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Secularism and Ethnic Minorities: Comparative Case Studies on Ethnic, Religious, and Political Cognitions in Pakistani-Controlled Kashmir, Central Russia, Romania, and Northern Scandinavia

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Abstract: According to my study, "political secularism" means the separation of political power from religious institutions, while "social secularism" is a theory and endeavor to eliminate religiosity from not only public but also private life, considering it an obsolete way of thinking. I examine four case studies based on my ethnological fieldwork in Hunza (in the Pakistani-controlled Kashmir), the Middle Ural (Russia), Transylvania (Romania), and Sápmi (northern Scandinavia). I outline and compare ethnic minorities (Hunzakuts, Tatars, Szeklers, Samis) according to their historical background, contemporary social environment, relation to the majority, their political endeavors, and the role of religion(s) among them. Based on my fieldwork notes, interviews, and sociological data, I analyze the similarities and differences of ethnic complexity, terminological confusions, problems of "lived religion," and the impact of social and political secularism. Since their religiosity differs from the majorities' ones, I found that secularism has a complex role and reception. Political secularism is essential for defending these minorities from assimilation, but most of these minorities reject social secularism since religion is part of their multifunctional ethnic discourse space. Religiosity is part of their survival strategy. Notwithstanding, ethnic minorities' religious institutions participate in political activity and propagate their claims for self-governance.

Keywords: minorities' religiosity; ethnic minority; social secularism; political secularism; survival strategy; religious discourse; Hunza; Tatar; Szekler; Sami

1. Introduction

Despite the numerous definitions and the debates on the meaning of "secularism," it has gradually become a core principle—while often disputed—of modern democracies since the Age of Enlightenment.[1] Notwithstanding, the fundamental statement of "a wall of separation between church and state"—how Thomas Jefferson summarized it (Fraser 1999, p. 19)—only had a political objective, so we can consider this particular manifestation as an illustration of *political secularism*. During the years of the war of independence, it was a primary imperative to eliminate the Anglican Church—with the British king at the head—from the new American states' political power and place it within the palette of competitive Christian churches. Citizens remained predominantly religious, and many state constitutions expressed that only those who believe in God (regardless of the church or congregation) could serve as a public officer (Jacoby 2004). Everyone became theoretically equal in the eyes of the law (except slaves, indigenous people, prisoners of war, etc.). Religious institutions lost their direct political authority in more and more countries in the following century. Thus, later, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the meaning of secularism extended to another matter after George Jacob Holyoake introduced secularism as a new social-scientific term in 1846, meaning the supposedly inevitable reduction of religiosity in both the private and public spheres (the secularization thesis). The meaning

of secularism became contested (Kettel 2019, p. 1). James George Frazer and Sigmund Freud, in addition to dozens of other leading scientists, envisioned that rational (meaning "scientific") thinking built on casualty gradually confines and dismisses religious thinking. This par excellence atheist attitude (in opposition to political secularism) can be considered as *social secularism*.

Social secularism integrated into the then-predominant social evolution theory that supposed a linear development of cultures and societies—with secular (meaning "atheist") societies and their predominantly scientific reasoning placing them at the peak. A common factor of these deductive social evolutionist opinions was that they were built from an "armchair perspective" of the reality and cultural diversity in the world; none of these theorists had long-term face-to-face perceptions of the then-called "primitives" nor of the "natives"; they never performed anthropological fieldwork.[2] Those exceptions—like Franz Boas or Bronislaw Malinowski—who did so started to criticize these evolutionary models and never argued on behalf of secularism; they accepted religiosity as a cultural fact, one of the phenomena that represents humankind.[3] Ruth Benedict, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Julian Steward, Clifford Geertz, Mary Douglas, Victor Turner, and most of the later anthropologists tried to keep their religious identity hidden in their scholarly works, and they never supported the theory of social secularism. Lévi-Strauss (1952) stressed that cultural diversity (including religious plurality) is a key element for social adaptation as a basic value of humanity.

Another wave of social anthropologists—the neo-evolutionist Leslie White, Eric Wolf, and Marshall Sahlins, for example, with a direct reference to Marxism—insisted that churches require monopoly over a sector of social and economic lifeworlds, while atheism could solve many problems of social inequality. After Max Weber's contribution to the sociological analysis of secularism, the so-called secularization thesis was criticized, refined, extended, specified, and disputed. The secularization thesis—according to Charles Taylor's (2007) interpretation—supposes that modernity is inevitably attended by the decline of religions, parallel to industrialization, individualization, the idea of authenticity, etc.

During the last decades of the twentieth century, the strengthening of religions in public life (affecting the political power) could be witnessed from Iran to Russia, from India to Egypt, etc. (Kettel 2019, pp. 2, 12). Post-secular social scientists rejected the supposition of an ideal development towards a nonreligious attitude (Smith 2012). Pierre Bourdieu (1971)— referring to both Karl Marx and Weber—explained that religious institutions (churches) need the monopoly over supernatural communication and over marketing the goods of salvation as a tool for keeping their power in social, cultural, and economic fields. However, the relations among political power, ethnic identity, and minorities' religious institutions did not receive much attention from neither the neo-evolutionists nor the post-secular theorists.[4]

Peter L. Berger (1969, p. 106) argues that the term *secularization* (or *secularism*) is loaded with contradictory ideological evaluations that are an embarrassment to the empirical research on the social roles and perspectives of religions. Bryan Wilson (1998, pp. 48, 64; Wilson [1966] 2016) stresses that each country or region has different social processes and trends of secularization, so the Western world cannot be regarded as going through a universal process; argumentation should rely more on empirical evidence. Linking to this argumentation, Davie Grace (2000, pp. 1, 4) argues that social reality itself disaffirms the secularization thesis since, in the last decades of the twentieth century, a revival of both institutional churches and individual spiritualism can be witnessed in some parts of post-Soviet Europe, and the Western world cannot consider itself as the prototype of a global process of religiosity and secularism since it is rather only "one strand among many." There are different, often contradictory, processes parallelly existing in a secular society; religion, individual spirituality, and scientific rationalism cannot be strictly contradistinguished from each other (Sutcliffe and Gilhus 2014, p. 13). Frans Jespers (2014, pp. 197, 208) accepts the arguments that religiosity and spirituality have many modes of transmission, so he set up a matrix of the different kinds of spirituality and religiosity that can be understood as

sacralization in a secular society. The role of case studies has increased in the last decades. There are more and more contributions in the form of comparative studies searching for complex answers of how political secularism prevails in different regions (Hayness and Wilson 2019). As an example of the difference between the religious minority and majority, Jacques Berlinerblau (2021, pp. 5–6) explains the different roles of and attitudes towards political secularism that can help minority religions survive. I would like to join this discourse on secularization with my paper, adding some notes on ethnic minorities' religiosity and its various social functions.

