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## The New Cultural Economy and the Ideologies of the Csíksomlyó (Șumuleu Ciuc) Pilgrimage Feast

On its 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, held at the end of 2016, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>1</sup> of UNESCO<sup>2</sup> requested from Romania a revision of the proposal for including the Whitsun pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó (Șumuleu Ciuc) on the list of World Heritage values.<sup>3</sup>

1 The supreme decision-making body of the inter-state convention on the preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage, created within the framework of UNESCO and adopted in 2003, is the Assembly of States Parties, which meets every second year. The implementation of the convention, including the evaluation of the proposals for inclusion on the lists, is handled by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Half of the members of this latter body are elected every second year, for four years of office.

The representative List of humanity's Intangible Cultural Heritage includes three Hungarian elements of cultural heritage (the Busó-walking from Mohács, the folk art form of the Matyó embroidery, and falconry) and six cultural values from Romania (the Căluș ritual, the doina chant, the craftsmanship of Horezu ceramics, men's wassailing at Christmas, lads' dances, and traditional wall-carpet craftsmanship in Romania and the Republic of Moldova), while Hungary is also represented in the *Register of good safeguarding practices* by the dance house movement and the Kodály method. Online: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/lists>.

The other UNESCO list, containing the unique natural and built heritage of the world, which is continuously extended since 1972 (*World Heritage List*. Online: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>), currently contains eight sites from Hungary (the Buda Castle and the historical parts of Budapest, the village of Hollókő, the caves of Aggtelek Karst, the Benedictine Abbey of Pannonhalma, the Hortobágy National Park, the early Christian necropolis of Pécs, the Fertő cultural landscape, and the Tokaj wine region), while Romania has seven sites on the list (the Danube Delta, Churches of Moldavia, the Horezu Monastery, the Saxon fortified churches in Transylvania, the Dacian fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains, the historic centre of Sighișoara, and the wooden churches of Maramureș).

These two conventions are often confounded or confused in the media and public discourse. The 2003 convention refers to the *intangible cultural heritage* of humanity, and does not use the expression "world heritage", defined in 1972 and primarily referencing *natural and built heritage*.

2 The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereinafter abbreviated to: UNESCO) was founded in 1945 and is based in Paris. The aim of the organisation is to strengthen the ties between nations in the domains of education, science, and culture, thus promoting world peace and safety.

3 The nomination of the Whitsun pilgrimage of Csíksomlyó for inclusion on UNESCO's representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage was initiated in Romania by Hunor Kelemen, the president of the *Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség* (RMDSZ – Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania), at that time in government. Hunor Kelemen was then also the Minister of the Ministry of Culture and Heritage Protection. As a first step, the National Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee, overseen by the Ministry, voted to nominate the pilgrimage for inclusion on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2011. The basis of the accepted proposal was the documentation prepared

The “heritagisation” process, which consisted of diplomatic and political background activity of more than five years and some professional preparation, ended in failure at this stage, provided a good opportunity for the surfacing of the different interpretations of this grand community event.

The first part of the study will deal with the cultural economy of the use of space, time, and rituals of present-day Csíksomlyó, i.e. those late modern processes, which have led to the reorganisation and denial of local traditions, the gradual loss of the events’ uniqueness and, ultimately, to its globalisation. In this part of the study, I will try to answer the question whether these processes also influenced

by ethnographer Vilmos Tánczos. Subsequently, a specialist committee prepared the nomination dossier according to the requirements of the UNESCO, with the support of several organisations concerned in this matter and institutions from the Székely Land. The nomination dossier was sent to the Paris seat of the UNESCO in March 2012 by the Ministry of Culture and Heritage Protection. However, soon after the nomination, there was a change in government in Romania, and the RMDSZ was not included in the new government. The new Romanian cultural ministry sabotaged the previous nomination by not responding to the letters received from the UNESCO and by omitting to send the requested supplements to the proposal. Thus, due to the non-compliance with the requested deadlines, the nomination process was halted. Two years later, in 2014, when the RMDSZ re-entered the Romanian government, and Hunor Kelemen also returned to the helm of the cultural ministry, the nomination was repeated. This new submission was registered in May 2015 at the UNESCO, and was declared technically adequate in June 2016. During the fall election campaign, the RMDSZ, which was excluded again from government, accused the technocratic government of Dacian Cioloş with intending to retract the already submitted proposal before the final decision of the UNESCO at the end of the year. Finally, the retraction did not happen, but Alexandru Oprean, Secretary of State for the Ministry of Culture, did not support the submitted proposal at the session of the Intergovernmental Committee of the UNESCO, held in Addis Ababa from the 28th of November to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2016; although the Intergovernmental Committee fully accepted the content of the nomination, which fulfilled all the criteria. The nomination only lacked a minor portion from its formal part related to the national registration. This minor lack was also present in several other submissions, being thus a recurring issue at the committee meeting. In the case of other nominations, the necessary corrections have been made right on the spot by the representatives of the submitting states. The committee also proposed the nomination for “revision” in the case of Csíksomlyó („Decides to refer the nomination of Whitsunday pilgrimage from Şumuleu Ciuc [Csíksomlyó] to the submitting State and invites it to resubmit the nomination to the Committee for examination during a following cycle”), which would have meant the inclusion of a single sentence, that could have been made right then and there. However, the submitting Romanian delegation did not make this correction. What is more, the Intergovernmental Committee ultimately left in place as its final decision this unfavourable decision proposal adopted at first instance due to the request of the Romanian party (!). All the participants of the session considered it to be unusually strange and incomprehensible that the representative of the initiating state made an indecisive statement about its own submission and did not attempt to remedy the minor formal omissions whose problem could have been solved right on the spot, even seeking support for the refusal of the application in its current form (!), while the delegation of the neighbouring Hungary urged for the acceptance of the application through repeated, but ultimately unsuccessful interventions. The Hungarian delegation participated at this session as a member of UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, while Romania did not have any representative in this body during that cycle, and the Romanian state secretary was only present as the proponent of the two Romanian submissions. The other nomination from Romania (regarding traditional wall-carpet craftsmanship in Romania and the Republic of Moldova) was accepted by the committee. The documents of the committee session can be consulted on the homepage of the UNESCO: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/11com>. (Last accessed: 31 October 2017.)



at all by the institutionally propagated concepts and ideologies of heritage, which will be presented in the second part.

In the second half of this study, I will attempt to synthesise the differences and similarities between the ideologies related to the Whitsun pilgrimage of Csíksomlyó along with the mutually exclusive or mutually reinforcing elements of the different stances. My questions are the following: 1. What do the involved institutions mean by the concept of “heritage”? What do they consider to be a part of heritage? 2. What kind of ideological meaning attributions do we have to take into consideration regarding the pilgrimage feast? 3. What are the relationships between these ideologies? How and why do these ideologies reinforce each other or clash? Who, and on what grounds considers as his (her) own the part of the cultural phenomenon that (s)he him/herself qualifies as “heritage”?

## **I. The Cultural Economy of the Pilgrimage Feast in Present-Day Csíksomlyó**

Let us first turn to the object of “heritagisation” itself, about which the different ideological interpretations were developed. In what way is the spiritual heritage of the past still present within *today’s* pilgrimage feast? This is the basic question we are addressing. In order to answer this question, we first have to clearly identify the characteristic factors and processes, which determine the developments of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó in the present.

It is undeniable that this community event of great importance has significantly changed after the 1989 change of the political system in Romania. New political relations, the changed opportunities of public transportation, electronic media, the further strengthening of secularisation, commercial and economic activities, the emergence of non-religious ideologies characteristic for the period in the context of the pilgrimage feast, as well as several other factors have deeply transformed the entire ceremonial, its use of space and time, and the symbolic world of the religious festival. All these factors also mean that the social importance and the function of the customs making up the pilgrimage festival has changed alongside with these transformations, rendering the interpretation of these new phenomena topical for social sciences.

An ethnographic approach that can be considered as traditional today, presented the customary elements (participants, ritual actions, the use of space, time and tangible symbols, ritual texts recited etc.) of the pilgrimage feast, repeated year after year, and which can thus be viewed as relatively constant in a historical context, and attempted to explore the symbolical or social (contextual and pragmatic) religious meanings of these elements. This paradigm supposes that the pilgrimage

feast possesses a constant, more or less traditional structure, representing the topic of ethnographic and anthropological research.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, it has to be understood that the change of the pilgrimage feast's custom structure is of such proportions – considering the event as a whole – that it indeed questions the “central” importance and “constancy” of the elements previously believed to be of essential importance and even the self-identity of today's pilgrimage feast. The point is that the uncontrolled and uncontrollable processes of the postmodern period radically alter the entire traditional structure of the pilgrimage feast. Important custom elements disappear along with their meanings and functions, while new, more or less ritualised events constantly appear and even acquire central importance. Thus, it becomes questionable whether we can speak of today's pilgrimage practice as a single, large ritual event, which takes place according to a constant scenario and has religious cleansing and the cathartic experience as its central and sole purpose.<sup>5</sup>

The great ritual drama of the pilgrimage feast originally had an organised structure and the stability of its elements was provided by a ceremonial well-known for the participants. As this structure seems to be collapsing today, its ethnographic analysis is also in the process of becoming objectless. The aim of today's ethnography is not to describe and explain the supposedly permanent ceremonial and the structure of the pilgrimage feast, but to capture the nature of the changes.<sup>6</sup> In such a paradigm, the ethnographic texts, visual documents etc. related to the former pilgrimage feasts of Csíksomlyó are recast as the historical bibliography and the data corpus related to an event of the past.

Today's ethnological and anthropological bibliography undoubtedly offers many methodological clues for the interpretation of the present changes. If we consider the pilgrimage feast as a ritual event of a spectacular character, which is realised in space and time, or as a visual “spectacle”, then the process of its present transformation seems to be graspable also from the perspective of the *cultural economical view*, developed and applied by anthropology during the last decades for analysing the economy of space use and of existence within space.

