

# Introduction

## Context Is Everything

### Plurality and Paradox in Contemporary European Paganisms

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Modern Pagan and Native Faith groups and movements have sprung up across Europe – as in the rest of the world – in recent decades, yet comparatively little has been published about them compared with the extensive literature on British and American Pagans and Pagan traditions.<sup>1</sup> This is beginning to change, especially in relation to Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>2</sup> All such movements, wherever they are, share some important characteristics – especially the valorization of human relationships with the rest of nature and polytheistic cosmologies – and could be said to belong to a global new religious phenomenon, albeit one that frequently invokes ancient religions.<sup>3</sup> But local expressions are extremely diverse – even within a single country – in terms of their beliefs, practices, values and politics. The relative importance of ecology, magic, ethnic politics and indigenous tradition varies enormously. Amidst this variety, large numbers of Pagans and Native Faith followers participate in global communities and communication networks via the Internet, bypassing cultural and geographical boundaries.<sup>4</sup> Thus they have it both ways, asserting the primacy of the local while enjoying connections with, and often borrowing from, their counterparts in other places.

This volume examines a variety of such groups and movements across the European region, many of whose goals involve the construction of authentic, indigenous, personal and group identities in the face of hegemonic, pan-regional and globalizing forces during a challenging period in Europe. Often side by side, there are revival or

reconstructionist groups with intensely local concerns informed by nationalistic impulses – particularly in post-Soviet Europe, but elsewhere too – and numerous other groups which take their cue from British and American-derived traditions such as initiatory Wicca, Druidry, Goddess Spirituality or Michael Harner’s Core Shamanism, albeit with creative local inflections and inventions. In their discussions of various groups the volume’s contributors explore what might be seen as two broad impulses under the contemporary Pagan and Native Faith umbrella, one colonialist and one nationalistic.<sup>5</sup> They show how these two impulses – by no means mutually exclusive – play out, intersect and collide, morph and transform. Tensions in the relationships between universalism and particularism, indigeneity and nationalism, politics and religion, tradition and innovation, left- and right-wing, modernity and anti-modernity, pre-modern and postmodern are explored.

The idea for this book, particularly the theme of its subtitle, was conceived in two moments – one in a teahouse in Budapest in September 2011 and the other in a café on the Sliema waterfront in Malta in June 2012. In the first, I found myself with twenty-or-so mostly strangers, crowded around some pushed-together tables: half were Hungarian Pagans attending their regular Moot and the rest were delegates at a conference who shared a research interest in modern Paganisms. (Some of the scholars were also Pagans of one stripe or another.) The evening gathering had been organized by the coordinator of the Pagan Federation International, the overseas wing of the U.K.-based Pagan Federation,<sup>6</sup> who was attending the conference and thought it would be interesting and pleasant for us all to get together. During the convivial evening I got talking with a Wiccan man of about thirty, who began telling me, darkly, about some trends in Hungarian Paganism he found disconcerting. One was a burgeoning interest in Wicca among people who played Live Action Role-Playing games and their consequent misconceptions about Wiccan magic. His more troubling concern, though, was the growth of a local ethnic Pagan group based on the *táltos* (traditional Hungarian shaman-like healers), a group he described as politically right-wing who ‘use *táltos*’ as a rallying point in attempts to reclaim land alienated during the Second World War and to ‘get rid of gypsies and Jews’. He, on the other hand, was a follower of British-originated Wicca and disapproved strongly of mixing religion and politics, especially right-wing nationalistic politics. He seemed very concerned that his form of modern Paganism could, and would, be mistaken for the other kind.

The second moment was when I was chatting with a long-time friend and research participant in Malta where I have been doing research among modern Witches and Pagans since 2005. The coven she belonged to had for some time been working towards getting its 'proper lineage' in Alexandrian Wicca, a British-based Witchcraft tradition which emphasizes training and initiation. My friend said that the group members had been taking lessons via Skype from an Alexandrian High Priestess living in Cornwall, England, tuning in to classes through their computers along with fellow students living in various parts of the world. The ninety-year-old Priestess had travelled to Malta twice to initiate members to the 'first degree' of the tradition. The group's rituals were also being conducted remotely via Skype: members gathered around a computer and the officiating High Priestess and Priest were located physically in the U.K. Previously the coven's rituals had been run by their own Maltese High Priestess and High Priest in the beautiful Goddess temple they had created or outdoors in a natural setting, but the coven had been informed that such priestly roles could only be held by 'third-degree' (the highest level of) initiates of the tradition, and that initiation must be given by a third-degree Alexandrian. The British Priestess was, however, happy for them to weave their own creative and locally distinctive elements into their religious practice. My friend said the new system was good, because they were now learning to 'do things properly' and becoming 'more knowledgeable', but that the rituals around the computer felt 'dead' and the 'energy wasn't the same' as when they went to the beach and conducted the rituals themselves. (I should note that some others in the Maltese Pagan community disagreed with the direction this group was taking, claiming that the Maltese Neolithic Goddess was 'much older than Stonehenge and the Wiccan Holly King' and that they did not need to learn everything from British Witches.)

