archaism (I.P.) that only sounds traditional but there was no position in Hungarian history like that.

9 For more detail on the new Hungarian mythology, see: HUBBES – POVEDÁK 2015

## From rubbish dump to sacred kurgan. The origin of the Szeged Vértó vernacular memorial place

The radical transformation of the hill began with the *Stars above Vértó* event held on 16–17 August 2008. This was when the *Tree of Life* statue that still represents the most spectacular and complex ideology of the place was unveiled.<sup>10</sup> The symbolism of the Tree of Life practically encapsulated the entire invented and real Hungarian history. On its base are the *Lions of Ister-Gam* that the alternative historian Ferenc Badiny Jós believes to be of Sumerian origin<sup>11</sup>; on these stand the guardians (“Nimrod and his sons Hunor and Magor, our king Atilla and his son Prince Csaba, our Chieftain Árpád, our king Saint Ladislás”<sup>12</sup>). Above them the branches of the tree preserve the memory of the apostles (Peter, Simon, Andrew, Phillip, James, John, Thomas, Bartholomew), heroes of 1848 and 1956 wars of independence, János and Matthias Hunyadi, and Saint Stephen.<sup>13</sup> At the top are the “Holy Trinity” “the Father, the Mother, the Son”<sup>14</sup>, the Hungarian coat-of-arms with the Holy Crown pointing in the four cardinal directions, and at the very top “our holy bird – the Saker Falcon (Turul-Torontál)”<sup>15</sup>.



Tree of Life on the Szeged kurgan  
(Photo: Povedák, 2014)

10 Created by Zoltán Varga on the basis of designs by János Apró Juhász.

11 BADINY JÓS 1998 (The book has been published in several editions.) Ferenc Badiny Jós (1909-2007) was a chief ideologist of Hungarian alternative, pseudo-history who stated for instance the genetic connection of Sumerians and Hungarians or that Jesus himself was of Hungarian origin.

12 From the 2008 poster on the inauguration of the Tree of Life. According to historical legends from the middle ages Huns and Hungarians were relatives who originated from the mythic Nimrod and his sons Hunor and Magor (the forefathers of Hun and Magyar [Hungarian] people). Chieftain Árpád (c. 845-907) was the leader of the nomadic Hungarians during the conquest of the Carpathian Basin. King Saint Ladislás (c. 1040-1095) has been a popular saint in Hungary and neighboring nations, where many churches are dedicated to him.

13 Matthias Hunyadi (1458-1490) was the most glorious king of Hungarian history. Saint Stephen (1000-1038) is considered to be the founder of the Hungarian state and one of the most-renowned figures in Hungarian history who converted Hungarians to Christianity.

14 *ibid.*

15 *ibid.*

The *Szekler Hymn monument* was erected on 1 August 2009 at an event called Kurultáj's<sup>16</sup> "clarion call at Szeged". János Apró Juhász who dreamt up the monument described it as follows: Its motifs are two grave markers, vertical and horizontal. The former lists the constituent elements of the Szekler universe: earth, water, fire, Szekler cross. The horizontal marker shows Sun-Moon, light-dark, the 12 stars of the Blessed Lady, with the evening star in the centre which is the star of the Blessed Lady of Hungarians. Its base is a cross-section of a globe, symbolising the Earth. The front shows heavenly life, the back earthly life. On the heavenly side the Blessed Lady orders the heavenly bodies, her gaze rests on the lower world. At the back are portrait statues of Kálmán Mihalik and György Csanády – the composers of the Szekler Hymn – in Szekler costume. Creative devotion is clearly visible on their faces. The statue was carved by János Losonczi on the basis of János Apró Juhász's dream and designs by András Barta.



Szekler Hymn monument (Photo: Povedák, 2014)

In 2010 eight *Szekler gates* were erected in a row running up the hill. From the bottom up they are gates of Udvarhelyszék, Csíkszék, Gyergyószék, Sepsiszék, Kézdiszék, Orbaiszék, Bardócz [sic!]-Miklós várszék and Marosszék, each donated by the given *szék* (Szekler administrative area).

On top of the *Hungarian Altar – Altar of Light* are lines from the Hungarian prayer ("Kőbe vésve néped által Marosszék től Sopronig, Neved szálljon mint a

16 The Kurultáj Hungarian tribal gathering is a neonationalist festival organised every second year by the Hungarian Turanian Foundation. In that year the event was held in Bösztörpuszta and attracted several hundred thousand visitors. For more details on Kurultáj see: Csörsz 2015.

sirály – Ébredjél fel Nimród király, Adj erőt az öreg tölgynek, Ismét éljen minden ág, Ős hitét a nemzetednek, negyvennyolcnak otthonát” [Engraved in stone by your people from Marosszék to Sopron, Your name flies like the seagull – Awake king Nimrod, Give strength to the old oak, New life to every branch, Ancient faith to your nation, a home to forty-eight]) and on the octagonal side are verses of the Hungarian National Anthem. Beside it stands a three-metre-high carved wooden *Turul statue*<sup>17</sup> received as a donation from Upper Hungary (now part of Slovakia).



Szekler gates (Photo: Povedák, 2014)

The *Light – monument to Hungarian resurrection* sculptural group unveiled in 2012 in practice represents figures from the time of Attila linked to Szeged and appearing in the Arvisura.<sup>18</sup> Looking towards the town, with their backs towards the others, stand the chief shaman Nekese and beside him the chieftain Szöged, behind them rising above the others is “Anahita the ancient Hungarian Mother Goddess”, with the two Parthian panthers beside her, in front of her is Deédes the

17 Turul (Saker Falcon) is the mythological bird of Hungarians.

18 Arvisura is perhaps the most influential alternative concept of Hungarian history written by Zoltán Paál that represents the paleoastronautic origin of Hungarians from the Sirius star system. See PAÁL 1972/1993.

golden woman, further to the front is the chieftain Koppány with drawn sword, and the blinded Vazul.<sup>19</sup> No further statues were added up to the end of 2016.



