



# Religion and Identity

Szeged, Hungary

October. 20 – 22. 2023.

# Religion and Identity

**Intersections of collective and private  
identity  
with religion and spirituality**



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**ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:** MOHAMED FARRAG [CEU], FRANTIŠEK VÁLEK [CUNI], PÉTER BOROS [ELTE], DOMINIK ČISÁRIK [UNIBA], VILÉM SKOPAL [UPCE], MATOUŠ MOKRÝ [MUNI], MÁRK NEMES [SZTE]

CALL FOR PAPERS DESIGNED BY:

ANDREJ KAPCÁR [MUNI]

**ISBN (Online): 978-615-6457-28-8**

**ISBN (Print): 978-615-6457-27-1**

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MAIN ORGANIZER:

MÁRK NEMES [SZTE]

[DOSZ.FILOZOFIA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:DOSZ.FILOZOFIA@GMAIL.COM) // +36303416683

FURTHER INFORMATION:

**WEBPAGE:** [HTTPS://WWW.CESAR-PLATFORM.ORG/](https://www.cesar-platform.org/)

**EMAIL:** [CESARPLATFORM@GMAIL.COM](mailto:CESARPLATFORM@GMAIL.COM)

**FACEBOOK:** [HTTPS://FB.ME/E/2ZZ5TRT3L](https://fb.me/e/2zz5tRt3L)

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## Religion and Identity

### Intersections of collective and private identity with religion and spirituality.

Across the course of history, the interplay between religion and identity has played a crucial role in shaping both collective and individual thought. This dynamic has had far-reaching implications for individual and collective self-definition, interpersonal relationships, and broader social cohesion. Similarly, the impact of systematic religiosity on the basis of human thinking should not be understated, and as such, it still remains a fertile subject for discussion and scholarly inquiry within the fields of humanities and social sciences.

Indeed, as contemporary young scholars still continue to draw inspiration from these cornerstones of our humanity – exploring new theoretical approaches, introducing new case studies, and offering multi- and transdisciplinary perspectives – a need emerges for spaces where the intersections of religion and identity can be discussed in academic settings.

The Central European Symposium for the Academic Study of Religion (or CESAR)'s 2023 symposium aims to serve as a forum where young academics and Ph.D. students of humanities and social sciences can introduce and discuss their new ideas, approaches, and innovative research.

This year's conference will host 37 intriguing lectures in 10 panels and two keynote presentations from renowned academics from the CEE region. With this event, CESAR hopes to provide an inspiring setting where Ph.D. students and advanced MA and early career postgraduate researchers may find appropriate audiences for discussing their research gaining invaluable experiences, critical feedback, and new perspectives.

Our symposium also strives to provide several informal events where young researchers from the CEE region may form stronger connections and find ways for further cooperation between the present institutions. Our affiliated journals of *Religio*, *Sacra*, and the *Hungarian Journal of Religious Studies* support these endeavors by offering peer-reviewed publication opportunities for a selected number of excellent presenters.

At our conference, each presenter will have **20 minutes to hold their lecture**, which a 10-minute debate will follow. Five minutes before the end of the presentation, the panel organizer will remind the presenter about the remaining time utilizing an interjection.

# Program overview

## Day 1 20<sup>th</sup> of October

9:30 – 10:30	Registration (mandatory for all participants) SZTE BTK Main Building, outside the Event Hall		
10:30 – 11:00	Opening ceremony SZTE BTK Main Building, Event Hall		
11:00 – 13:00	Identity in Late Antiquity and Medieval Ages SZTE BTK Main Building, Event Hall	Public image and societal identity in the history of Christianity SZTE BTK Main Building, Room X	Clashes of cultural and religious identity SZTE BTK Main Building, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor, Room 3428
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break Café Radnóti – SZTE BTK Main Building		
14:00 – 15:00	Keynote lecture <i>Spirituality in the Age of Festivals - The Hungarian 'Everness' case study</i> Dr. Réka Szilárdi, Ph.D. (Associate Professor, Head of the Religious Studies Department, University of Szeged, HU) SZTE BTK Main Building, Event Hall		
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee break Café Radnóti – SZTE BTK Main Building		
15:30 – 16:30	Return to accommodation		
16:30 – 17:00	Short walk to the Szeged Synagogue (Meetup for the group at the SZTE BTK Main Building's Entrance! Make sure to dress suitably and bring appropriate headwear.)		
17:00 – 18:00	Guided tour in the Szeged Synagogue visiting a Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday evening) service		


# Program overview

**Day 2**  
**21<sup>st</sup> of October**

10:00 – 11:00	<p>Keynote lecture</p> <p><i>Secularization and desecularization in the context of Central Europe</i></p> <p>Prof. Dr. David Václavík, Ph.D. (Associate professor, Department for the Study of Religions at Masaryk University, CZ)</p> <p>SZTE BTK Main Building, Conference Hall</p>	
11:00 – 11:30	<p>Coffee break</p> <p>Café Radnóti – SZTE BTK Main Building</p>	
11:30 – 13:30	<p>Modern and contemporary interactions of cultural identity and religion</p> <p>SZTE BTK Main Building, Conference Hall</p>	<p>Identity in new and minority religiosity</p> <p>SZTE BTK Main Building, Room X</p>
13:30 – 14:30	<p>Lunch break</p> <p>TIK Café – SZTE BTK TIK Building</p>	
14:30 – 16:30	<p>Intersections of religiosity and political identity</p> <p>SZTE BTK Main Building, Conference Hall</p>	<p>The role of identity in change, crisis, and conflicts</p> <p>SZTE BTK Main Building, Room X</p>
16:30 – 18:00	<p>Short break and return to accommodation</p>	
18:00 – 23:59	<p>Conference dinner and free discussion</p>	

# Program overview

**Day 3**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> of October**

<p>10:00 – 12:00</p>	<p>Transdisciplinary approaches and methods towards religion and identity SZTE BTK Main Building, Room X</p>	<p>Religious and social identity within the Church of Jehovah's Witnesses SZTE BTK Main Building, Conference Hall</p>	<p>Online panel</p> 
<p>12:00 – 12:30</p>	<p>Coffee break Café Radnóti – SZTE BTK Main Building</p>		
<p>12:30 – 13:30</p>	<p>CESAR Roundtable &amp; workshop SZTE BTK Main Building, Conference Hall</p>		
<p>13:30 – 14:00</p>	<p>Closing ceremony SZTE BTK Main Building, Conference Hall</p>		

# Detailed Program

## Day 1

### Panel 1

#### Identity in Late Antiquity and Medieval Ages

Abstracts: pages 18-20.

**Date & time:** 2023.10.20. 11:00 – 13:00

**Venue:** SZTE BTK Main Building, Conference Hall

Panel chair: Dr. Habil. Edit Újvári, University of Szeged

Panel organizers: Péter Boros

11:00 – 11:30	<b>Ivan Mileković</b> <i>Central European University (AT)</i>	<i>Cult of Athena and self-fashioning in Roman Macedonia: A case study of Heraclea Lyncestis</i>
11:30 – 12:00	<b>Zorana Cvijanović</b> <i>Central European University (AT)</i>	<i>Refrigeratam uel baptizatam: The Christian Legend of Emperor Trajan in Early Medieval Times</i>
12:00 – 12:30	<b>Máté Vas</b> <i>Eötvös Loránd University (HU)</i>	<i>The Sins of the Father, the Piety of the Son: Religiosity as a Political Tool in the Autobiography of Emperor Charles IV</i>
12:30 – 13:00	<b>Anna Porkoláb</b> <i>Eötvös Loránd University (HU)</i>	<i>Through the path of piety: Religious identity and speech in a medieval Dominican community</i>



## Panel 2

### Public image and societal identity in the history of Christianity

Abstracts: pages 20-22.

**Date & time:** 2023.10.20. 11:00 – 13:00

Venue: SZTE BTK Main Building, Room X

Panel chair: Dr. Szabolcs Nagypál (Mathias Corvinus Collegium, Eötvös Loránd University)

Panel organizers: Vilém Skopal

11:00 – 11:30	<b>Márk Besztercei</b> <i>Eötvös Loránd Uni- versity</i> (HU)	<i>Orthodoxy as identity? – The framing of heretics and the self-image of the Papacy in the Acts of the Lateran Council (649)</i>
11:30 – 12:00	<b>Bálint Károlyi</b> <i>Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies</i> (US)	<i>Reformation? Humanism? Or protestant humanism? Questions about the personal faith and interest of the 16th-century chamber officials.</i>
12:00 – 12:30	<b>Barnabás Szabó</b> <i>Central European University</i> (AT)	<i>Contouring the Nation. The Use of Confessional References to Delineate the Polity in Early-Modern Scotland and Catalonia (1680-1700)</i>
12:30 – 13:00	<b>Anna Vancsó</b> <i>Eötvös Loránd Uni- versity</i> (HU)	<i>Christianity as a source of identity construction in the Hungarian parliamentary speeches between 1990-2017</i>

## Panel 3

### Clashes of cultural and religious identity

Abstracts: pages 22-24.

**Date & time:** 2023.10.20. 11:00 – 13:00

Venue: SZTE BTK Main Building, 3rd Floor, Room 3428

Panel chair: Dr. Richárd Papp, Eötvös Loránd University

Panel organizers: Petra Loulová

11:00 – 11:30	<b>Laura Suszta</b> <i>Eötvös Loránd University (HU)</i>	<i>"Religion has not as yet begun to dawn among the Northern Indians" - The perception of religion through personal identity in the 18th century.</i>
11:30 – 12:00	<b>József G. Lénárt</b> <i>University of Jewish Studies (HU)</i>	<i>The role of Seraya Shapshal in the transformation of Karaite identity in Eastern Europe</i>
12:00 – 12:30	<b>Adéla Petřeková</b> <i>Masaryk University (CZ)</i>	<i>Roma or Believer? Negotiating Identity in Charismatic Movements between Antigypsyism and Romipen</i>
12:30 – 13:00	<b>István Olajos</b> <i>Eötvös Loránd University (HU)</i>	<i>Religious identity in early medieval China – Traces of Buddhist and Shamanic interaction in Taiping guangji 太平廣記</i>

# Detailed Program

## Day 2

### Panel 4

#### Modern and contemporary interactions of cultural identity and religion

Abstracts: pages 25-27.