I was surprised that after creating and running their own rituals for several years, guided by a very organized, dedicated and knowledgeable Priest and Priestess, this coven would now choose to defer to, and become dependent upon, 'authorities' in the U.K. Listening to my friend's account, it occurred to me that this group was participating willingly in what sounded like a form of religious colonialism, particularly in the context of Malta's past colonial relationship to Britain. I have written before (Rountree 2010, 2011) about a tendency in Malta to value the foreign over the local, and something of a cultural cringe with respect to things British in particular, related to Malta's long period as a British colony (1800–1964). While there

is a defensive pride about things Maltese, it is also the case that many Maltese rank foreign products, foreign media and a British university education, for example, more highly than the local varieties. Maltese Pagans have embraced participation in the global Pagan movement and sources of inspiration outside their own culture, especially British ones. The story my friend told me about the Skype lessons and rituals seemed to recapitulate this tendency. Wicca has, of course, been imported into many other societies where it may take on a local character or be consciously indigenized as contributors to this volume discuss (see Jenny Butler's chapter on Celtic Wicca in Ireland and Léon van Gulik's on Greencraft Wicca in Belgium).

Both the anecdotes I have related above speak to tensions between the local, foreign and global within modern Paganism and Native Faith movements. In both these instances the foreign is more highly valued and trusted, but for different reasons. The Hungarian Wiccan in the Budapest teahouse objected to what he saw as the misuse of Hungarian religious tradition for contemporary nationalist political goals and preferred to follow an apolitical religious tradition, even if its source was foreign and from the West. The Maltese coven wanted to fully understand and embrace initiation into Alexandrian Wicca in order to be 'truly', 'properly' Wiccan – a religious identity apparently very different from that of the Catholic majority in Malta. To do so the group members felt they had to go to, and accept the authority of, the tradition's British source. The concerns in both cases were about the authenticity and integrity of their chosen (new) religious path. Because Wicca is probably the best-known and most written-about tradition within contemporary Paganism globally, it has accrued considerable legitimacy and authenticity as a coherent new religious tradition.

However, other varieties of Paganism and Native Faith – those reviving or reconstructing ancient, indigenous religious traditions embedded in local cultures and places – configure authenticity and legitimacy differently. In such cases, more so in Central and Eastern Europe, religious authenticity derives from the perceived connection with the indigenous, cultural or ethnic roots of the faith, where, as Adrian Ivakhiv (2009: 214) has explained in the light of his work in Ukraine, 'blood' and 'tradition' – and ultimately nationality and nation-state – are rooted in a specific territory, an idea with precursors in European and Soviet thought. The nature–society relation is not structured in the way it is by most Anglo-Americans: humans are not seen as 'distinct from nature, but as culturally or ethnically "rooted" within the natural world'. Thus, Ivakhiv (2009: 221) claims,

religion and ethnic politics cannot be separated: identity is 'based on a primordialist and territorialized notion of ethnicity'.

Ethnic Paganisms have been widely described as responses to concerns about foreign colonizing ideologies, internationalization, globalization, cosmopolitanism, crises in ethnic identity and anxieties about cultural erosion (Aitamurto 2007; Ališauskienė and Schröder 2012; Bourdeaux 2000; Ferlat 2003; Gardell 2003; Ivakhiv 2009; Miller 2007; Shnirelman 2002; Strmiska 2005). Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, 'ethnic nationalism, neo-traditionalism, anti-Westernism and a revived Eurasianism (in Russia) have surfaced in ... the popular and intellectual culture of Eastern Europe' (Ivakhiv 2009: 222–23). Different religions have 'come out from under the surface', writes Lindquist (2011: 72), 'to be reconstructed and reinvented, and to assume the role of moral and spiritual guidance, ecological compass, and sometimes public national ideology in various designs of ethnonationalism'. 'Traditional', 'ancient' or 'indigenous' religions are being used to provide the symbolic capital for new nationalisms. Since the end of the 1980s, Neo-Pagans in post-Soviet lands have been 'searching for both a primordial past and a pure ethnic culture, which they view as invaluable resources to overcome the hardship and ideological vacuum of the transitional period' (Shnirelman 2002: 197). Ethnic nationalists in these societies have advocated a return to the 'genuine' spirituality of the pre-Christian period to assist the rebuilding of nation states, presenting an 'anti-colonial message' which 'emphasized the necessity to mobilize local cultural resources in order to struggle against the destructive external forces that were aiming, or were thought to be aiming, to enslave the people and destroy their culture' (Shnirelman 2002: 203).

Thus authenticity is a prevailing preoccupation for participants in and scholars of Paganisms and Native Faiths. As Strmiska (2012: 27) says, 'the question of authenticity' is one that 'goes to the heart of a recurring dilemma for Pagans and Pagan movements everywhere'. The key attraction and emotional charge of a particular movement may be that its authenticity is claimed to be founded on the revival or reconstruction of an ancient religion connected to a local cultural heritage, landscape and ethnic identity. However, it is not, of course, only in Central and Eastern Europe where the ancient and indigenous are valorized and this valorization did not begin with modern Pagans. Since the seventeenth century there has been a 'romanticist idealization of Indigenous cultures as a model for utopian ideas, rituals and symbolic configurations ... in Western culture', with indigenous people portrayed as living noble, happy, spiritual lives in harmony

with nature in contrast with the losses and damage wrought by industrialization and the colonial encounter (Waldron and Newton 2012: 68). Much of modern Western Paganism can be traced to the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romanticism (Hutton 1999), which flourished alongside the development of various modern nationalisms across Europe.

