

TWO PARTICULAR EXPRESSIONS OF NEO-PAGANISM

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Abstract: *The current increased interest in the practical and theoretical approaches to the manifestations of religiosity in its pagan forms is a feature of postmodernism. Neo-shamanism is an important part of neo-paganism. Unlike the classical, unifying approach of shamanism, recent studies have underlined the great diversity of the neo-shamanic practices. The differences in the ethno-pagan manifestations of the Hungarian and Romanian populations from the Carpathian area justify the importance of distinguishing among the pre-Christian religious traditions from which the aforementioned manifestations stem.*

Key words: *neo-paganism, shamanism, cultural tradition.*

1. Introduction

According to Michael Winkelmann (2010), neo-shamanism as part of neo-paganism has evolved considerably for the past years [24]. Within the context of an overlap between the secularization process and the increased communication difficulties between the old Christian churches and their believers, that is a sign of contemporary Western people's need to retrieve the original forms of their religiosity.

In Mircea Eliade's view, deemed by the history of religions and anthropology as a classical one, shamanism is generally concerned with the human element. However, the contemporary descriptions of the neo-shamanic practices outline its particular expressions. These are actually the result of the postmodern context within which both the described practices and their research are undertaken.

Starting from a comparative research into the Romanian and Hungarian neo-pagan manifestations, this paper highlights the causes that lead to the differences underlying these. Moreover, it provides an outlook on the descriptions of neo-paganism and neo-shamanism in the contemporary specialized literature, it outlines the conclusions of the aforementioned comparative research, as well as the specific shamanic features to be identified in the Romanian traditional culture.

Anchoring the neo-pagan manifestations into distinct cultural traditions as a means to acknowledge diversity is a postmodern trend, but the inherent recognition of traditions underlying this goes well beyond the boundaries of postmodernism.

2. Significant contemporary expressions of neo-paganism and their connotations

Robert M. Place (2008) views the

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shamanic experience as the oldest form of religious manifestation and underlines that neo-shamanism, which is the product of the courses and workshops on shamanism conducted by anthropologists in the USA during the '80s, is different from traditional shamanism in terms of the goal underlying the shamanic journeying. Neo-shamanism has rather developed as psychotherapy and not as a means to train healing shamans. [19].

Neil S. Price (2004) shows reservations as to the legitimacy of the neo-pagan anchoring into ancient religions and claims that the possibility of an operational recreation of ancient shamanic rituals can only be a matter of faith for contemporary archaeologists [20]. Displaying a more confident attitude, Robert J. Wallis (2004) appreciates that the neo-shamans could be useful partners in a constructive dialogue on tradition and archaeological research.

Helen A. Berger (2010) underlines the role played by the Internet and by the abundant literature in the field in increasing the number of solitary practitioners of neo-paganism. The latter could actually be the adequate religion for postmodernism [2]. Andrei A. Znamenski (2007) in his turn emphasizes the compatibility of neo-paganism termed as neo-shamanism with postmodernism. The neo-shamans acknowledge the existence of a reality that is different from the ordinary one, and that is commonly accessible and inhabited by spirits. Their spirituality centers on the link with Mother Earth and, hence, their movement also assumes an ecological orientation. Westerners rediscover the benefits of renewing their ties with the nature, of organic food, of living a healthy lifestyle. As a result, they redirect their attention towards the philosophy of nature, celebrate Earth Day and do ecological politics. However, academia and contemporary practitioners of shamanism no longer believe in the

universal character of the shamanic practices and, hence, compared to the classical period, no longer view it as proper to discuss about a generic shamanism [26]. Jenny Blain (2002) showed, a few years before, an increase in the number of persons involved in search of their spiritual ties with the Earth and with its inhabiting creatures, and considered that such a quest is characteristic of postmodernism. As a result of searching for origins and for authenticity, it is all too natural for a wide array of shamanic practices to develop [4].