**Date & time:** 2023.10.21. 11:30 – 13:30

**Venue:** SZTE BTK Main Building, Conference Hall

**Panel chair:** Dr. Csaba T. Szabó, University of Szeged

**Panel organizers:** Petra Loulová

11:30 – 12:00	<b>Evrin Can Ifla- zoğlu</b> <i>University of Sze- ged (HU)</i>	<i>Religious Institutions and Identity Building: The Case of Transformation of Alevism</i>
12:00 – 12:30	<b>Amir Tariq Mai- moona</b> <i>International Is- lamic University (PK)</i>	<i>The Impact of Acculturation on Religious Identity: A Study of Hindus in the United Arab Emirates</i>
12:30 – 13:00	<b>András Kiss</b> <i>University of Jew- ish Studies (HU)</i>	<i>Jesus of Nazareth as an identity model in modern Chris- tian and Jewish thought</i>
13:00 – 13:30	<b>Farkas Janka</b> <i>Eötvös Loránd University (HU)</i>	<i>Attitudes towards the ecological crisis in the personal narratives of Hungarian Buddhists</i>

## Panel 5

### Identity in new and minority religiosity

Abstracts: pages 27-29.

**Date & time:** 2023.10.21. 11:30 – 13:30

Venue: SZTE BTK Main Building, Room X

Panel chair: Dr. Gábor Dániel Nagy, University of Szeged

Panel organizers: Márk Nemes

11:30 – 12:00	<b>Attila Miklovicz</b> <i>University of Pécs</i> (HU)	<i>The concept of individual a collective identity and their intersection in Scientology – a hermeneutic approach to selected source texts</i>
12:00 – 12:30	<b>Krisztina Bodzásné Csényi-Nagy</b> <i>Eötvös Loránd University</i> (HU)	<i>Dimensions of Pagan Identity - Conversion Motifs in Hungary among Modern Pagans</i>
12:30 – 13:00	<b>Nathalie Bouchaut</b> <i>Université des Antilles (FR)</i>	<i>“Alex Boyé or the cultural claims of a Latter-Day Saint on Youtube”</i>
13:00 – 13:30	<b>Piroska Markwarthné Lengyel</b> <i>Eötvös Loránd University</i> (HU)	<i>Identity in the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition and for its modern Western members</i>



## Panel 6

### Intersections of religiosity and political identity

Abstracts: pages 29-32.

**Date & time:** 2023.10.21. 14:30 – 16:30

**Venue:** SZTE BTK Main Building, Conference Hall

Panel chair: Tamás Szilágyi, University of Pécs

Panel organizers: Attila Miklovicz

14:30 – 15:00	<b>Aleksandr Orlov</b> <i>Central European University (AT)</i>	<i>Old Believers in the Habsburg Empire in the Middle of the XIX Century: Balancing between Privacy and Pub- licity</i>
15:00 – 15:30	<b>Péter Tóth</b> <i>University of Sze- ged (HU)</i>	<i>Competitive Nationalisms in Central and Eastern Eu- rope: Mimetic Theory and Collective Wounded Identity</i>
15:30 – 16:00	<b>Tamas Dudlak</b> <i>Eötvös Loránd University (HU)</i>	<i>Rightly guided leaders: the religious ideology of Orbán and Erdoğan</i>
16:00 – 16:30	<b>Anoo Niskanen</b> <i>Åbo Akademi University (FIN)</i>	<i>Identity Motives Among Sweden Finnish Conservative Laestadians</i>

## Panel 7

### The role of identity in change, crisis, and conflict

Abstracts: pages 32-34.

**Date & time:** 2023.10.21. 14:30 – 16:30

Venue SZTE BTK Main Building, Room X

Panel chair: Dr. Zsuzsanna Szugyiczki, University of Szeged

Panel organizers: Vilém Skopal

14:30 – 15:00	<b>Abdul Matin Sk</b> <i>Jadavpur University (IN)</i>	<i>Agrarian Islam, Market Economy and the Idea of Common Good: Understanding the Changing Role of ‘Solo-Aana’ among Bengali Muslim society in rural India.</i>
15:00 – 15:30	<b>Muzammil Patel</b> <i>Habib University (PK)</i>	<i>Neo-Barelviyat in Pakistan: The search for a renewed Sufi identity?</i>
15:30 – 16:00	<b>Angelika Pataki-Tóth</b> <i>Eötvös Loránd University (HU)</i>	<i>Turning Christian in a time of need – the self-changing power of the Fukushima disaster</i>
16:00 – 16:30	<b>Roman Galovič</b> <i>Charles University (SK)</i>	<i>Empowerment from Beyond: Paradox of Identity and Agency in Praxis of Spirit Mediums</i>

# Detailed Program

## Day 3

### Panel 8

#### Transdisciplinary approaches and methods towards religion and identity

Abstracts: pages 34-36.

**Date & time:** 2023.10.22. 10:00 – 12:00

**Venue:** SZTE BTK Main Building, Room X

**Panel chair:** Dr. László Koppány Csáji (Hungarian Academy of Arts Research Institute of Art Theory and Methodology)

**Panel organizers:** Matouš Mokřý

10:00 – 10:30	<b>Markéta Muczková</b> <i>Palacký University Olomouc (CZ)</i>	<i>Exploring the Relationship Between Religious Identity and Prejudice: An Experimental Research Approach</i>
10:30 – 11:00	<b>Rita Figus-Illinyi</b> <i>University of Szeged (HU)</i>	<i>Dimensions of individual and community resilience</i>
11:00 – 11:30	<b>Lenka Jedličková</b> <i>Palacký University Olomouc (CZ)</i>	<i>What do managers believe? Research on the spirituality of people in management professions</i>

## Panel 9

### Religious and social identity within the Church of Jehovah's Witnesses

Abstracts: pages 36-38.

**Date & time:** 2023.10.22. 10:00 – 12:00

**Venue:** SZTE BTK Main Building, Conference Hall

Panel chair: Dr. Habil. Éva Petrás, Committee of National Remembrance

Panel organizers: Márk Nemes

10:00 – 10:30	<b>Munurangabo Richard Benda</b> <i>The Queen's Foundation</i> (UK)	<i>A Faith Community in Turbulent Times: Rwanda Jehovah's Witnesses in the context of genocide and beyond</i>
10:30 – 11:00	<b>Márk Nemes</b> <i>University of Szeged</i> (HU)	<i>Identity formation of Hungarian Jehovah's Witnesses converts</i>
11:00 – 11:30	<b>Olli-Matti Peltonen</b> <i>Freedom of Worship - Europe Office</i> (FIN)	<i>Leaving and Returning: Reaffiliation with the Jehovah's Witness Community</i>



## Panel 10 Online panel

Abstracts: pages 38-40.

**Date & time:** 2023.10.22. 10:00 – 12:00

**QR code:**

**URL:** [bit.ly/CESAR2023panel](https://bit.ly/CESAR2023panel)

Panel chair: Dr. Ádám Vér, Eötvös Loránd University

Panel organizers: Mohamed Farrag, Cezar Braga



10:00 – 10:30	<b>Péter Boros</b> <i>Eötvös Loránd University (HU)</i>	<i>The Emergence of a Lay Buddhist Identity in Early 20th-Century China</i>
10:30 – 11:00	<b>Jérémy Ianni</b> <i>University of Paris Vincennes – Saint- Denis, EXPE- RICE) Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC) (FR)</i>	<i>Testimony and music as vehicles for the construction of identity and the displacement of power: An analysis based on the case of a Born-Again denomination in the Philippines</i>
11:00 – 11:30	<b>Yael Dansac</b> <i>Université Libre de Bruxelles (BE)</i>	<i>“Becoming Animist: Identity Transformation and Inter- being Rituality in Wéris”</i>

# Abstracts

## Panel 1

### Identity in Late Antiquity and Medieval Ages

#### Ivan Mileković – Cult of Athena and self-fashioning in Roman Macedonia: A case study of Heraclea Lyncestis

During the Second Sophistic period, there was a widespread debate regarding whether Macedonia could be considered Greek or not, as exemplified by figures like Aelius Aristides. Specifically, it was noted that Macedonia lacks real (Greek) cities. Taking this polemic into consideration, this presentation examines the usage of religion, specifically the cult of Athena, as a tool for the self-fashioning of Hellenic identity in Roman Macedonia. The presentation will provide a general overview of the sacral topography of Athena's cult in Macedonia from the 1st to the 3rd century, with a particular focus on Heraclea Lyncestis. Special attention will be given to a marble statue of Athena Parthenos discovered in Heraclea Lyncestis. By arguing that this statue was found in a stoa near the Agora and theater of Heraclea, the presentation aims to explore the possible usage of a specific cult image within the context of Hellenic self-fashioning. Therefore, by analyzing the sacral topography of Athena's cult in Macedonia and giving special attention to the marble statue of Athena Parthenos found in Heraclea Lyncestis, the presentation seeks to explore how the cult and its imagery contributed to the formation of civic Hellenic identity in the specific context of this city.

