

# DANUBIUS

## SUPLIMENT

XXXII  
2014

RELIGIOUS  
PLURALISM  
IN GLOBAL  
PERSPECTIVE



EDITURA  
Muzeului de Istorie Galați

MUZEUL DE ISTORIE GALAȚI

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# **DANUBIUS**

**XXXII**

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## **RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

**Issue editor: George ENACHE**



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Oğuzhan Tan\*

***STATE AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN TURKEY.  
AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW FROM THE OTTOMANS  
TO THE REPUBLIC PERIOD***

**Abstract:** State's position from religion and faith groups in Turkey has several historical dynamics. Ottomans treated non-Muslims within a semi-autonomous so-called *Millet System* derived from the Islamic Law until 1856 when *The Imperial Reform Edict* granted all faith groups without distinction a set of rights and totally abolished the *Millet system*. However religious authorities did not welcome this change due to the fact that the extension of the citizens' rights meant a decline in religious authorities' dominion over their own communities. Consequently, non-Muslim communities gained a more prominent and political characteristic which resulted in developing an ethnic nationalism within the religious communities.

In the Treaty of Lausanne signed in 1923, a very important reference concerning the issue of minorities in the Republic of Turkey, the minority concept was based on the Muslim/non-Muslim distinction. On the other hand, the new regime's political design and its religion policies had deep effects on the political, social and religious life. Many of the contemporary problems connecting relationship between the state and faith groups in Modern Turkey date from the last two centuries and are highly associated with the transition from the Ottoman Period to the Republic one.

**Keywords:** *Religious Pluralism, Diversity, Turkey, Muslim, Non-Muslim, Islamic Law, Ottoman*

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### The Religious Demography of Turkey

Today, about 76 million people live in Turkey. 99 percent of the population is Muslim<sup>1</sup>, which can be confirmed by official resources given the fact that each citizen's religion is recorded in their identity card. The rest consists primarily of Christians and Jews. Though there are no precise surveys, and the estimates of numbers are influenced by political claims and counterclaims,<sup>2</sup> according to a statistical survey carried out in 2007 by KONDA, an independent research and consultancy agency, 82 percent of the Muslims in Turkey are Sunnī. Those defining themselves as Alevī or Sh'īī make 5.73 percent of the Muslim population.<sup>3</sup> However figures alone do not reveal the complex interplay between the majority and the minority as well as between the state and the religious communities.

### The Ottoman Experience with Religious Diversity

What we see in the broad scene of religious pluralism in modern Turkey has come about as a result of several historical dynamics. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Modern Turkey encountered lots of political and cultural challenges, one of which was managing diverse faith groups within a new political regime. The Ottoman rule had spanned over ages and across different cultures to acquire a fully-fledged pluralistic experience. Basing their tolerant and accepting policy with non-Muslims on a Qur'anic verse which is "let there be no compulsion in religion; truth stands out clear from error",<sup>4</sup> Ottomans treated them within a so-called *Millet System* which was intended to protect non-Muslims' rights. Derived from Arabic, the word *millet* in Ottoman usage commonly refers to a non-Muslim religious community such as Christians or Jews. According to this semi-autonomous system, every religious community was able to elect their highest leaders and to have religious and legal authorities with regard to their interior issues including marriage, divorce and inheritance. They had their own courts with jurisdiction over their members in religious matters. Judgments were executed by

<sup>1</sup> Kevin Boyle, Juliet Sheen, eds., *Freedom of Religion and Belief: A World Report*, 1st ed. (Routledge: London: 1997), 386.

<sup>2</sup> David Shankland, "Islam", in *The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey*, ed. M. Heper and S. Sayın (Routledge: New York, 2012), 107.

<sup>3</sup> "Aleviyim' diyenlerin sayısı 4.5 milyon," accessed October 13, 2013, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2007/03/21/guncel/agun.html>. The percentage of Sunnī population is given as 80% by Boyle and Sheen, *Freedom of Religion and Belief*, 387.

<sup>4</sup> 2. Baqara, 256 (Abdullaah Yusuf Ali's Translation).

the Ottoman government and some patriarchates had their own prisons.<sup>5</sup> Additionally every *millet* had the right to speak its own language and to receive education in its own schools. But there were some restrictions on their freedom; for instance they were not allowed to ring the bells outside the church or during the prayer time of the Muslims. When the Ottoman Empire declined in the nineteenth century, 14 *millets* were recognized by the Ottoman state.<sup>6</sup>

This system gained an institutional characteristic shortly after the conquest of Constantinople. Mehmed II ordered the orthodox Greeks to elect a religious leader for themselves and he named the elected Patriarch Gennadius II (Georgios Scholarios) as *millet başı* which means “the head of the community”.<sup>7</sup> With its new name, Istanbul preserved its Orthodox population and became the center of the other Orthodox Churches (Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Ukrainian and Albanian).

Mehmed II invited Hovakim, the catholic Armenian Bishop of Bursa, and wanted him to be the patriarch of the Armenian Church located in Istanbul.<sup>8</sup> He also appointed Moses Capsali as the Chief Rabbī of all Ottoman Jews.<sup>9</sup> After the Alhambra Decree issued on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1492 a lot of Sephardic Jews emigrated from the Iberian Peninsula to Ottoman Lands and settled in major cities.

The Jews who lived in Istanbul worked mainly in business and government. One of the turning-point for the Ottoman Jews was that in 1648, a young Sephardic rabbī, Sabbatai Zevi, claimed to be the long-awaited Jewish Messiah in Izmir, which was a center of Levantine trade. His claims were at first rejected by the other rabbīs and scholars; however he continued to proclaim his mission and cabbalistic teachings for over twenty years. His fame reached all over the Jewish world. Many of the Jews and some rabbīs believed in his messianic mission and followed him. The Jewish community was divided into two groups. Since he proclaimed his own kingship and called himself the king of the kings, some prominent rabbīs from opposing group took action against him and he was arrested and imprisoned. According to some accounts, as there was such a high possibility of being executed by the Sultan, he declared his conversion to Islam on 16 September 1666 and took a Muslim name, Mehmed. Many of his followers did the same thing becoming

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<sup>5</sup> Boyle, Sheen, *Freedom of Religion and Belief*, 387.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

<sup>7</sup> See Franz Babinger, *Mehmed The Conqueror*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 1959), 104-5; Gilles Veinstein, “Religious Institutions, Policies and Lives,” in ed. Suraiya N. Farokhi, Kate Fleet, *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. II (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2013), 322.

<sup>8</sup> Salahi R. Sonyel, *Minorities and Destruction of the Ottoman Empire* (Ankara, 1993), 38 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Veinstein, “Religious Institutions,” 322.



known as *dönme*, which means convert. Their conversion, however, has been considered by others as insincere and outwardly. Consequently, as an esoteric group Sabbataism has had deep effects on a set of political and religious debates.

Designating two types of citizens, Muslims and non-Muslims, the *Millet system* was gradually changed by the Ottoman Sultans to keep the diverse nations living under their sovereignty away from the overwhelming political influences that the French Revolution brought about.

First, the Imperial Edict of Reorganization (*Imperial Edict of the Rose House*), a very important milestone in this change process, was proclaimed in 1839 by Sultan Abdulmecid I. Bringing a new legal perspective concerning religious and political rights, the Edict expressly stated that “These imperial concessions extend to all our subjects, whatever religion or sect they may belong to; and they will enjoy them without any exception.”<sup>10</sup>

Second, a more detailed Code, *The Imperial Reform Edict* issued in 1856 granted all those faith groups without distinction a set of rights, and totally abolished the *Millet system* which had worked over centuries throughout the Ottoman history.

However, the religious authorities did not welcome the redefinition of the civil rights and of the legal status that this change brought about due to the fact that the extension of the citizens’ rights meant a decline in religious authorities’ dominion over their own communities. Consequently, non-Muslim citizens began to get involved in public life and politics much more. Thus, non-Muslim communities gained a more prominent and political characteristic which resulted in developing an ethnic nationalism within the religious communities introducing a new complexity into Ottoman culture.<sup>11</sup>

We should point out that according to the *Millet system* which was based on the rights given to the diverse faith-believers in the Islamic Law,<sup>12</sup> *millets* should not be seen as minorities only; but all the Muslims were considered as a *millet* also regardless of their racial ethnicity.<sup>13</sup> The word “minority” began to be used much more in the Ottoman politic life in the very late times of The Ottoman Empire bringing with itself two new concepts; “minority issues” to express their problems

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<sup>10</sup> See: Carter Vaughn Findley, “The Tanzimat”, in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 4 (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2013), 28-30.

<sup>11</sup> D. A. Rustow, “Turkey: The Modernity of Tradition”, in *Political Culture and Political Development*, ed. L. W. Pye and S. Verba (Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 1965), 177.

<sup>12</sup> Veinstein, “Religious Institutions,” 323.

<sup>13</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford University Press: London, 1961), 329.

and “issue of minorities” to express the problems they caused . This conceptual break was felt in the following period too.

### **The Republic against the Challenge of the Diverse Faith Groups**

During the negotiations of the Treaty of Lausanne, signed in 1923, a very important reference concerning the issue of minorities in Modern Turkey was brought up: the Turkish Delegation insisted on recognizing a minority concept based on religion. After that time, the word minority in Turkey has been applied to non-Turkish and non-Muslim citizens only, in particular to Greek Orthodox people, Armenians and Jews, excluding many others, such as Roman Catholics, Syrians and Protestants, which implies that they would not be able to enjoy the rights secured by the Treaty of Lausanne and they would face problems with regard to obtaining a legal personality, education and places for religious worship.

Non-Muslim minorities encountered a few political and cultural problems many of which were dating from the last two centuries of Ottomans when the issue of the minorities had been one of the major politic crises. The Ottomans suffered much from the nationalist influences of the French revolution, and they lost their sovereignty in many places. In addition, after the World War I, the Turkish delegations who participated in a series of treaty negotiations saw the minority file on the table. That made them believe that the issue of the minorities was to be politically misused. In other words, the problems emanated from the fact that the issue of the minorities was perceived as a part of the foreign relationships with other countries rather than a profound religious hatred.

After Turkey was declared a republic in 1923, the Turkish National Assembly, led by Ataturk, the First President, realized a dozen of so-called *Ataturk's revolutions*, which had deep effects on the political, social and religious life.<sup>14</sup> The new regime wanted to transform the society and create a new type of citizen by means of some strictly applied secular policies and top-down changes. According to the new design, the transformation of the Turkish society had to be total and fast, both in essence and outer appearance.<sup>15</sup> This standardization was especially carried out on the Muslim population. We can mention few of these changes as follows:

- The Law on the unification of education in 1924, which was aimed at taking control over the entire education system. In accordance with this law, non-

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<sup>14</sup> D. Shankland, “Islam,” 107.

<sup>15</sup> Metin Heper, “Kemalism/Atatürkism,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey*, ed. M. Heper and S. Sayin (Routledge: New York, 2012), 140.

governmental religious schools were closed down and teaching religions and religious education were both removed from state schools' curricula.<sup>16</sup>

- The law on compulsory hat wearing issued in 1925, which is still in force and proposing its change is forbidden by the constitution.
- The law on the closure of the Dervish lodges issued in 1925. These institutions were an integral part of the Ottoman social life. These lodges or fraternities stood equally for diverse sufi interpretations and practices of Islam and had a very broad base in the society.
- The law on the change of the alphabet issued in 1928, which prohibited the usage of the Arabic alphabet in all areas of the life, from education to publication. Since the Quran itself and almost all the religious literature had been written in the Arabic alphabet this change reflected very negatively on the religious life. Teaching the Quran, having old books or selling them were considered as an action against Ataturk's revolutions. The politic rationale of this change was, apparently, the cutting off the people from their traditional and religious memory.<sup>17</sup>
- The language of the Muslim call to prayer (Adhan) was changed in 1932 to Turkish from its original language which would have been recognized by any Muslim all around the Muslim world. This change was not pleasing for anybody.

These changes, some of which we mentioned, ostracized religious people to such a degree that they could not take office in the administrative system or army. Intervention in religious life has decreased to a great extent over the course of the time, yet there are some effects that continue to persist even today.

In 1946, the era of the single-party democracy ended. The Democrat Party, which took the power from the Republican Party in 1950, opened the way to more religious freedom; however they were removed from power by a coup in 1961. The public rationale for this coup and the others which occurred later on in 1971 and 1981, as well as the memorandum issued in 1997 by the National Security Council which compelled the prime minister to resign, was that suggesting the idea that the political leaders of the time were pursuing policies that violated the revolutions of the Republic.

Even though Turkey took very important steps in the field of religious freedom during the membership process to European Union, the old sentiments obstructing freedom still surface from time to time. The head covering known as the hijāb has remained one of the most symbolic facets of this debate between the fundamentalist secularism and the religious freedom. Until a few years ago,

<sup>16</sup> Boyle, Sheen, *Freedom of Religion and Belief*, 388.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*; See, İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralar*, vol. 2 (Ankara, 1987), 223.

students who covered their head were not accepted into universities. Many of them had to leave their country to study in some western universities. Although today they can go to any university in Turkey as the result of a kind of makeshift solution, they do not yet have any legal guarantee that they will be able to continue their education in this manner because of the lack of a law specifying their right to study with the hijāb. Furthermore, the Turkish parliament, whose responsibility is to represent the people, has never had any woman parliamentarian who wore the hijāb, although 61% of the women in Turkey wear it, according a survey from 2007.<sup>18</sup>

Another important component of the spectrum of the religious diversity in Turkey is the Alevism, which appeared first as a Sufi interpretation of the Shi'ism. The Alevism was transmitted throughout generations through a mostly oral culture, and retains some elements from the Central Asian Turkish beliefs.<sup>19</sup> A very dramatic historical trauma for the Alevīs was the Battle of Chaldiran which occurred in 1514 between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Empire, in other words between Selim I, known to be the first Ottoman caliph, and Shah Ismail, Turkish and Alevī leader of Safavids. The Ottoman Alevī population who lived in eastern Anatolia had very close relations with the Safavid State. In addition to having revolted against the Ottomans many times before the battle, they favored Shah Ismail in the battle. A lot of the Ottoman Alevīs who supported the Safavids were killed in both the rebellions and the battle that ended with Selim's victory. That is why the Alevī People were never able to recover from the effects of this trauma. They were also categorized later on as religious heretics and political outsiders. They simply had to keep their beliefs and rituals alive in their closed life-sphere.

For the Alevīs, the collapse of the Ottomans and the foundation of a Republic system instead offered a glimmer of hope. Although their status got better compared to before, their religious freedom remained limited. The Alevi people think that the double-standard policy of the state between different sects of Islam has been continuing. Some of the basic demands of Alevīs in Turkey could be summarized as follows:

- They want their *gathering house*, where the Alevi rituals take place, to be recognized officially as a place of worship just as the mosques are. If we have a look at the Alevī rituals we will clearly see that they bear a lot of the same features as those in the Sunnīte Sufic tradition. However the Alevī people's attendance at the mosques is much less than that of the Sunnīte people which makes the gathering house an alternative to the mosque. Alevīs' view of the

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<sup>18</sup> "A&G Araştırma Şirketi Verileri, 21.09.2007 - 23.09.2007," accessed October 13, 2013, [http://www.agarastirma.com.tr/arastirmalar/ortusunu\\_nasil\\_tanim.pdf](http://www.agarastirma.com.tr/arastirmalar/ortusunu_nasil_tanim.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Mehmet Eröz, *Türkiye'de Alevilik ve Bektaşilik* (Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları: Ankara, 1990), 327.

mosque has such a crucial importance that equalizing the gathering house with the mosque and seeing it as an alternative for it complicates the solution, since the mosque is very central to the mainstream interpretation of Islam.<sup>20</sup>

- They are not happy with the compulsory “religious culture and morality” lesson given in the elementary and secondary schools for two hours a week in accordance with the Constitution of 1982. Although this lesson was intended to cover general information about the definition of the religious beliefs and moral principles, its content has been changed to some extent in practice in order to become Sunnī-based, with a focus on Islamic prayers. However we should assert that it would not be very possible for many students to receive essential information about Islam, its faith and prayers without this lesson. This explains the reason why the content of the lesson has been changed.
- There are many non-governmental Alevī organizations and groups which have different perspectives in Turkey. That is why they cannot easily come to an agreement on many topics; which makes reaching a solution hard.

### **Diyamet: A Governmental Religious Authority in a So-Called Secular State**

Said to be a secular state, Turkey has a governmental authority called the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyamet) which is officially “responsible for conducting the affairs concerning the principles of Islamic faith, worship, and ethics and enlightening the people as to worship and morals and managing and supervising the worship places.”<sup>21</sup> Diyamet is the most important part of the regime’s design concerning relations between state and religion. Isolated from temporal and civil characteristics and directed by the state, Diyamet was presumably established in order to place the Islam or the Sunnī Muslim community under the state’s control rather than to support them.

We see that there are different views in the public opinion on the existence of such a religious institution attached to the state. Most Sunnī Muslims have a positive view of the Diyamet, especially in respect to the coordination and administration of the mosques without any factional division. However, some of them are not happy and want an autonomous religious administration,<sup>22</sup> especially when the state patronage reflects extensively on the content of preaching and *khutbas*. Complaining that the state aims to raise up “a good citizen” in the mosques, rather than “a good Muslim,” some Sunnī people propose a civil management of mosques.

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<sup>20</sup> Shankland, “Islam,” 107.

<sup>21</sup> *Law on the constitution of Presidency of Religious Affairs and it’s duties*, issued in 1965, Article 1.

<sup>22</sup> Boyle, Sheen, *Freedom of Religion and Belief*, 392.

Those who are secularists, republicans or statistes also see the Diyanet as a useful safety-valve for the regime because of the fear that “if the state doesn’t control them they can control it.” As for the liberal secular people who are the minority, they do not welcome a governmental religious institution at all.

We can say that there are two types of Alevī views on the Diyanet; while some of them believe that such governmental patronage in favor of a religion or sect should not exist in a secular state and view the Diyanet as just a part of a transformation and assimilation policy,<sup>23</sup> others do not oppose the patronage concept as a whole but they want the Alevī community to be represented within the Diyanet independently, rather than under a Sunnī administration. By obtaining official representation, they think that they would legitimate their belief and place it on par with the majority’s belief. On the other hand, they do not want to be officially recognized or funded via the Ministry of Culture on the basis of a cultural recognition because they do not want to be seen as a cultural tradition only, but as a religious faith system also.

### **Conclusion**

Unlike what is often mentioned,<sup>24</sup> there is a third model of secularism other than the Anglo-Saxon model, which is distinguished by taking a passive position and keeping equal distance from all the faith groups on a basis of respect, and the assertive French model which ignores religious presence in the state sphere. Experienced in the iron curtain countries, the third model which we can call *militant secularism* tends to take a hostile standpoint toward religions and exclude them from both state and public life. Even though Turkish secularism was said to be highly inspired by the French model, its practice has borne comparison with the third model as well.

In 1928, as a first step to secularism the statement that “the religion of the state is Islam” was removed from the Turkish Constitution of 1924 and Secularism was added to the Constitution in 1937 as one of the unassailable structural principles of the state.<sup>25</sup> This emphasis was preserved without definition in both Constitutions which were prepared in 1961 and 1982 after two coups; however its implications concerning political, social and religious life have gone beyond being just an emphasis. Violating the principles of the Secularism has been a serious crime, because of which political parties were closed down and government

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<sup>23</sup> Boyle, Sheen, *Freedom of Religion and Belief*, 392.

<sup>24</sup> Ahmed Kuru, “Assertive and Passive Secularism State Neutrality, Religious Demography and the Muslim Minority in the United States”, in *The Feature of Religious Freedom*, ed. Allen D. Hertzke (Oxford University Press: 2013), 235.

<sup>25</sup> Article 2.

officials were fired. Nobody knew what the legal definition of Secularism was exactly, yet courts could rule on that kind of cases.

Even though Turkey, has witnessed normalization in its political stability to some extent in the last decade, it still needs to improve its democratic culture and create much more awareness of diversity in order to rescue it from being a source of conflict.

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*Fatima Saba Akhunzada\**

***THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN RELIGIOUS PLURALISM.  
A CASE STUDY OF PAKISTAN***

**Abstract:** The term interfaith dialogue is not new now. Followers of different religions and of different ideologies have already mentioned it. Since the World has become a global village, the need of interfaith discussion increased. The main objective of this interfaith dialogue is to promote religious tolerance and peace among different religions and to avoid conflicts and violence. Another objective is to create the atmosphere of respect towards the other religions which we hardly see in the past. We observe discrimination and prejudices among the followers of different religions which continues even at this day and age. Religion is the need of every person and society, its role cannot be ignored in life, and it should not be used as a reason of conflicts among the nations. We observe in the past and even in the present that the reasons and causes of conflicts are racial and regional and based on caste and creed rather than religion.

The hereby article tackles the situation of Pluralism in Pakistan and the attitude of the state towards other religious minorities. There is a brief discussion about the existing ethnic groups and their conflicts. The rights of religious groups are discussed in the light of the constitution of 1973. Violence and discrimination against the minorities is discussed in the paper and their complaints and problems are highlighted. In the end some recommendations are discussed, regular sessions of interfaith dialogue are the need of the present time. Sectarian violence should be banned. A special program should be put in place among religious groups of every level to trust, respect and religious tolerance in the society. The constitution of 1973 should not be violated by the state or religious minorities.

**Keywords:** *Pakistan, pluralism, interfaith dialogue, religious minorities*

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### **Religious Freedom in Pakistan. The Legal Framework**

Pakistan, officially the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, is a sovereign country in South Asia. With a population exceeding 180 million people, it is the sixth most populous Muslim country in the world<sup>1</sup>. The territory of modern day Pakistan was home to several ancient cultures, and has undergone invasions or settlements by Hindu, Persian, Islamic, Mongol, Afghan and the Sikh cultures.

The area has been ruled by the numerous empires: the Arab Umayyad Caliphate, the Mongol Empire, the Durrani Empire, the Sikh Empire and the British Empire. The gradual decline of the Mughal Empire in the Eighteen Century enabled Sikh rulers to control large areas, until the British East India Company gained ascendancy over south Asia. The collective struggle for freedom of the All India Muslim League and Indian National Congress plotted against the British; in early 1947, Britain announced the decision to end its rule in India.<sup>2</sup>

The political system of Pakistan is that of a Democratic Parliamentary Federal Republic with Islam as a state religion. The population of Pakistan comprises several main ethnic groups (2009)<sup>3</sup>:

Punjabis (42.15%): 70.7 million
Pashtuns (17.42%): 35.2 million
Sindhis (14.1%): 24.8 million
Seraikis (10.53%): 14.8 million
Muhajirs (7.57%): 13.3 million
Balochs (3.57%): 6.3 million
Others (4.66%): 11.1 million

Pakistan is the second most populous Muslim-majority country. About 95 - 98% of Pakistanis are Muslim. The majority are Sunni (85-90%), with an estimated

<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Population Studies, Islamabad, Pakistan; MEASURE DHS ICF International Calverton, Maryland, USA, Pakistan. Demographic and Health Survey, 2012-2013, 2013: 2 (<http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR290/FR290.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup> See James Wynbrandt, *A Brief History of Pakistan* (Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, New York, 2009), 1-159.

<sup>3</sup> "Pakistan," accessed July 13, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakistan#Demographics>.

10-15% Shia.<sup>4</sup> A further 0,25 – 2,3% are Ahmadis, who are officially considered non-Muslims by virtue of a 1974 constitutional amendment.<sup>5</sup>

After Islam, Hindus (approx. 3.300.000 in 2005, 1,85%) and Christians (approx. 2,800,000 in 2005, 1.6% ) are the largest religious minorities in Pakistan. They are followed by the Baha'i believers (40,000 to 79,000), Sikhs (approx. 20.000) and then by very small communities of Zoroastrians, Kalash, Jains, Buddhists and Jews. The Christians are mainly geographically spread throughout the Punjab province, while their presence in the rest of the provinces is mostly confined to the urban areas centres.<sup>6</sup> Peshawar and Buner (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province - KPK) has an important population of Sikhs<sup>7</sup>, Sindh and Baluchistan has great influential Hindu population<sup>8</sup>.

It is very difficult to determine the exact percentages in the share of each religion, as national censuses held in Pakistan had uncertain results. Pakistani authorities are trying to reduce the proportion of religious minorities, while their representatives and international organizations speak of a significantly higher number of Pakistanis who are not Muslims.

For the analysis of the relation between the state and the minorities, it is better to take start from the famous saying of the first general governor of Pakistan: Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah: "you are free to go to your temples and mosques"<sup>9</sup>. These words actually opened the doors of religious freedom to the minorities in Pakistan .

The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, as the main legal document, both in terms of providing substantive rights, and of laying down standard regulatory norms, contains a number of articles that are designed to protect and promote the rights of indigenous populations and ethnic minorities in the country. The preamble of the Constitution provides that: "Adequate provisions shall be made for the minorities freely to profess and practice their religions and develop their cultures, [and that] fundamental rights, including equality of status, of opportunity and

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "Events of 1974 – Anti-Ahmadi Hostilities," accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.reviewofreligions.org/1968/events-of-1974-%E2%80%93-anti-ahmadi-hostilities/>.

<sup>6</sup> "Christianity in Pakistan," accessed July 14, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity\\_in\\_Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Pakistan).

<sup>7</sup> "Sikhism in Pakistan," accessed July 14, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism\\_in\\_Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_in_Pakistan).

<sup>8</sup> "Hinduism in Pakistan," accessed July 14, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism\\_in\\_Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism_in_Pakistan).

<sup>9</sup> "You are free to go to your temples and mosques: Quaid-e-Azam ," accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.brecorder.com/muhammad-ali-jinnah/the-road-to-pakistan/39918-you-are-free-to-go-to-your-temples-and-mosques-quaid-e-azam-.html>.

before law, social, economic and political justice, and freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship and association, subject to law and public minority [shall be accorded to all citizens]”<sup>10</sup>.

The constitution guarantees the freedom to practice the religion of choice and to manage religious institutions, the protection against taxation for the benefit of any other particular religion, and the protection to attend educational institutions in order to receive religious instruction or take part in any religious ceremony, or religious worship if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to another religion.<sup>11</sup>

In order to get an idea on the state’s ministers towards the rights of the religious minorities, one would have to review some of their statements, which are here in the letter of Pakistan’s Federal Minister of Religious Affairs to the European Union, written in 2006: “Minorities are free. There is no religious discrimination on the basis of religion. Interfaith dialogue committees have been established, and they review the level of religious tolerance every three months.”<sup>12</sup>

In another example, we know that the authorities of the state are conscious about the minorities’ rights which are mentioned in the Constitution of 1973. The Minister of Punjab said to the delegation of the representatives of minorities: “The Constitution of Pakistan explains that all minorities have full freedom of their beliefs and practices. The worship places will be protected by the state, which is responsible for all its citizens. Some seats are reserved for the minorities to provide them the opportunities of joining Government services. Furthermore, the state is responsible for the solution of their problems.”<sup>13</sup>

In order to provide a voice to religious minorities, Article 51 (2A) of the Constitution provides ten additional public service to the Christians, Hindu, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis and Quadiani (Lahori) religious communities in the national assembly.

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<sup>10</sup> “The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan,” accessed July 14, 2013, [http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1333523681\\_951.pdf](http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1333523681_951.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> “UrdupointNewspapers, December 18, 2006, Islamabad,” accessed July 15, 2013, <http://daily.urdupoint.com/>.

<sup>13</sup> “UrdupointNewspapers, May 2, 2013, Islamabad,” accessed July 15, 2013, <http://daily.urdupoint.com/>.

**Table 2.1** Seats for specific religious communities in national assembly<sup>14</sup>

Religious communities	No. of seats allowed
Christians	4
Hindu and persons belonging to the schedule castes	4
Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis communities and other non-Muslims	1
People belonging to the Quadiani or the Lahori group (who call themselves Ahmadis)	1

**Table 2.2** Seats for specific religious communities in Provincial assemblies<sup>15</sup>

Province	Christians	Hindus and scheduled castes	Sikh, Buddhists, Parsi and other non - Muslims	Quadiani/ Ahmadi/ Lahori group
Baluchistan	1	1	1	-
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	1	-	1	1
Punjab	5	1	1	1
Sindh	2	5	1	1

The government allowed religious minorities to officially celebrate their sacred holidays. Pakistan has also given the minorities the freedom to build their own worship places. Christians have 150-155 churches in almost different cities of Pakistan<sup>16</sup> and there are almost 75 temples for Hindus<sup>17</sup> and 40 gurdwaras for Sikhs<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> "The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan," accessed July 14, 2013, [http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1333523681\\_951.pdf](http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1333523681_951.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Shaheed Sardar Ali and Javaid Rehman, *Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Minorities of Pakistan. Constitutional and Legal Perspectives* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), 21-2.

<sup>16</sup> "List of Churches in Pakistan," accessed July 13, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_churches\\_in\\_Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_churches_in_Pakistan).

<sup>17</sup> "List of Hindu temples in Pakistan," accessed July 13, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Hindu\\_temples\\_in\\_Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Hindu_temples_in_Pakistan).

<sup>18</sup> "List of gurdwaras," accessed July 13, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List\\_of\\_gurdwaras&redirect=no#Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List_of_gurdwaras&redirect=no#Pakistan).

These minorities had the opportunity to create many educational institutions like school/colleges which are highly respected (Edwardes College – Peshawar<sup>19</sup>, Forman Christian College University – Lahore, Punjab<sup>20</sup>). Muslims often get admitted to these prestigious institutions. One of the best-ranked universities, the University of Peshawar in KPK has reserved special seats for non-Muslims. During the time Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (*United Council of Action*) was in office, the church from the campus of University of Peshawar, destroyed in the 80's, was reconstructed, as the result of the decision of Peshawar High Court, who has ruled that a church within an educational institution in a Muslim country is not against the tenets of Islam, which teaches tolerance.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, some of the institutes are offering interfaith courses, which are helpful for the development of peace and harmony among all the citizens.

It is important to know about some notable figures from the religious minority groups who have served in the Pakistan Armed Forces. They have received the highest civilians and military honors. Some of the notable Christians of Pakistan Armed Forces are:

- Air Vice Marshal Allan Perry-Keene (August 15, 1947 - February 17, 1949);
- Air Vice Marshal Richard Atcherley (February 18, 1949 - May 6, 1951);
- Air Vice Marshal Leslie William Cannon (May 7, 1951 - June 19, 1955);
- Air Vice Marshal Arthur McDonald (June 20, 1955 - July 22, 1957) Group Captain Cecil Chaudhry;
- Group Captain Eric Gordon Hall;
- Wing Commander Nazir Latif;
- Wing Commander Mervyn L. Middlecoat;
- Squadron Leader Peter Christy;
- Flight Lieutenant William D. Harney<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> "Edwardes College – Peshawar," accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.edwardes.edu.pk/>.

<sup>20</sup> "Forman Christian College University – Lahore," accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.fccollege.edu.pk/>.

<sup>21</sup> "Church in university campus not un-Islamic: Pak court," PTI, January 24, 2007," accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.wrn.org/articles/24029/?&place=pakistan&section=church-state>.

<sup>22</sup> "Christianity in Pakistan," accessed July 14, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity\\_in\\_Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Pakistan).

**Discrimination and Violence Among the Ethnic Groups and Against Minorities**

In the last decade, one can notice discrimination and violation rather than peace and harmony. Sectarian violence between the Sunni and the Shi'a has increased; there is no tolerance, but only hatred. The holydays of Muharram are the most insecure days in Pakistan because of discrimination. Suicide bombing in the gatherings of religious groups is common and killing of religious leaders or political leaders is just happening because of the prejudices. The discrimination among ethnic groups and political parties has made the situation worse; the current situation in Karachi can be a good example. Moreover, other religious groups have also many complaints regarding the intolerance of the majority.

Many Ahmadis were killed when their mosques were attacked in 2010.<sup>23</sup>

In February 2006, churches and Christian schools were targeted in protests over the publications of the Jyllands-Posten cartoons in Denmark, leaving two elderly women injured and many homes and properties destroyed.<sup>24</sup> Christian houses have been burned down in Lahore, in March 2013, after a Christian was alleged to have made blasphemous remarks.<sup>25</sup> On September 22, 2013, 78 Christians were killed in a suicide attack at the historic All Saints Church in the old quarter of the regional capital, Peshawar.<sup>26</sup>

As a result of forced conversions, extortion and kidnapping of Hindu girls, many Hindu fled to India: "There is no law and order in Sindh and the government is watching the activities of fundamentalists as a mute spectator", said Anup Kumar, head of a delegation of 150 Hindus detained by Islamabad for seven hours on August 2012 before being allowed to enter India for a pilgrimage.<sup>27</sup> Kumar also said it was possible that the majority of the delegation members would never like to go back to Pakistan in the prevailing circumstances. In Islamabad, President Asif Ali Zardari took serious note of reports of a "sense of insecurity" among Hindu

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<sup>23</sup> "Terrorist attacks on Ahmadi Mosques in Pakistan," accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.alislam.org/egazette/press-release/terrorist-attacks-on-ahmadi-mosques-in-pakistan/>.

<sup>24</sup> "Pakistan Militants Attack Christians Over Cartoons - Christian Persecution," accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.christianpersecution.info/news/pakistan-militants-attack-christians-over-cartoons/>.

<sup>25</sup> "Dozens of houses torched as mob attacks Lahore Christian locality," accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.dawn.com/news/791408/mob-attacks-christian-neighbourhood-in-lahore>.

<sup>26</sup> "78 killed, over 100 injured in Peshawar church attack," accessed July 14, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/607734/fifteen-dead-in-suicide-attack-outside-peshawar-church/>.

<sup>27</sup> "Pak Hindus arrive with horror tales," accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/chandigarh/pak-hindus-arrive-with-horror-tales/article1-911814.aspx>.



families in Sindh and directed the authorities to allay the minority community's grievances.<sup>28</sup>

In 2007, Minority Rights Group International, a watchdog organization, ranked Pakistan as the world's top country for major increases in threats to minorities — along with Sri Lanka, which is embroiled in civil war. The group lists Pakistan as seventh on the list of 10 most dangerous countries for minorities, after Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Myanmar and Congo.<sup>29</sup> According to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), “The government of Pakistan continues to engage in and tolerate systematic, ongoing, and violations of freedom of religion or belief”<sup>30</sup>.

### **Minorities' Overall Portrayal**

The minorities have also some complaints regarding their representation in the textbooks of the state. Religious minorities are often portrayed as inferior or second class citizens. A review of compulsory Urdu language textbooks for all students up to Grade 10, published by the Punjab Textbook Board, found that 96 chapters and poems out of 362 had a strong Islamic orientation, without any mention of Pakistan's religious minorities or their beliefs. The portrayal of religious minorities in textbooks is generally either derogatory or omitted entirely, with some exceptions. The contributions of religious minorities towards the formation, development, and protection of Pakistan are largely absent.

Among the negative passages about non-Muslims and their associated religious communities, there are also some passages that include either positive or neutral representations. The positive or neutral representations can be divided into the following four categories<sup>31</sup>:

1. Promoting tolerance within Islam;
2. Recognition of past historical harmonious relationships;

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> “Pakistan unwilling to protect religious minorities rights under ICCPR,” accessed July 30, 2014, <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/headlinenewsd.php?hnewsid=4925>.

<sup>30</sup> See the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The Pakistan Religious Violence Project, “Pakistan: A History of Violence,” *Factsheet Pakistan* (July 2013), accessed August 3, 2013, <http://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/resources/Pakistan%20Factsheet%20July%202013%20FINAL.pdf>. See also Robert P. George, “Pakistan Religious Minority Problem,” *Foreign Policy*, August 9, 2013, accessed September 3, 2013, <http://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/op-eds/foreign-policy-pakistan-s-religious-minority-problem>.

<sup>31</sup> Azhar Hussain, Ahmad Salim, Arif Naveed, *Connecting the Dots. Education and Religious Discriminations in Pakistan. A Study of Public Schools and Madrassas* (United States Commission on Religious Freedom, November 2011), accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/resources/Pakistan-ConnectingTheDots-Email%283%29.pdf>.

3. Description of equality under the law;
4. Accurate representations of non-Muslim religions.

Few amendments have been done recently in 2013 which gives hope for peace and nonviolence. On April 13, 2013 in Faisalabad Professor Anjum James Paul, Chairman Pakistan Minorities Teachers' Association (PMTA) in a press conference has stated that there are improvements in the Pakistani textbooks, as the authorities understood their responsible role for a moderate Pakistan so that Pakistani people may live in a peaceful coexistence regardless of religion, creed, color and caste. PMTA has been demanding that the role of minorities in the creation and construction of Pakistan must be included in the textbooks, so that culture of social and interfaith harmony to be promoted. Three pages have been included in the subject of Pakistan Studies (Compulsory) textbook, edition March 2013 for grade 10, about the role of minorities in Pakistan. Pakistani national heroes from the Christian, Hindu, Sikh and other minority communities are now part of the textbook and the pupils have the opportunity to know their historical role in the judiciary system, education, defense, health and sports, etc.<sup>32</sup>

A part of the speech of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, that he delivered in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 11, 1947 has also been included in the same textbook.<sup>33</sup> The role of minorities in the creation of Pakistan will be more evident in the forthcoming textbooks. Topics like human rights, peace, tolerance, co-existence, forgiveness, patience and service to humanity have been also included in the textbooks and biases have been reduced somehow.

