

University of Szeged

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

**Theories of ritual in the study of
non-scriptural religion in prehistoric
European societies**

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One of the most dynamic and controversial archaeological discourses of the last two decades has placed ritual at the centre of its research. Nevertheless, European archaeology still lacks an adequate theoretical framework for identifying, analysing and interpreting the ritual practices of the period. Thus, in the absence of definitions, the difficulty of identifying and interpreting rites has become one of the major problems of contemporary archaeology. In my thesis I will try to prove this hypothesis on the basis of the definitional and other problems related to the concept of ritual, the different theories of ritual and archaeological case studies. If I can justify why it is the theories of religion and ritual that predominate in today's studies opens up the way to outline and analyse the two trends that I consider to be the dominant ones in contemporary theoretical research. Archaeological case studies illustrate the advantages and problems of the cognitive research approach and of studies using practice theory. This will allow me to outline the interpretative advantages and disadvantages of current trends in

rhetoric from the point of view of religion and ritual expression. In my opinion, I can argue that the research on rituals in contemporary European archaeology has reached a turning point, as a result of which either religion disappears from the life of prehistoric societies in some archaeological analyses or one of the theoretical strands of the understanding of rituals has to be removed from the subject of religious archaeology.