During the last decades, my fieldwork connected me to several areas of Eurasia, where I focused on the discourses[5] of local, ethnic, and religious identities. As a social and cultural anthropologist, I am attracted to the diversity of cultures and religions. A variety of scholarly perspectives provides the opportunity for multidimensional approaches, so I avoid judging religiosity as the (neo-)evolutionists did. If the social secularist attitude prevailed in scientific works, it would reduce our tolerance and openness to the "other." Building our conclusions on our field experiences (fieldnotes of participant observations and interviews) and reflecting on scholarly literature certainly does not withhold us from the recognition that we cannot peel away the religious, contemporary spiritual, or atheist worldviews during our scientific activities. Notwithstanding, I argue that our religious/atheist/spiritual identity should not dominate our scholarly discourse (except in theology or in social-secularist activism). We should keep ourselves both terminologically and academically credible, compatible, and tolerant to religious, individual spiritualist, and atheist colleagues. We can call this attitude *scholarly secularism* to distinguish it from the theory and activism of social secularism. Nevertheless, postmodern anthropology entitled scholars to write freely about their own personal paths, like Christopher Partridge (2004) did in the introduction to his excellent book about the re-enchantment of the West. This demonstrates that scholarly secularism does not intend to hide our ideas at all. The "from-below" perspective of social anthropology often reveals the weakness of grand theories. My research question in this paper is "What kind of social functions can we recognize within ethnic minorities' religious life?" I reflect on the theories of social and political secularism in light of ethnic minorities' religiosity. I build my analysis and comparison on my fieldwork—experiences, interviews, and participant observations. I outline and analyze four case studies, according to fieldwork that I conducted between 2001 and 2020 in (1) Hunza (North Pakistan),[6] (2) the Middle Ural Mountains (Russia),[7] (3) Transylvania (Romania),[8] and (4) northern Scandinavia (Norway, Finland, and Sweden).[9] The three territories are shown in Figure 1. These local societies that I studied are not only geographically distant from each other, but their historical and cultural backgrounds differ too. I examine how ethnic minorities (re)construct their religious identity for the sake of their social (ethnic) survival strategies. My aim is to analyze and compare the current situation in certain localities, how the religious leaders and lived, vernacular religiosity relates to ethnic identity, and their political endeavors (participating in the political power). After briefly introducing the four communities, I will compare my results in an analytic discussion regarding how they relate to and interpret political and social secularism.
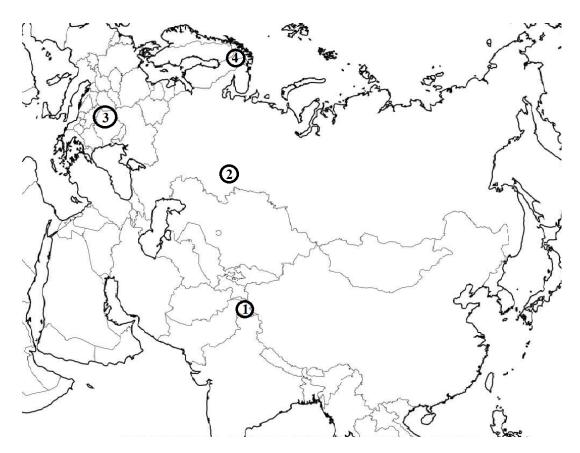
Figure 1. The three places of my case studies: (1) Hunza, (2) the Middle Ural, (3) Transylvania, and (4) Sápmi.[10]

2. Results

2.1. Case Study 1: The Ethnic and Religious Complexity of Hunza (Gilgit District, Pakistani-Controlled Kashmir)

Hunza River is the only one that crosses the Karakoram mountains and joins the river Gilgit, which is a tributary of the upper Indus. Hunza is also the name of a former kingdom (princely state) that is rooted in the medieval ages (Dani 2001) and—based on the historical borders—a territory in the Gilgit District of northern areas of Pakistan with approximately 100,000 inhabitants. With an elevation between 2400 and 2500 m, surrounded by dozens of peaks rising over 7000 m, the Hunza Valley has a Central Asian flora and atmosphere. The first paved road reached Hunza only in 1978, continuing to the Chinese border in 1982 as the Karakoram Highway (open to the foreigners in 1986; Sidky 1994, p. 94). Theretofore, one could only reach the region with days of walking through bare, rocky, mountainous paths until reaching this beautiful and gentle oasis—an oasis due to the very old agricultural irrigation system that drives the melting glaciers' water to the otherwise semidesert bench terraces of the hillsides (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. A view of Hunza River's canyon in 2001.

During the Great Game[11]—after heavy fights against the conquering maharaja of Kashmir and later on the British Empire—it became a semi-independent princely state in 1892, with a loose link to the central administration, but they continued paying yearly tribute to China as well (Flowerday 2018, p. 126; Sökefeld 2014, p. 11). When Pakistan and India gained their independence in 1947, Hunza found itself in a disputed territory of Pakistani-controlled Kashmir.[12] After the ceasefire line was set with the assistance of the UN on 1 January 1949, the so-called Karachi Agreement treated the population of the Gilgit-Baltistan region as semi-citizens, excluding the locals from fundamental rights (election, participation in international sport competitions, etc.). The Karachi Agreement was concluded between the government of Pakistan, the Muslim Conference of All Jammu and Kashmir, and the representatives of Azad (free) Jammu and Kashmir in 1949 (representatives of the Gilgit-Baltistan territory were omitted), but it was kept in secret until the 1990s (Karim and Hayat 2021, p. 3). Pakistan abolished the semi-independent princely state status of Hunza in 1974 and dethroned the Ayasho dynasty that had ruled there for many centuries (Holden 2018, p. 7). This was the last step in deconstructing Hunza's independence.

In the twenty-first century, residents of the Gilgit-Baltistan District (including Hunza) initiated persistent political and legal efforts to integrate this area into the state, to gain citizen rights for the oppressed people, and to eliminate political marginalization. High officials of the administration are still mostly Pakistani citizens from the south (mostly from Punjab)—those with full rights (Sökefeld 2014, p. 15). This causes ethnic tensions between the ruling nation and the local ethnic and religious minorities. In 2009, a new act of self-governance was accepted by the Pakistani state, giving rights to Gilgit-Baltistan to elect their own assembly, but the state continued governing the area through a separate ministry (Rashid 2010, p. 2).

Both ethnicity and religiosity appear as a very complex phenomenon in Hunza. There are many native languages spoken in the former kingdom, and—during the Pakistani period—newcomers brought Urdu, English, etc., as well. Persian was the lingua franca in the region until 1974. It is not obvious what we can call "ethnic groups" in Hunza: the language-based emic terminology (Burushaski, Shina, Wakhi, Dom, etc.) or the traditional emic terms that parallel them prevails,[13] which is based on their geographical and historical community—the Hunzakuts.[14] This community links the native languages together via their historical roots and divides them from those of the former kingdom (from Burushaski speakers in Nagar and Yasin, from Wakhi speakers in Afghanistan, from Shina speakers in Gilgit, etc.). According to the situation of who speaks to whom and whom an individual

wants to refer to, I unfolded very complex ethnic terminology during my fieldwork, shown in Table 1.[15]

Table 1. Situation-dependent ethnic terminology in Hunza (according to the language groups). The bold highlights the self-referential ethnic terminology.

Who Calls Whom?	Burusho	Shenaá	Guitsó (Wakhi)	Béricho	Pakistani	Nagarkuts
Burushaski	**Burushó, Húnzó, Húnzukuts**	Shenaá Húnzukuts	Waqhí, Guítso Húnzukuts Vircsikvor	Béri, Béricho Húnzukuts	Pakistani, Paki	Nagérkuts Burusho
Shina (of Hunza and Nagar)	Buru, Bru, Burusho, Hunzakuts	**Shiná Hunzakuts**	Wakhí Hunzakuts	Béricho Hunzakuts Ustatey	Pakistani, Paki	Nagérkuts
Wakhi (in Hunza)	Burusho, Hunzakuts	Shinai, -á Hunzakuts	**Xik zik,** Xikwor Wakhí **Hunzakuts**	Béri, Bérichí/-á Hunzakuts	Pakistani Urdu, Paki	Nagarí
Bericho	Buru, Bru, Burusho, Hunzúkuts	Shenaá Shiná Hunzúkuts	Waqhí, Hunzúkuts	Béri, **Dom Hunzúkuts**	Pakistani	Nagérkuts
Pakistani	Burusho, Hunzakuts	Shina Dard	Wakhi Gujali	Bericho Dom Domba	**Pakistani etc.**	Nágar(kut) Nagari Burushaski
Nagarkuts	Húnzukuts Burushaski	Shina	Wakhi	Bericho	Pakistani	**Nagarkuts Burushó**

Vernacular religiosity is not less complex in Hunza. Ismaili Islam—followers of the Aga Khan[16]—can be considered the primary faith of the Wakhis and Burushaskis, but other Hunzakuts—mainly the Shina speakers but also the Burusho in the town of Ganish (Rashid 2010, p. 1)—are Shia Muslims.[17] Punjabi officers and workers belong to the Sunni way of Islam and practice their religion out of the Shia or Ismaili mosques. This means that at least three kinds of Islam can be observed in Hunza. Shia believers often refer to the majority Islam believers with degrading phrases and vice versa. One of the most common pieces of gossip I heard from followers of Shia Islam and Sunnis is about the Aga Khan, mentioning him as a beau-type guy who lives in extreme luxury in Europe but visits Hunza seeking free sex with local girls. Contradicting this, Ismaili believers refer to him as the main supporter of Hunza's culture, schools, and economy.