Now there are pictures of the churches, temples and gurdwaras besides mosques. In the early textbooks it was written that Pakistan is the land of Muslims, but now it is written that Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Parsees live together in Pakistan. This has also been included in the same book of General Knowledge grade 1. The word "Masih", "Masihi" or "Masihyat" is being used now in the textbooks and in the electronic and print media instead of "Esa", "Esai" or "Esayiat" for Jesus Christ, Christians or Christianity.<sup>34</sup> Academic staff from the religious minorities has been somehow invited to set the papers for the Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education.

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<sup>32</sup> "Role of minorities included in the Pakistani textbooks by the efforts of PMTA," accessed August 3, 2013, <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/headlinenewsd.php?hnewsid=4270>.

<sup>33</sup> "You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place or worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the State".

<sup>34</sup> "Role of minorities included in the Pakistani textbooks by the efforts of PMTA," accessed August 3, 2013, <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/headlinenewsd.php?hnewsid=4270>.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The above discussion shows that Pakistan is basically a pluralistic society. The state offers religious freedom to all citizens equally, but the existing situation of violence and peace among the ethnic and religious groups is not satisfactory and the state seems to be unable to control this unfavorable atmosphere. Some serious steps should be followed, which can bring a change in the current intolerance and violent atmosphere.

The following principles of the interfaith dialogue should be respected:

- The constitution of 1973 is a social contract between the state and the minorities, so its violation should be avoided;
- Internal problems should be solved within the internal boundaries;
- Religious leaders of different religious groups should have regular sessions and meetings for highlighting their problems and working together for finding solutions; this will maintain the trust among them and will block discriminations and prejudices.<sup>35</sup>

The role of the state should be:

- Check for sectarian violence;
- Strictly enforce existing bans on militant sectarian organizations;
- Maintain the atmosphere of trust which will end prejudices and discriminations;
- Provide special security for judges and public prosecutors involved in the trials of suspected sectarian militants;<sup>36</sup>
- Serious attention should be given to protect the honor and worship places of the minorities;
- Seminars and conferences should be held on religious pluralism and diversity to develop and maintain respect and tolerance for the other religious groups.

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<sup>35</sup> See <http://www.deeneislam.com/ur/verti/aitrazat/906/article.php?CID=906>, accessed July 13, 2013.

<sup>36</sup> See Huma Yusuf, *Sectarian violence: Pakistan's greatest security threat?* (NOREF report, July 2012), 8, accessed July 15, 2013, [http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow\\_site/storage/original/application/949e7f9b2db9f947c95656e5b54e389e.pdf](http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/949e7f9b2db9f947c95656e5b54e389e.pdf).

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## ***THE RELIGION, THE STATE AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA***

**Abstract:** Romanian state attempted to use religious organizations to achieve certain political goals in the modern era. This has prevented the development of religious pluralism. It took a whole historical process to resolve disputes that exist between the state, the religions and society.

The emergence of a mature and responsible civil society favoured the development of religious pluralism in Romania. Solving problems within the Romanian society was also favoured by the belonging to a stable political and cultural space (the European Union).

This text aims at highlighting the evolution of state-religions-society relations in contemporary Romania, from state control over the religious affairs to a state that is neutral in religious matters.

**Keywords:** *religion, state, public sphere, Romania, modernity*

### **A matter of power: the church versus the state in the battle for the domination of the public sphere in the modern era**

Lately, the interest for the presence of religion and its role in the contemporary society, as well as the manner in which religion influences international relations have grown considerably. This is due to the “religious resurgence” phenomenon, noticed by a large part of the academic world which questions the theories of secularization that had become the dominant paradigm in the interpretation of the evolution of the religious phenomenon. This explains the ever persistent use of the “after secularism”<sup>1</sup> set phrase or the need to rethink the manner of understanding secularization.

In a volume entitled “Rethinking Secularism”<sup>2</sup>, Alfred Stepan, professor at Columbia University, publishes a study entitled *The Multiple Secularisms of Modern Democratic and Non-Democratic Regimes*, where he wonders to what

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<sup>1</sup> Erin K. Wilson, *After Secularism. Rethinking Religion in Global Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1-27.

<sup>2</sup> Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan Vanantwerpen, eds., *Rethinking Secularism* (Oxford University Press, 2011), GooglePlay edition.



extent the concept of “secularism” is necessary for the analysis of democracy. Among other aspects, the author shows that there are prosperous democratic societies nowadays, such as the Scandinavian states, which still maintain a state church, as well as “secular” societies, dominated by dictatorship and social injustice; the conclusion is the following: “patterns of state-religion-society relations that happens to coexist with democracy at any given time are best seen as conjunctural, socially constructed, political arrangements, rather than as fixed, normative models”.

Alfred Stepan’s study, as well as many others, suggests a few basic ideas that we shall make use of during our investigation. First of all, we notice the diversity of approaching religion within contemporary societies, there being multiple forms of “secularism” and “laicism”. Second of all, in the context of the connections that have been made between religion and nationalism or between religion and terrorism during the past several decades, there is great sensitivity, equally felt in the academic, political and social circles, regarding the influence exerted by religion and other various religious organizations upon democracy.

Generally speaking, whenever there are talks about secularization, two models have priority: the American one and the French one. The American model, based on the first amendment to the Constitution, introduces the idea of a “wall of separation” between church and state. The interpretations are numerous but, essentially, this “wall” is a guarantee of the fact that the state does not interfere in religious matters, that there is no official church and that no representative of authority is allowed to use his/her political or administrative function to attract believers towards the denomination that he/she belongs to, or favour any particular denomination. The religious organizations function in a free market, where they attract new followers, get organized and promote themselves exclusively by their own means, having the freedom of expression in the public space, as well as the possibility to influence this space. These organizations, by means of the influence they exert within the community, can influence the political and social agenda but this is possible only within the limits stipulated by the constitution. A politician may embrace a proposal coming from a religious organization but, when it is subjected to public debate, this proposal is not looked upon from the perspective of morals or religious values but it is evaluated strictly according to the constitution and the laws in force. All these elements turn the United States into a space of paradox: a state without an official religion, with a “wall of separation” between religious organizations and state institutions, but with an active presence of the religious organizations in the public space which they influence to a certain extent, their proposals being filtered through the framework legally guaranteed by the constitution. However, beyond the various debates, there is in the Americans’ consciousness the opinion that religion is generally a positive element, able to contribute the moral and social progress.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jeremy T. Gunn and John Witte, Jr., eds., *No Establishment of Religion. America’s Original Contribution to Religious Liberty* (Oxford University Press, 2012); John Witte, Jr

The French model, consecrated by the 1905 law of separation between church and state, is based on the following principles: the neutrality of the state, the freedom of religious exercise, and public powers related to the church. This law is seen as the backbone of the French principle of *laïcité*. Apparently, there are elements that bring the French law close to the American one, but the spirit in which the former was adopted and implemented is different. The French legislators saw religion as a potential danger for the values of modern society and, given this perspective, they imagined various ways to discourage the promotion and spreading of religious faith so as, in time, laicism should prevail.<sup>4</sup> The anti-religious and anti-cleric attitude will gain a new dimension in the Soviet Russia, where the communist leaders unleash a systematic battle, through propaganda, administrative and repression measures, meant to completely eliminate religion from the people's minds. In this context, the religious denominations' access to the public space was utterly forbidden.<sup>5</sup>

Besides these models, a large part of Europe maintained, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a certain type of state-church relations which originates in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In his study, "*Omnes et singulatim*": towards a criticism of the political reason, Michel Foucault analyses the rationality of the state power during the "Great Century" period (le "Grand Siècle"), which was mainly formulated in two doctrinal bodies: the state reason and the police theory. The state reason signifies a rational governance capable of increasing the power of the state in accordance with itself, overpassing the idea that the art of governing has to imitate the governance of nature by God, which made many consider this kind of rationality as being atheist.<sup>6</sup>

As far as the "police" is concerned, the authors of the Age of Enlightenment understood by this term certain areas which require the intervention of the state. According to N. de Lamare (1705), the police had to watch over 11 aspects within a state. They are the following: the religion; the morality; the health; the supplies; the streets, bridges and roads, public edifices; the public safety; the liberal arts; the trade; the factories; the servants and workers; the poor. Through the

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and Joel A. Nichols, *Religion and the American Constitutional Experiment* (Westview Press, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Le Goff, René Remond, eds., *Histoire de la France religieuse*, Tome 3, *Du roi Très Chrétien à la laïcité républicaine*, volume dirigé par Philippe Joutard (Paris: Seuil, 1991); Axel Freiherr von Campenhausen, *L'Eglise et l'état en France* (Paris: Editions de l'Epi, 1964).

<sup>5</sup> Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (London: MacMillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962); Pedro Ramet, *Cross and Commissar. The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 42-54; Sabrina Petra Ramet, ed., *Religious policy in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault, *Lumea e un mare azil. Studii despre putere*, trans. Bogdan Ghiu, Raluca Arsenie (Cluj: Idea Design&Print, 2005), 73-95.

“police”, the political and administrative power could intervene anytime in order to guide the man towards “the greatest happiness that he/she could experience in life”.<sup>7</sup>

Even though the 19<sup>th</sup> century is undisputedly dominated by the liberal ideology, which can hardly harmonize from a theoretical point of view with the “police” theory, many European states will practice, de facto, to a lesser or greater extent, in a more or less beneficial manner, this type of “police” on their own population.

This is not however the place to discuss in detail the causes that generated this reality. We will refer to the practical case of Eastern Europe. The societies of this region, wishing to shorten the distance from the advanced societies in Western Europe and across the Atlantic, will largely adopt the liberal ideology and the capitalist spirit but with a major correction: a special role assigned to the state seen as an instrument capable of coordinating and accelerating the development of society. To an equal extent, the enhanced role of the state in Eastern Europe is related to the national issue as well. The preservation of national identity becomes a real obsession for the peoples in Eastern Europe; this obsession manifests in many cases as a defensive attitude when facing various challenges of modernity, phenomenon which was called by some specialists “tendential modernity”.<sup>8</sup>

Within this context, the connections between the state and the churches, denominations sects or cults display numerous analogies specific to the “Old Regime” before 1789, i.e. the religion and the church become part of the state’s “police” system. The church organisation and religious teachings are often reinterpreted so as to serve the state, mainly as instruments of persuasion, used to stimulate the social solidarity and the development of national consciousness. From this point of view, the public presence of the church remains significant but it is controlled by the state.

Modern Romania also knew such a model of state-church relationship, understood as an instrument of strengthening the Romanian nation, which functioned till after the Second World War, when it was replaced by a Soviet-inspired model introduced as a result of entering Moscow’s sphere of influence; later, after the 1989 revolution and the fall of communism, Romania had to face new challenges belonging to the post-modern world, whose values are radically different from the communist ones or those of the Romanian 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Taking all these aspects into consideration, the purpose of the present study is to highlight the evolution of the state-church relationships in the Romania during the modern and contemporary eras, the manner in which the two institutions shared the public space, as well as the transition from a regime in which the state

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>8</sup> Constantin Schifirneț, “Orthodoxy, Church, State and National Identity in the Context of Tendential Modernity,” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 12, issue 34 (Spring 2013): 173-208

controlled the church to a system which accepts the freedom of churches and religious pluralism.

### The “founding fathers” of modern Romania and the religious issue

In 1859, the great European powers accepted the unification of two Romanian principalities, Moldova and Walachia, into one larger political entity (The Old Kingdom), later called Romania. Under the rule of Prince Al. I. Cuza, an unprecedented programme of political, social and administrative reforms was initiated and its purpose was to recover the historical delay that Romania had as compared to the advanced societies of the West.<sup>9</sup> The primary interest of Cuza and his collaborators, who can truly be considered the “founding fathers” of modern Romania, will be to define, from the perspective of the modern idea of state, the role the religious factor was to play in the Romanian politics as well as the new social role of the religious institutions.

At the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the religious map of Romania was dominated (90%) by the Orthodox faith, whom the vast majority of those who considered themselves Romanians belonged to. Due to the social, political and religious system of the previous centuries, as well as other concrete historical circumstances which are not the focus of this paper, there had been no major religious changes within the historical territory of the Old Kingdom till the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Proselytism was firmly stopped but those whose faith was already well defined and who chose to settle in the Romanian space were completely free to practice their faith. For this reason, the overwhelming majority of those whose faith was other than orthodox were not Romanians, and their structures were called, till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “foreign denominations (sects)”.<sup>10</sup>

Till the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Orthodox Church played an extremely important role in the Romanian society from a cultural, economic, social and even economic perspective, often playing the role a far too weak state. Cuza’s goal, as far as the Orthodox Church was concerned, was to transfer its economic, social and political attributions to the state, considered the only rightful representative of the national interest.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See A.D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană*, III<sup>rd</sup> edition, vol. XIII, *Domnia lui Cuza Vodă*, I<sup>st</sup> part (București: Cartea Românească, 1930); A.D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană*, III<sup>rd</sup> edition, vol. XIV, *Domnia lui Cuza Vodă*, II<sup>nd</sup> part (București: Cartea Românească, 1930).

<sup>10</sup> George Enache, “Problema « sectelor » în România. Din a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea până în 1948,” *Analele Universității “Dunărea de Jos” din Galați, seria 19 – Istorie* VI (2007): 108-109. There are two main terms in Romanian: “cult” and “sectă”. “Cult” means “church” and “sectă” means “sect” (Weber and Troeltsch’s typology). If we follow Howard P. Becker’s church-sect typology, “cult” include “ecclesia” and “denomination”, “sectă” include “sect” and “cult”.

<sup>11</sup> George Enache, “Religie și modernitate în Vechiul Regat: dezbateri privind rolul social, politic și național al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX – lea

Concretely, through the measures adopted by Al. I. Cuza, the Orthodox Church became a state church, entirely subjected to the political authority. The church's properties, which comprised more than 25% of the country's area, were confiscated, the schools under the church's patronage were closed, the entire social assistance was overtaken by the state, the civil marriage was introduced, steps were taken to limit the number of monks and monasteries and the church hierarchy was to be established directly by the prince which contravened the Church's tradition. In exchange for the properties that had been confiscated, the state assumed the obligation to pay salaries to the priests, to build and repair churches.<sup>12</sup> In the following decades, the sums allotted for the needs of the Church continually decreased although the population of Romania experienced in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century one of the highest growth rates in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

The same Al. I. Cuza is one of the initiators of the so-called "autocephaly" of the Romanian Orthodox Church, event which will happen *de facto* in 1885. The purpose of the administrative separation of the Romanian orthodoxy from the Ecumenical Patriarchy was to "nationalize" the Romanian Orthodox Church and to transform it into an instrument of preserving and promoting national identity.<sup>14</sup>

Cuza and his collaborators were influenced by the ideas travelling through Europe during the 1848 revolution. Most of all, the Romanians admired the opinions of the great professors from College de France, Jules Michelet and Edgar Quinet, who supported the national emancipation movements of the Eastern-European peoples.<sup>15</sup> They believed in the existence of a divinity that man can become aware of by means of "intuition". Along the evolution of mankind, this intuition of divinity becomes conscious and is rationalized in terms of principles and laws. The divine laws are laws of progress, liberty and emancipation, thought Michelet and Quinet. That is why, contrary to other thinkers, inclined towards atheism, the two considered the existence of religion as the very foundation of human progress. In time, the religious ideas and institutions experienced deviations from their true purpose.

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și începutul veacului al XX-lea", in *Schimbare și devenire în istoria României: Lucrările conferinței internaționale „Modernizarea în România în secolele XIX-XXI”, Cluj Napoca, 21-24 mai 2007*, ed. Ioan Bolovan, Sorina Paula Bolovan (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane), 375-381.

<sup>12</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. III (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1997), 110-118.

<sup>13</sup> PS Vartolomeu Stănescu, episcopul Râmnicului – Noul Severin, *Puterile sociale ale creștinismului. Opere alese*, ed. George Enache, Cătălin Raiu (Galați : Editura Muzeului de Istorie; Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2014), 400-8.

<sup>14</sup> Nicolae Șerbănescu, "Autocefalia bisericească, independența națională", in *Autocefalie, patriarhie, slujire sfântă* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1995), 83-99.

<sup>15</sup> George Enache, "Religie, libertate și progres în opera Dorei d'Istria," in *Mihai Dim. Sturdza la 80 de ani. Omega*, ed. Mircea Ciubotaru, Valeriu Lucian Lefter (Iași: Editura Universității "Al.I. Cuza", 2014), 713.

Quinet and Michelet were, among others, against the monasticism, which they considered “reactionary” and destructive as far as the fighting spirit for social justice was concerned and they were supporting the state’s control over the church and urged the churches to adapt their message and organisation so as to support the society’s development and progress.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, Cuza was not an anticleric but, through his reforms, he wanted to transform the Romanian Orthodox Church into an instrument of progress. However, the excessive control imposed by Cuza transformed the church into a simply ministry, strictly controlled by the state.

In the decades that followed Al. I. Cuza’s reforms, the Orthodox Church continued to be an important symbolic presence in the public space through its presence exclusively at the public ceremonies, through the fact that the members of the foreign dynasty brought in Romania in 1866 had to be raised in the Orthodox religion, through the fact that it had to be included into an identity equation which will define the Romanian uniqueness within Europe for a long time: the only Orthodox people of Latin origin.<sup>17</sup>

The representatives of the Church protested against these dramatic changes but not radically enough to threaten the strength of the Romanian state, which was unconceivable. All changes were eventually accepted as absolutely necessary for the development of the Romanian nation. This attitude was in contrast with the situation in Bulgaria, where the conflict between the Church and the laic authorities was extremely intense. The difference of attitude is to be seen in the historical evolution of the two countries. In Bulgaria, the state authorities will adopt harsh measures against the clergy, fact which will eventually contribute to the population’s weaker and weaker religiousness.<sup>18</sup> In Romania, due to the constant presence of the clergy within the public space, the population will consider Church and religion as natural facts, continuing to consider themselves Orthodox even if this term did not reflect a real religiousness but, in many cases, an affirmation of identity. As a matter of fact, the state was not interested in the religiousness of the people. The strict control of the public space, by means of hierarchy, along with the lack of any initiative in this area made it possible for the Orthodox Church to

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 713-719.

<sup>17</sup> “Biserica Ortodoxă Română – scurtă istorie,” accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.crez.org/istorie.asp>; George Enache, “Creștinismul în opera lui Mihai Eminescu,” *Ziarul Lumina*, January 15, 2010, accessed July 13, 2013, <http://ziarullumina.ro/documentar/crestinismul-opera-lui-mihai-eminescu>. These views have been criticized by representatives of the Greek Catholic Church: Silvestru Augustin Prunduș, Clemente Plăianu, *Catholicism și Ortodoxie românească. Scurt istoric al Bisericii Române Unite*, accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.bru.ro/istorie/cat-si-ort-capitolul-3/>.

<sup>18</sup> Claudiu Cotan, *Ortodoxia și mișcările de emancipare națională din Sud-Estul Europei în secolul al XIX-lea* (București: Editura Bizantină, 2004): 304-305.

experience at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century what was called at that age “the Church’s crises”.<sup>19</sup>

“The Church’s crises” defines in short the Church’s stiffening in formalism, the loss of the missionary momentum, its transformation into a mere mark of national identity. Simultaneously with this “crises of the Church”, Romania goes at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through significant changes of the religious landscape. The number of immigrants of other faiths increases and, at the same time, the religious prozelytism phenomenon develops. The Catholics, especially the Evangelic groups (called “neo-protestant” in Romania), consider Romania an extremely important battle field. The dramatic social and economic transformations experienced by the Romania of that time, the increasing number of those who had access to education and the dissatisfactions related to the state in which the orthodox religion was at that moment are factors that contribute to the manner in which the message of these missionaries was perceived.<sup>20</sup> The state reacted negatively at the presence of these denominations, sects, cults considered “foreign”, treating them as threats for the national security, trying to stop the phenomenon. Within this context, there appeared some justifications of political nature. In 1907, there bursts a large rebellion of the peasantry who constituted the large majority of the population and who lived under extremely poor conditions. Some of the peasants will find in the egalitarian ideology promoted by neo-protestant groups (The Adventists, “creștini după Evanghelie” - *Plymouth Brethren*) a way to protest against the discriminations they were suffering from. That is why the state will take, immediately after the rebellion’s repression, measures to expel the neo-protestant missionaries.<sup>21</sup>

The new religious groups begin to organize and gain an institutional structure. However, the Romanian state refused to acknowledge them in any way, these groups enjoying the status of “tolerated” till the end of the First World War.

A process of “rebirth” of Orthodoxy takes place at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well. People belonging to the laic world as well as clerics talked about the necessity for the Orthodox Church to be more than a formal presence in the public space, demanding the authorities to allow the church to manifest freely, so as to develop its missionary and social calling/vocation. This is the starting point of the so-called “orthodoxism”, a cultural, ideological and spiritual trend with multiple facets and ways of manifestation, which can be related, to a certain extent, to the Slavophilia phenomenon in Russia. The promoters of this trend were giving a new interpretation to the connection between orthodoxy and the Romanian nation, claiming that the orthodoxy was the “soul basis” of the Romanian people and that the former would be truly lived, not only formally stated. From this

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<sup>19</sup> Spiru Haret, *Criza bisericească* (București, 1912); N. Iorga, *Tulburările bisericești și politicianismul* (Vălenii de Munte, 1911).

<sup>20</sup> Enache, “Problema «sectelor» în România. Din a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea până în 1948,” 109-111.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

perspective, the state and the society had not only to grant the Church its freedom, but to contribute, by all means, to the insurance of an “authentic” orthodox education and existence. The “orthodoxism” will fully manifest after the First World War.<sup>22</sup>

### **The interwar Romania: between diversity and religious nationalism**

After the World War I, Romania’s borders change radically and so do the fabric of the population and its religious structure. According to the 1930 census, Romania counted around 18 million inhabitants, out of which over 13 million were Orthodox, pertaining to the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Romania, 1.5 million were Greek Catholics (Romanians), 1.2 million were Roman Catholics (most of them Magyars, but also Germans, the number of Romanians belonging to the Roman Catholic confession being around 150,000), Calvinists (most of them Magyars) were 700,000 approximately, Lutherans (Germans) counted 400,000 members, Jews 760,000 and Muslims (Turks, Tatars) were 200,000 approximately. Therefore, the new Romania was much more diverse ethnically and confessionally.<sup>23</sup>

All declarations made by the politicians in the 1918-1920 period underlined the idea that the new Romania, the result of the First World War, was to be even more democratic and ensure for all its citizens, “no matter their race or religion”, “full equality of rights, political and religious freedom”.<sup>24</sup> In reality, things were not exactly like this. On the one hand, ethnic or religious groups, dissatisfied with their integration within the Romanian state, would complain at international bodies about the “persecutions” they were subjected to by the Romanian authorities, many of these denouncements hiding in fact their refuse to accept the authority of the Romanian state and their wish to keep a series of privileges whose elimination was labelled as “forced Romanianization”.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, the Romanian state itself was not dominated by an authentic democratic spirit, the Romanian leaders being tempted to impose the same type of control over society that had existed before 1918. The temptation to increase the power of state and the secessionist manifestations of various minorities will create a status of tension that will prove baleful to the consolidation in a

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<sup>22</sup> Andreea Nanu, *Inventarea ortodoxiei. O istorie a identității ortodoxe în spațiul politic românesc* (Ph.D. diss., Universitatea București, 2010), accessed December 3, 2013, <http://www.unibuc.ro/studies/Doctorate2010Iunie/Nanu%20Andreea%20-%20Inventarea%20ortodoxiei/REZUMAT%20TEZA%20II.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> “Recensământul din 1930,” accessed July 12, 2013, [http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recens%C4%83m%C3%A2ntul\\_din\\_1930](http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recens%C4%83m%C3%A2ntul_din_1930).

<sup>24</sup> “Constituția României, 1923,” art. 5-8, accessed July 13, 2013, [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis\\_pck.htp\\_act\\_text?id=1517](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act_text?id=1517).

<sup>25</sup> *Minoritățile naționale din România, 1918-1925* (București, 1995): 428 – 449; Irina Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare. 1918-1930* (București : Humanitas, 1998).



democratic spirit of the interwar Romanian society, fact which will become apparent in the organization of the religious life in Romania.

The principles at the basis of organizing the religious life of the Great Romania were the respect for the freedom of consciousness and an increased autonomy of the religious organizations in their relation with the state, on the basis of which a unitary working framework for all religious confessions was to be established.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the majority of politicians kept in mind the idea of a church as a simple department of the state. The mixture of various principles is proven by the 1928 Churches Law which is far from creating a unitary organizing and working framework for all religious confessions in Romania.<sup>27</sup> As a matter of fact, the situation of the religious confessions in the interwar period is not really based on a certain vision but it is rather the consequence of some relations of power. Where the state already had the control and no international bodies had any interests, the state was tempted to perpetuate that control. The most eloquent case in point is that of the Orthodox Church which was granted at the beginning of the interwar époque a freedom that had been un hoped for before 1918, freedom which the state authorities would constantly seek to limit later on. Where the external pressures were high (in the case of the Magyar minority's churches) and the political interest was strong (the relations with the Vatican), greater freedoms were granted. Therefore, the result was a mosaic of particular situations that generated numerous dissatisfactions. This was the expression of a "weak" state which was trying to compensate the lack of authority over some religious confessions with an increased control over others not having the force (partly because of the external pressures) to impose a set of rules for all. The compromises made by the Romanian state regarding the organization of the church life are best seen in the case of the Concordat signed with the Vatican which regulated the situation of the Catholic Church in Romania.<sup>28</sup> The closing of this agreement generated a large debate at that time because they said that art. 22 from the 1923 Constitution was violated; this article stipulated that "The relations between various religious confessions and the state will be established by law". On the other hand, the 1928 Churches Law stipulated that "No church, denomination, sect can have dependency relations with any church authority or organization from abroad, except for those imposed by the dogmatic and juridical-canonical principles. The relations between the state and the Catholic Church – the only one in the country with such a dependency – will be established through a special agreement which will be subject to approval by the

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<sup>26</sup> "Constituția României, 1923," art. 22, accessed July 13, 2013, [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis\\_pck.htp\\_act\\_text?id=1517](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act_text?id=1517).

<sup>27</sup> *Biserica noastră și cultele minoritare. Marea discuție parlamentară în jurul Legii cultelor – 1928*, ed. Constantin Schifirneț (București: Albatros, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Nechita Runcan, *Concordatul Vaticanului cu România. Considerații istorico-juridice* (Constanța: ExPonto, 2000); Valeriu Anania, *Pro Memoria. Acțiunea catolicismului în România interbelică* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1992).

Legislative Bodies”.<sup>29</sup> This special agreement was considered by the rest of the religious confessions as a privilege granted to the Catholics which discriminated against the rest of the churches in the context in which the state authorities were replying to a memorial submitted by the Baptist believers, who were dissatisfied with their status, as follows: “The Ministry of Religious Affairs has control over all churches and sects, freedom does not exclude control and the Baptists, if they are loyal citizens, must help to discipline the country and keep it safe from any dangers”.<sup>30</sup> This answer hides within itself the profound philosophy lying at the basis of the religious policy of the Romanian state during the interwar interval. This religious policy was part of the effort to unify Great Romania, which did not take into account the creation of unity in diversity, but brought forward the idea that only the Romanian nation is state creating and only a few religious cults are reliable from the state’s point of view.

Through the 1928 Churches law, the interwar Romanian state classified the religious confessions into two categories: “culte”, which enjoyed the plenitude of juridical rights and included mainly the so-called “historical churches”, with tradition within the Romanian space, and the “religious associations”, with an inferior juridical status, which comprised mainly the “new” denominations and sects, neo-Protestant and various schisms within the Orthodox Church (especially those of Russian origin).<sup>31</sup> Thus, Romania obeyed the traditional European vision regarding the classification of religious movements promoted in the scientific world especially by Ernst Troelsch.<sup>32</sup>

As far as the “historical churches” are concerned, there was a dichotomy between “Romanian” churches and the other historical churches. As a sign or acknowledgment of the new religious diversity, the Orthodox Church was no longer state church but it was given, honorarily, the title of dominant church. Along it there was the Greek Catholic Church which comprised the Romanians from Transylvania who had recognized the Pope’s authority in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup>

The situation of the Orthodox Church was regulated by a special law in 1925. Through this law, voted by the Parliament, the politicians provided themselves with numerous levers to interfere in the life of the church. Among them, two were more important: the interference of the politicians in the election of the hierarchs and the state’s right to control in economic and administrative

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<sup>29</sup> “Legea pentru regimul general al cultelor, 22 aprilie 1928,” art. 7, accessed July 12, 2013, <http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/istorie/istorie1918-1940/5-7.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, *Repertoriu de dispoziții privitoare la regimul asociațiilor religioase* (București, 1934): 13.

<sup>31</sup> “Legea pentru regimul general al cultelor, 22 aprilie 1928,” art. 21-24.

<sup>32</sup> Brian Davies, *Religia din perspectivă sociologică*, trans. Dara Maria Străinu (București: Trei, 2000): 112-114.

<sup>33</sup> “Constituția României, 1923, art. 22,” accessed July 13, 2013, [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis\\_pck.htm\\_act\\_text?id=1517](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm_act_text?id=1517).

matters; the latter will be abusively employed to remove the uncomfortable people from the church.<sup>34</sup>

Adopting, out of electoral reasons, the orthodoxist discourse, more and more present in the society, the politicians would often speak about the importance of the Orthodox Church in the life of the Romanian people. From a symbolic point of view, the Orthodox Church overwhelmingly dominated the Romanian public space, fact which would generate a long-term rivalry between the Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic Church for supremacy as far as the domination of the "Romanian soul" was concerned.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the other historical churches would consider themselves discriminated against and, in the context of the promotion of Romanianism by the Romanian churches, they would become factors of cultivating the nationalist feelings of the ethnic minorities in Romania (especially the Magyar churches and denominations).<sup>36</sup>

As for the religious associations, in order for them to become "culte", they had to prove that they were not a danger for the state and that they did not affect the good morals, that they had a significant number of steady followers, recruited not by prozelytism, and that they had durability, not being just a sporadic manifestation. On their turn, these religious associations were classified into recognized and unrecognized. Their regime was regulated in the interwar period by decision no. 114.119/1933 and decision no. 31.999/1939.<sup>37</sup>

Essentially, these decisions strengthened a number of provisions from the Churches Law, in an attempt to prevent the prozelytism phenomenon, considered a major threat to the national security. In order to be more easily controlled, these religious associations were discouraged to institutionally group into a national entity. The associations had to periodically submit a register with the members and the newly converted had to prove they had discernment and that they had converted willingly. There had to be a special place for the cult activities and the ceremonies were to take place only in that location. The preachers could activate only on the basis of a special permit. The only neo-Protestant associations legally recognized in the interwar period were the Baptists, the Adventists and the Plymouth Brethren. The Pentecostalism, which had a rapid growth among the poor rural population, would be utterly forbidden.<sup>38</sup>

The end of the interwar period coincides with the growth of nationalism, expressed most often under the mask of orthodoxism, and with the lack of trust in

<sup>34</sup> George Enache, "Amestecul puterii politice în alegerea ierarhilor Bisericii Ortodoxe Române," *Arhivele totalitarismului* 1-2 (2004): 7 – 33.

<sup>35</sup> George Enache, "Biserică, societate, națiune, stat în România interbelică. I. Explorări în orizont liberal," *Revista teologică* 2(2010), accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.revista-teologica.ro/articol.php?r=30&a=3475>.

<sup>36</sup> Alin Spănu, "Serviciul Special de Informații atenționează: Revizionism maghiar sub cupola bisericii (1941)," *ANGVSTIA* 10 (2006): 163-170.

<sup>37</sup> Dorin Dobrinu, "Religie și putere în România. Politica statului față de confesiunile (neo) protestante, 1919-1944," *Studia Politica* vol. 7, no. 3 (2007): 589.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

the democratic political system. Starting with 1938 a number of authoritarian or totalitarian regimes are established in Romania and this will culminate with the establishment of communism. The regime of King Carol II, the legionary state and the regime of Marshal Antonescu will develop the ideology of fusion between the Romanian people, state and orthodoxy, fact which was expressed in the definition: "unitary state and unique church".<sup>39</sup>

The Law Decree 927/1942, which was issued during Antonescu's administration, forbade the shift from one denomination to another and the members of the forbidden religious associations were forced to embrace the Orthodoxy so as not to be deported. On November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1943 the "Law-decree for the interdiction of any activity of various sects in the country" was issued. The purpose of this measure is clearly shown by the resolution given by Antonescu to this bill: "The dissolution of the "secte" aims at forcing the shift to the originary church". The Orthodox priests also were obliged to participate in this action, being often forced by the gendarmes to "convert" the "sectarians". Moreover, the state, dissatisfied with the quality of the religious life within the Orthodox Church, will initiate a series of measures to "purify" it.<sup>40</sup>

All this time, the Romanian Jews experienced the most difficult period of their history. Separated from the rest of society by the use of criteria such as "race" and "religion" they will suffer numerous discriminations, will be sent to ghettos and a significant part of the Romanian Jews became victims of the Holocaust (especially those deported to Transnistria).<sup>41</sup> By a decision of Antonescu's administration, the Christians of Jewish origin were included in the category of Jews and suffered the same harshness as those of Jewish faith. Moreover, the Jew's baptism was strictly forbidden. Nevertheless, representatives of the religious confessions (especially those of the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches) defended the Jews that had already been converted and supported the Jews' right to baptize to Christianity in front of Marshal Antonescu.<sup>42</sup>

### The communist period

In August 1944, Romania leaves the alliance with the Nazi Germany and joins the Allies. The instauration of religious freedom, severely affected during the war years, was one of commitments taken by the new government in Bucharest. All religions are recognized and invited to participate to the new democratic life of

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 595-601; Costel Coajă, *Relația stat-biserică în perioada 1938-1948. Cazul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* (Iași: Princeps Edit, 2007): 13-94.

<sup>40</sup> Viorel Achim, ed., *Politica regimului Antonescu față de cultele neoprotestante. Documente* (Iași: Polirom, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Jean Ancel, *Transnistria* (București: Du Style, 1998).

<sup>42</sup> Florin Stan, *Situația evreilor din România între anii 1940-1944* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2012), 325-355.

the country. Unfortunately for Romania, in the years to come, “democracy” meant the “popular democracy” inspired by the Soviet Union.<sup>43</sup>

The Romanian communists, massively supported by the Soviet authorities, acted rapidly and with great determination in order to take over the complete power over the state and to establish a regime similar to that in the Soviet Union. The legend they wished to promote in the public space was that the power takeover happened legally, with the full consent of the people.

The resort to the people is a frequent topic in the communist discourse, even when reference is made to the religions. The communist leaders declared that, although atheists, they understood the vitality of the religious faith in Romania and that they respected it. Moreover, they promised that the authorities would financially support the religions, according to tradition, and this happened during the entire communist regime in Romania, being a rare case in the communist world.<sup>44</sup> The condition for funding was though total loyalty towards the communist Romanian state. After the establishment of the popular republic in 1948, all churches, denominations and sects had, through their representatives, to take a pledge in front of the new authorities.<sup>45</sup>

Behind the pretext that, in the past, the religious organizations had been corrupted by co-existing with the political factor, the communists moved to a vast programme of restructuring the religions. It was stated that in the end the religions in Romania would become “purer” and would be finally able to express their true teaching. One of the supporting arguments was always the “people”, which wants the change and no longer follows the religious leaders, who betrayed the interests of the ordinary man.<sup>46</sup>

The regime of the religions in Romania was regulated by the Law decree 177 on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1948. This decree introduces for the first time in Romania the idea of the completely laic nature of the public space and proclaims the total freedom of consciousness. People had the liberty to believe and the liberty not to

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<sup>43</sup> Vladimir Gsovski, ed., *Church and State behind the Iron Curtain. Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, with an introduction on the Soviet Union* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1955), 253-300; *Biserica Română Unită – 250 de ani de istorie* (Cluj-Napoca: Casa de Editură Viața Creștină, 1998); Cristian Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin. Biserica Greco-Catolică în timpul regimului comunist* (București: Curtea Veche, 2003); George Enache, *Ortodoxie și putere politică în România contemporană* (București: Nemira, 2005); Adrian Nicolae Petcu, ed., *Partidul, Securitatea și Cultele, 1945 – 1989* (București: Nemira, 2005); Cristian Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu comunist* (București: Curtea Veche, 2005); Vasilică Croitor, *Răscumpărarea memoriei. Cultul pentecostal în perioada comunistă* (Succedd Publishing, 2010).

<sup>44</sup> “O diversiune: despărțirea bisericii de stat,” *Universul*, no. 264, November, 16, 1946, 1.