The novelty of French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre's (1991) interpretation of space, created in 1974 but only becoming better known after the publication of the English translation of his volume in 1991, consisted in drawing the attention of social researchers to the subjective character of space and its

4 In recent years, some researchers described and interpreted the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage, in whole or in part, as a “pre-written”, great, ritualistic community drama or part of such a drama (Vass 2009, Tánczos 2016a, and in a historical context, Mohay 2009). They based their analyses on the theory Victor Turner, who interpreted pilgrimages as social dramas (Turner 1974) and emphasised in his book co-written with Edith Turner the initiatory character of the pilgrimages' ritual dramas (Turner–Turner 1978).

5 On this catharsis, see: Tánczos 2016a: 13–24.

6 In the closing chapter of his book on the history of the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage up to 1949, with an outlook on the pilgrimage practices revitalised after 1990, Tamás Mohay hints at the three major directions of contemporary changes: 1. the increase in mass attraction, 2. the ever stronger role of the officials organising the pilgrimage, and 3. the growing importance of the profane, “accessory” events, the so-called “annexed parts” (Mohay 2009: 256–257).



humanly constructed nature. Formerly, it was only the humanised, subjective character of experienced time and collective ritual practices taking place within time that was evident for researches, or in other words, the fact that the construction, i.e. the structuring of time, the attribution of meaning to time segments, and the ritual manifestation of these meanings represented the creation of time in the image of man. Lefebvre's conception of space extended this subjectivism and humanised character to space. He emphasises that it is us humans and society that attribute meanings to certain parts of space and fill space with rituals, forming it according to our own image in the most concrete manner. According to this conception, the landscape is not nature as an originally given framework of human activity, but it is always created as a historical reality through human activity and always exists only in relationship with man. Lefebvre's recognition means in fact that we deal with space culturally, "creating" and "producing" it *in the same manner* in which we attribute community contents to time, and we also produce our rites taking place in space-time accordingly, all these activities being organised on the basis of a certain cultural economy.<sup>7</sup>

In the following, I will make certain comments on the changes within the economy of spatial, temporal, and ritual manifestations of today's pilgrimage feasts of Csíksomlyó. I will analyse the change process of the pilgrimage feast on the basis of Theano S. Terkenli's conceptual categories related to the cultural economy of space, which are applied by several researchers<sup>8</sup>, while simultaneously also extending these conceptual categories to the economy of temporal and community rituals. These categories, constructed in the spirit of the Lefebvreian theory of space, seem to be appropriate for nuancing, or more exactly, adequately grasping those phenomena of the process called, simplistically and broadly, "globalisation", which can be observed currently in the case of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Breakdown and Blending of Borders (*Enworldment Processes*)**

The spatial, temporal, and social barriers of traditional societies become uncertain, blend into each other or break down completely during the first stage of the transformation processes characteristic for the modern age. These so-called

7 The word 'economy' is used here in the sense of 'the arrangement or mode of operation of something', and accordingly, the term, 'cultural economy' (which is already a well-established notion in so called cultural studies or researches related to cultural geography) is used with reference to the economic activity related to space, time, cultural and ritual manifestations.

8 The theory on the cultural economy of space and the concepts employed for its analysis were developed by Theano S. Terkenli in one of his studies published in 2002 (Terkenli 2002). This research perspective and the related conceptual categories were employed by several authors in the collective study volume entitled *Landscapes of a New Cultural Economy*.

9 Theano S. Terkenli considers *globalisation* to be a too broad and thus elusive term. In his opinion, it lacks nuances and details so much that we cannot use it to state anything about the geographic dimensions of the dynamics of change. It is for this reason that he proposes instead the introduction of the concepts of *enworldment*, *unworldment*, *deworldment*, and *transworldment*, through which the stages leading up to globalisation can be more specifically apprehended. On this justification, see: Terkenli-D'Hautesserre 2006: 7.



*enworldment* processes obscure the borders of actually or conceptually existing worlds, thus pressing distinct worlds into a single unity.<sup>10</sup>

Through the *enworldment* processes, the worlds that blend and melt into each other become familiar for modern people, since the breakdown of barriers between the different worlds occurs precisely in the spirit of a familiar occupation and an unscrupulous expropriation. It becomes clear especially during the pilgrimage feasts that the visitors of the place of worship in Csíksomlyó are not only religious pilgrims but also consumers who come to buy and consume locally, or take home with themselves all that is being sold here. When pilgrims take possession of the place of worship in a profane manner, as consumers, then the difference between *the sacred and the profane* disappears, and the two become indistinguishable as a result: religious experience and the beautiful natural landscape is commodified, not to mention the great quantity of religious and profane objects, as well as the different possibilities and technological means of entertainment.

It is to be especially emphasised that, in today's electronic age the consumption of landscapes, symbols, media representations (e.g. at the level of photographs and videos), institutional media products (e.g. newspaper articles, illustrated reports, TV programmes, documentaries) and even their production by the consumer within the framework of the so-called *prosumer* culture<sup>11</sup> are increasingly becoming important compared to actual consumption. The idealised image of Csíksomlyó, communicated about the place of worship, was a saleable commodity in the traditional world as well (for instance, postal cards, photographs, and drawings representing the place of worship were very much sought after), but the consumption of real and virtual images (coloured photo albums, DVDs, television broadcasts, Internet websites etc.) has now grown to larger proportions than ever before.

The blending of spatial borders is also expressed through the blending of *the cultural and the natural landscape*. The place of worship simultaneously offers the cultural experience of its harmoniously arranged architectural ensemble and the landscape experience of its unique natural environment. Thus, visiting Csíksomlyó can be simultaneously a sacred practice and an excursion. There are many people for whom the latter aspect is more important: all kinds of merry picnics are held and social life is very lively around the area during the pilgrimage feast, even during the sacred mass held on Holy Saturday. The pleasant buzz of the loudspeakers transmitting religious programmes and the sounds of the holy masses reach only fragmentarily the ears of the participants of this half-religious and half-profane excursion.

10 The blurring of spatial geographic boundaries is illustrated quite well by the disappearance of the differences between the village and the city. In a social sense, the conflation of the spheres of home life, workplace environment, and leisure time can also be considered an example for this phenomenon. Zoos and parks, especially English parks, characteristically express the amalgamation of civilising and natural space.

11 The term "*prosumer*" was created from the combination of the words "*producer*" and "*consumer*". It refers to the current emancipated cultural consumer, who simultaneously produces and consumes cultural goods within the same space. His emancipation consists in eliminating the intermediaries and the manipulative information controlled by others.



While some spaces of the place of worship from Csíksomlyó are very strongly profiled during the pilgrimage feast, others remain in the background. In other words, the scene has a clearly visible, strongly ideologised and mediatised part, but also an invisible, “secondary” or “rear” section, which is not planned and remains outside the space of the events taking place in the foreground. For example, the scenes of the various profane activities (eating, personal hygiene, housing, buying, entertainment, profane merrymaking, excursion, etc.) can represent such posterior, and as it were, “superfluous” landscapes of the pilgrimage feast. These locations only constitute an organisational issue and are never brought to the foreground from behind the scenes. Nevertheless, they still can be an important part of the pilgrimage feast event itself. The borders of these two spaces sometimes blend into each other, and the “secondary” spaces can sometimes enter into focus. For instance, during the procession, its entire route is sanctified, and the space of previously profane activities can become prominently sacred at the Holy Communion offered to the crowd during the mass held in the valley etc.

The dichotomy of the central stage and the periphery from behind the place of worship is determinant even when no pilgrimage feast or religious festival is taking place. Csíksomlyó’s character as a place of worship has defined the life world of the entire settlement. The “auxiliary” spaces of the catering industry, commerce, and entertainment were built around the central spaces of the stage.

Only a small part of the former pilgrimage traditions associated with the place of worship appear in some form in today’s pilgrimage practice, and an even smaller part has been preserved as a central element of the current pilgrimage feasts. Such a ritual element can be identified, first of all, in the religious procession, which the Church characteristically considers to be primarily worthy of “heritagisation”, and then in the practice of touching the devotional statue, in making the way of the cross, visiting the chapels, and naturally, the High Mass of the pilgrimage feast. Other traditional elements were so much on the periphery that the official Church did not even know of their existence (e.g. watching the sun at Whitsun dawn<sup>12</sup>, worshipping the devotional statue as a lunar goddess, collecting medicinal plants, etc.), or did not pay any attention to them (e.g. the popular liturgical tradition of sleeping in the church, internal organisational forms of the pilgrim groups, local traditions of pilgrimage, etc.). Today, it is possible for some of these peripheral phenomena to take a prominent position (e.g. the Church itself notices and “centralises” the previously ignored vigil of the pilgrimage feast, neo-pagan cults and the electronic media show strong interest for the ritual of waiting for the sun at Whitsun dawn, etc.), but generally it is more characteristic for the older popular traditions to fall into oblivion from their peripheral position and then to disappear completely. Thus, only a fragment of the traditional order of customs associated with the pilgrimage feast is still in existence today.

12 The non-public character of the sun watching ritual from Whitsun dawn is well illustrated by the fact that writer Sándor Fodor was the first to offer an account of this old ritual involving a large crowd, in his book entitled *Tíz üveg borvíz. Tűnődés séta közben* [Ten Bottles of Mineral Water: Reflections During a Walk] (Bukarest, Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1979).

Under today's modern conditions, only some of the ritual and spatial elements gain access to the central, theatrical space of the pilgrimage feast. These elements can be older traditions, but sometimes also newly created spaces and rituals. The elements of the pilgrimage considered to be "significant" structure themselves around the attractions and privileged places of the religious festival. As the landscape and culture are put on the stage, they simultaneously become consumable and are sold out to the omnivorous appetite of a homogenised mass taste.

At the same time, the pilgrimage has an "unimportant" part from behind the stage, which is not at all sacralised and is only minimally mediatised, but can also be commodified according to the laws of the market. It is clearly visible that the transformation of Csíksomlyó into a Hungarian national place of worship has also led to a complete reorganisation of the locality's entire social life, and to the change of the relationship between personal life and public existence. (This is, of course, not a unique phenomenon: in many places of the world, the life world of certain cities and villages is transformed due to being visited simultaneously or continually by a great mass of tourists.)

