

# Contemporary Spirituality 2023



Book of Abstracts

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## Book of Abstracts

Michal Uhrin, Manca Račič, Dominika Lešková (eds.)



FACULTY OF ARTS  
Comenius University  
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*Filozofska* fakulteta

*Oddelek za etnologijo in kulturno antropologijo*

Ljubljana, Slovenia, October 6-7, 2023

Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Department of Archaeology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University Bratislava, Slovakia

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# PROGRAM OF THE CONFERENCE

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Friday, October 6, 2023

**8:30 - 9:00** Registration

**9:00 - 9:15** Welcome by **Mojca Schlamberger Brezar**, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and **Boštjan Kravanja**, Head of the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

**9:15 - 9:30** Welcome by the Organising Team

## SECTION 1. RITUAL

**9:30 - 10:30**

**Keynote: Tatiana Bužeková** – Rituals in Alternative Spirituality: Collective and Solitary Practice

### Conference Talks

**10:30 - 11:00**

Danijela Jerotijević: Bonding: Emotions and Narratives in Alternative Spirituality

**11:00 - 11:30**

Nadja Furlan Štante: Spiritual Ecology and Ecologically Affirming Rituals of Contemporary Pagan Worshipers (Nature Worship of Primorska)

**11:30 - 12:00**

Saida Sirazhudinova: Women's Religious Rituals in the Context of Identity of Caucasian Muslims

**12:00 – 12:30**

Marjeta Pisk: The Transformative Power of Catholic Rituals in New Contexts

**12:30 – 13:00**

Anja Mlakar: Changing (Scholarly) Discourses About Paganism Through Time in Slovenia

**13:00 - 14:00** Lunch Break

## SECTION 2. (PLACE) IDENTITY

**14:00 - 15:00**

**Keynote: Boštjan Kravanja** – Sacred Places and Landscapes as Heterotopias of Contemporary World

## Conference Talks

**15:00 - 15:30**

Dayal Paleri: Seva, Spirituality and Community: Shifting Modalities of Everyday Hindu Nationalism in Kerala, South India

**15:30 - 16:00**

Anna Becker: Becoming a Pious Muslim: Processes of Embodying Conversion to Islam among Polish Women Converts

**16:00 - 16:30**

Nadia Zasanska: 'Spiritual Mobilization': War Rhetoric of the Russian Orthodox Church in Social Media

**16:30 - 17:00**

Špela Sevšek Šramel, Svetlana Kmecová: Spirituality in Three Contemporary Slovak Novels From the Perspective of the Depiction of Literary Space and the Use of Linguistic Means

**17:00 - 17:15** Coffee Break

## Conference Talks

**17:15 – 17:45**

Igor Jurekovič: From Body Postures to Body Techniques: Studying Christian Charismatic Bodies in Slovenia

**17:45 - 18:15**

Johnson Mathew John: Water in Ecumenical Theology(ies) – A Paradigm of Material Religion

**18:15 - 18:45**

Yaroslav Yuvsechko: Religious Minorities in Ukraine as Creators of Alternative Norms: Relations with Dominant Religions, Society and the State Under the Challenges of Wartime

**18:45 – 19:00** Closing of the first day, Dinner

**Saturday, October 7, 2023**

## SECTION 3. HEALING AND THERAPY

**9:00 - 10:00**

**Keynote: Miroslav Horák** – Substance Use Disorders Recovery in Therapeutic Communities

## Conference Talks

**10:00 - 10:30**

Jarken Gadi: Transcendental Meditation as a Means to Tackle Depression among Urban Youth in India

**10:30 - 11:00**

Judit Kis-Halas: Eco-Cosmology, Shamanic Discourse and Perspectives of Healing: The Construction of a New Sacred Site in Hungary

**11:00 - 11:30**

Andrej Kapcar: Pop Spirituality: The Application of Popular Culture in Contemporary Esoteric Practices

