



Religion, ritual and mythology : aspects of identity formation in Europe / edited by
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(Thematic work group)

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Volumes published (2006)

I. Thematic Work Groups

- I. Public Power in Europe: Studies in Historical Transformations
- II. Power and Culture: Hegemony, Interaction and Dissent
- III. Religion, Ritual and Mythology. Aspects of Identity Formation in Europe
- IV. Professions and Social Identity. New European Historical Research on Work, Gender and Society
- V. Frontiers and Identities: Exploring the Research Area
- VI. Europe and the World in European Historiography

II. Transversal Theme

- I. Citizenship in Historical Perspective

III. Doctoral Dissertations

- I. F. Peyrou, La Comunidad de Ciudadanos. El Discurso Democrático-Republicano en España, 1840-1868

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Introduction

CLIOHRES.NET AND TWG3: AIMS, PHASES AND METHODOLOGY

This volume is the result of the first year of activities of the Thematic Working Group 3 (TWG3) of the CLIOHRES.net project. The group, one of six within the network, is dedicated to Religious and Philosophical concepts, and met three times: in Coimbra, in September 2005, in Pisa, during the plenary meeting of the project in December, and in Malta in early March 2006.

CLIOHRES.net does not correspond to a traditional type of research project, and the current volume can only be fully understood in its role as part of a process based on a specific model of organizing a large number of researchers from very different academic traditions around a set of overarching themes of great importance to the European historiographical agenda.

CLIOHRES.net is centred on the idea of placing people, already expert researchers, in a context where their previous knowledge and experience acquires a new meaning. The network provides a new type of environment designed to allow the emergence of new approaches on relevant historiographical themes. This is to be accomplished “in the interactive, finalised context of meetings designed around the presentation of research, the exchange of views and the mutual production of books and reports” with the goal of achieving a “common elaboration of new viewpoints, consigned to texts which in practice demonstrate interaction and broadening, and which can be widely distributed”.

The project is structured as a progression of sub-goals and phases that provide a path of increasing integration and cross-fertilization of concepts, approaches and methodologies between the researchers involved. In this progression, the first year is defined as one of “recognition and mapping of how the questions perceived as important for the thematic area appear in the different national historiographies”. This first phase will feed into the second year where the aim is “defining transversal problems which are relevant in a more general context, and investigating and illuminating the relation between the two levels”.

The current volume therefore corresponds to the phase of “recognition” and “mapping”. There were several possible interpretations of this goal. Our approach was that of widening the horizons by collecting contributions from all members of the group and welcoming a variety of topics, approaches and developments of the underlying research,

while accepting the risk of a level of diversity that, in the context of this particular project, is not a handicap, but rather a necessary step. On the whole, our objective has been achieved, and very few researchers have been unable to participate in this stage.

Diversity, however, is not an asset *per se*. We are at the sowing stage, far from harvesting mature fruit, but it is important to try tentatively to produce an overview of the main questions and issues at hand and sketch a crude map of the most visible features of our misty territory.

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY IN CLIOHRES.NET

The original definition of the subject area of Thematic Workgroup 3 identifies the broad periods of the European history of ideas, adding contemporary interest to the connections between religion in national and ethnic identity:

[the group] will consider the religious and philosophical achievements of the ancient world, and particularly the ways in which that patrimony has been given meaning in different political and cultural contexts from the medieval to the modern and contemporary world; it will examine the Reformation as a focal point for understanding and comparing different confessional and national approaches to the Reformation period; it will deal with Humanism and the Enlightenment; the emergence of lay philosophy and new religious movements, observing and contextualizing the different approaches to, and understandings of, such phenomena in different parts of Europe; it will examine the significance of religious identities as linked to national and ethnic sentiments.

Religion and philosophy belong to the realm of “ideas” or “concepts”, mental constructs that frame the way people see the world. They are part of the worldviews shared by populations, which allow them to represent and operate with reality. As elements of the great mental frameworks, religion and philosophical concepts have reflected, shaped and interacted (the best verb is a matter for discussion) with other levels of social life and with other forms of conceptual representation of reality, from science to popular culture.