The possibility of choosing between spaces and the rituals taking place in them, as well as the rise of the consumerist attitude also means that the participants of the pilgrimage feasts are lacking today the clear boundaries of their personality. Formerly, pilgrims coming from the Székely Land and Moldavia hardly took any money with them; in fact some of them did not carry any money at all on the pilgrimage. They were solely and exclusively interested in meeting the Sacred in Csíksomlyó. These people had a definite character and were not interested either in buying, profane entertainment, or the idea of expressing any non-religious ideology (e.g. national identification).<sup>13</sup> Today however, the entire pilgrimage feast can be thought of as a collection of optional activities going on in different spaces and at different times, but usually based on consumption, or as the result of different processes and possible connections, rather than as encompassing religious ritual practices, strongly localised and obligatory for individuals.

### **Completely Collapsed Older Worlds (*Unworldment* Processes)**

The dissolution, blending, and uncertainty of former spatial and temporal structures, as well as of the ritual order regulated by the community – in other words, the series of *enworldment* processes – threaten with the complete liquidation of the traditional worlds through these processes and with the loss of the place's original identity. The so-called *unworldment* processes denote the complete demolition and dissolution of what is traditional (Terkenli 2002, Terkenli-D'Hauteserre 2006). Since personal and community identities are primarily related to certain spaces and to the collective rituals held in them, former identities disintegrate and are

13 I have observed this behaviour in the case of all the Moldavian pilgrimage leaders with whom I had close contact during the 1990s. Ilona Elek, the wife of István Jancsi (1920–2004), who was a pilgrimage leader from the village of Szitás (Nicorești), looked down upon and sometimes even severely criticised those younger women from her group who took more significant amounts of money with them in order to buy giftware.





annihilated along with the identity of the spaces. (At the same time, one has to note that individual and community identities are also reproduced in another, renewed form. However, this reproduction does not have anything to do with the disappeared traditions anymore. For instance, ethnic, racial, and local identities, or identities based on sexual orientation, as well as new identities organised on the basis of other cultural sign systems can develop instead of the disappeared identities.<sup>14</sup>)

The liquidation of older and traditional social-spatial structures and the cessation of community rituals are both signs of the traditional world's disappearance. In the case of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó, complete breakdown (*unworldment*) would take place if the crowd of several hundred thousand participants would become completely faceless and internally unstructured. This did not happen (yet?) in such a radical form, but the continuous decrease in importance of the internal structure based on the older traditions of the place of worship (pilgrim groups, geographical regions, and other organisational units) within the ritual order of the pilgrimage feast as a whole is surely a symptom for it. A decreasing proportion of the participants belong to traditionally organised pilgrim groups, and even these remaining groups often disintegrate during the pilgrimage feast, or in other words, they do not always behave as cultural units. Generally, the population of a locality only organises itself into a single unit for the time of arrival to the place of worship or the holy pilgrimage mass. It is a newly developed characteristic practice that people arriving at the pilgrimage site with different vehicles join the pedestrian pilgrim groups at a pre-arranged time and place, where they change into folk costumes, take out and install the religious insignia, and form larger pilgrim groups. However, these units only organise themselves for the time of the procession to the place of worship or of the Whitsun religious procession and often already dissolve during the holy pilgrimage mass. This increasing uncertainty of the group borders is also a typical decay phenomenon (*enworldment* process). In several cases, farther or smaller localities have ceased to organise their own pilgrim groups, although individual pilgrims continue to participate in large numbers at the religious festival. At the same time, today's pilgrimage feasts are also characterised by the presence of organised groups coming from Hungary. However, these ad-hoc and ephemeral groupings are not characterised by the strong cohesion of the pilgrim communities of the Székely villages, nor do they have their own pilgrimage traditions. The presence of such groups unnerves even the pilgrims who follow the traditional behaviour pattern and contributes to the decrease in internal cohesion of the pilgrim groups from the Székely Land and to the relativising of the former religious value system and the ritual religious practice based upon it.<sup>15</sup>

14 On this identity reproduction of a very different kind, see: Terkenli-D'Hautesserre 2006: 9.

15 Erika Vass offers a series of examples for this disruptive effect in her analysis of the joint pilgrimage routes of the groups from the Gyimes (Ghimes) region and the guests coming from Hungary, based on her field research conducted between 1998 and 2006. Discussing in detail these joint routes from 2005 and 2006, the researcher very vividly illustrates the differences, and sometimes the tensions, between the two opposing cultures. (Vass 2009: 95–136.)

As a result of these changes, the place of worship slowly loses its own traditional identity as a landscape as well as its ties to a place invested with its own identity. One might even say that the landscape is in the process of becoming placeless and inauthentic. Current processes point to such a homogenisation also regarding the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó.

The emptying out and the disintegration of ritual time are also characteristic of today's pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó. The central – and, as one might say, the only really “important” – event of today's pilgrimage feast consists in the open-air holy mass held at noon on Whitsun Saturday, to which the overwhelming majority of the participants arrives by car or bus, and they immediately leave the place of worship after the holy mass. This is the part of the pilgrimage feast that is most highlighted and sold out by the media. It is transmitted live by the *Duna TV*,<sup>16</sup> and the programme is also frequently rerun on television. It is only natural that the actors of local, national, and Hungarian political life generally make their appearance here and present themselves very visibly to the media. Media representation is of such importance that the ceremonial and the time use of the great pilgrimage mass is adapted to the television broadcast.

Traditionally, the pilgrims generally arriving on foot – and, from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, sometimes also by train – characteristically spent a longer time, at least two or three days, on the place of worship. Today, the number of such pilgrims is quite reduced, and the individuals and groups arriving for relatively longer periods prefer to spend their time with profane activities at the place of worship and its surroundings. The number of people who behave in a religious manner and stick to the traditional religious rituals of the pilgrimage (hearing mass, making the way of the cross, confession and communion, other sacrificial acts, etc.) is disproportionately small compared to the total number of the participants. Under these circumstances, the traditional temporal structure of the pilgrimage feast and its “grand ritual drama”, formerly indeed conceivable as being of central importance is now in danger of disappearing. Since the time period of the pilgrimage feast has become drastically shortened, some ritual elements are only familiar to smaller groups, while others change their functions. In other words, the participants are not involved anymore in the community events with the original religious intentions. For example, one of the central events of the pilgrimage, the procession is transformed into a grandiose spectacle and an interactive mass event, the ritual of waiting for the sun at Whitsun dawn becomes a kind of mere cultural curiosity, and so forth. The disappearance of certain times (as the pilgrims do not participate at some events anymore) and the cessation of the ritual structuring of the remaining times (pilgrims do not perform the traditional rituals anymore) or their functional change (they experience different contents within the rituals) are also the signs of a large-scale cultural impoverishment and disintegration (cf. the phenomenon of *unworldment*).

16 Translator's note: a public media channel in Hungary (editor's note: see also Vilmos Keszeg's introduction in the present volume).



### Worlds that Can Be Created Anywhere (*Deworldment* Processes)

The situation of landscapes eliminated through the *unworldment* processes, that have become “placeless”, is the same as that of eliminated personal and community identities: new ones are inevitably formed instead of them. These acts of new world creation occur within the so-called *deworldment* processes, which – similarly to the new identity constructions – do not base themselves upon any older, authentic local traditions either. The new worlds constructed instead of the disappeared old one can be constructed anytime and anywhere, and completely lack the authenticity of the specific place. Such a constructed place can take, for example, the shape of a tourist village, open-air (skansen) museums, and institutionally organised and coordinated, festive folk customs, which have become tourist attractions. In these cases, we are clearly dealing with a devolution process: pseudo-idealistic, artificial “magic worlds” manifesting the internal landscape of the collective imagination are the representations of a cultural devolution process.

The results of such *worldmaking* acts, constructed in order to replace the disappeared former worlds, are based on nostalgic representations of a selective nature. Marketability and consumability play a significant role in the creation and the entire practical implementation of the new worlds. Mass-media promotes and also generates with great efficiency these images of an illusory character.

These new worlds that can be created anywhere (the results of the *deworldment* processes) naturally separate, or break off, from the particular and specific geographical places, already annihilated within the *enworldment* and *unworldment* processes, and from the traditions formerly existing at these places, too, which also means the complete loss of the authentic character. Something that can be constructed and reproduced anywhere, thrown away or recycled, cannot have any particular and local character.

The inclusion of a local cultural phenomenon onto the UNESCO list of the universal intangible cultural heritage can have several unintended side effects, too. It can even serve the destruction, or at least the banalisation, of the local heritage, since the seductive force and great marketing value embodied in the UNESCO list can contribute to the transformation of authentic traditional values into tourist attractions, and even more marketable commodities. Indeed, after officially becoming part of the World Heritage, the local institutions managing the respective cultural phenomena will direct their efforts at serving standard mass taste as efficiently as possible, manifested in tourist invasions, great media attention, and other similar forms. As a result of “heritagisation”, the standardised products that are separated from their traditions – e.g. “traditional” tourist villages, mass-produced “traditional” handicraft products, “traditional” folk customs or religious phenomena – can occur *anywhere* in the world. This process of world production can naturally also be incorporated into certain rules, which will have, at best, only indirectly anything to do with the actual local traditions. The production of such new landscapes and illusion worlds developed independently from reality do not even need any local traditions, since these worlds can even be created from nothing and disseminated electronically with great effect throughout the contemporary

computerised world. In such conditions, locality and authenticity even represent hindrances to communicability and marketability. (World creation out of nothing is extremely well exemplified by Disney-type theme parks, Las Vegas casinos and similar phenomena.)

The *enworldment* and *unworldment* processes discussed above and the phenomenon of tourism manifesting itself along with them, as well as the commercial activities and cultural banalisation have changed the shape of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó so much that one is justified to think of a world that can be created anywhere, and of the Disneyfication of the pilgrimage feast. I am referring here, in particular, to the following aspects:

1. During the pilgrimage feasts and, to some extent, also at other times, the place of worship begins to resemble a *theme park* functioning within a religious framework, becoming an environment with a religious theme in which the most diverse activities take place. Some of these activities are of a religious character, others are only based on a certain kind of religious nostalgia, and finally there are also completely profane activities. When someone from afar arrives in such a prefabricated and pre-interpreted medium, (s)he is offered a ready-made world that can be consumed according to his/her taste. Let me note here that pilgrimage sites have also formerly been, in fact, such theme parks, but the proportion between religious and profane consumption was essentially different than it is today.