**11:30 - 12:00**

Sára Eszter Heidl: The Event Religion Phenomenon

**12:00 – 12:30**

Tancredi Marrone: Rituals of Extasy: Psychedelic Festivals

**12:30 - 13:00**

Andrej Kocan: Nixi Pae Chants of the Peruvian Huni Kuin

**13:00 - 13:30** Cold lunch / coffee break

**13:30 - 14:00**

Hee Sook Lee-Niinioja: Temporal Spirituality in the Passing Gates of Korean Sansa Temples and its Lantern Lighting Ritual

**14:00 - 14:30**

Baburam Saikia: Pilgrimage Impacts and Diversified Narratives of a Contested Story World

**14:30 - 15:00** Closing Remarks of the Organizing Team

Call for papers for the journal Svetovi / Worlds 3-4/2024

# SECTION 1. RITUAL

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*Keynote*

## Rituals in Alternative Spirituality: Collective and Solitary Practice<sup>1</sup>

*Tatiana Bužeková*

*Department of Archaeology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University Bratislava*

The interest in magic, religion, and spirituality which has risen since the second half of the twentieth century has been variously described as “the re-enchantment of the world”, “return to religion”, “new religiosity” or “new spirituality”. These expressions can refer to (1) increasing indicators of religiosity within established churches; and (2) emergence of new religious movements and alternative beliefs as well as growing numbers of those who identify with spirituality but not with a religion. The latter category can be named by a loose term “alternative spirituality”, as contemporary spiritual currents always present an alternative to long established religions – either strongly (explicitly dissenting) or weakly (they are merely variant or optional). Alternativeness is manifested in diversity of spiritual practice: it can draw on various traditions, include innovations, and does not need to be collective. Social scientists have long noticed that collective rituals serve to bind groups together; and this argument has been supported by recent research in evolutionary anthropology. At the same time, evolutionary studies point to the link between ritualized behaviour and a specific cognitive system dealing with potential danger (hazard-precaution system), which can explain individual performance. In the context of alternative spirituality ritualized behaviour range from solitary rituals to strongly prescribed group rituals. Individual and collective performance can be combined: one can choose to practice in privacy, without the need to participate in a group; but it is not uncommon for solitaries to participate in communal activities. In my paper, I will consider different levels of solitary and collective performance in relation to varied levels of social control within groups of practitioners. I will use the theoretical tools of Mary Douglas’ cultural theory and argue that Douglas’ argument about correlation between cosmological beliefs and concrete forms of social life is compatible with evolutionary explanations of ritualized behaviour. It can be applied in the context of alternative spirituality by comparison of selected alternative communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Funded by the European Union (ERC project DEAGENCY, № 101095729). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## **Bonding: Emotions and Narratives in Alternative Spirituality**

*Danijela Jerotijević*

The focus of this presentation are collective spiritual activities among urban population in Slovakia. Alternative spiritual gatherings that have been focus of this research are characterized by rituals, dance, shared narratives, and may be charged with different kind of emotions. Here, I will elaborate the idea how bonding is established and why the group is important in alternative spirituality even though it stresses an individual and their experience rather than collectiveness. The presentation will be partially based on up-to-date research, but further lines of the research will be also explored. Previous research has documented that religious rituals increase social bonding and solidarity, however, much less is known about the ritualized activities in alternative spiritual groups. Spiritual ritualized activities can transform individual experience and emotions into collective ones through „emotional contagion/mimicry“ (Gelder, 2009; Hess et al., 2014); while shared narratives can influence the „post-sacralization“ (Martos, et al. 2011) of individual experience and give it deeper meaning. I argue that thus anchored, shared experiences contribute to a sense of belonging, which in turn has a positive impact on overall well-being.