<sup>45</sup> George Enache, “Depunerea jurământului față de statul democrat popular de către cultele religioase din România în anul 1948,” *Analele Universității “Dunărea de Jos” Galați, fascicula 19 – Istorie VII* (2008): 183-196.

<sup>46</sup> Stanciu Stoian, *Culte religioase în Republica Populară Română* (București, 1949): 7-53.

believe and religion was taken out of schools. The distinction between “historical churches” and “religious associations” was eliminated, all religions being placed on the same level.<sup>47</sup>

The communist regime considered the new law a new beginning and asked every religious organization to request for a new recognition from the state. This meant they had to submit a statute of organization and function as well as a brief profession of faith which had to be approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The new regime encouraged (actually forced) every religious movement to have a unitary institutional organization, as centralized as possible, fact which will later prove a favouring factor in the state controlling the religions’ life.<sup>48</sup>

Through excessive measures, the communist regime included the majority of the church properties in the property of the state, accomplishing for the first time a complete secularization. This did not mean though the separation of the church from the state. Part of the churches’ maintenance expenses and the salaries of the clergy still was to be paid by the state, which had the right to control the way the money was spent. The contributions of the believers were limited, probably due to the fact that resorting to the believers would have stimulated a stronger relation between the clergy and the believers.

If religion had nothing to do with the social space, the clergy could come into the public space, as citizens, to take part in the political life. There were priests members of the Great National Assembly (The communist parliament) and of various communist organizations.<sup>49</sup> It was another way of keeping the illusion for the believing people that the church still played a role in the public space.

One of the major concerns of the 1948 Law was to limit the religions’ connections with the exterior, more than in the case of the 1928 Law. Any contact with the exterior had to be approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the religious authorities abroad could not, under any circumstances, have any influence upon the life of the believers from Romania.<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, the 1948 Law created an efficient system of control over the religions, completely separated religion from the social space but left the impression that the churches are entities accepted in the public space while the

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<sup>47</sup> George Enache, “Decretul 177 din 4 august 1948 și consecințele acestuia pentru viața religioasă din România. Privire comparativă,” *Analele Universității “Dunărea de Jos” Galați, fascicula 19 – Istorie XII* (2013): 131-149.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> “Legea Nr. 560 privitor la alegerile pentru Adunarea Deputaților,” accessed July 27, 2013, [http://fp.kross.ro/pdf/le\\_1946.pdf](http://fp.kross.ro/pdf/le_1946.pdf); “Constituția Republicii Populare Române, Titlul IV,” accessed July 27, 2013, <http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/constitutia-republicii-populare-romane-emitent-marea-adunare-nationala-publicat-n-monitorul-oficial-nr-87-bis-din-13-14931.html>; “Constituția Republicii Socialiste România, 1965,” art. 4, 17, 25, 44, accessed July 27, 2013, <http://legislatie.resurse-pentru-democratie.org/constitutie/constitutia-republicii-socialiste-romania-1965.php>; “Decret nr. 391 din 26 septembrie 1953 privind alegerea deputaților în sfaturile populare,” art. 11, accessed July 27, 2013, [http://fp.kross.ro/pdf/le\\_1953.pdf](http://fp.kross.ro/pdf/le_1953.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> Enache, “Decretul 177 din 4 august 1948,” 131-149.

freedom of expression was respected. In reality, it was building an illusion because through administrative mechanisms and systematic repressive actions the communist state aimed at transforming the religions in mere decorative elements.

As far as the individuals were concerned, the focus was on the persons who were considered extremely religious, especially those who acted as formal or informal leaders because they were able to influence the community. This kind of persons were marginalized, compromised or arrested and sent to prison, on account of penal reasons. There are tens of thousands of people who ended up in prison under various pretexts, the real reason being in fact their religious convictions.<sup>51</sup>

At the same time, the communist authorities, through the political police (The Securitate), tried to infiltrate the religious organizations by creating a vast network of informants as well as by imposing within the management bodies some persons faithful to the system who would guarantee the loyalty of those particular cults towards the communist state.<sup>52</sup> The communists constantly tried to leave the impression that they do not openly interfere with the life of the religious organizations, trying to act in an occult manner, but, when the interest asked for it, they shifted to open repressive actions. The best known case is that of the Greek Catholic Church. Thinking that this church was too closely connected to the Peasants National Party, the most important party opposing the communist power, the Romanian communist leaders inspired themselves from the example given by Stalin, who dissolved the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and in 1948 they organized the dissolution of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church.<sup>53</sup> The bishops and a large part of the clergy were arrested and the believers were forced to join the Orthodox Church (many opposed and were repressed). Moreover, in the context of Stalin started an ample propagandistic (and not only) action against the Vatican, the Romanian authorities shift to the systematic persecution of Roman Catholic priests and bishops, seeking to create an institutional structure by means of which to cut off the Romanian Roman Catholics from the Pope.<sup>54</sup> Another example that

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<sup>51</sup> Vasile Manea, Cicerone Ionițoiu, *Martiri și mărturisitori ai bisericii din România (1948-1989)*. Biserica ortodoxă, vol. I, ediția a II-a (Cluj-Napoca: Patmos, 1998), accessed July 27, 2013, <http://www.procesulcomunismului.com/marturii/fonduri/ioanitoiu/ortodoxa/>; Ioan Bota, Cicerone Ionițoiu, *Martiri și mărturisitori ai bisericii din România (1948-1989)*. Biserica Română Unită cu Roma, Greco-Catolică. Biserica Romano-Catolică, vol. II, ediția a II-a (Cluj-Napoca: Patmos, 1998), accessed July 27, 2013, <http://www.procesulcomunismului.com/marturii/fonduri/ioanitoiu/bisericii/>.

<sup>52</sup> George Enache, "Misiunile Securității în problema «Culte» la începuturile regimului comunist," *Analele Universității "Dunărea de Jos" Galați, fascicula 19 – Istorie VIII* (2009): 167-192.

<sup>53</sup> Cristian Vasile, *Istoria Bisericii Greco-catolice sub regimul comunist – 1945 – 1989*. Documente și mărturii (Iași: Polirom, 2003); Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin. Biserica Greco-Catolică în timpul regimului comunist*.

<sup>54</sup> Cristian Vasile, "Procesul mons. Vladimir Ghica (24 octombrie 1953 – 15 iunie 1954)," *Pro Memoria* 3 (2004): 142-163; Raluca Vasilescu, "Arbitrariul justiției comuniste: cazul Episcopului dr. Ioan Scheffler," in *C.N.S.A.S., Studii, 1, Totalitarism și rezistență, teroare*

can be invoked here is the 410 decree in 1959 through which the communist leaders sought to destroy the orthodox monasticism, considered a threat to the regime due to the large number of monks and their great influence among the believers.<sup>55</sup>

Besides these strategies there is also the atheist propaganda and the actions against religious faith. Unlike other communist states, the Romanian anti-religious propaganda did not take the hideous forms of destruction and systematic desacralisation of the churches or humiliation of the priests. People were encouraged to give up religion and not go to religious gatherings, and the promotion of religion in the public space was forbidden. In spite of all these, people were not stopped from entering the churches and participating in religious ceremonies, as long as these ceremonies took place within the space of the church. For this reason, throughout the entire communist period, most of the Romanian population got baptised and wedded religiously, the situation being, from this point of view, completely different from that in the Soviet Union. Moreover, certain public religious ceremonies, where religious symbols were present, were tolerated, such as: Easter and Christmas holidays, church consecrations, funerary processions. In Romania, there were certain situations that were otherwise unconceivable in other communist countries. Thus, Petru Groza, Prime-minister for many years, was buried with religious ceremony<sup>56</sup> and the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu had to accept the will of his father who asked to be buried with religious sermon, performed by several priests.<sup>57</sup> This suggests that the Romanian communist leaders were not preoccupied to systematically and ever faster destroy faith and the churches, as it was the case in Albania<sup>58</sup>, but were satisfied with

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*și represiune în România comunistă* (București, 2001), 137-145; Dănuț Doboș, ed., *Biserica Romano-Catolică din România în perioada persecuției comuniste (1948-1989)* (Iași: Sapiența, 2008); William Totok, *Episcopul, Hitler și Securitatea. Procesul stalinist împotriva „spionilor Vaticanului” din România* (Iași: Polirom, 2008).

<sup>55</sup> George Enache, Adrian Nicolae Petcu, *Monahismul ortodox și puterea comunistă în România anilor '50* (Galați: Partener, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> Dan Ciachir, “Înmormântarea lui Petru Groza. O colivă purtată de milițieni,” *Ziua*, March 18, 2008, accessed July 13, 2013, <http://sfvasile.blogspot.ro/2008/03/inmormantarea-lui-petru-groza.html>.

<sup>57</sup> Ionuț Cristian Ungureanu, “Paștele în Epoca de Aur: enoriașii se duceau pe furiș la biserică, în timp ce familia Ceaușescu respecta cu rigoare tradițiile,” accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.frontpress.ro/2012/04/pastele-in-epoca-de-aur-enoriasii-se-duceau-pe-furis-la-biserica-in-timp-ce-familia-ceausescu-respecta-cu-rigoare-traditiile.html>; Lavinia Betea, “Pasiunile lui Nea Andruța Ceaușescu, pământul și băutura,” *Jurnalul Național*, May 3, 2011, accessed July 13, 2013, <http://jurnalul.ro/special-jurnalul/pasiunile-lui-nea-andruta-ceausescu-pamantul-si-bautura-576857.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Nicholas Pano, “The Albanian Orthodox Church,” in *Eastern Christianity and the Cold War, 1945-91*, ed. Lucian N. Leustean (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), Kindle edition.



having strict control over the churches and with manipulating them for various political interests.

After the first communist decade, period during which the churches suffered ample repressions, there came a period of relative calmness. The communist leaders saw the churches as instruments of promoting national values (the national-communism age was beginning) and the foreign interests of the Romanian state. Trying to tighten the connections with the West, the Romanian communist leaders seek to normalize the relations with the Vatican<sup>59</sup>, accept the enlisting of the churches from Romania in the World Council of Churches<sup>60</sup> and support (at least at a declarative level) the existence of religious freedom in Romania. In exchange of a tolerant attitude, the representatives of churches are asked to present abroad a positive image of the regime.<sup>61</sup>

This extremely fragile balance collapses after 1975, in the context of signing the Helsinki agreement and of the growth in importance of the issue of human right in international relations. The western world pays more attention to the realities in the communist Romania, trying to also listen to other voices than those sent by the party. In this context, more and more voices start to denounce the excessive control of the state over the churches and ask for authentic religious freedom. Thus, Iosif Țon, Silvian Cioată, Pavel Nicolescu, Aurelian Popescu, Constantin Caraman and Radu Dumitrescu write a statement entitled *The neo-protestant denominations and the issue of human rights in Romania*, which was broadcast by Free Europe Radio on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1977. The document denounced the hypocrisy of the authorities and the control and repression mechanisms that were exerted upon the believers.<sup>62</sup> Another important character at that time is the orthodox priest Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, former political convict in the 1948-1964 period, who, in 1978, in a series of public speeches, demanded that the young could be catechized.<sup>63</sup> The reaction of the communist authorities was extremely harsh and the control over the churches strengthened. The leaders of the churches were forced to new declarations of loyalty and the contact with the exterior were strictly monitored.

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<sup>59</sup> Ovidiu Bozgan, *Cronica unui eșec previzibil. România și Sfântul Scaun în epoca pontificatului lui Paul al VI-lea (1963-1978)* (București: Curtea Veche, 2004).

<sup>60</sup> "World Council of Churches – History," accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us/wcc-history>.

<sup>61</sup> Adrian Nicolae Petcu, "Activitatea Departamentului Cultelor în atenția Securității (1970-1989)," *Caietele CNSAS* an II, nr. 2 (4) (2009): 69-120.

<sup>62</sup> Dorin Dobrinu, "«Culte neoprotestante și drepturile omului în România». Un memoriu din 1977," *Archiva Moldaviae* 4 (2012): 351-402.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Bourdeaux, "Father Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa - Fearless Romanian cleric defiant in the face of oppression," *The Guardian*, January 10, 2007, accessed July 12, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2007/jan/10/guardianobituaries.religion>; Fr. George Calciu, *Christ is calling you. A course in catacomb pastorship* (St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina/California, 1997).

The last part of Ceaușescu's regime was dominated by the disputes with the United States. Ceaușescu wanted to maintain the clause of the most favoured nation but more and more political leaders from the United States expressed their reserves regarding the situation of human rights in Romania, especially those related to religious freedom. In order to counterattack these attitudes, the Romanian government organizes a visit of Pastor Billy Graham, who delivers a series of biblical conferences in front of a large number of people. The visit, controlled to the smallest detail by the political police, was doubled by some speeches of the religious leaders who, on the authorities' "recommendation", emphasised the existence of religious freedom in Romania.<sup>64</sup> Eventually, the whole action was pointless because Ceaușescu gave up the clause willingly, closing Romania to any external influence. Fearing an instigation to an anti-communist rebellion through the churches, Ceaușescu and the Securitate subjected the churches to a suffocating control in the 1988-1989 period.<sup>65</sup> For this reason, the revolution in December 1989 meant the finding of freedom for the religions as well.

#### **Development of a true religious pluralism, after 1989<sup>66</sup>**

Georges Sorel is the author who introduces the "revolutionary catastrophe" theory, by which he understands a radical change, by means of violence, of certain realities otherwise difficult to change.<sup>67</sup> The communist regime produced this kind of "catastrophes" which dramatically changed social or ethnic realities which, under other circumstances, would have been impossible to change. But, on its turn, communism, through its excesses, was itself the victim of a "catastrophe", fact expressed by the radical manner in which it was rejected by the Eastern European societies that got out of communism.

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<sup>64</sup> Denisa Bodeanu, Valentin Vasile, eds., *Afacerea Evanghelistul*. *Vizita lui Billy Graham în România (1985)* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2010).

<sup>65</sup> George Enache, Adrian Nicolae Petcu, Paul Brusanowski, Ionuț Tudorie, "Biserica Ortodoxă Română în anii regimului comunist. Observații pe marginea capitolului dedicat cultelor din Raportul final al Comisiei prezidențiale pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste din România," *Studii teologice*, seria a III-a, year V, nr. 2 (April-June 2009): 7-104.

<sup>66</sup> About religious life in Romania after 1989 see Ion Bria, *Ortodoxia în România. Locul spiritualității române* (Iași: Trinitas, 1995); Iuliana Conovici, *Ortodoxia în România postcomunistă. Reconstrucția unei identități publice*, vol. I-II (Cluj Napoca: Eikon, 2009); Radu Preda, *Biserica în stat: o invitație la dezbateri* (Cluj-Napoca: Scripta, 1999); Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nihil Obstat. Religion, Politics and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998); Lavinia Stan, Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania* (Oxford University Press, 2007); Lavinia Stan, Lucian Turcescu, *Church, State and Democracy in Expanding Europe* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>67</sup> Georges Sorel, *Reflections on violence*, ed. Jeremy Jennings, *Cambridge Texts of the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

In modern Romania, the state's role was overwhelming for the society. Communism managed to make this status questionable and the civil society started to appear in Romania too, a country deprived of such a thing for a long time. Likewise, the communist initiatives in various fields were also questioned.

Religiously speaking, these perceptions had important consequences. The 1948 Churches Law was kept but the state withdrew unprecedentedly from the life of the churches, which gained a large freedom of manifestation. Only the rights of the churches were preserved and applied from the law and the churches kept receiving state funding, the sums constantly growing as compensation for the limitations during the years of communism.

In spite of the fact that the churches in Romania did not manifest as forces of anti-communist resistance, as was the case with Poland, most of the population placed religion and communism in a relation of antinomy. The relatively important presence of the churches in the public space in the communist period, as compared to other states, maintained a high level of religiousness among the population, of which only a tiny fraction declared atheist. For Romanians, the more pronounced presence of the churches in the public space could not have been more natural. Two were the motivations lying at the basis of this attitude shared by the large majority of the population: considering religion as a positive element of society and fixing the injustices done by the communist regime. One of the measures taken immediately after the revolution and which enjoyed at the time a large support was the introduction of religious education in the public schools.<sup>68</sup>

Having the population's support and the state's good will, the churches started reconquering the public space, but this fact generated a lot of unrest. First of all, it was felt that the disappearance of communism must be marked by a comeback to the realities before 1948. Thus, the Orthodox Church continued to state that it is a "national church" and that it deserves a dominant position, claiming an exclusive ecclesiastic space. The Greek Catholic Church, legal again, counted in the first years after the revolution, as a result of the catastrophe that it suffered, only a tenth of the number of believers before 1948. It claimed "restitutio in integrum", by this meaning to go back to the realities of the interwar period, both in terms of believers, and in terms of patrimony. Due to this, a long-term conflict started between the orthodox and the greek catholics based on the fact that the communist regime gave the Greek Catholic places of worship to the Orthodox Church. The orthodox pretended that the churches belong to the believers and since they chose to remain orthodox, then the churches must remain in the property of the Orthodox Church. The Greco-Catholics claimed that the places of worship were the property of the ecclesiastic institution taken as a whole, and did not belong to

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<sup>68</sup> Lavinia Stan, Lucian Turcescu, "Religious education in Romania," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 38 (2005): 38- 401.

the believers, therefore, they had to be retroceded. A solution to these frictions was sought in the court of law, through long and cumbersome trials.<sup>69</sup>

The Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic Church maintained the mentality of “historical church”, from the interwar period, trying to preserve a certain status, to have amiable relations with the state and to look reluctantly upon prozelytism, preferring the idea of amiable vicinity with the other churches.<sup>70</sup> The historical churches of the Magyar and German minorities adhered to these values as well, adding an active involvement in the process of affirmation of the two ethnic groups, after the age of national communism when their rights were limited.

The neo-protestant churches, older or recently arrived in Romania, situated in opposition to these “historical” churches. Although persecuted, the number of neo-protestants grew very much during the years of the communist regime. People were attracted by the dynamism of these denominations, by their missionary activity, by their more fastidious religiousness.<sup>71</sup> Thus, former Greek Catholics moved to neo-protestant cults when they refused to move to orthodoxy, in the context of forbidding the Greek Catholic Church, or numerous more rigorous orthodox groups in terms of religiousness, dissatisfied with the laxity of the official Orthodox Church. Especially towards the end of the communist regime, for many Romanians converting to a neo-protestant cult meant an extra opportunity to get support from the West in order to leave the prison that Romanian had become.

These churches came along with their missionary dynamism, called prozelytism by the “historical” churches, speaking against churches being funded by the state and against any administrative barriers against the missionary activities. They were in favour of an open market in the religious field, the suggested model being the American one.<sup>72</sup>

Besides the inter-confessional conflicts, a new problem appeared: the religious influence that the churches in Romania exert upon a young democracy which tries to grow up after decades of totalitarianism. The development of nationalist feelings in Eastern Europe and the increase of the religiously-motivated conflicts made the “religion and democracy” topic became a major one in the international academic world of the early '90s.

In the Romanian case, the situation was multifaceted. Firstly, there was the collaborationism of some representatives of the churches with the former

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<sup>69</sup> “Disputa patrimonială dintre Biserica Greco-Catolică și Biserica Ortodoxă Română,” accessed July 27, 2013, [http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disputa\\_patrimonial%C4%83\\_dintre\\_Biserica\\_GrecoCatolic%C4%83\\_%C8%99i\\_Biserica\\_Ortodox%C4%83\\_Rom%C3%A2n%C4%83](http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disputa_patrimonial%C4%83_dintre_Biserica_GrecoCatolic%C4%83_%C8%99i_Biserica_Ortodox%C4%83_Rom%C3%A2n%C4%83).

<sup>70</sup> Conovici, *Ortodoxia în România poscomunistă*, I, 370-382.

<sup>71</sup> Elis Neagore-Pleșa, Liviu Pleșa, “Culte neo-protestante din România în perioada 1975-1989,” in *Partidul, Securitatea și Cultele. 1945-1989*, ed. Adrian Nicolae Petcu (București, Nemira, 2005), 350-394.

<sup>72</sup> In particular the Baptist Church and the Adventist Church; APADOR-CH, *Stat și religii în România* (București, 2008), 23-25, accessed July 27, 2013; [http://www.apador.org/publicatii/raport\\_stat\\_religii.pdf](http://www.apador.org/publicatii/raport_stat_religii.pdf).

communist regime.<sup>73</sup> The absence of a public confession and the clear expression of regret for the compromises during the communist years generated a vivid debate regarding the necessity to “take communism out” of the churches in Romania, by removing the compromised leaders from the positions they held. The debate on this topic offered the opportunity to see who and how can interfere in the life of the churches, to what extent the state authorities or the public opinion can determine a change within a church or whether only the representatives of that church are entitled to make decisions in matters referring to them. Eventually, The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, the institution that took under administration the archives of the former communist political police, started to make public data from the archive regarding the relations of various representatives of the churches with the communist regime. Initially, it was this council that passed the verdict of collaborating or non-collaborating with the Securitate; starting with 2007 this has been done by a court of law.<sup>74</sup> Establishing the quality of being a collaborator with the Securitate has only a moral dimension, without administrative consequences. The problem of the relations between the representatives of the churches and the Securitate reached a peak in 2006-2009; from then on the interest in this topic grew smaller and smaller.

A second aspect of the debate about “religion and democracy” refers to the institutional organization of the churches and even their doctrine, whether these aspects are compatible with the democratic values or not. The topic is not new, but it goes back as far as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Catholic Church was regarded as essentially anti-democratic, a supporter of the Old Regime. Such a topic is extremely provocative but also extremely delicate as there is a lot of room for hasty generalizations and exaggerations. In 1997, a Belgian, Olivier Gillet, published a book entitled *Religion et nationalisme: L'idéologie de l'Eglise Orthodoxe Roumaine sous le régime communiste*.<sup>75</sup> The Romanian edition generated a vivid emotion within the public opinion through the author's blunt statements regarding the anti-democratic vocation of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The intense and amplified debates that followed, with pros and cons, were helpful in overcoming the nostalgic views upon the position of the church in the society and a more determined move was made towards connecting the churches in Romanian to the reality of the contemporary world.

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<sup>73</sup> Radu Preda, *Semnele vremii. Lecturi social-teologice* (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2008), 59-74; Radu Preda, *Comunismul, o modernitate eşuată* (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2009): 197-260; Carmen Chivu-Duță, *Culte din Romania între prigonire și colaborare* (Iași, Polirom, 2007).

<sup>74</sup> “Curtea Constituțională: Legea CNSAS este neconstituțională,” accessed July 27, 2013, <http://www.mediafax.ro/social/curtea-constititionala-legea-cnsas-este-neconstititionala-video-protv-2358154>.

<sup>75</sup> Olivier Gillet, *Religion et nationalisme: L'idéologie de l'Eglise Orthodoxe Roumaine sous le régime communiste* (Bruxelles, Editions de l'ULB, 1997).

In 1999 Pope John Paul II visited Romania, the first visit of the leader of the Catholic Church to a predominantly orthodox country.<sup>76</sup> The meeting that took place marked the beginning of a relief of the tensions between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Romania. Then, Romania's wish to join NATO and the European Union contributed to the strengthening of the collaboration relations between the religious cults and the rethinking of the Romanian religious space in a European key. All churches in Romania supported Romania's path to Europe and firmly expressed their support for the democratic values.<sup>77</sup> In 2007, in Sibiu, the Third European Ecumenical Assembly took place, and during discussions between the churches in Romania they used more and more often the idea of "religious pluralism", which was considered a fundamental principle of the contemporary world.<sup>78</sup>

In 2006, a new law was adopted which was meant to regulate the activity of the churches in Romania (Law 489).<sup>79</sup> The law represents a compromise between tradition and the new European realities:

- Law 489 guarantees the freedom of thought, conscience and religion, states that no one shall be prevented from adopting a religious opinion or joining a religious faith.
- There is no national church. All religions are equal.
- The law does not explicitly mention the principle of the separation between church and state, on the ground that the state neutrality in relation with any religion or ideology was already stated in art. 9 of the law.
- The law established a model of partnership between the state and the church. The recognized denominations are public utility legal entities, and as such, they are entitled to financial support from the state, proportionally with their membership.
- The law distinguishes between "culte" (churches, denominations) and religious associations. Anyone can found a religious association. In order to be legally recognized as "cult", religious associations must prove that they have functioned for at least 12 years in Romania and their membership amounts to at least 0.1 % of the population (German model).

The law paved the way for the establishment of true religious pluralism<sup>80</sup> although it received criticism from some representatives of churches or religious

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<sup>76</sup> Bogdan-Aurel Teleanu, "Cronica vizitei papale în România," *Vestitorul Ortodoxiei*, year IX, nr. 226-227 (June 1999): 6.

<sup>77</sup> Conovici, *Ortodoxia în România postcomunistă*, I, 453-475.

<sup>78</sup> Cătălin Grumeza, "Pluralismul religios, o încercare de a-l înțelege pe celălalt," *Ziarul Lumina*, September, 20, 2011, <http://ziarullumina.ro/societatea-perspectiva-crestina/pluralismul-religios-o-incercare-de-l-intelege-pe-celalalt>.

<sup>79</sup> "Legea 489 2006 privind libertatea religioasă și regimul general al cultelor, publicata în Monitorul Oficial nr. 11 din 8.1.2007," accessed July 27, 2013, <http://legeaz.net/legea-cultelor-489-2006/>.

associations<sup>81</sup>, and representatives from civil society, the most vehement as representatives of secular associations.

These groups, small at first, became increasingly present and influential. They believe that religion and church are excessively present in the public space. These groups, at first small, have become more and more present and influential. Essentially, they claim that religion should be taken out of public schools (the laicization of the public educational system), the state funding for churches should be withdrawn and the money should be used for other social projects.<sup>82</sup> The influence of these associations has grown fuelled by the ever intense discussions regarding the informal relations between the leaders of the churches and the political forces and by the use of the financial resources for other purposes than charitable actions. This is also seen in the significant decrease of the population's trust in the most important church in Romania, the Orthodox Church, from 80% to approximately 60% trust.<sup>83</sup> For the time being, it looks less like a process of secularization of society, of faith decrease, and more like an anti-clerical feeling.

In this context, in November 2014, the Constitutional Court of Romania, following the requests filled by representatives of the secular associations, gave a new interpretation to the manner in which religion is studied in school. According to the law, religion used to be an optional subject, but all pupils were enlisted by default, and those who did not wish to study religion filled a request to be

<sup>80</sup> "Legea cultelor, salutată de Institutul INTER," accessed July 27, 2013, <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/misiune-ortodoxa/conversations/messages/46>.

<sup>81</sup> Dorin Dobrinu, "Legea cultelor: text, subtext si context," 22, January, 19, 2007, accessed July 27, 2013, <http://www.revista22.ro/legea-cultelor-text-subtext-si-context-3392.html>; Natalia Vlas, "«Who Could Challenge Democracy?» The Law on Religious Freedom – An Expression of Romanian Democracy?," accessed July 27, 2013, [http://euroacademia.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Natalia\\_Vlas\\_Who\\_Could\\_Challenge\\_Democracy\\_The\\_Law\\_on\\_Religious\\_Freedom-An\\_Expression\\_of\\_Romanian\\_Democracy.pdf](http://euroacademia.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Natalia_Vlas_Who_Could_Challenge_Democracy_The_Law_on_Religious_Freedom-An_Expression_of_Romanian_Democracy.pdf); APADOR-CH, *Stat și religii în România*.

<sup>82</sup> "CNCI Decision 323/2006," accessed July 27, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CNCI\\_Ddecision\\_323/2006](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CNCI_Ddecision_323/2006); Smaranda Enache, ed., *Promovarea interesului superior al copilului în educația religioasă. Monitorizarea educației religioase în școlile publice din România* (Târgu-Mureș: Pro Europa, 2007); Ovidiu Pecican, "Stat și biserică în România postcomunistă," 22, June 18, 2008, accessed July 27, 2013, <http://www.revista22.ro/stat-si-biserica-in-romania-postcomunista-4634.html>; Emil Moise, "Relația Stat-Biserică în privința educației religioase în școlile publice din România," *JSRI* 7 (Spring 2004), accessed July 27, 2013, [http://www.jsri.ro/old/html%20version/index/no\\_7/emilmoise-articol.htm](http://www.jsri.ro/old/html%20version/index/no_7/emilmoise-articol.htm); "Asociația Secular – Umanistă din România," accessed September 17, 2014, <http://www.asur.ro/>.

<sup>83</sup> "Grupul român pentru studiul valorilor sociale, Valorile românilor – Newsletter no. 5 iulie 2009," accessed July 27, 2013, [http://www.iccv.ro/valori/newsletter/NLVR\\_NO\\_5.pdf](http://www.iccv.ro/valori/newsletter/NLVR_NO_5.pdf); Marcel Răduț, "Scade încrederea în Biserică - realități din umbra unui sondaj," *Adevărul*, October 23, 2014, accessed November 1, 2014, [http://adevarul.ro/news/politica/scade-increderea-biserica-realitati-umbra-unuisondaj\\_1\\_5448a6930d133766a82a50f3/index.html#](http://adevarul.ro/news/politica/scade-increderea-biserica-realitati-umbra-unuisondaj_1_5448a6930d133766a82a50f3/index.html#).

withdrawn. The court decided that this is unconstitutional and established that those who wish to study religion should file a request to the school authorities.<sup>84</sup> The fact was perceived by the supporters of religion study as a first step in the removal of religion from public schools.

### **Conclusions**

- In the modern period the Romanian state tried to use the religious organizations in order to reach certain political objectives. The state's intervention blocked the development of religious pluralism for a long time.

- The state's control over the religious organizations did not lead to a decrease of the religious feeling. The present population of Romania still has one of the highest levels of religiousness in Europe. Religiousness has transformed, experimenting new ways of expression.

- In the modern era, the public space was dominated by state and church. The civil society appears later. The civil society plays a significant role in Romania after 1989, as a result of the "catastrophe" of the totalitarian state. The presence of the civil society favoured the development of religious pluralism. Nowadays, the state is neutral in matters of religion.

- There have been few "catastrophes" in the area of religious life to lead to significant changes of the religions map, unlike other areas in Europe. One of the major "catastrophes" is the dissolution of the Greek Catholic Church in 1948, which, after being re-legalized, comprises only a small percentage of the old believers. Other "catastrophes" that we could mention are the exodus of Jews and Germans, fact which made the percentage of Lutherans and Mosaic Jews significantly lower.

- In general, the relations among the religions in Romania have been based on tolerance and respect. Conflicts appeared when religion mixed with political interests. Since Romania joined the European Union the inter-confessional relations have become better and better, being based on respecting the democratic values.

- After 1989, the presence of the churches in the Romanian public space has considerably grown, as a reaction to the persecutions during the communist period. At present, a part of the Romanian society is in favour of a new secularization.

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<sup>84</sup> "Religia nu e obligatorie în școli: Povestea omului care a învins sistemul și a înfuriat Biserica," accessed December 2, 2014, <http://www.ziare.com/social/religie/religia-nu-e-obligatorie-in-scoli-povestea-omului-care-a-invins-sistemul-si-a-infuriat-biserica-1333221>.



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**WOULD A WALL OF SEPARATION HELP?  
CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION AND SOCIAL ROLE OF  
RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA  
AND THE PLACE FOR POLITICAL THEOLOGY**

**Abstract:** Due to its rich history, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. After the Dayton Peace Agreement (1995), it is established as one country consisting of two entities (Republic of Srpska and Federation of BH) and three “constituent peoples” (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats). Its constitutional system was established as a set of different rules in order to represent each one of these “constituent peoples” and to prevent menaces to democracy or outvoting. Nevertheless, it seems that this constitutional system needs improvement. Since religion and ethnicity are almost empirically equal, it becomes quite interesting to observe that the legislative displays a strong tendency to adopt the principle of accommodation instead of strict separation, when it comes to religious freedoms.

However, on one hand, proponents of secularization emphasize this relation between religion and ethnicity as being one of the main causes for inter-ethnic tensions.

On the other hand, opponents of strict separation invoke their experience with the communist type of secularization as destructive and oversimplified. Their main argument is that secularization, regarded especially as a social concept, does not resolve but rather *silences* identity problems. In each case, whatever constitutional and social solution might be found for the future of the country, the author tries to show that *political theology*, as a critical and engaged approach of the Orthodox Church, must find its place in the day to day life of the Church and in the society.

**Keywords:** *constituent peoples, religious communities, accommodation principle, secularization, political theology*

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## 1. Introduction: Everything Begins with History

Following one of the most violent and severe wars in Europe after WWII, Bosnia and Herzegovina was established as one country with two federal units (entities); Republic of Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (not to be confused with the entire country which is constitutionally known only as “Bosnia and Herzegovina”). The Dayton (1995)<sup>1</sup> and Paris (1996) Peace Agreements put an end to the war, but none of the sides was pleased with the final solution: Serbs and Croats felt (and most of them still feel) that their right to self-determination and unification with Serbia or Croatia resp. was sacrificed by the International Community for political reasons. On the other hand, both nations were granted the role of “constituent peoples” in the newly founded country, while Serbian part in particular was disputing its autonomy. The Bosniak (Muslim) population was (and still is) unsatisfied with the fact that state is not a centralized one, but was (and still is) satisfied that it is *one* state after all.<sup>2</sup> These causes still remain a basic topic in

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**General note:** since this paper is written primarily for an international scientific and non-scientific audience, I tried as much as possible to rely on bibliographical references which are internationally available. That is the main reason why I refer to web references, especially in the case of such documents as the Dayton Agreement and various constitutional acts in the BH legislation. References given in this article may enable the reader to directly access these documents, check scientific accuracy and, possibly to further research. I believe that, as there are some reasonable concerns about the scientific reliability of web resources in the international scientific community, in 2013 it seems obvious that web resources are as reliable (or unreliable), verifiable (or unverifiable) as any other resource. I will also rely mainly on resources written in English.

<sup>1</sup> “Dayton Peace Agreement”, accessed July 10, 2013, [http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/BA\\_951121\\_DaytonAgreement.pdf](http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/BA_951121_DaytonAgreement.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> The causes of wars remain a topic of intense political tensions even today so it makes it very difficult to deal with this issue “scientifically”, especially because the perspective on some events, even “scientific” ones, changes according to the cultural and other standpoints of a historian. That is why there is virtually no single “*neutral*” book written about the breakdown of Yugoslavia, at least not to my knowledge. Even the historical books who tend to be descriptive, like John Lampe’s, *Yugoslavia as History (Twice There was a Country)*, (Cambridge University Press, 2000) did not manage to avoid favouritism in their *description*. Although it may be argued that his account of the Yugoslav wars is affected by his view on the civilization interactions, I find the version of Samuel Huntington, presented in his book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (Simon and Schuster: New York, 2003), 260-63 to be the most informative one. I want to prevent any other interpretation of this recalling of mine on Huntington’s work by saying that I make reference to his work only on an informative level. As a Christian Orthodox and thinker, I do not believe that complicated existential experiences such as wars could be explained only by *one* predominant hermeneutical key, called either “clash” or “cooperation” of civilization or anything else. From my perspective, I would also have much to say about Huntington’s description and classification of the Christian Orthodox Culture.

BH political agenda even 17 years after the war is over. The new generations who were born during the war or after it was ended, grew up with the same problems which made my generation suffer, watching our fathers going to war and our mothers praying for their return.

The Peace Agreement was made on one particular criterion: that none of the sides will get all they demand and that they will not lose everything they have. It was a good foundation for that moment in history. Nevertheless, the very fact that it was a compromise proved to be the main reason why political elites of all three nations (ethnicities) have tried to reach their goals through *political activism*. What was lost in the war might be regained during the peace and vice-versa.

Due to its history and geography, the territory of today's Bosnia and Herzegovina, has always been a multi-religious and multi-ethnic one (if we could apply the contemporary notion of "nation" or "ethnicity" to any society prior to the period of European national romanticism). Even before the Slavs came to the Balkan Peninsula, the territory of today's Bosnia and Herzegovina was a border of the Eastern and Western Roman Empires (from 395 AD onwards). Later, in the Middle Ages, the new formed Slavic states were influenced by both the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary. Slavs formed their own culture based on their own language in 9<sup>th</sup> century but their church relations with Constantinople and Rome were far more than spiritual<sup>3</sup>.

When in 1054, the Christian East and West finally split, the victims were not the Catalonian pirates nor the Russian princes, but south Slavic population who suddenly had to choose between two equally close (or distant) ecclesiastical and cultural centers. Later, both Christian communities, Orthodox and Catholic, regretted the history of conflict at the arrival of the Ottoman Empire. Together with the Ottomans, Islam came to Bosnia and Herzegovina and thus all three major religious communities were formed in BH before the ending of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. They had to find their way to survive under a foreign occupation (Ottoman and Habsburg) and to survive *with or without another* for, although historical

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Nevertheless, it seems to me that precisely his eagerness to present each side of the Yugoslav wars leads to *the most balanced description*. For instance, his insistence on the participation of foreign war volunteers in the Bosnian war gives account on all three sides, while almost every other historian only emphasizes the participation of the *other side's* "mercenaries". It is obvious for everyone who was at that time in Bosnia that *there were not that many volunteers* in the War - Huntington emphasized their role in order to prove his points, but the fact remains that only Huntington found it important to explain that *all* sides had their "helpers from the outside". For the history of Yugoslav society, it might be very helpful to read Branislav Radeljic, *Europe and the Collapse of Yugoslavia* (I.B. Tauris: London, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> See Dimitri Obolenski, *Byzantium and the Slavs* (St Vladimir Orthodox Press, 1994), 205 ff.

circumstances were changing in favor of one of the communities, there was never a point when one community had monopoly over the entire country.