*Keywords: Second Sophistics, Athena, Macedonia, Heraclea Lyncestis, Roman Greece*

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#### Zorana Cvijanović – *Refrigeratam uel baptizatam*: The Christian Legend of Emperor Trajan in Early Medieval Times

Classical tradition remembers Emperor Trajan as *optimus princeps*, a just ruler, and equally successful in both political and military campaigns he carried out. Pious he strove in his aim to preserve the traditional faith of the Romans by implementing strict rules for those who practiced Christianity. Emperor Trajan lived and died as a “pagan”; however, the later medieval account praises Trajan for his unmistakable Christian virtues. This tradition of Trajan as an exemplary pagan culminated with Dante's *Divine Comedy*, according to which Emperor Trajan earned his place in the heavenly spheres for his humility. This paper will explore the earliest narratives that led to the Christian legend of Emperor Trajan, known to be *narratum a Romanis*. How did Christians liberate and baptize the soul of a ruler known for his persecutions? Who were the voices of the old Roman tradition that were adapted to serve a new belief? How did the newly crafted legend of Emperor Trajan travel from Rome to Whitby Abbey, where it was written down for the first time? This paper will offer a summary of the main “pagan” and Christian sources that were responsible for one of the greatest theological debates on Trajan's identity in the Late Medieval Times. Additionally, it will confirm the continuity of the classical tradition in the period of early Christian kingdoms, whose

awareness was in eternal conflict with the unknown, somewhat barbarized, and yet so tempting classical literary authorities. The primary sources used in this paper include hagiography, biographies, theological treatises concerning baptism, and visual material with the depiction of Trajan's humility.

*Keywords: Trajan, baptism, virtuous pagans, Whitby, classical tradition*

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### **Máté Vas – The Sins of the Father, the Piety of the Son: Religiosity as a Political Tool in the Autobiography of Emperor Charles IV**

The autobiography of Charles IV of Luxembourg (1316–1378) carries unparalleled source value as it provides a detailed account of the first thirty years of the later Holy Roman Emperor. The autobiography encompasses various contemporary genres, including mirrors for princes, sermons, and visionary literature. The autobiography portrays Charles as receiving God's mercy through his steadfast piety. Despite facing numerous poisonings, battles, and acts of treason, Charles attributes his survival to his unwavering faith. There are a few sources, including the autobiography, where Charles also offers some criticism of his father, John the Blind (1296–1346). In the paper, I aim to argue that Charles carefully presents his spiritual growth, reflected in the images of prophecies and visions, while contrasting it with his father's declining ability to see with his mistakes. By doing so, Charles seeks to differentiate himself from his father and present himself as a ruler whose reign will be more successful. Additionally, I will emphasize that Charles's religiosity was not solely a private matter but was also expressed through various public activities, such as his writings, patronage of the arts, and the construction of significant buildings. This blurring of lines between private and public devotion highlights the complex nature of the king's religiosity. Furthermore, I aim to challenge the anachronistic view that separates political and religious thought when examining the Late Middle Ages. Thus, I will argue that the boundaries between the political and religious spheres were more fluid and intertwined. Lastly, in the autobiography, there is an ongoing issue that being a man and being a king are interconnected in some way. Thus, I will also use the concepts of the history of masculinity.

*Keywords: Emperor Charles IV, kingship, devotion, self-representation, autobiography, masculinity, House of Luxembourg*

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### **Anna Porkoláb – Through the path of piety: Religious identity and speech in a medieval Dominican community**

The question of women's religiosity is one of the most popular areas of research in medieval religious history. My lecture is based on Catherine Gueberschwihr's collection of biographies, a manuscript known as the *Vitae sororum*, collected at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries. This source, a so-called sisterbook, rich in descriptions and details, gives us an insight into the religious practice of the Dominican community of the monastery of Unterlinden near Colmar. In addition to commemorating the founding sisters of the community through 39 various life stories, Gueberschwihr's work provides a model for her fellow companions on the practice of the monastic virtues and correct behavior and speech. In the first part of my presentation, I will attempt to develop a typology based on the recorded life paths. What religious identities can we distinguish? What characteristics, practices, and attitudes do they draw from the vita and spirituality

of Saint Dominic? After the typology, I will focus on the relationship of each identity to speaking and listening. The only way to conclude verbal communication within the monastery is through convent chronicles, sisterbooks, or obituaries. In the second part of my lecture, I will therefore examine the communication of nuns based on the biographies of the *Vitae sororum*. We encounter records of sisters who confessed their faults and weaknesses to their companions; others refused to respond to the insults they had received, and in her great despair, the prioress was consoled by the sisters. How do nuns express and communicate their religious identity in interpersonal settings? What strategies do they use in speaking and listening to hear God's voice? My research aims to gain a better understanding of Dominican identity, practices, and piety, especially concerning verballity.

*Keywords: communication, medieval female piety, monastic silence, mystical experiences, Order of Preachers, religious identity*

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## Panel 2

### Public image and societal identity in the history of Christianity

#### **Márk Besztercei Orthodoxy as identity? – The framing of heretics and the self-image of the Papacy in the Acts of the Lateran Council (649)**

When we think about theological debates of the 7th century, usually what comes to mind is Maximus Confessor or maybe the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680–681), and not the possible connections of this era to the topic of identity. However, as I can see when we read the sources, we can discover some elements of some kind of identity. In my lecture, I want to concentrate on the Acts of the Lateran Council of 649, and I want to argue (based on the text) that the Roman Papacy itself demonstrated its "orthodox" self-image. Pope Martin, I saw the Papacy as the defender of the true faith and the "pillar" of the "pure doctrine" of Jesus Christ. We could say that these are the foundations of papal self-image or some kind of "apostolic self-representation." Besides this, we cannot just observe the papal identity but also the framing of the heretics, the "enemies" of the Church, and the true faith. I want to demonstrate that as the Papacy and the participants of the council had their own "orthodox" identities, they also depicted the Monothelites and other heretics as enemies of the Church of Christ. I intend to show examples of this kind of heretical "anti-identity" from the Acts. In both aspects (the so-called "papal" and "heretic"), I wish to concentrate mostly on the phrasing of the Acts (I will work with the original Greek and Latin text from *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*). With this examination, I hope I can contribute to the understanding of theological debates of the 7th century and connect this overshadowed era to the problem of religion and "identity."

*Keywords: Papacy, Rome, Late Antiquity, theological debates, Lateran Council, Monothelitism, orthodoxy*

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#### **Bálint Károlyi – Reformation? Humanism? Or protestant humanism? Questions about the personal faith and interest of the 16th-century chamber officials.**

There has been much research on the Habsburg Monarchy. We have gained insight concerning politics, economics, and social history. More recently, there has also been work on the official world, but this has not been studied from the point of view of religion and



cultural history. Investigating the culture and book literacy of the officials of the Habsburg Monarchy is quite a new research field. A more thorough analysis of individual book lists or libraries provides important data on the level of knowledge and education of individual officials and the whole group. Francis Bornemisza was one of the several officials of the Hungarian Chamber during the 16th century. Earlier, a paper was published about his life. But his knowledge and his cultural background are little known, such as his contemporaries. His booklist shows us an interesting view of the contact between reformation and humanism among the officeholders. As a clerk of the Hungarian Chamber, he used to be a faithful catholic, but his small book collection shows us he was interested in the Reformation. Besides that, he had different ecclesiastical works and some high-quality humanist books. Luther, Melanchthon, Sylvester, and Pesti are some of the authors from his collection. The religious works of these Lutheran reformers and humanist scholars of the period show us the complex interest of a financial official. In my presentation, I will demonstrate Bornemisza's contact with the reformation. My main questions: was he a protestant official? Was he a humanist with an interest in the new spiritual and intellectual trends? Or does his life and his booklist show us something different? Was he alone among the chamber, or were there other similar contemporaries?

*Keywords: reformation, humanism, booklist, officials, Hungarian Chamber, Hungary, Habsburg Monarchy*

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### **Barnabas Szabo – Contouring the Nation. The Use of Confessional References to Delineate the Polity in Early-Modern Scotland and Catalonia (1680-1700)**

This contribution analyses the use of confessional references in defining – or blurring – the contours of early modern political communities in late seventeenth-century Britain and Spain. Narcís Feliu de la Peña (1646-1712) and Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun (1653? -1716) were true ‘provincial patriots’ concerned for the prosperity of their respective homelands, Catalonia and Scotland, within the larger framework of the British and Spanish composite monarchies. In their works published in the 1680s and 1690s, Fletcher and Feliu proposed a political and economic vision for Scotland and Catalonia where the two ancient kingdoms would maintain their constitutional distinctness within the Stuart and the Habsburg dynastic conglomerates while also profiting from the umbrella provided by the expanding British and Spanish commercial empires. The two authors, living and working in two rather different milieus hundreds of miles apart, assessed the situation of their homelands, similarly, offered similar solutions, and resorted to comparable conceptual frameworks. As part of the latter, they often invoked religious images and confessional arguments to buttress their claims. In Feliu's narration, the ardent Catholicism of the Catalans was instrumental to the achievements of the Hispanic Monarchy. For Fletcher, Scotland played a very important part in securing the British Monarchy against the tyranny and corruption of Catholic France and the dethroned Stuarts it hosted. But what exactly was the significance of such religious-confessional references when it came to defining the place of Scotland and Catalonia within the composite monarchy? What political and economic connotations did these references have? What was their weight in Fletcher's and Feliu's constitutional and commercial proposals? Published on the eve of the “Utrecht Enlightenment,” when European societies were alleged to come together in treaties of peace and commerce, relegating wars of religion and confessional strife to the past, comparing the work of the two authors could

nuance our understanding of the transformation of the role of religion in governance and diplomacy.

*Keywords: Scotland, Catalonia, confessionalization, composite monarchy, Utrecht enlightenment*

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### **Anna Vancsó – Christianity as a source of identity construction in the Hungarian parliamentary speeches between 1990-2017**

The intersection between identity and religion has been under deep investigation since researching the role of religion in society; so, has the relation between religion and politics or religion and the nation. This research is part of my dissertation project investigating the several and often contested concepts of Christianity in the Hungarian parliamentary speeches since the transition, focusing on the different construction of Christianity – as culture, value, morality or power, etc. - by the different political actors embedded in the various discourses in which Christianity is part of. My results showed that the question of national identity has one of the strongest relations to Christianity - Christianity as a source of identity was one of the most often used interpretations of Christianity - but in several ways and has been constantly changing in these 27 analyzed years. I was using content and discourse analysis methods to investigate the way Christianity plays a role in creating, maintaining, and changing the concept of identity. Moreover, I would like to demonstrate the strategies to use Christianity in legitimizing, reinforcing, and supporting certain forms of identity construction, as well as how religious identity serves to legitimize or de-legitimize actors and discourses in the political sphere. I am convinced that my results contribute to a better understanding of the successful presence of Christianity in Hungarian political communication, which has been on the frontline since 2010 but has also played a significant role since the transition.