## **Spiritual Ecology and Ecologically Affirming Rituals of Contemporary Pagan Worshipers (Nature Worship of Primorska)**

*Nadja Furlan Štante*

Ecotheologists and ecofeminists strive for planetary solidarity that requires a larger framework than rights, justice, and equitable sharing of resources, and they seek new models of ecologies that go beyond anthropocentric androcentrism. Methodologically, presentation follows the ecofeminist thesis that the exploitation of the earth (ecological crisis) is closely linked to the marginalisation, exploitation, and abuse of women. From this perspective, it brings together the perceptions and critical views of Nature Worship community in Primorska (and beyond) and the significance of their examples of good practises and ecologically affirming spiritualities for building a sustainable future.

What was (is) the role and significance of women in the Nature Worshipers' community and its rituals compared to the position of women in the Christian (Roman Catholic) majority in the present from the perspective of spiritual eco-feminism and postcolonial feminist studies? How might the biocentric tradition of Nature Worshipers impact the Slovenian/Western anthropocentrism prevalent today? To what extent might the revival of Nature Worship represent



a realistic alternative and good practise in the current environmental crisis of our society? What symbols of Nature Worship can be usefully translated into contemporary ecology? How have the symbols and ideology of Nature Worship been subverted in contemporary (neo-pagan) interpretations of Nature Worship?

## Women's Religious Rituals in the Context of Identity of Caucasian Muslims

*Saida Sirazhudinova*

Women's religious rituals are closely related to identity, the transmission of religion in the family, and socialization. There are several types of religious rituals that allow a woman to join the religion and the community in the North Caucasus. Some rituals confirm the female role in religious socialization. Some rituals are closely related to domestic violence enshrined in tradition.

In this paper, on the example of the results of qualitative and quantitative research, the dynamics and transformation of women's rituals are considered, their modern features are revealed, their significance for women and for society is shown. The study showed that the non-public and practical role of rituals and traditions in the daily life of women is more pronounced, and it is more protected by society and aimed at preserving identity.

## The Transformative Power of Catholic Rituals in New Contexts

*Marjeta Pisk*

Many rituals in the Catholic religion are intrinsically linked to community participation and some of them cannot be performed without the presence of a priest. The prohibition on association during the COVID19 pandemic made these rituals impossible to be performed. However, due to the popularity of certain rituals in Slovenia, notably the blessing of food on Holy Saturday and the blessing of greenery on Palm Sunday, the performing of this ritual was temporarily changed in some cases. For example, after the virtual blessing during the first lockdown, Martin Golob, a Roman Catholic priest of the younger generation, introduced the drive-in blessing in 2021, which was widely acclaimed by the public.

In this paper, we will therefore question the adaptive power of rituals to new contexts, as well as the cohesive power of rituals in the community. In doing so, we will take as our starting point the abovementioned case study, as well as the phenomenon of the creation of a big virtual community of strongly heterogeneous group of people around the aforementioned priest. We will explore not only the phenomenon of this internet influencer, "the most famous priest in Slovenia", but also practical implications for performing certain religious rituals during and after the pandemic.

## Changing (Scholarly) Discourses About Paganism Through Time in Slovenia

*Anja Mlakar*

Throughout history, the term paganism (and related terms such as superstition) had different meanings. In this contribution, I will analyse these changes, primarily in (scholarly) discourses of Slovenian folklore collectors and scholars. The focus of this analysis will be what constituted “paganism” in the period between the 19th century and today and how it was perceived. What was perceived as “paganism” changed through time. These changing perceptions of the term reflect wider social and political discourses of the time, as well as the changing perceptions of religiosity itself. This also reflects in terminology that was used to describe these concepts. Paganism was defined based on being “the Other” to Christianity – even if the reality of religious expressions did not confirm this black-and-white dichotomy. The contribution will thus also touch upon a wider topic of vernacular religiosity, or rather the scholarly perceptions of beliefs and practices that did not align with the predominant Christianity, as well as the blurry line between folklore and religion.