According to Winkelmann (2010), the similarities in the shamanic practices and experiences of various cultures show the existence of some neurognostic structures as a biological basis for our knowledge capacity. The shamanic practices with all their symbolic and ritual meanings are human means of manipulating the psychobiological processes in order to obtain health and wellbeing. The ontological and functional basis of shamanism and of its practices is the access, by various means, to the integrative mode of consciousness. In the shamanic tradition, the latter's potential is used through dance, music, medicinal plants, as well as through the management of the human reaction to stress. The shamanic practices are essentially symbolic ones. Ralph Metzner (1998) underlined the important role played in the shamanic tradition by the thorough knowledge of plants' effects on human body and mind. The majority of Westerners who, in various ways, have experienced the effect of the psychedelic plants point out as major effects of using the manifestation of extensive consciousness that trespasses the Western materialistic view on the boundaries of the real world [16]. Jim DeKorne (1994) believed that the shamanic view on the world is the best map of consciousness that mankind may

have available. To a shaman the world has a center through which, vertically, other worlds may become accessible [10].

Robert A. Saunders (2013) agrees with opinion that the absence of a sacred text and of a religious authority, the individual freedom in choosing and interpreting of the experiences, the emergence of new views on the divine, the review of the magic and the assigning a sacred dimension to the Earth are neo-paganism features. In order to better analyze neo-paganism, Saunders suggests adding to the three-fold model belonging to M. York (2003) - behavior, religion, theology [25] - a new dimension, namely the one of politics. Neo-paganism is tightly linked to ethnic identity, according to Saunders [22].

According to Winkelman (2010), the cross-cultural features of shamanism, as they are presented by Eliade, make the shaman the primordial expert in managing the problems related to consciousness, emotions, social relations, health, interaction with nature and supernatural. The main trait of shamanism, according to Eliade, is the ritual use of an altered mode of consciousness. Without being shamans, many healers resort to this mode in their healing processes and, hence, can be considered shamanic healers. Winkelman underlines the absence of shamanism in the Mediterranean area, as well as in sedentary communities. Consequently, the author considers that agriculture played an important role in the transformation of shamans into shamanic healers. Moreover, agriculture is associated with priesthood and the priests are usually to be found in societies where there are also shamanic healers. In the case of the first Indo-Europeans, reminiscences of shamanic practices can be identified, but, as Winkelman points out, "Even at the proto-I-E stage; the societal and religious structures already replaced shamanism. The agricultural subsistence and political

complexity of early I-E society indicate that the original shamanic practices would have already been replaced by priests and other shamanistic healers, as reflected in the classic tripartite division of proto-I-E society." [24, p.69].

3. Two ethnic expressions of neo-paganism

Neo-paganism is part of the modern renaissance of magic and, probably, the religious minority with the fastest spread, as Rozália Klára Bakó and László-Attila Hubbes (2011) underline. The denotation of *neo-paganism* covers a wide array of religious manifestations that are nature oriented and based on the revitalization of the ancient classical pre-Christian movements movements from within and outside Europe. The expressions of neo-paganism include a significant ethnic component. That takes the shape of high ethnocentrism, ethnic supremacy or territorial supremacy arguments and is to be found in areas that are traditionally known for the nationalist stance. Schnirelman signals its presence in the former Soviet areas [apud. Bakó and Hubbes, 1], but the association between neo-paganism and ethnic nationalism can be viewed as a feature of the whole Europe. The term used by the authors of the study to describe this relation is that of *Ethnopaganism*. In addition, based on the successive surveys conducted by Helen Berger, Bakó and Hubbes indicate a spectacular increase in the number of pagan practices at international level. As Berger outlines, solitary training and practice based on the information acquired from books or via the Internet seem to be the future of religion [2]. Bakó and Hubbes, in their turn, highlight that neo-paganism, as an attempt of the individuals to define their identity in postmodern times, takes distance from the

secularization tendencies or from the traditionally accepted religious forms. Protochronism as an alternative of ethnocentrism, a trend that upholds the right of the first settlers over inhabited areas, their role in maintaining their rights in such regions and the heroic dimension of this, takes various forms in Eastern Europe, point out the aforementioned authors. Romanian and Hungarian forms of protochronism are mutually exclusive in the Carpathian area. In this respect, the ethno-paganism underlying these expressions upholds the wisdom and moral purity of each population's pre-Christian ancestors.