The sculptural group *Light – monument to Hungarian resurrection*  
(Photo: Povedák, 2014)

### **Whip cracking and Blessed Lady gathering. Rites on the Vértó kurgan**

The Vértó Hill in Szeged has been the scene of various events several times a year since 2008. Each new sculpture inauguration has been accompanied by a major two-day event; other events held on the site have been a Szekler-Hungarian World Gathering in 2010, Chain of Light for Hungary ceremonies in 2011, Szöged gathering in 2012, October Gathering on 23 October 2013, Szeged National Gathering and Blessed Lady Gathering in 2014, Autumn Equinox Gathering and Hungarians Arise Days in 2015, and watch-fires were lit in support of Szekler autonomy on 30 October 2016.

<sup>19</sup> In the chapter on historical remythologisation I discuss in greater detail the figures represented.

Some of the events are religious, so-called neopagan rites (the various anniversary gatherings), that include and mingle elements and symbols associated with Christianity, shamanism, esotericism, alternative history and neonationalism. The rites that are not (only) of a religious character (e.g. Szekler-Hungarian world gathering, inauguration of different monuments) are basically vessel rituals<sup>20</sup>, that serve simultaneously purposes of religion, entertainment, traditionalising, dissemination of information and the cultivation of national awareness, and accordingly all of these elements can be found in the programme offer (e.g. crystal meditation, lectures, neopagan religious ceremonies to restore female energies and prepare for the rebirth of the MAG nation, sacral viewing of sunrise at Fehér lake, crafts market, crafts activities, whip-cracking show, archery show, popular music programmes, etc.). The most demonstrative example of this is the initiation rite for the Szekler Hymn monument. The event began with a wreath-laying ceremony at the grave of Kálmán Mihalik – composer of the Szekler hymn – in the Inner Town cemetery, followed by a procession up the hill in Vértó as Miklós Patrubány, President of the World Federation of Hungarians, János Apró Juhász and Sándor Fuksz, President of the Upper Hungary Council of the World Federation of Hungarians, unveiled the trees of 8 heroes (from the bottom up: Lajos Kossuth, Ferenc Rákóczi II, István Dobó, Miklós Zrínyi, János Hunyadi, István Bocskai, Great Khagan Baján and Ilona Zrínyi<sup>21</sup>). A marker was erected for each one and beside them oaks were planted with soil and water from their native lands, then the *táltos* [shaman] Zoltán Sólyomfi blessed each of them with a shaman drum and singing. At the top of the hill – described by the organisers as the “Hungarian Golgotha towards the light” – they sang the Szekler hymn led by folksinger Tünde Ivánovics, then the shamanic drum circle performed a song titled “Come, come, take this soul into your mouths”. In his speech Miklós Patrubány outlined the economic/cultural idyll of the interwar far-right Christian-conservative Horthy era (1920-1944), when “honest persons could advance”, and reassured those present that the World Federation of Hungarians would take steps in international forums for the revision of the Trianon peace treaty that mutilated the country after the World War I in 1920. Gyula Mózes, President of the Szekler National Council added a new line to the Szekler hymn composed

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20 Post 1998.

21 Lajos Kossuth (1802-1894) was governor and the emblematic leader of the 1848-1849 anti-Habsburg war of independence. Ferenc Rákóczi II (1676-1735) was Prince of Transylvania, who headed a nearly successful national rising of all Hungary against the Habsburg empire. István Dobó (c. 1502-1572) captain of the fortress of Eger, where in 1552 he scored a historic victory over the besieging Ottoman army. Miklós Zrínyi (1620-1664) was a statesman, military leader, and author of the first epic poem in Hungarian literature. He spent his entire life fighting the Ottoman conquerors, becoming the outstanding Hungarian military leader of his century. János Hunyadi (c. 1406-1456) was the governor of Hungary who successfully fought against the rising Ottoman Empire. István Bocskai (1557-1606) was Prince of Transylvania and Hungary who led an anti-Habsburg uprising in 1605-1606. Ilona Zrínyi (1643-1703) is celebrated in Hungary as one of the greatest national heroines who opposed, although unsuccessfully, the autocracy and absolutism aspirations of the Habsburgs. Khagan Baján (Bayan) was the first khagan of the Avar Khaganate, between 562 and 602. He had no connection with Hungarian history at all.

by Kálmán Mihalik and György Csanády. In the course of the ceremony for the inauguration of the Szekler Hymn monument that lasted a good hour, he was the first to mention the name of the creators. The inauguration ceremony was led by shaman Zoltán Sólyomfi, then at the high point of the event they made a phone call to the “chief shaman of Hungary”, Tokmak Karaul of the Koppány tribe, who was already seriously ill at the time thus blessed and inaugurated the monument via mobile phone. The event ended with singing the Szekler Hymn, shouts of Huj-huj hajrá!, shooting arrows, and in the evening a bonfire. A crafts market was held around the hill, and participants could hear lectures reflecting an alternative view of Hungarian history.

