PRESENT AND PAST IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND MAGIC

Edited by
ÁGNES HESZ
ÉVA PÓCS

BALASSI KIADÓ
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Poster proclaiming 15 August as the “Day of the Armed Forces”, Tinos, Greece, August 1994.
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Ágnes Hesz–Éva Pócs

Introduction

The present collection of papers is based on the proceedings of an interdisciplinary conference held in 2017. The basic theme of the event was provided by the talks given by members of the “East-West” research group on religious ethnology, which was based at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Ethnography as part of the project “Vernacular Religion on the Boundaries of Eastern and Western Christianity” funded by the ERC. Members included folklorists, anthropologists and historians whose main research goal was to conduct complex, parallel examinations of present and past from the varying perspectives of historical anthropological/folklore studies. This was inspired by the insight that both the efforts of history in studying the past, and of folklore studies in looking often for traces of the past in the present may prove incomplete and one-sided without a mutually fruitful co-operation; and we may well also mention here the discipline of anthropology, which focuses mainly on understanding present societies. Works produced in this vein by our research group provided the idea to organise the conference Present and Past to which we also invited a few other scholars both from Hungary and the international scene. The main aim of this conference was to explore the complex interconnections of present and past, the interactions between contemporary research and the historical perspective. We were seeking to answer how and whether it is possible to study the present with the help of the past and to probe into the past with the help of the present; how the present may be understood with the help of the past and, vice versa; what connections between present and past could be studied today, and how and for what purposes present day societies “use” the past.

Examining the interconnections of the present and the past has been a much-felt presence in European folklore studies ever since the beginning (and, more covertly, also in history and religious studies). The “beginning” primarily meant studying the living relics of the past in the present, of “traditions” and their origin, no matter what purpose drove or what method served our learned forebears in doing so. Historical and cultural historical investigations, comparative historical analyses and their con-
This paper focuses on the public discourses and rituals associated with the contemporary celebration of Pentecost among the Romanians in the village of Gyimesbükk (Ghimeș-Făgăt, Bacău county, Romania). The topic is related to my ongoing cultural anthropological research on Hungarian and Romanian celebrations in Gyimes. Over the course of my fieldwork I was primarily concerned with Roman Catholic celebrations; however, I also looked at the festivities organised by the local Orthodox Church and was also interested in those social events of the local Romanians, which were not necessarily "religious" but rather economic or political in nature, along with the festivities organised for tourists. Between 2011 and 2016, I spent six months in the field. I found that while on the level of everyday concepts and practices the Romanians of Gyimes consider the festive cycle of Pentecost to be related to the dead and wait for the arrival of the Holy Spirit, recently, the narratives of the Romanian elite of Gyimes and of the local Orthodox Church have started to assign an increasingly important place to the commemoration of heroes on this occasion. They remember the heroes who protected Romanian lands (during World War I and II or during the period of "barbaric invasions" between the third and thirteenth centuries). It is also important to underline in this context the pagan roots of the celebrations stemming from Antiquity. Since 2011 these new interpretations and commemorations of the celebration have been bolstered by a local initiative, a Whitsun Festival called Rusalii in the Middle of the Carpathians on the day of the Orthodox Pentecost Sunday, which

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2 There are three large communities in the Gyimes region: Gyimesfölök (Lunca de Sus, Harghita County, Romania), Gyimesközp Norfolk (Lunca de Jos, Harghita County, Romania) and Gyimesbükk. The communities of Gyimes are divided into patak ("streams"), patakvidék ("stream valleys").

3 ‘Rusalii’ is a medijul locally Carpaților’.
attempts to reinforce the religious and national identities of Orthodox Romanians who constitute a minority here.

In what follows I will examine why, how and relying on what kinds of sources and cultural memories were these celebrations of Pentecost, especially that of the Rusalii Festival, shaped by the Romanians in Gyimes. How are the different layers of the narrative past interrelated in public discourse, festive sermons and in the media? As will become apparent, the answers to these questions demonstrate a close correlation with the symbolic rivalry for the village and the local culture between the local Romanians and Hungarians and cannot be separated from the spectacular and much more public Hungarian Pentecost festivities of Csíksomlyó and Gyimesbükk.

The wider context: interethnic connections and symbolic rivalry between local Romanians and Hungarians

The wider context is defined by the alternating efforts of the Romanian and Hungarian authorities to Romanianise and Hungarianise the region. This rivalry is fundamentally characteristic of Transylvania and also correlates with local, more specific socio-historical processes. The region lies at the border of Transylvania and Moldavia, which, before 1920 was the eastern border of the Kingdom of Hungary. After Romania declared war on the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1916, Romanian troops entered Transylvania through the Gyimes Pass. In 1919, Transylvania (including Gyimes) was annexed to Romania. Although Hungary temporarily regained authority over a considerable part of Transylvania between 1940 and 1944, from 1944 the region belonged to Romania again. In 1944, during World War II the Hungarian and Transylvanian battalions fought against the Romanian-Soviet troops invading the region, but were defeated.