2. The new world, which has come to replace the traditional and almost obliterated pilgrimage feast has a strong *spectacular* character and is dominated by visuality. The increased role of icons and images is a general characteristic of newly created worlds, which can be explained by the fact that images are easier to consume than text that necessitates intellectual understanding and transcoding.

To go even further: in the case of such created new worlds, it is not simply the vision that is important, but the active and interactive participation in it, or in other words, the performance of the vision, or the *spectacle* (Terkenli-D’Hauteserre 2006: 13). This vision that includes the participants of the pilgrimage feast can also be experienced emotionally by them, and they can immediately give their individual responses to specific parts of this experienced theatre. This constant and interactive personal presence can lead participants to contribute with their personal, often surrealistic and exotic elements and ritual practices to the grand spectacle of the pilgrimage feast. This also explains for instance, the wearing of sometimes quite spectacular costumes at the religious festival, as well as other, rather odd forms of behaviour. Because we are dealing here with worlds created in the spirit of some kind of – ancestral, folkloristic, national, religious, etc. – nostalgia, no one is shocked by these surrealistically “artistic” or exotic manifestations at the pilgrimage feast, since even the artificial and the virtual can appear as natural within such a world. An “ancient Hungarian” costume can be present at the religious festival in the same way as any other, actually existing Hungarian folk costume or the more or less correctly reconstructed uniforms of the Székely Hussar regiments.



Thus, the Lefebvrian conception of space seems to be entirely validated: a landscape developed in such a manner is not simply nature anymore, but a social, human product. As we have seen, the landscape of the pilgrimage feast of Csík-somlyó is also meant for mass consumption. However, it is still differentiated from genuine global Disneyfication<sup>17</sup> that is placeless, cultureless, and lacking in community identity due to the fact that the landscape of the pilgrimage feast still attempts to create a certain kind of pan-national identity. The final result is a hybrid mixture that is a characteristically postmodern phenomenon, simultaneously expressing the current identity consciousness of the entire Hungarian population, which has become heterogeneous and is in search of authentic values, and the joy of experiencing together a modern, carnivalistic worldview.

The lay and religious institutions involved in organising the pilgrimage feast can evidently only partially model the landscapes of the pilgrimage feast. While focusing on the “important” spatial fragments and the “significant” ritual events, these institutions cannot see outside their own environment. They are undoubtedly the central organising core of the pilgrimage feasts, but meanwhile the “peripheries”, which are considered to be “unimportant” and are uncontrolled, or even uncontrollable – and here I am referring not only to the peripheral spaces, but to all the ritualistic and non-ritualistic, everyday manifestations taking place at the place of worship –, living their own lives, they gain such significance as to transform the pilgrimage feast as a whole and even render the “centre” itself as secondary, turning it into a periphery for some of the participants.

3. These nostalgic landscapes and fantasy worlds acting as sights and spectacles all *offer an escape* from the real world, and thus denote social-psychological problems.<sup>18</sup>

4. Since the pilgrimage feast of Csík-somlyó is a world that is somewhat rendered independent from reality and created in the spirit of strong feelings of community nostalgia (religious faith, national unity, commonly experienced joy, etc.), as such, it can offer a convenient site for the emergence of ideologies that do not contradict the original ideology of its world creation. That is to say, the pilgrimage feast *can be filled with various extra-religious ideological contents*.

From this latter perspective, the analysis of the current transformations affecting pilgrimage spaces created year after year, as well as of the pilgrimage periods and community rituals, can be significant because – while the modelling and experiencing of spaces, time periods, and rituals are, on the one hand, a social construction – these also actually effect society, on the other hand. For example, the occupation and expropriation of symbolical spaces, times, and rituals

17 In addition to the *enworldment*, *unworldment*, and *deworldment* processes discussed here, Theano S. Terkenli also considers so-called *transworldment* processes characteristic for the current cultural economy of space (see: Terkenli 2002 and Terkenli-D’Hautserre 2006). *Transworldment* processes finally consummate and transcend the breakdown of cultural borders in the postmodern age. At certain places, they essentially form spatial structures, which can be considered fully global. Since processes of this kind are not relevant for the Csík-somlyó pilgrimage, I will not present them here.

18 On this topic, see: Terkenli-D’Hautserre 2006: 10.



can strengthen the position of the social elite, and rival groups can also fight for acquiring and exploiting these, etc. After the first open-air holy pilgrimage mass in 1993, the representatives of the Hungarian political elite were seated for a long time within the space of the altar (*Hármashalom-oltár*),<sup>19</sup> and thus the crowd of several hundred thousand participants had to kneel before them at certain moments of the holy mass. Similarly, politicians have also been fond of walking within the cordon delimiting the centre of the procession. The UNESCO “heritagisation” issue of the pilgrimage feast is even today primarily discussed within the political arena in which the exclusive role belongs to the political elite and where so-called “scientific professionalism” can only have a thoroughly politicised function as an unavoidable factor of this process.

Finally, I consider it important to emphasise that I have presented separately and successively the phenomena defined by Theano S. Terkenli (*enworldment*, *unworldment*, and *deworldment*) in order to generally characterise the current economy of the space, time, and rituals of the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage feast. However, these processes are not the continuation of each other; that is to say, they are not the successive stages of a larger process, but represent, in fact, separately existing phenomena functioning more or less in parallel with each other. Consequently, it is often very difficult to disentangle and distinguish them from each other. After all, these processes build upon each other, and follow each other. The essential point is that these concepts seem to be adequate for the interpretation of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó as a culturally polyvalent and, in many ways, flexible event.

## II. Heritage Concepts – Heritage Ideologies

### **The Divergent Interpretations of the Concept of *Heritage***

*Heritage* designates a consciously assumed and formulated ideological attitude towards a certain cultural or natural phenomenon. We consider something as heritage because it contains some value originating from the past and deemed to be important for future preservation.<sup>20</sup> The concept of heritage has divergent interpretations because the different institutions and the ideologies operating them do not identify the spiritual value of a given cultural phenomenon in the same manner.

In the following, I will analyse this issue with reference to the pilgrimage feast and, in a wider sense, the place of worship from Csíksomlyó.

#### **1. *Heritage as Spiritual Value in Popular Tradition***

The Whitsun pilgrimage of Csíksomlyó is a community ritual which has been in existence for several centuries – being documented from the middle part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards –, a popular religious tradition, whose ritual course constantly

19 Translator’s note: the “Triple Pile Altar” – a construction that looks like tree hills, designed by the architect Imre Makovecz in 1996.

20 On the embeddedness of *heritage* in the past and its relationship to *tradition*, see the summary prepared by Vilmos Keszeg, which also includes a useful bibliography (Keszeg 2014).



changed over time.<sup>21</sup> The ritual events of the pilgrimage have always been defined by the existing traditions, the regulations of the governing religious and lay institutions, as well as the changing needs of the participants of the pilgrimage.

*Constant change* undoubtedly represents an important characteristic of the pilgrimage, which is otherwise said to be traditional. Nevertheless, the great ritual event also has constant, archetypally timeless elements, considered to be of central importance by the participants of the pilgrimage in any historical period, which are thus rightfully considered to be inherent to the essence and the ancient heritage of the pilgrimage. Such an element can be identified in *following the models* also practiced by the ancestors (e.g. making the pilgrim's way, encountering the devotional statue of the Virgin Mary, assuming the sacrifice, experiencing the sense of belonging to the community, etc.) and consequently in the *positive attitude* towards the heritage of the past.<sup>22</sup>

Since the proclamation of true spiritual values took place sometime in the ancestral past (*in illo tempore*), people living today cannot have any other task than to return, again and again, to these values.<sup>23</sup> The desire for eternal truths and values, along with the need for creating internal order as well as the nostalgia for the authentic beginning is perhaps even stronger in today's world than it was in the past.

## **2. The Concept of Heritage in the Interpretation of the Catholic Church**

The Second Vatican Council held between 1962 and 1965 undoubtedly represented a turning point in the attitude of the Church towards different forms of local religious cultural heritage. The theology of the Vatican II recognises – among other things – that the spirit of Christ can also be active in other religions besides Catholicism, and it can manifest itself within local religious cultures (the doctrine

21 From a historical perspective, primarily with regard to the historical periods preceding the 1948 regime change, the development process of the pilgrimage's community ritual practice was analysed by Tamás Mohay in his studies (Mohay 1996, 1997, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2012) and in his monograph entitled *A csíksomlyói pünkösdi búcsújárás. Történet, eredet, hagyomány* [The Whitsun Pilgrimage of Csíksomlyó: History, Origins, Tradition] (Mohay 2009), while I myself presented the popular pilgrimage practice from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in my volume entitled *Csíksomlyó a népi vallásosságban* [Csíksomlyó in Popular Religiosity] (Tánczos 2016a). The current pilgrimage practice of the Csángós of the Gyimes (Ghimes) region was comprehensively presented in the PhD dissertation of Erika Vass (Budapest, Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences, 2007) and in her book based on the doctoral thesis, entitled *A búcsú és a búcsújárás mint rituális dráma* [Indulgence and Pilgrimage as Ritual Drama] (Vass 2009).

22 On 24 June 1949, Hungarian ambassador Jenő Széll reported to the Hungarian government that, in spite of the countermeasures of the state (e.g. "cultural competitions" organised during this period), there was a great number of participants at the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage: "I know of a case when a young tractor driver who is a member of the workers' party went to the pilgrimage feast saying that 'this is how we've done it for 400 years.'" (Vincze 2002)

23 The entire myth theory of Mircea Eliade is centred on this archetypal human aspiration: "Rituals and significant profane gestures acquire the meaning attributed to them, and materialise that meaning, only because they deliberately repeat such acts posited *ab origine* by gods, heroes, or ancestors." (Eliade 2006: 19).

of inculturation). Vatican II radically transformed the liturgy of the Church and its entire organisational life (e.g. introduced national languages instead of Latin into the liturgy, transformed the liturgical use of the church space, recognised the role of laypersons and new religious communities within the church service etc.). However, this openness towards ecumenism and local religious cultures did not mean the tolerance of the Church for the secularisation that started to spread in the modern age: the recognition of the message of Christ and the presence or absence of religious faith remained a decisive criterion for judging different cultural phenomena.

