# Anti-Maryism and Pentecostal Peripheralisation of Virgin Mary among the Roma in Slovakia

## Findings from the project RELIROMA

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# The Rise of New Denominations

A variety of Neo-Protestant, Baptist, Pentecostal, and Charismatic denominations have been increasingly active among the Roma in Slovakia. Their numbers and influence are still growing, representing a significant shift in the religious landscape of these communities.



# The Appeal of Pentecostalism

The new Evangelical denominations present an attractive programme for the Roma people, offering solutions to both material and spiritual challenges.



### Socio-Economic Hope

A promise to help people get out of the vicious circle of poverty.



### Ethnic Emancipation

An offer of emancipation based on a religious principle, providing a new source of collective pride and identity.



### New Identity

An alternative, Biblical ethnogenesis that substitutes ethnic identity for a religious one, breaking from the 'old Gypsy story'.

# Rewriting Traditional Romani Christianity

**The new faith introduces a radical 'correction' of traditional religious architecture.**

### Miracles Redefined

The concept of miracles is reinterpreted as 'gifts of the Holy Spirit'.



### New Healing Practices

A competitive health programme includes practices like attaching hands and group prayers for miraculous healing.



### Alternative Protection

An alternative form of spiritual protection against revenants (*mulos*) and magical attacks is offered through the power of the Holy Spirit.



# The Main Attack: Against the Virgin Mary



Pentecostal leaders repeatedly attack three central pillars of traditional Romani Christianity when addressing new converts.

- The Cult of the Virgin Mary: The primary target of theological critique.
- Anthropomorphism ('Idolatry'): Condemning religious decor, holy corners, and domestic altars as idol worship.
- Belief in Revenants (*mulos*): Challenging the traditional belief in the spirits of the dead.

# Replacing Mary with the Holy Spirit



## Mary's Peripheralisation

- Deprived of her divine face.
- Removed from the position of an unwritten member of the Holy Trinity.
- Reduced to a human figure of marginal importance.

## The Holy Spirit's Rehabilitation

- Competes with Mary's traditional roles (miracles, healing, protection).
- Rehabilitated as the originally excluded member of the Holy Trinity.
- Elevated to a central position in spiritual life.

# Research Scope and Methodology

- Examines the peripheralization and functional substitution of the Virgin Mary.
- Analyzes anti-Marian pastoral discourse and the collective responses of Romani communities.
- Documents individual testimonies of converts, capturing doubts and polarities before and after conversion.
- Utilizes longitudinal, multi-sited local research to map visual forms of domestic devotion.
- Identifies the phenomenon of 'empty spaces' – the visual remnants of the former cult of the Virgin Mary.

# The Phenomenon of 'Empty Spaces'

Longitudinal research maps the visual forms of domestic devotion, revealing 'empty spaces' where Marian veneration once existed.

### Before Conversion



### After Conversion



# Conclusion

Pentecostalism offers Roma communities a powerful path for social and ethnic emancipation. However, this transformation requires a radical religious shift, primarily targeting the traditional veneration of the Virgin Mary.

By peripheralizing Mary and elevating the Holy Spirit, these movements create a new religious identity. This profound change is not only theological but is visibly manifested in the domestic sphere through the emergence of 'empty spaces,' documenting a significant cultural and spiritual realignment.