The history of Gyimes attests a long-term hybridisation process: since the first waves of settlement in the eighteenth century there has been a mixed population here, with a Romanian minority and a Hungarian majority. The Gyimesian settlers arrived from the Székely Land (Eastern Transylvania) and Moldavia and were serfs and Romanian shepherds respectively, had different cultural backgrounds and were adherents of the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic religion. The first Roman Catholic parish was founded in 1782, the first church of the parish being the Kontumac Chapel close to Najáktó. In 1787, the first Romanian Orthodox church was built in the village. As stated on the website of the Orthodox Parish, the first Greek Catholic stone church was built in 1800 with the participation of 80 Romanian Christian families. There are no traces of early Orthodoxy; the first Orthodox parish was established in 1928.

The Romanian and Hungarian populations of Gyimes have mutually influenced one another, especially each other's religious views and paralituric customs. Besides assimilation policy on the state level, the pastoral activity of the local churches, the educational establishment, the amateur art movements, folklore movements (e.g. the Hungarian Gyöngyösbükk Táncházmozgalom (Pearly Bouquet Movement) 1931–1947 and Tânccházmozgalom (Dance-house Movement) 1960–1970, the Romanian Cântărea României (The Song of Romania) since the 1970s all exerted their influence on both populations. In addition to these, on a more interpersonal level tourism, historical and contemporary mixed marriages, romantic relationships, friendships and the individual exchange of rituals and religion have all played an important role in the process of hybridization. It is important to note that the Greek Catholic Church was officially banned in 1948, and its parish and church in Gyimesbükk were taken over by the Orthodox Church. The former Greek Catholic believers had to choose between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox churches. Greek Catholic families living in Gyimesközéplők and Gyimesfölők converted to Roman Catholicism; while the majority of Greek Catholics in Gyimesbükk became Orthodox. Parallel with the abolition of the Greek Catholic Church, conscious ethnic separation on religious grounds has strengthened: Romanian Catholics were increasingly considered to be Hungarians, while Greek Catholics and Orthodox believers Romanians. While Hungarians in Gyimes disregarded the Greek Catholic heritage as a basis of identity, local Romanians continuously reproduced it in their cultural and communicative memory. They considered the first Greek Catholic church to be an Orthodox church. Different national identities have been assigned to the otherwise rather homogeneous local culture. At least these border construction mechanisms are dominant at the meso-level of society (in the interpretations of the knowledge/power elite and the local church) and in some aspects of public political rites and discourses. The local knowledge elite, supported by Hungarian and Romanian civil foundations, ethnographers and the numerous folk musicians, dancers, and tourists visiting the region, tries to semanticise, appropriate, and exploit Gyimes, its culture and its population – in other words, they attempt to heritagize the region.

On the level of public discourses, the Romanian intellectuals in Gyimes and the local Orthodox Church stress the autochthony of the Romanian population, which they support by highlighting that the Gyimes Romanians weathered past centuries

4 Csíksomlyó (Șumuleu Ciuc) is a peripheral area of Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc, Harghita County, Romania).
5 Ilyés 2006, 121.
6 Ilyés 2003, 115.
essentially by hiding in the mountains.\textsuperscript{9} They believe that these “sequestered mountains protected their ancestors between the third and the thirteenth centuries from the dangers of migration flows”. Thus, “secluded from the world they successfully preserved [their] language, beliefs, customs and traditions”.\textsuperscript{10} They emphasise the Romanian origin of the otherwise shared Hungarian and Romanian Gyimes culture; they claim that it was “the Romanians who created their own culture on the basis of the Thracian-Dacian and Roman traditions from Antiquity, the Byzantine culture and their own experiences” – as argued at a symposium on education in Gyimesbük in 2009. This view is not a local specificity; it is an amalgam of the Daco-Roman continuity theory (conceived in the eighteenth century and later becoming the official doctrine in the twentieth century, although with declining support now) and the Dacian (Thracian) cult (which was supposed to have diminished the Roman influence and has been a popular view since the 1950s). The essence of these theories is that the ancestors of the Transylvanian Romanians had already been living in this region when the Hungarians arrived and thus, due to the continuity of their presence, have a more ancient (ownership) right to the territory than the “conquering” Hungarians.\textsuperscript{11} The Romanians are the descendants of Dacians who populated the region in antiquity and of the Romans who occupied the province for almost two centuries; the Romanian people came into existence in the period when the Christian doctrines were diffused.\textsuperscript{12} Several Romanian teachers from Gyimes claim their language also contains many pre-Latin Daco-Getian expressions, besides Latin words. The Gyimes Hungarians also consider themselves as the exclusive and, above all, the first inhabitants of this region who arrived in Gyimes in the seventeenth century. They reject the theory of the early presence of Romanians; they emphasise that Orthodoxy did not even appear in Gyimes before the 1950s when the Greek Catholics became Orthodox. Gyimes people continuously compete for the ownership of common local culture, and in many cases concurrently, disregarding each other, they use the same elements of this culture in the construction of their regional and national identity and in their economic activities. They stage the same local traditions, dances, songs as either Hungarian or Romanian customs; and their rivalry can be detected in their festive events as well. Julianna Bodó and Zoltán B. Biró have discovered similar practices elsewhere in Transylvania; they considered the public celebration and commemoration practices as processes of Hungarian or Romanian symbolic use or occupation of space.\textsuperscript{13} For example, the