The legitimacy originating from Christ and the enrootedness in the past is also important within this thinking, and even represents the sole authentic criterion of current value. The Catholic Church's Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith published in 2000 its declaration entitled *Dominus Iesus*, signed by cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the later Pope Benedict XVI. The very subtitle of the declaration (*On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*) alludes to the main message of the document, in order to clarify the wrongly interpreted ecumenical "courtesy" of the Church.<sup>24</sup> This declaration refuses the relativisation of religious faith (e.g. "all religions are equal", "what is true for some is not true for others", etc.), so-called religious "pluralism", the eclecticism of unsystematic theological views, the wrong interpretations of the Holy Scripture from outside the Holy Mother Church, etc., emphasising against them the sole, exclusive, and universally salvific role of Christ.

From the perspective of local popular religious manifestations, all this means that the Catholic Church continues to view the efforts of Vatican II towards inculturation as being still valid, but it only assumes community with those cultural elements received from the past or from other religions which express or serve the spirituality of Christ. Consequently, the cultural heritage valued by the Church, originating from the historical past, always and necessarily has to be religious and even of a strictly *Christian character*, since this is the very essence of the Catholic religious attitude. The source of salvation can only lie in the acceptance and confession of the sole and universal heritage of Christ. In the words of the most important hymn of praise: "*O Lord, save thy people: and bless thine heritage. / Govern them: and lift them up forever*".

### **3. The Secularised Interpretation of Cultural Heritage. The Heritage Concept of the UNESCO**

As we have just seen, there is a common element of traditional popular culture and the interpretation of heritage by the Catholic Church: both define the concept of

24 *A Hittani Kongregáció Dominus Iesus nyilatkozata* Budapest, Magyar Katolikus Püspöki Konferencia. Kézirat gyanánt. 2000. augusztus 6. [*The Dominus Iesus Declaration of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith*. Hungarian Conference of Catholic Bishops. As manuscript. The 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2000.]

Online: <http://uj.katolikus.hu/konyvtar.php?h=149>. (Last accessed: 30 January 2017.) The document is presented in: Székely 2002.



heritage with reference to a transcendent, metaphysical value revealed in the past, that is to say, they both have an originally *religious character*.

In today's secularly oriented cultural politics, the concept of *cultural heritage* is essentially defined as a value not on the basis of religious faith, but according to other value categories. Thus, something can be declared now a part of humanity's cultural heritage due to its rarity, ancient origins, high aesthetic relevance, scientific value, community function and several other factors that are not of central importance, or are even irrelevant, from the perspective of religious faith.

From this secularised perspective on culture, the art-historical, architectural, and cultural-historical heritage of the place of worship from Csíksomlyó is also considered an important value within universal human culture.<sup>25</sup> As such, the pilgrimage feast from Csíksomlyó as a great ritual drama<sup>26</sup> and its religious folklore can also be viewed as a community event with essentially non-religious functions (e.g. tourism, seeing the world, identifying with aesthetic experiences, the rebuilding of identity, practicing economic and commercial activities, etc.), and even the originally and traditionally religious functions of the pilgrimage can be given expressly social interpretations. In this secularised conception of culture, religious faith itself as well as its institutional practice is just another "cultural particularity". Such an attitude, however, is viewed by religious institutions and believers in general as a degradation and a profanation of the Sacred.

Another important circumstance lies in the fact that the interpretations of secularised heritage are codified on a high level and have exclusive validity within the institutional structure of modern society (e.g. areas such as legislation, education, and culture). Today, the religious conceptions of heritage can only manifest themselves within institutional frameworks expressly related to the Church, or they can be present within the – increasingly marginalised – traditional popular cultures.

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- 25 Observant Franciscans from Transylvania settled in Csíksomlyó in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The cult of the Virgin Mary, also expressed in pilgrimage practices, already existed here at that time, as attested by the first document referring to this place of worship, the *Dum precelsa...* diploma issued by Pope Eugene IV in 1444, granting indulgence prerogatives. The late Gothic devotional statue was probably created on site around the period between 1510 and 1515. Several other ecclesiastical artefacts have survived from this historical period in the Csíksomlyó region, the origins of which are most probably related to the activity of the Franciscans in this area. Established in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Franciscan library from Csíksomlyó is an important monument not only of Hungarian but European culture as well. It is the only library fund within the territory of historical Hungary whose development can be continuously tracked from the 15<sup>th</sup> century until the present day. It includes an incunabula collection consisting of 119 volumes and fragments printed before 1501. The volumes printed from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century at the Franciscan typography established in Csíksomlyó by János Kájoni in 1676 and bound at the monastery's workshop are similarly valuable. All these publications can be viewed in the Székely Museum in Csík (Ciuc). For more details on this topic, see: Muckenhaupt 1999 and 2010.
- 26 Pilgrimage was interpreted as collective ritual drama by Victor Turner and Edith Turner in: Turner 1974 and Turner–Turner 1978. For the presentation of the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage from this perspective, see: Vass 2009 and Tánczos 2016a.

The world organisation UNESCO created the concept of “world heritage”, and subsequently, of the “intangible cultural heritage”<sup>27</sup> and codified them on a high level in international law in a political medium during the 1970s, level both within international law and the legal system of the individual member states, subsequently aiming to enforce this legal regulation within a cultural-political medium.<sup>28</sup> It is very important to note that this codification is related to an international ideology and, at the same time, to the legal system of the political nations (states); that is to say, *it is not culturally grounded*. At the same time, this heritage concept is strongly secularised, which in the practical process of the “heritagisation acts” leads to the impossibility of motivating the formulation of cultural elements of a religious and national character as *religious* and *national* values, and consequently of their designation as a *heritage* that is to be protected; respectively, they can only receive this status as “cultural specificities”. What is more – as I will come back to this idea later, when discussing the question of universal or local values (see chapter *Universal or local...*) –, this secularised concept of heritage was created precisely in order to suppress the heritage-concepts with a national character, in circulation since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Ideologies That Can Be Associated with the Spiritual Legacy of the Place of Worship from Csíksomlyó**

### ***1. The Devotional Statue of the Virgin Mary from Csíksomlyó as the Protector of the Faith***

The devotional statue of the Virgin Mary, which represents the central ideological core of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó as the objective of the pilgrimage, is simultaneously also a magical-mystical symbol. The statue of the Holy Virgin, dating back to the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and also proclaimed officially by the Church as “illustrious in wonders” (*miraculis insignem*) in 1798, represents the victorious Woman clothed with the Sun (*Mulier amicta Sole*), symbolising the theological doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (*Immaculata Conceptio*), as she tramples under her feet the enemies of the true faith. The representation of the Woman clothed with the Sun has become an anti-Turkish and anti-Hussite symbol in the interpretation of the Hungarian Observant Franciscan monks in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was later adopted as an ideological symbol of the fight against Protestantism and Eastern Orthodox, “aberrant” Christianity. The widely known explanations for the origins of the historical memorial pilgrimage of Csíksomlyó,

27 The World Heritage Convention was adopted in 1972, being ultimately restricted to the protection of built heritage sites and natural cultural landscapes. Therefore, the need to protect the oral and non-objectified heritage that determines the identity bequeathed and maintained by the communities (initially, traditional culture and folklore) arises already in 1973. The associated recommendations, actions plans, and directives begin to emerge in 1989, conferences and round-table discussions are held under the auspices of the UNESCO, etc.

28 It is also an important circumstance that UNESCO did not codify the conventions within the legal system of the individual member states. Each state accedes to the convention through its own legal way, and either creates a legal framework for it, or not.





which are still being disseminated today, are also related to this ideology of the true faith's protection: according to them, the devotional statue of the Virgin Mary helped the Székely Catholics to victory in their battle against the army of the Unitarian prince of Transylvania, John Sigismund, in 1567.

## ***2. The Devotional Statue of the Virgin as the Patron Saint of Hungary and the Hungarian People***

At the same time, the Virgin Mary is also the patron saint of historical Hungary. The first Hungarian king, Saint Stephen, who died without a male heir, bequeathed his country and crown to the Virgin Mary before his death, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1038, Assumption Day. Through this dedication of the country, the Virgin Mother has become the proprietor, as well as the protector of the country and of the Holy Crown of Hungary (*Regnum Marianum*). From the Baroque age onward, and especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Virgin Mary, and thus the Woman clothed with the Sun was also frequently represented wearing the Holy Crown of Hungary,<sup>29</sup> which nicely expresses the association of these two circles of ideas: the Virgin Mary is the protector both of true Christian faith and the Hungarian people, as well as of the historical Hungary.

This religiously-based ideology with mediaeval roots made it possible for the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó to become a national meeting place of Hungarians scattered throughout the world after the disintegration of historical Hungary following World War I, and a symbol of their unity.<sup>30</sup>

## ***3. The Pilgrimage Feast of Csíksomlyó as a Possibility for the Manifestation of Local Community Identities***

Right up to the modern age, i.e. until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the place of worship from Csíksomlyó was a regional pilgrimage site both of the Catholic Székelys and the Hungarian Catholic population of Moldavia, the Csángós, and it has only become a location for pilgrimage for Hungarians worldwide during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In spite of the strong contemporary globalisation tendencies, the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó is even today primarily considered to be their own by the Székely Catholics, who participate at this event regularly and also pay respect to the local traditions. Thus, the ritual organisation of the pilgrimage expresses the local identities associated with the regional structuring of the Catholic Székely population both on the level of geographical regions and the villages. In the words of Tamás Mohay: "The cohesion-creating force of religious relationships and traditionalised historical privileges is perhaps nowhere in the entire Hungarian language area as prominent as in the Székely Land. The consciousness of common origins, the reality of common freedom, the common domain, the common rights, as well as

29 Pope Leo XIII granted, at the request of Kolos Vaszary, the Archbishop of Esztergom, the general celebration of the Magna Domina Hungarorum festival on the second Sunday of October (later, this religious celebration was moved to 8 October).