It is easy, sometimes irresistible, in this bird’s-eye view of the development of mankind, to see the role of religion as tied inversely to the development of science, rational paradigms and the materialism of everyday life. Religion would be a primitive way to understand reality and to find values and goals in social interactions. As long as religion is considered in general terms as a way to understand reality, both natural and social, and as long as we believe that the rational and scientific comprehension of the world is cumulative and unlimited, the destiny of religious and philosophical concepts is already clear. In that sense, the history of religion is a part of the history of ideas, an area where broad and progressive chronological stages are easy to conceptualise. A clear progression seems to emerge, from the mythology of Antiquity through the dogmatic scholastic construction of medieval times, to the slow erosion and new construction brought about by Humanism, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and Lay Philosophies, with the unexpected revival of religious movements in the 19th and 20th centuries, puz-

zingly against the current. August Comte put it very clearly in the great law of history, describing mankind moving through the theological, the metaphysical and, finally, the positivist state.

But the present shapes our view of the past. We live in a world where religion cannot possibly be considered a relic of a surpassed phase of human evolution, nor philosophy an ever-diminishing frontier around the lands not yet conquered by science. On the contrary, the social need to understand the omnipresence of religion, religious feeling and religious institutions has reached new heights in present times. At the same time, there is an unavoidable and almost daily need to question the concepts that are essential to our identity and sense of belonging, in the various non-concentric circles that delimit our daily life (gender, family, work, group, country, culture or civilization).

These intellectual urgencies are particularly relevant in the current European context, not because of the political need to custom-design a *post facto* identity, but, on the contrary, because of the necessity of understanding how the capacity for diversity (cultural, religious, political) has become, by paradox, one of the unifying references of the European ideal.

Any reference to the importance of religion, and the need for conceptual introspection on the values that constitute the European identity, normally triggers the evocation of the great and dramatic moments of recent times. We are faced with the need to question the inevitable progress of our world towards a better society based on rationality and tolerance and of our ability to face the threats of religious and ideological fanaticism, not only when they come from the outside but, more painfully, when they grow inside our own societies.

One could say that the historiography of religion is faced with a paradox: most long term historical evaluations of the role of religion would seem to point in the direction of decline, greater interiority or privatization, while the present seems to show the contrary, an extraordinary renewal of the importance of religious factors in the public as well as, in some countries, the private sphere. It is as if religion, in history, only seems to fade when looked upon from a distance. When watched at close range, it just seems to grow¹.

This paradox is not just the result of over simplistic views of the past and future in the heads of those few that try to rationalize the destiny of mankind. It has become part of what many of us consider to be the natural order of things. Some people feel puzzled or uncomfortable when faced with examples of well-educated, bright young people with very strong religious beliefs and corresponding practices. Education, material comfort and citizenship in democratic societies do not seem compatible with deep faith and beliefs in super-natural entities. It is as if progress, in the sense of knowledge, education and well-being, inevitably imply a decline of religious faith, associated with ignorance and political, social and economic exclusion.

One could also attribute this common conception to a tentative denial of the fear that the really significant lines of division of the planet are not, as they were a few years ago,

those of the great ideological blocks, but those of religious choices. We were surprised and elated by the disappearance of the former great divide that had hung over our heads for decades, feeding the dark spectre of a possible Armageddon, and now we are shocked and reluctant to face the globalisation of a new Other and the returning nightmares about fingers on buttons. As before, we see the global divide cut through the inner space of our societies, and once again we face the tragic dilemmas of security and liberty.

These are matters that certainly deserve reflection and innovative approaches. While this is not the place for a lengthy discussion on the role of religion in society, either in the past or the present, it is worthwhile, in the spirit of the project, to raise a few questions that are relevant in this context, which can help us to appreciate the variety and diversity of the texts gathered here, and to envisage more clearly a future agenda for our undertakings.

Most of what follows concentrates on religion and not on philosophy, since, in fact, this first volume is almost exclusively centred on various manifestations of religion through history.

Understanding Religion: Widening the Horizon

All the chapters in this first volume from TWG3 are about religion or about phenomena where a religious dimension is present to varying degrees (the rituals around the commemoration of Tito's birthday provide perhaps the least obvious case, at first glance). The variety of topics, periods and phenomena is so wide that some questions certainly can be raised: What is the value of putting together such a diversity of subjects? Is there a common object in all this variety? Is it possible to define a field, however broadly, capable of attracting a coherent scientific endeavour?

