EASR CONGRESS 2018, Bern

Multiple religious identities

Monday, June 18

Chair Renata Salvarani

OPEN SESSION: Contrasting religious multiple identities: efforts to mark orthodoxies and differences in complex societies
Multiple religious identities can emerge in multiethnic and multicultural society and can be related with mixed behavior, syncretic worships, contaminations, new rituals, complex self conceptions, identity debates within religious groups. At the same time different communities can evidence some efforts to contrast multiple identities, defining orthodoxies, orthopraxis, ortholiturgies.
The object of this panel is the resistance to contaminations and to mixed identities, analyzed in historical perspective. The main aim is to outline general identity, social and cultural dynamics. No chronological limits are predetermined.
Papers and discussion will be focused on:
Ethnical and cultural aspect of multiple religious identities;
Dynamic and changeable aspects of multiple religious identities;
Definitions of orthodoxy;
Codifying religious orthodoxy (and orthopraxis) in multicultural and multiethnic contexts;
Strategies of contrasting multiple religious identities and behaviors;
Resistances to multiple religious identities within religious groups;
Processes of strengthening religious "orthodox" identities related with the contrast to multiple identities;
Use of violence connected with the resistance to standardization efforts;
Educational activities;
Legal aspects and interventions,

Dialogue and conversion in the contemporary world. Remarks in a historical and theological perspective

Ilaria Morali

Pontifical Gregorian University, Italy; ilariamorali@gmail.com

These days, *dialog* is an *umbrella term* with multiple meanings. Many Christians think that dialog (interreligious and ecumenical), have the goal of sharing 'different truths' by excluding apriori the conversion. Christian history shows however that dialog and conversion are not only closely linked in the life of Church but they played a peculiar role in the western cultural identity. In which sense dialog and conversion are today compatible? and why conversion has still importance for today?

When Sacred Languages Generated Puristic Metalanguages: Sanskrit, Hebrew and Arabic in a Comparative Perspective

Cyril Aslanov

Aix-Marseille Université/ Saint-Petersburg University, France; msaslan@mail.huji.ac.il

This paper aims at studying the relationship between the devotion to sacred texts (*Vedas* and *Upaniṣad* in Hinduism; Bible and Oral Law in Judaism; *Qurʾān* and *Ḥadīth* in Islam) and the emergence of grammatical schools (Pāṇini ca. 4th century BCE; the Jewish Massoretes of Tiberias between the 6th and the 10th century CE; the first schools of the Arabic grammatical tradition in Baṣrah and Kūfah in the 8th century CE). I would like to compare the correlation that the three religious traditions of Hinduism, Judaism and Islam established between their respective sacred languages and the corresponding grammatical metalanguages that are supposed to preserve their purity, or at least to protect the integrity of the texts conveyed in those languages. My attempt is to perceive the influence, the described languages (the languages of the sacred corpora) exerted on the grammatical metalanguages in which they are supposed to be described, transmitted and secured against erosion, corruption and spuriousness.

Martyrdom as identity choice: Christian communities during the first Islamic period (Spain, Egypt, Syria)

Renata Salvarani

European University of Rome, Italy; info@renatasalvarani.it

When the spread of Islam after the death of Muhammad led Christian communities in a minority condition, written sources testify death sentences for blasphemy and apostasy: Christian and Jew could deal with jails and executions as opportunity to state their religious identity and to refuse to be assimilated.

This situations cause problematic reactions in their religious communities and lead to contrasts and internal dialectic processes of identity/submission/dissimulation/assimilation.

The memory of the events can be canceled or altered; rarely the executions are officially recognized as martyrdoms, but sometimes these witnesses of religious identity enact a deep general change process.

Minorities are oriented to accept the rules imposed by the official power to be allowed to mantein their own rites and their organization. Individual stances and, mostly, voluntary martyrdoms are generally condemned: religious hierarchies try to hinder contrasts and rebellions.

The case of Cordoba's Martyrs is very known but some others are evident in Spain, Egypt, Syria between VIII and X centuries.

Islamic Orthodoxies and Orthopraxies in Libya, Saudi Arabia and Iran: Islamic Orthodoxies and Orthopraxies in Libya, Saudi Arabia and Iran: The Performance of Religious Identities in Shifting Geopolitical Contexts.

Alexander Grinberg

IDC Herzliya, Tel-Aviv university, Israel; sagrinb@gmail.com

Islamic Orthodoxies and Orthopraxies in Libya, Saudi Arabia and Iran:

The Performance of Religious Identities in Shifting Geopolitical Contexts.

The turbulent years of the Arab spring have made manifest the various socio-economic, cultural and ideological factors that participate in the performance of religious identities. Religious identities are tightly intertwined with national and transnational definitions, whereas religious affiliation by and for itself is no more monolithic but rather falls within a broad spectrum of religious observances and faiths from orthodoxy to orthopraxy.

The proposed paper will explore the inner machinations of performance of these shifting identities within the ever-changing geopolitical contexts of current Libya, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Each of these three countries provides new insights into the question of the performance of such identities within the socio-legal, and normative-cultural landscapes of the modern Muslim nation state

Libya. Libyan identity is defined by tribal affiliation no less than by belonging to 'Islam'. Tribal identity appears to be the strongest, and the performance of Islamic identity is entrapped by the existence of rival centers of power in the country: of popular Islam or Sufism, political Islamism, jihadist Movements and Salafism. Each script has its own socio-political repercussions. Moreover, what appears at first glance as pure ideological and religious constructs of identity could well be ideosynchronously conceived as ethnic and tribal. For instance, Libya is home to the Ibadi Muslim community, which in contrast to Salafists is often described as 'politically quietist' and 'ideologically moderate'. However most of Ibadi believers in Libya are ethnically Touaregs whereas the Salafists are Arabs.