One may be confused by the fact that there is a parallel religious system in Hunza: the native faith that has many kinds of specialists and a complex—while unwritten—cosmology as well. Most Muslims in Hunza believe in the native faith as well, which is built on nature spirits (such as the *parí*) and creatures of the worlds below us. There are specialists who can communicate with and influence the transcendent creatures. The most widely known of them are the *bitan*s, who we can easily fit into the category of shaman from the shamanistic worldview of Eurasia (Csáji 2011, pp. 165–66). The *dashmán* or *bitan dashmán* is a *bitan* who does not perform ecstatic trance dance to communicate with the spirits. *Jaadugar*, or sorcerer (Willson 1999, p. 165), can be compared with the etic term "black shaman" in the study of shamanism, while the *sire gús* is a divining, miraculous woman, who acts mostly in secret. The *aqhón* is a vernacular Ismaili religious specialist, who prepares amulets, drives away bad spirits, prevents from evil eyes, etc.[18] These native faith specialists do not form an institutionalized religious system now, even though the *bitan*s led official religious events before 1974. Nowadays, they act mostly in private. Islam and the native faith complement each other, and we cannot speak about Hunza's vernacular religious system without paying attention to both.

2.2. Case Study 2: Araslanovo and Kunashak (Turkic-Speaking Ethnic Minorities in Chelyabinsk Oblast, Russia)

Chelyabinsk Oblast is situated from the Middle Ural Mountain range to the Kazakhstan border. The southern part of the region belongs to the vast grassland of the Eurasian steppe, while the middle part is covered by forest steppe, swamps, and agricultural areas. The western part is hilly and mostly covered by pine forests. In addition to being an area of agriculture, this was a copper- and iron-mining and metallurgic territory from the Bronze and Iron Age that continued into modern times, and the conquering Russian Empire exploited its strategic resources beginning in the late seventeenth century (Atnagulov 2020, pp. 230, 237). I visited many parts of this wonderful area several times between 2008 and 2013, and I have continued to keep an online connection to my native friends.

The territory of Chelyabinsk Oblast is 88,900 km^2. According to the 2010 census, 2,829,899 people are Russian (83.8%), 180,913 are Tatars (5.4%), 162,513 are Bashkirs (4.8%), 50,081 are Ukrainians (1.5%), and 35,297 are Kazakhs (1.05%), in addition to Germans, Belarusians, Mordvins, Armenians, etc.; 29% of the population declared themselves "spiritual but not religious" and 14% "atheist" (Russian Federal State Statistic 2010). I focused on the Turkic-speaking ethnic groups, Tatars, Bashkirs, Mishars (Meshcheryaks), etc. They predominantly belong to Sunni Islam, which unifies them as a religious minority amongst the Orthodox Christian majority (Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, etc.) in Chelyabinsk Oblast, but they come from the autonomous regions (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan) where Turkic-speaking Sunni Islam believers form the majority of the society. Mishars do not have their own autonomous region in the Russian Federation or outside of it, although even Finland has a slight Mishar minority. The number of atheists in Turkic Muslim groups in Chelyabinsk Oblast is much lower than in the rest of the population.

Araslanovo (*Арыслан* in Tatarian language) is a village in the Ural Mountains in Chelyabinsk Oblast, Nyazepetrovsky Rayon (district), with a predominantly (94%) Tatar population, and additionally 5% Bashkirs and 1% Russians. According to the 2010 census, 711 people live in the settlement (ibid.). They document the lineages (*shezhere*)[19] annually at the Sabantuj festival, where traditional folk music is played, the *baraba* wrestling games are performed, and people extend the rewritten *shezhere* of the village (with death, birth, and marriage data). The locals explained to me in 2008 that the old scripts were tragically destroyed during Soviet times, but a teacher of the village reconstructed the lineage, so—since the collapse of the Soviet Union—they use large, new posters for this purpose (see Figure 3).

There are three main lineages in the village. The prestige of them demonstrates that only those can consider themselves "native" who can deduce their descent from the founding families. Araslanovo has one mosque with an imam, who rescued the very old texts of the Koran during the Soviet times (see and Figure 4).

Some fifty kilometers east from Araslanovo, also in the northern part of Chelyabinsk Oblast, rests Kunashak, a district (which has a central town with the same name) of 3199 square kilometers and 32,225 residents, according to the 2010 census, of which 47% were Bashkirs and 36% Tatars, together forming a local majority (Kunashak District Statistics 2017). It has belonged to several administrative regions from Sverdlovsk to Perm, Tyumen, etc., and later to the Bashkir Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic until 1934, when it was integrated into Chelyabinsk Oblast (Yemelianova 1999). This fact becomes important when we try to analyze the diversity of their current Turkic-speaking community since the ethnic categorization is far from obvious in the region (Atnagulov 2017, p. 267). The actual administrative policy's etic categories of ethnic groups affected the modifications of the emic ethnic terminology as well (Atnagulov 2016, p. 144). Emic terms of the pre-colonized Turkic ethnic groups were very complex. Kinship (such as lineages) and social formations (such as clans and tribes) build on each other and sometimes construct new entities using the elementary structures of lineages and clans. Reconstruction of ethnic terms in historical sources is very problematic because different levels of ethnic categories (groupings) can be called forth depending on the actual political situation and the perspective of the speakers

(besides their social circumstances; Samigulov 2016, p. 140). Ethnicity is not a one-level identity marker, but places individuals in the linguistic, religious, and economic social environment (Gilroy 1997, p. 304). This can be demonstrated—as the key issue for my actual case study—with the term "Mishars" (also called Misher/Meshcheryak/Mesher Tatars) during the seventeenth to twentieth century.

Figure 3. Lineage posters in public at the Sabantuj of Araslanovo, 2008.

Figure 4. The interior of the Araslanovo mosque, with parts of the old scripts in 2008.

The Mishars of Kunashak appear in the first relatively accurate ethnic map of the Russian Empire issued in 1951, made by Pjotr Köppen, as Meshcheryaks (Mishars) formed the dominant group of the Kunashak region in the first half of the nineteenth century. They spoke a Turkic language similar to Bashkirs, Kazakhs, and Tatars, also with many dialects. Nevertheless, Mishars—linguistically—were declared by the positivist linguistic mainstream at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century as a "subgroup" of Tatars (speaking "only" a "dialect" of Tatar language). This declaration cannot be separated from Tatar nationalism. After this conscious nation construction of Tatars (Zenkovsky 1953), most Mishars started to declare themselves Tatar, while some of them joined the identity of Bashkirs—if they lived in a Bashkir social environment. This division was a result of the evolving Bashkir and Tatar nationalisms in the nineteenth to twentieth centuries (Faller 2011, p. 12), which resulted in the current situation of which the Tatars are the second- and Bashkirs are the third-largest ethnic groups in Russia (Maslyuzhenko and Samigulov 2017). Only the Mishars who lived at a distance from Tatarstan and Bashkiria (e.g., those in Finland) could keep their ethnic identity. Nowadays—officially—there are no "Mishars" in Kunashak, according to the 2010 census (there was no such choice in the census). I must add that there are Russian, Komi, Chechen, Chuvash, and Bashkir people around them in the region, so it is a multicultural environment, with the Mishar majority predominantly having Sunni Islam as their faith.

Forced Christianization by the Russian Empire during the eighteenth century and then the organization process of Cossack military troops and the Tatar and Bashkir nationalisms in the nineteenth century all had an impact on the ethnic map of the current Ural region (Atnagulov 2016, pp. 137–38). Sunni Islam connects these people in the Chelyabinsk region more than their ethnic roots and supposed origins. According to my experience, they try to reduce the generations-long Tatar and Bashkir nationalist influence by focusing on the locality and the religion to keep their identity.