A number of chapters in this book show that modern Pagans not only are interested in connecting with their own indigenous roots, but also draw connections between themselves and other indigenous peoples, some of whom are immigrants living in their societies (see chapters by Kraft, Butler, Gregorius and Hegner). Moreover, personhood and nationhood, ethnicity and connection to place may be configured in diverse and unconventional ways – so, for example, followers of Germanic Paganism and the Norse deities are found throughout the world, not only in the countries with which they were originally associated. Cultural belonging may be configured according to the place one inhabits and with whom one lives – irrespective of place of birth and ethnicity – amidst processes of migration and reterritorialization. Transnational and transcultural kinships are forged among followers of different indigenous religions, particularly among followers of shamanisms.

It seems there are broadly two ways in which modern Pagans and followers of Native Faiths conceptualize relationships between people (ancient and modern), religion and landscape. Some Pagans (see chapters by Butler, Kraft, Hegner, Gregorius, Amster and Velkoborská) stress the importance of (1) the sacred relationship between themselves and the particular tract of land in/on/with which they live, and (2) the sacred relationship between ancient people and that same tract of land. But these Pagans do not believe that they need to be blood-related or ethnically connected to those ancient people in order for their (contemporary Pagan) religious ideas, sentiments and practices to be ‘authentic’. It is enough for the land to serve as the common denominator. Common habitation – albeit diachronically – connects ancient people to modern people, and all people to the spirit or divine realm, inspiring various, perhaps quite different, forms of sacred relationship and religious practice. A lived relationship with the same land is enough to confer authenticity on their contemporary Paganism. Other groups, particularly followers of Native Faiths in Central and Eastern Europe (see chapters by Peers, Szilágyi and Västrik), emphasize points (1) and (2) above, and also a third point: the importance of an ethnic connection and continuity between the ancient inhabitants and themselves. In such places, however, there

may also be other groups who are not concerned with ethnicity, instead prioritizing their relationship to the land and/or participating in a global tradition such as Goddess Spirituality or Wicca (see chapters by Velkoborská and Hegner).

In the context of living in a globalized, hyperconnected world, as all Pagans and Native Faith followers inevitably do, tensions between the local and global are constant despite the unavoidable – often sought-after and embraced – cross-fertilization of ideas, beliefs, values, products, preoccupations, practices and so on. The case studies in this book show that this is as true in contemporary Paganism and Native Faith movements as it is in a great many other areas of contemporary social and cultural life globally. All the groups discussed here, irrespective of the importance they attach to an ancient religion or which country they inhabit, draw to some extent, consciously or unconsciously, on elements derived from (often) culturally and geographically distant and disparate sources made available through the Internet, a large Pagan (and growing academic) literature, and people moving about sharing knowledge, a common feature of religious ‘travelling carriers’ in the globalized world (Handelman and Lindquist 2011: 41). The sources practitioners use are numerous and eclectic: the resources of other contemporary and ancient Pagan traditions along with elements from diverse religious and non-religious sources, including New Age phenomena, various forms of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Vodou, Western Esotericism, indigenous people’s shamanic traditions, Zoroastrianism, archaeology and sacred sites, folklore, history, literature, linguistics, the environmental movement, feminism and other liberatory social movements, right- and left-wing political movements, historical reenactment groups, popular culture and the media, and many other sources. The imagination and creative invention also play an important role – sometimes unacknowledged, at other times vigorously celebrated (Magliocco 2009).

Looking across all these groups and movements, it appears that some Pagans and Pagan groups in some places choose to participate in global and globalizing religious processes, while other Pagans and Native Faith groups aim precisely to counter such processes, downplay them, or adapt imported global traditions to give them a local character and relevance. In many instances, the two processes – globalizing and localizing – are bound up with each other, as a number of chapters show (see those by Fedele, Howell, van Gulik, Kraft, Peers, Gregorius, Hegner and Rountree). Undoubtedly some Pagans’ involvement in ethnic politics causes discomfort and



conflict within the wider Pagan community, as well as outside it. In some groups the term 'Pagan' is regarded as problematic because it is seen as Christian-derived and the religion of the foreigner, colonizer or invader. Preferred terms are 'Native Faith', 'traditional religion', 'indigenous faith', 'nativist', 'reconstructionist' or the specific name of a local group or tradition such as Rodnoverie<sup>7</sup> (in Russia), Forn Siðr (in Denmark), Maausk (in Estonia), Dievturi (in Latvia), Romuva (in Lithuania) or Brothrus Wulfe (in the Czech Republic). Scott Simpson and Mariusz Filip (2013) provide a detailed discussion of the language used in Central and Eastern European groups and revisit the long-standing debate about whether scholars should use 'Pagan' (often preceded by 'modern' or 'contemporary') or some version of 'Neo-Pagan' (Neopagan, neo-Pagan, neopagan) to refer to the followers of contemporary traditions. I will not revisit the debate here, except to say that virtually all people who are part of this religious phenomenon do not include the prefix 'Neo'; they simply call themselves 'Pagans' or by the name of the particular tradition (for example, Wiccan, Heathen or Druid). Scholars tend to use both 'Neo-Pagan' (to make it clear they are talking about a new religious movement rather than a pre-Christian religion) and 'Pagan' (in keeping with practitioners' preferred appellation), and both terms appear in this volume. It is now conventional to spell 'Pagan' with a capital *P* to refer to the contemporary religious phenomenon and with a small *p* to refer to pre-Christian religions.