Moreover, despite religious differences, common biological roots, language, material culture and mentality had always formed the basis for inter-religious interactions and influences. The same tension of being distant and yet close, different from and different for, suspicious and attracted - it could be seen as one of the constant characteristics of the BH life and history. Both Yugoslav projects (the Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1918-1945<sup>4</sup>; Socialist Yugoslavia 1945-1990<sup>5</sup>) failed to overcome the negative side of that ambivalent feeling. The “Brotherhood and Unity” policy failed the test of history. Will the new state, based on war trauma, deprived of the very illusion that “Brotherhood and Unity” are possible and yet composed by the same large ethnicities which formed Yugoslavia manage to survive?

## **2. Constitutional Structure of BH and “constituent peoples”**

According to the preamble of BH Constitution (which is an integrated part of Dayton Agreement and therefore cannot be changed)<sup>6</sup>, “Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs”, are “constituent peoples (along with Others)”<sup>7</sup>. Although the Preamble, as well as the entire Constitution was “based on respect for human dignity, liberty, and equality”<sup>8</sup>, the specific naming of the three nationalities as constituent peoples has both a historical and constitutional significance. The historical one consists of the traumatic history of Yugoslavia’s break, which started by omitting the status of the Serbs as a constituent people in the first Croatian post-communist Constitution (1991), which was one of the most reliable signs that the relations between Croats and Serbs would lead to the conflict. Secondly, naming some nation “constituent” means that nothing in this country can be done without prior consent of that nation. In practice, in the BH context, that means that every decision must be approved by the elected representatives of each one of the constituent peoples. Thus, BH, in

<sup>4</sup> The first official name of the country was “The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes”, but from 1921 the name was officially changed to “The Kingdom of Yugoslavia”.

<sup>5</sup> From 1945 to 1963 officially “The Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia” and from 1963 to 1991, “The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia”.

<sup>6</sup> The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina is an integral part of the Dayton Peace Agreement (technically, it is the Annex 4 of the Agreement). Political and legal significance of that fact must be stressed upon. As an integral part of the peace agreement, it cannot be changed without prior consent of all parties and, specially, without the consent of the constituent peoples.

<sup>7</sup> “Bosnia and Herzegovina – Constitution”, accessed July 8, 2013, [http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/bk00000\\_.html](http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/bk00000_.html).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

addition to the “usual” *trias politica* system, also has different checks and balances which prove that none of the constituent ethnicities could be marginalized. The country has tripartite Presidency instead of one president (actually, one of the co-presidents is only a ceremonial president according to the rotation principle) and each important decision must be approved by consensus. In the Parliamentary Assembly and the Council of Nations, there are also quotas required according to the representation principle. The same situation could be found in the Constitutional Court.

This system was created with the evident purpose of giving all constituent peoples a sense of control and security. However, things become very complicated when a new law needs to be approved. Checks and balances sometimes prolong legal procedures very much. The situation is especially complicated in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where, along with the State and Entity level, there are 10 cantons which are, in fact, states with own Government, Police, Education and Healthcare system. Political games and constitutional reforms entered the new phase when, in the winter of 2009, the European Court for Human Rights proclaimed that in the case *Seidic/Finci vs. Bosnia and Herzegovina*<sup>9</sup>, rights of “Others” (people not belonging to constituent populations) were jeopardized by the quota/veto system and other legal provisions. That game, the Game of Constitution, is still going on with various outcomes and with players (local politicians) and referees (international politicians) playing often dirty.

### **3. Social Role of Religion(s) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Their Constitutional Position**

The situation becomes even more interesting when we add religion(s). Since three religions (Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam) were the pillars on which the same population formed three different nationalities/ethnicities, there is a general identity of national and religious identity. Orthodox Christians and Serbs are interchangeable, just like Catholics and Croats or Muslims and Bosniaks. Although BH is quite a religious country in terms of the population practicing their religion, there are also many citizens who would declare themselves as belonging to a religious community, although they do not believe in the basic truths of that religion or they do not believe in God at all. You can be an “Orthodox” or “Muslim” atheist not just in Northern Ireland, but in Bosnia and Herzegovina, too.

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<sup>9</sup> Marko Milanovic, “Sejdic and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina”, in *American Journal of International Law* 104 (2010), accessed July 8, 2013, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1672883](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1672883).

Religion is also the most significant social factor in BH. Although widely misunderstood as “traditionalism” or “patrimonial folklore”, religion plays an important role in the everyday life of most of the population of BH. Religious institutions are amongst the most respected in the society. Religious holidays and feasts are an inseparable part of family life. Religion is also an important factor in the political life: some of the most important religious figures, like former Reis-ul-Ulema (Grand Mufti) Mustafa ef. Cerić, played rather active roles in political life of the country. On the local level, it is also quite common knowledge that political parties, even with a “Social Democrat” profile, need an alliance with the local clergy in order to get a better “electoral basis”. The eternal question: *to which extent is religion being used for political purposes and to which extent religious leaders like this alliance*, remains opened. Whatever the answer to this question may be, religion cannot be neglected as a sociopolitical force and as an everyday experience.

Hence, it could be expected that, although secular in its constitutional structure, BH opts for an accommodation principle in the State-Religious Communities relation. The Constitution of BH contains an Enumeration of rights amongst which “freedom of thought, conscience, and religion” is promised (Article 4, Paragraph 3.g)<sup>10</sup>. The Constitution of the Republic of Srpska is more specific in its provisions. Article 10 guarantees human rights to our citizens “irrespective of their race, sex, language, national or social origin, religion, education, material standing, political or other conviction, social status or any other personal circumstance”.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Article 28 specifically refers to the freedom of religious conviction: “Freedom of religion shall be guaranteed. Religious communities shall be equal before the law and free to manage their religious affairs and practice religious services. They may open religious schools and conduct religious education in all schools at all levels of education; they may engage in commercial activities, receive gifts, establish and manage legacies, in accordance with the law. The Serbian Orthodox Church shall be the church of the Serb people and other people of Orthodox religion.”<sup>12</sup>

The openness of our legislature to the accommodation principle could be easily noticed from the article quoted above, just like a semi-Constantine relation with the Church: the Serbian Orthodox Church is mentioned there as “the Church of the Serb people and other people of Orthodox religion” which actually has neither constitutional value (what are the exact constitutional consequence of this rather casual mentioning of the SOC?) nor it has any ecclesiastic value (SOC was

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<sup>10</sup> “Bosnia and Herzegovina – Constitution.”

<sup>11</sup> “Constitution of Republika Srpska”, accessed July 8, 2013, <http://www.vijecenarodars.net/materijali/constitution.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

and still is the Church of the Serb people and of all Orthodox believers with or without being mentioned as such in the Constitution). Nevertheless, *making it sound religious and patriotic* is one of the best “abilities” of BH politicians. In each case, it is obvious that the RS Constitution gives a broad range of social activities to religious communities, which is evidently a socially mature decision having in mind a social presence of religions. The Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina includes the “freedom of religion” in Article 2.<sup>13</sup>

But the real legal incarnation of the accommodation principle could be found in the state *Law on religious freedoms and legal status of Churches and religious Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina*.<sup>14</sup> The Law recognizes four existing communities (Serbian Orthodox Church, Catholic Church, Islamic Community and Jewish Community) as “traditional religious communities” which has given them only one “advantage” over others: they did not have to apply for registration in the Central Register of Religious Communities of the Ministry of Justice. Other religious communities were required to do so, but the Law had set rather low “quota” for new registrations: 300 adult citizens of BH.<sup>15</sup> It is interesting that, among other documents required for registration, a newly-registering community must provide “a document about its official religious doctrine”.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the Law did not favor any religious community neither has it given any religious community a specific social or political role. For instance, it did not declare any religious holiday as an official holiday in any part of the country.

#### 4. Would more Secularism Help – Lesions from Communist Past

With so much political tension and so much accommodation principle in the BH legislative, it became quite common for most of the international political personalities and for some local politicians to consider that *more secularism would calm down the country*. The rationale of the proponents of the “more solid wall of Separation” is that, if religions would be less present in society, there would be fewer tensions in politics. Of course, this program also includes not just a political process, but social measures as well. The replacement of Religious education, given by religious communities by teaching a “Culture of religions” class, using religious sociologists as teachers, was just one of such moves. Generally, the

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<sup>13</sup> “*Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 18 March 1994,” accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b56e4.html>.

<sup>14</sup> “Zakon o slobodi vjere i pravnom položaju crkava i vjerskih zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini,” accessed July 13, 2013, [http://www.mpr.gov.ba/biblioteka/zakoni/ bs/ZAKON%20o%20slobodi%20vjere.pdf](http://www.mpr.gov.ba/biblioteka/zakoni/bs/ZAKON%20o%20slobodi%20vjere.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

project failed not only because the religious communities opposed to it, but because its exact intention was *to compete* with Religious Education instead of giving wider insight *along with* Religious Education.

One of the most interesting characteristics of former Yugoslav societies is “sudden” conversion of former leading Communists to Social Democrats and, very often, Neoliberals.<sup>17</sup> While replacing “dictatorship of proletarians” for the “human rights” discourse, most of these politicians and their political inheritors remained loyal to the concept of *strict separation between the Community and the State*. It seems that their political philosophy/ideology adopted a new form which is equally critical towards the role for religion in society. However, this conversion, just like the conversion of former communists to nationalists and religious fanatics, show how (in)sincere was their old “faith” and how opportunistic is the new one. Still, the new wave of economical and political problems, as well as the nostalgic sentiment towards the times of relative wealth and social stability under communism give more public presence and sympathy for this alternative vision of society.

As much as secularism might seem logical, perhaps just in some future will it come to be considered as any kind of a legitimate solution. There are at least two reasons for that:

The first is *the historical experience*. Secularization in its most radical form (as the total “exile” of religion from public space) was one of the hallmarks of Communism. We live in era in which influential members of the clergy still remember what was it like to be a priest or imam in Tito’s “liberal” Yugoslavia: when instead of the Secretary for relations with Religions (affiliated to the Ministry of Education and Culture) you had a “Commission” for the same purpose (affiliated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs i.e. Police); when you had to file a report to the local policemen about everything you said and did. So, the wounds of *militant* secularism are still too fresh as to let other types of secularism be taken in consideration.

The second important reason for which secularism cannot resolve the problem of interfaith relations is given by the fact that it is based on the premise that *ignoring the problem for some time might actually resolve it*. Again, historically speaking, it favors a social model which is impossible in BH’s historical and political conditions. History has proven that if you try to minimize the role of religions in the social life, they will still survive, but put on the margins of society, they might contribute to social explosion. The Yugoslav experiment has

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<sup>17</sup> Even Slovenian aspect of Yugoslav story can tell the same thing: the first Slovenian politician who won the presidency was Milan Kucan, notable Communist leader who, however, changed red for blue-with-golden stars flag quite rapidly in the period 1986-1991. See, Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 360.

shown that, if you constantly put religious and ethnic identities under the carpet, the dust will eventually ruin the carpet. The question also remains whether the powder you put under the carpet is just dust or gun-powder. Although to some extent it should be recommended that the accommodation principle should be exploited more cautiously in BH, the historical experience and (even) present situation do not give way for any other constitutional or social model of the State-Community relation. The opportunity that all of us might for moment “close our eyes” to the fact that we are Orthodox, Catholic or Muslim will not change the fact what we are when we open our eyes. Neither *pretending that we are not* any of that will do us any good. We are what we are. We must find a way to decrease the political usefulness of that fragile yet important aspect of our identity.

### **5. Political elite with vision and Political Theology for Communities**

In *Origins of Political Order*, Francis Fukuyama tried to explain how political institutions in the West were made and what historical, economical and social reasons were needed to make Western societies the most historically successful. How one society becomes democratic and comfortable to live in? Or, as he put it, by quoting Pritchett and Woolcock, “how to get to Denmark”.<sup>18</sup> Well, Bosnia and Herzegovina will never get to Denmark and in some sense it is better this way. But how can this country become a less stressful place to live and what is the role of political elites and religious communities in this context?

It is obvious that the political elite lack vision. It is too fragile to the everyday political dirt because it does not know any better. All ideologies are gone because they were made ad-hoc for special elections-to-elections purposes and not in order to make the country and its entities better. The same problem remains when it comes to the interaction between politics and religion. Political factors *use* religion for their own purposes and representatives of religious communities often *accept* that position for gaining some small favor or because of the fear of that old paradigm - “society which overcame religion” might be restored. It is obvious that *both* sides need to reconsider their positions.

Since I am not an expert in political science, I will refrain myself from giving advices to politicians. Maybe just one: some vision and statesman-hood would not kill you, you know? Our institutions should serve us and make us feel proud and there is no proud in seeing your most honest feelings being used for someone’s most dishonest ones.

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<sup>18</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order from Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (New York, 2012), 14.



Moreover, I am an Orthodox Priest, a Theologian, professor and, above all, a father of two children (so far). That means that I want a better future for them, but the future in which all of our identities could be preserved and improved. As an Orthodox Christian, and as a believer, I stand for a new *Political Theology*.<sup>19</sup> I think that there is a far better place for us, as the Orthodox Church, to speak and to act than only on politicized forums. We are here to preserve our identity. But we will better preserve it if we start to openly testify Christ's presence amongst those who suffer on social margins, if we openly stand for what we believe, even *if* it will not be pleasant to hear for politicians. If we, like all Old Testament prophets, pay attention to injustice among our "New Israel", if we, like Christ told us, "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17) and then fulfill the Gospel as our social program, instead of politicized theology which insists that the supreme ontological value lies on the "evil of the day", we should find strength to speak about modernity with the courage of Eternity, knowing that what really is relevant is *yet to come*. Thus, only by being grounded in the vision of permanent values, we will be able to speak about everyday events. Otherwise, we will suffer the problem of irrelevance. We should address all those people for whom we serve the mass, from civil authorities to "the sick and the suffering, for captives and their salvation".<sup>20</sup> Or, maybe, we should begin from "the sick and the suffering, for captives and their salvation" and then address the civil authorities. New Political, yet not *politicized* theology should be our voice in the future.

## Conclusion

One of the most evident causes for which people trust more their religious communities than politicians is because religious communities have shown the ability to survive for centuries under foreign occupations while political structures collapsed. It means they are *stable*. Can a state benefit from that stability? It can. But it must firstly quit the every-day political misuse of religion for small favors and cheap points. On the other hand, religions must find their intellectual and social force, or they must rather intellectually shape their view and their social responsibility. In such circumstances, the State could benefit from the stable pillars of its identities and could the religious communities raise their voice without fearing that the voice could be misused by politicians or muted by their own crisis of social relevance.

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<sup>19</sup> More about my view on the foundations of one Orthodox Political Theology is given Darko Djogo, "Trinity, Society and Political Theology," *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 3:2 (2012): 89-112, accessed July 13, 2013, <http://orthodox-theology.com/media/PDF/IJOT2.2012/Djogo.Trinity.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> *Service Book of the Holy Eastern Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church, according to the use at the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of North America*, 2012, 30

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Rehab Sakr\*

**WHY DID THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD FAIL?  
THE DOUBLE-FACED DISCOURSE OF IKHWAN AND POLITICAL  
RESPONSE TO ISLAMIST-SECULAR DIVERSITY IN EGYPT<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** For the first time since its establishment in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood reached political power when one of its members held the presidency in Egypt after the presidential elections of 2012. One year after being in power, another revolution unwounded against the Muslim brotherhood's president, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2013. The Muslim Brotherhood, by the end of 1990s and the beginning of 2000s has launched two internet websites: Arabic and English and used to adopt double faced discourse to attract supporters from different political attitudes, namely Islamists and secularists. This paper argues that one of the important reasons behind the failure of the Muslim Brotherhood In Egypt is that it failed after it came to power to transform its double faced discourse into policies. Decisions and policies of the Muslim Brotherhood were contradictive and did not satisfy any side, after a short while, the group lost all its allies.

**Keywords:** *Egypt, Muslim Brotherhood, ikhwan, islam, secular*

**The Muslim Brotherhood: A Historical Overview**

In 1928, Hassan el-Banna, a school teacher in a small town in Egypt (*Isma'elya*), established a small group with six of his friends, which aimed at improving the life of the poor in the neighbourhood. They started out by

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<sup>1</sup> The study is based on a qualitative discourse analysis of the Muslim Brotherhood Official websites in Arabic and in English versions from 2009 till 2010. It is worth mentioning that after the revolution of 25th of January 2011, the group could have its own newspaper and its own television channel which became the source of the discourse and the views of the group.

*Danubius*, XXXII, Supliment, Galați, 2014, pp. 75-86.

establishing an evening school for teaching those who could not attend school regularly, belonging mainly to the working class. Shortly afterwards, the group established a mosque and focused on teaching the Islam to the young people. Within three years, the group grew rapidly and el-Banna was able to establish a branch in Cairo; the headquarters was subsequently moved to Cairo. In 1932, there were about 300 branches of the group – which got the name of the Muslim Brotherhood – and they were spread all over Egypt. At that stage, the group paid attention mostly to Islamic education, Islamic teaching, and returning the Islamic values to the Egyptian society, which, for el-Banna, was influenced by Western imperialist values.

During the 1940s, millions of young educated people joined the group, which extended its social services for the poor, especially when it built hospitals, pharmacies, and schools. In addition, it had numerous newspapers and magazines, which were used to express the group's opinions about various issues. The group then established a military wing – the Secret Apparatus – whose main role was to fight the British colonization.

During 1950s and 1960s, the Muslim Brothers were accused of trying to assassinate Nasser, therefore many were jailed and tortured, while others were sentenced to the death penalty. The group itself was banned. Nasser's successor, Sadat, who lacked the charismatic character of his predecessor, thought of religion as a source of legitimacy, so he followed a different policy with the Muslim Brotherhood. The concentration camps were closed and the imprisoned members were released. The main objective of the group at that time was to work legally, in other words to turn into a political party, as Sadat permitted a multi-party system. But the battle between Sadat and the group prevented it from becoming a party. Because of its position regarding the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel in 1979, the relationship between the group and the government shattered again.

The relationship remained the same during the 1980s. The group remained illegal, but the government was tolerant regarding some of its activities, such as offering social services and publishing newspapers and magazines. The confrontations started again in the 1990s when the group gained massive public support from the Egyptian society because of the extensive social services it provided. At that time, the state reduced its offering of such services according to the agreements signed with the International Monetary Fund. The group could dominate university elections as well as councils and syndicates.

During 1990s, the group had two official websites: one in Arabic and another one in English. These websites were its only media channels, as the group could not have its own newspaper or television channel. By using these websites, the group could pass on its discourse to different new groups, especially through the English website, whose followers were comprised of Egyptian high class

members, western intellectuals and politicians, who were thus being transmitted the group's views related to many issues such as: Islamic Laws (Sharia), debatable concepts (Democracy, human rights and elections), relations with the West, the Palestinian issue, and the position of women and minorities. After the revolution of the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2011, the group got the majority in the legislative elections of 2011. In June 2012, Mohamed Mursi, one of the group's members, became the president after winning the presidential elections of 2012. In the next section, the discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood regarding the political issues mentioned above will be presented on the official websites of the Muslim Brotherhood websites in both Arabic and English versions.

### **Islamic Laws (Sharia)**

“Allah is our objective;  
The Prophet is our model;  
Qur'an is our constitution;  
Jihad is our way;  
Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope”

*(The slogan of the Muslim Brotherhood).*

The above slogan shows that the Quran is not only the main source of law in the view of the Muslim Brotherhood, but that it is also the constitution itself. The idea of the Quran as a constitution appeared extensively in the Arabic version of the Muslim Brotherhood website, especially during the crisis brought by the burning of the Quran in the United States of America in September 2010. The Muslim Brotherhood published a message issued by the Supreme Guide<sup>2</sup> on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2010, which expressed the group's dissatisfaction with any insult brought to the Quran (although burning the Quran was not specifically pointed out) and called on Muslims to defend the Quran in three ways. The first one is to read it. The second one is to consider it as the main source of religious rules, and the third one is to consider it as the main source of law and rules of life and to apply these laws in all aspects of life. The message pointed out that the Muslim Brotherhood should be the model for Muslims in understanding the Quran and working according to its rules so that the Quran could become “our constitution and the constitution of the *Ummah*”.

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<sup>2</sup> “Weekly Message of the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood”, accessed September 23, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=71077&SecID=213>.

The Supreme Guide stated that the constitution of a state whose religion is Islam should be based on the Quran, which should be its main source of law. He stressed that any article in the constitution that contradicts Islam should be omitted and removed.

The main focus of the English version concerning this issue is that Sharia law has different meanings<sup>3</sup>; there are confirmations that some people consider Sharia as a rigid political ideology, but not all Muslims have the same understanding. Tariq Ramadan, the grandson of Hassan el-Banna, has a different understanding. For Ramadan, Sharia is an applied ethics: "I'm trying to come up with a new framework for Islamic applied ethics...meaning what? That we have a common ground, a common area, where the Christian ethics, the Jewish ethics, the Muslim ethics, the humanist ethics...could provide reform for the better."<sup>4</sup>

Islamic law is not only about the set of punishments mentioned in the Quran (*Hodood*), but also about many man-made laws developed in the cultures where Islam has spread. "Islamic law is all about wisdom and achieving people's welfare in this life, it is all about justice, mercy, wisdom and good". What conflicts with human rights, justice, and wisdom is against Islamic law. The website tries to send a message that a very important part of the Islamic law is the Islamic normative law, which is the product of the understanding of many scholars who studied the Quran and the Sunna.

As stated on the English website, Islamic law is flexible, and its understanding of 1400 years ago is not and cannot be the same as the understanding nowadays. Now there are, for example, Muslim minorities in many Western countries. These countries have different law systems, and cannot be asked to adapt these systems for the sake of the minorities. Even in Islamic countries, the rapid changes call for new readings and interpretations. Religious people should make more efforts for new "*ijtihadat*" or interpretations of the Islamic Sharia in order to adapt it to different places and times.

### **Women and Religious Minorities**

Regarding the Jewish communities, according to the Arabic website, the normal image is that they are traitors to their nation countries while being loyal to Israel.<sup>5</sup> This was the case not only for Egypt but for all countries where Jewish minorities lived. They preferred to live in ghettos, isolating themselves from the

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Robert D. Crane, "Shari'ah Compliance in America," accessed October 1, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=26581&ref=search.php>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Amr Mahmoud, "Egypt's Jews: wealth, treachery and sabotage," accessed September 2, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/new/Article.aspx?ArtID=12721&SecID=0>.

social affairs. As for the economic aspect, they always had their own Jewish projects and refused to join any national ones; they also did not allow other non-Jews to be partners of their projects. Before 1952, the Jewish minority owned 20% of all Egyptian companies, while all Egyptians owned 25% of these companies. And a Jew (Youssef *Katawy*) was the Minister of Finance, the minister of transportation and a member in the upper house of the Egyptian parliament for many years.

They actively participated in the arts – cinema production, direction, and music composition –, however, they did not add any real value to the Egyptian culture. In addition, they tried to destroy the native culture by importing different values and behaviors into the society with their movies. Only the Muslim Brotherhood and the *Misr Alfatah* party paid attention to these efforts of the Jews to destroy the culture of the society and had a clear view regarding this danger. After the establishment of Israel, the Jews in Egypt announced that they were against Zionism, but secretly collaborated with the Jewish gangs in Palestine<sup>6</sup>.

The English one offers quite a different view. On the English website, there is a distinction between Jews and Zionists and between Judaism as a religion and Zionism as an aggressive ideology. For example, it is pointed out that Sheikh *Yusuf Alqaradawy*<sup>7</sup> stresses that, firstly Muslims should differentiate between Zionists and Jews; secondly, Muslims have a problem with Zionists, who have an aggressive ideology, but at the same time can and should co-exist with Jews. Additionally, both groups, Muslims and Jews, have a common ground as followers of two Abrahamic religions. *Alqaradawy* pointed out that Jews who believe in the authentic Torah are close to Muslims. Moreover, the followers of the two religions have common rituals and religious practices. For example, neither eat pork, have halal/kosher food, and prohibit statues in their places of worship. Not only do they have common ground in terms of religion, but also historically they suffered the same brutal treatment in the period following the fall of Andalusia and the fall of the Islamic rule there. *Alqaradawy* stressed the fact that Muslims are against the oppressive Zionism, not against the Jews. In the same way the website focused on the news of the European Jewish convoy which carried medical and food assistances to Gaza.

The third issue is that the group clarified that Christians can hold any political position such as prime minister or minister or representative in Parliament. At the same time, the group ignored its position regarding the presidency for

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Yusuf Alqaradawy, "Muslims are anti Zionists not anti Jews," accessed September 6, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=16936&ref=search.php>.



Christians, since this contradicts with the Sharia.<sup>8</sup> In this context, the group interviewed the Coptic writer and thinker Rafik Habeeb<sup>9</sup> who assured them that the Islamic Law or Sharia is a guarantee for non-Muslims in Islamic countries. According to Habeeb, this opinion is justified by the fact that the main point of Sharia is that it is applied to non-Muslims only in matters which do not contradict with their own beliefs, and therefore Habeeb does not mind having laws made on the basis of the Sharia. On the English website, there is no clear opinion or position on Christians standing as candidates for presidential elections, but it is stressed that Christians can hold any political position such as prime minister or minister. In addition, there is a confirmation of the positive historical role played by the Egyptian church in different crises.

The group confirmed the role of women in politics; women can and should participate in public affairs and stand as candidates for parliaments, municipal elections, and all public councils. They should vote and express their opinion on all candidates. As far as the presidency is concerned, on the Arabic website the group still refuses the idea that women can hold the presidential position<sup>10</sup>. On the English website, it published an article by Abd Almonem Abo Alftooh,<sup>11</sup> one of the famous reformists in the group, who clarified that there are no religious constraints on women or religious minorities in Islamic countries with regard to the political positions, including presidency, and that there are different religious opinions on this matter, depending on certain social conditions. It is worth mentioning that the article was not allowed to be published on the Arabic website, as it does not suit the editing policy

### **Debatable Concepts: Human rights, Elections and Democracy**

“Human rights” as a term is usually used by the group on the English website when talking about issues related to the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the security forces, such as the trials of civilians before military

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<sup>8</sup> “Muslim Brotherhood program for legislative elections of 2010,” accessed December 23, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanonline.net/Bernameg.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> “The Islamic law is a guarantee for the Copts, interview with Rafik Habeeb,” accessed September 30, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=19705&SecID=373>. Rafik Habeeb is a thinker, specialising in Islamic movements, and said to be very close to the Muslim Brotherhood.

<sup>10</sup> “Interview with Mohamed Habeeb,” accessed September 24, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/new/Article.aspx?ArtID=25785&SecID=0>

<sup>11</sup> “Muslim Brotherhood Reform,” accessed September 29, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=19355&ref=search.php>

courts<sup>12</sup> and aggressive actions taken by the police against protesters. What is observed is that the group refers to the Human Rights Charter of the United Nations and the comments and reports of human rights centers and associations to support its opposition to the trials of civilians – usually belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic groups – before military courts or to condemn the arrest and torture of protesters and strikers.

The same term is used on the Arabic website for the same issues; however, the references are different.<sup>13</sup> The group usually refers to religious references such as the Quran and the sayings of the prophets in addition to the opinions of important religious persons in Egypt and in the Islamic world.

The situation of the group was not surprising. The fear of political marginalization after its boycott of the election in 1990 rendered the group keen on participating in the election and on refusing to participate in the boycott. To face the criticism of the opposition, especially that of the National Association for Change, which is an ally of the group, the Muslim Brotherhood resorted to a political Fatwa to justify its position. On the Arabic website, the group published a Fatwa by the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Badeea, which stated that the participation in the elections was considered one of the forms of a great Jihad<sup>14</sup> for the group, and boycotting these elections was considered a kind of escaping from the war. Additionally, in order to face the expected election fraud, the group published a Fatwa by Nasr Fared Wasel<sup>15</sup>, who stated<sup>16</sup> that election fraud is considered one of the forbidden great sins, as a real Muslim does not lie or cheat, and should thus be refused by the Egyptians.

### **Relations with the United States**

According to the group, the United States is responsible for the anarchy in Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and it believes this anarchy is proof of the intention of the United States to destroy the Islamic countries and to loot their wealth and resources. Besides, the United States should stop its intervention in the

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<sup>12</sup> “The Situation of Human Rights in Egypt 2009: Introduction, summary and recommendations, EOHR.ORG,” accessed September 23, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=25734&ref=search.php>.

<sup>13</sup> “Juries of the Ummah: it is forbidden to torture a Muslim,” accessed September 7, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/new/Article.aspx?ArtID=71245&SecID=0>.

<sup>14</sup> Muslim clerics differentiate between two kinds of Jihad: the great one, which refers to facing corruption in all its forms and in all aspects: political, social, economic, etc. and the small Jihad, which refers to going for war to defend one’s life, land, property, etc.

<sup>15</sup> Egyptian cleric and former Mufti of Egypt.

<sup>16</sup> “Fraud elections is one of the great sins, interview with Nasr Fared Wasel,” accessed September 21, 2010, <http://ikhwanonline.com/new/Article.aspx?ArtID=71422&SecID=0>.

Palestinian issue in order to allow a real solution to be reached. In other Islamic countries, the West supports authoritarian governments and never raises the issue and the argument of human rights unless there is an interest for the Western countries.<sup>17</sup>

In Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine, there are occupation forces, while in the other Islamic countries, the political systems work as agents for the West and help achieving Western interests. This policy started with the colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When the direct military colonialism ended because it became difficult to continue, it was replaced by corrupt political systems and intervention in the internal affairs of the states. On its Arabic website, the group sheds a light on the return of military colonialism under the cover of the fight against terrorism, and the increasing numbers of civilians killed in Pakistan and Afghanistan by the American troops show the level of hatred of the Western countries against Muslims. In the same context, the website stresses the strong connections between Zionism and the United States, as the latter supports Zionism in the media and in military terms.<sup>18</sup>

The criticism of Western countries and especially the United States became clear during the burning of the Quran. The Arabic website published a statement by the staff of Alazhar University, which described the act as a new crusade war on Islam and an expression of enmity and racism against Muslims and Islam.

As mentioned above, the English website tends to differentiate between the people and the governments in Western countries. In the event of the burning of the Quran, the Muslim Brotherhood accused the American government, which uses and supports media messages against Muslims, and accused President Obama, who could not stop this event according to any constitutional basis, but who could at least have shown his rejection of such acts. The website publishes stories of young Americans who spent time in Islamic and specifically Arabic countries and who discovered new positive aspects of these societies and people and changed their views about Islam and Muslims. Things such as interactions with young Muslims listening to music and understanding how women are involved in public life lead to mutual understanding rather than *Islamophobia*.<sup>19</sup>

Another important focus on the English website is that the group tries to make it clear that there is a difference between various “types” of Islamic movements, especially between two types: the Jihadi movements and the moderate movements. The former obviously adopts violence as a main tool for achieving its goals; meanwhile the latter adopts other tools, such as peaceful struggle through

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<sup>17</sup> “The Emergency, Iraq and Palestine, Ikhwanonline statements,” accessed October 5, 2010, <http://ikhwanonline.com/new/Article.aspx?ArtID=64025&SecID=0>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew Cornwall, “My Muslim brothers and sisters,” accessed November 28, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=26350&ref=search.php>.

the media, through elections, or peaceful strikes and demonstrations. Here, the group focuses on the difference between Al-Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood regarding their ideologies, histories, and tools. Additionally, it shows that it rejects the ideological basis of Al-Qaeda and that the latter criticises the Muslim Brotherhood for its moderate ideology.<sup>20</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood refers to many situations in different Islamic countries in which Islamic movements (some of them affiliations of the Muslim Brotherhood) announced their rejection of Al-Qaeda's behaviour. An example is the message of *Ayman Al-Zawahiri* to *Aljamaa Alislamiya* (Islamic Group) in which he criticised the Islamic Group because it decided to abandon violence, revise its ideology, and adopt peaceful methods. The Islamists of Libya published a jurisprudential revision titled "Corrective Studies in Understanding Jihad, Accountability, and the Judgment of the People" in which they announced the wrongness of adopting violence and decided to abandon it.

### **Palestinian Issue**

On the Arabic website concerning the view of the Muslim Brotherhood on the Palestinian Issue we find: (1) Supporting Hamas as a resistance movement and its bombing operations against the Israelis; (2) Condemning the behavior of the Palestinian authority and the Arabic governments on the Arabic website, while ignoring to mention anything about these operations on the English website; (3) Calling on all Muslim governments and individuals to take part in the Jihad in Palestine to liberate the Al-Aqsa Mosque as an expression of the *Ummah* concept, especially on the Arabic website. On the English website, there is the same call with a focus on inviting Muslims in the West to lobby in order to be able to put pressure on Western governments. The group is keen to show its historical role in the issue; (4) It was discovered that Israel as a name is almost not mentioned on the Arabic website; instead, the term "Zionist entity" is used to refer to Israel, as an indication of the non-recognition of Israel. On the English website, the word Israel is used normally; (5) Accusing the West, especially the USA, of being the main factor behind the problem by supporting Israel is mentioned on both websites; however, on the English website, there is an invitation for intellectuals to support the historical and legal rights of the Palestinians.

On the Arabic website, the group stresses the fact that Hamas is the Muslim Brotherhood affiliation in Palestine; therefore the group supports it entirely. Hamas

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<sup>20</sup>Camille Tawil, "Al-Qaeda losing supporters in jihadi groups across Arab world," accessed September 9, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=25755&ref=search.php>.

and the resistance movements in the region are the only hope for liberating Palestine. According to the website, the resistance of Hamas and the Palestinians who support it is the soul of the Quran, which gives them the power to refuse to recognize Israel and to fight until they liberate all of Palestine. What clearly proves their confidence in God is their reaction towards the burning of hard copies of the Quran: As a response to that invitation, Hamas decided to teach the Quran to sixty thousand people.<sup>21</sup>

On the Arabic website, the Jihad, which is the strategy of resistance, is the only way to get the occupied lands back, as negotiations and talks have not led to any results except to the destruction of more homes and the occupation of more lands. In this context, the Jihad is an obligatory religious duty (*Farida*) for all Muslims, not only governments or Muslims in Palestine – the whole Islamic *Ummah* should participate. On the other hand, Jihad does not only refer to the military form, but should be a war waged in many areas: economic, media, political, etc. Muslims should work to develop their economic systems, their political systems, and their media systems in order to be able to win the war.<sup>22</sup> Israel is mentioned by name and the settlements are even mentioned with their Israeli names. Concerning the recognition of Israel, the website published the statements by Farouk Albaz,<sup>23</sup> who stated that Hamas is willing to recognize Israel if they reach an agreement or at least sit together at the negotiation table.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, Khaled Mashaal announced at a conference in 2008 that Hamas was willing to accept any agreement with Israel, which means recognition of Israel as a legal country, if the Palestinians accept this agreement in a public referendum.<sup>25</sup>

## Conclusions

Trying to satisfy different political-religious attitudes in the Egyptian society, the Muslim Brotherhood, as an opposition movement, has presented itself in two different ways: on the Arabic official website it appears as a religious traditional movement, uses traditional terms and refers to traditional interpretations of the texts. On its English website, the group has presented itself as a moderate

<sup>21</sup> “A new heroic operation by Qassam,” accessed September 2, 2010, <http://ikhwanonline.com/new/Article.aspx?ArtID=70139&SecID=0>.

<sup>22</sup> “Jihad is the only way to liberate AlAqsa, weekly message by the Supreme Guide,” accessed September 27, 2010, <http://ikhwanonline.com/new/Article.aspx?ArtID=55797&SecID=0>.

<sup>23</sup> Egyptian politician.

<sup>24</sup> “Egypt: Hamas is ready to recognize Israel,” accessed October 15, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=2551>.

<sup>25</sup> Henry Siegman, “US Hamas policy blocks Middle East peace,” accessed October 11, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=26293&ref=search.php>.

political movement who uses new interpretations and a flexible language. Holding the position of the presidency and being involved in writing the constitution, the Muslim Brotherhood had to choose one position: a religious movement which seeks to mix religion and politics or a political movement which gives priority to civil laws and minimizes the role of religion in the political life. Failing to choose a specific position made the group lose its alliances either with the Islamists or with the secularists and led to the isolation of the Muslim Brotherhood. And in one of the very rare situations, Salafis and secularists got unified against the Muslim Brotherhood president.