Based on a comparative research focused on the web pages upholding Romanian and Hungarian ethno-paganism and protochronism, Bakó and Hubbes conclude that "generally members and contributors of these pages do not tend to identify themselves as some practicing Neopagans or following any certain cultic rituals. Still the overall image mirrored by these sites, blogs, and forums is a strong commitment to revitalize the ancient Dacian-Zalmoxian spirituality and religion." [1, p.140], and "In contrast to Romanian counterparts, these groups are rather religious and practicing indeed shamanic rituals, gathering on Neopagan festivals. At the same time most of them are typically Ethno-pagans, with a strong focus on reconstructing the ancient religious traditions brought from the Asian steppe." [1, p.141]. The authors compare two organizations: *Gebeleizis Association*, a Romanian Zalmoxian group, and the *Tengri Babba Community*, a Hungarian Shamanist group, and reach the conclusion that "Ethos and social legitimation shows a bureaucratic approach on the Romanian organization side, and a traditionalist, charismatic legitimation approach on the Hungarian organization side. [...] the Tengri community is more concerned with

persuasion through examples (a whole series of activities presented, and the guru's CV displayed), while the Zalmoxian group is more concerned with confronting religious and political status quo and deductive arguments rooted in their foundation documents." [1, p.146]. In terms of the way the Romanian and Hungarian ethno-pagan organizations' members define themselves, the authors point out "After surfing many websites on both sides we can conclude that for Romanian groups generally the Thracian idea is more important than a not-so-clear structure of religious cult, they are rather centered on what they call Zalmoxian spirituality. In contrast, Hungarian Shamanist groups, where there is real shamanism involved, do clearly declare themselves as religious, and ethno-political activism is secondary." [1, p.147]. The shamanic features identified by ethnologists in the Romanian traditional culture are influenced by the latter's orientation towards agriculture and by the sedentary nature of the communities where they developed. Their description and their historical roots are outlined below.

4. Shamanistic connotations in Zalmoxis' worship

According to Herodotus, the Getians believed themselves immortal, by virtue of the fact that "he who perishes goes to Zalmoxis - their divinity (daimon) whom some deem to be the same as Gebeleizis" (IV, 94). Herodotus' Greek informants reckoned Zalmoxis a liberated Pythagoras' slave, educated by the latter and preacher of his teachings among the Getians. The core of his teaching was the idea of a happy post-existence. The teaching was destined to the elite, was transmitted during ritual banquets held in the *andreon* and was proved by Zalmoxis' disappearance, followed by his

reappearance, during the fourth year, from the underground dwelling built for this purpose.

The autonomy of the soul was a fascinating idea to the Greeks. Strabo associates Zalmoxis to Orpheus and Musaios, renowned characters for their “mantic and thaumaturgical prestige and for their ecstatic experiences” [12, p.43]. Orpheus’ descent into the underworld in search for Euridice’s soul, the power exerted by this one, through music, on the animals, and his singing head floating towards Lesbos are shamanistic dimensions. According to Erwin Rohde [21], *enthousiasmos* and the belief in immortality are Thracian imports in Dionysos’ Greek cult. For E.R. Dodds [11], Orpheus, “Thracian figure similar to Zalmoxis”, is a mythical shaman or shamans’ prototype. Zalmoxis may be likewise associated, through Pythagoras, to the legendary shamans of the Greek tradition. Shamanistic features can be conferred upon Abaris, Aristetas, Hermetimus of Clazomenae, Epimenides of Crete, Orpheus and Pythagoras. However, Zalmoxis is, by the characteristic features of his worship, a god of mysteries, Eliade deems. Despite the Getian god’s frequent comparisons to figures traditionally classified to be shamanistic in the Greek world, Zalmoxis is not a shaman.