### Legends of the sacred kurgan. Historical remythologisation

We have become accustomed to find that in the case of neonationalist and ethnic pagan spaces drawing on the new Hungarian mythology the sacralisation of the given place is based on the remythologised reinterpretation of events presumed to be or in fact linked to the place. This can be observed, among others, in the case of the Atilla hill at Tápiószentmárton where local legends suggest that the tomb of the Hun leader lies under the “hill”; of Dobogókő where alternative history writings postulate that the mythical Ancient Buda and the burial place of the Árpadians<sup>22</sup> lie under the presumed remains of the (presumed) former castle and where – according to esoteric beliefs – the “heart chakra of the Earth” is supposed to be found;<sup>23</sup> and the same historical reinterpretation can be found behind the attribution of a Sumerian origin to the cult of Babba-Mary in Csíksomlyó.<sup>24</sup> However, there are no other examples in Hungary of a complex meaning comparable to the historical myths of Vértó in Szeged. In this case the remythologisation applies to a.) reinterpretation of the place, b.) the historical figures (presumed to have once existed) and their (presumed) ties to the place, c.) the past (presumed) events associated with them, and in addition to all this, d.) the (presumed) ancient religion of the Hungarian people.

22 Chief Árpád and his descendants.

23 POVEDÁK 2014a.

24 Csíksomlyó is the most popular Roman Catholic pilgrimage destination among Hungarians. Csíksomlyó is situated in Transylvania, today Romania, and by today the pilgrimage became a “vessel ritual” that attracts nationalists, ethnic pagans, neopagans, new age believers and Christians as well. See more: POVEDÁK 2014b.



### *a) Remythologisation of Vértó*

Although the origin of the Szeged Vértó Hill is well documented<sup>25</sup> and lacks any mystical or transcendental element, according to the mythology of the creators of the memorial place it is a sacral space, a kurgan that “was not only an ancient Hun burial place but also a sacral initiation site and watch-mound, and our ancient Hun forebears also marked the boundary of an area with it.”<sup>26</sup> János Apró Juhász maintains his mythology even despite such minor anomalies as that, by his own admission, the artificial lake was formed on the basis of the personal plans and voluntary work of himself and his companions.<sup>27</sup> In this way his compulsive self-justification overlooks the logical discrepancies and insists that

“SZÖGED-CSONGRÁD-CSEÉPA is in reality a sacral axis. One of the remaining proofs of this is the KURGAN beside Csongrádi road and the Fehér lake at Sándorfalva”.<sup>28</sup>

### *b) Neomythology of the heroes of Vértó – Attila, chieftain Szöged, chief shaman Nekese, Koppány*

It is obvious from the neomythology of Vértó that its creator made use of the two most important foundation writings of the new Hungarian mythology, the Arvisura linked to the name of Zoltán Paál and the writings of Ferenc Badiny Jós, in particular his classic on Jesus the Parthian prince. Apró Juhász himself says that he wrote the myth according to “THE WRITING, the TRUE WORDS, THE ARVISURA and the KNOWLEDGE left to me”<sup>29</sup>. As a consequence the “historical sacral description of Szöged Vértó”<sup>30</sup> in practice reflects the legends of the region in the Arvisura, although with minor departures, “corruptions”. For example, while throughout the Arvisura we read of Atilla, great king of the Huns, in the Vértó myth we find Attila. Moreover in the Szeged myth Attila’s death was caused intentionally by his Germanic wife, Ildikó in 489, in the Arvisura that happened in

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25 The pond known as Vértó [Blood pond] or Vöröskereszt [Red cross pond] was formed in the 1970s as a rainwater retention pond when the surrounding housing estate was built. At the same time the artificial sled hill was also formed beside it.

26 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2013. 6.

27 “I and the engineer Zoltán Fírbás, and my wife Zsuzsanna redrew the original plans to ensure that they met the required technical specifications. (Stormwater retention pond!) In this way, as a result of our changes to the plans it was possible to meet the technical requirement of the Vértó hill and the Vértó pond, as a retention pond for stormwater” APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2015.

28 *ibid.*

29 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szogedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekjele/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

30 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2015.

453 and the wife who poisoned him – who was sent to him in conciliation by the Goth tribes who rebelled against him – is called Krimhilda, Krimhilda-Ildikó.<sup>31</sup>

In the sacral account of Vértó, Attila and among those associated with him Deédes the golden woman, Nekese the chief shaman, prince Csaba, chieftain Szöged, as well as Koppány and Saint Stephen appear as central figures.

In connection with “great king Attila”, it is understandable that his burial/burials figure here, in view of the proximity of the Tisza-Maros rivers. According to the local myth based on the Arvisura teachings, Attila was buried<sup>32</sup> in one of the tributaries of the Maros river. The “grave” was guarded by chieftain Szöged, son of the shaman Maros, with his horsemen, and he founded Szöged for his mounted patrol guards.

“[...] every day for close to twenty years at TÁPÉ (THE YELLOW) they swam their horses across the Tisza to »SCYTHIAN ISLAND« the Tisza-Maros junction and rode up to the first resting place of OUR GREAT KING ATTILA in the Maros-Százazéri-Nagyéri tributary to check that the grave had not been disturbed [...] after 20 years DEÉDES THE GOLDEN WOMAN<sup>33</sup> decided with simple female wisdom (entirely rational and practical) to have ATTILA’S TRIPLE SARCOPHAGUS brought to the new main HUN camp (beside the Fehér Lake at Szöged) so that the patrols would not have to ride out there every day. Here, close to the ANCIENT PUSZTASZER sacral place he was reburied in a fitting place on the sacral axis. THE SECOND BURIAL WAS HERE. [...] As to the question of whether the triple sarcophagus of OUR GREAT KING ATTILA was later taken away from beside the banks of SZÖGED FEHÉR LAKE to the PILIS MOUNTAINS, our other sacral centre thousands of years old, I CANNOT and DO NOT WISH to give an answer!”<sup>34</sup>

In all cases the new Hungarian mythologies – including that associated with Vértó – treat Saint Stephen and his opponent Koppány (c. 962-997) as a pair and portray them in binary opposites. Stephen regularly figures as a negative, harmful traitor and the main sin attributed to him<sup>35</sup> is the imposition by force of the Christian religion foreign to ancient Hungarian traditions, interpreted as ideological colonisation. They contrast the “original”, “true”, “Hungarian/Scythian” Christianity, represented by Koppány, with the “falsified” “Judeo-Christianity” operating under the direction of the Roman Pope that infiltrated the country

31 PAÁL 1972/1993. 414, 479.

32 PAÁL 1972/1993. 489–493.

33 According to the Arvisura it was Ildikó who had the patrols stopped in 505. PAÁL 1972/1993. 494.

34 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szogedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emleklejele/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

35 For a detailed discussion of the remythologisation of Saint Stephen and Koppány, see Povedák 2015.

under the leadership of Stephen with the intention of oppressing the Hungarian people.