2.3. Case Study 3: Szeklers in Transylvania (Romania)

As part of the Transylvanian Hungarian minority, there is a subethnic group, the Szekler (*székely*), who often call themselves members of "Szekler nation" (*székely nemzet*) or

"Szekler-Hungarian" (*székely-magyar*). There is a long-lasting dispute on their origins, but most of them have a very strong Hungarian ethnic identity. They distinguish themselves from the other Hungarians in Transylvania, with a proud Szekler self-consciousness. Szeklers were a legal entity from the late medieval ages and had a frontier-guard function in the Hungarian Kingdom. A collective regularization kept them out of the feudal system of nobles and serfs; however, they also had a hierarchical social stratification. The highest status was the *Főszékely*, or *primor* in Latin (Prime Szekler); then, the richer Szeklers formed the high status *lófő* (horseman) and the lower *közszékely* (common Szekler) groups. There are many subdivisions of Szeklers by the former administrative divisions of the Kingdom of Hungary, the so-called *Székely székek* (meaning Szekler seats), such as Kézdiszék, Udvarhelyszék, Marosszék, Háromszék, etc. Smaller localities also had quasi-ethnic subdivisions according to the valleys or other localities they lived in (Csík, Kis-Homoród mente, Vargyas mente, Küküllő mente, etc.). There is a traditional rivalry between these subdivisions, and there are significant differences as well according to the dominant religions there. The territory of Csík, for example, is predominantly Roman Catholic, and Háromszék is predominantly Calvinist. Sometimes we can see such religious division in a valley, where each village has different religious distribution (the majority in Prophet Dénes's village is, for example, Unitarian). Szeklers in Romania live in a compact region that covers an area of at least three districts in east Transylvania. According to the regional statistics, they form the ethnic majority in that territory with 581,406 (76.3%) people from the total population (762,000) (Elekes and Sziágyi 2020, p. 128.). Nevertheless, the demand for creating an autonomous region is continuously refused by the Romanian governments, even if there was a period between 1952 and 1960 when the Szekler Autonomous Region was declared constitutionally (Bottoni 2018). These communal rights for ethnic minorities would not be without parallels in Europe; they stress the North Tirol case in Italy, the Catalonians in Spain, and the Sami in Norway, Finland, and Sweden. These, in addition to the many other examples, might be a useful tool for how to obtain an autonomous, self-determination status in this region. Their petition has been delivered by the European Union as well.

Despite the oppression of the churches and of religiosity during the Communist regime (until 1989), Romania remained a highly religious country. According to the 2011 census, 86.45% of the total population of Romania (20,121,641 people) is Orthodox Christian, 4.62% is Roman Catholic, and 3.41% is Calvinist, and only 0.31% belong to the Unitarian Church; less than 1% of the population declared themselves atheists or "without religion" (Negruți 2014, pp. 45–46). However, territorial diversity shows significant differences. Hungarians have supposedly lived in Transylvania since the tenth century CE.[20] Hungarians predominantly belong to the Roman Catholic, Calvinist, and Unitarian religions, but there are some Lutherans and Greek-Catholics[21] as well. Romanians belong predominantly to the Romanian Orthodox Church, and some of them to the Greek-Catholics[22]. The correlation between ethnicity and the actual religion is easily recognizable from the statistics. Transylvania was a contact zone of Orthodoxy and Catholicism (and later also Protestantism) from the late medieval ages. Hardly any of the ethnic Hungarians belonged to the Orthodox Church and vice versa, and only some Romanians belong to the Catholic Church (that is, the Greek-Catholic subgroup of the Catholics).

The post-Soviet (democratic) Romanian state guarantees individual rights for the members of any ethnic or religious minorities. Notwithstanding, the Catholic Church has a special territorial policy in Romania. They allow their priests to celebrate Mass in the Hungarian language in Transylvania but refuse to allow it in north-eastern Romania (Moldavia) despite the continuous demands of the huge Hungarian-speaking minority there[23], who are nearly all Catholics in that part of the country (Szilágyi N. 2012, p. 197). Catholicism as an identity marker is mixing the ethnic identity and the native language (mother tongue) in Moldavia. There are many Romanian-speaking Catholics who refer to their Hungarian ethnic identity, and there are some Hungarian speakers who identify themselves as "Catholic" despite declaring themselves "Hungarian." In addition to the Hungarian-speaking Catholics with Hungarian identity—as the most typical combined

identity there—there are also some Catholics with Romanian identity (Laihonen et al. 2020). They—the Catholics—form a slight minority there among the Romanians with the Orthodox faith (Bodó 2012, p. 31).

I performed multi-sited ethnography in Transylvania (Romania), Vojvodina (Serbia), and Hungary among an ecumenic (charismatic Christian) new religious movement between 2010 and 2018. I call them the Lights because this is the emic term for those members of the group who "received" the Holy Spirit (Csáji 2018b). The movement was established by a Unitarian Szekler man, a folk prophet (Prophet Dénes) in 2008, when he started his evangelic journeys, first in Romania, then in Serbia and Hungary.[24] He had many visions of heaven and hell, and—referring to prophecies he received from the Holy Spirit—he asks everyone not only to read but also actually act according to the Bible (Csáji 2020b). The movement's members remain in their former congregations in addition to participating in the Lights' religious events and discourse. Two-thirds of the members are Catholic, most of the rest are Protestant (Calvinist and some Unitarian). Since most members live far from the others, the role of online communication increases continuously. Prophet Dénes belongs to the Hungarian ethnic minority in Transylvania,[25] as do all the members since the language of the group is Hungarian. In addition to those in Romania, there are many followers of the Lights in Vojvodina (Serbia) and in Hungary too. I had the opportunity with this research to gain insight into the Hungarian ethnic and religious minority's life in Romania.

Prophet Dénes and the members of his movement often join the most important Hungarian Catholic ritual, the Pentecostal pilgrimage to Csíksomlyó (Şumuleu Ciuc in Romanian) (Csáji 2020a; see Figure 5). Many Hungarians from Moldavia have traditionally visited this religious event in the last centuries. However, as in case of the Lights, not only Catholics come, but Protestants as well, since this event has a strong atmosphere of national cohesion, as it is inseparable from national identity construction (and strengthening). This pilgrimage is also an important touristic and political representation of the Szeklers in Romania that sometimes sees over a million participants.[26]

Figure 5. Open-air Pentecostal Catholic Mass in Şumuleu Ciuc (east Transylvania, Romania), the most important religious ensemble of the Hungarian ethnic minority in Romania in 2011.

2.4. Case Study 4: Sami People in Northern Scandinavia

The northernmost point of Europe (Nordkapp) was "discovered" later than America (by Richard Chancellor in 1554). Sami are the indigenous people of this vast area in

northern Scandinavia, who migrated there during the Ice Age and lived from nomadic reindeer herding and fishing. They rapidly decreased in terms of both territory and number in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries because all four of the countries that occupied Sápmi[27] (Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia) oppressed them with linguistic, economic, and other restrictions. Sami children were taken to boarding schools in the twentieth century (until the 1960s), where Sami language was prohibited, claiming to "adequately socialize" (assimilate) them into the majority's society (Lehtola 2010, pp. 10–11). Sami revitalization began in the 1970s, when some local Sami intellectuals (inspired by Nils-Aslak Valkeapää and other intellectuals) proudly confessed their ethnic identity, requested minority rights, claimed self-determination, and insisted on stopping the stigmatization surrounding their singing of their traditional songs (the *yoiks*) publicly (Tamás 2018, p. 32). It soon became a movement for the Sami, applying for ethnic, indigenous, and political (autonomy) acceptance by the governments, and *yoiks* were recognized widely as the most ancient singing tradition (folk heritage) in Europe (Tamás 2013, p. 63). This became a core symbol of Sami identity discourse that received worldwide recognition (Hilder 2014). Samis in Norway, Sweden, and Finland belong to some of the countries with the highest GDP per capita, and they use high-tech tools (satellite mobile, GPS coordinates to follow the herds, 5G internet, etc.), but a significant portion of them kept their reindeer-herding occupation.