The classification of his teachings as Pythagorean may nevertheless have a more consistent cause than the Greeks’ superficiality, for whom, everything referring to the soul, to its separation from the body and to its happy post-existence is Pythagorean. The doubtful identification made by Herodotus between Zalmoxis and Gebeleizis is not sufficient, Eliade believes, to consider the two gods one and the same. Gebeleizis is a god of storm, probably a degraded heavenly Dyaus, in line with a frequent process in the history

of religions. The Herodotean passage referring to the Getians menacing their god by shooting him with an arrow is probably a positive religious act, of imitation and gestural support. The lack of reference to Gebeleizis, according to Herodotus, does not prove the disappearance of his worship. The connotations of master over storms extant in Saint Elijah’s folkloric portrait, on one hand, and the celestial symbolism of the Dacian sanctuaries from Costești and Sarmizegetusa, on the other hand, advocates the survival of Gebeleizis’ cult, at least until Dacia’s Christianization, probably in a syncretism, determined by the sacerdotal class, with Zalmoxis, the god of mysteries. The shamanistic connotations in the latter’s representations might accrue from this syncretism.

5. Zalmoxian specialists in sacredness

For Strabo, as shown by Eliade, there is no allusion to the mysterious character of Zalmoxis’ worship. According to Strabo, Zalmoxis learnt from Pythagoras and from the Egyptians, the mysteries of heaven, and thus convinced the king of his country to associate him in the governance. Originally priest and God’s messenger, Zalmoxis was later on worshipped himself as a god. Ever since, all Geto-Dacian kings had had venerable advisers, living in the cave of the holy mountain Kogainon and sometimes reckoned to be gods. The information transmitted by Strabo, suggesting additional sources, independent from the Herodotean text, are compatible with the features of the Thracian religious system, detachable from Plato’s references to Zalmoxis’ doctors, in *Charmides*: the god’s unclear homologation with the king and high priest, the tendency to deify one’s kings and, especially, the high priest’s exceptional prestige and authority [12]. Around the latter and the *specialists in sacredness*, vaguely related to him, as

shown by Eliade, the survivals of the mystery tradition from Zalmoxis' cult must be searched.

Eliade uses the syntagm *specialists in sacredness* for the contemplative, celibate and vegetarian ascetics, living, according to the notes of Strabo and Flavius Josephus, on both sides of Danube. They lived in isolation, avoiding the women's presence and feeding on milk, cheese and honey. Since Antiquity, they had been likened to the Essenes and they may be pertinently compared to the druids [12]. For the Mysian ascetics, Strabo resorts to the terms *theosebeis* and *kapnobatai*. The former means "those who fear the god". The latter allows for multiple interpretations. Eliade operates with the translation "those who walk through smoke", relating it to the use of hemp smoke to provoke ecstatic trances.

Andrei Oişteanu [18] highlights other three possible translations: "travellers amid clouds", in relation to the priests' meteorological attributes, to their astronomical preoccupations or to the localization of their sanctuaries and caves in the mountains; "feeders on smoke", in relation to the practice of apotropaic rites or ecstasy-provoking fumigations; "smoke diviners" in relation to the priests' mantic preoccupations. These translations support the hypothesis of the perpetuation as Zalmoxian of some shamanistic practices previous to Zalmoxis' worship.

The most spectacular is the translation of the term *kapnobatai* by "travellers amid clouds". Oişteanu defends this translation. The absence of direct reference to travels amid clouds in the ancients' texts about Thracian ascetics does not imply the absence of these practices. The travels through the air, frequent in the ancient thaumaturges' biographies, performed in the flesh or in spirit, are shamanistic, as anthropologists consider. The existence of such practices and beliefs for the

Danubean Thracians is basically possible, Oişteanu believes.