“VAJK (the future SAINT STEPHEN) abandoned our ANCIENT faith – CHRISTIANITY OF THE SUN – then before his death converted and offered up our country to the Virgin Mary »OUR BLESSED LADY«. When he formed the alliance with the Roman Catholic Church, HE IMPOSED THE NEW RELIGION ON HIS NATION with brutal force. He had tens of thousands of our táltos priests put to death, had the hands cut off the lute players, their tongues torn out, and had the rune writing sticks collected and burnt.

KOPPÁNY most firmly represented the ANCIENT MATRIARCHAL LAW, THE HUNGARIANS TRUE TO THE ANCIENT ONE GOD FAITH – CHRISTIANITY OF THE SUN. He resisted the imposition by blood and murder of the new Judeo-Christianity.

THERE WAS ONLY ONE SINGLE HUNGARIAN WHO stood up in defence of the faith of OUR ANCIENT, OLD ONE GOD FATHER, the MAG-GAR, PEOPLE OF KNOWLEDGE, SONS OF LIGHT, THE ANCIENT MATRIARCHAL LAW, OUR ONE MOTHER GOD, OUR ANAHITA AND THE BLESSED LADY CLOTHED IN THE SUN, BABBA MARIA, THE MOTHER who gave birth to JESUS, OUR NAZIR – KOPPÁNY who defended the HUNGARIANS OF THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE SUN WHO FOLLOWED THE ANCIENT ONE GOD FAITH, THE LEGAL INHERITOR OF LEADERSHIP AFTER THE DEATH OF GÉZA!”<sup>36</sup>

### *c) Reinterpretation of historical turning points*

In addition to the death and burial of Attila already mentioned, local myth also presumes an integral connection between Pusztaszer and Szeged Vértó, presumably because of the geographical proximity. For this reason, the Vértó legend naturally speaks about the Magyar Conquest as an outstanding event, defining it as a reoccupation in view of the belief in the Hun-Magyar kinship.

“In 896 the Hungarians returned not to »CONQUER«, but to RECONQUER; according to the decision of the tribal alliance, what had been the centre of the empire of our great king ATTILA, the ANCIENT HUN-GARY. It was not an easy matter then either as they

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szogedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekjele/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

had to break through the combined efforts and resistance of the western powers (just like today).”<sup>37</sup>

There are also occasional mentions from the reign of Saint Stephen (conversion by force, the blinding of Vazul). Both events are landmarks that opened a new chapter in the course of Hungarian history, and because of their transitional nature their mythologisation can be regarded as inevitable.<sup>38</sup>

### *d. Religious reading: Christianity of the Sun*

If we approach the site from the viewpoint of religious studies, it can be said that its primary marker is contemporary paganism, but one that is a phenomenon showing a strongly syncretic, almost bricolage religious construction. There are basically two main trends in contemporary paganism. One – less in evidence in the present case – aims to revive the Hungarian shamanic belief while the basic tenet of the more significant segment of the other (also in the case of Szeged Vértó) is that before Saint Stephen the Hungarians were not pagans but Christians. The creator of Szeged Vértó in practice follows those teachings, when he writes (in the Szeged dialect) that “The Huns and the Hungarians were never pagans! They always believed in one God, the original Christianity (they practised Christianity of the Sun, the Manichean religion).”<sup>39</sup> Further:

“Our king ATTILA was of the Jesus faith, he spoke four languages [...and followed] the true religion of LIFE-GIVING LOVE – of JESUS-NAZIR.”<sup>40</sup>

This so-called *Scythian-Hungarian Christian* subculture dissociated itself from the Christian churches that it called *Judeo-Christian*,<sup>41</sup> speaking of itself as the true follower of the legacy of Jesus. On the basis of the book published by Ferenc Zajti in 1936 *Was Christ a Jew?*, and the Parthian Jesus theory based on, Zajti by Ferenc

37 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoged-vertó---magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszulesenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szögged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

38 For more detail on the circumstances contributing to remythologisation, see KAPITÁNY - KAPITÁNY 2015: 39-60.

39 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoged-vertó---magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszulesenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szögged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

40 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoged-vertó---magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszulesenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szögged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

41 Use of the term Judeo-Christian to describe Christianity in itself implies an anti-Semitic attitude.

Badinyi Jós who became far better known<sup>42</sup> – the basic tenet of Hungarian, Chaldean or Scythian Christianity is that neither Jesus nor his disciples were Jews. According to the belief of Apró Juhász:

“JESUS-NAZIR our PARTHIAN-MAG-GAR-BROTHER, never was and could not have been of Jewish descent; he was PARTHIAN, and his mother, as a simple, real earthly mother, the FIRST GOLDEN WOMAN of that time, the embodiment of FEMALE MATRIARCHAL LAW did not and could not have given birth to him as a virgin, BECAUSE THAT IS PHYSIOLOGICALLY IMPOSSIBLE. She, who addressed her firstborn in JERUSALEM, in JARU-SALEM, the CITY OF THE SAKER FALCON, not as »little lamb«, but as little falcon!”<sup>43</sup>