These questions, together with the paradoxes and perplexities mentioned before, are partly determined by the complex usage patterns of the word "religion". In the European historiographic tradition, the word is commonly used at face value, precluding the need for formal definitions. Like all great words ("freedom", "progress", "happiness") everyone knows what "religion" means until a definition is attempted. Then the exceptions, qualifications and nuances multiply to such a point that no clear meaning remains. What exactly is "religion"? How can we define the concept in an operative way?

Régis Debray argued recently in a provocative and insightful book that the word should be avoided as a major epistemological obstacle². He draws a parallel with the word "fire" that also seemed, at a certain point in time, to represent a clear phenomenon, present in everyday experience, naturally attracting the energy of thinkers and the imagination of countless minds. But only when "fire" was "de-objectified" and correctly identified as a particular manifestation of combustion, only when it was realized that there was nothing fundamental, intrinsic or elementary in the phenomenon, only then was it possible to move to a scientific discourse that actually explained what "fire" is³.

Debray's proposal is to use the word "communion", a solution that is only understandable as part of his global argument that we use "religion" and derivatives for describing the basic mechanisms at work in the construction of human *communities*, the processes by which the "them" becomes "us". Religion is a sort of *ingénierie associative* [associative engineering] and the essence of the religious phenomenon lies less in its content than in the procedures that it encompasses. This is why, according to Debray, we find the same processes in every endeavour that attempts to draw together a group of individuals under a strong sense of identity and common belonging, from churches to new born nations, from revolutionary social experiments to dynamic organizations, all the way down to small teams and groups aiming to survive and succeed. In all of these situations we encounter the ideas of a common origin, narratives that place the contemporaries with regard to that common origin, a hierarchy and associated rituals that define roles for actors, and finally a membrane, which circumscribes the community and distinguishes the inside from the outside – the basic building blocks of group identity⁴.

This approach is of interest to us here, because the path that TWG3 defined for itself from the first meeting, was to inquire into the way religion "works" in the context of multi-varied historical situations. In retrospect, we can say that this volume is, to use Debray's expressions, more about the *faire* than the *dire*, and more on *opérations* than on *représentations*.

This shift of focus from the "concepts" inscribed in the official title of the Group is less radical than it seems. Religious concepts are, by definition, "beliefs". And beliefs are mental processes intimately connected to action and the triggering of behaviour, a theme to which we will shortly and briefly return. So there is really no way to deal with religious concepts without matching them with the social practices they induce.

If we take religion as "social engineering", a toolbox of mechanisms and procedures that can be applied to all types of social interactions relevant to the construction of the identity of a community, then, in fact, we will find religion everywhere. And, inversely, whenever we look into religious processes at work, if properly contextualized, we will find the identity of communities being constructed and developed. The chapters in this book can be read profitably from this point of view, justifying the overarching title of *Religion, Ritual and Mythology: Aspects of Identity Formation in Europe*.

The intimate link between what is called "religion" and the basic processes of creation and maintenance of social groups implies more than just special attention to the concrete practices of social actors in historical situations. It also implies that religion and social life are inextricably tied and any theory of religion is, in a way, a theory of society, and any theory of society is bound to produce a theory of religion. The latter is, of course, very much confirmed by the facts, as we find a strong interest in religion from the founding fathers of sociological thought, including Comte, Durkheim, Weber and Marx. We also find the same interest in Freud and Jung. It can be argued that religion is one of the central issues in social theory, which is consistent with the "religion as social engineering" approach⁵.

This poses fundamental theoretical questions that cannot of course be examined within the scope of this introduction. Nevertheless, it is important to stress the fact that the challenges of understanding the persistent role of religion in society, in the sense described above, has increasingly favoured approaches towards a “natural” grounding of religious behaviour. We have all read or heard countless times that religion corresponds to basic needs existing in human beings. We are now seeing attempts to demonstrate that “belief” or “religion” are part of the human “hardware”, or that they emerge from the basic processes that are responsible for human societies⁶. Religion could be genetically determined, or be the product of an evolutionary process where beliefs evolve like organisms in symbiotic association with the human hosts who subscribe to them⁷. The widespread attention that religious issues attract nowadays makes these approaches suitable for broad public consumption.