## SECTION 2. (PLACE) IDENTITY

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*Keynote*

### Sacred Places and Landscapes as Heterotopias of Contemporary World

*Boštjan Kravanja*

*Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana*

In the lecture, I will discuss the classical notion of sacred places as a particular geographic space that evolves in both religious and non-religious contexts as a marker of cultural, political and environmental changes of the today's world. I will especially address the complex dynamic that surrounds the processes of sanctification of different sacred places and landscapes. These can be either specific natural landmarks, environments and landscapes (mountains, rivers, rocks, lakes, caves etc.) or man-made (infra)structures (temples, churches, shrines, pilgrimage sites, meditation centres etc.), or both.

According to classical (and popular) notions of sacred space, these sites primarily evoke spiritual experiences, deep sense of connection with divine presence or spiritual energy, contemplation, personal introspection, feeling of peace, belonging etc. These feelings of emotional connection, memories, a sense of (place and communal) identity, and belonging, are further enforced by performing religious rituals, festivals, ceremonies, feasts, pilgrimages etc., or simply by regular visitation, seeking personal tranquillity, meaning, transcendence and power.

However, the notion of sacred space can also be used as a conceptual point of departure to examine the construction of extraordinary places and landscapes in non-religious contexts, such as in frames of heritage production, tourism, national politics, environmentalism, indigenous rights etc. Due to their contested nature, these contexts emphasize political dimensions of sacred places, rather than the spiritual one, and allow us to comprehend multifaceted influences that surround them, as well as the construction of "other spaces" or heterotopias (Foucault), which mushroom in contemporary world as localizations and "realizations" of different utopias, fantasies, and illusions.

## **Seva, Spirituality and Community: Shifting Modalities of Everyday Hindu Nationalism in Kerala, South India**

*Dayal Paleri*

In the southern state of Kerala, the Hindu nationalist politics find itself in the margins as they were unable to register any electoral success despite their hegemonic political and cultural presence in all other parts of India. The successive electoral defeat of the Bharateeya Janata Party (Indian People's Party) in the state leads to the assumption that Hindu nationalism in Kerala is anomalous to its mainstream political culture. However, through a critical ethnography of the everyday activities of the Hindu nationalist organizational network in central Kerala, this paper challenges the mainstream academic conceptions about the marginality of Hindu nationalism in the state and argues that the Hindu nationalist network led by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National volunteer organization) uses a strategy of constructing a Hindu political majority through non-electoral organizations intervening in the arena of seva (social service) (Through Seva Bharathi), temple protection and community building (through Kshethra samrakshana Samiti) and ordinary spirituality (Through Vivekananda Kendra). We argue that this mode of politics that focuses on everyday life leads to the formation of aggressive Hindu majoritarian sensibilities in the region's religious and familial spaces that have the prospect of translating into a political majority.

## **Becoming a Pious Muslim: Processes of Embodying Conversion to Islam among Polish Women Converts**

*Anna Becker*

This paper, drawn from my master's thesis, explores the processes undertaken by ethnic Polish women converts to Islam in order to cultivate more pious religious selves while forming a new Muslim identity following their conversion. Drawing from recent ethnographic fieldwork in Poland among convert women, I will analyse the various practices and rituals they employ to become more pious along with other changes they have made in their lives. Some examples of these changes include the incorporation of the five daily Islamic prayers in their routines, impacting their family, work, and leisure time; or observing the month of Ramadan, where fasting necessitates the complete abstention from food and water and encourages extra worship. Key to understanding these active efforts is the concept of habitus, popularized by Bourdieu (1990, 1977) and elaborated upon by Mahmood (2005), which contextualizes the daily lives of my research participants in a process of reconstituting oneself to replace their former habitus with a new, Muslim habitus. The active efforts undertaken permeate every aspect of the con-

vert's life, setting them at odds not only with their former selves, but with the majority Catholic society they live in oftentimes making for lonely journeys.