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Zaker Hussain Ershad\*

## ***THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISLAM AND POLITICS IN CONTEMPORARY AFGHANISTAN***

**Abstract:** In Afghanistan, Islam and politics are interlinked. In the history of Afghanistan, two kinds of such relationships were recorded. Moreover, we can say that Islam, as the religion of 99% of the Afghan people, existed in the all the historical periods of Afghanistan. The history of Afghanistan indicates an interference of Islam and politics as follows:

1. Passive presence: in this context, Islam did not impose just advocated social trade and attempted to justify the policy of the state. During the passive presence, we don't have any structured planning for the state and we don't have any Islamic pattern for public policy as to how we should govern. Afghanistan was defined by this process until 1919.
2. Active attendance: in this context, Islam claims to have a special part to play with respect to the government, as well as in society. The Mujahidins and Taliban advocated for this approach. But in fact they don't have any political plan to manage the country based on Sharia. They just emphasize on the Quran and Sunnat, but not in a clear way. This second Islam approach makes more reference to the doctrine, but it is at the same time a reaction to the internal and international issues, like modernization and so forth.

**Keywords:** *Islam, Afghanistan, Taliban, ethnic groups, religiosity, politics*

### **Introduction. Ethnicity and Islam in Afghanistan**

The founder of the modern Afghanistan is Ahmad Shāh Bābā (1722-1772), former commander of four thousand Abdali Pashtun soldiers, who became the Chief of Abdali confederation, after the death of Nader Shah Afshar of Persia in June 1747. One of Ahmad Khan's first acts as chief was to adopt the title *Padshah durr-i durrān* ("King", "pearl of pearls"). Rallying his Pashtun tribes and allies,

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he pushed east towards the Mughal and the Maratha Empire of India, west towards the disintegrating Afsharid Empire of Persia, and north toward the Khanate of Bukhara, creating the Durrani Empire (also called the Last Afghan Empire or Sadozai Kingdom).

On the first side, politics in Afghanistan was based on ethnicity and internal crisis since the beginning. Different groups of Pashtun struggled to take over the reins of political power in Afghanistan. It is my belief that throughout the history of Afghanistan, there has been a dedicated challenge between the Pashtun tribes, clans and families, specifically between Sadozai (Popalzai tribe) and Mohammadzai (Barakzai tribe), two families who gave the most rulers of Afghanistan between 1747 and 1979. Perhaps this is the main source for all the crises in Afghanistan.

On the other side, Islam was used as a tool that can justify social issues and legitimizes the policy carried out by politicians and the government. This process continued until 1979.

The relationship between religion and politics in Afghanistan has been articulated since 1979 by different forms, ranging from the secular state with marginalized Islamic groups and principles to the most fundamentalist religious government. All forms of interaction between Islam and politics in the country can be traced back to different theoretical interpretations of the Islamic teachings regarding politics, based on the political conditions that brought about a particular perception of Islamic tradition on politics.

Islam, in general, and Hanafi in particular, as the most influential religious cult, have experienced three different types of interactions with politics that could be categorized in these approaches: Islamic Society, Secular State, Islamic State and Islamic Emirate, and Islamic Republic. So, the discussion of the relationship between Islam and politics can be further divided into three aspects: Islamic State, Islamic Emirate, and Islamic Republic.

## **I. Islamic Society**

Here, the Islamic Society refers to the relative separation between Islam as religion and the political affairs; according to this approach, the sphere of Islam is limited only to some aspects of social life without expanding its domain to define structure of the government and characteristics of rulers. The position of the Hanafi groups, making up for the majority of Afghanistan's population, against monarchy regimes in many decades of Afghanistan history had been justified based on this perspective. This interpretation of Islam was due to ethnical relations and the Dominance theory (Ghalaba theory); Since its establishment as a country in 1747, Afghanistan was indeed the outcome of tribal politics; traditionally, the Afghan

Kings were recognized as representatives and symbols of the Pashtun Tribe; therefore, in contrast with other ethnic groups, they latter usually supported the monarchies, because in tribal terms, a Pashtun King was as a symbol of dominance of the Pashtun Tribe in the country. In addition, the loyalty of the kings was justified religiously, based on theory of *Ghalaba*, a classic political theory among Hanafi scholars; according to this theory, if any ruler (just or unjust) become dominant in a society, the people are required to obey, because whenever faced with the choice between justice or the security of the society, the second choice takes priority over the first one. In addition to these points, there were other social reasons for the decline of the political dominance of religious discourse and groups: (1) the *tribal leaders*- in Afghanistan, as a traditional and ethnical nation, tribal leaders had been an influential social group in the political life, and they were always in a hidden competition with the religious leaders of the Afghan society. The monarchic system of the country considered the tribal leaders to be an important source for its legitimacy and a good social support for the monarchy as a whole; the cooperation between government and tribal leaders had made them a powerful competitor for the religious leaders.<sup>1</sup> (2) Sunni Islam has no established and organized clergy system;<sup>2</sup> as the clergy depends on the financial resources of landlords (*khans*) and government aids; this was a barrier in the battle for power. (3) With the withdrawal of the British forces from the Indian subcontinent, global politics changed; Afghanistan faced a nationalism discourse, not an Islamic movement.<sup>3</sup> In the twentieth century, Afghanistan witnessed a remarkable mobility of modern intelligentsia, western education and press. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the rulers opened western and secular schools with foreign aid and teachers from France, Germany, the United States and Great Britain, to educate the statesmen. After the mid-1950s, the modern school system developed with expanded foreign aid. The government established primary schools in villages and districts, secondary schools in many provincial centers, and secondary boarding schools in Kabul for some graduates of provincial primary schools. A secular system of higher education has also been established.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the nationalist intellectual's role in the public and private sector of the Afghan society increased, while the position of graduates of religious schools was declining.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 84.

<sup>2</sup> Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Barnett R Rubin, "Political Elites in Afghanistan: Rentier State Building, Rentier State Wrecking," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (February 1992):79- 81.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## II. The Communist Regime: toward a secular state

The formation of a communist regime on April 27 1978 in Afghanistan was a unique phenomenon in the history of the country, a nation with a well-founded tradition and Islamic culture, once faced a secular state with signally hostile to religion including Islam. The communist regime tried to monopolize its power by subordinating all social forces in the country to one ideology and party.<sup>6</sup> The regime emphasized on the clear separation between Islam and politics and the necessity of respecting religious rituals as long as they were separate from politics. Taraki, one of the leaders of the Khalq Party, addressed the matter and said: “there are some people who combine religion and politics and take the True Religion of Islam as an instrument for politics. After the Saur [April] Revolution there is no place for such endeavors. We honor our clergymen and religious leaders. As repeatedly emphasized, when they do not intervene in politics and do not oppose to the Saur Revolution, we will respect and honor them. But should they engage in demagoguery, deceive the masses, and do the veil of religion to rise against the Saur Revolution, we will not permit it.”<sup>7</sup>

The communist party was facing a serious problem, the majority of the Afghan people considered the communist regime as an enemy of Islam, and public opinions in the country were against the regime; the communist leaders gradually became aware that Islamic values are an irritating reality that could not be ignored; therefore they changed their tactic, instead of being hostile to religious values, the regime began to use religion to make legitimacy on the eye of the public; but the contrast between Islamic principles and communist ideals was a problem which needed to be resolved properly. The solution was to publicize the regime’s interpretation of Islamic values based on the Marxist theories to persuade the public opinion with regard to the similarity between Islam and Marxism. Taraki, a senior member of the Khalq Party claimed that the guideline for this is “serving the masses”. According to this criterion, we, compared to others, are the true servants of the masses.<sup>8</sup> Our every single step and action is according to Islam and Sharia.”<sup>9</sup> The regime had to step forward to picture its legitimacy through religious leaders (Ulama). In 1979, the regime established a religious council containing a number of clergymen.<sup>10</sup> The declaration issued by the council in support of the regime shows the goals of its establishment: “Our Khaliqi state is the servant of the creatures of God and the protector of the religion of Islam and the sharia of Prophet

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<sup>6</sup> Esposito, *Islam in Asia*, 86.

<sup>7</sup> *Anis Newspaper*, March 11, 1979, 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, May 24, 1971, 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, June 14, 1979, 3

<sup>10</sup> Esposito, *Islam in Asia*, 88.

Mohammad... All the policies of this regime have been in accordance with Sharia and all the edicts issued have been according to Islam.”<sup>11</sup> Using Islam as a source of legitimization was highlighted by Parcham, another faction of communist party that came to power with the aid of the Soviet troops and after the invasion of Afghanistan. The Parcham members knew of the invasion intentions of their supporter, the Soviet Union. This made Afghans angry and so the regime’s legitimacy declined. Therefore, they increased their persuasive measures for the public opinion and tried to present a positive picture of the regime in the society. Karmal, member of Parcham, called the Soviet Invasion an “act of God.”<sup>12</sup> He also declared that “the Holy Religion of Islam and our national heritage are inseparable aspects of our national culture.”<sup>13</sup> The efforts made by the regime to ensure legitimacy were not effective; in the Afghans’ perspective, the ruling party was similar to its supporter, the Soviet Union. The regime’s propagandists publicized the theory according to which the October Revolution presented the Muslim population of the Soviet Union with rights and freedoms that had been previously denied to them. Muslim religious leaders from the Soviet Union had been invited to Kabul and Afghan clergymen were sent to the republics of the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to understand that the secular state of the communists, despite all ideological contradiction, had a huge hidden function in forming and expanding the first waves of Islamist movements which finally led to the establishment of a religious state after the collapse of the communist regime. Uprising against the communist regime and the invasion of the country by the Red Army, became indeed a historic opportunity for Afghan Islamists.

### **III. The Islamic State**

The Intervention of religion in the political affairs of the country was induced by the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in 1979; it caused the uprising of different fundamentalist and Jihadi groups. During the resistance against the Red Army, the Islamic parties gained a golden opportunity for fundraising and receiving considerable resources from the US and the Arab nations, both from the public and private sector. The formation of the Islamic resistance parties, mostly outside the country, led to the collapse of the communist regime headed by Najibullah in April 1992 and the establishment of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, a turning point for Political Islam in Afghanistan’s history. While Najibullah regime was coming down, Afghan Mujahidin, mainly Hanafis,

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<sup>11</sup> *Anis Newspaper*, August 11, 1979, 1, 7.

<sup>12</sup> *FBIS Daily Report: South Asia*, June 20, 1980, c/ 1-5.

<sup>13</sup> *Anis News Paper*, January 26, 1980, 1.

organized a transitional government; but instead of being an Association consensus, it became a battlefield on distribution of power among different parties. Despite the continuation of fighting for power and disagreement among Mujahidin, the first Islamic State in the country was established. In a political system whose structure and process of presidential election were based on a specific interpretation of Islamic political thought, the president was elected not through a public election but by an Islamic Council named Shura Ahl Al-Hal wa Al-'aqd (Council for problem solving and agreement-making); an Islamic council was first held to elect Caliph after the death of the prophet Mohammad in 632. This interpretation of the Islamic Political thought was considered a formal decision-making process which served for electing the president and facilitated the opportunity for some Jihadi groups including Jamiat Islami and its allies to monopolize political power in the country. Shura Ahl Al-Hal wa Al-'aqd as an electoral mechanism which, on one hand, could prevent the secular parties from taking power and on the other hand gave some religious groups a chance for political manipulation.

Contrary to the former Islamic Society's approach, the Islamic State had a determining role for Islam both with regard to the social life of Afghanistan and the political system, including the structuration of government and the election of the head of the State.

#### **IV. The Islamic Emirate**

The Islamic Emirate was a unique type of interrelation between politics and religion in Afghanistan's history; an illustrative example of tribal and totalitarian interpretation of Islamic concepts regarding politics. In the Islamic Emirate, political Islam was interpreted on a tribal context and used as instrument for the Pashtun hegemony on the territory of Afghanistan, where other ethnics were excluded from participation to the political system and women were deprived of their basic rights. The head of the government was elected by a council of clergymen in Qandahar, not as a leader or president but as an Emir, in this case, a Pashtun clergyman named Mullah Mohammad Omar. To explain the appearance of the Taliban in the battlefield of power in Afghanistan, we need to focus on its ideological roots and social background and the part played by the regional power in the creation of this fundamentalist Islamic movement; indeed, the Islamic Emirate, as a unique model of the Islamic political system in recent times and as an exclusive interpretation of the Islamic thought, can be explained in terms of three mentioned factors:

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<sup>14</sup> Esposito, *Islam in Asia*, 89.

**IV.1. Ideological roots**

During the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, many Afghans fled to Pakistan, a country that had the most effective role in the support of Afghan resistance groups against the Soviet invasion, as a front line in the Cold War, hosting many fighters from all around the world, of the increasing motivations for fighting against the Soviet led to a Jihadi Ideology; therefore, many religious schools were established for young Afghans who had the potential of being future fighters. Many of these Afghan students were thought the Deobandi interpretation of Islam in schools administered by Jamaiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam, led by Maulana Fazl-ul-Rahman.<sup>15</sup>

The Deobandi derives from a religious school named Darul Uloom Deoband in Deoband, India; it was founded by influential muslim scholars in 1866.<sup>16</sup> The Deobandi movement developed as a reaction to the British colonialism in India, which was considered by Muslim theologians to be corrupting Islam. Fearing its consequences, a group of Hanafi Muslim scholars founded an Islamic seminary known as Darul Uloom Deoband. It is here that the Islamic revivalist and anti-British ideology of the Deobandis began to expand. Their influence spread throughout the region, and hundreds of religious schools affiliated with Deoband expanded throughout India and Pakistan.<sup>17</sup>

The founders of this school were dogmatic Hanafis; they strayed to revive Islamic thought in the Indian Subcontinent and remove western education from their educational program.<sup>18</sup> The pioneers of Deoband systematized this very flexible curricular template according to their own ideological needs and sensibilities; most notably they removed texts dealing with logic and philosophy and spread the significance of Hadith studies. The School then begun political activities and established a religious and political organization in 1919 called Jamaiat-e-Ulema-e-Hind. When the Muslim League was campaigning for Pakistan's independence from India, some members broke from the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind in 1945, after the organization backed the Indian National Congress against the Muslim League's lobby for a separate and independent Pakistan and formed the Pakistani branch of the School which continued its religious and political activities

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<sup>15</sup> Neamatollah Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan* (New York, Palgrave, 2002), 119.

<sup>16</sup> "About DarulUloom," accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.darululoom-deoband.com/english/aboutdarululoom/introduction.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> Rama Sankar Yadav, B.N Mandal, *Global Encyclopedia of Islamic Mystics and mysticism*, Vol. 1 (New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2009), 64.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

in Pakistan under the name of Jama'iat-e-Ulema-e-Islam as a political party.<sup>19</sup> It then split into three separate parties known by the name of their heads: Jama'iat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazlur Rehman), Jama'iat Ulema-e-Islam (Sami ul Haq) and Jama'iat Ulema-e-Islam (Nazariati).

The most important principle of the deobandi movement, including the Taliban, is the revival of Chaliphate. Shah Waliullah, one of the pioneers of Deoband School, believed that Chaliphate would be formed through one of these four options: Shura Ahl Al-Hal wa Al-'aqd, Shura, Nasb (Appointment) and Ghalaba (Dominance).<sup>20</sup> According to this approach, Taliban established their state as an Emirate based on the Chaliphate theory of the Deobandi political thought; in this theory, such democratic mechanisms like elections are a lawful way of selecting the head of an Islamic country.<sup>21</sup> They criticized the ex-Mujahideen leaders for not following the way of forming an Islamic Chaliphate. As a close source to the Taliban, Mohammad Mossa from the Darul Ifta-e- Wal Irshad writes: "thus the election of a Khalifah, the formation of a government was extremely sensitive and important in those blessed days of long ago and here in the present times the Mujahideen were asked to form a government in installment! This was the biggest mistake as it provided an opportunity for creating disturbance to every enemy of Islam. Another greater mistake was that Caliphate was purposely not mentioned anywhere, faithfulness to the martyred blood had demanded the use of terms Khalifa and Khilafat instead of president and prime minister. A Caliphate should have been established based upon the golden rules of Sharia, but this was not so".<sup>22</sup> According to the Taliban, establishing an Islamic state means enforcing the Sharia in Afghanistan and bringing security and stability to the country. They considered it a religious obligation for the movement, and the leadership was committed to such an establishment. The Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, described the aims of the movement as follows: "To end the mischief in the country, to establish peace and security, to protect life, wealth and honor and to enforce the Sharia, do Jihad against the leaders who were devoted for power, and endeavor to make the land of Afghanistan an exemplary state."<sup>23</sup> To implement these ideas, they formed a special unit of police named Amr-e- Bil

<sup>19</sup> Douglas Allen, *Religion and Political Conflict in South Asia: India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka* (US: Greenwood Press, 1992), 77.

<sup>20</sup> Shah Waliullah al-Dahlawi, *Hujjatullah al-Balighah*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 2005), 137-8.

<sup>21</sup> Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 152.

<sup>22</sup> Mohammad Mossa, "The Taliban Movement and Their Goals," *Darul Ifta-e-Wal Irshad*, Peshawar, Pakistan, 7<sup>th</sup> Moharram 1417 (June 20, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Nazir Laghari, Mufti Jamil Khan, Interview with the Amirul Mumineen, Peshawar, Pakistan, June 1998.

M'arouf, the General Department for the Preservation of Virtue and the Elimination of Vice. This organization, headed by Mawlwi Qalamuddin, had thousands of informers in the army, government ministries and hospitals who monitored foreigners and western aid agencies.<sup>24</sup>

#### **IV.2 Social Background**

The Taliban is not just a religious party that can only be identified based on their religious relationship with the School of Deobandi and Wahhabism, but indeed the group is a product of ethnic relations and culture in the southern area of Afghanistan; this movement raised within a Pashtun region; therefor it has to be understood in term of its ethnic history.

As the ancient kings of Afghanistan, the Pashtun constituted nearly the full ranks of the Taliban government. The war in Afghanistan was not a simple religious war. For the Pashtun, it was an ethnic war, a war of revenge of plots by warring tribes and a struggle for power. Afghanistan appeared as an independent country as the Durrani confederation (1747-1818), a powerful Pashtun tribe; it derived its power from the tribal relations in different periods of time and historic developments. The distinctive feature of the Durrani confederation was its tribal structure: the government was ethnically Pashtun and religiously the Sunni interpretation of Islam. The Confederation brought all Pashtuns together under one political system. Pashtuns constituted the backbone of the confederation's military forces, and they were treated more preferentially than other ethnic groups in the country, with lower taxes and enjoying large land distribution. During the Durrani kingdom, the Pashtuns enjoyed an institutionalized military, economic, and political dominance in the country. Therefore, as Ahadi writes: now "the Pashtuns believe that they constitute the majority in Afghanistan, that the Afghan state was formed by the Pashtuns, that Afghanistan is the only Pashtun state in the world, and that the minorities should accept the Afghan character of the state".<sup>25</sup> But things did not happen as they expected. Ahadi writes: "The collapse of the Najibullah regime in Kabul in April 1992 not only ended the communist era in Afghanistan but also heralded the end of Pashtun dominance in Afghan politics. Indeed, for many commentators as well as politicians this change in ethnic relations was more significant than the defeat of communism".<sup>26</sup>

A long history of living as the ruling class and then losing that position was very painful for the Pashtuns. To go from an undesirable position and reach to what

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<sup>24</sup> Ahmad Rashid, "Scourge of God," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (August 7, 1997): 55.

<sup>25</sup> Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, "The Decline of the Pashtuns in Afghanistan," *Asian Survey* (July 1995): 634.



was desired gave way for a serious need to change the political players, the current players. Pashtun Mujahidin were not able to restore the Pashtuns to their historical position because of the following reasons: firstly, the formation of different non Pashtun political parties against the invasion of the country by the Soviet Union made the interethnic relations more competitive than before; following the formation of non-Pashtun factions, the struggle for power became serious and sometime led to conflicts.

Secondly, the Pashtuns suffered from a political division, as there were six Pakistan-based Pashtun resistance parties which enabled the Pashtuns to receive more than their fair share of foreign military and financial aid, but it also promoted rivalry, suspicion, and frequently violent clashes between them. This intra-Pashtun conflict prevented the leaders of Pashtun-dominated organizations to coordinate their military activities and take a united political stand during the chaotic downfall of the communist regime.<sup>27</sup>

Thirdly, the gap between the Pashtun resistance parties and the Pashtun masses affected the trust between them, and weakened their position in the interethnic relations.

All of the above gave way for a new movement that could restore the past to the Pashtuns. Therefore, the Taliban played the role of saviors for Pashtuns; which led to the formers attracting the support of the majority of the Pashtuns. So, in addition to the sense that the Taliban was a religious movement, pro- Taliban Pashtuns were motivated by a kind of ethno-nationalism.<sup>28</sup>

### III. 4 International Actor

Throughout its history, Afghanistan has been the subject of a geostrategic competition between regional and international players. In the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Afghanistan was as a battlefield between Russia and Britain. To resist the Russian expansionism, the British tried to establish a defensive zone that included parts of Afghanistan. Despite the Russians having their eyes set on the Indian shores, they were also worried that Britain sought to dominate South Asia. Therefore, Russia maintained its military presence in northern Afghanistan and Iran.<sup>29</sup> When the British left the region in the late 1940s, the US replaced them as a challenger of the Soviet and the new superpower in the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 621-2.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 626.

<sup>28</sup> Robert D. Crews, Amin Tarzi, *The Taliban and the Crises of Afghanistan* (Harvard University Press, 2008), 219.

<sup>29</sup> Steven R. Galster, "Rivalry and Reconciliation in Afghanistan: What Prospects for the Accords?," *Third World Quarterly* (October 1988): 1507.

region. The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union intensified the competition between two super powers. The US and its allies spent a lot of resources to back Afghan Mujahedin and defeat the Soviet. When the Soviet withdrew from Afghanistan, the country suffered civil war for many years, and the US remained neutral without any intervention for or against any side; during these years, the US followed its interests indirectly through Pakistan. In order to have more control on Afghanistan, Pakistan organized the Taliban with the aid of the financial support of Saudi Arabia and the private sector of the Arab countries. Pakistan did everything while coordinated by the US. Each of these three countries had their own aims with regard to the support of the Taliban; Pakistan followed its influence on Afghanistan in order to use it as its strategic ally in a prospective confrontation with India and to access to Central-Asian markets. Saudi Arabia saw the Taliban as a useful instrument to use in order to expand the religious influence of the Salafi interpretation of Islam on the region against the Shia Muslim country, Iran. The United States encouraged Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to support the Taliban, certainly right up to their advance on Kabul on September 26, 1996; on one hand the US did this to torment Shia Iran by supporting the Salafi Taliban, who saw the Shia as their religious enemy; on the other hand, the US intended to use the Taliban as an instrument for security of the prospective gas and oil pipeline from Central Asia to Pakistan.

## **V. Islam in the Present Regime**

Given the relation between religion and the political system in Post-Taliban Afghanistan, the current Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is also formed as an Islamic Society, where the Islamic values are respected, religious principles play a defined role in regulations, but the structure of the political system is secular and the election of rulers are regulated by democratic principles.

The current regime, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, is a combination of Islamic principles and secular values. On one hand, there is an emphasis on the enforcement of Islamic rules in the country; on the other hand, there is a commitment to democracy and human rights which is mandatory. Article 1 of Afghanistan's Constitution states: "Afghanistan shall be an Islamic Republic, independent, unitary and indivisible state." Additionally, Article 7 states that "No law shall contravene the tenets and provisions of the holy religion of Islam in Afghanistan". In Article 7, which deals with the obligation of the State to promote education at all levels, the development of religious education and improvement of the conditions of mosques, religious schools and centers are specially emphasized. This duty is further emphasized in Article 45 where the State is required to implement a unified educational curriculum based on the provisions of Islam and to

develop the curriculum of religious subjects on the basis of the various Islamic schools of thought existing in Afghanistan.

Besides the emphasis on Islam, observance of human rights and democratic values is also highlighted in Afghanistan's Constitution, as it announces that "The state shall be required to create a prosperous and progressive society based on social justice, preservation of human dignity, protection of human rights, realization of democracy, attainment of national unity as well as equality between all peoples and tribes and balanced development of all areas of the country".<sup>30</sup>

In the current regime, the religion's position is defined in terms of two main determinant factors: expectations of the international community and social condition, including the past experience and the current situation of the country. The new Afghanistan and the overthrowing of the Taliban were indeed the great achievements of the US and its allies, attained with remarkable sacrifices and costs; in establishing the new Afghanistan, they had their own expectations regarding democracy and human rights. Afghans, as partners of the US and NATO, had to consider the international viewpoints in forming the new state. Afghanistan is seriously dependent on US and EU support in different fields including financial, political and technical aids.

Another determinant factor with regard to the religion's position in the present political system of Afghanistan is the social condition of the country; the experience of Afghanistan plays an important role in the relations between politics and religion. Emphasis on democracy and human rights, indeed, is a response to the dictatorship of the past; unfortunately the dictatorships in the country always used all instruments to sustain their system, including religion and ethnicity. In Afghanistan, as a multi-ethnic country, religion could be used as a justification for discrimination and injustice against minorities; the massacre of Hazaras during the reign of king Abdur Rahman, the civil war with thousands of casualties and the killing of minority groups by Taliban government, all had been done with a somewhat religious justification, but at least these painful experiences had illustrated that a religious government in Afghanistan could be more of a source of suffering than happiness.

## **Conclusions**

As mentioned above, we have three periods which could help us explain the relationship between Islam and politics in Afghanistan: the period of mujahedin, Taliban and the present regime. The Islamic Principles have interfered with politics

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<sup>30</sup> "The Constitution of Afghanistan," accessed July 15, 2013, [http://www.afghanweb.com/politics/current\\_constitution.html](http://www.afghanweb.com/politics/current_constitution.html).

in all these periods. Especially in the first and second period, the society of Afghanistan was influenced by the values of Islam, subject to Taliban and mujahedin interpretation. We can say that the political Islam was born during these times. According to the rigidity of this interpretation, the society of Afghanistan was faced with civil strife. So the different groups reject the interferences of Islam in the political sphere. Moreover, we can state that this kind of political Islam is a reaction to conflict. For example when the mujahedin regime fell and Afghanistan was faced with anarchism, the Taliban groups appeared in Afghanistan. When the Taliban induced hostility among of people of Afghanistan and led the country to religious fervor, this regime was also overthrown and new one was established, today's Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

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***MUSLIM PERCEPTION OF THE MODERN SECULAR STATE  
AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE ISLAMIC COMMONWEALTH  
OF RELIGIONS***

**Abstract:** This paper seeks to explore the Muslim perception of the modern secular state by answering such questions as: why do some Muslims and Muslim societies tend to reject the modern secular state and why do Muslims generally view Islam as “the lodestar” of politics? It examines the foundations of the Muslim perception of both the modern secular state and their rejection of comprehensive secularism. It also examines how this perception reflects a global Muslim commitment to both Islamic teachings and development without submitting to the secular modernist theory. Muslim engagement with secularism in countries such as modern Turkey and Malaysia shows that there is a need for the Islamic Commonwealth of Religions that fuses not Islam but religions in general with politics. This is because the Islamic Commonwealth of Religions does not make the *other* assimilate other dominant religious norms but only suppresses religious traditions and practices that are harmful and inimical to the *other*.

**Keywords:** *Muslim society, secular state, Islamic Commonwealth of Religions*

**Introduction**

The global Muslim perception of the secular modern state, despite the existence of differing Muslim groups with differing and at times competing views, is unified to a very large extent today as can be seen from the contemporary Muslim engagement in many Muslim countries, especially modern Turkey and Malaysia. A major factor responsible for Muslim rejection of the modern secular state is comprehensive secularism. Comprehensive secularism is reflected in every

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sphere of the secular modern society. While the Enlightenment regarded Religion only as a personal affair which is not allowed to occupy the public domain, modernism has heralded a revolution against the Church and religious beliefs, and embarked on the gradual secularization of the Church and religious teachings, such that what is subsisting today as comprehensive secularism, which is far more dangerous than the initial partial secularism. Consequently, people nowadays reject moral responsibility and moral values. Science and technological advancement alone, guarantees progress, to most people while morality is relative and subject to the prevailing customs, whims and flings of the society. The entertainment industry controls the life of the people including their dreams. The temples of modern religion are factories, laboratories, cinemas and discos etc. The Media, which is wielding enormous power, is employed to sell the people all forms of utopias.

Comprehensive secularism erects a barrier between the Church and the state. Accordingly, it intends the establishment of a state that is “wholly detached from religious teaching or practice,” a state that is irreligious.<sup>1</sup> It is this brand of comprehensive secularism that has been described as “the most powerful philosophy of secularization in the nineteenth century” that was put into practice by Marxism in what was the Soviet Union back then.<sup>2</sup> Comprehensive secularism is a systematic and relentless all-out struggle to stamp out and eliminate religion. This was the case in the Soviet Union, Ataturk’s Turkey, as would be discussed later, and to some extent, in China. Today secularization has advanced in almost all modern secular states, even in traditional Christian states, assaulting Christendom as Christianity loses its interpretative power. The European Renaissance that was a renewal of the ancient pagan Greece and Rome and European Enlightenment were enthusiastically taken up by many countries of the West without the slightest discrimination. This brought an end to the traditional Christian civilization and heralded the prevailing secular modern materialistic world, promoting the centrality of money and worldly possessions while antagonistically thwarting or distorting the expression of the spiritual, religious and Godly.<sup>3</sup> According to Alasdair MacIntyre, Christianity has lost its social context and become immersed in the social context of the Enlightenment, which may explain the reasons why many Christian beliefs have lost their religious and moral significance in the face of Enlightenment rationality.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>3</sup> M. Lings, *A Return to the Spirit* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2005), 60-64.

<sup>4</sup> A. MacIntyre, “Is Understanding Religion Compatible with Believing?,” in *Contemporary Classics in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. A. Loades and L. D. Rue (La Salle: Open Court, 1991), 571-574.

However, this has not occurred in the World of Islam. In fact, it appears the more the Muslims are exposed to modernization and development, the more their religious devotion increases. This may be confirming the assertion of Ali Shariati, a pre-revolution Iranian scholar and critic of Western civilization, in his *Civilization and Modernization* that the Muslim World cannot experience or embrace western modernization because of the pagan roots of the Enlightenment.<sup>5</sup> In the words of Ernest Gellner, “there is one dramatic and conspicuous exception to all this: Islam. To say that secularization prevails in Islam is not contentious. It is simply false.” To him, Islam is as strong now as it was a century ago and in some ways, it is probably much stronger.<sup>6</sup> Why is Islam resistant to secularism? Gellner argues that out of the three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Islam is most resistant to secularism because it is the closest to modernity due to its universalism. To him, the holistic message of Islam makes it applicable to the community. The Islamic principle of ‘the community will not agree on error’ gives the Muslim community a political authority of communal consensus. This combined with the theoretical absence of clergy makes Muslim theology egalitarian and Islam a universal worldview that allows Muslims to construct their values and practices.<sup>7</sup> While some Muslims may have fallen prey to the secularization theory, as suggested by Gellner, most Muslims have not been attracted by the glitters of westernization and secularization. Thus, in the wake of striving for progress and development, to many Muslims and Muslim countries, development and progress are not synonymous with embracing the West and Western modernity.<sup>8</sup> This is also the view of Moore when she explains what she terms “the exceptionalism of the Muslim American experience”. To her, “the Muslim encounter with pluralism in American is of an exceptional nature because as an ideology, Islam represents, like modernity, a universalistic world view.”<sup>9</sup>

It is therefore pertinent here to examine the global Muslim alternative to the modern secular state in some Muslim countries.

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<sup>5</sup> See A. Shariati, *Civilization and Modernization* (Houston, Texas: Free Islamic Literature, 1979).

<sup>6</sup> E. Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 5-8.

<sup>8</sup> Johann P. Arnason, “Civilizational Patterns and Civilizing Processes,” *International Sociology*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2001): 387-405 and his *Civilizations in Dispute: Historical Questions and Theoretical Traditions* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> Kathleen Moore, *The Unfamiliar Abode. Islamic Law in the United States and Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 33-34.



### The Muslim Alternative to the Modern secular state in Some Contemporary Muslim Countries

Today many Muslim societies, while rejecting the secular modern state, make Islamic ideological and cultural values such as *tawhid* (divinity of Allah on whom rests absolute sovereignty), *Khilāfah* (caliphate which carries no theocratic or prophetic privileges), *Shurā* (consultation guided by the *Sharī'ah* (Islamic Law) to arrive at and bound by political decisions) and *'adalah* (justice for all, including non-Muslims in rights and duties) the basis of their modern state, even while some of them still adopt many components of the secular modern state. Consequently while some Muslim countries, such as Iran, Turkey and Malaysia uphold such pillars of modernity like empowerment of women, elections, voting, mass education and urbanization, they also embrace or are re-embracing Islamic values which include emphasis on following: the *Sharī'ah*, introduction of Islamic institutions such as Islamic Banking, Islamic Insurance, *halāl* food and the adoption of the Islamic dress, especially the *hijāb* as it would be seen in these contemporary Muslim countries.

Contemporary Iran is the first Muslim country to engage with the modern concept of the Islamic state as an alternative model to the modern secular state. The country, which shared a lot in common with Turkey during the post-World War One eras of the Reza Khan Shah and Muhammad Reza Shah is today championing Islamic modernity. During this post-War period, the Shahs, inspired by the "success of Ataturk's Turkey," pushed through western-style modernization through education, western dress, the press, industry, urbanization, political consciousness and empowerment of women. According to Anasri, secularization and westernization were equated to development and progress in Iran, just like in Turkey.<sup>10</sup>

After many years, despite the principal features of modernity during the Shah era, such as secular feminism and the abandoning of the Islamic female dress, general increases in levels of education, especially female education and the mass urbanization of the Iranian society, the whole world was shocked by the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979 and its reverberating effects in the revivalism and reassertion of Islam in the world today. Pre-revolution Scholars of the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979 like Shariati had predicted the collapse of western modernity in Iran because of its ideological and structural non-Islamic defects.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> A. M. Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000), 24-39.

<sup>11</sup> See Shariati, *Civilization*.

Following the Islamic revolution of 1979, which brought Ayatollah Khomeini to power, Islamic feminism which takes Islamic modernity and not western secular modernity as its sources of legitimacy was born in the Kiyān Cultural Institute with *Zanan*. This is the Iranian women's revolutionary magazine that uses Islamic texts to demand rights granted to women by the Islamic Law. Abdul Karim was the guiding and intellectual inspiration for this magazine.<sup>12</sup> This Islamic Feminism which has its intellectual base in the Kiyān Cultural Institute has succeeded in using the Islamic imperative to fight against many anti-woman practices in Iran. By 1982, Islamic Feminists pushed through the appointment of female lawyers as advisers in family courts, and two years later, in administrative justice courts. They also pushed for appointments in the positions of Assistant to the Public Prosecutor and Magistrates. In 1991, this Islamic model of modernity won for women bills allowing their early retirement age, granting them custody rights, ending the prejudicial treatment of women in higher education, and in the selection of University courses, as well as appointment of women into the *Majlis* and the provision of nurseries for working mothers.<sup>13</sup>

The juristic re-reading of the Iranian Civil Codes that discriminates against women in Iran by the *Zanan* culminated in the 1992 Divorce Amendments, which annul a supposedly Islamic divorce law that grants men powers to abuse women. The 1992 Divorce Amendments curtailed men's right to divorce, granted women financial domestic provisions known as *ujrat al-mithl* or standard wages for housework and ended the subordinate position of women in the name of men's *qawamah* (male headship) of the family, domestic violence as well as gender inequities that exist in the hitherto Islamic penal codes of fixed punishments, retribution and discretionary punishments.<sup>14</sup>

To the Iranian thinker, Abdul Karim Soroush Islamic modernity as an alternative to the secular modernist model is a form of "democratic religious government," which is a solution to the perceived gulf between Islam and modernity. According to his analysis, there can only be impasse between Islam and some components of western secular modernity, especially in the areas of Islamic values, ethics and religious principles. He argues further that as for the institution

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<sup>12</sup> R. Wright, "An Iranian Luther Shakes the Foundation of Islam," *The Guardian*, February 1, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> H. Afshar, "Islam and Feminism: An Analysis of Political Strategies," in *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, ed. Mai Yamani (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 201-216.

<sup>14</sup> Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Stretching the Limits: A Feminist Reading of the Sharī'ah in post-Khomeini Iran" in *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, ed. Mai Yamani (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 285-316.

of governance, Islamic humanism is not at variance with the rights and duties of the governed and their representatives, once Islamic values are maintained.<sup>15</sup>

The fact that the modern Islamic state as conceived in Iran above is not at variance with the rights and duties of the governed and their representatives has been maintained by many contemporary Muslim scholars. To AbuSulayman, the principles of freedom and equality are the consequences of the Islamic teachings on justice. Hence, a person is free in Islam “to act according to one’s own moral convictions, to make ideological or intellectual choices, and to take decisions on the basis of these convictions and choices.”<sup>16</sup> He explains further that the system of *Shurā* in Islam provides that people sit together and deliberate issues of concerns and are bound by conclusions in the light of the principle of justice.