Drawing on Zajti’s writings, the Scythian-Hungarian Christians – including Apró Juhász – also proclaim the teaching of *the Hungarians as God’s chosen people and their Calvary*,<sup>44</sup> *the ancient Hungarian religion of love*; and under the influence of racial theory the *view of religious history that thinks in terms of Jewish-Hungarian (sinful-uncorrupted) opposites*.<sup>45</sup> It claims that the last, still living memory of this ancient religion that even the conversion by Saint Stephen was unable to wipe out, is the Babba Mary cult of the Szeklers and the Csángós and the Whitsun feast at Csíksomlyó.<sup>46</sup>

“Our ancient sacral place, Csíksomlyó, the SACRED PLACE where our people waited for the »REBIRTH OF THE SUN – LIGHT« on the sacred sun feast day of our first lady clothed in the sun, BABBA MARIA was transformed into a site of the »neo-Christianity« imposed with force and blood. BUT EVEN THERE people did not stop

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42 ZAJTI 1936. The work of Badinyi Jós has become an unquestionable, canonised ideological basis among those who believe in the alternative descent of the Hungarian people and their prophetic consciousness.

43 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szogedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekleje/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

44 It was not Zajti who created the topos referring to the sufferings of the Hungarian people and it was not a product of the period. Zajti used it as early as 1918, but it could be found much earlier in the period of Hungarian Romanticism (it is sufficient to think of the National Hymn!), and its roots can be traced right back to the 16th century. On this subject, see ŐZE 1995, IMRE 1995.

45 These are all treated as basic truths by practically all authors putting forward alternative views of the past, including Bobula, Badinyi Jós, Szántai, and Gábor Pap.

46 On this point the influence of the work of the Franciscan Árpád Daczó OFM can be clearly seen. It was Daczó who expounded in his popular alternative historical monographs on the Sumerian origin of the Csíksomlyó Babba Mary cult. Daczó 2001, 2010.

waiting at dawn to greet the rebirth of the SUN and LIGHT, they were NEVER able to take this away from us!"<sup>47</sup>

Just as there are no clear borderlines in the contemporary pagan trend, the mythology of Vértó is also more complex. Although it reflects Scythian Christianity it also speaks of shamans (chief shaman Nekese led the burial rites for Attila, Zoltán Sólyomfi and Tokmak Karaul "consecrated" the place), and through the appearance of Anyahita it is also integrally connected to the spirit of the Arvisura.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to all this, there is also emphasis on the anti-Semitic thinking that already appeared in Zajti's work. This is present in the dissociation from Judeo-Christianity as the power that plotted against the ancient Scythian-Hungarian Christianity,<sup>49</sup> and appears far more emphatically in community opinions on judgement of the place.<sup>50</sup>

## The bipolar world view of the neomythology

It can be clearly seen from the historical remythologisation that the world view underlying it is a basically folk tale-like simplified model built on binary opposites, in which parties with exclusively good and exclusively bad qualities oppose each other. In this view the Hungarian historical events presented are also practically reinterpreted, where the Hungarians/Huns are on the positive side and those who are always plotting against them (Western culture, Jews, communists) are considered to be the negative side. In this way a continuous anti-Hungarian

47 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szogedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekjele/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

48 [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged\\_hirek/van\\_remeny\\_megkoronaztak\\_a\\_vertoi\\_dombot/2296750/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged_hirek/van_remeny_megkoronaztak_a_vertoi_dombot/2296750/) [There is hope – the Vértó hill crowned] Paleoastronautic mythology an ad hoc occurrence (the presence of intelligent extraterrestrial beings in terrestrial civilisation). In the course of the 2012 inauguration rite: "Magdolna Szelei asked for a blessing on the assembled company. – Blessed be all those who undertook the journey to Earth today, from whatever planet they have come – in the words of the teacher awakening the Hungarian soul, who also reminded us that we arrived on Earth through the Milky Way." [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged\\_hirek/van\\_remeny\\_megkoronaztak\\_a\\_vertoi\\_dombot/2296750/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged_hirek/van_remeny_megkoronaztak_a_vertoi_dombot/2296750/) Accessed on 12 August 2016.

49 "In the three centuries following the crucifixion, killing of JESUS-NAZIR the Christians of the Sun were wiped out to the last man, and the »new masters« – who became extremely wealthy – occupied the Vatican! What has happened to the resolution of the synod of that time that exists in the Vatican archives, which declared that every 10<sup>th</sup> Pope had to be PARTHIAN, HUNGARIAN?! That is why ATTILA, the master of the world, stopped with his armies before the Vatican and did not raze it to the ground, because he, as a CHRISTIAN OF THE SUN respected the ancient law, the resolution of the Vatican synod that was then still CHRISTIAN OF THE SUN!" <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoged-vertomagyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertoujjaszuletésenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szöged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

50 More on this later!

conspiracy becomes one of the driving forces of Hungarian history. In the present case the opposing parties are the great king Attila and the Germanic Ildikó who poisons him, the Christianity of the Sun Koppány and Vazul (Vászoly) against the Judeo-Christian Stephen and Gizella, who as the principal evil one also had her own child, Imre, murdered.