When we try to discover the exact number of Sami people in northern Scandinavia, we encounter a lack of official statistics. In Sweden, for example, since the 1970s, ethnicity is not consciously unregistered in the national census (Axelsson 2011, p. 117). In the mid-1970s, they were counted as 17,000, but it was based on a survey, not a census. The Sami parliament was established for local semi-self-governance in 1993, who registered 42,000 Sami for electoral reasons: those of the reindeer-herder occupation (that is a Sami monopoly in Sweden) and those who have at least one "declared" Sami parent (Axelsson 2011, p. 130). Nevertheless, they also encountered the problem that it is far from obvious who can be considered Sami. The problem is similar in Finland and Norway (Todal 2018, p. 11), where Sami parliaments also exist for governing some local issues. The estimations vary very much from 60,000 to 100,000 people in four countries. The largest Sami population lives in Norway (about half of the total) with 40,000–45,000 people, in Sweden with 17,000–20,000 people, followed by Finland with 5000–6500 people, and Russia with around 2000 (Josefsen 2010, p. 5).

Sami people have had traumatic historical experiences, as the majority's society occupied them during the modern ages and oppressed them culturally, economically, and politically. Forced Christianization was one line of this process, but later it was extended with nationalist assimilation and genocide endeavors. As an example, there were race biological studies from the late nineteenth century in Sweden until the 1970s that aimed to justify seeing the Sami as an inferior species, with measuring skulls and brains, comparing them with the civilized Swedish ones, and generally applying social Darwinism in physical anthropology (Cramer 1986, p. 59). Until the last decades of the twentieth century, even sterilization processes were active to depress the Sami population in Sweden—a practice for which the Swedish king and the government publicly begged for forgiveness in the twenty-first century (Tamás 2018). Sami people were also ethnically stigmatized in Norway and Finland with repression of their language usage (Eidheim 1969). Their shamanic drums were collected and burnt and the traditional Sami folk songs, the *yoiks*, were prohibited (Tamás 2020, p. 301). This oppression caused a very interesting phenomenon in the last decades of the twentieth century. During the decades of strict oppression, the Sami were seemingly assimilated into their Norwegian neighbors, speaking their language and using their customs, including Lutheran religiosity; but when the strict legal rules were tightened, many Sami appeared "from the shadows" and declared the existence of their ethnic minority in northern Norway, even in those territories where Norwegians thought they had disappeared (Eidheim 1992).

There is a dispute about whether Sami people have one language with different dialogues or whether there are Sami languag*es*, since territorial distance resulted in significant

linguistic differences, such as among *Lule*, *Inari*, and—for example, besides other dialects—*Skolt*.[28] Sami do not understand each other, and there is no "literary" or common Sami language used as lingua franca (Josefsen 2010). They lived in a vast area; cyclic migration with their reindeers on a strictly customized route resulted in linguistic divergence.

The forced Christianization period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was kept in Sami collective memory for a long time. Lars Levi Laestadius (1800–1860), the founder of Laestadian way of Lutherans, who had Sami parentage, brought a different style of evangelization to the Sami. As an example, he used Sami language for sermons. He fought against alcoholism—then a serious problem in Sápmi, when Scandinavian tradesmen used alcohol for "bargaining purposes," that affected most Sami communities as a "social drug"—in his puritan and tolerant way. He often followed the reindeer herdsmen to preach, and he married a Sami woman. He respected the Sami indigenous native faith and built some of its elements into his sermons. Notwithstanding, he also prohibited singing the *yoik*s, "the voice of the devil" (as it was commonly called then) (Tamás 2020). Christianity has become an immanent part of Sami life since then.[29] Sami ethnic revitalization since the 1970s has continued to rely on religiosity although—in addition to the Laestadian and other local Christian congregations—contemporary spirituality has also arisen with ethnic and political connotations. This development can be easily placed in the re-enchantment process of the West (Partridge 2004) and the modern "art culture system," as James Clifford (1988, p. 248) calls it. More and more Sami become singers, writers, poets, and filmmakers have a more-or-less religious attitude.[30] Sometimes they refer to the pre-Christian, pagan past, sometimes to a syncretic way combining Christianity and the native faith, and some of them have a clear anti-clerical attitude. Sami art has often mixed with religiosity and ethnic issues, fighting against the majority society's supposed colonialization endeavor and oppression (Nyyssönen 2013, p. 101).

At the end of the twentieth century and in the first decades of the twenty-first, religious syncretism emerged among the Sami. As an example, I refer to Lars Levi Sunna's works that apply pre-Christian ornaments (e.g., from the shamanic drums) and symbols of deities in Christian church architecture, paintings, and sculpture (see Figure 6). It is disputed whether or not pre-Christian symbols should be used in Christian sacred spaces (Dubois 2012, p. 142).

Figure 6. Altar in a Lutheran (Laestadian) church of Jukkasjärvi with pre-Christian symbols (the sun from a shamanic drum) made by Lars Levi Sunna (photo: Tamás 2018, p. 38).

Forced Christianization and ethnic oppression on the part of the majority has resulted in a strong counteraction in the last decades, which has appeared in many videoclips, poems, articles, posters, and other forms of cultural artifact. Shamanistic revival—as an element of ethnic identity construction—appears in many urban (neo-)shamanistic and syncretic forms (Tamás 2018, 2020). The present ethnocentric, self-respecting attitude along with the political claims can be called a form of "minority nationalism." Sami discourse space has a very frequently occurring ethnicity discourse. It creates new narratives of the past under the umbrella of Sami national memory, an obligation towards their ancestors and a tool for transmitting their Sami identity to their descendants. Political and artistic activism—or artivism, as the group of Suohpanterror calls it—resulted in Sami political, economic, and cultural claims appearing worldwide, placing this small ethnic unit in the cognitive world map of peoples (see Figure 7). Sami people are among one of the leading members of the Arctic Council.[31] They provide exemplary social patterns to Siberian and North American indigenous peoples on how to represent ecological consciousness and indigenous sovereignty (Hilder 2014, p. 19; Josefsen 2010, p. 10; Sillenpää 2008).

Figure 7. A Suohpanterror poster.[32]

3. Discussion

It is an instinctual need to place ourselves in the world with religious, ethnic, class, or other cognitions of differences and similarities. These orientations create the feeling of being in a community and also provide a basis for simplifications that result in stereotypes. Self-identification helps us navigate the ever-changing social environment and create solidarity and social security. My aim with this paper is to analyze the relation between ethnic minorities' religious life and their social (and political) existence. I demonstrated with the case studies that—in opposition to the nationalist idea of peoples—emic terminology is confusingly complex, multilevel, and often antinomic. Different ethnic terms are called forth in different situations referring to actually dissimilar groups of a society.

Ethnic units overlap each other, as in the case of Hunza in which language, locality, or even religious reference (relevance) of different layers activates different social networks in a complex society. In Russia, the word "Tatar" has different meanings to the inhabitants of Kunashak and the nearby Araslanovo. Araslanovo has historical descendant groups (lineages) to trace back their ethnic roots to the Volga Tatar origin; Kunashak's previous Mesher identity disappeared, giving place to their present, much weaker Bashkir and Tatar ethnic identity. A man from the local government said, "Are we Tatars *or* Bashkirs? Tatars *and* Bashkirs. It is unimportant. The important thing is our Muslim faith. We are first Muslims than Russian Tatars or Russian Bashkirs here. And we are proud Russians as well, if it is needed."[33] Hardly anyone would similarly self-identify in Araslanovo, in Bashkiria, or in Tatarstan; self-identification based on national ideology is much stronger there than in Kunashak.