Similarly, Modern Turkey is a shining example of a Muslim country that rejects the wholesale adoption of the secular Western modernizing project. For Muslims, who adopt the wholesale modernism or secularization project and ape the West, oblivious of their Islamic heritage, Kemal Ataturk’s Turkey is the best model. It is the first Muslim country to embrace the path of comprehensive secularism through liberalization of the Muslim mind from Islamic fundamentals and total secularization of all Islamic institutions in the Old Ottoman Empire. To Ataturk, progress and development was not possible for Turkey without westernization and social and cultural transformation “embracing and internalizing all the cultural dimensions that made Europe modern.”<sup>17</sup> However this secularization was not well received by the majority of the Turkish population, who preferred the cultural values of Islam that Ataturk’s Turkey sought to supplant. To overcome the popular opposition to his secularist modernization project, Ataturk used the military to enforce his modernizing project. For almost a century, Turkey deepened unbridled fascist and autocratic practices, which were at complete odds with the democratic vision of modernity to subdue the people.

Post World War Turkey, which used fascist and arbitrary military tactics to push through Ataturk’s secularization and westernization project with Western style dress and other European innovations imposed on the people, is however today re-embracing the cultural values of Islam.<sup>18</sup> This re-adoption of Islamic

<sup>15</sup> See A. Soroush, *The Expansion of the Prophetic Experience: Essays in Historicity, Contingency and Plurality in Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, trans. Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo (Herdon Va: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993), 89.

<sup>17</sup> C. Keyder, “Wither the Project of modernity? Turkey in the 1990’s,” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. S. Bozdogan and R. Kasaba (USA: University of Washington Press, 1997), 37-51.

<sup>18</sup> T. Atabaki and E. J. Zürcher (eds.), *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Ataturk and Reza Shah* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 11-279.

values, especially of the *hijāb*, values that were banned for half a century in Ataturk's secular Turkey, is similar to what is happening today in post Hosni Mubarak Egypt in the behavior of many Egyptian educated women who are today reclaiming the Islamic dress that was earlier rejected by their urban and educated grandmothers. This return to Islamic teachings in Egypt is today confirmed by the gradual re-adoption of the *hijāb* that was discarded in Husni Mubarak's secular Egypt. This new adoption of the *hijāb* is being championed by the Muslim Brotherhood which came into power, for the first time in July, 2012 and was demonstrated by the first TV station exclusively run by veiled Muslim women before the military coup of July 2013.<sup>19</sup> To all these Muslim countries, progress or development does not involve comprehensive secularism, which presupposes the absence of religion in the public arena or separation between the Church and the state. In Malaysia, as it would be seen now, the Islamic state, while adopting Islam as the official religion also offers equal opportunities for all religions in state patronage and participation in the public arena.

In Malaysia, which can today be regarded as the best model for the fusion of political modernity and the entrenchment of Islamic cultural values, Islamic modernity is progressing. As by the late 90s in many Muslim countries, where many Muslim scholars had come to terms with the projection of Malaysia as an Islamic state, the country appears the most suitable model for the Commonwealth of religions, which is the trust of this paper.<sup>20</sup> For one, Malaysia is a pluralistic society, in terms of its multicultural, ethnic and religious composition. Muslim mosques, Chinese temples, Indian temples and Christian Churches are located at distances of a few hundred meters from each other in the country. Secondly, the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, like the Nigerian Constitution, does not declare the country a secular state. In similar vein, both the constitution of Malaysia and that of Nigeria make provisions for what has been termed "legal pluralism" that is "the provision to establish native court systems in addition to the existing common law and *Sharī'ah* law."<sup>21</sup> In recognition of the country's plurality, the *Sharī'ah* does not have any status of superiority and neither is it an independent law in the two constitutions.

All these provisions appear to justify the Muslims' position that the country, though being an Islamic state, is multicultural, religious and pluralistic. Yet

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<sup>19</sup> "Egypt Launches TV Station Exclusively Run by Veiled Muslim Women," *The Nation News*, July, 2012, 49.

<sup>20</sup> *New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, March 24, 1997, cited in I. O Uthman, "Muslim Women in Nigeria: the Position of FOMWAN and Lessons Islamic Malaysia," *Journal of African and Asian Studies* 18 (2009): 245-265.

<sup>21</sup> Abdul Rashid Moten, "Malaysia as an Islamic State: A Political Analysis," *Journal of Islam and International Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2003): 1-69.

Malaysia is today using the Islamic impetus to unite its multi-religious and multicultural people and develop its society. Today, long standing multi-religious and multicultural prejudices and biases among the people<sup>22</sup> have been weakened by some provisions of the Malaysian Federal Constitution to bridge the educational and economic imbalance between Muslims and non-Muslims. These provisions include the adoption of the Malay language as the official national language while providing a means for the preservation of the cultures and languages of peoples of other religions and races in Malaysia. The idea of using the Malay language as the official national language and medium of instruction in all national schools is aimed at uniting all races in the country by bridging the communication gap between the non-Muslim and Muslim Malay communities. The introduction of the new economic policy (NEP) from 1970 to 1990 that grants Malays 30% equity in all economic, commercial and industrial operations in the country is also believed to have contributed to increasing interaction and interdependence between Muslims and non-Muslims in general, and Malays and Chinese in particular.<sup>23</sup>

Today, the Islamic Malaysian development model for gender advancement has devised approaches not only in maintaining Islamic decorum but also in eliminating practices that are harmful to women. The Malay Muslim women, while on one hand are upholding the decent Islamic dressing in their social, business, academic and official public engagements are on the other hand protected by the country's Islamic laws from the imposition of the face-veil, segregation from the public spaces, domestic violence and other harmful practices in the name of the Islamic law. In fact, as Malaysia is grasping with the concept of Islamic modernity, the *hijāb* wearing women who are usually portrayed as backward and oppressed by a patriarchal Islam and who therefore need to be emancipated, are in fact playing leading roles in all sectors of the 'Islamic Malaysian' Society.

The visibility of the Malay Muslim women who make up about half the Malaysian population today could be said to reflect what I have termed severally as the contemporary phenomenon of "authentic Islamic feminism."<sup>24</sup> Though this

<sup>22</sup> N. Z. C. Jen-T'chiang, "Advocacy on Inhumane Practices" and Roslizawati Mohd Ramly, Muhammad Khairi Mahyuddin, "Muslims and non-Muslim relations: Bridging the Gap and Building respect", in *The World Today: Current Global Issues*, ed. Ab Rahman, A. (Malaysia: Universiti Sains Islam, Malaysia, 2007), 5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibrahim Olatunde Uthman, "Feminism in Postmodern Society: An Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Islam in Asia*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2005): 131–150; Uthman, *The Muslim Women of Nigeria and the Feminist Discourse of Shaykh al-Albani* (Kuala Lumpur: The International Islamic University, 2008), 84–87; Uthman, "A Triadic Re-Reading of Zaynab al-Ghazzālī and the Feminist Movement in Islam," *Islamic Studies*, 49:1 (2010): 65-79; Uthman, "Rereading of Zaynab al-Ghazali's Representations of Muslim Women and Islamic Feminism in the 21st Century," *The Islamic Quarterly UK*, Vol. 55, No 3 (2011): 215-232.

phenomenon of authentic Islamic feminism could be traced in Malaysia to the publication of Kāssim Amīn Bey's *Tahrīr al-mar'ah* under the title *Alam Perempuan* in Penang in 1930, it recorded a remarkable landmark during the aforementioned Prime Minister of Islamic Malaysia that women's percentage in all sectors of the economy increased from about 30% in 1957 to about 48% in 1995. This rise was possible with the heavy investment by the Malaysian government in social reconstruction, industrialization and education, especially for women.

Today the Malay Muslim women enjoy basic constitutional rights. They enjoy the freedom to vote, run for office, pursue education and hold administrative and political positions as notable as university presidents and government ministers. Contrary to the claim of the Norwegian Professor, Ingrid Rudie, the Islamic revival in the 1980s that brought about the Malaysian model of development has not curtailed the rights of the Malay Muslim women.<sup>25</sup>

Malaysia is therefore most relevant today as the best model of the Islamic alternative paradigm of progress and development because of the entrenchment of Islamic cultural values in the country. Islam is, according to the Malaysian Federal Constitution, the official religion of the country while other religions are allowed to be "practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the federation."<sup>26</sup> The era of Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (1981 to 2003), coincided with Islamic resurgence in the Middle East which has been defined by Chandra Muzaffar as: "a description of the endeavor to re-establish Islamic values, Islamic practices, Islamic institutions, Islamic laws, indeed Islam in its entirety, in the lives of Muslims everywhere. It is an attempt to re-create an Islamic ethos, an Islamic social order in the vortex of which is the Islamic human being, guided by the Qur'an and the Sunnah."<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the ascension of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad to the prime minister-ship of Malaysia in 1981 was a watershed in the boosting and entrenchment of Islamic cultural values in Malaysia. His vision was characterized by the need to give Islam and Malays, a greater role in the political and economic structures of the country. He sought to transform the Malay mindset and inculcate Islamic values in the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibrahim Olatunde Uthman, "Muslim Women and the Islamic State between Political Activism and the Islamic Law: An Analysis of the *Jilbāb al-Mar'ah al-Muslimah fī Al-kitāb wa al-Sunnah* of Shaykh al-Albānī," *IKIM Journal of Islam and International Affairs*, 2/1 (2006): 117-45.

<sup>26</sup> A. Ibrahim, "The Position of Islam in the Constitution of Malaysia," in *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, ed. A. Ibrahim, S. Siddique and Y. Hussain (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia, 1985), 214.

<sup>27</sup> C. Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgences in Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1987), 2.

economic and political development of the country.<sup>28</sup> In strengthening the position of Islam in every sector of the Malaysian educational, economic, technological, cultural, and political development plan, the government of Dr. Mahathir enlisted the cooperation and support of the global and national leadership of the Islamic resurgence.

For instance, Dr. Mahathir brought into his government, the national Islamic youth leader, the president of the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, thus bringing to the ruling party, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), a renewed Islamic appeal.<sup>29</sup> In short, the twenty three years of the government of Dr. Mahathir laid the groundwork for Islamic resurgence or Islamization of all sectors of the country. For the first time, the entire spectrum of Malaysians became open to “Islamic input” and Islamic Banks, Islamic insurance companies and the use of the media for the propagation of Islam were officially instituted. All female news casters on radio and television stations were mandated to wear the *hijab*.<sup>30</sup> In 1983, the International Islamic University, (IIUM) was established to advance the Islamization of Knowledge project.

### **The Islamic Commonwealth of Religions Model and Future of Modern Secular States**

The above, not only demonstrates the global side to the Muslim rejection of comprehensive secularism but even the legal secularist separation of religion and politics as is prevalent in some western countries like the United States of America. The Muslim world and Muslims generally tend to reject the secular modern state. This Muslim rejection of the modern secular state or a separation between religion and state, whether in form of “legal separation” or “civil religion” is understandable within the global context of the debates over the extent of the Judeo-Christian basis of Euro-American secular nations.

While secular nations such as the United States establish “a wall of separation between religion and politics,” Judeo-Christian practices and symbols still express themselves in the public arena like prayers observed on July 4<sup>th</sup>,

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<sup>28</sup> O. Bakar, “Islamic and Political Legitimacy in Malaysia” in *Islam and Political Legitimacy*, ed. S. Akbarzadeh and A. Saeed (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 127-149.

<sup>29</sup> D. Camroux, “State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia: Accommodation, Co-option, and Confrontation,” *Asian Survey*, 36/9 (1996): 852-868.

<sup>30</sup> M. A. Haneef, “The Development and Impact of Islamic Economic Institutions: the Malaysian Experience” in *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century*, ed. K. S. Nathan and M. H. Kamali (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), 82-99.

Thanksgiving and at presidential inaugurations, official observance of Christmas and Easter Holidays and the use of the Gregorian Calendar. Thus, “legal secularism” or what some term “civil religion” in the US has led to what, to borrow the idea of Alexis de Tocqueville, may be termed the “tyranny of the dominant secular Judeo-Christian culture” in the US.<sup>31</sup> That “as a nation, American celebrate Christmas, not Buddha’s Birthday,” and that “whatever religious diversity they enjoy is always being negotiated in what can only be described as a Christian context,” shows according to Stephen Prothero that Buddhists or Muslims etc must invariably “yank their traditions around to Christian norms and organization forms.”<sup>32</sup> This explains, in my view, for instance, the non official recognition of other religious practices in the United States such as work free hours to observe the Friday prayers and the adoption of the Islamic Calendar. For this reason also, the use of the *hijāb* in government offices, secondary schools and even higher institutions in many secular countries is almost outlawed. What is unfolding on the *hijāb* in Nigeria is the replica of debates revolving around the veil in modern society. Theodore Gabriel and Rabiha Hannan’s collection of articles have shown that the western and European approach of disallowing Islamic religious symbols and individual identities within the overarching framework of secular society is sustaining the polarization between two opposites, the Muslim world and the West.<sup>33</sup> Hence as observed by Malika Ghamidi, the prohibition of the veil in France and elsewhere in Europe is a challenge to modern conceptions of democracy, liberty and human rights etc.<sup>34</sup>

However, the Muslim modern secular state alternative already discussed above is to my mind, either the direct opposite of the Judeo-Christian modern state or even more dangerous. For this state tends to replace the “tyranny of the dominant Judeo-Christian modern secular state” with the “tyranny of the dominant Islamic secular state” as is the case in Malaysia or with a worst and more dangerous form of “tyranny of a classical Islamic state’ that refuses to recognize religious pluralism and the “manyness” of religious traditions. This is the case in Saudi Arabia and to a very large extent, Iran, two competing poles in Islamic religiosity. In my view, the Saudi rejection of “manyness” in whatever form, accounts for its support for the return of the military in Egyptian politics, following the ouster of the first democratically elected President, Muhammad Mursi.

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<sup>31</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. II (New York, Vintage Books, 1945), 12.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 6-7.

<sup>33</sup> Theodore Gabriel and Rabiha Hannan (eds.), *Islam and the veil: Theoretical and regional contexts*, (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 1-204.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 142-147.



For this reason, the classical Islamic understanding of an Islamic state is also not the way forward in today's global village. This is more so in Nigeria where Muslim and Christian prayers still express themselves in the public arena like prayers observed during official ceremonies, such as Independence celebrations, official observance of Muslim festivals of breaking the fast and sacrifice, Christmas and Easter Holidays, yet African Traditional Religion is given no space whatsoever. This may be changing, as for the first time, the incumbent governor of the Osun State in Southwestern Nigeria "Ogbeni" Rauf Aregbeshola now gave expression to the traditional religion of the people in all his official engagements and it is also ensured that it is taught in schools.

My contention here is that the alternative to the modern secular state is the culture of multiple religions and peaceful coexistence that can best be realized in a truly Commonwealth of Religions as demonstrated by the Prophet (SAW) in Madinah. This Commonwealth of Religions is my answer to Moore's question: how can modernity, with its moral imperatives of liberty and tolerance, accommodate an essentially "illiberal" (hostile to liberty) world view.<sup>35</sup> It is simply by embracing the Commonwealth of Religions, which as conceived and implemented by the Prophet (SAW) in Madinah refers to the state that fuses politics with its plural religions. The Commonwealth of Religions I propose differs from the current multicultural and religious America where "bridges are the lifelines of a society on the move" in many ways as it fails to answer the question, "what next?" after realizing "energetic bridge builders" and creating a truly pluralistic society."<sup>36</sup>

Though Diana Eck writes about both Muslim increasing recognition "in American public discourse" and participation "in American public life" as a "two-way traffic" of pluralism, she doesn't show anywhere in her *New Religious America*, whether this is an Active Pluralism traffic (ATM) or a Passive Pluralism Traffic (PPT).<sup>37</sup> The question here is: is it enough to accept Muslim participation in American public life without accepting Islamic teachings, practices and symbols/icons in the same public arena? It is also different from Catherine Albanese's "oneness amidst the manyness" of religions and "combinations among all religious peoples". I am not comfortable with her "postpluralism (the new combinations that occur as people borrow religious ideas and practices from one another)."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Moore, *The Unfamiliar Abode*, 34.

<sup>36</sup> Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a Christian Country Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (New York: Harper One, 2001), 335.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 335-385.

<sup>38</sup> Catherine L. Albanese, *America: Religion and Religions*, 5th Edition (Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2013), 11.

My own discomfort with the use of these terms is due to the fact that they confirm, in reality the “tyranny of the dominant secular Judeo-Christian culture” in the US. The “oneness” that is created from the “manyness” (religious pluralism meaning free existence of many faiths) is truly religions that of PPT where all other religions must invariably “bring their traditions around to” the dominant Judeo-Christian norms and ethics. This is true today of Buddhism, and of the Native American Religion as it is true of African American Religion, and Latino-Chicano Native Religions in the United States. All these faiths share one thing in common in the United States; they exist as “Judeo-Christian Buddhism, Native American Religion, African American Religion, Native American religion and Lationo-Chicano Native Religion.”

Similarly, “postpluralism” and “combinations” among all religious peoples, in my view presupposes the superiority of some distinctive teachings and practices in a religious tradition, such that other religious traditions would want to borrow and imitate such teachings and practices. This questions whether humans, as the proverbial “blind people trying to feel an elephant”, can ever know if what they seek to borrow or emulate is truly the best strand in a religious tradition? For these reasons, the Commonwealth of religions, rather than combining and borrowing the ideas and practices of others, embraces officially both in theory and practice the “manyness” of all religious teachings, practices and symbols and icons, whether in the private, political, economic or public arenas. Such a state while upholding such pillars of the modern state like human rights, empowerment of women, elections, voting, mass education and urbanization, it also officially embraces its plural religious practices, traditions and values including the application of the *Sharīah*/the Christian Cannon Law/the African Customary Law, financial institutions such as the Islamic Banking/the Christian Banking/the African Customary Banking, and the adoption of Cultural symbols such as the Islamic dress, especially the *hijāb*/the Catholic Nun’s habit or veil/the Yoruba *iborun*.

In closing, I would like to address the question of how would the state mediate on practices that may be perceived as harmful in the Commonwealth of Religion? To this, my answer is simple: all religious practices and institutions will be officially allowed and observed as long as they are not imposed on the *other*. My Commonwealth of Religions seeks, in the words of the Christian conservative leader, Ralph Reed “a place at the table” for all religions.<sup>39</sup> I give instances from Islam and Christianity.

The punishment for *al-Riddah* (apostasy) and other penalties in Islamic

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<sup>39</sup>Ralph Reed quoted by E. J. Dionne Jr. in Hugh Hecllo and Wilfred M. McClay (ed.), *Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Policy in America* (Washington D.C. and

Criminal Law are offered “a place at the table” of the Commonwealth of Religions. It is immaterial whether they constitute a gross violation of the freedom of religion, worship and practice as well the right to life or not, as long, as they are implemented only on those who believe in them. If a person who believes in the punishment for *al-Riddah*, for example turns round to commit the crime, such a person, in my view, should suffer the punishment. This is despite my personal view that *al-Riddah* is not punishable but treason, in line with the *Hanafi* School’s justification for the killing of the apostate. According to the School, the apostate is killed under the Islamic law because of “averting his aggression and not because of his apostasy.”<sup>40</sup>

The second example of a religious practice that should be offered “a place at the table” of the Commonwealth of Religions, in my view, is both the permission of polygamy in the Islamic Law and prohibition of bigamy in the Christian Law, which is a crime already in Euro-American modern secular states, where even the consent of a prior spouse makes no difference to the nullity of a plural marriage. This prohibition of bigamy, especially polygamy, in my own view, violates the right of those women who feel they can get happiness and fulfillment in multiple marriages. It is interesting to note that the feminist historian Sarah McDougall argues that the Christian Euro-American insistence on monogamy and its enforcement till today may be attributed to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Muslim incursions into Central Europe and the subsequent exposure of European Christians to cultures that practiced polygamy. For this reason Christian male polygamists were subjected to harsher punishments, such as death penalty, exile and imprisonment with hard labor than female bigamists.<sup>41</sup> Yet if a Christian subscribes to this law, then such a Christian should be punished when the law is violated.

## Conclusion

Though the modern secular state is predicated on the secularization theory that modernization can only be achieved through secularization, the modern Islamic state in the above Muslim countries shows that Islam can also support development and progress through the use of the Islamic imperative to provide social justice, high standards of living, as well as good governance and a qualitative educational system etc that guarantee not only the right to life but also

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Baltimore/London: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press), XIV.

<sup>40</sup> Dr. Wahhabah al-Zuhayli, *Al-fiqh al-Islami Wa adilatuh*, vol. 6 (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr 1996), 187.

<sup>41</sup> See Sarah McDougall, *Bigamy and Christian Identity in Late Medieval Champagne* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2012).

qualitative living, religious freedom, material comfort and dignity. This paper however calls for a Commonwealth of Religions that can support religious pluralism without the “tyranny of the dominant Judeo-Christian culture” in the “oneness” of “manyness” that emphasizes the PPT model of pluralism whether in the guise of “civil religion” or the “tyranny of the dominant ‘Islamic’ culture” in some of the Muslim countries discussed in this paper.

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***DIALOGUES BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND BUDDHISTS:  
FROM JAPAN TO THE WORLD***

**Abstract:** Most Japanese consider themselves to be non-religious or secular. “Ritual, but not religious” might be a useful term to describe Japanese religious characteristics. Indeed, we celebrate many religious rites throughout the year and throughout our lives, some of which are closely related to Buddhism, others are related to Shinto, and others are related to Christianity. For most Japanese, religion is not a specific belief system but a pragmatic instrument for daily life. Although Christian faith does not root itself in the Japanese community, when we look back at the history, we find that some Christian missionaries took tremendous efforts to bridge the gap between Buddhism and Christianity.

In this paper, I would like to trace these efforts. First I will present some demographic facts about religion in Japan. According to the annual reports of Japan’s Ministry of Education, Cultural, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan has had more religious adherents than its total population. Next I will trace how the dialogues between Christians and Buddhists developed. In the Meiji Era, although the Meiji Constitution guaranteed the long-cherished freedom of religious belief, the Christian churches entered a period of hardship, persecution, and retarded growth. 1896 is a remarkable turning point for the relationship between Christianity and Buddhism, because the first Buddhist-Christian conference was held in Tokyo. That was a social gathering of Buddhists and Christians for the purpose of exchanging opinions.

The next turning point is the lectures on Zen-Buddhism by D.T. Suzuki, who found something common between Christianity and Zen-Buddhism. In the end, I will reach the most important figure --Father Hugo Lassalle. He was a Jesuit priest who tried to bridge the Zen-Buddhism and Catholicism through the practice of meditation. His effort bore fruit and gave impacts on people not only in Japan but also overseas.

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What do Catholicism and Zen have in common, then? I might say it is the practice of meditation and mysticism. I would like to close my paper by citing a passage from W. Johnston – “What united us was not philosophy but religious experience.”

**Keywords:** *Japan, Buddhists, Christians, Zen, Catholic, Interfaith Dialogue*

## **Introduction**

Most Japanese consider themselves to be non-religious or secular. Sometimes we are at a loss unable to express any ideas when we are asked about our religious affiliation. “Ritual, but not religious” might be a useful term to describe Japanese religious characteristics. Indeed, we celebrate many religious rites throughout the year and throughout our lives some of which are closely related to Buddhism, others are related to Shinto, and others are related to Christianity. For most Japanese, religion is not a specific belief system but a pragmatic instrument for daily life; Japanese suddenly become Christians at Christmas and at weddings, they become Shintoists on New Year’s days, and then they become serious Buddhists at funerals.

Christian faith does not roots itself in the Japanese community – even when we celebrate Christmas, we imagine Santa Claus more than Jesus Christ. However, when we look back at our history, we find that some Christian missionaries took tremendous efforts to bridge the gap between Buddhism and Christianity. In this paper, I would like to trace these efforts.

## **Demography and Brief History of the Religions in Japan**

### **1) Demography**

First of all let us see some democratic facts about Japanese religion. Japan consists of an extensive archipelago on the far Eastern Coast of the Asian continent. Its population is over 126million. Although it is said that Japan is one of the world’s most homogeneous nations, we have other ethnic groups both in the northern part – Hokkaido, and in the southern part – Okinawa. However, in this paper, I would like to discuss the religions of the great majority of Japanese people.

According to annual reports by Japan’s Ministry of Education, Cultural, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan has had more religious adherents than its total population. Roemer discusses this phenomenon in detail and focuses on data from 2004: “Here, approximately 109 million Japanese were Shinto adherents, over 93 million were Buddhists, 9,599,000 were labeled “other”, and slightly more than

two million were Christians, for a total of 213,827,000 religious adherents (Statistics Bureau 2007:747). The population of Japan at the time, however, was only 127,776,000. These data indicate that religious adherents made up more than 1.67 times the total population in 2004.”<sup>1</sup>

Roemer explains this gap as follows: “Perhaps a more accurate explanation is that these figures are reported by officially recognized religious institutions and not by Japanese individuals (cf. Kisala 2006). Frequently, affiliation with a Buddhist temple or Shinto shrine is based on geography or heredity rather than on one’s personal religious motivations (see Davis 1992; Traphagan 2004). Many are automatically included as members (*ujiko*) by their local Shinto shrine simply because they live within its district. Similarly, in the case of Buddhist temples, though a significant number of Japanese will state that they are affiliated with the temple where their ancestral tomb is located, most likely, the living household members did not choose this connection. Additionally, the figures reported by shrines and temples often include the same individuals or families more than once, because Japanese are free to make donations that may be recorded at a number of places of worship, regardless of their religion. Most likely, these individuals do not consider themselves affiliates of any religious institution, and they will visit different shrines and temples throughout the year on an as-needed basis (see Reader and Tanabe 1998). For these reasons we see why Shinto boasted 85% of the population and Buddhism claimed 73% in 2004”.

Table 1 shows the latest (2011) demographic data of the religious statistics officially announced by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. This also shows that the total number of religious adherents is 196 million, while the total Japanese population of 2011 is 126 million.

**Table 1:** *The number of religious adherents, 2011*

Shinto	100,770,882
Buddhism	84,708,309
Christianity	1,920,892
Others	9,490,446
<b>Total</b>	<b>196,890,529</b>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Roemer, “Religious Affiliation in Contemporary Japan: Untangling the Enigma,” *Review of Religious Research* 50 (3) (2009): 298-320.

## 2) Brief History

According to an article published in *Religions of the World*, Japan has had a complex religious history, where religious forces from outside Japan (notable from continental Asia) have fused with indigenous forces to produce a variegated religious structure.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, religions in Japan are comprised of a number of organized religions, including Shinto, a tradition that developed in Japan with a specific focus on the Japanese situation, and Buddhism, which came to Japan from continental Asia in the 6th century. Also, Japan has a continuing folk religious tradition centered on customs, beliefs, and practices that go back thousands of years. I will show a brief history of each religion—when it entered Japan and what effects it has on the Japanese society.

## 3) The indigenous prehistoric religion and Shinto

The indigenous prehistoric religion of Japan was based around the veneration of kami; god or deity. There were a lot of kami, ranging from nature deities to the spirits of clan ancestors. The relationship between people and kami was a reciprocal one, with people venerating, praying to, and making offerings to the kami, whose role was to reciprocate by providing benefits, such as good harvests and health etc., and overseeing the fortunes of the living. This indigenous tradition coalesced into Shinto. The term “Shinto” means “the way of kami—gods or deities--” and indicates a tradition centered on myths that tell that the land and the people of Japan were given life by the kami, who are considered protectors of Japan and ancestors of the Japanese imperial family. Such myths have bound Shinto, the emperor, and the nation together and have given Shinto a special status of nationalist orientation. In fact, from 1868--the beginning of the Meiji era-- to 1945--the end of World War II--, Shinto had been considered a national religion.

## 4) Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism

Buddhism entered Japan through China in the sixth century. At the same time, Taoism was transmitted to Japan by secular immigrants from Korea and China, not by priests. Also Confucian ethical concepts came into Japan from China. Confucianism affirmed the importance of venerating one’s elders and parents and placed great emphasis on caring for the spirits of the dead, who were worshipped as ancestors. When it entered Japan, Buddhism had absorbed many

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<sup>2</sup> J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann eds., *Religion of the World*, Vol. 4 (ABC-CLIO, 2010), 565.

elements of Taoism and Confucianism. Buddhism also brought with it a variety of practices and rituals, ranging from the study of scriptures to meditation, pilgrimage, and mortuary rituals. These practices and rituals have influenced Japanese religion ever since. Buddhism received support from the imperial court and there was a close relationship between Buddhism and the state until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Japanese Buddhism developed into the variety of sects, which brought forth innovative leaders. In the early ninth century, two monks: Saicho (767-822) and Kukai (774-835), respectively, established the Tendai and Shingon sects. In the Kamakura period, between the late 12<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, a number of new Buddhist leaders emerged to establish new forms of Buddhism. Eisai (1141-1215) and Dogen (1200-1253), respectively, established the Rinzai and Soto Zen sects based on meditation practices. Honen (1133-1212) founded the Pure Land sect and Shinran (1173-1262) founded the True Pure Land sect, both of which are based in faith in the Buddha Amida. Also, Nichiren (1122-1282) established the Nichiren-sect and espoused a nationalistic form of Buddhism based on the Lotus Sutra.

Although the status of Buddhism as national religion finally collapsed when the Tokugawa Shogunate was taken over from the Meiji Government, the Buddhist rituals remained in people's everyday life.

### **5) Christianity**

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Japan also encountered Christianity when Jesuit missionaries came to Japan. They were briefly successful - the number of converted Christian reached 150 thousands, when Hideyoshi Toyotomi banned Christianity in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Japan's political rulers took the isolation policy, banning Christianity completely. During this period that lasted for about 250 years, Japan was closed to the outside world. All Japanese people were forced to take an oath of allegiance to Buddhism and to conduct the funerals and memorial services of their ancestors at their local Buddhist temples. Accordingly Buddhism became "a de facto pillar of the state"<sup>3</sup> and was given monopoly on the performance of death rituals.

This hostile environment for Christians turned better after the Tokugawa Shogunate was overthrown by the new Meiji Government, the top of which is the Japanese Emperor.

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<sup>3</sup> J. Gordon Melton and Martin Bauman eds., *Religion*, 566.

## 6) Modernization and Religious Pluralism

As mentioned above, Japan opened its doors after the Meiji Restoration (1868). The Tokugawa Shogunate was overthrown by the Meiji Government and Buddhism lost its privileged status; Shinto was elevated to the status of a national religion, instead, and the Japanese Emperor was to be portrayed as a sacred figure.

Sharf shows the hard situation Buddhism faced at this period as follows: "The early years of the Meiji were trying times for Japanese Buddhists. Their religion had become the subject of a devastating critique and persecution known as *haibutsu kishaku* or abolishing Buddhism and destroying [the teachings of] Shakamuni. Government ideologues succeeded for a time in censuring Buddhism as a corrupt, decadent, antisocial, parasitic, and superstitious creed, inimical to Japan's need for scientific and technological advancement. At the same time, Buddhism was effectively rendered by its opponents as a foreign "other", diametrically opposed to the cultural sensibility and innate spirituality of the Japanese".<sup>4</sup>

As the new Meiji Government wanted to create a modern nation, the old Tokugawa system had to be destroyed. Not only Buddhism but the ethics of samurai, i.e., bushido were also attacked. Vederan Golijanin describes the situation during this period as follows: "New Government wanted to create modern Japan, which meant that old Tokugawa system must be destroyed. Apart from the shogun, the samurai and local lords were the greatest obstacle in process of modernizing, so their properties were confiscated and former warrior class was reduced to a level of common citizens. In such conditions, the bushido ethic lost the basis which it had in Tokugawa's military regime, but the bushido consciousness continued to live in the minds of the samurai. Protestant missionaries introduced them to a new Lord they can serve – Jesus Christ. Many samurai thus converted to Christianity and redefined bushido as service to Christian God".<sup>5</sup>

In fact, the similarities between Christianity and Bushido (the ethics of the samurai) attract increasing attention in Japan.<sup>6</sup>

As we have seen so far, Shinto became a state religion in the Meiji period. State Shinto reached its peak in the 1930s and got a political power. For example, the Bureau of Shrine was transformed into the Agency of Shinto Worship (Jingiin),

<sup>4</sup> Robert H. Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," *History of Religions*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (August 1993): 1-43.

<sup>5</sup> Vedran Golijani, "Jesus in Japanese Culture. From Tokugawa Catacombs to Endo Shusaku," *Annual Journal of St. Basil of Ostrog Orthodox Theological Faculty, University of Sarajevo* (November 2012): 35.

<sup>6</sup> See Takemi Sasamori, *Bushido to Kirisuto-kyo* (Tokyo: Shincho-sya, 2013).

an extraministerial body. However, after World War II, the links between Shinto and the Japanese government were broken. According to *A History of Japanese Religion*, the situation surrounding Shinto after World War II was as follows: “Clause ten of the Potsdam Declaration, wetting out the terms for Japan’s surrender, demanded the establishment of the freedom of speech, religion, and thought. The Allied occupation authorities enforced this demand from the beginning of the occupation, in September 1945. In December they issued a directive titled “The Abolition of Governmental Sponsorship, Support, Perpetuation, Control, and Dissemination of State Shinto.” The so-called separation of the state and religion, beginning with the abolition of the State Shinto.”<sup>7</sup>

In May 1947, the new Constitution of Japan, which guarantees religious freedom as a basic human right, took effect and the State Shinto’s eighty-year dictatorship in religious matters finally came to an end.

That brought the age of religious diversity to Japan. Many new religions emerged, and in the field of Christianity, denominations left the Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan, which was established in 1941, in a quest for religious freedom. “The denominations that broke away in 1946 were the Kirisutokyo Kyodai Dan (Japan Brethren in Christ), Kassui Kirisuto Kyodan (Christian Church of the Living Water), Nihon Kirisuto Kaikakuha Kyokai (Reformed Church in Japan), Nihon Seikokai (Anglican Episcopal Church of Japan), Kyuseigun (Salvation Army), and Toyo Senkyokai Kiyome Kyokai (Kiyome Church of the Oriental Missionary Society). They were followed in 1947 by the Nihon Fukuin Kirisuto Kyodan (Japan Evangelical Christian Church), Nihon Horinesu Kyodan (Japan Holiness Church), Fukuin Dendo Kyodan (Evengetical Mission Church), Nihon Baptesuto Remmei (Japan Baptist Convention), Kirisuto Yukai (Religious Society of Friends), and Nihon Fukuin Ruteru Kyokai (Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church), and the trend continued in 1948 and 1949”<sup>8</sup>. Between 1946 and 1952, the Protestant membership in Japan swelled. However, after 1952, when the occupation by the allied forces ended, Christian fervor waned and large numbers of the young who had thronged the churches lost their interest. Compared with the large number of Christians in Korea, the number of Japanese Christians stayed low, but Christianity had a deep and far-reaching influence on the religion, ethics, education, and culture of Japan.

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<sup>7</sup> Kazuo Kasahara ed., *A History of Japanese Religion* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 2001), 542.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 522.

## Dialogues between Christians and Buddhists

### 1) The Anti-Christian Campaigns in the Early Meiji Era

As mentioned above, the Meiji Government gave Shinto the status of national religion and then Buddhism took its place. In 1889, the Meiji Constitution was promulgated and it symbolized “the end of an epoch of rapid Westernization and Christian expansion”.<sup>9</sup> Although the Constitution guaranteed the long-cherished freedom of religious belief, “the Christian churches entered a period of hardship, persecution, and retarded growth”.<sup>10</sup> Also, the Buddhist renewal movement was closely related to the anti-Western and anti-Christian reaction. According to Thelle, “the frequency and aggressiveness of Buddhist campaigns increased drastically after 1889”<sup>11</sup>.

Thelle surveyed the anti-Western Campaign as a concrete manifestation of the conflict. Let me summarize the background of the campaign after him.<sup>12</sup>

First, Thelle indicates that, in most cases, the Anti-Christian activity was directly related to obvious signs of Christian expansion. In order to counteract this, Buddhists sometimes held anti-Christian meetings and even took drastic actions to disturb Christian meetings. Second, he mentions that there was some feeling of Buddhist doctrinal superiority and they were eager to defeat Christian theology. Third, Buddhists’ attack on Christianity proved their nationalistic reaction. After 1889, there was a wave of nationalism, which supported this tendency.

In short, in the Early Meiji Era, Buddhist persecution of Christianity was a nationwide phenomenon and the situation was far from the dialogues between Christians and Buddhists.