“The Germans-Bavarians, feigning peace and friendship, with carefully considered intent sent a woman – Ildikó – to the main camp in Nagyszentmiklós, where one night she furtively poisoned OUR GREAT KING ATTILA.<sup>51</sup>

Then 30,000 German mercenaries invited into the country by Gizella attacked Koppány’s group and killed them all. These are the dry historical facts.<sup>52</sup>

The wild boar [that killed Saint Emerich] was in fact the assassins hired by Gizella.<sup>53</sup>

He had VÁSZOLY, the rightful successor to the house of Árpád, imprisoned for years and when as he approached death he realised what he had committed against his nation, he called Vászoly to him. When his wife Gizella the German woman learnt of this intention, she acted first: she had Vászoly blinded and hot lead poured into his ears to make the blood of the House of Árpád unfit to act as king.”<sup>54</sup>

During the years of socialism, it was the oppressive regime that opposed them, the creators who intended to rescue the Hungarian people, and today it is persons linked to left-wing political forces and the West who embody the opposition who cowardly hide behind anonymity and wish to do harm.

“We were never able to bring in and erect the HUNGARIAN TREE OF LIFE made at that time because on the night before it was to be brought in those in power had it sawn up into one-metre-long pieces [...]”<sup>55</sup>

[...] was the first Szekler gate burnt? Chief Koppány’s arm and sword were broken three times, they smeared shit on the Hungarian altar and the foreign-owned press used every means of defamation

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51 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2013. 7.

52 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoged-vertó---magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszuletésenek-hiteles-leírata-5/> [True account of Szöged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

53 *ibid.*

54 *ibid.*

55 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2013. 10.

to discredit people, their determined national cooperation and will, but they did not succeed!”<sup>56</sup>

In this one-sided struggle János Apró Juhász owed his persistence to widely respected individuals – mainly on the political Right – who support the preservation of Hungarian identity, such as Imre Makovecz<sup>57</sup>; mention of their names and personal ties to them quite clearly becomes a basis for self-legitimation.

“I had that »HUNGARIAN TREE OF LIFE« carved 30 years ago in ÁSOTTHALOM, in the Forestry School’s wood-carving camp, at the encouragement of my BROTHER, teacher, comrade-in-arms, eternal example, the Hungarian architect IMRE MAKOVECZ, for the inauguration of Vértó and the »lady of Szöged«, so that we could put the crown on our work together.<sup>58</sup>

I was encouraged and helped in this by József Gregor who lived at the time in the same building as me in Szeged, Ipoly sor 7/B, my true Szöged brother, shining star of our nation who said: »Jani, do it!«<sup>59</sup>

The positive, true Hungarians have always opposed the representatives of all negative, harmful powers. Their chief qualities are heroism, the readiness to make sacrifices, to help each other, representing love in face of the materialistic world. This is why Apró Juhász stresses that the vernacular memorial place was created without any state support, through full Hungarian combined efforts, or through the cooperation of the people of Vértó.

“[...] we are carrying out this work worth several hundred million forints without a single forint of support from the state and guided by the will of the supreme ONE ANCIENT GOD ...<sup>60</sup>

Then this entire area (that for more than 30 years served as a rubbish dump and place to dispose of dead animals) was planted with trees and sown with grass free of charge, with the voluntary work of the PEOPLE OF VÉRTÓ SZÖGED, and a cultured city district was created WITH FULL NATIONAL COOPERATION, with one faith and will!”<sup>61</sup>

56 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoked-vertó-%E2%80%93-magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszuletésenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szöged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

57 Imre Makovecz (1935-2011) was one of the most prominent proponents of organic architecture.

58 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2013. 10.

59 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szokedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekjele/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

60 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szoked-vertó-%E2%80%93-magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszuletésenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szöged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

61 <http://www.fvszme.hu/category/archivum/vertó/> Accessed on 12 August 2016.



“[...] it was created through the combined efforts of the whole of the Hungarian people of Vértó Szeged, Rókus Makkosház, Dorozsma, Szőreg, and Hungarians beyond the border!! WITH VOLUNTARY WORK!! I never asked for, expected or received thanks.”<sup>62</sup>

However, the representatives of the positive side, in keeping with the principles of the religion of love often mentioned in myths of a religious nature do not hate despite all harmful intentions, do not exclude, but love. However harmful a figure he portrayed Saint Stephen to be, he nevertheless gave him a place on the Tree of Life.

“IN THE SPIRIT OF FORGIVING LOVE I put him too on the »HUNGARIAN TREE OF LIFE« erected on OUR KURGAN in Szöged Vértó, one of the branches is devoted to him, to Vajk »SAINT STEPHEN« – in the spirit of the FORGIVENESS of the true faith, the RELIGION OF LOVE proclaimed by our blood brother JESUS-NAZIR the Parthian prince, our great teacher of CHRISTIANITY OF THE SUN!<sup>63</sup>

It would appear from all this that the often emphasised cooperation and national will are self-justifying factors providing an escape from the fact of the far more ambivalent and divisive reality, and parallel with this the constant creation of enemies provides the basis for identity construction.<sup>64</sup>

The extent to which this folk-tale, bipolar world view is an ideological construct or the actual reality can be clearly seen in the community reactions concerning the reception of the Vértó vernacular memorial place.

### **Collective reception – from neonationalist idyll to “soc.lib” Mordor**

How the neonationalist, bricolage creation shifts from the ideological level to the local, lived reality can best be seen in the discourse on it. To obtain such a view it is worth examining the relevant articles in the Csongrád county daily *Délmagyarország* and the many comments they attract. The additions to the “memorial place” made over a number of years and the events held there on each occasion evoked very strong reactions from readers. If we are to obtain an objective and

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62 [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged\\_hirek/apro\\_juhasz\\_janos\\_olvasoi\\_levele/2172749/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged_hirek/apro_juhasz_janos_olvasoi_levele/2172749/) [Reader's letter from János Apró Juhász] Accessed on 12 August 2016.

63 APRÓ JUHÁSZ 2013. 9–10.

64 GLÓZER 2013. 123.

interpretable result from all this we need to make a (hopefully) prejudice-free analysis of the whole discourse.