30 For the interpretation of this phenomenon from an anthropological perspective, see: Papp 1996, Vörös 2005.

their revived memories have formed the basis for a century-spanning stability from the Middle Ages up until now. [...] This common consciousness is in itself geographically structured: it is tied to the Székelys and the Székely Land as a whole, and within it to some of the former Székely seats and further within these to some specific locality.” (Mohay 2009: 177)

#### **4. The Ideologies of Neo-Pagan Myths Which Can Be Associated with Csíksomlyó**

The place of worship from Csíksomlyó offered in many respects a suitable place where the traditions of the past could become the starting point for the various myths of the modern age.

There is a kind of *nature worship* and *ecological worldview* that is related to the place of worship from Csíksomlyó. Many people are looking for their physical or psychological health, or their inner harmony from the encounter with the devotional statue or other sites of this place of worship and with its religious culture and ritual practices. Most of these have their antecedents within the traditional pilgrimage (e.g. touching the devotional statue, reciting prayer, sleeping in the church, making the way of the cross or other forms of sacrifice, the cult of the sun with its ritual practice at Whitsun dawn, collecting medicinal herbs, etc.), but these old rituals acquire new, changed meanings within the ideological attitudes characteristic for the modern myths.

The oldest forms of worship associated with the place of worship (e.g. waiting for the sun on Whitsun dawn) and other mythical concepts (e.g. the Mary-representation worshipped as moon goddess under the name of *Babba Mária*, the magical power of the plants collected from the place of worship) can be integrated into their new, *neo-pagan myths* of the present. Nowadays, even community manifestations of these modern myths can sometimes be observed at the place of worship from Csíksomlyó.<sup>31</sup>

#### **5. The Heritage of Csíksomlyó as an Ideological Value**

Since the manifestations of human culture are generally complex, there are no cultural phenomena that could be designated as heritage in their entirety. A cultural phenomenon becomes *heritage* if we begin to relate to it as a cultural value to be preserved, i.e. ideologically.

“Heritagisation” always selects, emphasises, or even over-emphasises, certain elements, while it does not acknowledge others at all (most often, the more “mundane” or ideologically unpleasant and inconvenient phenomena). Thus, the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó cannot be “heritagised”, i.e. turned into an ideological value in its *entirety*.<sup>32</sup>

31 For more details, see: Peti 2012, Tánczos 2016a: 121–162.

32 In the traditional world, the pilgrimage was a grand ritual drama taking place during many days, on numerous locations, and with the participation of many hundred thousands of actors, moreover also changing within historical time (for its ethnographic description, see: Mohay 2009, Vass 2009, Tánczos 2016a), which has now come close to disappearance (see the second part of the present study). But even in its current changed form, the pilgrimage feast represents a great complex of customs, involving many ritual elements and meanings associated with them.



Cultural and art historians, social researchers, ethnographers as well as other specialists explore today, more or less successfully, the present and historical *cultural reality* of the place of worship from Csíksomlyó and its Whitsun pilgrimage feast. However, the cultural elements involved in the process of “heritagisation” and classified as high values are not formulated within scientific, but within ideological and political circles, with ideological and political aims,<sup>33</sup> and contemporary electronic media plays a decisive role in their distribution.

Evidently, a certain *mythification* also takes place during these acts of “heritagisation”: certain elements of an actually existing phenomenon are selectively brought into the foreground and invested with meanings that render the respective phenomenon important to some people, and this coherent and easily communicable world of meaning is distributed extensively and quite forcefully. Thus, heritage is *not an actually existing cultural reality, but a virtually existing, modern political and ideological myth*. Accordingly, the heritagisation process of the world’s cultural values does not take place in scientific circles, but on the highest levels of the world’s political diplomacy.

Nevertheless, as any other functioning myth, these acts of “heritagisation” also undoubtedly have an important role within society:

1. Since myths are always selective and simple compared to reality, their messages can be easily distributed. This is precisely how they can acquire an important role for the interpretation of the world and the orientation within it, the presentation of community values as well as the editing process of identities. Thus, society does not face the cultural heritage itself, but always only the myth which is formed about it, as the complexity of reality cannot be communicated (and perhaps society as a whole is not even interested in it).

2. The ideological attitude inevitably present within “heritagisation” can have stronger or weaker forms of institutionalisation. Accordingly, we can speak of family, local, national or even universal forms of human heritage. The inclusion of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó on UNESCO’s representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage would mean the institutionalisation at the highest level and, at the same time, the highest legitimisation of the myth, offering a source of pride and satisfaction for those who identify with it emotionally. The intangible cultural heritage declared part of the UNESCO list of national values has become a point of

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33 The “heritagisation” initiatives, which are also legally regulated and highly canonised on the international level since the 1970s, represent a challenge to the involved humanities and social sciences, and first of all for ethnography, inasmuch as these extra-scientific ideological imperatives and the practical steps taken in their spirit also caused a paradigm shift within science. This issue is discussed more fully, based on the change affecting the museological perspective on the cultural heritage of European cities, in one of the studies of Gábor Sonkoly (Sonkoly 2009). In another study – examining the example of Hollókő in Hungary – he calls attention to the fact that the relationship between (historical) science and non-scientific cultural heritage, which was produced and institutionalised not within the scientific, but within the cultural-political medium, becomes problematic when the latter penetrates the field of scientific interpretation and thus endangers its critical perspective and autonomy. The manifest opposition is created by the fact that cultural heritage is established on mythical grounds (Sonkoly 2014).

competition between the world's nations, respectively its states, as well as a "proof" of excellence, just like the Olympic Games medal table.<sup>34</sup>

The fact that the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó got involved into the "heritagisation" process on the highest level, within UNESCO, rendered this event of already mythical significance even more important for society, thus increasing the ideological character of its content.

### **The War of Ideologies for Csíksomlyó: The Current Situation**

The mutually divergent interpretations of *cultural heritage* sketched out so far and the different ideologies associated with them lead to a lack of consensus between the institutions involved in heritage preservation regarding the "heritagisation" of the Whitsun pilgrimage feast and the place of worship from Csíksomlyó, which serves as its site.

#### **1. Popular or Ecclesiastic?**

Before the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the manifestations of "popular religiosity" outside of the Church were clearly rejected, or at least treated condescendingly by the Catholic Church, and the Church tried to steer its priests who showed interest for such phenomena to the path of "orthodox official" religiosity. Although the Council proclaimed the necessity of integration into local traditions (inculturation), this principle was not easy to put into practice since the confrontation with certain specific phenomena caused uncertainty, indecision, and sometimes internal disputes. The institutionally disciplined, doctrinal religiosity of the Church is facing difficulties in handling the spontaneous experiential character of popular religiosity, as well as its ideas and rites also containing magical elements.<sup>35</sup>

The Catholic Church looks with distrust also on some of the traditional folk customs of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó. When stating that "only the procession" should be added to UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list, clerics distance themselves from those popular ideas associated with the pilgrimage feast, which are more difficult to be interpreted in a Christian religious framework. For instance, the magical rite of touching the devotional statue with different objects (the so-called *érintőzés*) and the sacrificial actions with magical content, associated with the way of the cross, can perhaps still be interpreted in a religious manner,

34 UNESCO is, of course, also aware of this unwanted competition, and there are renewed debates around this issue at the meetings, since the representative list is not intended to select and represent national values. According the UNESCO's regulation, "each State Party shall identify and register all elements of intangible cultural heritage present in its territory".

35 The theory of the British religious anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse on religious forms opposes *doctrinal religiosity* as practiced by the official church, which is strongly formalised, with the more personal, spontaneous, and emotionally charged religiosity (*imagistic religiosity*). In Hungarian religious ethnographic research, it was Lehel Peti who put the two concepts to use as analytical categories in his studies on dreams and visions, e.g. the analysis of the rituals of waiting for the sun at Whitsun dawn in Csíksomlyó. See: Peti 2012.



but the “exchange of wedding rings”<sup>36</sup> in front of the devotional statue by people not eligible for the sacrament of marriage cannot be consecrated in any way according to applicable church regulations. Similarly, the Christian interpretation of the ritual of waiting for the sun<sup>37</sup> at Whitsun dawn on the Kis-Somlyó Mountain is neither by everyone, and many see the remnants of pre-Christian sun worship in this phenomenon. Several people, especially the followers of neo-pagan religious cults, consider that the appellation “*Babba Mária*” of the devotional statue of the Virgin Mary from Csíksomlyó goes back to ancient religious roots;<sup>38</sup> the Catholic Church, however, considers this as “placing the cult of Mary from Csíksomlyó on pagan foundations” and necessarily rejects it as such. The Transylvanian Franciscan order repeatedly proclaimed that it is against offering protection to these cultural manifestations along with the pilgrimage feast.<sup>39</sup>

The secularised ideology behind the concept of intangible cultural heritage cannot hold any reservations against these “unchristian” cultural phenomena. However, the question still remains whether popular religious phenomena not endorsed by the Church as an institution, which supports the submission and organises the pilgrimage feast can be included on UNESCO’s list.

## 2. *Religious or Profane?*

The reservations of the Church are not only directed against the popular elements of the pilgrimage feast, but also against the secularised, profane interpretation of the concept of intangible world heritage, also promoted by the UNESCO.