It is in this context that the mission of TWG3 is progressively defined. As historians, we should welcome and answer as far as we can the renewed interest of our society in the historical roots of religious experience. This implies the careful analysis of religious processes in the past, in all their variety, complexity and different interactions with other aspects of social life. But it is also imperative that we do not lose sight of religion as being one of the most fascinating emanations of the human mind, one that particularly challenges history with the riddles of omnipresence in time and space.

The contributions

The chapters included in this volume vary widely in several ways. The group includes researchers from nine countries and ten different institutions, totalling 20 people of whom eight are doctoral students. Research interests range widely at various levels: chronological (from Antiquity to the late 20th century), thematic (from the sacralization of rituals in an atheist state to urbanism and religious segregation in medieval towns) and geographic (from the Iberian Peninsula to the Balkans, from Malta to Ireland). The scope of the contributions is also varied, from early reviews of research topics and literature to bird’s-eye views of a field and scholarly discussions of historiography in specific areas.

The volume is divided into four main sections. *Religious Communities and Urban Communities* brings together chapters that explore different ways in which religious communities interact with urban environments. *Religion and Mythology*, with contributions to identity in multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-confessional societies is more closely related to the problem of identity, a pervasive topic that reappears throughout the volume. *Religion in Secularisation and Nation Building Rituals and Implementation of Religious and Political Power* approaches the ways in which religion and political power interact. Within each section the order of the contributions is chronological.

In the opening chapter of the first section, *Jean-Luc Lamboley* focuses on the role of religion in the urban development of new Greek colonial cities. His approach builds upon research of the last two decades of the 20th century which moved away from the

political and institutional aspects of the foundation of cities to give more relevance to the religious dimension, especially the development of a common cult as the basis of the identity of the new communities, slowly replacing the particular devotions of the mixed population of original settlers. The archaeologist is able to retrace the emergence of the new identity through the effect of religion as a major structuring force of urban space. The poliad divinities, attached to the new city, become the unifying entity that organizes space, cultural references and activities.

The next three chapters give detailed overviews of the historiography of mendicant orders in urban contexts. *Dieter Berg* gives a detailed and scholarly overview of German historiography on the Franciscans, with a special focus on the relationship between the mendicant friars and the development of cities. The historiographical production is described in relation to a variety of topics: the wide-ranging interaction between the friars and the city involving the dimensions of urban topography, social status and propopographical studies, and the role of the order in urban development, urban riots, urban economy and intellectual life. Other aspects included in the review are the relationships between the Franciscans and civil and ecclesiastical authorities in the cities, an aspect where privileges, property and prominence played a conflicting role. Berg's analysis also describes how historiographical interest in the Order shifted with historical context and researchers' backgrounds, from the interest after World War II in the original message of peace and reconciliation of St. Francis, the emergence of new approaches under the influence of French historiography of the 1970s, and the role of the political division of Germany in the shaping of different approaches to research.

Raphaella Averkorn provides a complementary approach to Berg's by focusing on the Dominicans rather than the Franciscans. The development of historiography in the field is closely connected to the emergence of a new regional history in the 1980s because the friars are obviously a central agent in the organization of territories. An overview of the research institutions in Germany is given. A number of recurrent topics of research emerge. The main themes deal with the perception of mendicants orders in medieval society by medieval people. Another is the involvement of Dominicans in church politics, relationship with bishops, local clergy and other monasteries as well as with local authorities and nobility. Averkorn also describes current research into the attitudes of the friars regarding preaching and pastoral care, and their relationship with various cultural areas. The gender dimension is also reviewed through the research on female monasteries (or convents) that developed from the 1980s onwards. The overview also refers to the work of German historians that have published work on the relationship of mendicant orders and citizenship outside Germany, i.e., in England, Scotland, Ireland, Italy, France, Aragon and Castile, showing the path towards the integrated study of mendicants in European society.