All meanings of the term *kapnobatai* send to shamanism. The shamanistic dimension slips thereby in the proximity of mystery Zalmoxis, weaving into the representations of his worship among contemporaries. Older than Zalmoxis, this dimension becomes characteristic feature of his teachings and outlives them. Nevertheless, if the abilities of these specialists in sacredness may be reckoned shamanistic, their possessors are not, technically, rigorously, shamans.

6. Generic shamanism and shamanic properties: shamans, iatromantes, possessed and wizards

In the work *Experiențe ale extazului (Experiences of Ecstasy)*, Ioan Petru Culianu concludes: "we dare say that the nickname of *shamans* is not suitable to Greek *iatromantes*, as they do not fall absolutely at all into the phenomenology of shamanistic possession: they do not master the spirits they were possessed of. However, on the other hand, they are capable of the same performance as genuine shamans. At last, *iatromantes* did not enter Greek culture at a certain time: they rose with it, occupying a prominent place in this very culture and being one of its most shocking, though less individualized characteristics." [9, p.46].

Another work by Ioan Petru Culianu, entitled *Călătorii în lumea de dincolo (Out of this World: Otherworldly Journeys)*, is elaborated on the assumption of cultural rise through cognitive transmission. The latter is defined as "active rethinking of tradition, based on a simple set of rules" [7, p.43], the individual's participation in tradition, explaining the persistence of certain beliefs and practices. The individual thinks within a tradition and is molded by this one. When the undertaken

rules target the existence of another world located in heaven and of the immortal soul distinct from the dying body, “we may ascertain that the rules depend to such an extent on shamanism they probably accrue from it.” [7, p.41-42].

“The fact designated as *shamanism* is an archaic religious phenomenon (seems to have been attested since Paleolithic) and universally spread”, Eliade noted [13, p.17]. Eliade also highlighted the widespread belief across Asia, in the wane of shamanism: “Formerly, the *early shamans* really fled amid clouds on their *horses* (namely on their shaman drums), they could take any desired shape and performed miracles that their descendants of today are unable to repeat” [13, p.21].

Shamans by skills and possessed by their way of accessing ecstatic states, the *iatromantes* force, analogously to the *Zalmoxian* specialists in sacredness, the broadening of the shamanism definition. Their initiation does not involve the seizure of the spirits possessing them, but confers healing powers and control over the weather upon them. Separating the initiation technique from the set of rules that Culianu indicates as foundation of the shamanistic-type beliefs, shamanism may be admitted alike as source of its standard North-Asiatic manifestation and of its Mediterranean manifestation. The same minimal rules, related to the existence of a netherworld and the separation of the immortal soul from the body, the core of generic shamanism, yielded specific developments, opening up various paths to access the netherworld.

This hypothesis is also supported by the conclusions of the work *Nocturnal History. An Interpretation of Sabbath* (1996) by Carlo Ginzburg. Deeming sorcery more than mere invention of a persecuting society, Ginzburg assigns it a shamanistic origin [14]. What inquisitors deemed to be devilish knowledge was the prolongation

of a long Scythian-origin shamanistic tradition, wherein ecstasy was obtained and maintained with specific plants. Of course, Ginzburg’s diffusionist conclusion superficially amends the admittance of distinct forms, Northern and Mediterranean, of shamanism. But Scythian shamanism, brought (or re-brought, considering the topic-related bibliographical resources) on stage by Ginzburg is technically different from each of these forms. These differences, alongside partial similarities, sustain the common support, the shamanic minimal rules thereto.