\textsuperscript{9} The Tarhavaas district of Gyimesbük has been regarded as one of the central zones where Romanian shepherds were hiding, and even though the toponym is presumably of Hungarian origin (it means ‘bald mountain’) the local Romanians and other Romanian intellectuals interpret its Romanian version (\textit{Târhevas}) as ‘bad place in the mountains’ (’un loc rău in munte’), according to the Romanian thesaurus. See: https://dexonline.ro/definitie/tarhavaas. Accessed 14 January 2019.


\textsuperscript{11} Miskolczy 1984.

\textsuperscript{12} See Rusu 2014; 2016; Boia 2011.

\textsuperscript{13} Bodó and Biró 2000, 13.

most recent public food consecration took place during the Easter of 2016 in the main square of Csíkszereda – close to Gyimes –, where the local and neighbouring Romanian Catholic priests consecrated the festive food in the baskets of 6000 families. This rather spectacular ritual could also be understood as a political-religious demonstration. The local symbolic rivalry is also extended to the organisation of Orthodox and Roman Catholic Pentecostal festivities in Gyimes, their use of space and the various interpretations, commemorations and reconstructions of the past associated with the celebrations.

It is important to note that the picture is different when it comes to everyday social relationships. In that context the redrawn ethnic and religious borders are not clearly defined; indeed, they change depending on the situation and are permeable. In the case of interethnic marriages or relationships among neighbours and others, the borders between ethnic and religious group identities may be questioned and the differences may vanish leading to new forms of identities. In such cases we can talk about newly explored religious identities which may compete with other forms of identities (e. g. local, ethnic, cultural, national): Roman Catholic (religious) identity may weaken Romanian (ethnic) identity just as Orthodox (religious) identity may weaken Hungarian (ethnic) identity potentially leading to identity crises and the reconstruction of identities.

\textit{The cultural precedents: The Hungarian Pentecostal Festival in Gyimesbük}

The Hungarians of Gyimes were the first to organise their Pentecostal festival in 2008 in a joint effort with organisers from Hungary. The primary intention of the organisers was to renovate the central and representative buildings (the railway guard’s house, the Roman Catholic chapel close to the border etc.) at the \textit{Thousand-year-old border} (the border of the former Kingdom of Hungary). These newly renovated buildings were intended to become memorial places, to be inaugurated at the Roman Catholic Pentecost festival.

Gyimes is close to Csíksomlyó, the most significant Hungarian shrine, which attracts numerous Hungarian pilgrims on every Pentecost Saturday. It is the largest Hungarian Roman Catholic pilgrimage event in the Carpathian Basin having strong political and national overtones (many tourists and pilgrims pay a visit to Csíksomlyó primarily for this reason rather than out of religious motivation).\textsuperscript{14} By arranging the Pentecost Sunday Festival, the Gyimesian organisers tried to connect to the religious-political events of Csíksomlyó. They wished to create a certain religious and political festival tradition. They also wanted the Kontumác Chapel and the border to become one of

\textsuperscript{14} See Vörös 2005; Mohay 2009; Losonczi 2009.
the stations on the Mary’s Way pilgrim’s route and tourist network that runs across Central Europe.\footnote{The Mary’s Way/Via Maria pilgrim’s route was initiated in 2007. The Kontumac chapel became a major side station of the Transylvanian red route in 2009. The starting point of the pilgrim route from Gyimesbük to Csíksomlyó is indicated by a cross.}