## **'Spiritual Mobilization': War Rhetoric of the Russian Orthodox Church in Social Media**

*Nadia Zasanska*

The study defines the social media discourse of the ROC in 2022-23 as an example of purity discourse aimed to legitimize Russia's aggression in Ukraine. In September 2022, after the start of mobilization in Russia, Patriarch Kiril announced "spiritual mobilization", which means that a death of a Russian soldier in Ukraine would be considered a sacrifice for others, so it would wash away all the sins that a person committed earlier. This statement and metaphor of "washing away" triggered the intensification of purity rhetoric all over the social media of the ROC. The religious actors called for spiritual mobilization and 'purification' in Russian society, which meant regular church attendance, confessions and prayers. Moral purity was addressed as the condition of fast victory. However, along with the sacralization of Russia's war against Ukraine, bloggers intensified anti-LGBT and pro-life rhetoric among their followers. ROC bloggers on Telegram, YouTube and Instagram label such themes as signs of 'dirt', 'decay' and sinfulness within Russian society that prevent Russia from victory in Ukraine. Focusing on metaphors dirty-pure within the dichotomy of sin-innocence, the study demonstrates the structure of purity discourse, popular referents of purity used in the context of war and warriors, and purity practices used by chaplains in the Russian army. The metaphors of purity rhetoric migrate within various digital and non-digital spaces, activating new referents, symbols and meaning.

## **Spirituality in Three Contemporary Slovak Novels from the Perspective of the Depiction of Literary Space and the Use of Linguistic Means**

*Špela Sevšek Šramel, Svetlana Kmecová*

Spirituality in three contemporary Slovak novels from the perspective of the depiction of literary space and the use of linguistic means Abstract: One of the distinctive tendencies of the contemporary Slovak novel is documentary - autobiographical. The category of literary space is highlighted in these fictions. The question of identity and contact with the traditional takes place in a regional, ethnically and confessionally diverse environment. The paper discusses three awarded novels from 2019, Čepiec by K. Kucbelova, Šeptuchy by A. Sabuchova and Svätyné by D. Madro, all of which, probably not by chance, coincide with the theme of contemporary spirituality. All three of them, each in its own way, deal, among other subjects, with the key

thematic areas of this conference, i.e. ritual, identity, including spatial, and healing or (auto) therapy. These traditionally ethnological topics are approached in the paper from other perspectives, namely the literary and linguistic means and strategies used. The literary part of the analysis and comparison of the novels deals with the exploitation of the potential of the regional setting and the use of specific narrative strategies related to the topics of ritual and therapy. The linguistic part focuses on the language means employed by the authors in the three areas mentioned above, dealing mainly with the choice of lexis, symbols, metaphors and phraseology, examining the texts mainly from the perspective of ethnolinguistics and ethnophraseology.

## **From Body Postures to Body Techniques: Studying Christian Charismatic Bodies in Slovenia**

*Igor Jurekovič*

Religious studies have in recent decades taken a material turn, shifting the analytical focus away from religious ideas and onto religious materiality – be it places, sounds, objects, or bodies. Focusing on the later promises to reinvigorate both theoretical and empirical studies of religion. The past decades have also seen an increase in research on Charismatic Christianity as it rapidly grows in number, particularly in the Global South. Combining these two research cornerstones, the presentation aims at discussing religious bodies as observed during fieldwork in three Slovenian Christian Charismatic communities: a Charismatic Catholic Renewal community, a Pentecostal church and a neocharismatic community with no ties to any mainline Christian church. The presentation is based on preliminary results of participant observation and conducted interviews. It will argue that converting to such a community necessitates obtaining a certain religious body style – a body logic. In main, this consists of adopting certain, at first uncomfortable, religious postures, which develop into Christian Charismatic body techniques. It will be argued that such techniques both enable the development of appropriate religious beliefs and act as their embodiment.