7. Solomonaries, magicians with meteorological attributes within Romanian mythology

Zalmoxis’ worship, the Getian god, has been destined, ever since the beginning, for instructed people. This status diminished its chances of survival as it prevented its descent into the rural environment and in folklore. Furthermore, Zalmoxis’ religion, by its eschatological dimension, by the enhancement of the initiations, of the asceticism and of the mystery-type erudition could be easily taken over by Christianity. However, the tradition of the solitary and chaste ascetics, revered as saints and heavenly-mystery connoisseurs, survived in the Romanian cultural field. *Hermits and solomonaries* are the followers of this tradition. The former, honoured for their monastic life, are placed, in popular beliefs, around the *voivodes*, as their secret advisers. Daniil Sihastru’s legend condenses these beliefs.

Solomonaries are the magicians with meteorological attributes of the Romanians’ mythology. In their representation, the features of the Thracian specialists in sacredness intertwine with Saint Elijah’s legendary biography, the one who thunders and flashes, on his birthday,

and with the tradition of considering King Solomon as patron of sorcerers across Europe and Middle East.

Solomonaries live, as tradition says, outside communities, near lakes, mountains, in forests or in the fields, they look wild, put on humble clothes, beg, in order to test the villagers' generosity, eggs, milk, honey or oil and they keep away from women, who would drain powers from them. Their portrait does not essentially differ from the one of the ancient specialists in sacredness. Mihai Coman [6] interprets the humble travesty, begging, reward and connection with storms as proofs for the Solomonaries' uranian ascendance. The derivational scheme proposed by M. Coman, god of storm - solomony, is complemented by Oişteanu [18]. The variant god of storm - storm god's priest - solomony fits more closely in the traditional vision on solomonaries. According to Mircea Eliade, Gebeleizis changed from primordial god of the heaven into storm and fertility god, bringer of useful rains and charmer of elements and spirits. *His* priests shot the demons of the storm-clouds with arrows or bound them and rode them in the sky. In outlining the solomony's status, his relation to the storm-dragon is therefore essential, as appreciated by Oişteanu.

The well-sinker, handler of the hazel rod detecting water sources, is not unknown to the inhabitants of the Romanian villages. Radiesthesia endeavours to bring in the perimeter of positivist knowledge the special sensitivity of the loop to radiations, and this detection procedure is relatively widespread in the European cultural space. However, the well-sinker's skills are deemed magical. On his moroseness, on the rigour of his moral judgements and on the variegated fasts he undertakes, there is drafted the solomony's mythic portrait.

According to the information reported by Lazăr Şăineanu [apud. Kernbach, 15],

solomonaries spend seven years in a devil-run underground school. Therein they learn all beings' languages, nature's mysteries, magic and spells. Schoolchildren read magic books, seated on a speedily rotating grinder, at rushlight. Ten apprentices attend this school simultaneously. After the seven years, one of them is chosen and meant to become solomony. He can master the dragons of storms, controlling rains and hailstorms.

The solomony goes to the edge of the lake, opens up his bag and takes out his magic book and reins. Then he beats the water with his hooked rod, calling the dragon that he charms, reading to it. Tamed, it is obedient to the solomony, who saddles and straddles it, carrying it over villages, fields and forests. Where the solomony decides, the dragon empties the water sucked from the lake, provoking heavy rains and hail. And likewise, where the solomony decides, the uncalled dragons are chased away and obliged to shed thereby their rains over uninhabited places.

Solomonaries are therefore subject to special consideration in Romanian villages. Known, recognized or only suspected after the rod hidden beneath their shabby clothes, they are enveloped in awe and properly treated. Nobody dares to mistreat a solomony and almost any beggar might be a solomony. The solomony is the actor of this order. He is a wizard. His deeds are effective by virtue of a magical causality.

8. The cultural tradition as a support for ethnic differentiation in contemporary paganism

The members of the Romanian ethnopagan groups are rather concerned with identifying arguments upholding that their movement is anchored into the spiritual tradition of the inhabitants of Dacia, as

well as with finding arguments that this tradition outlasted, and, by contrast the Hungarian ethno-pagans view themselves or aspire to become shamans and are thus focused on accessing their consciousness and acquiring extra sensorial abilities, Bakó and Hubbes conclude [1].