Rita Ríos de la Llave approaches the connections between mendicant orders and cities in another context, that of the medieval Castile and León. Ríos analyses the shift in historiography as the field opens to researchers from outside the Order. New topics emerge, including the relationships between the royal family and the order, the politi-

cal role of the Dominicans, intellectual and academic development, religiousness and spirituality and urban growth. One of the main conclusions is that as long as studies of the mendicant orders and studies of medieval urban life remain as separate fields with little interaction and cross fertilization, true progress in both areas will be limited. The overview covers more specific themes, such as the communities of Dominican nuns in medieval Castile and Léon and the current issues of this emerging area. The last part of the chapter makes an inventory of open research topics related to Dominican communities and urban communities, among which we find the recurrent theme of conflicts with the secular clergy, with whom the friars were in a clear competition for souls and resources in the ecosystem of religious medieval life.

Luisa Trindade approaches the coexistence of different religious communities, a recurring theme in this volume. Here the angle is that of history of urbanism, or how multiple confessions coexist in the same urban area. The subject is the development of Jewish quarters in Portuguese towns. The spatial “identity” of the Jews is a construction of the 14th century, regulated by a royal decree of 1361. Trindade’s interest lies in the difference between law and practice, or rather between the governed space and the lived-in space. The slow adoption of law, the local tensions, the constraints of urban space and different demographic rhythms created complex patterns over time until the abrupt expulsion/conversion of the Jews in the 15th century. The review of current research and open issues depicts an interesting picture of how religious identities, however clearly defined by dogma and ruled by law, had to coexist in everyday life with the down-to-earth realities of economic roles and urban daily life, which continuously eroded the attempts to delimit, through space, a well-connected Jewish community. This is a point we will see made again later on the volume, in connection with Sicily.

Victor Mallia-Milanes’ paper on the Knights of St. John puts forward another important aspect of the role of religion in history: the relationship between religion and war, which he traces back to the famous sermon of Urban II in Clermont, 1095. The theme of the “Holy War” and the intellectual justification that makes it possible are very much at the centre of today’s debates. For seven hundred years, the Knights of St. John brought about the intersection of religious ideals, military warfare and secular power that we find everywhere in Christianity, but rarely in such a condensed and circumscribed setting. One of the interesting points made on the review of the historiography is how a circumstantial answer to a need of professional military support becomes a persistent structure in time that was to last for centuries. It reminds us of the unmatched power of religion to hold together a community in a radically changing environment. It is fascinating to see the way the Hospitallers adapted their original mission, without ever really changing its essential aspects, by playing the card of the threat even when it was hardly credible, reinforcing the role of the hospital to make the flow of resources justifiable, and keeping alive the idea of crusade long after its historical time.

Emanuel Buttigieg presents research in progress on “growing up” in Hospitaller Malta, during the *Ancien Régime*. Growing up is of course a matter much concerned with religion, as age was the subject of precise regulations from canon law, touching aspects

like autonomous will, capacity to take vows and decisions, etc... Buttigieg gives a brief overview of historical concepts of childhood before focusing on the way the question has been, or rather has not been, dealt with by Maltese historiography. The overview covers the exploitation of traditional sources like parish registers and information from medical institutions, while pointing at the same time to new approaches centred on the concept of “children’s geographies”. Travellers’ accounts are used to reconstruct the way public space was the stage for children’s activities in a society where men worked at sea and women ruled over the domestic space. The link between childhood and adolescence, and the charitable work of the Knights of St. John is made through a review of work related to the founding hospital and to dowries for marriage.

Olga Dekhtevich’s overview of the historiography of the Khlyst movement again raises the topic of the links between power, church and religious dissent. The Khlysts, or God’s people, were a long-living sect founded in the 17th century with a significant following until the early 20th century. In the 19th century they became a threat to the Russian Orthodox Church. Like many other sects that short-circuited the carefully crafted symbiosis between the official church and the state, the Khlysts become the subject of persecution, and much of the early writing on the movement came from officials in charge of its persecution. *Dekhtevich* describes the existing literature, stressing that the secretive nature of the sect, which encouraged its followers to be good Orthodox Church members and keep their true faith a secret, together with biased accounts from interested parties, makes it difficult to have a clear picture of the facts. But in spite of the unreliable sources, an interesting topic emerges, that of the connections between religious sectarianism and social movements, together with the capacity of religion to aggregate the struggle of the deprived against the powerful institutions of the church and state.