## **Water in Ecumenical Theology(ies) – A Paradigm of Material Religion**

*Johnson Mathew John*

In Christian faith traditions water is a strong metaphor for divine activity and divine space. Water in the Christian scriptures has not only been the milieu of divine intervention, but of sanctification and new life in its fullness of justice and peace in God's reign. Given the context of the significance of water in religious traditions, especially in Christian spirituality, the affirmation of water rights is inherent to the ethos of Christian communities. Recently the ecumenical circles and the ecumenical discussions have given a lot of importance to water and the sustainability

of water in development discourses. There are ecumenical documents, theological statements, biblical hermeneutics giving prime importance to the spirituality of water and the need for sustainability of water. This has taken the whole realm of contemporary spirituality into a different dimension where material religion has met with intersectionality, hybridity and peoples' movements. The paper is research into the realm of water and its importance in peoples' spiritualities and the evolution of Christian theologies addressing material religion. It also addresses the contemporary trends in spirituality where the material sustainability cannot be detached from religious discussions.

## **Religious Minorities in Ukraine as Creators of Alternative Norms: Relations with Dominant Religions, Society and the State Under the Challenges of Wartime**

*Yaroslav Yuvsechko*

Attention is drawn to the vulnerability of religious minorities (RM) in Ukraine, their current status and interactions with state, dominant religions and society. The legislation of Ukraine provides a high level of freedom of religion or belief. But in practice the state cannot guarantee the equality of religious communities with not many followers. Traditional (dominant) religions consider some RM in Ukraine as hostile. Ukrainian society has not yet perceived many RM as native and natural, but mostly already perceives their spread as a normal process. In connection with the Russian invasion RM in Ukraine face new challenges. Many communities lost their buildings or were forced to leave them in the occupied territories, and some moved to other regions of Ukraine or abroad and started their activities anew. We explore the issues concerning RM in Ukraine during wartime: freedom of expression and position of multiculturalism in the new reality; the level of the state support or loyalty to RM; how they compete with established religions; how actively RM interact with society, or are on the path of marginality; assessment of safety among the believers of RM.

# SECTION 3. HEALING AND THERAPY

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*Keynote*

## Substance Use Disorders Recovery in Therapeutic Communities

*Miroslav Horák*

*Department of Languages and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Regional Development and International Studies,  
Mendel University in Brno*

This contribution aims to present the effective factors that influence the substance use disorders recovery in therapeutic communities and to determine its essential elements in the Peruvian, Nicaraguan, and Czech context. The qualitative data were collected during 90 semi-structured interviews with inpatients/clients of 7 therapeutic communities based in Peru (Takiwasi), Nicaragua (Centro de Especialidades en Adicciones, Centro de Rehabilitación del Alcohólico y Adicto a Otras Drogas and Albergue de Miembros Adictos en Recuperación) and the Czech Republic (Renarkon, Sejrek and Kladno-Dubi). All interviews were transcribed, and content analysis was performed. The grounded theory created during this process provides a unique insight into the factors considered effective by inpatients/clients of therapeutic communities in different socio-cultural contexts..



## **Transcendental Meditation as a Means to Tackle Depression among Urban Youth in India**

*Jarken Gadi*

In Maharishi Mahesh Yogi developed the Transcendental Meditation technique (TM) in the 1950s program based on ancient meditative yoga practices. According to a recent UNICEF report, one in seven Indians between 15-24 years of age feels depressed. However, social and cultural stigma often prevent youth from seeking medical/psychological help or treatment. Hence, in India the reported incidence stands at a meagre 1.6%. A team of researchers from UCLA in studies conducted showed that depressive symptoms decrease by 50% over a 12-month period in those practicing TM. The question is thus, if, TM can help deal with issues of depression among Indian youth, particularly through a technique that has originated in India but is relatively unknown. This study aims to evaluate the efficacy of TM in improving mental health among Indian youth through an evidence-based study conducted over a four-month period with youth (aged 18-29 years of age) from the city of Pune that has the largest student youth population in the country. TM will also align itself with India's flagship healthcare program- The Jan Arogya Yojana that envisages preventive and curative healthcare with mental health being a prima area of focus.

