

# POLITICS AND FOLK RELIGION

## (FOREWORD)

3rd SYMPOSIUM OF THE SIEF COMMISSION OF FOLK RELIGION  
24th–26th SEPTEMBER 1999

After two successful meetings of SIEF Commission of Folk Religion in Stockholm (Sweden, 1993) and Chaves (Portugal, 1996) the 3rd Symposium is invited and organized by the Department of Ethnology, University of Szeged.

Politics and folk religion. The question is once again very timely. The Kosovo crisis, Northern Ireland, Dagestan, and I could go on listing all the tensions which appear in our world as religious conflicts. I hope that the papers<sup>1</sup> presented (and published) here will help to give us a better understanding of these processes and that at the end of the conference we will be able to say that we have learnt a great deal, and can offer our analyses for politicians who are able to make the world a more peaceful place.

This conference is an important event, not only for the Department of Ethnology, University of Szeged and the City of Szeged, but for the whole of Hungarian ethnology. This can be seen in the fact that it has been supported by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, the Municipality of Szeged, the University and the Centre of European Studies/Phare Programme.

Popular religion, folk religion or vernacular religion is our Department's special field of teaching and research. Sándor Bálint, the founder of "religiöse Volkskunde" or "Volksfrömmigkeitsforschung" in Hungary, was Professor of our Department between 1947–1964. We wish to carry on his intellectual legacy. Our current and planned research in Hungary, the Carpathian Basin, and elsewhere in Europe, our publications, regular Hungarian and international conferences, international relations and international student seminars all serve this aim. The present conference is also part of these efforts.

We have attempted to create an appropriate atmosphere with an exhibiton of photography of Magdolna Szabó and Imre Küllös in the conference hall, illustrating the conference' topic with pictures on destroyed Hungarian churches in the Yugoslavian war from Croatia and attractive phenomena of religious culture and popular religion.

Gábor BARNA

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately there are two papers missing from the volume – Margaret MACKAY (Edinburgh): "How Shall We Sing the Lord's Song in a New Land?" and Mare KÕIVA (Tartu): *People Waiting for the "White Ship" – Symbol and Practice*. The paper of Bertalan PUSZTAI: *Religion as a Support in Creating Identity* has been published already elsewhere, the one of Jaanus PLAAT: *Religious Movements and Congregations in West Estonia...* was not presented at the conference.