In the first years of the Hungarian Pentecostal Festival, the Gyimesbük railway guard’s house (in 2008) and the Kontumac Chapel (in 2009) were renovated and inaugurated during the celebration. In 2010 a heroes’ monument was established. The names of the fallen soldiers and freedom fighters, who were born in Gyimesbük or died there defending the Gyimes Pass, or who took part in the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, in WWI or II, and in the freedom fights in 1956 or 1989, have been engraved in marble. A separate memorial plaque was also devoted to the unknown soldiers. The ruins in front of the Kontumac Chapel were re-constructed as a local scene of national commemoration. By creating the memorial, the organizers established a place where visitors may commemorate the local cultural heritage, the “glorious Hungarian past” and the fallen soldiers regarded as heroes in a ritual celebration. The organised tours to visit the heroes are not unprecedented. The visitors, initiated by the main local organizer of the Pentecost pilgrimage festivity events, have been commemorating the patriotic fights in Gyimesbük during August–September 1944 in an ecumenical mass for more than a decade. In the 1990s, on a nearby mountainside, a cross was raised in memory of the soldiers who fought and disappeared there. In the spring of 2010, the year of the inauguration of the heroes’ memorial, people from Gyimesbük and some members of a Hungarian foundation marked 20 of the identified soldiers’ graves with a cross. An important factor in establishing the memorial was that the only monument in the region before was the memorial for Romanian soldiers. The ruins in front of the Kontumac Chapel were re-constructed as a local scene of national commemoration. By creating the memorial, the organizers established a place where visitors may commemorate the local cultural heritage, the “glorious Hungarian past” and the fallen soldiers regarded as heroes in a ritual celebration. The organised tours to visit the heroes are not unprecedented. The visitors, initiated by the main local organizer of the Pentecost pilgrimage festivity events, have been commemorating the patriotic fights in Gyimesbük during August–September 1944 in an ecumenical mass for more than a decade. In the 1990s, on a nearby mountainside, a cross was raised in memory of the soldiers who fought and disappeared there. In the spring of 2010, the year of the inauguration of the heroes’ memorial, people from Gyimesbük and some members of a Hungarian foundation marked 20 of the identified soldiers’ graves with a cross. An important factor in establishing the memorial was that the only monument in the region before was the memorial for Romanian war heroes on the Romanian side of the former border, in a nearby settlement with a Romanian majority population. Thus, the heroes’ memorial inaugurated in 2010 can be interpreted as an anti-memorial and the public rites performed at the memorial as part of a political anti-cult. The initiation of the new heroes’ memorial marks a turning point within the history of the Gyimesbük pilgrimage festival. The cult of the fallen soldiers who died in Gyimesbük has been articulated and legitimated: the soldiers “have given their blood to the country, to our people” (excerpt from a preacher’s speech at the Gyimesbük festive occasion in 2010) so the family ancestors were proclaimed as national heroes at this time. The epigraph at the memorial represents this national context as well: “Cum Deo pro patria et libertate!”\footnote{“With God for fatherland and liberty!” The motto of Rákóczi’s War of Independence (1703–1711).} The place has become a lieu de mémoire.\footnote{Nora 1999, 142–57.} In 2011, the Hungarians inaugurated a bridge over the Tatros River, with a sign expressing the solidarity between Hungarians and Romanians. In 2012 a Calvary was constructed and in 2013 the inauguration of a spatial installation (memorial columns) took place. In 2017, when the relic of Saint Ladislaus I of Hungary was temporarily transferred to Gyimes, the festive event was built around his figure.

The festival has an elaborate, relatively constant performance-script: the first spectacular event is the arrival of the special nostalgia trains to the Gyimesbük Railway Station and the guard’s house. In 2008, for the first time following the unification of Transylvania with Romania 64 years earlier, an engine emblazoned with a Hungarian coat of arms bearing the Holy Crown, rolled into the Gyimesbük station, since 2010 two such trains have been arriving. The train passengers from Hungary travelled as an organised tour; most of them headed to the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage held the day before the festival in Gyimes on Pentecost Sunday. They were greeted at the station by a small group of local people dressed in folk costumes, some of whom were on horses, played music, or held flowers, cakes and pálinka (“brandy”) in their hands. During the festive events the passengers lodged with Hungarian families in the region. At the Pentecost of 2016 and 2017 the pilgrims’ train also stopped at Gyimeskőzéplók (the local organization of the DAHR\footnote{The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, representing the Hungarian minority of Romania.} party and volunteer firemen took part in this arrangement). After the train had arrived, the pilgrims walked to the Kontumac Chapel accompanied by the horsemen. This was followed by various festival programs; commemorative ceremonies and a Roman Catholic Holy Mass celebrated on a stage beside the Kontumac Chapel. The chapel was referred to in the ritual discourse as the oldest church of the Gyimes region. The Pentecost Festival was closed by greetings at the guard’s house.

The Hungarian Pentecost festivity is clearly not a simple Pentecostal celebration. Similar to the nearby Csíksomlyó Pentecost, the location of the festivities has become a national place of pilgrimage and commemoration. Approximately ten thousand Transylvanian and Hungarian pilgrims arrive here every year.

\textbf{Romanian Rusalii Festival in Gyimesbük: Construction of the rituals and of ritual time}

At the level of Romanian public discourse, various voices in the regional news before and after the Hungarian Pentecost have been dominant since the beginning, emphasizing the irredentist features of the Hungarian event, for example: the “festival has been organized at the border of the late Austria-Hungary, just a few hundred meters from Emil Rebreanu’s tomb”;\footnote{Emil Rebreanu was an officer of the Austro-Hungarian army and the older brother of the writer, Liviu Rebreanu. He was executed for espionage and desertion in 1917.} “the Hungarians make a nostalgic visit to the Greater Hungary (‘Ungariei Mari’); thousands of Hungarians travel to Gyimes year after year and they act like they would on Hungarian ground”; “you can’t see a Romanian flag”; “the region temporarily becomes red-white-green and Hungarian-speaking.” Or emphasizing that the pilgrimage is just a cover: “the pilgrimage to Gyimes...
has become a real business; “the food industry is doing well: lángos20 with cheese and garlic, chimney cake, ice cream, goulash, mici (‘mici’ in Romanian)21 are being sold at the houses.”22 And so on.