## **Eco-Cosmology, Shamanic Discourse and Perspectives of Healing: The Construction of a New Sacred Site in Hungary**

*Judit Kis-Halas*

Keya is the founder and leader of a Hungary-based spiritual-community. As a former disciple of Amazonian and Peruvian shamans, she regularly consumed ayahuasca. Nowadays she considers herself as an artist and an eco-shaman. The idea of creating a sacred grove in the small South Hungarian village where she had house came to her mind right before the pandemic. After long and careful planning, the construction works began in 2022 and have been gradually progressing with major or minor interruptions since then.

Drawn on the author's interviews with Keya, and her ongoing ethnographic fieldwork at the site (starting in 2019), the paper introduces the building of a special ritual and healing complex, which, when completed, will serve as the community's base.

First, on the example of ceremonies and rituals carried out at particular phases of the construction process, the paper presents how shamanic discourse and healing activities as two fundamental characteristics of the community's religious-spiritual identity are represented in them. Second, it

examines the ongoing construction of this new South Hungarian sacred site from a comparative angle and place it among similar alternative spiritual endeavours in socialist and post-socialist Europe. Finally, broadening the scope of investigation to a more global scale, the paper attempts to interpret the events in the context of eco-cosmologies and environmental healing.

## Pop Spirituality: The Application of Popular Culture in Contemporary Esoteric Practices

*Andrej Kapcar*

Magical practices, as part of the larger contemporary esoteric milieu, have undergone significant changes in the past decades. Relying previously on the exclusivity of knowledge and membership, the shift towards individuality in practice and accessibility has been a common denominator for several of the post-modern esoteric movements. Among one of the most influential new “schools” of magic undoubtedly belongs Chaos Magick, which can be traced back to practitioners such as Austin Osman Spare. With the rise in popularity of individual, custom-designed magical rituals, popular culture has proven to be one of the important aspects associated with the practice. Influential, able to reach a wide audience and depicting visually attractive supernatural events, and abilities, it is of no surprise that several practitioners have started to include depicted fictional characters and places into their rituals. At the same time, many practitioners are artists themselves and intentionally manifest the esoteric knowledge in their audio-visual art. This presentation will focus on the mutual interaction between the occult knowledge represented through visual means in popular culture and the magical practice of modern magicians.

## The Event Religion Phenomenon

*Sára Eszter Heidl*

In my presentation, I focus on transformational festivals, which are in the spotlight of many researchers interested in temporary events as contemporary rituals. In a fast-paced, constantly changing world people need to unwind and enjoy the moment even more than before. Festivals give participants intense experiences, which help them break away from their everyday lives, find a liminal community, relax, transcend, and then return to the structure.

Based on empirical fieldwork conducted in Hungary, I built a four-dimensional approach to investigate event-based communities from a religious studies point of view. Examining the festival area and period, the symbols and objects found at an event, the community formation and cohesion, and the inward, personal experiences can show the religion-like and spiritual characteristics of the festival and its participants. While religion is changing nowadays, many people try to find beliefs and practices that are most fitting for them. Visiting events induces spiritual experiences, and gives opportunities to find harmony, body-soul balance and alternative methods.

I compare a 'spiritual' mindfulness (Everness, Siófok), a 'traditional' Catholic (Lélek, Szombathe-ly) and a non-religious (Fekete Zaj, Mátrafüred) music festivals in my research, the main results of which I will introduce in this presentation.

## Rituals of Extasy: Psychedelic Festivals

*Tancredi Marrone*

This presentation will address the group dances and the formation of cohesion within the sub-culture of psychedelic electronic music festivals. Collective dancing is considered also as a form of group ritual not unlike the ecstatic dances of traditional shamanic cultures albeit modified and adapted to a contemporary environment. Electronic musical appliances and laboratory psy-chedelic substances often substitute classic instruments and entheogens. Drawing from the coun-tercultural philosophy of the hippie movement, spirituality is conceptualized as integrating the individual with the collective and to finding a means of creating greater empathy and connection but also healing. Inspired by the *extaticu* cults, the achievement of a gnostic state of consciousness becomes a shared experience and no longer something that is relegated to the individual. Group rituals thus occupy a central role in the spiritually oriented psychedelic community.