While on the subject of controversial terms, I would note that 'indigenous' and 'indigeneity' are also problematic terms which have occasioned rigorous debate among anthropologists and others (e.g. Saugestad 2001; Kuper 2003; Kenrick and Lewis 2004; Barnard 2006; Wolfe 2006; Grixti 2011). Saugestad (2001: 43) has proposed four criteria for 'indigenous people': first-come (descended from people who were there before others), non-dominance (living under alien state structures), cultural difference (from the majority population) and self-ascription ('indigenous people' self-identify as such and claim indigenous status). Such attempts to define, however, incite debate over ethnographic cases which do not fulfil all four criteria. Kuper (2003: 395) has argued that the very idea of an 'indigenous people' is essentialist, founded 'on obsolete anthropological notions and on a romantic and false ethnographic vision'. Hence 'indigenous' could be seen simply as a new word for 'primitive' (Barnard 2006: 2). As Barnard (2006: 7) points out, though, while anthropologists hotly debate 'the indigenous' as an anthropological concept, the concept is 'defined intuitively by ordinary people – indigenous



and non-indigenous alike – around the world, it does have meaning’. In the following chapters ‘indigeneity’ is variously conceptualized and discursively employed; context provides the clue to intended meaning. ‘Indigenous’ is yoked with ‘people’, ‘culture’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘identity’, ‘rights’ and ‘religion’. It is used fairly loosely to refer to ‘local’, ‘ancient’ or ‘rooted in’ (place, ethnic or cultural group, nation, religion) or it may furnish the symbolic capital for ethnonationalism.

While a strong connection exists between indigeneity, ethnicity, attachment to place and nationalism in many Central and East European Paganisms, in other groups in Central and Eastern Europe and elsewhere the first three of these are less likely to be yoked with nationalism – at least, a politicized form of nationalism. Moreover, even where indigeneity and ethnicity are strongly connected with local nationalisms, a form of transnationalism may also be identified involving these groups and individuals, whereby they may come together at festivals, conferences and other gatherings to share ideas, knowledge and rituals. This has been particularly notable with transnational groups of modern shamans. Any resulting eclecticism does not imply a lack of concern for ethnicity or indigenous tradition. Lindquist (2011: 76) describes how, in 1993, Michael Harner of the Center for Shamanic Studies in California and some associates joined with Mongush Barakhovich Kenin-Lopsan, a Tyvan poet and playwright, and other Tyvan shamans to organise the First International Conference on Shamanism in Tyva (an autonomous republic in the Russian Federation). For a couple of weeks Harner and fellow shamans from the U.S., Austria, Germany and Switzerland (some of whom were anthropologists) worked together with Tyvan shamans. In 1997 a ten-day gathering of shamans and other indigenous religious specialists was held at a Tibetan Buddhist retreat centre in Savoy in the French Alps to learn from one another’s practices.<sup>8</sup> Another example is the Sami shamanic festival, *Isogaisa*, held annually in Norway since 2010, which brings together shamans from all over the world (see the chapter by Kraft in this volume). Each of these cases reveals both attachment to a specific indigenous ethnic tradition and a desire to share transnationally.

This volume’s contributing authors come from several disciplinary backgrounds – Socio-cultural Anthropology, Folklore Studies, Religious Studies and Cultural Psychology – and to a degree these influence their research preoccupations, theoretical perspectives and positioning as researchers in relation to the topics and communities they discuss. Scholars’ particular research interests also play a part in their choice of focus and analysis and the discourses they invoke:

for example, gender and religion (Fedele) or politics and religion (Szilágyi). The research methods they have used – for example, participant observation or content analysis of media sources and online archives – also bring variety and blur disciplinary differences, as does the scope of focus (for example, country overview or intimate ethnography of a small group). Together these studies enrich our understanding of this diverse, growing and changing religious phenomenon in a region hitherto under-represented in scholarly literature on contemporary Paganism and Native Faith movements.

I have resisted dividing the book's chapters into sections based on geography within Europe. While it is true that groups in a particular region may share some broadly similar characteristics – influenced, for example, by the Roman Catholic context of southern Europe or by the post-Soviet context of eastern Europe – it would be a mistake to suggest that expressions of Paganism can be categorized straightforwardly according to region. There are broad patterns and tendencies, but the overall picture is complex and changing. Within any national context it is likely that there exists a plurality of traditions, coexisting peaceably or with varying degrees of mutual disapproval and occasional conflict. As Aitamurto and Simpson (2013) emphasize, post-Soviet societies all have different political histories and their experiences of communism were diverse. While the centrality of nation, ethnic group or tribe may be common to many groups' ideals, these groups are highly diverse and nationalism is given different levels of importance and takes a variety of forms. Stereotypes can be misleading.

While Native Faith movements are frequently associated with the politics of nationalism, cultural reclamation and nation-building, it is not the case that the transnational Pagan traditions are apolitical. The focus and forms of political engagement are different. Many eclectic Pagans, Druids and modern shamans have for decades been deeply involved in environmental politics and activism. Gender politics are at the heart of Goddess Spirituality and some of its best-known leaders have been feminist and environmental activists for close to half a century. Thus contemporary Paganisms and Native Faiths have commonly been harnessed to sanction, sacralize and endorse a variety of 'big ideas', ranging on the political spectrum from ethnonationalism to environmentalism to feminism and a variety of other movements for social equity.