### 2) The Buddhist-Christian Conference (1896)

1896 is a remarkable year for the relationship between Christianity and Buddhism. The first Buddhist-Christian conference was held in Tokyo on September 26, 1896. That was a social gathering of Buddhists and Christians for the purpose of exchanging opinions. The discussions were prompted by a questionnaire concerning the future of religion in Japan, published by Nihon Shukyo in May, 1896, and it was Soen Shaku who proposed the discussions between the two parties. This was the concrete starting point of the Buddhist-Christian Conference. Soen Shaku is the person who published the first English

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<sup>9</sup> Notto R. Thelle, *Buddhism and Christianity* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 95.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 136-146.

book about Zen.<sup>13</sup> Sharf mentions that “Soen Roshi came to play a pivotal role in the export of Zen to the West, not only through his own efforts — his participation at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions, his subsequent lecture tour of America and Europe, and the English publication of his lectures - but also through the efforts of some of his students, notably D. T. Suzuki (1870-1966), and Nyogen Senzaki (1876-1958)”.<sup>14</sup>

Now the dialogues began. This conference can be considered a model of interfaith relationships.

### **3) D. T. Suzuki’s understanding of Christianity**

D. T. Suzuki, a disciple of Soen Shaku, is a big figure in Zen-Buddhism. He was born in 1870 and was diligent enough to master English. First he helped his master Soen with his English. He then read a lot about Christianity and found something common between Christianity and Zen-Buddhism. He was impressed by the German theologian, Meister Eckhart’s sermon and was “convinced that Christian experiences are not after all different from those of the Buddhist<sup>15</sup>”. He thought that Eckhart’s idea of God’s self-love is connected with the idea of universal enlightenment of Zen-Buddhism. As D. T. Suzuki gave lectures in the United States, his idea of Zen-Buddhism attracted the beat generation in 1950’s.

Sharf says that it is no doubt that D. T. Suzuki is the single most important figure in the spread of Zen in the west<sup>16</sup>. I will quote him below:

“Suzuki was born in Kanazawa (Ishikawa Prefecture) in 1870, and first became interested in Zen in high school through the influence of his mathematics teacher Hojo Tokiyuki (1858-1929), a lay disciple of Kosen Roshi. Around the same time (i.e., 1887) Suzuki met Nishida Kitaro—a student at the same school—and the two would become lifelong friends. In 1889 Suzuki was forced to leave school due to financial difficulties, and after a stint as a primary school English teacher he entered Waseda University in 1891. Soon thereafter Suzuki transferred to Tokyo

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<sup>13</sup> According to the explanation by BBC, Zen Buddhism is a mixture of Indian Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism. It began in China, spread to Korea and Japan, and became very popular in the West from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The essence of Zen is attempting to understand the meaning of life directly, without being misled by logical thought or language. Zen techniques are compatible with other faiths and are often used, for example, by Christians seeking a mystical understanding of their faith (“BBC-Religions-Buddhism: Zen Buddhism”, accessed October 4, 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/subdivisionz/zen\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/subdivisionz/zen_1.shtml)).

<sup>14</sup> Sharf, “The Zen of Japanese Nationalism,” 7.

<sup>15</sup> Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Misticism: Christian and Budddhist* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1957), 6-7.

<sup>16</sup> Sharf, “The Zen of Japanese Nationalism,” 12.



Imperial University, and at the same time began to commute to Engakuji to study first with Kosen Roshi, and following Kosen's death, with Shaku Soen. Suzuki reports that Soen Roshi started him on the mu koan, which he "passed" with a kensho experience at rohatsu sesshin (a week of intensive Zen practice commemorating Buddha's enlightenment) in 1896.

Suzuki's life changed dramatically when, in 1897, he moved to LaSalle, Illinois, to study with Paul Carus, the editor of *The Open Court* journal. He was to spend a total of eleven years in La Salle, earning his keep as a translator and proofreader at the Open Court Publishing Company. In addition, Suzuki took time off in 1905 in order to serve as Soen Roshi's translator and assistant during the latter's tour of America."<sup>17</sup>

#### **4) Father Hugo Lassalle, S.J.**

Hugo Lassalle was born in 1898 in Germany. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1919 and came to Japan as a missionary in 1929. He was fascinated with the country's Zen practices and he got Japanese citizenship in 1948. His Japanese name is Makibi Enomiya. Here is the obituary of Hugo Lassalle published in Otto Syre S.J.'s "Calendar of the Society of Jesus".<sup>18</sup> If you read this you might understand what he did during his life:

"July 7<sup>th</sup> 1990 – Hugo M. Enomiya Lassalle  
† in Munster

Father Lasalle was born as the son of a Huguenot family on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1898 in Externbrock, district Hoexter at the Weser. In 1919, after World War I he entered the Society of Jesus. In 1929 he went to Japan to take over a professorship for German language at Sophia University in Tokyo. His Japanese name was Makibi Enomiya.

In 1931, Together with students he created the 'Jochi Settlement', a social work settlement in the slums of Tokyo. From 1935 to 1949 he was Mission Superior of the Jesuit Mission in Japan. In a difficult time he was responsible for the Sophia University in Tokyo and for the Apostolic Vicariate of Hiroshima.

On August 6<sup>th</sup> 1945 he survived the atomic bomb release at close range.

After World War II it is because of his initiative that Jesuits from many countries came to Japan to help the work of the German Jesuits. An expression of his courage and commitment was the building of the World Peace Church in Hiroshima. This was Father Lassalle's idea and work.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>18</sup> "July 7<sup>th</sup> 1990 – Hugo M. Enomiya Lassalle," accessed July 16, 2013, [www.conspiration.de/syre/english/jul/e0707.html](http://www.conspiration.de/syre/english/jul/e0707.html).

Aside from those activities he became more and more engaged. He became engrossed in the spirituality of Zen Buddhism and even became a qualified Zen Master. It is his merit that the Zen meditation was introduced into the Christian spirituality. After the Second Vatican Council he became by uncounted meditation courses in the German speaking countries for many people an instructor of the inner life. His experiences found expression in many books and publications.

For his role as mediator between the eastern and the western thinking Father Lassalle got much acknowledgment. Hiroshima, the city where he lived and worked for so many years, conferred on him the freedom of the town. The theological faculty of the University Mainz granted him the honorary doctor on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday.

During a meditation journey through Germany he fell and broke his thighbone. He needed care and therefore he came to Munster for the last months of his life into the order-own home for the elderly.

When pneumonia supervened he died in the St Francis Hospital Munster on July 7<sup>th</sup> 1990.

Several Japanese were present when he died. Those present sang in a low voice the song which he closed all his Zen courses with, namely 'Great God we praise you'. During the second strophe he imperceptibly passed away into God's eternity."

Lassalle read a lot of D. T. Suzuki's writings and learned about Zen Buddhism<sup>19</sup>. He experienced Zen for the first time in 1943, at the Eimeiji Temple in Tsuwano, Yamaguchi. He describes his experience as follows: "To say something about the contents of meditation is certainly the most difficult thing. It is characteristic that not a single word is said beforehand about the subject of the following meditation. At the sound of the gong, everybody goes to the meditation room. With faces turned towards the completely barren walls, all squat down in their assigned places, in the position described above. The spinal column has to be perfectly erect, and the hands folded in front in a prescribed way at all times. Not a single word is whispered, not even the slightest noise of a movement breaks the absolute silence. One sits there in this posture for one or two hours [...] What does the mind occupy itself with during all this time? Perhaps one could say that the mind should be free from all thought in the ordinary sense of the word, in order to become ready to receive the "enlightenment". This enlightenment is a new kind of knowledge, intuitive insight into the essence of being."<sup>20</sup>

Since then he frequently visited the Eimeiji Temple. In 1945, unfortunately he was severely injured following the atomic bomb attack but he miraculously

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<sup>19</sup> Hugo Lassalle, S.J., "The Catholic Church and Zen Buddhism in Hiroshima," *The Irish Monthly*, Vol. 83, No.972 (1954).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

survived. In August 1948, the Association for the Promotion of Religious Thought was at last founded. There were six Catholic priests and twelve Zen bonzes present at the association. Lassalle says that “it was perhaps the first time in the history of the mission that such an association had been founded”<sup>21</sup>. In his memoir he writes that from 1948 to 1950, mainly during spring and autumn, lectures were held in different districts. Also Zen monks cooperated with him at the construction of the World Peace Church in Hiroshima in 1954. In 1956 he started a Zen-Buddhist practice in Obama, Fukui, and in 1961 he built a Zen Training Monastery in Hiroshima. He returned to Sophia University, Tokyo in 1962, and built a Zen Training Monastery in Tokyo in 1969.

He also gave many meditation-lectures in Germany and Western countries. He wrote a book, *Zen Meditation for Christians* so that he could answer the many questions and requests from his students. In his book, he explains about Catholic meditation and Zen meditation and shows that in Catholic meditation, which is usually understood as discursive meditation, there are some aspects of objectless meditation, which is characteristic of Zen meditation. I will quote him below:

“The term “Christian meditation” usually reminds us of a kind of mental prayer which reflects on some religious truth, some passage in the Bible or event from the life of Christ. The meditator ponders the object of reflection and derives a moral from it, developing it into a dialogue with God, Christ or the saints; that is, into a prayer in the true sense of the word. This kind of meditation has been and still is the kind that is most often practiced. In the following we shall consistently refer to it as “discursive meditation,” and shall distinguish it from “object-less meditation” in its proper sense.

On the other hand, when we hear of meditation in the context of the Eastern religions, say Hinduism or Buddhism, we usually think of something different. The practice of *zazen*, for example, has some external similarity to discursive meditation in the Christian realm, but Zen Buddhism does not even employ the word “meditation” much less “discursive.” The phrase “Zen meditation” which one occasionally finds in modern Japanese texts is a recent one of foreign origin”.<sup>22</sup>

He makes it clear that the dividing line between “discursive meditation” and “object-less meditation” is not always clearly visible by making reference to Thomas Aquinas’ explanation between ratiocination and intellection — the former refers to “discursive meditation”, while the latter to “object-less meditation”. He says: “By way of difference between reason and intelligence we can now distinguish discursive from object-less meditation. In the former it is primarily the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> H. M. Enomiya Lassalle, *Zen Meditation for Christians*, trans. John C. Maraldo (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1974), 23-24.

discursive or logical thinking proper to reason which is active, along with sensible representation. Moreover, reason by its very nature always grasps in terms of subject and object. This, of course, also influences discursive meditation, which is accordingly characterized as representational, that is, directed to an object. For this reason a certain amount of preparation is required with respect to the object of reflection, as everyone who has learned to meditate discursively knows.

On the other hand, object-less meditation in the proper sense of the word makes use of intelligence. From the preceding we may conclude that intellection by its nature does not operate within a division of subject and object. There is essentially no tension between subject and object in intuitive knowledge; rather unitary being itself, which never occurs as an object, imparts itself to intelligence. Accordingly, meditation performed by means of intellection is non-representational or supra-objective. It grasps the truth at a single glance. But we cannot understand how this happens as long as we try to use reason. For reason divides where intelligence unifies.”<sup>23</sup>

Then he concludes: “Zazen in its advanced state is a kind of meditation performed through the intelligence, and supra-logical and supra-objective.”<sup>24</sup>

His practice of Zen had a big influence on the other Catholic fathers and sisters. Let us see some cases below.

### **5) After Hugo Lassalle**

#### *• Sister Elaine MacInnes*

Sister Elaine MacInnes, born in 1918 or 1919, is a Roman Catholic nun. She came to Japan as a foreign missionary in 1961 and was introduced to Zen meditation. She was one of the few teachers to be accredited by the Sanbo Kyodan in Kamakura, Japan, one of the foremost centers for the study of Zen. In her book *Light Sitting in Light*, she wrote about her life and the relationship between Zen and Christianity. She met Father Lassalle and He influenced her a lot. She expresses her gratitude to him in her book.<sup>25</sup> After she spent 15 years in Japan, she transferred to the Philippines in 1976 and opened a Zen Center for the Catholic Church in Manila. In 1980 she and Hugo Lassalle were accredited Roshi, i.e., grand masters of Zen Buddhism, by their master Yamada Roshi. In 1992, she was invited to become director of the Prison Phoenix Trust in Oxford, England. After her retirement in 1999, she moved back to her native Canada and lives there now.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 30.

• *Father Robert E. Kennedy, S. J.*

Robert E. Kennedy, S.J., born in 1933, is an American Catholic priest and a Zen master. He became involved in Zen through his work in Japan during the late 1950's and early 1960's. At that time, there were many Jesuits who were engaged in interfaith work with Zen Buddhists.<sup>26</sup> He was installed as a teacher of Zen in 1991. He was the chairperson of the theology department of Saint Peter's College in Jersey City, N.J. He teaches theology and the Japanese language there. In addition to his work at the college, he was a practicing psychotherapist in New York City, and a representative at the United Nations of the Institute for Spiritual Consciousness in Politics. He belongs to Morning Star Zendo in Jersey City, New Jersey now and attends many regional sittings when his schedule allows.<sup>27</sup>

• *Father William Johnston, S.J.*

Father William Johnston, S.J., born in Belfast in 1925, entered the Society of Jesuits in 1943. He was ordained a priest on March 24, 1957 and spent many years of his life in Japan; during this period, he was actively involved in inter-religious dialogues, especially with the Buddhists. He is the author of well known books on mysticism, including *Silent Music*, *The Still Point*, and *The Inner Eye of Love*.<sup>28</sup> His work bore fruit into "Christian Zen"<sup>29</sup>. He passed away in Tokyo in 2010.

### **Instead of conclusions**

Hugo Lassalle's effort bore fruit and gave impacts on people not only in Japan but all over the world. As shown above, Sister Elaine MacInnes, Father Robert E. Kennedy, S.J., and Father William Johnston, S.J. studied Zen in Japan. There have been so many followers of Zen in Europe that the Lassalle-Institut was founded for the promotion of ethically-based culture of values in Edliback,

<sup>25</sup> Elaine MacInnes *Light Sitting in Light: A Christian's Experience in Zen*, trans. Somo Horisawa (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> "The Gifts of Zen Buddhism," accessed October 5, 2013, <http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/384/article/gifts-zen-buddhism>.

<sup>27</sup> "Morning Star Zendo", accessed October 5, 2013, <http://kennedyzen.tripod.com/details.htm#links>.

<sup>28</sup> "Fr. William Johnston SJ", accessed October 5, 2013, [http://pweb.sophia.ac.jp/jesuit45/Fr\\_William\\_Johnston\\_SJ.html](http://pweb.sophia.ac.jp/jesuit45/Fr_William_Johnston_SJ.html).

<sup>29</sup> William Johnston, *Christian Zen* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), William Johnston, *The Still Point: Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995).

Switzerland in 1995. It is one of the Europe's most distinguished institutions in the field of Zen.<sup>30</sup>

What do Catholicism and Zen have in common, then? I might say it is the practice of meditation and mysticism. As I have given some remarks about meditation in the previous chapter, let me consider what mysticism is. According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, "mysticism" is defined as follows:

1. the experience of mystical union or direct communion with ultimate reality reported by mystics;
2. the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience (as intuition or insight);
3. a vague speculation, a belief without sound basis;
4. a theory postulating the possibility of direct and intuitive acquisition of ineffable knowledge or power."<sup>31</sup>

In Christian history, Meister Eckhart (circa1260 – circa1328) was a famous mystic. According to the Christian Classics Ethereal Library, "Meister Eckhart (in English, Master Eckhart) was a theologian, a writer, and the greatest German mystic of the Middle Ages. His writings focused on the relationship of the individual soul to God"<sup>32</sup>. The big figure of Zen Buddhism, D. T. Suzuki was impressed by Eckhart's idea as mentioned before. Ignatius de Loyola (circa 1492 – 1556), Spanish Catholic priest, was another mystic. He was one of the founders of the Society of Jesus. It makes sense that there are many Jesuits, including Lassalle and Kennedy, who are interested in Zen Buddhism.

Zen Buddhism is also related to mysticism. We have already seen that Zen Buddhism is a mixture of Indian Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, "The Taoism of the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tze is a system of metaphysics and ethics in which mysticism is a fundamental element"<sup>33</sup>.

Apparently Zen Buddhism and Catholicism have some elements of mysticism in common. Lassalle concludes that there are some similarities between Zen and Christian mysticism<sup>34</sup>. Let me quote some of his explanations below: "The parallels between Zen and Meister Eckhart are perhaps even more striking...It is not surprising that in Eckhart we find sayings and pointers which could have been written by a Zen master. He says, for example, that an aspirant must "leave God for the sake of the Godhead" – which means: to come to the essence of God, his true ultimate nature, the aspirant must leave the three persons who derive from the

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<sup>30</sup> "Lassalle – Institut", accessed July 17, 2013, [www.lassalle-institut.org/](http://www.lassalle-institut.org/).

<sup>31</sup> "Misticism", accessed October 9, 2013, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/misticism>.

<sup>32</sup> "Johannes Eckhart", accessed October 9, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/eckhart>.

<sup>33</sup> "Taoism", accessed July 10, 2013, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14446b.htm>.

<sup>34</sup> Lassalle, *Zen Meditation for Christians*.

essence. As we have seen, Zen doesn't ever, not even temporarily, conceive of the absolute as a person. Similarly the Zen master Rinzai (d.867) writes: "kill the Buddha, kill God, kill your ancestors". This means not that the disciple must eliminate Buddhism in order to attain enlightenment, but that he must free himself of all concepts to grasp the absolute.

We find another parallel in Eckhart's teaching on the complete spiritual renunciation of the will as well as of the intellect. In his sermon "Blessed are the poor", he says "As long as a person keeps his own will, and thinks it is his will to fulfill the all-loving will of God, he has not the poverty of which we are talking, for this person has a will with which he wants to satisfy the will of God, and that is not right. For if one wants to be truly poor, he must be as free from his creature will as when he had not yet been born." A principle of Zen runs parallel: "Through perfect denial to perfect affirmation."<sup>35</sup>

In conclusion, I would like to refer to a passage from W. Johnston: "What united us was not philosophy but religious experience."<sup>36</sup> I have found the Zen-Catholic Dialogue a great model of inter-faith dialogue and it proved to have possibility to be a passage toward religious universalism.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 81-82.

<sup>36</sup> William Johnston, *Christian Zen* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997).

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***THE RELATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE IN ARGENTINA:  
A STUDY ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM***

**Abstract:** The goal of this study is to trace the relation between the Roman Catholic Church and the State in Argentina's public policies through the historical changes on the educational system. In this regard, I describe the different arrangements between the Church and the State that occurred in the educational field from the perspective of secularism, focusing on the state-political field, including both formal and informal political institutions and norms, and emphasizing the strategies of involvement of this religious institution on the State.

**Keywords:** *Argentina, Roman Catholic Church, educational system, public policies*

**Introduction**

Education had been historically a field of fight, competition, tensions and agreements between secular and religious powers, to the point that, for some scholars<sup>1</sup>, the battle between the Church and the State over education during the period of foundation and consolidation of the national States is considered as one of the earliest causes of party cleavages' formation. In Argentina, the particular series of agreements between the Church and the State over the education has shaped the national educational system, the subnational educational systems, and the relation between these two levels of government of education.

The argument that guides this essay is that while the relation between the Church and the State regarding the educational system has tended to vary

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<sup>1</sup> Seymour Lipset, Rokkan Stein, "Estructuras de división, sistemas de partidos y alineamientos electorales," in *Diez Textos Básicos de Ciencia Política* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1990): 231-73.

concomitantly with the general arrangements between the two institutions, the agreement of “passive complementarity” through convergent strategies has survived the last sixty years, beyond the variations in the broad arrangements between Church and State. So if the main goal of the Church until 1955 was compulsory religious education in public schools, this goal changed during the last six decades: the state aid to denominational private schools, access to the Education portfolio, and strengthening links with subnational educational authorities are currently the main strategies of influence of the Catholic Church in the Argentinean educational field. Increasing its presence by creating and maintaining private schools had become the goal of the state.

To clarify this argument, the paper is organized as follows. In the first section, theoretical assumptions are expressed and the concepts of “Church-state relation” and “Church” are defined. The second section briefly describes the various arrangements between the Catholic Church and the State in the history of Argentina. The third one describes the arrangements between Church and State in the educational field and the strategies of influence of the Catholic Church for each moment.

### **1. Theoretical assumptions**

Before developing this argument, there are two theoretical assumptions that must be clarified: the first one refers to the idea of “relation between Church and State” and the second one refers to the concept of “Church”. These are the two main concepts used in this article.

The notion of relation between State and Church used on this study is based on a conceptual background<sup>2</sup> that includes three main ideas that refer to the problem of the relation between the religious and the public and social sphere: secularization, secularism<sup>3</sup>, and influence of government on religion. In this section we develop different definitions of these concepts to account the conceptual background and clarify the semantic field.

The meaning of “secularization” is in dispute between two possible definitions: a) the degree of separation between the field of religion and other fields of social life, without focusing on the political or the State fields (ie. secularization as more autonomy of religion); b) the decrease in the level of practices, beliefs, and religious expressions individual (ie. less religiosity).

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Adcock, David Collier, “Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research,” *American Political Science Review* 95:3 (September 2001): 529-46.

<sup>3</sup> We use the word “secularism” as a synonym for the idea of “laïcité” or separation between the Church and the State.

In this sense, some authors have understood secularization as an increasing rationality that started with the opening of modernity. One of them is Wilson<sup>4</sup>, who defined secularization as the replacement of religion by social scientific bases (or “objective standards”) and secular legitimacies and identities, and measures it through a particular dimension which is the standard of behavior. For Wilson, secularization means that the religious criterion about the definition of an appropriate behavior is replaced by laws focused on acts which disturb social relations. Thus, state power tends to be legitimized not by religious criteria, but by popular will, national identity or other secular identity bases. Another author who observes secularization from the point of view of increasing rationality is Berger<sup>5</sup>, who sees secularization as a decline of religion as a relevant factor for culture. Also Beckford<sup>6</sup> explored the cultural dimension, understanding secularization as a replacement of religion by secular foundations, like psychology, in fields like sentimental education and transcendental questions. Norris and Inglehart<sup>7</sup> have understood secularization not as a process of separation or autonomy of spheres, but as a systematic erosion of the practices, values, and religious beliefs. To measure it, they focused on the dimension of the religious practices and chose indicators as quantity of religious specialists, church attendance, etc. Given the debate around a resacralization of the world, they concluded that the importance of religion persists most strongly among vulnerable populations, especially those living in the poorest nations: “Religiosity persists most strongly among vulnerable populations, especially those of poor nations, which are *facing personal* threats to *survival*. We argue that feelings of vulnerability to physical, societal, and *personal risks* are key factors driving religiosity”.<sup>8</sup>

Milot<sup>9</sup> used the idea of “secularization” in order to “clarify the semantic field”<sup>10</sup>, and defined it as the progressive loss of social and cultural relevance of the religion as a normative framework for behavior and moral life. Therefore the fact that religious affiliation is expressed with visible signs in the social space, does not affect the process of secularization.

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<sup>4</sup> Bryan Wilson, *Religion in sociological perspective* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1982).

<sup>5</sup> Peter Berger, *El dosel sagrado. Para una teoría sociológica de la religión* (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, 1977).

<sup>6</sup> James A. Beckford, “The Insulation and Isolation of the Sociology of Religion,” *Sociological Analysis* 46 (1985): 347-54.

<sup>7</sup> Pipa Norris, Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Micheline Milot, *La laicidad* (Madrid: CCS, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Giovanni Sartori, *La Política* (Mexico: FCE. 2002), 274-302.

The idea of secularism is closer to the concept of “relation between Church and State” because it refers to the phenomenon of separation between the religious field and the political-state field. In this sense, some authors understand that secularism should be tracked at the state level, others at the state and politics’ level, and others in the way in which political legitimacy is built. Milot<sup>11</sup> is one of the authors that think about secularism focusing on the State. For her, secularism is a particular type of relation between the State and the religious groups, which is defined by three “principles”: separation -between the Church and the State-, neutrality, and freedom of conscience and religion, although it is not clear if these three “principles” should be understood as necessary or sufficient conditions to define secularism<sup>12</sup>. Her typology defines six types of secularism (separatist, anti-clerical, authoritarian, faith, civic, and recognition), which do not depend on a “degree” or “measure” but on the historically particular way in which the “lay adjustment” happened in each country. Along the same lines, Baubérot<sup>13</sup> presents the idea of “thresholds of secularism” as critical junctures that set particular social standards of coexistence between religion and politics, in which political legitimacy arises from secularization of civic elements. But the indicators used to classify these “thresholds” or “covenants”, occur once, in the history of France, so the categories have little room to ‘travel’ through time and space. Mallimaci<sup>14</sup> (2008) also uses the idea of “thresholds of secularism” to classify the types of secularism in Argentina, focusing on the five dimensions: “State and its apparatus (employment, education, health, military, civil, and respective laws); political society and their parties with multiple affinity networks; civil society and its institutions: unions, social movements, cooperative, media; processes of cultural construction and meaning in everyday behavior; relations with the Vatican, remembering that in Latin America the power in the relationship with states and local churches has grown over the years”<sup>15</sup>.

Blancarte<sup>16</sup>, like Milot, separates secularization and secularism in order to clarify the semantic field, and defines secularism as a social regime of coexistence whose political institutions are legitimized mainly for popular sovereignty and not

<sup>11</sup> Milot, *La laicidad*.

<sup>12</sup> Gary Goertz, “Points of Departure: Intension and Extension,” in *Concepts and Method in Social Science*, ed. D. Collier and John Gerring (London: Routledge, 2009), 185.

<sup>13</sup> Jean Baubérot, *Histoire de la laïcité en France*, 4e édition (Paris: PUF, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Fortunato Mallimacci, “Nacionalismo católico y cultura laica en Argentina,” in *Los retos a la laicidad y la secularización en el mundo contemporáneo*, Roberto Blancarte ed. (México, El Colegio de México, 2008), 239-62.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Roberto Blancarte, “El porqué de un estado laico,” in *Los retos a la laicidad y la secularización en el mundo contemporáneo*, Roberto Blancarte ed. (México: El Colegio de México, 2008).

by religious elements<sup>17</sup>. Unlike Milot though, he emphasizes the differences between “formal institutions” and “forms of government”: “There are countries which are formally secular, but nevertheless are still conditioned by political support from the main churches of the country, or countries that are not formally lay but in practice, for reasons related to a historic state control over the churches, do not depend on the legitimacy from religious institutions”<sup>18</sup>.

Esquivel<sup>19</sup> retakes these two dimensions raised by Blancarte, and proposes a very similar definition of secularism, understood as autonomy from the political dimension to the religious one: “In a secular regime, the civil power does not lie in elements and religious factors for legitimacy”<sup>20</sup>.

Blancarte’s concept of “form of government” is partially replaced by Esquivel’s label of “political culture”<sup>21</sup>, which is tracked using indicators such as the incursion of priests in the electoral arena, the role of mediators of religious specialists in social conflicts within a country or between countries, the access of various officials -especially of the education portfolio - to cabinets because of their religious ties, consultation with religious experts on public policy decisions and cabinet by the leaders, noncompliance with laws of the legislative and the judicial power because of an agreement with religious groups, etc.

When it comes to the mutual influence between political and religious institutions, some authors emphasize state intervention on religion<sup>22</sup> or the intervention or influence of religion on the State<sup>23</sup>. In that sense, the concept

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 30-1.

<sup>19</sup> Juan Esquivel, “Los espacios de laicidad en el Estado argentino,” (paper prepared for the Convention of the Latin American Studies Association of Canada, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Juan Esquivel, “Cultura política y poder eclesiástico. Encrucijadas para la construcción del Estado laico en Argentina,” *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 146 (abril-junio 2009).

<sup>22</sup> John Fox, *A world survey on religion and the state* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> See Juan Esquivel, “Iglesia católica, política y sociedad: un estudio de las relaciones entre la elite eclesiástica argentina, el Estado y la sociedad en perspectiva histórica. Informe final del concurso Democracia, derechos sociales, y equidad. Programa regional de becas CLACSO, Buenos Aires, 2000,” accessed July 13, 2013, <http://programadssrr.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/iglesia-cate3b3lica-polc3adtica-y-sociedad-un-estudio-de-las-relaciones-entre-la-elite-eclasic3a1stica-argentina-el-estado-y-la-sociedad-en-perspectiva-histc3b3rica.pdf>; Esquivel, “Cultura política y poder eclesiástico. Encrucijadas para la construcción del Estado laico en Argentina,” *Archives de sciences sociales der religions* 146 (abril-junio 2009); Esquivel, “Religión y política en Argentina. La influencia religiosa en las constituciones provinciales,” (2010), accessed July 13, 2013, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/217234011/1-ESQUIVELReligion-en-las-Constituciones-Dr-Juan-Cruz-Esquivel>.

created by Fox<sup>24</sup> is the GIR, or Government Involvement in Religion, an index based on five dimensions: 1. Official role of religion in the state; 2. Preferential treatment of one religion; 3. Legal restrictions on religious minorities' practices; 4. Regulation of all or the majority religions; 5. State legislation on religion. As noted, this index focuses on the legal dimension or the "formal institutions", because they are easier to measure in order to accomplish a quantitative strategy of research with a large number of cases.

Instead of this, Esquivel<sup>25</sup> studies the convergence of political institutions - formal and informal - and religious institutions in the system of government, in what he considers a special "modus Vivendi", between a religious influence and a particular "political culture" more or less receptive to this influence. That particular "modus vivendi" results in varying degrees of secularism.

Briefly summarized the discussions and distinctions in the semantic field of the concept of confessional political system, the decisions taken in the configuration of this concept are:

1. In the debate between the idea of "secularization" to refer to the social world in a broad sense and the idea of "secularism" to refer to the state-political field, I choose to distinguish between these two areas related to religion and to focus on the second one.

2. In the discussion about whether the concept of secularism should include only formal institutions or it should also include informal political institutions and norms, I choose to include informal political norms and institutions in the definition.

3. Given the different perspectives on whether the focus of secularism should be the state intervention on the religious field or the intervention of religious institutions on the state, I choose to emphasize the involvement of religious institutions on the state.

The other theoretical assumption that should be clarified is that although Catholicism and the Catholic Church include many different groups, opinions, and political as well as theological positions in Argentina<sup>26</sup>, and all those groups live in a permanent battle to define and redefine the boundaries of Catholicism<sup>27</sup>, in this essay I use the expression "Catholic Church" or "Church" referring to the Catholic hierarchy expressed by the Episcopal Conference of Argentina.

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<sup>24</sup> John Fox, *A world survey on religion and the state* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Esquivel, "Cultura política y poder eclesiástico."

<sup>26</sup> Fortunato Mallimaci, "Diversidad católica en una sociedad globalizada y excluyente. Una mirada al fin del milenio desde Argentina," *Sociedad y religión*, 14/15 (1996): 71-94.

<sup>27</sup> Esquivel, "Iglesia católica, política y sociedad."

According to these assumptions, it is possible to observe the public presence of the Catholic Church and its relation with the State and delimitate different moments in a typology defined by two dimensions: the way that the state builds political legitimacy in relation to the Church, whose categories are “autonomy” and “complementarity” - as a synonym for “interdependence”; and the way in which the State creates and reproduces that relation, which can be active - when the state seeks to control the timing of this relationship - or passive - when the state reproduces it. So the relation between Church and the State, as I will study it, may vary between active autonomy, passive autonomy, active complementarity, and passive complementarity.

## **2. Church and state relation in Argentina: a historical approach**

For a better understanding of the relation between Church and the State on the field of the educational system, the relation between Church and the State on the broad political field is briefly summarized in this section.

### **A. 1500 -1879. Colonial times and consolidation of a national state. Passive complementarity**

During most of the colonial period, the Church was not hierarchically and rationally organized, so there were low levels of institutionalization until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when missions, temples, and parish spread all over the later called Argentine territory. Despite of that first development wave, it would be one more century until the Church could be considered as a national institution present in the entire country<sup>28</sup>. Between the independence process and the consolidation of the State as a national State, the political elites oscillated between, on one hand, warranting religious freedom and providing the frame for immigration to get to Argentina and populate the young country; and on the other hand, reproducing the catholic hegemony that was the legacy from the colonial times, where the power of the State and the power of the Church were both part of a symbiotic relation. As a counterpart of its privileges, the so-called “patronage scheme” would give to the governments the power to interfere with the Church by naming the episcopal authorities, allowing or denying the arriving of new religious orders, and being in charge of assignment of the Vatican’s documents<sup>29</sup>. In 1853, the first Constitution reproduced this scheme by recognizing religious freedom but at the same time, by

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<sup>28</sup> Roberto Di Stefano, Loris Zanatta, *Historia de la Iglesia Argentina. Desde la conquista hasta fines del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Mondadori, 2000).

<sup>29</sup> Esquivel, “Iglesia católica, política y sociedad.”



establishing the sustaining of the Roman Catholic religion. As it is written in its Section 2: “The Federal Government supports the Roman Catholic Apostolic religion”<sup>30</sup>. According to the same text, the President was also supposed to belong to the Roman Catholic Church and be born in Argentina, as a symbol of the convergence of religious and catholic identity as a whole. According to these characteristics, the colonial period and the phase of consolidation of the State could be considered, from the perspective of the Church-State relations, as years of passive complementarity or passive interdependence: a balance without winner or losers, where the state was neither secular nor religious and Catholicism was neither the official religion nor equal to any other religion.

### **B. 1880 -1929. Liberal offensive and active autonomy**

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Julio Argentino Roca’s government advanced on redrawing the boundaries of the Church and the State by creating a civil register that would be in charge of the identification of the people, nationalizing the cemeteries – both of which used to belong to the Catholic Church - and establishing civil marriage in 1888. Despite these decisions, Roca’s administration did not establish the separation between Church and State. But its secular policies were enough to develop the reaction of the Argentinian Roman Catholic Church, which took political liberalism as its first contender to defeat. In the process of internal discussion opened by this liberal government on the offensive, the Argentinian Church developed two devices that contributed to the creation of the idea of “being Catholics in all the spheres of life”<sup>31</sup>, which is the base of “integral Catholicism”<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> National Constitution of Argentina (1853).

<sup>31</sup> Fortunato Mallimaci, “El catolicismo argentino desde el liberalismo integral a la hegemonía military,” in *500 años de cristianismo en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: CEHILA, 1992).

<sup>32</sup> Emile Poulat, *Église contre bourgeoisie* (Paris: Casterman, 1977), quoted in Fortunato Mallimaci, “El catolicismo argentino desde el liberalismo integral,” 13: “[Roman Catholicism] Is Roman, intransigent, integral and social. Roman first: the papacy is in its head and its heart. Intransigent, meaning two things: first, as an anti-liberal Catholicism, negation and antithesis of a liberalism which is the official ideology of modern society; but also unbreakable on the principles that mark this opposition. Integral because it refuses to be reduced to cultural practices and religious beliefs, and is worried about building a Christian society according to the teachings and under the leadership of the Church. Social, in several senses: because it penetrates all the spheres of public life; because that strategy made Catholicism essentially popular. In short, because the economic liberalism of modern society has raised social issues whose solution requires a broad mobilization of the Catholic forces.”

Those two devices that led to the hegemony of Integral Catholicism in Argentina were the project of a “third way” between Communism and liberal Capitalism<sup>33</sup>, and the creation and expansion of a social catholic network that included a Worker’s Circle, several journals, and a Catholic Union that gathered women’s, students’, and professionals’ organizations. But beyond the process of creation and consolidation of this particular kind of Catholicism, the relation between the State and the Church between 1880 and 1930 could be broadly considered as an “active autonomy”, with the church on the defensive and the expansive liberal State that increased its capacities, partially, by taking responsibilities and duties that belonged to the Church up to that moment in its own hands.

### **C. 1930 -1945. Undemocratic regimes and active complementarity**

In this setting, the 1930’s democratic breakdown found in the Argentinian Roman Catholic Church an organization that was not involved in democratic issues. On the contrary, integral Catholicism expectations of “restoring everything in Christ”<sup>34</sup> converged with an authoritarian regime without any civil or political legitimacy. The agreement between the Church and the Armed Forces was not just circumstantial, but the beginning of a long-term project of “militarization and Christianization”<sup>35</sup> of the society that shaped the way in which the Catholic hierarchy would deal with the whole society, including Catholics and non-Catholics through the State. This period could be broadly characterized, from the perspective of the Church-State relation, as a phase of “active complementarity or active interdependence” based on crossed legitimacy: the Church would provide to the State the political legitimacy that the government did not have, and the State would provide the Church with its own political structure and ideological apparatus to create the idea of a continuum between the Argentinean citizenship and the Catholic religion.

### **D. 1946 -1955. Peronism and active autonomy**

This equilibrium changed when Peronism - the political movement through which the Welfare State developed in Argentina - came to power in 1945. Like the Integral Catholicism, Peronism was also self-defined as a “third way” between Communism and liberal capitalism; took several symbols from Christianity, at the

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<sup>33</sup> Jose Maria Ghio, *La Iglesia Catolica en la politica argentina* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros Editorial, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Mallimaci, “El catolicismo argentino desde el liberalismo integral.”