*Keywords: Christianity, parliamentary speeches, identity construction, legitimization process, religion, and nation*

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## **Panel 3 Clashes of cultural and religious identity**

### **Laura Suszta – "Religion has not as yet begun to dawn among the Northern Indians" - The perception of religion through personal identity in the 18th century.**

Samuel Hearne, one of the greatest explorers of northern Canada in the second half of the 18th century, despite his years with the Denesuline people, considered their customs, traditions, and religion to be merely "silly notions" in his *Journeys from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean in the years 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772* (1795). The explorer went so far as to declare that "Religion has not as yet begun to dawn among the Northern Indians," a statement born solely of his religious convictions. But what was religion for him, then? If we were to answer this question quickly and simply, Christianity would be the answer. But is the answer to this question so simple? Since Christianity itself is a complex, compound concept, the answer can and should only be given in more detail. Add to this the fact that London-born Hearne had lived at sea with his crew since the age of 11 and that, according to his contemporaries, "he then took Voltaire's *Dictionary*, and said to us, here is my belief, and I have no

other." Hence, the answer to the above question is not so straightforward. In my presentation, I will explore Hearne's religious identity and issues, primarily but not entirely through his preconceptions and images of the indigenous Denesuline religion. I aim to provide a more accurate picture of the Denesuline religious phenomena described in his account by exploring Hearne's background motivations.

*Keywords: Samuel Hearne, Denesuline, indigenous religion, North Canada, 18th century, religious identity*

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### **József G. Lénárt– The role of Seraya Shapshal in the transformation of Karaite identity in Eastern Europe**

In the 19th and 20th centuries, a new movement and new principles took shape in the Eastern European Karaite communities: a radical break with the Jewish roots of the community and the "discovery" of the Turkish origins of the Karaites. To create a Turkish identity, the leadership of the time used drastic means: name changes, the use of time and month names in Turkish, and the construction of new symbols and emblems. This harsh intervention in the traditional culture of the Karaites was so successful that a significant part of the Karaite community in Eastern Europe still defines itself as an ethnic group of Turkish origin. An important player in this process was Seraya Shapshal, who, as the religious leader of the Karaites, not only supported the changes but also actively helped them. It was he who appealed to Nazi Germany's offices dealing with racial issues with the request that they recognize the Turkish origin of the Karaites and that they have nothing to do with Jews. According to many historians, this type of de-Judaization saved a significant part of the Karaites from the horrors of the war.

The Karaites never formed a significant minority, and the war and the Soviet era swept away the remaining community. Their Turkification and de-Judaization is a relatively rarely researched topic, as is the life and work of Seraya Shapshal. This paper attempts to present the history of the change of Karaite identity and the role of Seraya Shapshal in the process.

*Keywords: Karaite, Shapshal, identity, dejudaization, Turkification*

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### **Adéla Petřeková – Roma or Believer? Negotiating Identity in Charismatic Movements between Antigypsyism and Romipen**

This conference paper synthesizes and investigates the dynamics of identity negotiation and social integration within charismatic movements, with a specific focus on the Roma community. By examining the interplay between external and internal factors, this study sheds light on the emergence of charismatic faith and its impact on religious, cultural, and group identity. The conference paper is a literature review of various fields and a chapter from the author's master's thesis. Internally, this study explores the active agency of the Roma in adopting charismatic beliefs and reconstructing authority structures. It emphasizes the appeal of charismatic Christianity and its challenge to ecclesiastical authority structures, offering a means to deconstruct the roots of Romani exclusion. The roles of religious leaders and their assistants in facilitating hierarchically graded participation are also examined. The paper also highlights the notion of the transition to faith as a means of survival and empowerment among the Roma, aligning with

society's accepted form of religious expression and embodying "slow life" strategies that engender trust. It explores the transformative effect of Pentecostalism on self-perception, overcoming past difficulties, and addressing issues related to social exclusion. At the same time, it explores the concerns about losing the cultural identity – Romipen – upon accepting a new faith as well as the synthesis of Romipen and Pentecostalism in various forms, such as music and. Overall, this paper contributes to the understanding of the intricate dynamics of identity negotiation, social integration, and the formation of religious and cultural identities within charismatic movements, particularly among the Roma communities. I also offer a drop to explanations for the emergence of charismatic movements among Roma communities across the world.

*Keywords: charismatic faith – Pentecostalism, identity, antigypsyism, Romipen, life history theory, trust, social exclusion*

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### **István Olajos – Religious identity in early medieval China – Traces of Buddhist and Shamanic interaction in Taiping guangji 太平廣記**

The present lecture's main goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the interaction of Buddhism and shamanism in early medieval China. The primary source material used in this presentation will be the encyclopedia *Taiping guangji*, 太平廣記 which contains a whole chapter introducing shamans from the post-Han period. In these stories, we are able to observe the evolving characteristics of shamanic activities and identity from the Six Dynasties 六朝 (220–589) to the Tang Dynasty 唐朝 (618–907). Furthermore, Buddhist influence can be identified in the shamanic narratives, which suggests that Buddhism – while establishing its identity in a foreign land – maintained a hostile attitude towards contemporary shamanic activities and shaped people's way of thinking about shamans. Thus, these stories can be seen not only as records of supernatural events but also as accounts of the transformation of these distinct religious movements. As for the changing identity of shamans, we encounter a relatively new series of activities shaped by the political struggles and intrigues of the imperial palace, often involving the use of various imprecations and black magic. The greatest challenge for Buddhism, on the other hand, was to establish a firm position on the religious stage of medieval China as a foreign religion. One of its main strategies in this endeavor was to convince people of the effectiveness of its own practices and supernatural activities. Therefore, the primary goal of Buddhism during this period was not the dissemination of its teachings but rather the demonstration that it could offer an effective alternative to shamanistic practices. Consequently, the author's main objective is to examine this vibrant religious atmosphere of the era and to ponder the question of how the identities of these religious movements were shaped during this vivid interaction.

*Keywords: Buddhism, shamanism, medieval China, religion, identity, Taiping guangji*

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## Panel 4

### Modern and contemporary interactions of cultural identity and religion

#### **Evrin Can İflazoğlu – Religious Institutions and Identity Building: The Case of Transformation of Alevism**

In this paper, I will discuss how transformation in institutions leads to the transformation of religious identities by using the transformation of Alevi identity in Germany as a case study. Alevism, which has gathered supporters in Anatolia and its nearby geography, is accepted as a heterodox, syncretic minority belief in many scientific studies. Although there are different approaches in the literature on the origins of Alevism, studies on the institutional structure of Alevism have agreed that the religious organization is similar. These studies explain the differences between the recent Alevi organization and the organizational structure of the past with traditional-modern, rural-urban, and archaic-contemporary dichotomies. In this article, beyond the aforementioned studies, the transformation in the organizational structures of Alevism will be explained with the concepts of "born-into-identity" and "learned identity." Starting from the 1960s, Alevis migrated to cities and abroad, which forced them to transform their traditional religious organization from the 'Ocak system' to NGOs. While the former had been allowing Alevi society to prioritize community identity and learning religiosity being a part of it, the latter is teaching Alevism as a course in which individuals learn it as outsiders and have more room for self-expression of religiosity. However, this transformation was beneficial in establishing a sense of group belonging for those who have loose ties with traditional organizational forms in cities and outside of Turkey. Moreover, this transformation made Alevis think and act more on equal citizenship in terms of religious pluralism. In this sense, the Alevi movements learned from the experience of the recognition process of Alevis in Germany, where the first right to give religious education and the first legal recognition of Alevism was gained.

*Keywords: Alevism, Transformation, Identity Building, Urbanisation, Modernisation*

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#### **Maimoona Amir Tariq – The Impact of Acculturation on Religious Identity: A Study of Hindus in the United Arab Emirates**

The UAE is renowned for its diverse and culturally rich society, encompassing more than 180 different cultural backgrounds, among them a substantial Hindu population. With the UAE experiencing increasing racial and social diversity in its workforce, social harmony prevails within the country. The diverse Hindu population in the UAE poses a unique challenge for studying their adoption of values and norms from other cultures. This article aims to delve into the effect of acculturation on the religious identities of Hindus residing in the UAE. The research explores the interplay between acculturation processes and religious identity formation among Hindus, shedding light on the multifaceted influences that shape their religious beliefs and practices. The findings of the study reveal that acculturation plays a significant role in shaping the religious identity of Hindus in the UAE. Hindus actively participate in and celebrate numerous Islamic rituals and events, indicating a blending and evolution of religious practices. This highlights the impact of acculturation on religious identity formation, wherein Hindus in the UAE navigate the adoption and adaptation of cultural values and norms from different

communities. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding religious identity in multicultural contexts and provides insights into the dynamics of acculturation within the Hindu-Muslim community. By examining how Hindus in the UAE embrace and integrate aspects of different cultures, the study expands our understanding of how religious identity is influenced by acculturation processes. The results emphasize the fluidity and adaptability of religious identities in multicultural settings, where individuals engage with diverse religious traditions and incorporate them into their practices. Understanding these dynamics has implications for promoting intercultural harmony and fostering a sense of belonging among diverse religious communities in the UAE.