In the following review of the book's chapters I try to indicate the overlapping themes as well as the idiosyncrasies of individual case studies. In the chapter after this introduction, Siv Ellen Kraft

describes how the revival of Sami shamanism in Norway beginning in the late 1970s was linked with a broader cultural revival among the (Christianized) Sami people in connection with environmental protests, and resulted in changes to the legal and political status of Sami as an indigenous people. Amidst a period of consciousness-raising among a new generation of Sami, the founder of Sami neo-shamanism made a journey 'home' in search of his Sami roots, where he met a Chilean shaman with an African *djembe*-drum who became his guide. He also made journeys to California where he was trained by one-time anthropologist Michael Harner in the universalist practice of 'Core Shamanism'. Thus, until the early twenty-first century, it is debatable whether the shamanism practised by this Sami man and others in Oslo could be called specifically *Sami* shamanism – it undoubtedly drew on eclectic sources, some of which came from geographically and culturally distant places and times.

Kraft outlines a process whereby a distinctive Sami neo-shamanism was pieced together in which indigenous ethnic identity became important. She argues that contemporary Sami shamans confound Michael Strmiska's oft-quoted model linking 'Reconstructionist' forms of modern Paganism with 'people for whom ethnic identity is very important', and 'Eclectic' forms with a tendency to select ideas, practices and deities from a variety of sources while emphasising 'a spirituality of nature' (Strmiska 2005: 20–22). Sami neo-shamans consciously draw upon eclectic cultural resources in constructing their contemporary practice while being deeply concerned with issues of ethnicity, cultural continuity and heritage. By embracing 'a spirituality of nature' they forge connections with indigenous peoples more widely, thereby integrating the local and universal.

By the time Asatro (contemporary Nordic Paganism) began flourishing in Denmark in the mid 1990s, practitioners were, on the whole, opposed to the mixing of religion and ethnic politics, both because they knew the trouble this had caused in some other Pagan communities and wanted to avoid similar conflicts, and because they were influenced by the strong Danish cultural aversion to mixing religion and politics. Most Danish followers of Asatro in Matthew Amster's research rejected the idea that their faith was somehow genetic or ethnically based, but stressed the importance of the local landscape and the 'logic' that the Norse gods will be felt most vividly in Nordic countries. However, Amster also gives examples of individuals who held distinctly left- and right-wing political views which influenced them respectively towards eclecticism and universalism on one hand,

or towards the view that Asatro is exclusively for Danes and xenophobic attitudes towards immigrants on the other.

As Kraft claims in the case of the Sami, Amster contends that the reconstructionist/eclectic model is disrupted in the Danish setting. He describes how concerns about ethnic political ideas and intolerance in portions of the largest Danish Asatro organization led some members to form a splinter group, *Nordisk Tingsfællig*. This group dedicated itself to practising apolitical Asatro and ritual innovation, because they felt Asatro rituals had become too influenced by Wicca. Thus they wanted to move away both from the politics of ethnicity and nationalism usually associated with reconstructionist Paganism and from the influence of foreign traditions normally associated with eclectic Paganism. Instead they sought a greater local authenticity and historical accuracy in constructing their rituals but eschewed an ethnic agenda.

Modern Heathenism in Sweden, like some other movements discussed here, is a series of paradoxes. Fredrik Gregorius shows that on one hand Heathens present their religion as the reinvigoration of an organic, authentic Nordic culture, while on the other they use non-local sources such as Wicca and neo-shamanism to transform Heathenism from a theoretical and emotionally charged ideal into a living religion. While Heathen identity draws on the idea of an essential, deeply rooted Nordic culture, most Heathen groups welcome members with non-Scandinavian backgrounds and are not concerned about Sweden's increasingly multicultural society. It is Heathens in the United States who are more likely to embrace ideas about ethnicity and Nordic genetic connections. Although Swedish Heathens are influenced by American authors and ideas, they are sceptical of American Heathens' ability to follow the faith while living so far from the cultural and natural environments fundamental to what Gregorius terms this 'organic religion'.

In their quest for religious legitimacy in the local religious market and society, Swedish Heathens use two apparently contradictory forms of leverage. On one hand they emphasize a congruence between Heathen ideals and the important ideals of the wider Swedish society – democracy, ecology and equality – which they claim have a cultural foundation in pre-Christian Norse religion. On the other, they align themselves with, and draw inspiration from, immigrant religious minorities within Sweden, primarily practitioners of indigenous religions such as Hinduism and Afro-Caribbean religions such as Vodou. By positioning themselves as another minority faith, they obtain leverage from a public debate

about multiculturalism and immigrant religions. Thus, as in the case of Sami neo-shamans, Swedish Heathenism reveals a dynamic interplay between reconstructionism and eclecticism, local and non-local indigenous religions, local Pagans and local non-Pagans, and national and transnational relationships in modern Paganism.

The Czech Pagan scene is highly diverse, incorporating ethnic Pagan reconstructionists and eclectic Witches, Wiccans, Druids and others. Like the Danish splinter group Nordisk Tingsfællig, the Brotherhood of Wolves (*Brothrjus Wulfe*) described by Kamila Velkoborská split off from the Czech Ásatrú scene following disagreements and power struggles. The Wolves also eschew an ethnic or political agenda (despite some members' earlier involvement in White Power groups) and seek authenticity by creatively combining elements of Germanic religious heritage with an intimate connection with the immediate landscape. Uniquely, though, their faith centres on the Great Wolf Fenris of the Eddas and is embodied in a lifestyle revolving around Czechoslovakian Wolfdogs (which most members breed) and an attempt to live as modern pseudo hunter-gatherers. The group traces a correlation between the tragic demise of *Canis lupus* in Eurasia and North America, the fate of Fenris in Old Norse mythology and the demise of human intimacy with nature. Drawing a parallel between their lives with their Wolfdogs and the lives of ancient tribes who lived in harmony with nature and other beings, including wolves, members of the Brotherhood see the Wolfdog – once wild, now domesticated – as representing their compromised life as Pagans in the modern world.