In 2008, the Romanians of Gyimesbük and Palánka, or rather the local Romanian knowledge elite, planned an anti-festival at the Rebrenu memorial in Palánka at the same time and at the same place to counter the Hungarian national Pentecost pilgrimages. The authorities of Bákó County have not granted permission to the anti-demonstration citing security considerations. In 2008, the 91st anniversary of Rebrenu’s death was celebrated on the Holy Thursday before Pentecost: the Rebrenu memorial was decorated with wreaths and bouquets of flowers. Many commemorative rites were also arranged on other occasions at the memorial marked with the gravestone about two metres from the obelisk commemorating the Soviet heroes. It is important to note that in October 2012, a new memorial was inaugurated next to the Rebrenu memorial and the memorial of Soviet heroes. At the front of this new memorial stands a bronze statuette of Emil Rebrenu, while an icon of Saint George can be seen on the back. The memorial is clearly a political response to the Hungarian war memorial inaugurated in 2010. The demand for an anti-demonstration has emerged almost every year, when the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Pentecost do not coincide, but only a few events were organised in response, and even these were not necessarily instigated by locals or the local elite, but by journalists, activists and private individuals from other settlements. They raise the Romanian flag on their cars and mingle in the Hungarian crowd with the Romanian flag. Desteptarea (‘Awakening’), a Romanian-language Bákó daily, also reported that in 2015 a young Romanian man (it was not clear whether he was a local) was heading towards the Hungarian crowd with a red-yellow-blue national flag, when a local inhabitant convinced him to put the flag down in his yard.23

In 2011, when the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Easter and, thus, Pentecost coincided the Orthodox Church in Gyimesbük celebrated a grand liturgy in the churchyard under the name Rusalii in the Heart of Carpathians (‘Rusalii in Inima Carpaţilor’). They were celebrating Pentecost at several locations of Gyimesbük, and together with non-local participants they organised the Rusalii Festival and the commemoration of the heroic dead.24 The organizers wanted the festive event to be a monumental anti-demonstration (contra-manifestatie la Ghimes’), the significance of which would go well beyond the borders of the region.25 The Orthodox Church announced that it would hold its own demonstration in Gyimes as it wanted to celebrate the Pentecost in the mountains (‘Rusalii in munte’). In the organisation of the festivities one could recognise the efforts to create a monumental Romanian national celebration, which equalled those of the Hungarians of Gyimes in previous years. The use of the national flag in the Romanian festival running parallel with the Hungarian event was highlighted many times during the ceremony. With the conception of a new festival, the organisers attempted to create a spectacular Romanian Pentecostal festive event for the local Orthodox community. Thus, they offered a Romanian Orthodox alternative to the Hungarian Pentecostal festive occasion in Csíksomlyó and Gyimesbük, which are also popular among local Romanians. Apart from these, the intention to reinforce faith has also become one of the main declared goals of the religious-cultural event.

It has become a tradition to strengthen Orthodox faith in a region where Orthodox Romanians constitute a minority. (2011)26

The Orthodox archbishop of the county (Bákó, Bacău) also attended the festivities, and he presented an icon of Saint Parascheva27 to the Gyimesbük priest. According to a report on Bákó TV:

The presence of the bishop had a special significance on a day and at a settlement that recently had only been significant for the Hungarians. While less than two kilometres away, great festivities were taking place at the Thousand-year-old border, in the courtyard of the little Gyimesbük church the Orthodox believers celebrated Pentecost. (2011)28

Several non-local participants went to the event. As a teacher of a nearby settlement said:

It is important to be with the people who try to celebrate according to their one-thousand-year-old traditions among thousands of Hungarians who invade the region. (2011)