## Nixi Pae Chants of the Peruvian Huni Kuin

*Andrej Kocan*

The film *Nixi Pae Chants of the Peruvian Huni Kuin* follows the search for *nixi pae* (ayahuasca) chants. The Cashinahua people (Huni Kuin) split about a hundred years ago when a faction of them, to escape the horrors of the rubber boom, moved from Brazil to Peru and resisted contact with the outside world until the 1940s. If the Brazilian Cashinahua are world famous as protagonists of ever expanding ayahuasca shamanism, with their *nixi pae* songs accompanied by guitars, djem-be and other instruments, Peruvian Cashinahua elders insist that guitar songs are inventions threatening their tradition. As on the Peruvian side there is no tourism, the only way of earning a substantial amount of money is by becoming a preacher or a teacher. Missionaries' formula of teaching the young natives to become bilingual teachers and then co-opting them in spreading the new religion results in self-colonization. The commodification of the ritual through tourism might not be the worst problem these native people face. However, the version of "traditional" ayahuasca rituals the spirituality-seeking Westerners have come to know as authentic Huni Kuin tradition has most probably evolved into a staged and performed neo-shamanic version through the demand created by the very visitors.

## Temporal Spirituality in the Passing Gates of Korean Sansa Temples and its Lantern Lighting Ritual

*Hee Sook Lee-Niinioja*

As a sanctuary and a pilgrimage centre for spiritual practice, the Buddhist Mountain monastery Sansa maintained living spaces for believers and practitioners. Located in forests alongside streams, the temple site rises higher from the gate to the courtyard, allowing a wider view. Pilgrims follow a similar spatial path from a profane to a spiritual world, as the spirit of place bears the atmospheric quality of a specific landscape with (i) emotional, (ii) cognitive, (iii) behavioural and (iv) social aspects. Place identity is explained through human experiences, and memories through reflections of these social structures.

*Yeondeunghoe* is a lantern ritual to celebrate Buddha's birth. Temples are adorned with lotus lanterns to culminate collective rituals, while Buddha's wisdom enlightens the nation's mind by illuminating lanterns. Durkheim (1893) claimed two forms of consciousness. Individual consciousness highlights human uniqueness and distinctiveness; collective consciousness comprises the shared values, ideas, and universal beliefs of a group. Buddhism represents these two forms as a philosophic religion of personal salvation by renunciation of worldly desires.

My paper discusses how humans perceive the environment as they cross each gate and participate in lantern ceremonies to gain spirituality and identity. It examines how temple objects enable people to reassure themselves.

## Pilgrimage Impacts and Diversified Narratives of a Contested Story World

*Baburam Saikia*

Parshuram kund is popularly known to be a Hindu pilgrimage site situated in the Himalayan region of Arunachal Pradesh, India. The mythical belief of Hindu God Parshuram getting rid of his sin at the place, has influenced in recent years thousands of Hindus across India and Nepal to come to Parshuram kund pilgrimage throughout the year especially during the time of *makara-sankranti* (12-14 January) - auspicious transition day of Sun into Capricorn. However, according to some local Mishmi folks popularizing Parshuram kund as a Hindu pilgrimage site has been subduing the local folkloric and mythical importance of the place. The paper aims to analyze different narratives from both local and pan-Indian Hindu perspectives with special emphasis on local knowledge of the Mishmi tribe. This will investigate folkloric association of the Kaman Mishmis, residing nearby the Parshuram kund area in the Wakro circle, with the place, including how they see the Hindu pilgrimage in their locality. This research intends to discover how the Hindu story has overtaken the local story and made the place a popular Hindu pilgrimage site.