Just as the development of Sami neo-shamanism belonged to a more general project of Sami nation-building, with, for example, its annual festival receiving financial support from the Sami Parliament and other municipal and national sources, Eleanor Peers shows how a revival of shamanism in the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic, northeastern Siberia, is related to a wider post-Soviet nationalist revival of cultural and religious traditions, beginning in the 1980s, in which shamanic specialists became nationalist activists. As a result, shamanic ability is now highly valued and shamans are coopted to collaborate with politicians, cultural workers and academics in the design and production of public events. One example is the important annual *Yhyakh* cultural festivals in which elaborate rituals are funded by the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic's governing body. Peers argues that despite what it shares with neo-shamanic and other new religious developments in other societies and despite drawing on some of those trends, the revival of Sakha shamanism has been shaped by a distinctive

local heritage. This includes the pre-Soviet Sakha shamanic tradition, which survived both Christian missionization and Soviet-era repression, and, secondly, the Republic's experience of Soviet modernization and, subsequently, the post-Soviet national revival. She demonstrates how the meshing of local and global elements produced a social transformation unique to Sakha (Yakutia), but which has parallels in other national contexts.

Like a number of other Native Faith movements which emerged in post-Soviet societies at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, the Estonian Maausk movement (whose followers are called Maausulised), discussed by Ergo-Hart Västriik, stresses continuity between itself and indigenous ethnic traditions, is anti-West and hostile to Christianity (seeing it as a subjugation tool of the foreigner) and is closely tied with a developing nationalist discourse. Maausk, however, has links with an earlier ethnic religion, *Taara usk*, established in the 1920s by intellectuals influenced by Romanticism and Estonian nationalism.<sup>9</sup> Banned by the Soviets in 1940, *Taara usk*'s ideas reemerged following the Soviet collapse in the form of Maausk, 'the faith of the earth', again driven by intellectuals involved in conservative politics. The Maausulised currently enjoy considerable local popularity and positive local media coverage, are involved in lobbying for heritage protection and wilderness preservation, are active in debates about religious freedom and indigenous rights, and have joined with the University of Tartu in a research project aimed at registering and studying sacred natural sites. In terms of their integration into a wider nationalist revival of cultural and religious traditions, there are echoes of Peers' discussion of the revival of shamanism in the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic and Szilágyi's account of a 'Pagan metaculture' in Hungary. And outside the post-Soviet context, there are similarities with the way that Sami neo-shamans are being drawn into a wider project of nation-building in Norway.

In the introduction to their book *Religion, Politics and Globalization: Anthropological Approaches*, Handelman and Lindquist (2011: 42) write that: 'In late modernity the pluralization of religious options became a focus of theorizing.... The argument is that the disestablishment of the official churches engenders the pluralistic setting in which religions of all kinds thrive, as world-views and practices, in public spheres and in popular imagination'. This is the scene Tamás Szilágyi portrays in Hungary at the end of socialism in the context of the Christian churches' failure to rebuild their religious and sociopolitical base. As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter when describing my teahouse encounter in Budapest, those

Hungarian Pagans who follow a Western-originated and now global tradition such as Wicca or Goddess Spirituality may have some quite different priorities and views from those involved in an ethnic religious tradition. Szilágyi's focus is on groups of the latter kind. As well as the numerous small, explicitly religious Pagan communities which operate on the periphery of Hungarian religious life, Szilágyi identifies a 'Pagan metaculture' which has spilled out of the field of religion into the wider culture, particularly into popular culture and right-wing politics. This metaculture offers a 'non-institutionalized transcendent worldview' and emphasizes Hungarian cultural and religious heritage and practices, nature-centred thinking and alternative healing modalities. As Ališauskienė and Schröder (2012: 3) write in *Religious Diversity in Post-Soviet Society*, 'While Neopagan religious communities have remained numerically small, the power of the idea of cultural heritage advocated by them easily transcends the boundaries of the religious field in societies where discourses of a deep-rooted national cultural identity are thriving'.

The relationship between Native Faith and nationalism is highly charged in the German context, where the historical association between nationalism and the National Socialist regime, with its interest in Teutonism and 'blood and soil' ideology, means Neo-Pagans fear – and risk – being branded neo-Nazis and therefore engage in a wary, secretive dance with the indigenous and local. Concentrating on the unique geopolitical urban context of Berlin, Victoria Hegner charts the reconstructionist beginnings of Neo-Paganism in West Berlin during the early 1980s, then goes on to discuss a group with whom she has done fieldwork, the Moon-Women, who manage to disrupt the connection between Native Faith and nationalism by reconfiguring notions of 'ethnicity' and 'belonging' within the contemporary cosmopolitan Berlin context.