*Keywords: UAE, acculturation, religious identity, Hinduism, multicultural society, cultural diversity.*

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### **András Kiss – Jesus of Nazareth as an identity model in modern Christian and Jewish thought**

In my talk, I would like to present parallels between how modern Christian and Jewish thinkers used the figure of Jesus of Nazareth as a personal and collective identity model starting with the Enlightenment and why the figure of Jesus is suitable for such an aim. In my view, based upon the long history of Jewish-Christian symbiosis in Europe, the Christian quest for the historical Jesus and the so-termed modern Jewish reclamation of Jesus cannot be seen as two distinct phenomena but must be examined as two sides of the same endeavor, the aim of which was to provide a solution of the Christian and Jewish identity crises following the collapse of the *Ancien Régime*, and to legitimize nation-states and collective Jewish existence against the individualizing and assimilating tendencies of the nation-states, and the participation of the hitherto “internally colonized” Jews in the new administrations. Christians and Jews used the same basic methodologies and theoretical assumptions but reached different conclusions. Thinkers of both sides adhered to the same criteria of what constitutes science, believed in the historical missions of their nations, and interpreted Jesus in his historical setting reconstructed through the projection of their contemporary issues back into Jesus’ time. Also, they used constructed Hegelian dichotomies and constructed geographies based upon the Romantic assumption that landscape determines individual and national character. Using Michel Foucault’s term, Jews considered the Christian narrative as an appropriation of Jesus, against which they wrote their counter-history, powerfully polemicizing against Christian thinkers. Some early 20th-century Zionist thinkers used the demythologized Jesus to distance themselves from both traditional Judaism and Western Christian culture. For them, the figure of Jesus was a personal identity model in whom they found their origin and identity, ultimately their new imagined self, the “New Jew.”

*Keywords: appropriation of Jesus, constructed history, counter-history, hidden polemics, identity crisis, identity model*

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## **Janka Farkas – Attitudes towards the ecological crisis in the personal narratives of Hungarian Buddhists**

The relationship between religion and ecology has been a widely debated topic among scholars ever since the controversial essay of Lynn White: *The Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, in which White blames the anthropocentrism of Judeo-Christian tradition in Western society for the degradation and objectification of nature. His logic – though critiqued by many – brings up an important question in contemporary religion: how does religious worldview influence the attitudes towards nature, environmental ethics, and the ecological crisis? Buddhism is often used as an example of a more holistic nature-man relationship in theory, but we still lack a significant amount of empirical evidence of whether this is reflected in the narratives of contemporary Buddhists as well. I was inspired to conduct such a study in Hungary for my thesis at ELTE Human-ecology master's program. Throughout my research, I was seeking answers to the following questions: Are ecological principles and values displayed in the personal narratives and identities of members of the Buddhist community in Hungary, and if so, how? How do these principles and values parallel the Buddhist ethics in the narrative? Since I was interested in the personal narratives of Buddhists, I opted for a qualitative approach by combining narrative and semi-structured interviews with 12 local Buddhists. This was ideal, especially because I was able to better understand the interviewees' Buddhist identity, their socio-economical background, and their views and attitudes when it comes to aspects of the ecological crisis. In my presentation, I am going to explain the methodology, research experience, and the results of my study, all the while reflecting on the conflict in Buddhism, mostly being a post-modern religious (self-focused) identity and the ecological crisis being a collective, all-encompassing global problem.

*Keywords: contemporary Buddhism, religion-sociology, human-ecology, ecological crisis, religious identity, narrative research*

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## **Panel 5 Identity in new and minority religiosity**

### **Attila Miklovicz – The concept of individual a collective identity and their intersection in Scientology – a hermeneutic approach to selected source texts**

Scientology, being a new religious movement (NRM) of considerable public presence and interest, is also still attracting academic attention. The ways and questions of approaching the subject are changing, though. As one of the most acclaimed young scholars in the research of Scientology, Donald Westbrook mentions in his very recent book (published in *Cambridge Elements*) *L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology Studies*: “Numerous other avenues for scholarly exploration exist. [...] there is a need for more research into the particulars of Scientological theology and practices, [...]”. Following that line, this paper focuses on the appearance of the concept of identity in the Scientology scripture, trying to place it in context with other philosophical, spiritual, or religious texts or social concepts. The question of identity occupies a very central role in the tenets of Scientology as one of the main targets of its practices is to address the identities of the parishioner. As the founder, L. Ron Hubbard phrased it in his book, *The Fundamentals of Thought*: “There are three Conditions-of-Existence. These three conditions comprise



(make-up, constitute) life. They are *BE*, *DO*, and *HAVE*. The first condition of existence is BEING. Being is defined as ‘the assumption (choosing) of a category of identity.’ It could be said to be the role in a game.” Later, he uses the term *beingness* as a synonym with the term identity and explains what four types of identities someone can assume and what he means by a “role in the game.” In the lecture, beyond presenting the Hubbardian concept of individual identity, I also show its possible manifestation as collective identity and reflect on whether any similarity may be traced to the concept of *wounded collective identity* by Professor András Máté-Tóth.

*Keywords: Scientology, identity, NRM, Hubbard, collective identity*

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### **Krisztina Bodzásné Csényi-Nagy – Dimensions of Pagan Identity – Conversion Motifs in Hungary among Modern Pagans**

Neopaganism has become more and more popular since its foundation in the 1960s. The reason for this phenomenon may be that it introduced an alternative approach to life by reviving and romanticizing archaic pagan religions and re-inventing them with modern teachings (e.g., sanctity of nature individualism). In my paper, I will introduce the three neopagan religions studied in the past ten years: Wicca (an eclectic movement that revived a fictitious witch religion), Ásatrú (reconstructionist trend of the Old Norse religion), and Yotengrit (ethnopagan, újáltos movement, which was greatly influenced by New Age). The main question is why neopagans decided to follow that particular religion and how they converted. I conducted quantitative research in the form of questionnaires published on the websites of the communities I studied; samples were identified as individuals who self-defined themselves as followers of the religions described above. I also conducted semi-structured interviews on the manifestations of their individual religiosity, finding the particular religion and their life before and after conversion. I analyzed the data with grounded theory. I realized five main categories, which have 2-4 additional concepts. These five categories played a big role in shaping the modern pagans' new religious identity. Christianity (*‘dogma,’ ‘monotheism,’ ‘hypocrite’*); Nature (*‘god,’ ‘homecoming’*); Community (*‘holidays,’ ‘people’*); Spiritual (*‘personal,’ ‘way/path,’ ‘signs,’ ‘transformation’*); Tradition (*‘ancient,’ ‘altar,’ ‘history’*) In my findings I realized that childhood experiences and previous interest greatly influence the process of learning about religion, during which the believer gains knowledge of the basic principles. In the development of actual religious practice, the focus is on individualism and eclecticism. Therefore, solitary and communal practices are not mutually exclusive or can freely alternate at any time during the person’s life. Loss of interest and deconversion can occur at any time after affiliation, after which the process is potentially restarted from the beginning.

*Keywords: Neopaganism, conversion, religious identity, New Age, Hungary*

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### **Dr. Nathalie Bouchaut – “Alex Boyé or the cultural claims of a Latter-Day Saint on YouTube”**

While it is no longer true to say that the Church of Jesus- Christ of Latter-Day Saints is a “white” church because of its immense proselytic work outside of the United States, its capital is Salt Lake City, whose population is as white as its mountains. While some prominent members, such as Mitt Romney, are now part of mainstream US politics, others stand out in the world of music, thanks to the «YouTube» hosting site. Some of

the most distinguished artists of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints come from the ethnic and cultural diversity that characterizes it today. What approach have they adopted to impose their racial difference through music? How did their artistic contributions emerge in times of violence against Afro-descendants in the United States? To answer these questions, we will take the example of Nigerian singer Alex Boyé. In this study of contemporary «artivisms» of ethnic minorities in religions, we will highlight the link between alienation and the search for a proper artistic aesthetic. Then, through the example of artist Alex Boyé, we will show that platforms such as YouTube make it possible to make identity claims heard in the United States.

*Keywords: Religion, Arts, Latter-Day Saints, Minorities, Diversity*

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### **Piroska Markwarthné Lengyel – Identity in the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition and for its modern Western members**

In the first half of my presentation, I would like to explore what identity traditionally means for the Gaudiya Vaishnavas and how they view the self and themselves. I will draw on the scriptures (Bhagavad-gita, Srimad Bhagavatam, Upanishads) of the tradition and contemporary biographies of its saints. Then, I would like to look at the same question in the period after the appearance of Gaudiya Vaishnavism in the West. I am interested to see how the members of ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness), founded by Bhaktivedanta Swami in New York in 1966, adapted this tradition. How did their upbringing and background (including the counterculture) affect their self-image after joining the religion? To what extent (if any) does the identity of a modern Western believer correspond to the traditional one, and how does it differ from it? I would like to look primarily at the perspective of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's disciples, the first generation of modern devotees, using interviews and reminiscences as sources.

*Keywords: identity, Gaudiya Vaishnavism, Caitanya, ISKCON, Bhaktivedanta Swami, devotee*

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## **Panel 6**

### **Intersections of religiosity and political identity**

#### **Aleksandr Orlov – Old Believers in the Habsburg Empire in the Middle of the XIX Century: Balancing between Privacy and Publicity**

In the middle of the XIX century, the sustainable communities of Old Believers – religious dissenters who had emigrated from the Russian Empire, existed in the Habsburg Empire, predominantly in the Bukovina province. Having possessed the long tradition of non-publicity in Russia, they did not seek to draw attention to their presence in the Austrian Empire, but the total hiddenness turned out to be unattainable due to the endeavor to establish a full-scale Church institution. On the one hand, Old Believers had to interact with the authorities of the Habsburg Empire: two monks (Pavel and Alimpii) visited Vienna in July of 1843 and became the object of interest of the Vienna public as well as Austrian elites: the emperor and other crucial grandees gave them meetings. On the other hand, the monk Alimpii took part in the Prague Slavic Congress in 1848, where he presented a passionate speech with accusations toward the Russian and Austrian

Empires. These episodes illustrate a highly complicated position of Old Believers in the Habsburg Empire: they fluctuated between demonstrative loyalty to the Austrian authorities and contacts with revolutionaries. At the same time, Old Believers possessed a highly entangled identity where religious components could intercept or even conflict with ethnic/cultural ones: they could be perceived as a religious group or Russians/Slavs. The ambitions of the institutional building meant that Old Believers could not be solely a spiritual community, even in the highly variegated and sufficiently tolerant Austrian Empire in the middle of the XIX century. Meanwhile, their collective identification was utterly flexible: Old Believers could be considered religious fanatics, loyal subjects, or potential revolutionaries. This topic reveals the complexities of intersections between religion and identity in modern societies and imperial states, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, with its extreme political and cultural diversity.