We can see a wide variety of ethnic layers and cultural and sociohistorical contexts in my four case studies, but there are significant similarities as well. All four of the ethnic minorities had significant historical roots and refer to their historical community and supposed cultural continuity. All four case studies refer to their common territorial unit, and all of them had traumatic experiences in the past as part of the common narrative memory. They have many similarities and differences. There are incomputable kinds of ethnicities and grounds for ethnic units, markers, and forms (Eriksen 2003), and there are several kinds of perceptions that we can call "ethnic perspectives" in the world (Brubaker 2004). Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2003) stresses that both minority and majority ethnicity and nationalism can result in peaceful and violent events as well, just as any other social opposition between "us" and "them" can. Thus, we should not make a value judgement, since they are parallel phenomena with mutual influences on each other.

Nationalism rejects multilayered ethnicity and claims self-determination to a supposedly (culturally or politically) homogeneous group of people. Ethnicity is penetrated by and mixed with nationalism at very different levels in the four case studies. In the case of the Transylvanian Szeklers, they have a mother country (Hungary), and the significance of the multilayered ethnic categories, such as Hungarian, Szekler, Csángó, etc., is usually much smaller than the national identity's (Hungarian). The Romanian majority has not only a different language but also a different religion as well. There are hardly any Orthodox Hungarians, while Orthodoxy is the predominant religion of Romanians. In northern Scandinavia, Samis have no common country, so their pan-Sami nationalistic claims are a survival strategy for them, as they are divided by languages (having dialects that keep them from understanding each other). Although they share a Lutheran identity (and Orthodoxy in Russia) with the majority (Swedish, Norwegian, Finish), the revival of Sami shamanism or, more often, the reference to elements of this shamanic past distinguish the Sami religious worldview from the majorities' ones.[34] Sami religiosity is interweaved with political endeavor for the purposes of ethnic autonomy and indigenous rights. The ethnic group that is least penetrated by nationalist ideology is the society of Hunza, in which Pakistani nationality is far less a part of their identity than being Shina, Hunzakuts, or Wakhi. They practice Shia and Ismaili religions that are also minorities in the predominantly Sunni country.

Nevertheless, a common element of the case studies is that religiosity plays an important role for most members of the four minorities. In the case of the Sami, I must add that contemporary spirituality and the revival (reconstruction) of shamanism exist in parallel to the Christian identity, sometimes both the Lutheran faith and neo-pagan ideas and practices can be parts of the very same person's religious identity. In addition to Lutheranism and Lutheran and neo-shamanistic syncretism, anti-Christian neo-paganism is an increasing phenomenon.[35] They refer to the crimes of Christianity regarding the forced conversion and the destruction of the shamanic drums, traditions, and heritage of the formal ethnic culture. There are no statistics for this, but—as far as I observed—anti-Christian groups and neo-shaman quasi-religious theorists (writers, singers, politicians) are still much fewer in number than Lutheran ones.

There is a syncretism of shamanism and institutional religion (Islam) among Hunzakuts too.[36] A *bitan* told me: "We [*bitans*] are proper Muslims. I want to be a good Muslim, and just after that, I can be a good *bitan*. I was chosen by the fairies to be a *bitan*. But all the people are chosen by God to be a good person. *Bitanship* is not opposite to our faith." Until the late medieval and early modern age, the Baltistan and Gilgit regions were predominantly Buddhist. Hunzakuts' shamanism is very different from the Bon that also existed beside Tibetan Buddhism. It is not a revival or reconstruction, so it is very far from the phenomenon of urban or neo-shamanism.

I do not want to homogenize the religiosity of the studied societies. Meredith B. McGuire (2008) uses the term "lived religion" for the several kinds of religiosity, stressing the importance of personal perceptions, practices, experiences, and emotions, while Lenard N. Primiano (1995) introduces the term "vernacular religion" for the individual forms. Although this theoretical approach seems much more relevant regarding my European examples,[37] I observed far more similarities than differences among the individuals' personal religiosities in Hunza and the Uralian Tatar cases. One reason for this is the different sociohistorical routes and circumstances. The four ethnic minorities have faced different traumas in the last centuries and have different political and religious obstacles and claims, so their historical experiences and current endeavors are different. The other reason the notion of lived religion is less relevant in Hunza and the Urals that I found is that there are different kinds of discursive systems.

Mische and White (1998) recognized that discourses construct social networks and frames, with these networks allocating and more or less determining the discourses themselves. This dialectical relation of social networks and discourses can be applied to religious and ethnic discourses as well. A religious community's inner discourse can be considered not only as an *interpretive community* (Fish 1980), but also a frame for communicative contents and interactions. A local community, a school class, a workplace, a family, or several other frequent discursive frames form *discourse spaces*[38]. Discourse spaces are relatively separate from each other and together form the social discursive environment (discourse field). They construct, transform, and reconstruct common semantic meanings and value preferences. Discourse spaces overlap each other. The process of meaning and value construction, that is, the construction of social patterns, lays "within these network-like relatively insular communication structures. Personal discourse horizons (discursive access) also have importance, since they reach other discourses as well. Discourse spaces can be imagined similar to Harrison White's notion of *network domains* (see Mische and White 1998), but there are important non-network-like elements as well: status, locality, emotions, personal lifeworlds etc. all have impact on the process" (Csáji 2020b, p. 359). Among the studied local societies, the systems of discourse spaces differ very much. Hunza's, Kunashak's, and Araslanovo's religious and ethnic discourse spaces are much more overlapped than the Transylvanian one. Sami religious and ethnic discourses did not overlap enough until the 1970s, and this divergence resulted in the separation of language dialects. The decentralized structure of the Lutheran Church also had an impact on the disintegration of the Sami language groups (Lule, Pite, North, Inari, Skolt, etc.). Sami minorities started to seek community with each other from the early twentieth century on, and the first all-Sami congress assembled in Åre

in 1917. Nevertheless, the fear of Sami national progress resulted in strong assimilation endeavors in the majorities' societies over the next fifty years. During the period of oppression, Samis recognized that it is substantial how much ethnic, local, political, occupational, religious, kinship, and other discourses overlap each other. According to my experience, if they overlap a lot, they are more likely to strengthen each other's cognitive engravements (memorial imprints) and community construction, while in cases in which they diverge, social entropy (Galtung 1967) more likely increases. To avoid disintegration and disorder, religion can be an elementary tool.

Multifunctional social networks in the case studies' ethnic minorities contain religious bonds and discourses as well. A local priest told me in Transylvania that "Our [Szekler/Hungarian minority's] chance for survival lays in two elements: do not let the churches and the schools fall!"[39] I encountered similar statements amongst Uralian Tatars (both in Kunashak and Araslanovo) and in Hunza too. The Sami case was quite different. There were some who stressed the importance of the Lutheran Church, but there was a contradictory relation towards the Laestadian ways, and there is contemporary dispute about the neo-shamanistic groups and endeavors among Christian Samis. But religion as an "ethnic marker" is not obvious. There was a case, in 2016, when someone (a Lutheran man) asked me, "What do you want from those extreme Sami nationalist Laestadians?"[40] On another occasion, I was talking with a Sami woman who did not understand how a Sami could be Christian after all the crimes against Samis committed on the part of Christians. At the same time, most of the Sami Lutheran congregation do not allow the singing of traditional Sami *yoiks* in their churches; they suppose that "yoiking" is not reconcilable with Christianity. These debates—and my previous examples—show the wide range of religious perspectives and emotions among the Sami. They live in secular countries where Christian faith is rapidly losing its importance (except in Russia). Parallel to this, New Age and contemporary spirituality, that is, neo-pagan movements, are becoming more significant.[41] This is why the "lived religion" concept can be most adequately applied to the Samis and, next, to the Hungarians in Transylvania.