From the earliest days, reconstructionism and eclecticism, nationalism and a form of religious colonialism, were part of the growth of Paganism in West Berlin. Hegner describes how shortly after a nascent Neo-Pagan community developed in the city during the early 1980s – one emphasizing the triad of blood, tradition and territory and intent upon rehabilitating the old Germanic mythology and festivals – ambassadors of Anglo-American forms of Paganism visited the city. In 1986 Starhawk, whose *The Spiral Dance* had been translated into German in 1983, came from California spreading news of the revival of Goddess religion. In 1988 the well-known Wiccan author Vivianne Crowley visited from Britain and began initiating people into Wicca. Hegner describes how some of the early



reconstructionist German Pagans were critical of, and disappointed by, the ways in which these high-profile Anglo-American visitors constructed Paganism, questioning their historical sources and eclectic approaches. Other German Pagans, however, especially women, were inspired by the feminist and socialist politics of Starhawk's new Witchcraft and Goddess religion. Like the reconstructionist Pagans of the 1980s, today's Moon-Women cautiously seek to rehabilitate the Germanic pantheon and mythology and celebrate their connection to the local landscape. But unlike those early reconstructionists, they are eclectic, explicitly creative and inclusive in their approach. Hegner attributes the changes in Neo-Paganism to changes in Berlin as a hot, new sociocultural space.

Nationalism within Paganism and Native Faith groups has come to be associated with reconstructionist groups who emphasize ethnic connections with a particular place and people and are often feared by other Pagans, rightly or wrongly, to be politically right-wing. Jenny Butler shows that there are other ways to conceive of the relationship between Paganism and nationalism. In Ireland Paganism is not a medium through which nationalism develops or is expressed. Rather, Irish nationalism and Irish Paganism have both drawn on a common reservoir of cultural resources, namely Ireland's land, ancient monuments, language, myth and folk culture. Instead of aligning with a politically oriented nationalism, Irish Pagans gravitate towards Romantic Nationalism with its emphasis on shared culture, morality and spiritual values. National identity is less important to them than an emplaced Pagan identity and a more broadly shared 'Celtic' identity, which has the advantage of circumventing further battles over what constitutes 'Irishness'. Unlike groups who use ethnic connections with the ancient past and territory to legitimize their exclusivity, Irish Pagans see the ancient past as supporting a discourse of greater inclusivity. Butler shows how they also adapt not-so-ancient traditions – some of which are part of the prevailing Catholic religion, such as devotions at holy wells – because these are seen as evidence of the continuity of pre-Christian pagan practices within Irish Christianity. Although Wicca has been imported to Ireland, a local Celtic Wicca has emerged, with practitioners worshipping only Celtic deities and favouring practices believed to have an Irish precedent.

Wicca has also been customized on the European continent. Once British Traditional Wicca had expanded beyond Britain, in some places it morphed into derivative traditions as a result of fusions and transformations, becoming eclectic in practice and theology. Léon

van Gulik explores the tensions between eclecticism and traditionalism among Flemish followers of Greencraft Wicca, for whom, like the Irish Pagans, Celticity is important. Greencrafters are part of the British-derived Alexandrian lineage and follow its practices, but have steered clear of 'Wiccan imperialism' by also developing a systematic body of additional ideas, principles and practices in an effort to uncover what they believe to be the universal roots of ancient European nature religions and to reconcile these with Celtic ethnicity. Van Gulik discusses two aspects of the Greencraft system: the Celtic Tree Calendar they have constructed based on that of the British poet and writer Robert Graves in *The White Goddess* (1966), and their experiences and experiments in relation to the stone circles they visit in various parts of Europe and also create in their own back yards. While Greencrafters' activities involve an eclectic bricolage of cultural material, van Gulik argues that they nonetheless aim to make their system 'ethnically commensurate' and cosmologically consistent by combining elements that are allegedly Celtic in origin or at least indigenous to northern Europe. He argues there is no longer such a thing as an 'authentic Celt'; all contemporary Celticities are constructions.

Another tradition which has spread – or been spread – from its British base to Germany, Spain, Hungary, Sweden, The Netherlands, Australia and Argentina is the Goddess Conference, which originated in Glastonbury in 1996. Drawing on fieldwork with Iberian followers of Goddess Spirituality, Anna Fedele analyses the transplantation of the 'Goddess Conference package' (see Bowman 2009) to Spain in 2010 and concludes, in the wake of the event's failure in 2012, that to be accepted such Anglo-traditions need to be adapted to a local context through a process of cultural and religious translation mediated by local leaders familiar with the local milieu. In the case of Spain and Portugal, this milieu is traditionally Catholic. Although they may criticize aspects of Christianity, these Catholic-raised Goddess followers incorporate many Christian, especially Catholic, elements (see Fedele 2013). For them the Virgin Mary is a Christian version of the ancient Goddess and Mother Earth; the saints are Christianized Pagan gods and goddesses. Fedele argues that this study reveals the ways in which Pagans negotiate tensions between local, cultural or national identities on one hand, and wider, increasingly globalized influences on the other. Indigenizing imported forms of Paganism provides them with a vital sense of authenticity; nevertheless Iberian Pagans are also keen to be part of the international Pagan movement. Thus they are caught up in two fields of tension: between their own

spirituality and Goddess traditions from the U.K. and U.S., with whose spiritual ideas and practices they share a strong affinity, and between themselves and the local Catholic society, with whom they share a strong cultural affinity and Catholic heritage.

The Italian Pagan community, situated in another predominantly Roman Catholic society and also the host to a string of high-profile Pagan teachers and authors from Britain and the U.S., has indigenized and reappropriated the various modern Pagan traditions which have come to Italy rather later than elsewhere, with apparently fewer tensions than those experienced by Iberian followers of Goddess Spirituality. Francesca Ciancimino Howell argues that although Wicca, Druidry, Goddess Spirituality and other traditions have been introduced and ‘taught’ by British and American visitors, Italian sources can be shown to have played an influential role in the birth of Wicca in Britain, and imported traditions can be related to enduring vernacular religious complexes and magical lore within Italy. Howell charts the diverse and deeply entwined local and global strands and connections within contemporary Italian Paganism.