The second section takes us from the urban setting to multi-cultural and multi-ethnic contexts.

Maria-Paola Castiglioni tackles the main recurring theme of this volume: the connection between the religious sphere and the construction of the identity of communities. Here the context is the Greek colonial cities and their foundational mythological narratives. Castiglioni opens with an extended review of the field of mythology before she moves to the more specific connections between myth, acculturation, frontiers and ethnic identity. Contrary to a strict structuralist approach, myth is put into the historical context where it lived and is taken as part of the history of the period. The example of the Illyrian myth of Cadmos, the hero from Thebes, is used by Castiglioni to show these symbolic mechanisms at work, integrating the mythic narrative with archaeological findings. The resulting analysis suggests that the local elites appropriated the Greek episode to anchor their power and status, leaving open many interesting questions on the ways the religious dimension is used in a multi-cultural setting.

Jean-Luc Lamboley, in his second paper in this volume, revisits the same theme of the connection of myth and identity. The setting is Taranto, a Spartan colony during the 8th century B.C. The Tarantine myth is a wonderful narrative that brings together a

collective rite of passage with the foundation of a city. Lamboley's analysis goes one step further, demonstrating the role of the myth in asserting the right of the invading Greeks to the indigenous land they were occupying. By analysing the myth together with the archaeological evidence, it is possible to make sense of the particularities of the narrative and link them to the need to legitimise the appropriation of land that had a previous legitimate owner. The role of the myth as a resolution of basic conflicts of a culture is very well demonstrated. For the Greeks, the right to own land belonged to those that were born on it. Thus the occupation of other people's land posed a conceptual problem that the myth solves. A similar problem occurs in the re-colonization of territories occupied by Greek populations from another metropolis, which is also convincingly demonstrated in the case of Apollonia of Illyria.

Charles Dalli's chapter on medieval Sicily paints a vivid picture of the multiple combinations of religion, ethnicity and language that resulted from the Norman conquest of the island from 1060 onwards. The problem, from the new rulers' point of view, was how to deal with 250,000 Muslim subjects, and, on the side of the conquered, how to survive in the new regime, finding a path between "relegation and assimilation", through "dissimulation or rebellion". The Muslims had coexisted with Greek Christians and local Jews before the invasion, while the Normans brought new Greek and Latin immigrants from the continental territories under their control. The puzzle increased in complexity as the new lords choose Saracens both for high offices and court servants, while a new Latin feudal class emerged from the network of supporters of the new rulers. Dalli's review of sources and of current research highlights the complexity of the situation and the lack of correspondence between language, faith, ethnicity and social status until the policies of intolerance and ethnic clarification of the 13th century. We are again reminded that religious identities have to interact with different types of social constraints in complex ways.

Emöke Horváth's chapter is an example of approaching a frequently visited historiographical object and bringing in religion as a new angle. The Vandals' rule in Africa generated a stereotyped image, that of a people linked to violence and destruction, and persecutors of the Church. But the Vandals also had a religious element to their identity, that of following Arianism. According to Horváth, Arianism was a significant element of the identity of *gens vandalarum*. The Vandals were Christians, but by following Arianism they remained separate from the trinitarian world, including the Roman church. Horváth poses the question of the importance of religion to the Vandals, reviewing early medieval sources. Through the fragmentary evidence, there emerges a picture that stresses more the role of strategic constraints than an ethnic or religious specificity. A few thousand Vandals controlled a strategic territory, the most important harbour in the north of Africa and managed, as able seamen, to disrupt the main artery of commerce in the Mediterranean. The argument here is that religion, in this case Arianism, played an important role in forming the identity of the barbarian people. The religious intolerance of the Vandals derived from strategic choices rather than from special attention to dogmatic and spiritual subtleties. They persecuted the local Roman

bishops because of their leadership role. Arianism was an important element of identity of a minority of rulers in a hostile world.