There are new neo-pagan (mostly ethno-pagan) religious movements in Transylvania too, but their number is dwarfed by the Christians (Bakó and Hubbes 2011). Atheists are in the minority, but in growing number. In 2016, a Szekler teacher told me: "Atheism is a religion too. It is strictly dogmatic. The refusal of God's existence and the acceptance of the soul as something separate from the material body, that humankind is considered as one of the animal species, and death as a total and irreversible perishing. These are strict dogmas of atheism." Nevertheless, I found numerous Transylvanian atheists who applied contemporary spirituality's practices, such as Reiki, energy healing, positive resonance of gems, etc. Religious syncretism—with invented neo-pagan and traditionalist revival—also exists there (just as in all the Central and Eastern European countries), but its importance lags behind the Sami society, where the contrast and the disputes are more apparent.

Social secularist theory is widely rejected by most of the minorities I studied, except by the Sami society, where many more people declare themselves to be "atheist," "deist," "unreligious but believer," "non-practicing Christian," or simply "neutral" than in any of the other three examples. In Transylvania, more in the Urals, and most in the northern Pakistan region, religion is at the core of self-identification narratives and coexists with their ethnicity. When I asked about secularism, people of the Kunashak and Hunza often replied with harsh phrases. A *bitan* from Hunza told me: "Without our faith, we lose our common morality. Without common morality, we quickly break-up."[42] This also shows that emotional involvement cannot be neglected when we think about ethnic minorities' religiosity. In the case of Samis, this role of religion pertains to a much smaller part of the ethnic group.

I show the varieties of religious fields[43] in Table 2 and the similarities in the claims of self-determination (except in the Uralian Tatars' case). These claims are proclaimed not only by the political and/or ethnic institutions (like the Szekler Council in Transylvania or the Sami parliaments in northern Scandinavia), but by the religious leaders and congregations

as well. Despite the different importance levels of religiosity in the four cases, this is a common phenomenon in all of them. Social and political secularism are opposites to the studied societies. Political secularism is a key issue for their survival, so they insist on keeping a secular political environment. Contrary to this, social secularism is a toll for assimilation by the majority society, so all the minorities in my case studies strictly refuse social secularism, except the Sami, who only have subgroups with this opinion (e.g., the Laestadian religious communities). Influence of national ideology shows a much wider palette in the four cases.

Table 2. Comparative matrix of the four case studies (importance of religiosity, diversity of religions, political claims of religious institutions, role of nationalisms).

	Importance of Religiosity (versus Atheism)	Religious Diversity amongst the Ethnic Minority	Political Claims by Religious Leaders and Religious Institutions	Role of Nationalism (Homogenization of the Ethnic Layers into One National Level That Claims Self-Determination)
Hunzakuts (Pakistani-controlled Kashmir/Northern Areas of Pakistan)	all-essential	two main ways: Shia and Ismaili (both are within Islam)	political secularism, right for voting in the Pakistani elections, human rights, self-determination	weak (there is a territorial claim for self-governance but with keeping the ethnic complexity)
Bashkirs and Tatars in Kunashak (Middle Ural, Russia)	important	one dominant religion (Sunni Islam) besides some non-religious people	political secularism, keep the existing human rights and religious Freedom	weak
Araslanovo Tatars (Middle Ural, Russia)	quite important	*(same as in Kunashak)*	*(same as in Kunashak)*	strong Tatar national identity
Szeklers in Transylvania (central Romania)	very important	three dominant Christian churches: Roman Catholic, Calvinist, and Unitarian; there are some Lutherans, and very few Greek Catholics; there are sporadic neo-pagans, esoteric, and non-religious ones	political secularism, political autonomy, and self-determination	strong
Samis (northern Scandinavia)	not so important	Lutherans and neo-pagans, many syncretic forms, nature-based esoterism, and contemporary Spirituality	political secularism, self-determination, political autonomy, and indigenous rights for the Sami people	strong

Josip Llobera refers to nationalism as a "secular religion" ([Llobera 1994](#), p. 221). Without a doubt, there is a historical parallel between the emergence of nationalism and secularism (both political and social). Nevertheless, my case studies show us that nationalism and religiosity can also be in a symbiotic relationship. In the case of the Hungarians in Transylvania, lived religion and national identity strengthen each other, and religious institutions often play important roles in election campaigns, local economic and workplace organization, etc. The Sami case is slightly different, but the Sami national endeavor cannot be called "secular" either. They refer to the Sami past—traditional Sami shamanism in

a syncretic or in an anti-Christian way—but their religiosity is linked to their national endeavors. Hunzakuts' self-determination and human rights claims cannot be called nationalist, since they do not aim to integrate the plural society into a supposed nation; their objective is rather territorial autonomy for the former kingdom of Hunza (parallel to the neighboring Nagar's claims), keeping the plural society with its complex ethnic matrix. In the case of Uralian Tatar religiosity, it also links with ethnic and national identity, and—in the case of Kunashak—it prevails over nationalism. Anyway, Llobera is right when he argues on behalf of the quasi-religious *feature* of nationalism. Notwithstanding, the relation to secularism is much more complex in the minorities that I studied.

The stronger the religion (as in Hunza or in Kunashak), the weaker the nationalism and vice versa. This would be an easy conclusion of the Llobera theory, but it would not be an adequate statement according to my case studies. As I demonstrated with the Transylvanian case, nationalism can be engaged with religiosity, even with its syncretic and vernacular forms. And Tatar nationalism in the Araslanovo village shows a significant relationship with their local religiosity. Lived religion—as individual forms of religiosity—is also a confusing term for describing these minorities, since it focuses more on differences than on similarities. In certain cases, this might be the right way to distinguish and recognize the complexity and multicolor of religiosity, but in other cases, it hides the importance of the social patterns and the role of communal (and common) ways of religiosity. The most important conclusion of Table 2 is that religiosity plays a key role in the ethnic minority survival strategy for most of the studied societies (all but the Sami), and it contains political (meaning "nonsecular") claims for autonomy and self-determination. Even in the exceptional (the Sami society) case, in which the self-determination claim is the strongest political issue from all the four cases, religiosity sometimes plays a role (such as in the case of Laestadian Sami communities or in neo-pagan Sami artists).

4. Conclusions

Cultural differences are essential for humankind's ability of adaptation to our ever-changing social and natural environment (Lévi-Strauss 1952). As a result of the recognition of cultural differences, ethnicity is an instinctual distinguishing of "us and them" based on certain aspects, interests, and discourses. Categories and actual layers of ethnicity are called forth in communicative situations. Ethnicity is a kind of cognition: how we place ourselves in the world among cultural, historical, economical, etc., similarities and differences. Emic categories and cognitions of ethnicity show confusing complexity and variety (Eriksen 2003, p. 54). In the case of Hunza (Pakistan), I demonstrated in Table 1 how many terms refer to different groups of the society depending on the given situation. The Middle Urals' Tatar minority, Transylvanian Szeklers, and the Sami of northern Scandinavia also have very complex ethnic terminology rooted in their historical experiences and social memories.[44]

Being a minority often causes a perception of ethnicity. The majority's social environment activates the ethnic sensitivity of the minorities and experiencing "ethnic boundaries" is part of their everyday life (comp. Barth 1969). Without maintenance, ethnic minorities quickly destruct or assimilate. According to the four case studies I outlined, I found that there is a significant correlation between minorities' ethnic identity and religiosity, as religious identity often coexists with ethnic identity, forming a complexity of identity constructions. They form a much stronger survival strategy together than alone. A common feature of all four case studies was that religious life plays a central (or at least a significant) role for most within the given minority. Nevertheless, there are significant differences in the ways it is lived. For example, in the case of the Uralian Tatars, inhabitants of Araslanovo and Kunashak evaluated and lived their religiosities differently. There are many forms of lived or vernacular religiosity among all the minorities that I studied in this paper, although their importance is very different. I observed the most diverse ways of lived religion in the case of the Sami and then in the Transylvanian Szeklers. For Uralian Tatars and Hunzakuts, it was a much less relevant term and theoretical concept.