The difference in opinion is caused by the fact that the institutions of the secularised modern age are at loss on how to handle interpretations of culture, which render religious faith as the central element of a cultural phenomenon. Secularised interpretations of culture deprive from their religious content even cultural phenomena originally developed in the spirit of religious faith, which have preserved these religious contents to date. Naturally, these approaches cannot accept religious interpretations of heritage either, since the religious attitude towards spiritual heritage – such as the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó – already presupposes that the rightful owners of any cultural heritage are only those who consider the originally faith-based, i.e. religious values of that heritage as their own, and demonstrate this

36 For an ethnographic study on this subject, see: Balatonyi 2011.

37 For more details on this topic, see: Peti 2012: 135–154; Tánczos 1992 and 2016a: 146–152.

38 The book entitled *Csíksomlyó titka* [Csíksomlyó’s Secret] by Transylvanian Franciscan monk Árpád-Lukács P. Daczó (Daczó 2000) on *Babba Mária* was immensely popular over the last decade and a half, having several editions. In my own opinion, the word “babba”, meaning ‘beautiful’, is an epithet of the *pure, beautiful, and sinless* Virgin Mary in Székely children’s language, or actually a synonym of *Szépszüzmária* [the Beautiful Virgin Mary], and its use is associated with the fact that the devotional statue from Csíksomlyó is a representation of the theological doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. At the same time, the representations of the Virgin Mary, which can be related to the devotional statue from Csíksomlyó, do in fact, contain lunar associations (“the lamp of Babba Mária”, “Babba Mária sees you”, “Babba Mária will punish you”, etc. – referring to the moon). (T. V.)

39 *Keresztalja*. Erdélyi Katolikus hetilap. [Procession of Pilgrims. Transylvanian Catholic weekly.] I. (23.) 25 September 2011.



through their corresponding ritual behaviour. These people are the ones who make up the *heritage community* and consider themselves to be the “true” owners and heirs of a certain cultural heritage. The secular ideologies pervading contemporary Western society and the institutions representing them naturally consider the interpretations of heritage centred on the presence of religious faith as illegitimate, “exclusivist”, and “politically incorrect”, reacting to them with aversion.

Consequently, UNESCO can also only discuss the originally religious forms of cultural heritage by considering their religious character, i.e. the religious faith creating the phenomenon itself, as a kind of “cultural particularity”, thus relativising the religious faith and showing respect for it only as for *one of the possible* interpretations of the world. However, such a “pluralist”, relativising approach is unacceptable and even revolting for religious people, almost representing an insult to piety and blasphemy. Characteristically, the rumours – otherwise of an uncertain background – according to which the Romanian State wants to propose the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó for inclusion on UNESCO’s list “merely as a religious festival” created resentment and even wary suspicions within the Catholic Church.<sup>40</sup>

The most important characteristics of the carnivalistic worldview expressed by a “religious festival” are jubilation, consumption, competitiveness, performance and theatricality, the lack of spiritual value or the mixture of different values etc. The joint promotion of these would fully fit into the secularised ideology of the UNESCO, but such a view would be unacceptable for the Catholic Church and any believer who views the pilgrimage feast as one of the important manifestations of the Christian religious value system and as the theological chance of escaping the otherworldly consequences of their sins.

### **3. Universal or Local (National) Value?**

As we have just seen, the interpretations of tradition and the ideologies related to the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó often have local or strongly national characters; that is to say, they can be associated with smaller religious or cultural communities. UNESCO, however, naturally wishes to provide universally acceptable definitions for the cultural goods included on its World Heritage List and thus “to be protected”. Consequently, the great question is how explicitly local cultural manifestations can

40 The 21 September 2011 issue of the Transylvanian Catholic weekly entitled *Keresztalja* [Procession of Pilgrims] was published with the headline *Csak „vallásos fesztiválként” védené az UNESCO a csíksomlyói búcsút* [The UNESCO would protect the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage only as a “religious festival”]. The magazine informs its readers that the Transylvanian Franciscan order deplores the fact that the Romanian Ministry of Culture, which is led by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ), only intends to add the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage to UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage as a “religious festival”. According to the Catholic magazine, “the rituals of the shamans following the ancient Hungarians’ religion”, “sun worship”, and the “kitsch peddlers” cannot benefit from the same protection as pilgrim groups, and the “all too broad ethnographic interpretation” of the event pushes its fundamentally religious character into the background. However, some of the phenomena associated with the pilgrimage and criticised by the Church (e.g. neo-pagan cults, commercial activities, etc.) were in fact not included at all in the submission.



be included in the universal value system, and whether something that is local can also be considered universal.

This question figures prominently in the international scholarly literature on the issue of “heritagisation”. The general opinion is that the universal always manifests itself in the local and the particular.<sup>41</sup> As seen above (chapter *Religious or profane?*), it can create a problem for the UNESCO if local and particular cultural or ideological values manifest themselves in the form of *religious faith*, which is not universal but a conviction that “excludes” non-believers. However, the *national ideologies*, or national myths<sup>42</sup> developed across Europe throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and still alive today also qualify as such religious forms of faith and cannot be accepted in any way as part of humanity’s spiritual world heritage. What is more, the concept of *cultural heritage* was created in the 1970s within a certain political and ideological medium, institutionalised on such a high level and spread so strongly in international cultural politics precisely in order to reinterpret the traditional conceptions of national culture.<sup>43</sup> The secularised ideology of UNESCO, which promotes “cultural diversity”, can also express reservations against the emphatically manifested Hungarian national character and symbols of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó, both with respect to its religious and national character. Seen from the universalist point of view, national identities – which also contain religious representations – are incomprehensible, undesirable, and even dangerous. With all these aspects in mind, precisely because of the presumable antipathies and objections of the committee, these emphatically Hungarian national aspects of the pilgrimage feast (the idea of the Regnum Marianum, the pilgrimage feast as a reaction to the “Trianon syndrome” of the Hungarians, the presence of national symbols within the current ritual of the pilgrimage feast, etc.) were not emphasised in the first place in the professional documentation presented to UNESCO at the initiative of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania

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41 The dilemma of universal vs. local also poses numerous theoretical questions and represents a real practical problem on the levels of institutional implementation during the “heritagisation” processes related to UNESCO (what precisely is the task, the responsibility, and the legal power of the world organisation, the state, and the local institutions during the nomination process and the later protection?). Two great international scientific conferences were organised around these issues in 2011 (*The Constitution of Cultural Property*. Göttingen, 17–19 June 2011; *Institutions, territoires et communautés: perspectives sur le patrimoine culturel immatériel translocal*. Villa Vigoni, 30 June–3 July 2011), and the conference presentations have also been published in a volume of studies (Bendix–Eggert–Peselmann 2012).

42 The forms of consciousness and community rituals of a national character (e.g. memorial festivities with national content) are considered to be among the religious manifestations within ethnographic and anthropological specialist literature, too.

43 On this issue, see also: Sonkoly 2014: 409.

(*Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség*).<sup>44</sup> The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians, which urged the nomination, tried to communicate two different and radically opposed meanings of it, both with a mythical foundation. 1. On the one hand, the Alliance presented the pilgrimage feast in the text of the nomination itself, both to the nominating Romanian State and to the UNESCO, as a local tradition worthy of international protection, having archaic roots and even creating contact between different regional and religious cultures, neglecting its strong Hungarian national character; 2. on the other hand, it emphasised within its communication in the media, press statements, etc. directed at the Hungarians of Transylvania (that is to say, the Democratic Alliance's voters!) that, as a result of the diplomatic and political efforts of their organisation protecting the interests of their community, the symbolic recognition at the international level through the "heritagisation" of the pilgrimage feast will not only be awarded to an important cultural value but to one of the great symbols of the Hungarian nation, torn apart by the Trianon peace treaty, or in other words, to the mass manifestation of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó as a Hungarian national symbol. The initiative of the Hungarian Alliance ended in failure at the end of 2016, since Romanian diplomacy, guided by opposing interests, saw through this plan and thwarted its own nomination with its very own instruments.

#### **4. A Hungarian National Value Within the Romanian Nation-State**

Oppositions such as *universal vs. national*, *Catholic vs. national* are finally compounded by the opposition of *Romanian national vs. Hungarian national*, which ultimately proved to be decisive in the diplomatic process of "heritagisation" by the UNESCO. According to the UNESCO regulation, only the *states* are entitled to submit proposals for including certain elements of cultural heritage from their territory onto the list containing the universal intangible heritage of humanity, and they will also be responsible for the future preservation of the values included on the list of UNESCO. Ultimately, the member states interpret the internationally accepted, and rather relaxed, legislative framework completely freely and implement them according to their own bureaucratic standards.<sup>45</sup> UNESCO has but few

44 I myself also deliberately omitted these important Hungarian national aspects in my professional documentation prepared on the request of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) for the 13 September 2011 session of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee, overseen by the Romanian Ministry of Culture and Heritage Protection. It seemed expedient to do so, in order to avoid the immediate refusal by the committee of this nomination proposal made by the RMDSZ, which was in power back then. The proposal was indeed accepted by the committee, which of course does not mean that each of its Romanian members was not fully conscious of the Hungarian national character of the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage. The favourable decision was followed by the preparation of the nomination dossier, sent to the UNESCO in March 2012 with the signature of Hunor Kelemen, who was then the Cultural Minister of Romania. The nomination dossier also did not emphasise the national implications of the religious festival.

45 The conference volume Bendix–Eggert–Peselmann 2012 discusses the local and global character comprehensively, with specific case studies, along with the relationship between the states and the UNESCO.



instruments for actual intervention. According to the first convention, adopted in 1972, dedicated to registering the natural and built heritage, the UNESCO can support the implementation process of the regulation with the aid of expert staffs or envisage the exclusion of certain values included on the World Heritage List if their management does not correspond to the accepted commitments,<sup>46</sup> but the other, more recent convention regarding the registration of intangible cultural heritage does not contain any such intention, possibility, legal framework, or even proposal. Consequently, the representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage does not offer any legal protection, not even so much as the List of World Heritage Sites.