The Saudi Arabia: The country is the most prominent example of tensions between orthopraxy and Islamist ideology (which often is incorrectly perceived as orthodoxy). The Wahhabi establishment is the custodian and overseer of the performance of orthopraxy in the Weberian meaning of the term. In a somewhat paradox way, the orthopraxic stance (in contrast to Islamist ideology) enables social and geo-political flexibility across the board. The Saudi civil space is a stage to Crown prince Mohammad Bin Salman 'reforms' on women rights, relations with Israel and the rapprochement with the 'heretical' Shi'ites in adjacent Iraq.

Iran. Iranian identity is based upon the pre-Islamic Persian culture and language, Shi'ite Islam and Western or westernized 'culture'. These components have been in conflict with each other over history. However, they are all imminent and integral parts for the performance of modern Iranian identity. Most orthodox Shi'ite behaviors are Iranian; Shi'ite establishment is thought according to Western canons of organization and even those secular Iranians who reject the ideology of Islamic revolution are culturally Shi'ite Muslims. The latter category suggests another inquiry into the research of religious affiliation as culture, well beyond the dichotomy of belief and disbelief.

Debating Armenian orthodoxy in the age of Confessionalization

Anna Ohanjanyan

Central European University, Hungary; annaohanjanyan@gmail.com

"When a layman inquires whether Armenian Church is heretical or orthodox, everyone starts speaking nonsense as if they are drunk on wine": with this words an unknown polemicist from early eighteenth century begins his treatise against confessional "others". Such an exquisite allusion to biblical *xenoglossia* highlights the existing polyphony of opinions on the orthodoxy (and orthopraxy) in Armenian communities under the Ottoman rule. Confessionalization age granted confessionally more or less homogeneous Eastern Orthodox (Apostolic) Armenians with the emergence of complex religious, confessional and cultural identities. Long-lasting coexistence with Muslims compelled to elaborate mutual norms of segregation in shared physical spaces as well as a number of social regulations and behavioural codes to steer clear of contamination. More challenging was coexistence with proselytising Christians, particularly Catholics. After the intensive infiltration of post-Tridentine Catholicism into Armenian communities, the number of crypto-Catholic Armenians rapidly increased. Shared sacred spaces and *Communicatio in Sacris* (i.e. common participation in worship) became main impetus for both Apostolic and Catholic Armenians to define and fashion Armenian orthodoxy and to codify orthopraxy in the communities. It was accompanied with the making of new credal documents, catechisms, liturgical and spiritual writings leading to the diversification of opinions within the society. This paper discusses intellectual and social debates on the "true orthodoxy/orthopraxy" within Armenian communities and the strategies of its definition, clarification and framing in the the multi-religious and cultural Ottoman context at the turn of eighteenth century.

Politically Conditioned Form of Multiple Religious Belonging in Medieval Georgia

Lado {Vladimer} Mirianashvili

Fund of Science Udabno, Georgia; lado_miriani@yahoo.com

Politically Conditioned Form of Multiple Religious Belonging in Medieval Georgia

Lado Mirianashvili

Based on Georgian medieval examples, I am introducing a new form of multiple religious belonging, in addition to those five ones which have been distinguished by Catherine Cornille. I call it Politically Conditioned Form. It stands close to Occasional Belonging, which is identified with popular religiosity and healing rituals, as well as spiritual seeking, though is quite different from the latter. In my paper I will overview roots and peculiarities of the Politically Conditioned Form of multiple religious belonging and its effect on the society.

On 20 November, 1612, Treaty of Nasuh Pasha was signed between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Persia, granting the latter suzerainty over all Caucasus, including east Georgia (Kartli and Kakheti Kingdoms). Starting from 1632, Persia succeeded in bringing Muslimized Bagrationis to the throne of Kartli: to become a king (actually the nominated *wali*), the candidate to the throne was to receive confirmation from the Shah who would not grant consent until the candidate accepted Muslim faith. The Georgian princes had to obey: they accepted Islam, the religion of their Persian suzerain, but at the same time continued to maintain Christian belief and heritage. Outwardly, the Muslimized Georgian kings lived a Muslim's life: they wore Muslim cloths and followed certain Muslim traditions, but at the same time they remained Christians: they donated vast lands and villages to Christian monasteries, commissioned construction of churches and copying of Christian manuscripts, etc. Despite the fact that these two religions – Christianity and Islam – are not compatible and that the Orthodoxy requires single commitment from the believers, this type of multiple religiosity was accepted by all.

One of the colourful examples of the Politically Conditioned Form of multiple religious Belonging is that of Giorgi XI, king of Kartli. Giorgi ascended the throne in 1676 as a Muslim, and was given the name of Shah Navaz II. He did his best to strengthen king's power and to gain independence for the country. As he had plans on receiving military assistance from the west, he supported activities of Catholic missionaries in Georgia. Thanks to surviving letter sent by a missionary to Rome, we know that on 7 December, 1686, Giorgi XI converted to Catholicism. On 29 April, 1687 he sent a letter to Pope Innocent XI expressing loyalty on behalf of himself and his son, and asked for military assistance. One more conversion followed, and again for political reason. In 1688 Giorgi XI rebelled against the

Persians. Shah relinquished him from the throne. When the situation with Afghan rebels became complicated, Shah Husein decided to use Giorgi's military experience against the Afghans and to reconcile him. Giorgi was invited to the Persian court. In 1696 he arrived in Isfahan, again converted to Islam and received back the throne, though he got involved in military operations against the rebel Afghans, who have treacherously killed him. A cross, miniature icon and Psalm Book was found on the body of killed Giorgi.

DISCUSSION

Giovanni Casadio

University of Salerno, Italy

Discussion on the panel's argument and on the papers items related with hisotriographical problems and perspectives.