*Keywords: Old Believers, fluctuated identity, empire*

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### **Péter Tóth – Competitive Nationalisms in Central and Eastern Europe: Mimetic Theory and Collective Wounded Identity**

Throughout history, humans formed various groups to identify themselves and distinguish 'us' from 'them.' Religion served this function before the modern era, and since the 18th and 19th centuries, the nation and nationalism have been playing this role primarily. The basic pattern of identification is the dialect of inclusion and exclusion, involving mimetic rivalry and violence. This tendency also occurs today, so the current geopolitical situation makes it necessary to understand its nature. Because of the present Russo-Ukrainian war, the investigation of this topic is highly relevant regarding European societies and nations. In my presentation, I focus on a theoretical understanding of Central and Eastern European (hereafter CEE) nationalism, with particular attention to the regional specialties based on the theory of "wounded collective identity." There is a bond connection between religion, nationalism, and victimization in the collective identities of the societies on CEE, which remained quite ignored by the major theorists of nationalism. Mimetic rivalry, scapegoating, victimization, and religion (in CEE, that's Christianity) are the major parts of René Girard's mimetic theory. According to my approach, the Girardian theory may serve as a theoretical framework to explain contemporary nationalisms. I hypothesize that the abovementioned tendencies are rooted in the mimetic phenomena, as these are different historical and contextual manifestations of mimetic inclinations. After all, there's a structural symmetry between religious systems and nationalism. Thus, I propose an approach to interpret nationalism as religion based on broader anthropological horizons to overcome the fundamental dilemmas of theories on nationalism.

*Keywords: mimetic theory, wounded collective identity, nationalism, Central and Eastern Europe*

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### **Tamas Dudlak – Rightly guided leaders: the religious ideology of Orbán and Erdoğan**

Over the last few years, there has been a growing interest in illiberal governance systems, primarily concerning Hungary and Turkey. While attempts have been made in the literature to define the religious foundations of the two systems (institutions, movements, parties, belief systems), the religious discourse of Orbán and Erdoğan has not

been addressed in depth. To fill this gap, the empirical part of the research intends to address the following questions: How do Orbán and Erdoğan perceive religion? How does religion inform their political view? In the leaders' view, what are the positions and goals of the Hungarian and the Turkish peoples? How is the leaders' religiosity? For a deeper understanding of the situation, I analyze the governmental ("mainstream") religious discourse to answer how the leaders thematize the issue of Christianity and Islam in their political agenda (identity, national goals, moral values, humanitarianism). I argue that religious upsurge or the emergence of post-secular societies can be considered a new form of nationalism (religious nationalism) that replaces the former secular nationalism as the dominant ideology. Religious nationalism relies on the traditional legitimacy and identity systems that have acquired well-established positions in the cultural life of Turkey and Hungary (Islam and Christianity, respectively). For conservative populist parties such as the Fidesz and the AKP, religion is part of the "cultural package" that must be preserved against internal and external enemies. In this research, I pay particular attention to studying the ideological background of the two systems. The underlying narratives are examined by discourse and content analysis. For this purpose, I focus on the official statements and speeches of Orbán and Erdoğan. This research is based on English, Hungarian, and Turkish literature and the Turkish and Hungarian press.

*Keywords: Hungary, Turkey, discourse, Christianity, Islamism*

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### **Anoo Niskanen – Identity Motives Among Sweden Finnish Conservative Laestadians**

In my dissertation project, processes around identity motives and life choices concerning religion among present and former Sweden Finnish Conservative Laestadian migrants in Sweden are examined. Laestadianism is a Lutheran revival movement within the Church of Sweden and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. It started in the Northern parts of Sweden in the middle of the 19th century among the Sami and Finnish-speaking minorities. The Conservative Laestadians are the largest subgroup, with about 100,000 adherents in Finland. In Sweden, the adherents are less than 5,000. In this study, migrants from Finland and their offspring are in focus. I used Identity Process Theory (Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014) and Motivated Identity Construction Theory (Vignoles, 2011, 2017) in analyzing identity processes among the participants. According to Identity Process Theory and Motivated Identity Construction Theory, identity motives are crucial for identity processes. Some of these identity motives are continuity, distinctiveness, self-esteem, and belonging. Life story interviews have been done with 21 present and eight former Conservative Laestadians living in Sweden. Some of them are first-generation migrants from Finland, and some are second and third-generation migrants. All participants had previous or present connections to a Conservative Laestadian congregation founded in Sweden by Conservative Laestadian migrants from Finland in the 1970s. Of the life story interviews, 26 were analyzed together with Faith Q-sortings. Faith Q-sort is a new method for assessing religious subjectivities based on Q-methodology founded by David Wulff and further developed at Åbo Akademi University in Finland. The Faith Q-sortings resulted in three prototypes/factors after factor analysis: Prototype 1 - Religiously dedicated and committed, Prototype 2 - Critical former Laestadian, and Prototype 3 – Tradition-bound hybrid. The interviews showed a variation in identity motives and life choices between and also within the three prototypes.

## **Panel 7**

### **The role of identity in change, crisis, and conflict**

**Abdul Matin Sk – Agrarian Islam, Market Economy and the Idea of Common Good:**

**Understanding the Changing Role of ‘Solo-Aana’ among Bengali Muslim society in rural India.**

The neoliberal economic policy has not only affected the agrarian economy but also massively affected the nature of social relations, the common good, and the idea of religion itself. The process of globalization and market economy has led to the breakdown of the communitarian idea of society and promoted the concept of ‘individualization’ and ‘privatization’ of public goods. Scripturally, Islam does promote the concept of ‘collective performance,’ be it weekly Friday conglomeration for –*Jumma* (prayer), annual *Hajj* pilgrimage, or collective celebrations of religious rituals. Going beyond scriptural Islam, there are many such collective social practices, especially among the agrarian Muslim society in rural Bengal, which promotes the idea of common goods such as Annual Islamic gatherings (*Waz-Mahfils*), construction of traditional community centers (*Dahleej*), rural Islamic schools (*Madrasah/Maktabs*), formation of village common fund through contribution from every household as cash and kinds (known as *Mustir-chaal*). All these social socio-religious practices and interventions are under serious threat due to the neo-liberalization of the economy and the Arabization of Islam. Based on an ethnography of rural Bengali Muslim agrarian community and their concept of ‘Solo-Aana’ (traditional community initiatives), this paper will address the question of what happens when Agrarian Islam meets with a Neo-liberal market economy and global Islam. How do local agrarian Islamic practices engage with the idea of common goods? This paper would argue that the sociology and political economy of religion (here Islam) is important to understand the changing nature of social relations and public goods.

*Keywords: Agrarian Islam, social relations, public good, solo-aana, neo-liberal economy, Bengali Muslims*

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**Muzammil Patel – Neo-Barelviyat in Pakistan: The search for a renewed Sufi identity?**

In 2011, the Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer, was killed by his official security personnel for alleged blasphemy. The killer, Mumtaz Qadri, belonged to the Barelvi Sunni sect, popularly known as followers of Sufism, the mystical strand of Islam. Qadri was lauded by clerics, politicians, and masses for his act and is revered as a saint, with a tomb erected upon his execution by the state. This spiritualization of violence has emerged as the renewed collective religiopolitical identity of a contemporary Barelvi movement in Pakistan known as the *Tehreek Labbaik* that contrasts them with rival sects. The episode challenged the notions of several Western academics and the triggering question as to how we make sense of this collective aggressive identity and Sufism. The orientalist discovery of Sufism and the resultant romanticization of its perfumatory aspect not only reduced the complex tradition to mere celebratory rituals but also placed

it at odds with normative Islam. Perceptions about the Orient have been informed by this over-arching dichotomous understanding of their realities. *Tasawuf*, or what has come to be popularly known as Sufism, is no exception to this. Regarded as an esoteric path to reach the Divine that is inherent to Islam, Sufism is not a monolithic tradition and has evolved differently across Muslim societies. It was the shift in political sovereignty from the Mughals to the British in colonial India that prompted Muslim modernist responses to address their political anxiety. The Barelvi and Deoband movements of South Asia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century should be seen in this context as modern reformist movements, with the former regarded as guardians of shrine-based ritualistic tradition as inherent to their idea of *tasawuf* while the latter as shunning these innovatory practices (*bid'ah*) with a focus towards a more sterilized *tasawuf*. However, both movements comprised of orthodox Shariah scholars that did not place *tasawuf* at odds with Islamic scriptures. It is important to highlight this as much Western scholarship has placed the Deobandis as anti-Sufi *ulemas* while Barelvis as antinomians, implying less legalistic while being more tolerant, passive, and inclusive. This underlying premise is flawed and hence becomes problematic in making sense of a contemporary movement like the Tehreek Labbaik and their connection with political violence. The paper aims to deconstruct these simplistic binaries forged upon South Asian Sufi reformist movements and place the contemporary Barelvi public religious identity in the context of its colonial foundations.

*Keywords: Religion, Sufism, Reform, Identity, Politics*

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### **Angelika Pataki-Tóth – Turning Christian in a time of need – the self-changing power of the Fukushima disaster.**

Christianity entered Japan in 1549 with the help of Jesuit missionaries led by Saint Francis Xavier and accompanied by the Japanese Anjiro. These missionaries came across the differences between their 'Christian' culture and the Japanese culture at the very beginning of their activity, when they encountered customs like the veneration of ancestors. Their main goal was to gain as many converts as possible, but that goal did not come into reality. Hence, the ratio of Japanese Christians has never gone above 3% of the population of Japan. There were several reasons that could hinder the spreading of Christianity, and one of the main ones was the approach of missionaries towards the above-mentioned elements of Japanese Culture. They told the newly converted to leave behind everything that was part of their native culture because they thought that those were incompatible with the teachings of the Bible. This way, the new Christians became aliens in their society, and most of them had a serious identity crisis. Therefore, Christianity, in this exclusive form, could not become attractive to the Japanese people, who were accustomed to an inclusive religious syncretism. This presentation introduces the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster in Japan, regarding the spiritual life of victims and the help they got from religious organizations, especially the Christian ones. The presentation examines how natural disasters can change a person's point of view on religion, how these can shake a person's own identity, and what is the role of the Christian missionaries in all of that. Furthermore, it presents a unique Bible study book written by an American Christian missionary who lives in Japan. The book uses stories from the survivors of the disaster, making the Fukushima disaster its main theme, to help people come closer or get to know better the Christian God.