As I said at the beginning of this introduction, it was while talking with a Maltese Pagan friend about how her coven had recently handed over the running of its rituals to a High Priestess in Cornwall, having accepted that they needed to be trained and initiated by this British expert, that the idea came to me of considering a colonialist impulse in contemporary Paganism. While it is reasonably commonplace for scholars to point to a nationalist impulse, particularly in Native Faith movements, the colonizing aspects of some forms of modern Paganism have not hitherto been acknowledged or addressed, perhaps because until recently much of the research, at least that published in English, has focussed on the countries which are the source of the colonizing. From the contributions to this book, it is clear that since the late 1980s British and American literature and the visits of bestselling authors and high-profile teachers from the U.K. and U.S. have had a considerable role in spreading the gospel of the Goddess in Europe, meeting with a variety of local responses ranging from enthusiasm to disapproval. Most noticeably, though, globally available, Anglo-American ideas and materials have been adapted by local people to local contexts. In the case of the Maltese coven mentioned above and discussed in the final chapter, what might be seen as a colonizing and indeed overtly controlling process can be viewed more profitably in the light of the country’s historical relationship with colonization and local processes of indigenization. The contributions to this book demonstrate that as Paganism spreads and morphs in

the postmodern, globalized world, where identities, affinities, alignments and collectivities are configured and made over in numerous novel ways, the concept of colonialism itself becomes problematized and subject to revision.

I sincerely thank the volume's contributors for their engagement with its theme and sharing the rich and diverse results of their research. While there was unfortunately only space for thirteen case studies in the volume, both the variety and some common trends across the region are abundantly apparent. So is the fact that the Pagan and Native Faith scene is dynamic, complex and constantly changing. Generalizations about, for example, groups in post-Soviet societies or in a particular geographical subregion (such as northern or southern Europe) may be confounded by the diversity of groups present in a single national context. Although thirteen countries are represented, the chapters should not be regarded as 'country studies', but rather as studies of particular groups in particular countries. A study of Goddess Spirituality in Hungary or Sweden, Wicca in Spain or Hungary, Slavic Paganism in the Czech Republic or neoshamanism in Malta would have yielded different perspectives of what is happening in these countries, let alone what is happening in the countries not represented here. Above all, these studies emphasize the importance of local sociocultural, historical, political, religious and environmental contexts in determining the diverse shapes that Paganisms and Native Faith movements take in the current sociopolitical-religious space of Europe. Moreover, they show that a particular local context may inspire quite different responses.

## Notes

- 1 It is common in Pagan scholarship and among Pagans to give an initial capital letter to 'Witch', 'Pagan', 'Witchcraft' and 'Paganism' when referring to these modern religions and their adherents following the common practice when referring to religions and their followers (e.g. Christian, Christianity).
- 2 A key source is *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* and the recent anthology *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (Aitamurto and Simpson 2013). See also Gardell (2003), Ivakhiv (2005, 2009), Shnirelman (2000, 2002, 2007), Simpson (2000), Strmiska (2005, 2012), Szilárdi (2009), Pilkington and Popov (2009) and York (1995).

- 3 There are exceptions to polytheism; for example, in advocating the return of Ukrainians to their pre-Christian faith, Lev Sylenko advocated the monotheistic worship of the god Dazhbog (Shnirelman 2002: 204).
- 4 Over the years there have been attempts to put local and global figures on numbers of Pagans. After a rapid expansion from the last two decades of the twentieth century through till the first decade of the twenty-first century, growth slowed by the end of that decade, in part due to the end of the Teen Witch fad (Lewis 2012: 128). The 2011 census figure for total Pagans in England and Wales was 78,566 (Lewis 2012: 132). In 2008 an American Religious Identification Survey was carried out by the Graduate Center of the City University of New York; the number of total Pagans was 711,000 (rounded to the nearest thousand). The figure represents a statistical extrapolation based on a survey of 50,000 people in the United States (Lewis 2012: 133). The Canadian census in 2011 recorded a total of 26,495 Pagans (e-mail from Shai Feraro to New Religious Movements Scholars group, 28 September 2013). In the 2013 New Zealand census the total was 7,572 (<http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/data-tables/total-by-topic.aspx?gclid=CLXRobb6wr0CFQccpQodtjkAQQ>) and in the 2011 Australian census the figure was 32,083 (Lewis 2012: 134–35). The above total figures of Pagans are broken down into the various traditions (Pagan, Wicca, Druidism, Witchcraft, Heathen, Pantheism and so on).
- 5 For example, see the ‘Return of the Hellenes’ movement in Greece (Miller 2007). See also Snook’s (2013) discussion of American Heathens. Heathenry is a reconstructionist religious movement whose practitioners align themselves with ancient Germanic and Norse cosmology.
- 6 The Pagan Federation International has thirty-five member countries or regions. <http://www.paganfederation.org>. Accessed 3 April 2014.
- 7 Modern Slavic Paganism or Native Faith is known by various terms including Rodnoveriy and Ridnoviry. In Russia the term is Rodnoverie.
- 8 A documentary film entitled *Fire on the Mountain: A Gathering of Shamans* was made about this event by the Canadian director David Cherniack. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awEfLq7W5Tc>. Accessed 21 October 2014.
- 9 Dievturība was a parallel ethnoreligious movement established in Latvia in the 1920s (Shnirelman 2002: 200).

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