Thomas Ruhland reviews the literature on two pietist missions in India: the Dänish-Hallesche Mission and the Herrnbuter Brüdergemeine, the first of their kind. As two expressions of the same Protestant denomination inside an alien environment, it is striking to see how specific identities of practice and objectives are developed and sustained by both missionary communities. Conflicts within pietism, combined with different economic and administrative settings, manage to maintain a distinct individuality in the two enterprises. Both missions assume a holistic attitude towards their objectives regarding the local population: it is not just about conversion, but also about civilization and education. In consequence, the missionaries transmit the rational and scientific values of the Enlightenment. Ruhland reproduces the striking quote of missionary John: "Science and its spread are, as I take it, a part of religion and mission..." But each mission represents different trends inside the enlightened intellectual currents of the late 18th and early 19th centuries and different approaches towards the local population. Again we find identity and religion closely connected in unexpected ways.

In the third section, *Religion in Secularization and Nation Building*, we have interesting examples of the various ways in which the religious dimension is present in the process of the emergence of new nations.

Iwan-Michelangelo D'Aprile approaches the opposition between religious concepts and the new secular frameworks that arise from the Enlightenment in Europe. It is probably the contribution most clearly placed in the area of History of Ideas, focusing on an epoch where concepts were in fact discussed at the European level. D'Aprile revisits recent historiographical trends that can be evoked to deal with the topic in hand. The topographical turn of recent historiography finds an interesting historiographical subject in the city of Berlin, as it became an end point for Jewish emigration in Central Europe, a process favoured by the tolerant policies of Frederik II. The question of Jewish citizenship can be seen as a good subject for cultural transfer research because in the 18th century, it was clearly a trans-national European question. Other current trends in the historiography of the Enlightenment are reviewed in relation to D'Aprile's topic, namely the concept of a long 18th century, since the understanding of the evolution of the handling of Jewish citizenship in Germany is only comprehensible when seen in a long 18th century that culminates in the Napoleonic invasion of Prussia.

Michael Refalo describes the end of a half-century long establishment in Malta, one that saw the island under the dominant role of three papal institutions: the Order, the Church and the Inquisition. Napoleon ended the rule of the Hospitallers in 1798. Two years of French rule did not change much and the role of the church was reinforced by their participation in the expulsion of the French with the aid of the British. Refalo reviews the literature on the political and institutional aspects of the church and also inquires into the religious sentiments and experiences of the population in general. At the institutional level, the historiographical issues can be summarized in the conun-

drum “How could a Roman Catholic island in the middle of the Mediterranean be ruled fairly peaceably by an Atlantic Protestant nation?”. It is very interesting to follow Refalo’s overview of the careful British handling of religious affairs on the island, and the way the wider political issues of the relationship between the Crown and the Vatican shaped the ecclesiastical politics of Malta. Later, as a local political class emerged, religion became a weapon on the path to a new regime. In the last pages of the paper, Refalo reviews new approaches to the religious life of Malta, referring to research about the role of bell-ringing and belfries, which detects the complex role of religion in local identity and communications.

Giulia Lami looks into the role of religion in the sense of nationality in contemporary Ukraine. The divide between the Russian Orthodox Church and the other Orthodox denominations, created after independence in 1991, maps the political divide revealed worldwide by media coverage of the “Orange revolution”. But Lami’s picture is more complex, showing that religious confession, linguistic background and national identity do not map easily onto geographical and religious divides. Tracing the origins of the Ukrainian mosaic, Lami goes back to the disintegration of the Kyivan Rus’ in the 13th century. The Greek-Catholic church, created in 1596 by the Union of Brest, becomes a factor of permanence and identity in an area of shifting borders all the way through to the 20th century. The review shows the intricate and sometimes unexpected ways in which national sentiments, religious denominations and the role of external powers interact. New perspectives and new methodologies are called for, especially trans-national comparative studies with a long time span, to respond to the need for historical knowledge in these changing times.

Borislav Mavrov’s review of Irish historiography continues the exploration of the role of religion in historiographical discourse dealing with national identity. While in Ukraine we saw “a new need for history”, in Ireland, the historiographical debate on the nature of national identity and the role of religion in the process has a long tradition. As Mavrov reviews the different schools and arguments on the specifics of the Irish national question, we are confronted with the fact that not only religion, but also history itself plays an important role in the foundation of identity processes, in a way similar to the foundation myths describe by Lambolley and Castiglioni.