*Keywords: Christianity, natural disasters, identity crisis, change, role of missionaries, inclusive, exclusive*

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## **Roman Galovič – Empowerment from Beyond: Paradox of Identity and Agency in Praxis of Spirit Mediums**

My contribution concerns British spiritualism around fin de siècle, and I present this topic as an illustration of how a new religious cosmopraxis might unlock new identities, specifically new gender roles. Since most trance mediums were young women, spiritualism has become a significant topic of feminist anthropology. The analyses show how the role of the medium provided an empowering alternative in the Victorian gender doctrine of separate spheres and allowed women, relegated to private domestic spheres, to take on an active and influential public role. This is in line with the general politics of spiritualism, which was associated from its very beginnings with emancipatory movements. However, it also constitutes a paradox of identity, dubbed by Jeremy C. Young as “empowering passivity.” Since it is in a trance when the identity and agency of the medium are completely suppressed, the body becomes just a mouthpiece for the spirit entity. The paradox resides in the fact that it is precisely deliberate suppression of one’s agency that leads to social empowerment. It is this paradox of identity that is at the crux of my contribution, and I frame it in Victor Turner’s concepts of antistructure and liminality. On the one hand, the spiritualist Beyond, an egalitarian world of enlightened spirit entities, can be interpreted as an antistructure to the Victorian hierarchy and thus explicates how “ghosts provided an escape of liberation” from the patriarchal structures. On the other hand, the concept of liminality sheds light on the paradox of the medium. If viewed as a liminal role between the social ideal of passivity and the progressive ideal of emancipation, it could be empowering not despite passivity but because of it. In this perspective, mediums would reach empowerment not by sketching a radically new identity but by crafting a new identity out of a reclaimed and subverted existing patriarchal norm.

*Keywords: agency, feminism, mediumship, spiritualism, trance, Victorian era*

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## **Panel 8**

### **Transdisciplinary approaches and methods towards religion and identity**

#### **Markéta Muczková – Exploring the Relationship Between Religious Identity and Prejudice: An Experimental Research Approach**

The presence of animosity towards foreigners, minority groups, or diverse ethnicities poses a societal challenge in varying degrees. Moreover, religiosity holds considerable significance in shaping individual and collective perspectives toward diverse identities. Hence, our study aimed to examine the impact of participants' religiosity on attitudes toward other ethnic groups and whether it mitigates or exacerbates social hostility. Specifically, we investigated the association between levels of religious beliefs and the Czech population's attitudes towards long-standing ethnic groups in the Czech Republic, namely the Roma and Vietnamese communities. The study involved 100 Czech participants between the ages of 18 and 65, and data collection took place in controlled



laboratory settings. Our research employed three data collection methods: eye-tracking using Tobii Pro Lab, an economic game called Dictator Game, and a questionnaire survey utilizing the Portrait Value Questionnaire 21. Our findings indicate that participants' personal level of religiosity did not significantly influence their attitudes toward the targeted groups. Interestingly, we observed a substantial inclination among participants to distribute material assistance impartially among different ethnic groups, prioritizing the level of need rather than considering ethnicity or religiosity. In an upcoming conference paper, I intend to present the detailed results of this research.

*Keywords – religiosity, ethnicity, racial bias, identity, Eyetracking, priming.*

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### **Rita Figus-Illinyi – Dimensions of individual and community resilience**

The increase in the number of different crises around the world has given rise to a new exploration of the concept of resilience. A wide range of disciplines (security policy, social sciences, natural sciences) have become interested in incorporating the concept of resilience into their terminology. The concept of crisis is now accompanied by the concept of resilience, which seeks to compensate for deficits and irregularities. In psychology, various theories of resilience offer solutions for dealing with and subsequently avoiding crises. The phenomenon of resilience, initially examined only at the individual level, has become more and more interesting. What are the factors that can make the group resilient at the community level? The concept of resilience is originally a concept from physics, the study of matter. From there, it is taken by psychology and interpreted at the level of the individual. After that, the various fields of science are taken over in the widest possible way and interpreted at the community level. In the inanimate environment of physics, resilience is clearly delimited. Psychology is already developing different theories at the level of the individual, thus giving scope to the flexibility of the concept. As psychological frameworks are not unambiguous or, in some cases, contradictory, interpreting them at the community level comes up against difficulty. I would like to draw attention to the points that are certain in the interpretation of resilience at both individual and community levels. I would like to highlight the factors that are in a cause-and-effect relationship in the interpretation of individual resilience and community resilience. Furthermore, I would like to draw attention to those inclusions that cause blockages at the individual level and, in my opinion, cannot be elevated to the interpretation of the community level.

*Keywords: resilience, community resilience, psychology, social systems, community development*

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### **Lenka Jedličková – What do managers believe? Research on the spirituality of people in management professions**

This paper will present research that is conducted within the framework of Ph.D. studies in Religious Studies and focuses on studying the various forms of spirituality among people working in managerial professions in the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic is traditionally ranked at the top of the list of the most atheistic countries in the world. But as the latest data show, Czechs are not nearly as atheistic as they might seem. On the contrary, a growing percentage of people tend to practice "alternative" beliefs that have no ties to specific religions or churches. These tendencies are also strongly evident

in the group that my research focuses on. The managerial environment is characterized by a profit maximization orientation, a pragmatic mindset, high pressure and responsibility, and the resulting stress and increased risk of burnout syndrome. It is probably due to these factors that there is a frequent tendency in this environment to incline towards a spiritual dimension of life, which should help to increase resilience to daily stresses. To a large extent, spirituality in the group studied is intertwined with other areas of life (lifestyle, diet, medicine, etc.), and often, this spirituality is not individual but collective or even 'institutionalized,' supported by the organizations themselves. Many of the corporate rules, rituals, or hierarchies of these companies even resemble religious institutions. The search for the causes of this phenomenon, as well as what meaning managers attribute to spirituality and whether and how it helps them in building their own identity, is the subject of my dissertation. An important part of the research is also to map the terminology that appears in the context of spirituality in the field of management (terms such as spiritual transformation, spiritual transcendence, self-development, etc.), as some of these terms are used so often that they are devalued and emptied by it. This may also be the reason why the originally unquantifiable realm of spirituality is becoming a completely rational, marketable commodity in this environment. This is also what my thesis will address. The paper will present the theoretical background, research methodology, and conclusions to the present, including a typology of various manifestations of spirituality.

*Keywords: managers, spirituality, identity, religiosity, rituals, spirituality as a commodity*

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## **Panel 9**

### **Religious and social identity within the Church of Jehovah's Witnesses**

#### **Munyurangabo Richard Benda— A Faith Community in Turbulent Times: Rwanda Jehovah's Witnesses in the context of genocide and beyond**

One's identity and religion are formed within a historical and cultural context. The 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, where some 800,000 Tutsi were killed, mostly by machete, fractured every aspect of this largely Christian country. Most Tutsi victims were reported to have been killed by fellow believers on church properties. While individuals of different faiths heroically took a moral stance to counter massacres, church leaders were found culpable of sins of omission and commission. During the post-genocide, Rwandans have undertaken the challenging road to regain their faith—in God, in religion, in humanity. In 1994, the minority religious group of Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) in Rwanda was a mere 2,500, with an estimated 400 killed during the Genocide. Since then, some 30,000 Rwandans have become JWs, making it one of the fastest-growing religions in Rwanda. With this historical-cultural backdrop, a 2023 nationwide survey investigated the religious and identity factors of this faith community. The Rwanda survey contained some measures that were used in studies of JWs in Hungary

and Kazakhstan. For our cross-cultural consideration: What attracts individuals to become and remain JWs? Are the religious motivations of JWs more intrinsic, extrinsic, or both? What perceived psychological and interpersonal changes do JWs have after their religious conversion? Other findings from the Rwanda study to be presented are: Shared support influences group identity, so how do JWs view the social support of their congregations? Additionally, temporal orientation shifts over time, which allows individuals gradually to turn their attention away from past traumas toward a perhaps more positive future. As a religious people, how much do JWs think about and how do they feel about the past, present, and future?

*Keywords: Rwanda, Jehovah's Witnesses, genocide, minority religiosity. Identity*

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### **Márk Nemes – Identity formation of Hungarian Jehovah's Witnesses converts.<sup>1</sup>**

Although Jehovah's Witnesses have been active for almost a century in Hungary, their church was only recognized as a legal body in 1989. Since then, only one thematic volume has been published about the movement (Fazekas, Jakab, Petrás, Szita – *A magyarországi Jehova Tanúi Egyház története. A kezdetektől napjainkig*. Gondolat Kiadói Kör, 2017.), which predominantly examined its development from a denominational-historical perspective (archive research, public records of former legal cases, personal recollections). Domestic researchers have not been able to research the movement using the empirical toolkits of religious studies and social sciences. While this can be explained by the community's peculiar “withdrawal from the world” (Wallis, 1998), such research would contribute to our knowledge of the presence and developments of minor religious communities and would even further our understanding of religious pluralization after the regime changes in the CEE region. In my lecture, I aim to introduce the results of one such attempt conducted in 2023 with Prof. Dr. András Máté-Tóth. Based on the quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (life-history interviews) results of our research, I aim to reveal the crucial steps of conversion while also highlighting the life circumstances of converts and their motivation. I will finalize my lecture by showing some of the initially processed data relevant to this topic from our qualitative research and position the conversion process in the matrix of affiliative processes in new and emergent religiosity in the CEE region.