It soon becomes obvious when reading the comments that these are verbal struggles between two opposing sides practically incapable of compromise. On the one side is the idyll of the neonationalist memorial place where the many children living in the Vértó area “already have a chosen Szekler gate that they guard voluntarily”, and who, in the words of Apró Juhász, when he arrives “rush down from their homes to their homeland, and always receive him with embraces”.<sup>65</sup> According to the opinions that can be classified on this side, the gates and statues erected at Vértó are beautiful and sacral. “They are quality creations in the interest and memory of a good cause”.<sup>66</sup> On the other side are those who entirely reject all this. In the words of Gonda who wrote an article in a sarcastic tone “the Szekler skanzen is just as out of place among the panel apartment houses of Makosháza as Father Christmas would be in the midst of a Nigerian massacre.”<sup>67</sup>

In the course of the mutual construction of enemies, the neonationalist supporters accuse the commenters on the opposite side they generally assign to the political category of “soc.libs” [socialist-liberals] of dividing the population of the country on a level that becomes part of national characterology. In their unanimous opinion, the other side are “anti-national”, do not recognise “either God or country”, and are not capable of recognising the good intention and selfless action of others and their beautiful creations.

“Now too, here too, as always and everywhere the Hungarians’ terrible lack of togetherness is in full evidence. The past 50-60 years have made such individualists of us that we are incapable (1) of tolerating others (especially the soc.libs) [...] It is only louts who always denigrate, criticise, belittle – but at the same time are incapable of positive, creative, value-creating manifestations or actions. The lout is in his element in opposition to EVERYTHING and ALWAYS. Unfortunately there are now too many louts in our little country.”<sup>68</sup>

“The local MSZP [Hungarian Socialist Party] people have once again shown what is in the bottom of their hearts! They have neither God, nor nation, nor homeland... Look, you can see that the communist brainwashing has been successful in many people. It is only people

65 <http://www.fvszme.hu/magyar-napok-szogedi-szer-2012-a-feny-a-magyar-foltamadas-emlekleje/> [Hungarian Days Szöged gathering 2012. The light is the sign of Hungarian resurrection]. Accessed on 12 August 2016.

66 Comment by JUNGHEINRICH 05.08.2010. [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged\\_hirek/mi\\_koze\\_a\\_vertonak\\_a\\_szekelyekhez/2171965/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged_hirek/mi_koze_a_vertonak_a_szekelyekhez/2171965/) [What does Vértó have in common with the Szeklers?] Accessed on 12 August 2016.

67 *ibid.*

68 *ibid.* Comment by CYT 05.08.2010.

deprived of the possibility of thinking, fit for a real consumer society, a grey, dumbed down mass, who can say such things..."<sup>69</sup>

"Personal attacks, all personal attacks. I went out to see. Beautiful. You don't have to be a local resident to see, hear, gather information. I am deeply ashamed, because this is not what those craftsmen worked for, not what they carved the gates for. It is typical that a gift, good words are received in this way. Sounding an alarm: MORTAL DANGER!"<sup>70</sup>

Basically the other side are regarded as traitors, servers of foreigners (Jews, Western economic powers), who are not prepared to cultivate togetherness with Hungarians living beyond the border, nor to recognise the glory of Hungarian history serving as the basis of the new Hungarian mythologies – that has for the most part undergone remythologisation and is represented in the works created.

"Yes, the country needs to be shaken up, there is no need of grey people, everyone must know and learn about the past, live in the present and look to the future, all this can only be done in harmony and equilibrium. [...] We must proudly recognise brothers, relatives, the family, this is true for the small family and it must be true for the family of the big nation!"<sup>71</sup>

"I welcome questions like the one the editor kindly put at the head of the article: »What does Vértó have in common with the Szeklers?« Dear Mária Germán Szabó! Dear Gábor R. Tóth! Would he have asked the question if János Apró Juhász, or someone else organised a »gathering« in Vértó of the »American«, »Danish«, »Catalan« or some other nation? (I don't dare to mention the people of David, because I could end up being driven out of my own country...) Say, if the question was put: »What do the Jews have in common with Vértó?« I will answer for you: Nothing. Because he wouldn't have dared to say a word... He should be ashamed of himself!"<sup>72</sup>

If we analyse the discourse of those on the other side representing a position rejecting the creations of the vernacular memorial place, we find a more complex argumentation. On the one hand emphasis is placed on the practical consideration, because the memorial place was built on Szeged's only "hill", a popular place for sledding, many people feared that the Szekler gates would endanger children's physical safety. On the other, the firm rejection of neonationalism and

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69 *ibid.* Comment by SZGD-I 05.08.2010.

70 *ibid.* Comment by HORIZONT 07.08.2010.

71 *ibid.* Comment by SZGD-I 05.08.2010.

72 *ibid.* Comment by TENGRI77 05.08.2010.

the conception of history behind the sculptural group appeared as a basic argument.<sup>73</sup> Beside these views, there were far fewer counterarguments based on aesthetic principles and fewer people complaining about the noisiness of the rites held here.