In the last set of contributions, *Aleksey Klemeshov* reviews the Russian historiography on Roger Bacon, the famous Franciscan of the 13th century, whose works on grammar, philosophy, science and alchemy played a major role in medieval thought and the development of scientific thought. Klemeshov’s review testifies to the difficulties of researching certain historical subjects in the Soviet era. The life and work of Bacon was either ignored or, probably worse, transformed into the “ideologist of the urban working classes, atheistic but inconsistent” when referred to in dictionaries and encyclopaedias. It was only in 1985 that the first solid and extensive work on Bacon, in the form of a doctoral thesis, appeared. Klemeshov’s contribution constitutes the only chapter dedicated specifically to a significant religious thinker, which is somewhat surprising considering the number of important individuals that have shaped religious thought throughout the centuries.

The last two contributions introduce the role of rituals in the implementation of political power, an aspect that has been receiving growing attention in historiography.

Ana Isabel Ribeiro focuses on the question of ritual and symbolic representation in Portugal during the Ancién Regime. This was one of religion's central roles in society. Reviewing the existing literature on the subject, Ribeiro stresses the bi-directional exchange of practices and symbols between secular power and the church. Consecration and funeral rites of the kings provide the major opportunities for the sacrilization of power, but other studies show the role played by special spaces shared by the secular and religious, and also the usage of representations of power originating from civil authorities by ecclesiastical dignitaries like bishops. In this context, the rituals mainly have a differentiating role of stressing hierarchies and the distance between rulers and the ruled.

Dimitar Grigorov's description of Tito's birthday celebrations shows that rituals also have a levelling and unifying function. It also demonstrates that in a secular context, theoretically freed of any explicit religious reference, we find a usage of symbols and ceremonies that are clearly drawn from the same toolbox that supports religious practices. The connection between the ritual celebrations and the sense of national unity is striking, and Grigorov's description quickly dismisses a simpler interpretation centred on personality cult. In fact, we were facing the symbolic construction of a supranational identity centred on one man, the founder, and the role of the rituals described is to show clearly, in an almost totemic way, the flow of faith from every member of the community converging towards this figure in the mystical nature of the last baton.

CONCLUSION

CLIOHRES.net, like all scientific endeavour, is not free from its "spontaneous ideology" to bring back the useful, if outdated, expression of French philosopher Louis Althusser. It is central to this "ideology" that the confrontation of different approaches, different academic traditions and different scientific objects will produce a positive decentring effect that will translate into innovative insights, new questions, and new methodologies and, in the end, into significant progress of scientific knowledge. The validation of this vision is the final object of the project, so at the current stage, it has to go under the label of a hopeful hypothesis. As a generic principle, it is in noble company, from the concept of the great advances in civilization that were connected to moments of increased multiculturalism (in Claude Lévi-Strauss), to the current basic dogma of biology: diversity promotes adaptation and evolution. In our view, this first volume constitutes a promising step in that direction.

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NOTES

- ¹ However contemporary we may find the paradox of the present day importance of religion, it is, in fact, a recurrent theme that shows up frequently in the introduction of volumes on the subject. An example from the sixties: “One of the most intriguing intellectual phenomena of the mid-twentieth century is the widespread interest in religion at a time when there is also extensive agreement that religious belief, as traditionally understood, has markedly declined in its *intrinsic* significance for most members of modern societies”. R. Robertson, *Sociology of Religion: Selected Readings*, Reading 1969, p. 11.
- ² R. Debray, *Les communions humaines. Pour en finir avec “la religion”*, Paris 2005. See also, by the same author, *Le Feu sacré: fonction du religieux*, Paris 2003.
- ³ Debray, *Les communions* cit., p. 31.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-98.
- ⁵ See S. Trigano, *Qu'est-ce que c'est la religion?*, Paris 2004, and R. Boudon, *Le sens des valeurs*, Paris 1999. Both provide a reflection on the role of beliefs in social theory that we feel is consistent with the perspectives put forward here. From the latter author, there is also a biased, but thought provoking review of the main classical authors' views on these topics: R. Boudon, *Études sur les sociologies classiques*, Paris 2000.
- ⁶ L. Wolpert, *Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast. The Evolutionary Origins of Belief*, London 2006 and an earlier contribution: W. Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions*, Harvard 1996.
- ⁷ D. Dennet, *Breaking the Spell. Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, London 2006.