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20 Lángos is a deep fried flatbread, a common street food eaten fresh and warm in Hungary.
21 Mici or Mălătei is a traditional Romanian dish of grilled sausages made from a mixture of ground beef, lamb and pork with garlic and black pepper.
This same television program featured excerpts from several short interviews in which the reporter asked elderly Romanians from Gyimes to name the occasion they were celebrating. Several interviewees used the appropriate Hungarian term, piinkisd for Pentecost. This can be explained by the cultural interactions and bilingualism stemming from the aforementioned long-term interethic, inter-confessional co-existence. The family and private Pentecostal customs of the Orthodox of Gyimes who have ancestors of mixed ethnicity and religion are not significantly different from the rituals of the local Roman Catholics. One distinguishing feature of the former Orthodox celebration is the involvement of the dead: the Orthodox adherents light candles in the church and at the grave of their loved ones and give money for their spiritual salvation. The Orthodox celebrate their dead and the memory of family ancestors on festive rites and the ethnicised commemoration of the celebration and began to dox celebration is the involvement of the dead: the Orthodox adherents light candles in the church and at the grave of their loved ones and give money for their spiritual salvation. The Orthodox celebrate their dead and the memory of family ancestors on the Saturday before Pentecost (and so did the Greek Catholics in the past), which is also known as the ‘Saturday of the dead’ (or Moși or Moși de Vară). There were at least 25 Moși Saturdays celebrated every year in the Romanian past. However, before 2011 the local Orthodox people including the former Greek Catholics typically undertook a pilgrimage to the Catholic celebration in Căușomlyó, and several participated in many of the events that have taken place during the Gyimesbük Catholic Pentecost Sunday pilgrimage since 2007. I know a young Orthodox man who received the Hungarian participants on horseback wearing the traditional clothing of Gyimesbük. There are other examples when Romanians and Hungarians visited each other’s celebrations.

During the Orthodox Pentecost Festival that has taken place since 2011, the Sunday celebration at Pentecost has channelled local celebration practices into new frames. The local Orthodox Church began to create and put into circulation its own spaces, festive rites and the ethnicised commemoration of the celebration and began to establish a new ritual timeframe in which past and present, mythical and present events intermingled. The Orthodox church of Saint Michael and the Archangel Gabriel has become one of the representative locations of the festive event. It was chosen because this stone church, consecrated in 1800, was the first Greek Catholic church in Gyimesbük (there are two smaller Orthodox churches there) which was declared a scene of religious faith and enlightenment. According to a 2011 Pentecostal sermon, this enlightenment can primarily be attained through “the Holy Church, the Holy Secret, and the Holy Communion, the Holy Cross and abstinence, fasting and immortal love.” During the events at the Gyimesbük mountainside next to the Orthodox churchyard, the Podiş has been chosen as the possible site of the first Greek Catholic wooden church of Gyimes, as decreed by the Church and many intellectuals. The Romanians of Gyimes regard the first Greek Catholic wooden chapel and stone church as their own, as churches of the real faith, almost Orthodox churches. More and more Romanian intellectuals and local inhabitants in Gyimes point to a hand-drawn military map from the eighteenth century, the first military Land Survey Map (1763–1787) on which they base their claims but sometimes they refer to a much older map from 1620, on which there is a Romanian church in Gyimesbük represented as Valaşische Kirche or Wallachische Kirche. The memorial site of the former wooden chapel (which the map shows as located on a hillside in Gyimesbük named Podiş), is marked with a commemorative cross protected by a tin roof. While in the first year the festive liturgy was celebrated in the yard of the Orthodox Church, from the next year on the holy liturgy ended with a procession and a pilgrimage to the Podiş. There was a procession around the church in 2012 and 2013. In 2014, after the procession they went on a pilgrimage to the Podiş, where a holy liturgy was being celebrated. A group of pilgrims walked with banners and holy icons during the procession. In 2015 the holy liturgy was celebrated in the churchyard. They did not walk to the Podiş; the procession was held in the churchyard, there was an altar, a table decorated with birch twigs was set in front of the heroic memorial in the churchyard, and the holy liturgy was celebrated in honour of the Holy Spirit. The liturgy was celebrated again by the bishop of Românvâsăr, accompanied by 16 priests. The believers were sprinkled with holy water, sacramental bread was dispensed, and linden twigs were consecrated. This was followed by a musical/dance performance put on by the children of Gyimesbük titled The Bright Future of Gyimesian Orthodoxy (‘Lumina de Mâine an Ortodoxiei Ghimeşene’). A local schoolteacher of Romanian language and literature has called education and the Church the guardians of Romanian traditions, and the Romanian traditional costume the cloak of the soul. The call “let us remember the past” was reiterated several times during the festival. A procession was held in 2016 and 2017 and the celebration took place at the Podiş.

The name of the festival has been changing over the years since its inception. Initially, it went by the name of Rusali in the Middle of the Carpathians. In 2013, the name Podiş, the hillside in Gyimesbük where the one-time wooden chapel stood, appeared in the name of the festive event: Rusali and the Procession on the Podiş (‘Rusalilor şi Procesiunea de Pe Dealul Podiş’). In 2014 the name of the festival event was Rusali in the Eastern Carpathians (‘Rusalile din Carpaţii Răsăriteni’), while in 2015 Pentecost was celebrated under the name Rusali in the Heart of the Carpathians (‘Rusalii în Inima Carpaţilor’). The name of the festive event changed to Holy Pentecost Liturgy and Procession to the Podiş (‘Sl. Liturghie a Rusaliilor şi Procesiunea de Pe Dealul Podiş’) in 2016 and Annual Pentecost Pilgrimage and Procession to the Podiş (‘Pelerinaj de Rusali cu Procesiune de Pe Dealul Podiş, Anual’) in 2017. Over the years it became clear that the festival did not live up to expectations; it did not manage to become a Pan-Romanian national-religious festival. Accordingly, it returned to hosting events at the local level.