Geographically and geopolitically speaking, the Hungarians are more receptive to the trends coming from the West. If neo-paganism is the Western reaction to the challenges raised by postmodernism, secularization, as well as by the rigidity of the official discourse of the Christian churches to religiosity, then it is all too natural for the neo-pagan trend manifested in Transylvania to originate in the West – in the same vein as the numerous cultural trends that emerged from Central and Western Europe. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that, compared to their Romanian counterparts, the Hungarian neo-pagans are more oriented onto the practical dimension of the spirituality from which they claim their movement originates and which is in full agreement with the old distinction between being and doing, contemplating and building, East and West. As a result, the neo-shamanic practices are more likely to be embraced by the Hungarians, who are closer to the origins of this movement and more inclined towards the practical application of their religiosity, rather than by the Romanians.

Besides the different effects of this geographical and geopolitical positioning of the Hungarians and Romanians in relation with these cultural trends, these populations' different spiritual traditions should also be taken into account. The ethnographic research has attested the presence of shamanism in the Hungarian traditions. Within the Romanian ones, the character that most resembles the figure of the shaman is the 'solomonar'. The latter, similar to the mythical shamans of the

ancient Greek tradition, possesses the ability of physically flying through the air and also uses ritual instruments for rhythmic calling. However, the solomonar is not possessed by the spirits with which he interacts and, therefore, he is not a shaman as the latter is technically and ethnographically defined. Yet, he inherits the shamanic powers of the Dacian priests serving the God of Storm.

The different manifestations of the Romanian and Hungarian neo-pagan groups are based on the distinction made between the shaman and the priest in the service of the God of Storm. This differentiation actually corresponds to the relations established with the sacred at various stages of community development, as they were highlighted by Winkelman [24]: hunters-gatherers initially, cultivators later. These, according to Carlo Ginzburg, are distinct particular developments of the original shamanism. The different traditions they generate can actually account for the different manners in which the Romanian and Hungarian ethno-pagan groups relate to esoteric knowledge.

In shamanic tradition, any community member can have a shaman's vocation. Anyone aspiring to become a shaman must listen to the calling, go through an initiation period under the guidance of an experienced shaman (live or dead) that helps him confront the spirits and learn how to master them. However, the result of the confrontation and his future shamanic career are all within the aspirant's own powers. According to priests' tradition, the aspirant's agreement to undergo the initiation is necessary, but the decision for him to become a priest ultimately belongs to the god and it is put into practice by a priest. The shamanic initiation is open to anyone, while becoming a priest is only for the few ones. All of the above actually explain both the invitations and encouragements to participate in initiation

courses into shamanism on the one hand, and the concern for valuing the origins of the shamanic tradition and its continuity, on the other hand. Thus, the open, democratic access to shamanism is opposed by the reluctant acceptance of the difference in status between the learned priests of the Dacians and those who strive to acquire their teachings as well as possible. These two distinct traditions, the shamanic one and the priests' pre-Christian one, heavily influence the contributions made by the Romanian and Hungarian ethno-pagan groups to the development of the contemporary neo-paganism. On the one hand there is the trend upholding the self-transformation as a result of the shamanic experience (traditionally oriented to the benefit of the others in the community). On the other hand, there is the communion focus (traditionally oriented on the role of the priest). While shamanism emphasizes the individual, the priest's tradition focuses on the group cohesion ensured by the common spiritual vein shared by the members.

The neo-pagan expressions are different: rediscovery of the shamanic tradition on the one hand, reaffirmation of the spiritual Dacian traditions, on the other hand. The first involves an adaptation to the urban environment. The course attendees come from this environment and at least a part of the training activities unfold in urban areas. The revival of the pre-Christian tradition involves a direct contact with this. In this respect, the students from Cluj, while on their anthropological field internship in the Apuseni Mountains under the guidance of Professor Achim Mişu recorded in the '90s beliefs about solomonars and their meteorological powers [17].