To search for the relation between ethnic minorities' religious identity and their political claims, I analyzed the four case studies according to their historical context and political objectives. Their attitudes toward political and social secularism showed significant similarities. Ethnic minorities have to live in a multilayered discourse field, where their ethnic representations and discourses are in interaction with the majority's. There are relatively separate discourse spaces, such as workplaces, schools and classes, friendships, families, localities, and political and other social organizations (such as religious conglomerations). Reality is constructed, maintained, and reconstructed through these discourses. Religions and religiosity play different roles in the societies I studied, but it is a common element that most of their members consciously reject social secularism on principle. They consciously recognize that their religious and ethnic identities cohere, although in different ways. In the case of the Hunza society and the Uralian Tatars, their Muslim faith distinguishes them from the surrounding majority; in the case of the Transylvanian Szeklers, it is certain Christian churches that do so. In the case of the Sami, the majority also belongs to the Lutheran Church in Sweden, Norway, and Finland, but the Laestadian subgroup and the neo-pagan movements rely greatly on the Sami ethnicity. This has resulted in various forms of syncretism—and disputes—among them.

The situation is contrary in the case of political secularism. Political secularism is a key factor in providing better circumstances and strategies for their minority's survival (comp. Berlinerblau 2021). The Pakistani state—which is strongly engaged with Sunni Islam institutions—shows tolerance to other Islamic ways, such as the Ismaili and, with less importance, the Shia in Hunza. When the majority takes political action, such as the 1948 forbiddance of the Greek Catholic Church in Romania and the forced integration of it into the Romanian Orthodox Church, it is widely considered a conscious assimilation endeavor. Common historical experiences and social memory cause a requirement for political secularism by the four studied minorities. Religious leaders and institutions often take part in political actions, such as causing agitation during elections, making political claims for autonomy or self-determination, or, in case of the Sami, claiming indigenous rights not only for themselves but also for other indigenous minorities around the world. Nevertheless, minorities' religious leaders interpret political secularism as something that pertains to the majority's political power. As a final conclusion, political secularism—regarding the majority or the minority—and social secularism have opposite meanings, appreciation, and roles in all of the four cases I studied.

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Notes

1   Not without certain roots (see Gorski 2000; Taylor 2007).

2   Their disdainful position has not been accurately studied, even though in other fields of social science, the first wave of evolutionist perspective was considered intolerant and untenable.

3   The religious identity of Boas generated disputes only after his death (see Opler 1967, p. 741).

4   Sociologists prefer grand theories and statistical comparison rather than traipsing and navigating among the unique examples that social anthropologists do.

5   I use the term "discourse" in the Foucauldian way.

6   My ethnological fieldwork was conducted in 2001, but I continued research online until the present. I use my ten life-history interviews recorded in Hunza, thirteen short interviews, my ethnological fieldnotes, and state statistical data (census) for the present analysis, along with the archive that I created based on my digital ethnographical research after my return from the field.

7   I conducted my ethnological fieldwork between 2008 and 2013 with several shorter visits (lasting some weeks or a month) to the region. I use my five life-history interviews, seventeen shorter interviews, my ethnological fieldnotes, and state statistical data (census) for the present analysis.

8   My anthropological fieldwork started in 2010 and ended in 2018. I use my twenty-seven life-history interviews, forty-five shorter interviews, my ethnological fieldnotes, and state statistical data (census) for the present analysis, along with the archive that I created based on my digital ethnographical research.

9   My first ethnological fieldwork trip among the Sami people was in 1999, as an assistant of the linguist and ethnologist Ildikó Tamás, who is a specialist of the Sami culture; our last visit happened in 2015, but we continued research in the form of an online ethnography until the present. I use the nine life-history interviews that Tamás conducted with my assistance, twenty-one shorter interviews, our ethnological fieldnotes, and the state and Sami ethnic parliament's statistical database for the present analysis, along with the archive that Tamás created, based on her digital ethnographical research.

10   Figures and photos were made by me unless otherwise noted.

11   The colonial rivalry between the British and the Russian Empire to occupy Central Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century.

12   There was no Hunzakuts who would have wanted to belong to India, since they were frightened of being a Muslim minority there and they had horrible memories of the Sikh rule of Kashmir in the late nineteenth century (Dani 2001). Although the Pakistani state is strongly engaged with Sunni Islam, it is tolerant to other Muslim ways.

13   Both are called *qáum,* an emic term for an ethnic group.

14   It is both a singular and a plural term for the residents of Hunza.

15   A much more detailed analysis of this topic can be read in my previous study (see Csáji 2018b).

16   Followers of the Aga Khan are an Ismaili subgroup (Willson 1999, p. 185).

17   Ismaili—as part of Shia Islam—is called the "seveners," dividing them from the Shia majority in the world, the so-called "twelvers." Shia Islam (the twelvers) is dominant in the Gilgit region, although the Noorbakshia way of Islam is also present in Baltistan as a religious minority (Csáji 2018a, pp. 119–20).

18   For more about the religious specialists in Hunza, see (Csáji 2011).

19   The word for this documentation is the same in the Bashkir, Tatar, and Kazakh languages.

20   Transylvania belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary for most of the second millennia. It became part of Romania in 1920 (after World War I), but the northern part was reintegrated into Hungary between 1940 and 1945 (for the very complex history of Transylvania, see Pop et al. 2018).

21   Catholics with the Byzantian liturgy united with the Roman Catholic Church in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Pop et al. 2018). The Catholic Church granted them collective rights; for example, a married man can also be ordained as a priest.

22   The Greek Catholic Church was seized by the Communist regime in 1948, many bishops and priests were killed, and believers were forcibly united with the Romanian Orthodox Church until 1989 (Negruți 2014, p. 45).

23   They are called "Moldavian Hungarian" or *Csángó* (Laihonen et al. 2020)

24   He travels on foot or by an age-old motor scooter. He lives in poverty and never asks but accepts small food and petrol donations to be able to continue his journey. There is no common property or "tax" in the movement (Csáji 2018b, 2020b).

25   He frequently goes to Romanian and Roma communities as well, but those people who he visits, evangelizes, and blesses cannot join the group because of the language barrier (Csáji 2018b, 2020a).

26   The tourist and cultural industry have built a whole range of references and marketing actions on it (Mohay 2009).

27   The emic term for the land inhabited by Sami people.

28   There are more than a dozen known dialects/languages of the Sami.

29   The absence of statistics on religiosity requires me to suppose according to my fieldwork that Protestant (predominantly Lutheran) Christianity plays a central role even nowadays for the Sami communities, and the religiosity rate is much higher than that among the major Swedish, Norwegian, and Finnish societies (especially if we compare it with the southern Scandinavian cities).

30   Nils-Aslak Valkeappää, Mari Boine Persen, Wimme Sari, Sara Margrethe Oskal, Niillas Holmberg, etc.

31   The political platform for the arctic indigenous societies and the countries with Arctic territories.

32   https://voima.fi/hairikot/artikkeli/suopunkiterrorin-kannukset/, accessed on 1 January 2023.

33   From one of the author's interviews in Kunashak conducted in 2012.

34   The Sami-founded Laestadianism is also widely considered a Sami (ethnic) subgroup of Lutheranism, despite the fact that there are non-Sami Laestadian communities in locales as far as Austria.

35   According to the modern art–culture system, they often appear in videoclips, poems, political speeches, etc. (comp. Hilder 2014, pp. 120–29).

36   This is a well-known, frequently described phenomenon in other inner and Central Asian Islamic societies as well.

37   More so for the northern Scandinavian than the Transylvanian society.

38   This is my term for the various configurations of the discourse field (see Csáji 2018b, p. 162).

39   In one of my interviews in Crăciunel (Romania) in 2013.

40   From one of my interviews. Note that the Laestadian community is part of the Lutheran Church.

41   Michael York (2009, p. 293) stresses, "Paganism does indeed overlap with secularism on its focus of being this-worldly."

42   From a conversation with a Hunzakuts *bitan* in 2001.

43   Comp. (Bourdieu 1971).

44   Contrary to ethnicity, nationalist ideology claims self-determination for only one layer—the "nation"—as a legal and social sovereign unit, neglecting multiethnic identities and the multilayered complexity of ethnic communities (Llobera 1994).

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