*Keywords: Jehovah's Witnesses, conversion process, conversion motifs, multidisciplinary methods, new religious movements, post-socialist societies.*

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### **Olli-Matti Peltonen – Leaving and Returning: Reaffiliation with the Jehovah's Witness Community**

Quantitative studies of Jehovah's Witnesses from diverse countries and cultures (most recently Hungary, Kazakhstan, and Rwanda) provide evidence of strong individual and

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<sup>1</sup> This research was made possible with the Predoctoral Grant of the Hungarian National Eötvös Scholarship. Scholarship ID MAEO 2023-24/182827.

group religious identity as a prevailing characteristic of the community. The studies identify leading motivations for affiliating and remaining with the Witness community and view about congregation support and resilience. Recent research into the process of affiliation among Witnesses by psychologist of religion Raffaella Di Marzio (2020) updates and expands earlier sociological studies by James Beckford and Bryan Wilson (Beckford, 1975; Wilson, 1973; Wilson, 1977; Dobbelaere & Wilson, 1980). To date, disaffiliation research on Witnesses is dominated by a handful of studies based on small convenience samples (Ransom, 2020; Luther, 2022). One aspect remains poorly researched and understood: The process of reaffiliation. This paper draws on in-depth interviews of those who involuntarily left the faith community utilizing “disfellowshipping,” or expulsion for serious, unrepentant conduct, and who later qualified to be reinstated to the community after having renounced and ceased the objectionable acts. A significant number of disfellowshipped Witnesses eventually chose to take up their religious identity as Jehovah’s Witnesses. This is the first systematic analysis of those who have been disfellowshipped and later returned to the congregation as active Witnesses. The paper will briefly summarize the terms of disfellowshipping and reinstatement and analyze the self-reported expressions of reinstated Witnesses regarding their spiritual struggles, the experience of disfellowshipping, reasons for their decision to return, reflections on the ecclesiastical reinstatement process, the attitude of fellow congregants toward them, and their current spiritual and emotional state. This analysis of in-depth interviews with European Jehovah’s Witnesses provides perspectives on these particular processes of disaffiliation and reintegration and gives additional tools to understand JW’s religious identities.

*Keywords: identities, reaffiliation, excommunication, Jehovah’s Witnesses*

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**Panel 10**  
**Online panel**  
**NETIQUETTE**  
**(For online participants)**

The online panel of the conference will be hosted on a Microsoft Teams platform. Microsoft Teams can be accessed from any browser, but for more secure and stable access, we recommend downloading the dedicated Microsoft Teams desktop application. You can also join the conference presentations without MS Teams registration. However, please make sure to enter your full and real name when logging in, ensuring the smooth running of the conference.

Please note that the keynote presentations and roundtable will be recorded and will be published after the conference! Furthermore, in the absence of a registry sheet for our online presenters, we can confirm your participation in the conference with screenshots, which will only be used later in our internal reports.

To prevent any possible bandwidth or network issues during the conference, we request all of our non-speaking participants to turn off their microphones and cameras during the presentations. Speakers and those who wish to raise questions are requested to switch on their microphones and cameras for the duration of their talk. Non-presenting participants may also ask questions after each lecture via chat or by using the “raise hand function.”

Each presenter will have 20 minutes to introduce their lecture, which a 10-minute debate will follow. Five minutes before the end of the presentation, the panel organizer will remind the presenter about the remaining time using an interjection.

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### **Péter Boros – The Emergence of a Lay Buddhist Identity in Early 20th-Century China**

Forming one's identity around a particular religious tradition was never a widespread phenomenon in China. This can be attributed to numerous reasons, a few of which are the lack of a "religion" in the modern sense in historical China, the non-exclusive membership in domestic traditions, like Confucianism, Daoism, and later Buddhism, as well as the stronger role of family and locality in identity formation. This all, however, changed during the early 20th century, when the fall of the Qing empire and the establishment of the Republic of China brought about completely new political, social, and economic structures. These changes, coupled with the desire to transform China into a 'modern' state in its Western sense, led to the emergence of a new form of lay identity, which centered around being a Buddhist believer. The present talk will elucidate the reasons behind the formation of this new identity and the activities in which it manifested itself and demonstrate individual cases through the case studies of the two leading figures of the new lay movement, Yang Wenhui and Ouyang Jingwu.

*Keywords: lay Buddhism, Buddhist identity, modernization, Buddhist education, lay organizations, Yang Wenhui*

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### **Jérémy Ianni – Testimony and music as vehicles for the construction of identity and the displacement of power: an analysis based on the case of a Born-Again denomination in the Philippines.**

In the Philippines, more and more people are leaving Catholicism to convert to a Born-Again denomination. This denomination implies a reconfiguration of intramundane and extramundane identity as a result of the new birth. As a doctoral student in Education Sciences, I am conducting ethnographic research in a neighborhood Born Again church. Using participant observation and biographical interviews, I'm seeking to understand what kinds of transformations conversion is likely to bring about. By analyzing religious discourse and two practices (witnessing and enthusiasm), I propose to answer the following questions: How is identity constructed, shaped, and maintained by religious activities - How do religions change the identities of their converts? Using specific, documented examples, I will show the changes in identity and narrative that testimonies can bring about. Phrasing and experience rely on both the subjectivity of the convert and the dominant discourse of rebirth. As a counterpoint to the studies carried out on the social frameworks of memory in cases of religious conversion (Berger & Luckman, Dubar), I will discuss the figure of testimony as a displacement of power knowledge. I will show that even if conversion corresponds to a turning point, it does not necessarily correspond to a total change in the social world. What people testify to does not always correspond to empirical experience. As music and song are very much a part of Born-Again worship, I will next discuss the link between the believer and the divinity. Enthusiasm, opposed by Luther, corresponds to this divine presence in the physical texture of the believer. The Born-Again pastors insisted on this personal relationship and opened up a way, through music, of materializing this relationship in the body. Music, therefore, has

more than just the role of indigenizing worship. It is the cornerstone of the experience proposed by Born Again denominations and becomes a new intercession between the believer and the divinity. In this way, music acts as the cornerstone of the group's identity-building, enabling the common experience of enthusiasm. It is, therefore, a mediation of power and knowledge since the temporality and spatiality of these moments are controlled by the pastors and not the believers, making it possible to create this common Born-Again identity.

*Keywords: testimony, enthusiasm, knowledge-power, narrativity*

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### **Yael Dansac – “Becoming Animist: Identity Transformation and Interbeing Rituality in Wéris”**

In Wéris, a Prehistoric site containing megalithic monuments located in Belgium, contemporary ritual practices are held to establish horizontal relationships between practitioners and non-human beings considered to inhabit nature (Dansac, 2022). Practitioners are mostly nationals living in urban settlements who were raised in Catholic households and are drawn to Wéris because they consider it a “sacred” space. During ritual practices, participants seek to establish meaningful engagements with nature and to interact with other-than-human beings (nature spirits, telluric energies, and non-defined ancestors) to whom they grant reflexivity, knowledge, and agency (Chamel & Dansac, 2022). Considering nature as a living world and mobilizing spiritual discourses and techniques inspired by diverse indigenous groups, practitioners creatively elaborate ritual practices where they create contemporary-Pagan offerings, practice bodily techniques such as Western forms of meditation, and sacralize local megaliths as the work of ancient builders who had an intimate relationship with the natural environment. This paper seeks to explore how and why diverse forms of Contemporary Animism are practiced in Wéris and how they impact the relationships between human and non-human participants. Becoming an Animist in Wéris is a process that appears to involve disenchantment from modernity, interest in esotericism and holistic healing, as well as rejection of institutionalized religions. Practitioners embrace the desirability of self-improvement or self-empowerment, as well as polytheistic cosmologies and invocation of ancient religions. In this paper, I seek to present ethnographic data collected during 2022 and 2023 among three practitioners who identify themselves as animists to reconnect with nature. This paper seeks to explore how and why diverse forms of Contemporary Animism are practiced in Wéris and how they impact the relationships between human and non-human participants.

*Keywords: Contemporary Animism, Identity, Community, Non-Human Beings, Wéris*

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## Practical Information: About the Venue

The conference will take place in the Main Building complex of the University of Szeged, Hungary. The exact address: the University of Szeged, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 6722 Szeged, Egyetem u. 2.

**Registration is mandatory** for every participant upon arrival! (Including presenters, keynote lecturers, organizers, esteemed guests, etc.). The registry desk will be accessible during the entirety of the conference outside of the Conference Hall, where every presenter will receive a complementary registry pack, including (but not limited to) a detailed program of the symposium, a name tag, and a textile bag, a note pad, pens, and folders.

Each conference room has a projector, a presenter laptop, and access to the local wireless network. However, we recommend saving all presentations on an external USB drive, ensuring no technical issues may occur due to network disturbances. Presenters may also send their presentation slides in advance directly to the organizers to this email address: [cesarplatform@gmail.com](mailto:cesarplatform@gmail.com)

### Organizers:

Mohamed Farrag [CEU], František Válek [CUNI], Péter Boros [ELTE], Dominik Čisárik [UNIBA], Vilém Skopal [UPCE], Matouš Mokrý [MUNI], Márk Nemes [SZTE]

The conference is organized by the Central European Symposium for the Academic Study of Religion and the Philosophy Department Association of Hungarian Ph.D. And DLA Candidates. The venue was provided by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Szeged.

### Our Supporters:

The conference is supported by the Religious Studies Department from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Szeged, the Center for Religious Studies of the Central European University, the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Pardubice, and the HUN-REN-SZTE "Convivence" Religious Pluralism Research Group, as well as the Khyentse Foundation. The conference was co-organized and supported by the Philosophy Department Association of Hungarian Ph.D. and DLA Candidates on behalf of the Ministry of Human Resources, with the support of the National Talent Program's NTP-TK-M-21-0002 grant, announced by the National Cultural Fund of Hungary.

**Catering: Radnóti Café – Szeged, Egyetem u. 2, 6722**

**Photo/video documentation:**

**Adrienn Kolumbán ([kolumbanadrienn@gmail.com](mailto:kolumbanadrienn@gmail.com))**  
**TiszapART Kulturális Televízió (<http://www.tiszapart.hu/>)**

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