From 2011, several events at the Rusali Festival have taken on the character of commemorative ceremonies, with several venues attempting to establish collective

30 Marian 2000, 189.
32 Românvâsăr (Roman, Neamț County, Romania).
memories. Thus Podiş, the hillside marked with a cross, is referred to as the place of remembrance, a sacred place, and a secret place. As the local priest said in 2014:

... Where, in ancient times, the first wooden church once stood. ... This is a holy site for us; we honour our forefathers and pray on their memory. (2014)

According to a sermon from 2011 the Podiş:

... bears the religious remains of the first location of the Romanian. (2011)

Orthodox Christians view Orthodoxy as the only legitimate successor of universal Christianity. The sermons at the Podiş celebrations often refer to the 1800s when — as they point out:

There lived about 80 Orthodox families in the area and there was a wooden church on the marked spot. (2016)

Paul Connerton wrote that in a commemorative ceremony a community is reminded of its identity with the help of a master narrative. In the context of the Pentecostal festival event the Romanian local elite intends to create such a master narrative, a ritual time, a ritual past related to the festive event, which is the local, ethnicised history — particularly the local war heroes’ noble actions — supplemented with the Daco-Roman continuity myth. They commemorate the noble deeds of the heroes defending the fatherland, the wartime periods between 1914–1916 and 1941–1945 (the battles after which Transylvania became a part of Romania) and the glorious ancient ages — the defence of the true faith and territory. In a wider sense those national heroes are mentioned in the context of the festive events as having contributed to the drawing and re-drawing of the boundaries of Greater-Romania (according to a 2017 pronouncement). However, local heroes are mentioned as well. Thus, the remembrance is taking shape also in smaller-scale public narratives, and the whole narrative strategy is aimed at rewriting history. They are focusing on local ancestors and heroes who guarded the region during the barbaric invasions:

Just like they had been watching over the peaks of Budaca, or Târâu (Hungarian Tarhavas), or Oltean (Hungarian Oltván, or Csúrök), or Tiganilor (Cigány or Hegyes) they had the opportunity to secure the safety of the inhabitants of the former villages in the nearby forests. (2016)

The preacher also noted that if you look around on the Podiş you can relive the experience of the earlier landscape, you can see the same peaks seen by the late heroic inhabitants. Thus, as expressed during a Pentecost liturgy, the Pentecost Holy Mass and procession were celebrated in honour of the local heroes who “sacrificed themselves on the altar of (local and national) history” (June 2016). Although the commemoration of the heroes is related primarily to the Podiş, the participants pay their respect at the memorial in the yard of the Orthodox Church consecrated in 1998. They call the Pentecostal honouring of the fallen ancestors an old tradition, emphasising that:

... Commemorating the dead has been a part of the [Pentecostal] tradition for centuries. ... We remember and express our gratitude to the heroes who had sacrificed their lives for the nation and the country; who fought for our freedom and independence. (2011)

The festive rites were created as an amalgam of local and other Greek Catholic and Orthodox Pentecostal practices (mostly from Romanian settlements in Bákó County and partly from Oltenia); and the organisers refer to both scientific and biblical evidence in their interpretations. In recent years, besides the Orthodox liturgical rites of Pentecost, the public representations of the festival emphasise the presence and survival of Byzantine Christian customs and of pre-Christian pagan, Thracian-Dacian and Roman elements. Local interpretations are partly based on the official Orthodox Christian interpretation, according to which the origin of Pentecost and the establishment of its final form dates back to the age of the Apostles; but they also highlight its presumed connection to the festival of Rosalia, the festival of roses in Ancient Rome. At the request of local teachers, the Orthodox children of Gyimes arrive to Holy Mass and the procession on Pentecost Sunday with colourful peonies (and with salt and sweetbread); they also stick flowers onto the festive banners as a gesture of remembrance to the local ancestors and heroes.

As for the Pentecost-Rusali connection, local intellectuals are very familiar with the treatise of Dimitrie Cantemir about Pentecost and the ritual dance of Călușarii, Câluș, which is interconnected with the Pentecostal celebrations in many respects. The rite itself is popular in numerous communities in Oltenia; it was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008. It is not practiced in Gyimes, but is known as a staged ritual from various folklore festivals (e. g. Slănie-Moldova Festival). The relevance of Cantemir’s description to the present topic is that he emphasises the Latin roots of Călușarii and of Pentecost. This argument also appears in the explanations on Pentecost by the Romanians in Gyimes. They trace back the symbolism of the flowers and their ritual significance, as well as the commemoration of the dead to the tradition of the Roman Rosalia festival; moreover, some consider it to be an even more ancient Thracian-Dacian tradition. All this is supported by the Latin origin of

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20 Connerton 1989, 61.