# Acknowledgements and References


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## Selected References


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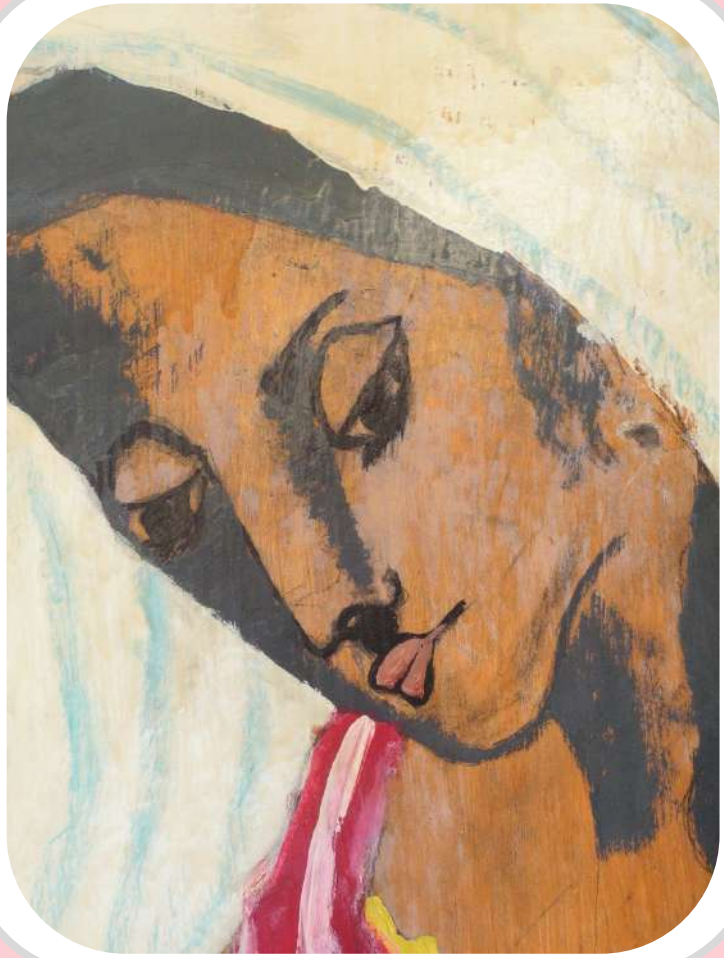


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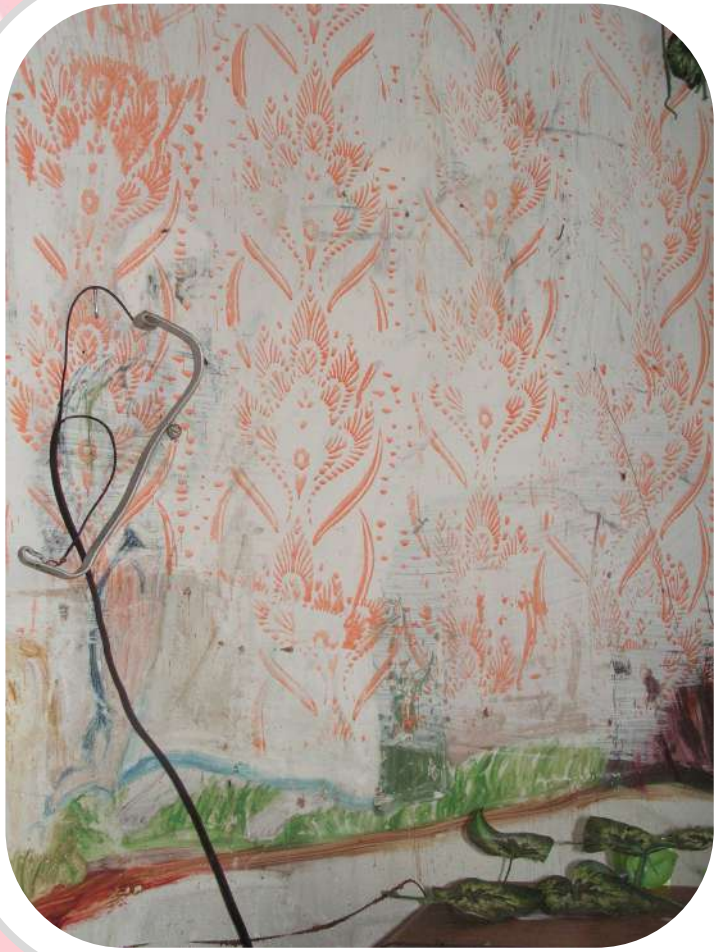



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# Presentation of the research result of the project

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