The differences (marked as oppositions) outlined above prove Lucian Blaga's theory on the stylistic matrix defined as the total of the unconscious categories that determine the ethnic, local and cultural

specificity [3]. One of these categories is the space horizon, which is a matrix space of origins that leaves its print on the inhabitants of a given area. Populations characterized by different space horizons, configured in accordance with their original spatial structures, can live within the same physical space.

According to Blaga, the ethnic option for a given Christian denomination is directly linked to the features of a stylistic matrix. To exemplify this link, the philosopher pointed out the architectural styles that are characteristic for each denomination. Moreover, this link could be extended to the neo-paganism area that is tolerated and potentiated by these denominations. This is explained by the fact that the neo-pagan manifestations occur within a Christian environment and are, at least partially, the result of an opposition to the official position adopted by the dominant denominations. Hence, the ethnic differentiations of these manifestations can be traced back to the denominations their supporters are part of (or, were part of, to be more precise). A denomination that is open to change (that is, Protestantism and, from an Orthodox view, Catholicism as well) is more prone to feeding adepts to the neo-pagan group which, as already underlined, are individual oriented. Conservative denominations favour community orientation. The meaning of *community* is used in this article as it is explained by F. Tönnies.

9. Conclusions

Neo-paganism has evolved considerably lately. This phenomenon is considered as a result of simultaneous opposition to secularization process and Christian teachings that dominated the Western culture. The development of this form of spirituality alongside with the great variety of local and/ethnic forms that it encourages are

considered expressions of the postmodern religiosity. One of the main expressions of neo-paganism is neo-shamanism.

The comparison between the ethno-pagan manifestations of the Hungarians and Romanians from the Carpathian area is proof of the differences between the pre-Christian religious origins of these.

The ethnographic research on the Hungarian spiritual tradition records the existence and manifestations of shamanism. The solomonars are the only magicians with meteorological abilities, do not actually fit the technical definition of the shaman and hence. Both the real shamans and the solomonars are the expression of the primary religiosity called *shamanism* by Ginzburg and are the result of the latter's adaptation to the living conditions of the hunters-gatherers and cultivators. In the case of the cultivators, the rituals characteristics of shamanism were taken over by the priests. The solomonar is the one who inherits the powers and the meteorological abilities needed to cultivate the land. For this reason, the neo-pagan expressions take different forms with the Romanian and Hungarian population. These different approaches are in line with the ethnic characteristics of the two populations and with their influence on their cultural artifacts.

Contemporaneity reveals more frequent and diverse expressions of the postmodern breakaway with the Christian religiosity. Diversity is proof of the perennial nature of religiosity that is seeking the proper forms to manifest itself.

The current study agrees with the conclusions of the research undertaken by Bakó and Hubbes (2011). As comparison between a theoretical approach and an invitation-guide to shamanic practices, these conclusions may not very clearly delineate the two expressions of neo-paganisms. The web supporters of neo-

paganism as originating from the Dacian spiritual tradition may only be the chroniclers of neo-paganism. In this case, their relationship with the pagan practitioners may resemble the relation between the laymen talking about Christianity and the Christian priests administering the Sacred Mysteries. To the limit, the relation could also be described in terms of the difference between the esoteric and exoteric dimensions of tradition since the Dacian administrators of the sacred were known to be solitary and, nowadays, the Romanian mountains still host hermits. If tradition should be passed on from the former to the latter, the distinction between paganism and neo-paganism is no longer operational.

Even though the aforementioned research may capture just echoes of Romanian neo-paganism expressions that do not diminish the importance of the comparative conclusions it draws in terms of the different cultural traditions to which the Romanians and Hungarians belong. The hidden priest, secret practitioner and royal counsellor, holds a well determined role within the Dacian tradition. The distinction between esoteric paganism/exoteric paganism supplementary potentiates the contemporary diversity of religiosity expressions.

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