31 Oltenia is a historical province and geographical region of Romania. It is situated between the Danube, the Southern Carpathians and the Olt River.

35 About the ritual see Benga and Negota 2010; Săraru 2010.
the word Rosalii. The use of Rosalii as the invented and reinvented ancient symbol recalled in connection with the commemorative rituals honouring national and local ancestors and heroes is not limited to the Pentecost-herculea celebration at Gyimes-bükki. An interesting parallel can be found in the work of the archaeologist Vasile Pârvan who dedicated an entire chapter to introducing the ancient Rosalia rite in his 1923 book Memoriale (Memorial). In this text he wrote that the Rosalia was extremely popular in Trajan's province of Dacia since the very beginning of its establishment; according to archeological findings and a series of monuments related to the Rosalia cult were erected even during the reign of Trajan's successor, especially in urban, but also in rural areas. The Roman custom (in fact, an Ancient Romano-Italic rite) was to put flowers, especially roses, on the graves of the beloved to commemorate them every year. Vasile Pârvan offered his text on Rosalii to those who fell for freedom in the last two years of World War I.37 Explanations for the other central element of the Orthodox Pentecostal liturgy, the consecration of linden branches, are also rather complex: on the one hand it is considered to be a symbol of the descent of the Holy Spirit, upon the apostles in the form of flames as described in the Acts if the Apostles in the Bible (Acts 2:1–31). On the other hand, an online media report on the 2011 celebration also emphasised that: “Performing a holy mass and the sacred liturgy, along with the consecration of the linden branches and the various festive ceremonies were once approved by our Dacian ancestors.”38 Moreover, as recalled in a 2014 festive sermon, by consecrating the branches and sprinkling holy water on the believers, national heroes and the heroes from Antiquity are also commemorated. On the level of public rituals and their (public) interpretations, by celebrating Pentecost the proponents of the festival are keeping alive a complex and ancient rite, which they consider to be an amalgam of universal and Byzantine Christian liturgical and paraliturgical customs as well as pagan traditions rooted in Dacian-Thracian and Roman celebrations that coexist with official and popular religious ideas.

36 Some Romanian and international folklorist and anthropologist (e.g. Kligman 1981; Goody and Poppi 1994) presume that some parts of the rituals and conceptions of the recent Romanian Whit-sun festival are actually survivals from the Antique Rosalia. As Kligman wrote, in the Orthodox world, such celebrations take place at different times of the year compared to their antique counterparts. In Romania meals are placed and shared on the graves at Whitsuntide, during the festival of Rusalii, which perhaps derived from the Roman festival of Rosalia during which offerings of flowers were brought to the family graves (Kligman 1981). Others emphasize the Slavic origin of the rituals. Ovidiu Birlea claims that the originally Latin expression was reintroduced in the Romanian vocabulary with the intercalation of a Slavic language (Birlea 1981, 303).

37 Franga 2016, 224.


Conclusion

From the foregoing we can conclude that the Orthodox Pentecost of Gyimes and its constructed, local commemoration claiming to date back to antiquity is essentially practiced to justify and represent the rights of Romanians in Gyimes to the land and to celebrate Pentecost. I showed that on the level of public discourse the Gyimes Orthodox Church and the local knowledge elite created their own series of Pentecostal rituals and associated time-frame, which moves dialectically between recent and ancient past and the events of the mythic past and the present. In doing this they exploit historical and ethnographic data and sources as well as provide continuity on the level of narratives, but we can also posit a (re)invention of ritual and narrative tradition. During the festive event on Pentecost Sundays both the Hungarians and the Romanians of Gyimes commemorate the Apostolic Age and the various timelines of their ethnicised history: their ancestors, their heroes, the Hungarian and Romanian past and, in the case of the Romanians, the mythical Dacian-Thracian period. Both groups have created distinct places of commemoration, Romanian and Hungarian spaces and landscapes. They attribute particular importance to the Hungarian and the Romanian side of the historic Hungarian-Romanian border running through the frontiers of Gyimesbükki, and the first Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic/Orthodox churches also play a significant role in their commemorations. These places, as Maurice Halbwachs and Jan Assmann have pointed out, can also be considered as “topographical texts” of cultural memory. The site of the first Orthodox church as a significant venue of commemoration cannot be associated with a concrete historical moment (since the date of the church’s foundation is unknown), but it indicates a long-term Orthodox Romanian presence and local history in Gyimes; the memory of the heroic ancestors refers to the period of the world wars, while also alluding to the movements of resistance in previous times, as far back in history as Antiquity. Finally, according to the interpretation by the local Church, the Orthodox Pentecost represents the primordiality of Romanian culture: which is an alloy of various pagan and Christian cults and rites from Antiquity, creating a Romanian whole. Besides political legitimation, the celebration of Pentecost serves to establish and reinforce local, regional, ethnic and religious identities.

39 Hárs 2005, 67; Barna 2002, 156.