“Why did the local authority give its approval for the erection of a confused historical and ideological symbol in such a prominent place, for the ideological expropriation of the Vértó hill? Do the people in city hall perhaps believe in the Sumerian origin? Or did they just behave as a building authority, without considering that the memorial tree suggests knowledge contrary to what the local children learn at school? And do those who do not think this way have to look at this collection of »values« from Nimrod to 1956, reflecting confused values?”<sup>74</sup>

“Now then. There’s everything here. Nimrod’s sons, and kurgan, and Szekler gate, wooden grave marker, Szekler hymn, sacral place with Attila, king of the Huns. I haven’t even listed all the idiocies. So we are waiting for the sons of Nimrod to appear, through the eight Szekler gates, and on the Vértó kurgan there will be bacon frying at a campfire, and whip cracking, the Szekler hymn that will give Attila great pleasure in his grave beneath the Vértó, because he is the great king of the Huns. And the children will whiz down between the grave markers on their sleds, and the residents of the ten-storey panel buildings will come to gaze in admiration, and many of them will shed tears of delight. It looks as though someone has left the door of the loony house unlocked.”<sup>75</sup>

“It’s terribly tacky, kitschy. They’re putting carved gates all over the hill – will there be Szekler garden gnomes?”<sup>76</sup>

“The Szekler gates have been built right on the sledding slope that the children won’t be able to use, although lots of them come to slide down here. Why did they have to put the monument here? What have the Szeklers got to do with Vértó? Why will the festival be here? We’ll hear nothing but whip cracking all day, like last year!”<sup>77</sup>

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73 It is true that in some cases the rejection of neonationalism itself also led to an excluding way of thinking: “get out of here to Romania if you’re so keen to see Szekler gates” comment by POTZOK 05.08.2010. *ibid.*

74 *ibid.* Comment by TOROK52 05.08.2010.

75 *ibid.* Comment by YOSSARIAN 05.08.2010.

76 *ibid.* Comment by LOGARITMUS 05.08.2010.

77 *ibid.*

It is a good indication of the (initial) strong opposition that arose in connection with the vernacular memorial place that even before it was erected, in early August 2010, someone set fire to the Csíkszék gate, then in 2012 the statue of Koppány was knocked over and its arms broken off. In the opinion of Apró Juhász, who had the place built, the nature of the two opposing sides can be seen in the fact that even he was unable to free himself from the view based on dual opposites. Though both sides regard themselves as tolerant, there has not been the slightest sign of reconciliation and compromise.

“I believe that it has given strength after so much denigration and humiliation (the first Szekler gate was burnt, Koppány’s arm and sword were broken off three times, shit was smeared on the Hungarian altar and the foreign-owned press used every means of defamation to discredit me, the determined national cooperation and will, but it did not succeed)! I have been guided above all by the intention of contributing during my short life on this earth to the survival of my community and to making known the true history I have learned.”<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

Whenever international researchers visit Szeged, we always visit the “kurgan” at Szeged Vértó and their reaction there is always great (scholarly) wonder at the mythology of the vernacular memorial place. The object of their wonder on the one hand is the ideological wealth present there, the amazing degree of syncretism, and on the other the fact that it is found not in some place remote from built civilisation, in nature – as is generally the case for neopagan sacral places – but in the middle of an extensive housing estate that stands as a memento of socialism. However, anyone who comes to the place as a researcher with the goal of the desired objectivity, needs to move quickly beyond that wonder in order to determine what they are seeing here. Is it a neopagan sacral space, a historical memorial place based on pseudo-scientific facts, or a radical Right-wing demonstrative ritual space, or perhaps a memorial place making use of traditional motifs, arising from the individual level and reflecting “popular” national consciousness? Is all this an integral part of our folklore and religious heritage, or rather merely an attractive creation?

If we wish to describe it with the category of religious studies, the phenomenon itself can be defined with the concept of contemporary paganism, as

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78 <http://www.fvszme.hu/szeged-vertó---magyar-tortenelmi-nemzeti-emlekhely-es-a-vertó-ujjaszületesenek-hiteles-leirata-5/> [True account of Szeged Vértó – Hungarian historical memorial place and the rebirth of the Vértó].

shamans, spiritual beings, ancestral spirits and alternative healers all appear in connection with the rites. At the same time the figures of Jesus and the Virgin Mary, also prominent in the mythology of the place, certainly cannot be classified in the category of paganism, moreover the creator of the site and the participants in the various rites also generally define themselves as Christians, not as pagans. Even if we are aware that the contemporary pagan trends widespread in Eastern Europe are basically ethno-centric<sup>79</sup>, we cannot place in this category the alternative historians who have reinterpreted the past of the Hungarian people in a manner contrary to mainstream historical studies and whose teachings have been incorporated into the local mythology, as they wrote not about religious but (seemingly) historical phenomena and events.

But alternative historiography does not explain why two real figures, the composers of the Szekler Hymn appeared without any distortion on top of this “hill” in the south of the Great Plain.

The answer to the question of “what is this phenomenon” does not lie in the rejection of these categories, the place simultaneously combines neopagan and Christian symbolism, creates seemingly traditional invented traditions, that appear to be much more than only folklore but in reality are not that, and it tries to appear (history)scholarship, while it builds from the world view of tales and myths. But it is also easy to state that basically it is popular among the followers of radical Right-wing politics and radically rejects the opinion, arguments and actors of the political other side that it calls “soc.lib”. The neopaganism, alternative history, radical Right-wing popular culture, the invented traditions are not “the” phenomenon itself, only parts of it. Neonationalism is a fluid syncretic mass of trends that do not dissociate themselves from each other, are simultaneously religious but often anti-church and anti-institution; resting on bases that are historical but tale-like and not scholarly; traditional but invented traditions. In the words of Feischmidt in her excellent analysis of the subject, neonationalism “[e]vokes the causes and manner of togetherness, the past imagined as shared and the present presumed to be shared. Its meaning in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century [...] comes mainly from the desire for community and respect that places in the centre of discourse on Hungarianness the loss of territory and the minority communities, and imaginings concerning them, as well as symbolic forms of restitution.”<sup>80</sup> The vernacular memorial place created on the Szeged Vértó “kurgan” is the realisation of all this in local, everyday culture.

79 On the subject of contemporary paganism in Eastern Central Europe, see AITAMURTO – SIMPSON 2013, STRMISKA 2005.

80 FEISCHMIDT 2014. 7.

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