According to the above, the proposal for the inclusion of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó onto UNESCO's list, a practice characterised by a strong Hungarian national symbolism along with its religious character, as well as the protection of a Hungarian national symbol could only be achieved through the involvement of the Romanian State, which defines itself as a unitary nation-state in the first article of its Constitution, thus also denying national cultural diversity within its territory. In accordance with this nationalist ideology, the Romanian State thus far proposed only Romanian cultural values for inclusion onto the list of the UNESCO. On one occasion, it also happened that a characteristically Hungarian cultural value, the Hungarian lads' dance from Kalotaszeg (Călata) was nominated for inclusion on the UNESCO's list as part of the Romanian cultural heritage, among Romanian lads' dances.<sup>47</sup>

The attitude of the Romanian State towards the spiritual legacy of Csíksomlyó and the pilgrimage feast has always been suspicious, unfriendly, and sometimes even hostile. During World War I, in 1916, Transylvanian Franciscans brought the devotional statue to Kolozsvár (Cluj) in order to save it from the Romanian army entering Transylvania, and it only got back to Csíksomlyó three years later, in 1919. However, after the regime change, the pilgrimage feast could not be organised due to the obstruction by the Romanian authorities. The first pilgrimage feast to include the procession ceremony (the so-called *kikerülés*) was held in 1922 (Mohay 2009: 204–218). During the period between the two world wars, the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó played an important role in the formulation and the strengthening of the new identity consciousness of Transylvanian Hungarians.<sup>48</sup> The communist dictatorship following World War II was simultaneously anti-religious and anti-Hungarian. The pilgrimage feast was prohibited after 1948 in its organised form and counter-manifestations (“cultural competitions”<sup>49</sup>, sports competitions, folklore festivals, etc.) were regularly held during the period of the pilgrimage. In the years after the 1989 regime change, the pilgrims of Csíksomlyó were intimidated for some time through a demonstrative military and police presence at the loca-

46 For more details on this topic, see: Bendix–Eggert–Peselmann 2012: 16–22.

47 See: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/lads-dances-in-romania-01092>.

48 In this period, secular and religious intellectuals regularly organised folk and religious art exhibitions as well as other events and festivities (One-thousand-Székely-Girls Day, trade expositions, organ inaugurations, etc.). For more details on this topic, see: Tánczos 2016a: 180–184.

49 For further details, see: Gagyí 2003.

tion – military helicopters circled above the place of worship from Csíksomlyó and above Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc), and military exercises were held in the area. After the consolidation of democracy, these power demonstrations by the political authority gradually ceased, and Romanian political authority, knowing itself to be firmly established within the territory, even made it possible for groups arriving from Hungary and other parts of the world, as well as from the Székely Land and other regions of Transylvania, to participate with their Hungarian national symbols at this large community event. Thus, while also preserving its original religious character, the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó has become an enormous manifestation of Hungarians worldwide, mobilising many hundred thousands of people every year, as well as a symbol of national unity.

In the above context, it is understandable that Romanian State politics has, in fact, continuously impeded the heritagisation process of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó, which started in 2011, in its capacity as a proponent (!) of its inclusion onto the World Heritage List. Finally, at the end of a controversial diplomatic process, which lasted for years, it achieved the failure of the nomination process at the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, held at the end of 2016.<sup>50</sup>

The unfavourable end result of the much-awaited UNESCO session has apparently seriously affected Hungarians in Transylvania, who interpreted the proposal in a symbolical way. According to the unanimous opinion of political analysts, Hungarians from Romania participated in a larger proportion than usual at the parliamentary elections from the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2016, and voted unanimously for their own political interest organisation, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ), because they felt themselves to be strongly endangered by the surprisingly hostile attitude of the Romanian State in the Csíksomlyó affair, as well as by its many other simultaneous anti-Hungarian measures.<sup>51</sup>

### **5. Catholic Value Versus National Value**

The Hungarian national character of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó, established in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, does not only constitute a problem for those institutions which interpret the concept of cultural heritage in a secular manner. This aspect of the pilgrimage feast represents a problem for the Catholic Church, too, in the same way as the folk traditions related to the place of worship and to the pilgrimage feast, which are difficult to be accepted canonically. As the meaning of the epithet “Catholic” is ‘universal’, the Church is noticeably afraid that the *Catholic*

50 On the stages of the application process, see footnote 3.

51 “We’ve experienced what it’s like when the apparatus of the Foreign Affairs works obstructively, since it has been proven that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture have sabotaged the admission of the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage onto UNESCO’s List of World Heritage” – declared Hunor Kelemen, the president of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ). (*Krónika*, 6 January 2017) – Online: <http://www.kronika.ro/erdelyi-hirek/kelemen-hunor-barmikor-felmondhatjuk-az-egyuttmukodest>.





*religion* will be overcome by some kind of *national religion* at the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó.<sup>52</sup>

In the light of the foregoing, let us now draw two partial conclusions:

1. The pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó has become the most significant cultural phenomenon, worthy of “heritagisation”, of the Hungarian community in Romania, due to its traditions of many centuries, significant religious function, as well as other cultural characteristics, but also because this religious festival attracts massive crowds year after year. Such mass events, which point beyond their original religious and cultural meanings, become a focus of attention for political and ideological interests and can be exploited by ideologies of heritage disseminated by the political elites. The participants of the cultural phenomena are considered as factors within the inherently politicised processes of “heritagisation” only insofar as they themselves also become political actors.

2. During these processes of “heritagisation”, one always has to articulate the mythical meanings of the respective cultural heritage. It is never the reality itself of the quite complex cultural phenomenon serving as the basis of the myth that is important, but always only that mythicized representation formed about the respective phenomenon, which can be articulated about it within ideological and political discourse. Consequently, it is never from a practical perspective that the protection of a phenomenon designated as heritage becomes significant, but it is only the discourse about its protection that can become important on an ideological-political level.

The question is, however, whether the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó really needs such a thoroughly politicised attention. According to the Transylvanian Franciscan order and, more generally, the Catholic Church, the inclusion onto UNESCO’s list would not contribute to the deepening of the spirituality of the pilgrimage feast, although it could perhaps be useful from the perspective of the infrastructural development of the religious site, and its wider international presentation.

## Summary. Is There a Need for Heritagisation?

Regardless of the political and ideological “heritagisation” war developed around it, the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó is now in a process of transformation and

52 Sándor Asztrik P. Tímár, Franciscan church director from Csíksomlyó, made the following declaration on this topic in one of his interviews: “We always emphasise that the Whitsun Saturday indulgence is primarily a religious pilgrimage and not an ‘all-Hungarian national meeting’. It is, of course, also the latter. There are many people who would like to use it for other – mostly political – purposes, but we cannot let this happen. There were such attempts, such ‘flying tackles’, so to speak.” (Csíksomlyói beszélgetés. Bakó Béla Pál és Tímár Sándor Asztrik ferences atyákat Jakab Gábor kérdezte [Conversation in Csíksomlyó: Franciscan fathers Béla Pál Bakó and Sándor Asztrik Tímár interviewed by Gábor Jakab]. *Keresztény Szó* [The Christian Word] XVI. 5., May 2005. Online: <http://www.keresztenyszó.katolikos.ro/archivum/old/index.html>.

is constantly acquiring new functions.<sup>53</sup> All this causes the radical change of the pilgrimage feast: in parallel with the emergence of new functions, goals, and pilgrimage practices, the ritual richness and diversity of the former local traditions associated with the practice of pilgrimage have disappeared, and this tradition has become fragmented.<sup>54</sup> The grand ritual drama from Csíksomlyó, whose structure and elements of meaning we, as ethnographers, tried to describe, does not exist anymore and will never exist again.

All this does not only mean the disappearance of the old ways (while it definitely means this as well!) but primarily a kind of hybridisation. Today, both of the pilgrimage feast's use of space and the ritual actions performed in these spaces are characterised by a new kind of intermediateness and dedifferentiation. Through these blending processes, the sharp distinction between the old and the new, the sacred and the profane, the religious and the entertaining, the official and the popular, the central and the peripheral, the personal and the communal all disappear. The most important manifestation of this intermediateness is that the religious attitude is nowadays mixed with a strong modern consumeristic behaviour in the case of the participants arriving to the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó in great masses. Sometimes, old religious traditions are revitalised and become objects of mass consumption precisely through this consumer culture.<sup>55</sup> In the context of today's electronic civilization, mass consumption also means the intense consumption of the virtual image of the place of worship.

The most important cultural economical processes of today's pilgrimage feasts are independent from the institutions modelling the pilgrimage feast: the disappearance, or at least the relativisation of the spatial, temporal, and ritual boundaries are modern phenomena impossible to control through top-down implemented cultural or religious policies. (Taking into consideration the mentality and the media of late modernity, this is perhaps hardly a surprise. Even the traditional, more strongly ritualised pilgrimage feasts were controlled from above, and such control would be even more difficult to implement nowadays.) Organising institutions only provide today, as is their obligation, the general framework of the pilgrimage feast, but they cannot actively intervene and exert any control over the manner in which the pilgrimage feast's events of prime importance and their meanings develop. For instance, they cannot influence the motivations, forms of organisation, and time

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53 See, for example: Mohay 1996, 1997, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011; Vass 2009; Tánczos 2016a, 2016b; Vörös 2005; Biró T. 2012. Contemporary scholarly literature from the field of the anthropology of religion also calls attention to these new social and ideological functions, as well as to the profane aspects. For a comprehensive overview on this subject, along with the relevant scholarly literature, see: Bowie 2007; and for general conclusions, based on the analyses of two modern walking pilgrimages: Barna 2008.

54 With regard to the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage, see: Mohay 2009: 253–258, Tánczos 2016a: 250–256.

55 Eduardo Chemin reached the same conclusion in his PhD dissertation defended at the Exeter University from England. He analysed the relationship between pilgrimage traditions and the consumer behaviour characteristic for late modernity on the basis of modern narratives on the pilgrimage walk to Santiago de Compostela (Chemin 2011).



spent by the participants of the pilgrimage feast of Csíksomlyó, their behaviour at the place of worship, etc.

As for the strongly institutionalised and intensely ideological cultural-political activity surrounding the “heritagisation” process, considered even at its highest level, this can be useful for many purposes, but not for the protection of heritage, which is declared by this cultural politics as its main goal. Those traditional cultural values that are indeed, for various reasons, in danger of disappearing, cannot be protected anyway, neither by UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage List, nor by the activity of the Romanian State as a protector charged with safeguarding cultural heritage. This would already be impossible because most of the institutions and main actors involved in the process of “heritagisation”, sometimes in conflict with each other – as we have seen above –, are not interested in heritage itself anyway, but primarily care about the heritage ideologies. And: how could religious faith and religious experience be “heritagised” within the framework of a secularised ideological system and its institutions? Thus, we need to search for other institutions and methods for preserving the presently existing heritage of Csíksomlyó.

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