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

point of self-characterizing, in one of its most important manifestos, as “deeply Humanistic and Christian”<sup>36</sup>; and put in the hands of the government the responsibility over social help - which was, up to that moment, not a policy but an issue that belonged to Christian charity’s organizations. In summary, as Peronism was - like Catholicism - a political movement that could offer an integral way of life where people could be Peronists in almost every aspect of their lives, these two worldviews clashed. A decade later, after several political confrontations with arguments like religious education, divorce, and the legalization of prostitution, the same reasons that led the Church to support Peronism - its idea of social justice, its proposal of a third way between communism and liberal capitalism, and its religiosity - led it to be part of the coup that overthrew it in 1955. The phase of Peronism, which was very complex and included a lot of different sub phases<sup>37</sup>, could be considered broadly, from a Church-State perspective, as a period of “active autonomy” marked by competition and legitimacies’ clash.

#### **E. 1955-1976 Developmentalism and proscription of Peronism. Passive complementarity**

As a result of this confrontation, the Church supported a military regime again, and worked on the political and civil legitimacy that the dictatorship needed to remain in power for two years and ban Peronism for almost two decades. This decision, combined with the different interpretations on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Concilium, deepened the internal differences in the Catholic field - the “Peronist Christians” and the “institutional Catholics”<sup>38</sup> - in a dynamic that would lead to a violent disciplination twenty years later<sup>39</sup>. The so called “developmentalist period”, that lasted for over twenty years and included military and civil regimes while Peronism was banned, could be considered, from an overview, as a phase of “passive complementarity” where the State ceded certain prerogatives - especially in the field of the education - but the governments did not reinstall the bond of crossed legitimacies that the undemocratic regimes of the thirties had with the Integral Catholicism.

<sup>36</sup> Natalio Tomas Garrone, *Veinte verdades del justicialismo peronista* (Buenos Aires: Tall. Gráf. Mangione Hnos, 1951), quoted by László Horváth, *A Half Century of Peronism, 1943-1993: An International Bibliography* (Hoover Institution, Stanford University, 1993).

<sup>37</sup> See Lila Caimari, *Peron y la Iglesia Católica. Religión, Estado y sociedad en la Argentina (1943 - 1955)* (Buenos Aires: Emece, 2010); Susana Bianchi, “La crisis de la hegemonía 1954-195,” *Revista Criterio* 2305 (junio 2005).

<sup>38</sup> Caimari, *Peron y la Iglesia Católica*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

**F. 1976 -1983. State terrorism and active complementarity**

During the last Argentinian dictatorship that came to power in 1976 after the political and economic crisis that weakened the last Peronist government, these differences within the Catholic field shaped the way in which the military government would deal with the Church: on one hand, as a part of a genocidal scheme based on State's terrorism and systemic disappearance of people, the military regime swept from the Catholic field the organizations and people that were close to the Liberation Theology and to the Peronist youth organizations; on the other hand, as part of the historical agreement by which the church would legitimate authoritarian regimes in exchange of having a central role in public life. The Catholic hierarchy complained about the reports of international organizations denouncing human rights being violated in Argentina and considered them as "anti-Argentinian propaganda". As far as religious pluralism goes, religious freedom was violated by the creation of a registry of religions, in which all the non-Catholics religions were to register, so that the State could regulate their activities and their designation of authorities. During the last dictatorship, the relation of "active interdependence or complementarity" between the Church and the State returned to shape the political arena.

**G. 1983 -1989. Democratic transition and active autonomy**

This particular kind of agreement between the political and the ecclesiastical power started to decline with the definite recovering of democracy, when the Church became involved in a double competition<sup>40</sup>: on one hand, with the other religions that started expressing freely in the public space - especially the evangelicals -, and on the other hand, with the rest of the organizations - political parties, trade unions, students organizations, etc.- that reactivated the public sphere by their requests to the state and the society. But on this general frame, the government's attitude towards the Church changed according to each president. During the transitional government - Raul Alfonsin's -, the relation with the Church was not easy counting on the political legitimacy of being the first democratic president after seven years of a violent authoritarian regime, the government went for several goals that touched some core issues on the Catholic agenda, by calling a National Pedagogical Congress in 1984 in which all the constituencies involved in the educational institutions were allowed and encouraged to participate on a major reform of education, Alfonsin's administration advanced on democratizing a field that authoritarian governments

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<sup>40</sup> Esquivel, "Iglesia católica, política y sociedad."

used to leave entirely to the Church; by passing the divorce's bill - raised by the government -, it challenged the Church as the primal source of moral order. So during the transitional period, the relationship of the Church and the State went back to "active autonomy".

#### **H. 1989 – 2002. Post transition and passive complementarity**

But this battle between the Church and the State, to define what should be the best educational and moral order for the country, didn't repeat itself during the post-transitional government of Carlos Menem, despite of the contradiction between its neoliberal economic policy and the so-called "social concern" of Church. In fact, during the 90's, the tensions and discussions inside the catholic world multiplied: on one hand, most of the catholic hierarchy supported the presidential "catholic" gestures, such as supporting the Vatican's position about women's rights in the United Nations' conventions, financing faith-based initiatives, and attending yearly the national revolution's day, Te Deum. On the other hand, a few bishops, priests and nuns, and some Christians denounced the consequences of economic liberalization. The relationship between the Church and the State on this post-transitional period could be characterized as a relationship based on "passive complementarity": the government was supported by the population, so it did not need the legitimacy of the Catholic Church to govern, but at the same time it reproduced some inherited elements of complementarity, maintaining the balance which existed prior to the democratic transition.

#### **I. From 2002 to the present times. Strong democracy and passive complementarity**

During the last decade, the arrangement between the church and the state was questioned by Nestor Kirchner's administration and the first government of Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, whose position on the relationship of the Church with the State could be defined as an "active autonomy". This active-autonomous attitude can be tracked-down through several policies, like choosing civil servants for the Religions' Affairs Secretary and the embassy in the Vatican, who do not come from traditional catholic families; supporting two women on the Supreme Court that were criticized by the Church's hierarchy because of their opinions on abortion; defending positions about women's and homosexual rights on the United Nations' conventions that were against the Vatican's position on those subjects; reducing the funding of faith-based initiatives and increasing the budget of social aid programs that depend on the State; raising and approving a national law that prescribes sex education in primary and secondary schools and other bills that

defend reproductive rights, despite the criticism of the church; releasing the military bishop from office after he said that the Health Minister was to be thrown into the sea with a stone tied around his neck'; supporting and passing a bill that legalizes same-sex marriages; and not assisting the Buenos Aires Cathedral's yearly Te Deum, even after the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge Bergoglio, became Pope.

### **3. The Church and State relations from an educational perspective**

Within the history of the relationship between the Church and the State, the changes in the balance of power with regard to the educational policy can be considered to be a particular matter of study. Like the broader approach of the Church and State relationship, several moments can be described from the point of view of the State's political legitimacy in relation to the Church - autonomy or complementarity - and the passive or active way in which the state builds this legitimacy.

#### **A. 1500 -1879. Colonial times and consolidation of a national State.**

##### **Passive complementarity**

During the colonial times, Jesuit priests took charge of the natives' evangelization as a direct consequence of the Patronage regime. Dominicans, Mercedaries, Franciscans, and Augustinians followed the Jesuits on the commitment of "Christianizing the Indians"<sup>41</sup>. This commitment was the starting point for the Church to develop as one of the most important agents involved in the educational issues in the region, and reproduced - at the same time that supported - the symbiotic relationship between church and state. During the 16th century, religious orders created several parochial schools and convent schools, as well as a few high schools in order to provide education to the emerging elites. Training new priests and theologians was also a priority for the Church that, in this regard, created a seminar in Cordoba, which was the first step for creating a National University<sup>42</sup>. During the time of the State's consolidation - between the Independence of 1816 and the nationalization of Buenos Aires -, the provinces' stances regarding the role of religion in education varied between those who emphasized the necessity of a free-of-charge and compulsory education and the anti-liberals who emphasized the traditional and catholic values. These differences

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<sup>41</sup> Roberto Di Stefano y Loris Zanatta, *Historia de la Iglesia Argentina. Desde la conquista hasta fines del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Mondadori, 2000).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

on the subnational level marked a path of heterogeneity that still remains in the present times<sup>43</sup>. So the colonial period and the years of the creation and consolidation of the national State could be considered, from the perspective of the educational system and the relationship between the Church and the State, as a passive interdependence in which neither the State had the capacity to spread education over the territory, nor the Church had the capacity to politically articulate the provinces.

### **B. 1880 -1929. Liberal offensive and active autonomy**

This equilibrium changed when one of the most important critical junctures<sup>44</sup> in Argentinian history of education occurred around the parliamentary debate and sanction of the Law 1420, which regulated the education provided by the schools that belonged to the national government. This discussion started in 1882, when a National Pedagogical Convention was called by a presidential decree. The Church mobilized some of its major intellectuals to defend its positions with regard to the so-called “freedom of teaching”, which implied the public recognition of private religious schools, the State’s role on children education, and the presence of religious - catholic - teaching in public schools. After a hot debate on the Church’s proposal of defining public education as “essentially catholic”<sup>45</sup> this motion was abolished and the Catholic congressmen<sup>46</sup> left the convention. One year later, a bill supported by Catholics -although a congressman that belonged to a secularist party and was a member of freemasonry raised it- was discussed on the plenary<sup>47</sup>. The most difficult topic was, again, the inclusion of religious contents on the curriculum, and the lack of consensus rolled the bill. Immediately, liberal majority raised an alternative bill. Although in that text the Parliament did not define explicitly the “secular” or “pluralist” or “nonsectarian” nature of education, religious education was excluded from the core curricula and instead included in the afterschool schedule. This defeat, considered by some scholars<sup>48</sup> as the worst

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<sup>43</sup> Axel Rivas, *Lo uno y lo múltiple: Esferas de justicia del federalismo educativo* (Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de Educación, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the political arena* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 27-39.

<sup>45</sup> Domingo Sarmiento, “Cuestiones incendiarias en el congreso pedagogico (13 de abril de 1882),” accessed July, 13, 2013, [http://bibliotecaescolar.educ.ar/sites/default/files/IV-02\\_0.pdf](http://bibliotecaescolar.educ.ar/sites/default/files/IV-02_0.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> Identified by Sarmiento as “Goyena, Estrada, Lamarca, Navarro, Viola, canon Pinero, father Magendie, etc.”, in “Cuestiones incendiarias en el congreso pedagogico.”

<sup>47</sup> Gregorio Weinberg, *Debate parlamentario, ley 1420, 1883-1884*, vol. I (Buenos Aires: 1984), accessed July 15, 2014, [http://bibliotecaescolar.educ.ar/sites/default/files/IV\\_07.pdf](http://bibliotecaescolar.educ.ar/sites/default/files/IV_07.pdf).

<sup>48</sup> Di Stefano, Zanatta, *Historia de la Iglesia Argentina*.

on the Argentine Catholic Church's history, shaped the church's institutional strategy during the following 46 years: intervening on the educational rules at the subnational level and strengthening and organizing private schools. With regard to the first point, the provincial laws that regulated the education in the provinces of Cordoba, Mendoza, Rio Negro, and Santa Fe not only allowed but also warranted compulsory religious education<sup>49</sup>. About the second point, bishops, priests, directors, and teachers of private schools gathered in 1910<sup>50</sup> for the first pedagogic convention on catholic education. Four years later, the Episcopal Conference of Argentina decreed a religious teaching plan for all the catholic schools, which contained rules and indications for religious teaching and the curriculum, bibliography, and didactic books for each grade for both elementary schools and high schools<sup>51</sup>. Although they had lost the battle of religious education in public schools 16 years earlier, the bishops pointed out that according to the Latin American Plenary Council, "The Church has not only the right, by nature and above every human power, to establish and regulate schools to give to the Catholic youth Christian education, but also to claim that in every school, whether public or private, catholic youth's education will be under its jurisdiction and that anything that is opposite to catholic religion and healthy moral will be tough in any field of the curriculum"<sup>52</sup>.

Although this document had no legal value beyond the catholic schools dependent on the Episcopate, it shows quite clearly the opinion of the Church's hierarchy about secularism in public education and its low level of commitment to democratic norms by not recognizing the Law 1420's establishment of keeping religious education on the afterschool's schedule. In the same year, the Argentine Catholic University was created with the goal of educating Catholic leading elites. But these expectations lasted only for a few years, since the State would not legally recognize its diplomas. In 1925, as a consequence of the church's strategy of strengthening the private schools, the Council for Catholic Education (Consudec) was created to help private schools with the bureaucratic paperwork and defend

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<sup>49</sup> Rivas, *Lo uno y lo multiple*.

<sup>50</sup> Hector Aguer, "Propuestas y riesgos de la educación católica, a las puertas del Bicentenario patrio. Opening speech of 47° Director's course of CONSUDEC. Salta, 10 de febrero de 2010," accessed July 15, 2013, <http://www.arzolap.com.ar/textos/Propuestas%20y%20riesgos%20de%20la%20educacion%20catolica.html>.

<sup>51</sup> "Decreto del Episcopado argentino sobre la enseñanza religiosa en los colegios y escuelas católicas. Plan de enseñanza religiosa," accessed July 17, 2013, [http://www.episcopado.org/portal/2000-2009/cat\\_view/150-magisterio-argentina/24-1889-1928.html?start=20](http://www.episcopado.org/portal/2000-2009/cat_view/150-magisterio-argentina/24-1889-1928.html?start=20).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



those schools that would feel “hindered in the free exercise of teaching”<sup>53</sup>. This Council would depend on the Episcopal Conference and, according to the collective pastoral signed by the bishops when it was created, one of its priorities would be spreading the catholic teaching to those children whose parents could not pay for it, by warranting a scholarship system.<sup>54</sup> So the period between the 1880’s liberal offensive and 1930 could be described as a period of “active autonomy” from the State, marked for a liberal and expansive State and a Church on a defensive position, where the Catholic strategy on education was revisited.

### **C. 1930 -1945. Undemocratic regimes and active complementarity**

With the 1930 democratic breakdown, the Catholic Church recovered from the secularist policy set by law 1420. By 1934, the National Council of Education changed the curriculum and included references to God in the course of Moral Education – now called “Citizen Education” or “Civic Education” -. But it was not until 1943 that religious education was included as a compulsory assignment in every school of Argentina, by the decree 18,411.<sup>55</sup> According to this norm, Law 1420 had not abolished the religious teaching but, by setting it at an inconvenient schedule, had made it impossible to attend and had led to “biased interpretations”<sup>56</sup> that were against the Constitution. Religious teaching was supposed to spread over all the elementary schools, high schools, and universities that belonged to the national State and it would be ruled and organized by a National Bureau of Religious Instruction and controlled by a specific group of inspectors. Most of the provinces followed this trend and established compulsory religious education in the provincial schools. So the educational phase that started with the 1930’s coup was, like the broader process of militarization and Christianization of society, a moment of “active complementarity or active interdependence” between the Church and State. This relationship was based on a crossed legitimacy where the Church would provide the State with a moral content on education that could replace the liberal paradigm, and the State would provide the Church with its educational structure so the Church could spread the Catholicism religion all over the people, Catholics or non-Catholics.

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<sup>53</sup> “Pastoral colectiva sobre la creación del Consejo Superior de Educación Católica,” accessed July 15, 2013, [http://www.episcopado.org/portal/2000-2009/cat\\_view/150-magisterio-argentina/24-1889-1928.html?limitstart=0](http://www.episcopado.org/portal/2000-2009/cat_view/150-magisterio-argentina/24-1889-1928.html?limitstart=0).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> “Decreto No. 18.411, del 31 de diciembre de 1943,” accessed July 15, 2014, <http://www.bnm.me.gov.ar/giga1/normas/14066.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

**D. 1946 -1955. Peronism and active autonomy**

This decree was converted into a law by the Peronist government in 1947. But the implementation of this law reflected the relationship between Peronism and the Church: the National Bureau of Religious Instruction would be in hands of civil servers and the role of the Church on the curriculum's conception would be just advisory. So this policy could be seen as a way of increasing the public presence of the Church but also the level of control over it. Seven years later, as a result of the tensions between the Church and the Peronist government, religious teaching in public schools was abolished. But with regard of private education, the legacy of Peronism in the relationship with the Church was much heavier: Law 13,047, sanctioned in 1947, established that private schools' teachers would have the same rights as the public schools' teachers. By this decision, the government defined that funding private education would be a state responsibility.<sup>57</sup> From that moment on, the Church and State's discussion around education would focus on state regulation and financing.<sup>58</sup> So this period defined by the competition between the Church and the State reflected on the educational system as a phase of active autonomy in which the State would give to the church a portion of the educational system but at the same time it would put it under public control and responsibility.

**E. 1955 -1976. Developmentalism and proscription of Peronism. Passive complementarity**

As the political coalition that supported the military government that started in 1955 was conformed for socialists, communists, and the Roman Catholic Church, religious education did not become a part of the curriculum. But in the course of Moral Education, one of the contents was "the notion of God, creator of all that exists. Duties of Him fulfilling the Moral or Divine Law"<sup>59</sup>. Beyond the issue of religious education in public school, the trend towards private education deepened throughout the decade. Despite of the secularist and anti-clerical ideology of its supporters and the massive protests carried out by the students,

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<sup>57</sup> Gerardo Suarez and Roxana Perazza, "Apuntes sobre la educación privada," in *Mapas y recorridos de la educación de gestión privada en la Argentina*, ed. Gerardo Suarez and Roxana Perazza (Buenos Aires: Aique, 2012)

<sup>58</sup> Alejandro Morduchowicz and Gustavo Iglesias, "Auge y avance de los subsidios estatales al financiamiento de las escuelas privadas en la Argentina," in *Mapas y recorridos de la educación de gestión privada en la Argentina*.

<sup>59</sup> María Laura Mauceri, Guillermo Ruiz, "La finalización de la educación primaria nacional: Los últimos años de la acción directa del Estado nacional en la educación primaria. Período 1961-1978", in *Hist. educ. anu.*, vol.10 (2009) [online].

Arturo Frondizi's government presented at least two politics of passive complementarity with the Church with regard to education: on one hand, he called Luis McKay, "a man of Irish Catholic origin and known for its religious fervor"<sup>60</sup> to be his Education Minister, although the "obvious candidate" for that position was a man from the west wing of the president's coalition - which could be considered as secular and even anticlerical. On the other hand, he recognized the private universities' diplomas, legalizing the creation of private universities by Law 1457. Although this decision would not directly affect the proportion of private schools' students over the total amount of students in elementary and high schools, it would shape the relation between the Church and the State, as they converged in their complementary strategies: the Church, after the failed experience of compulsory religious education in public schools, re-focused on strengthening, disciplining, and multiplying private schools; the State, by financing private schools, de-monopolized the statist nature of the educational system, taking charge of private education. As a consequence, the National Office of Superintendence of Private Education was created one year later. In 1960, the quality examinations against mixed juries were abolished when private schools were legally considered as "administrative units of self-management" and became legally able to deliver diplomas without any state control of quality.<sup>61</sup> The growth of private education was linked to the policies of decentralization of schools that started in 1961, when the state signed agreements concerning the decentralization of primary schools with a few provinces. Under de military government that started in 1966, a group of education experts linked to the Catholic Church took control of the Education Ministry. Some of the intellectuals who were part of this group were Antonio Salonia, who had been the vice minister of McKay, José Ciuccarelli, a religion professor linked to the military clergy's journal, and the group of Luis Jorge Zanotti, Alfredo van Gelderen, Reinaldo Oserín, Miguel Petty y Carlos Silva, who had been part, like the President, of the Courses of Catholic Culture in 1922<sup>62</sup>.

To conclude, the balance between the Church and the State in the educational system during this period had three main axes: decentralization, promotion of private education, and cabinet access for Catholic experts who were

<sup>60</sup> Celia Szusterman, *Frondizi. La política del desconcierto* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1997): 167.

<sup>61</sup> Norma Paviglianiti, *Neoconservadurismo y Educación* (Buenos Aires: Coquena Grupo Editor, 1991). Quoted in Florencia Finnegan, Ana Pagano, *El derecho a la educación en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: LPP and FLAPE, 2007), accessed July 17, 2013, [http://issuu.com/lucita15/docs/derecho\\_a\\_la\\_educacion\\_finnegan-pagano](http://issuu.com/lucita15/docs/derecho_a_la_educacion_finnegan-pagano).

<sup>62</sup> Pablo Pineau, *Historia y política de la educación argentina* (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Educación de la Nación, 2010), accessed July 15, 2013, <http://repositorio.educacion.gov.ar/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/89820/Historia%20politica%20educacion.pdf?sequence=1>.

politically linked to the Church. Those three axes converge with the Church in a relation of passive complementarity, where the State abandoned some of its responsibilities and control capabilities over education, while the Church furthered its growth strategy through the private sector.

#### **F. 1976-1983. State terrorism and Active Complementarity**

These policies were expanded during the last military dictatorship. The most important decision of the dictatorial regime regarding decentralization was taken in 1978, when the Law 21,809 allowed the Executive Power to transfer all the national primary schools to the provinces. The transfer would be formalized by signing agreements with the provinces, which would be responsible for all expenses resulting from the transfer. With regard to support granted to private schools, there are two issues to consider: firstly, although the enrollment in private schools did not grow dramatically between the beginning of the dictatorship in 1976 and its fall in 1983, the transfer of schools to the provinces without the necessary budget to accompany the increase in the education demand implied supporting the growth of private education, because provincial budgets could not finance the construction of new schools. Therefore, the new demand for education could only be absorbed by the private sector, or simply remain unsatisfied. Secondly, it is important to mention that the third Minister of Education of the military government, Juan Rafael Llerena Amadeo, had strong ties to the Council for Catholic Education and publicly defended the so-called 'principle of subsidiarity' inaugurated by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical "Quatragessimo Anno"<sup>63</sup>. According to Llerena Amadeo, this principle was opposed to both liberal and directed economies, and consisted mainly of the idea according to which individuals and social groups had the right to carry out all social and economic activities they were good at. Therefore, it was unfair for the State to absorb those activities, because their mission was extra or subsidiary.

About the third axe -cabinet access for Catholic education experts who were politically linked to the Church- the case of Llerena Amadeo could be considered as paradigmatic: he had been an Assistant Secretary for the Minister of Education José Mariano Astigueta (1967-1969) during one of the authoritarian regimes of the sixties. In 1976 he was a professor at the Catholic University of Argentina and Salvador, an academic secretary of the Faculty of Law of the University of Buenos Aires and belonged to one of the institutes associated with the National Council of Science and Technique. He was also a collaborator in the center-rightist newspaper

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<sup>63</sup> Laura Rodríguez, "La influencia católica en la educación. El caso del ministro Juan Rafael Llerena Amadeo (1978-1981)," *Estudios* 25 (2011): 141-157.

La Nación and also in Catholic magazines and journals such as Universitas and Estrada. Regarding his social background, it is important to stress upon the fact that he was closely linked to the Catholic Education Council. In those years, the Council was under the influence of the episcopal chair of Catholic education, Bishop Antonio José Plaza, who was also Archbishop of La Plata and police chaplain in the province of Buenos Aires.

There were three more devices of Church's intervention on the educational system during the last dictatorship: a doctrinaire or ideological one, which shaped the contents of education; a political one, that shaped the subjects of education; and a pedagogical one, which shaped the ways of teaching. The first one can be especially traced into the courses of moral and civic education, whose content have been analyzed by several researchers who highlighted its undeniable pre-conciliar Catholic bias<sup>64</sup>, throughout history<sup>65</sup>. The second one consisted mainly in the persecution of teachers and students of catholic educational institutions that questioned the catholic hierarchy because of its relationship with the military government, or those having leftist points of view. This issue has been much studied by many scholars and specialists in Human Rights, but the most visible fact was the document called "Subversion in education. Knowing Our Enemy", which was distributed by the ministry of Education to every school. The goal of the text was "understanding of the subversive phenomenon of those days" and aimed at "explaining directly and clearly the main facts which occurred" on the "actions of Marxism"<sup>66</sup>. The third one referred to the catholic element used upon the teaching field and can be traced through the figure of the Spanish teacher of Opus Dei Victor Garcia Hoz, who was invited to Argentina by the Education Minister. He was one of the theoreticians of catholic teaching and postulated the so called "personalized education". He was also publicly identified as the educator of the Franco regime and proposed the separation of the sexes in the entire educational system, as well as teaching of specific courses for men and women.<sup>67</sup>

So during this period, the relationship between the Church and the State could be characterized as an "active interdependence" where both parts were

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<sup>64</sup> See Rodriguez, "La influencia católica en la educación."

<sup>65</sup> Laura Rodriguez, "La Historia que debía enseñarse durante la última dictadura militar en Argentina (1976- 1983)," accessed July 17, 2013, [http://www.academia.edu/3612615/La\\_Historia\\_que\\_debia\\_ensenarse\\_durante\\_la\\_ultima\\_dictadura\\_militar\\_en\\_Argentina\\_1976-1983\\_](http://www.academia.edu/3612615/La_Historia_que_debia_ensenarse_durante_la_ultima_dictadura_militar_en_Argentina_1976-1983_).

<sup>66</sup> "Subversion in education. Knowing Our Enemy. Document of the Ministry of Education, 1978," quoted in Laura Rodriguez, "Iglesia y educación durante la última dictadura en Argentina," *Revista Cultura y religión*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2010): 4-19.

<sup>67</sup> M.N. Filippa, "Educación personalizada y dictadura militar en Argentina: 1976/1983," in Claudio Suasnábar, *Universidad e intelectuales. Educación y política en la Argentina (1955-1976)* (Manantial, 2004).

avored by all the educational policies: from the State's point of view, the arrangement was advantageous for pragmatic and political reasons: the pragmatic reason is that the catholic schools – which already accounted for around 70 percent of the private schools - could have been a contention for the educational demand once the primary schools were decentralized; the political reason is that the Church's program, in its ideological, pedagogical, and political dimensions, coincided with the disciplinary goals of the dictatorial government. From the Church's perspective, the arrangement was convenient because by having influence in the educational policies and contents and, at the same time, receiving the new educational demand, the institution could expand its influence in both directions: private and public, confessional and political.

### **G. 1983-1989. Democratic transition and Passive Autonomy**

With the return of democracy, the transitional President raised a bill by which he called a National Pedagogical Convention in 1986, which was opened to students, parents, cooperative associations, trade unions, teachers, education experts, and the whole population through parties and other representative organizations. This fact caused several discussions within the Catholic community, between those who thought that they should go to the congress and those who preferred to ignore it. In the end, it was the first position that won the discussion and by 1985, the Argentine Episcopate distributed a document entitled "Education and project of life" and told the schools directors to encourage their communities to attend the forums public discussions called by the government. By 1988 the Pedagogical Congress approved ten very general motions, most of them unanimously. There were dissensions in motions referring to delicate issues for the Catholic agenda, like the religious holidays: the Catholics wanted to include the fact that the school legislation should be "harmonically embedded in the assumptions of a national project that recognizes a world vision that is originally Christian"<sup>68</sup>. Other issues like the role of the family in education and the Latin American integration were approved with dissensions. But the most important thing about this Congress was not the contents and discussions, but the intact ability of the Church to conquer the public sphere, which led the government to abandon the education bill. So even though the first attitude of the government was "active autonomy", its inability to move the agenda forward because of the power of the church marks a period of passive autonomy.

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<sup>68</sup> *Documentos sobre la historia educativa argentina*, accessed July 15, 2013, [http://argentinahistorica.com.ar/intro\\_libros.php?tema=26&doc=87&cap=458](http://argentinahistorica.com.ar/intro_libros.php?tema=26&doc=87&cap=458).

**H. 1989 – 2002. Post transition and passive complementarity**

In this context, the policies of decentralization support to the private sector, and cabinet access for Catholic experts who were politically linked to the Church became stronger during the neoliberal period. Consequently, the Law 24,049 of Transference of Educational Services empowered the National Executive to transfer to the provinces all the educational services administered by the Ministry of Education as well as the powers and functions of acknowledged private institutions. Although this policy implied, in the long term, a heavier charge for the governors, they did not offer any kind of resistance because, at the same time, they would control more resources. Besides that, during the first years of the transition to a decentralized system, salaries would be paid by the national government. Two years later, the 24,195 Federal Law of Education recognized private schools as a part of the public system, by the name of 'public schools of private management'. About the incursion of Catholic-political activists with strong links to the Church during the neoliberal government of Menem, it is important to focus on the case of Salonia, who was Menem's Minister on Culture and Education for the first three years of government and had been subdirector of McKay during Frondizi's, and led the consulting team of the military government of Onganía. So during this period, the State-Church relationship was 'passive complementarity' because the State's strategy of shrinking the state and decentralize the educational system converged with the Church's strategy of growing in the private sector.

**Conclusions**

As a consequence of the convergence of the decentralization policies and the church's strategy of discussing the education policies at the subnational level, provincial educational systems are now very heterogeneous from the point of view of subsidiarity levels and levels of secularism. Looking at the distribution of the provinces from these two dimensions, four groups of provinces (according to the percentage of educational spending that is transferred to the private sector) may be detected. And observing the way in which the incursion of religious education in public schools is prescribed in provincial constitutions and education, there are also four groups of provinces --with secular public education and religious education allowed outside the normal school hours, without specifying the schedule, and religious education within the normal school hours--. The combination of these two dimensions in a typology of 16 categories shows the heterogeneity of subnational educational systems (See table I). So even though the State becomes increasingly autonomous in general, it described a relationship of passive complementarity with the Church in the educational field (See chart II).

This change in the pattern of co-variation could be explained by the dynamics of decentralization and privatization of the educational policies during the last 60 years, which converged with the broad strategy of the church of strengthening the private sector and improving the ties with provincial education authorities. At the same time, these facts show that the religious education in public schools has usually been a temporary policy in Argentina, while these other policies that do not affect directly the contents of education tend to be more lasting because they affect the educational institutions and therefore they change the educational system in the long term. From this starting point, it is up to future studies to try and answer the question about the reasons that explain the variance between provinces in the type of educational system and the link of this variation to the Church-State relationship.



## APPENDIX

**Chart I.** Provinces according to their type of subnational educational system.

		Level of secularism			
		Lay	Religious incursion in public schools in afterschool schedule	Religious incursion in public schools without specifying the schedule	Religious incursion in public schools into class hours
Level of subsidiarity	Not subsidiary	Formosa; La Rioja; Neuquén; Chubut; Chaco	.	Jujuy	.
	Low subsidiary	Mendoza; Río Negro; Tierra del Fuego; Corrientes	La Pampa	Catamarca	Salta
	Subsidiary	Santa Cruz; Misiones	San Juan; San Luis	Santiago del Estero	Tucumán
	Very subsidiary	CABA; Buenos Aires; Santa Fe; Entre Ríos;	.	Córdoba	.

**Source:** Author's elaboration based on data gathered from provincial constitutions, provincial education laws, and figures provided by the National Directorate of Educational Statistics.

**Chart II.** *Church - State relations and Church - State relations on the educational field.*

<b>Years</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Church- State relation</b>	<b>Church-State relation on the educational field</b>
1500-1879	Colonial Times and consolidation of the national state	Passive complementarity	Passive complementarity
1880-1929	Liberal Offensive	Active Autonomy	Active Autonomy
1930-1945	Nondemocratic regimes	Active complementarity	Active complementarity
1946-1955	Peronism	Active autonomy	Active autonomy
1955-1976	Developmentalism and proscription of peronism	Passive complementarity	Passive complementarity
1976-1983	Dictatorship and genocide	Active complementarity	Active Complementarity
1983-1989	Transition	Active autonomy	Passive Autonomy
1989-2002	Post transition	Passive Complementarity	Passive complementarity
2003-2011	Strong democracy	Active Autonomy	Passive complementarity

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### ***THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN EDUCATION IN BURUNDI***

**Abstract:** Despite the cultural, territorial and administrative unity of the Burundian people, their recent history has been characterized by tribal wars between communities, the height of which was reached in 1972 and 1993. Since then, some 200,000 Burundians have perished in widespread, often intense ethnic violence between Hutu and Tutsi factions. Hundreds of thousands have been internally displaced or have become refugees in neighboring countries. That period of guerrilla war and civil strife ended by the Arusha peace agreement signed in 2000 by the transitional government and the rebels.

In 2005, Pierre Nkurunziza was elected as President and head of the State. After decades of civil war, Burundi is facing a high level of poverty as a result of dramatic violence. The ambition of the actual government intends to build a new peaceful and developed country. Hence, education is the highest priority of the actual government.

Churches in Burundi are involved in the peace and reconciliation process, teaching people how they can live peacefully with each other, and that conflicts can be solved without fighting. In their framework of interfaith dialogue, they emphasize their engagement to educate for lasting peace and development.

**Keywords:** *church, Burundi, education, civil war*

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## I. Country Profile

### I.1 Geography<sup>1</sup>

Burundi is a small landlocked country in east-southern Africa with an area of 27,830 sq. km, of which about 7% consists of lakes. It is bordered by Rwanda to the north, Tanzania to the east and south and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west. Burundi's capital city, Bujumbura, is located in the western part of the country. In general, Burundi has a tropical highland climate with diversity of temperature from one region to another, chiefly as a result of differences in altitude.

### I.2 Population

Upon the conclusion of the General Population and Housing Census of 2008 (2008 RGPH), the population totaled 8,053,574 inhabitants, 49.2 percent of them being men and 50.8 percent of them being women. According with CIA – The World Factbook, the estimated number of population in Burundi in July 2014 is 10.395.93.

0-14 years: 45.7% (male 2,385,571/female 2,361,367)

15-24 years: 19.3% (male 1,001,486/female 1,005,617)

25-54 years: 28.6% (male 1,483,936/female 1,491,401)

55-64 years: 3.9% (male 190,707/female 216,983)

65 years and over: 2.5% (male 109,434/female 149,429) (2014 est.)<sup>2</sup>

### I.3 Ethnic groups<sup>3</sup>

There are 3 social groups improperly called "ethnic groups": Hutu (85%), Tutsi (14%) and Twa (1%).

Unlike real ethnic groups, Burundians have spoken one and the same unique language- Kirundi - for a long time. They share the same values and live in the same villages. They all live on agriculture combined with animal farming. There is no historical or identity reference which distinguishes them. Nevertheless, the Twa are not well integrated into the social order.

Despite the cultural, territorial and administrative unity of the Burundian people, their recent history has been characterized by tribal wars between communities, the height of which was reached in 1972 and 1993. But one should

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<sup>1</sup> "Burundi," accessed July 13, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/by.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Nigel Watt, *Burundi: The Biography of a Small African Country* (Hurst Publishers Ltd., 2008), 23-32.

not be mistaken because the great majority of the population (all the communities together) continues to live together as before on the same hills, they go to church, school, markets, and bars and fetch water from the same springs.

#### **I.4 Languages<sup>4</sup>**

The main language is Kirundi, a Bantu language. Both Kirundi and French are official languages. Swahili is used as a lingua franca along Lake Tanganyika and in the Bujumbura area. Swahili, a mixture of Arabic and Bantu languages that is the language of trade and business in much of East Africa, also is spoken, mostly in the region of Lake Tanganyika and in the capital city. English is taught in schools from primary.

#### **I.5 Economy<sup>5</sup>**

Burundi is the 4th less developed country in the world in terms of social welfare indicators. 68% of Burundians live on less than \$1 a day.

Burundi is a rural country with about 90% of the population engaged in subsistence agriculture. Subsistence means that people have just enough to eat, but do not have spare money for luxury items that are taken for granted in the west.

As Burundi is landlocked, it has few natural resources and negligible industry. Primary exports are coffee and tea. Because of the civil conflict the production of coffee has been reduced by half. This is compounded by the decrease of coffee prices in the world market as well. As a result, people are very poor. Decades of civil unrest and genocide have severely affected Burundi's economy, impoverished the already struggling population and destroyed the country's chances of attracting outside investment.

## **II. Brief History of Burundi**

### **II. 1 Kingdom and colonization<sup>6</sup>**

Even before the fifteenth century, Burundi was an organized nation, a kingdom with sound political structures and a social organization of its own, since then, the country was ruled by a line of seventeen Kings of four dynasties of Ntare, Mwezi, Mutaga and Mwambutsa.

From 1898 to 1916, Rwanda Urundi was a German Colony. The German authorities made no changes in the indigenous organization; they administered the territory through the traditional authorities in accordance with the laws and

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 11-22.

<sup>5</sup> "Burundi," accessed July 14, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/by.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Watt, *Burundi*, 22-32.

customs of the region. After its defeat in World War I, Germany handed control of a section of the former German East Africa to Belgium. So they adopted the same policy of indirect administration employed by the Germans.

## **II.2 Independence and end of royalty of Burundi<sup>7</sup>**

On 1 July 1962, Burundi became an independent, constitutional monarchy headed by the Mwami (King) Mwambutsa IV. Mwambutsa was deposed in July 1966, and was succeeded in September by his son, Charles, who then became known as Ntare V. On 29 November 1966, Ntare V was in turn overthrown by a military coup headed by the Prime Minister, Col. Michel Micombero, who abolished the monarchy and declared Burundi a republic with himself as president.

On 1 November 1976, President Micombero was stripped of all powers in a bloodless military coup led by Lt. Col. Jean-Baptiste Bagaza who became the second president of Burundi.

Bagaza encouraged land reform, electoral reform and reconciliation. However, after 1984 Bagaza's human rights record worsened due to his suppression of religious freedom and political opposition. In September 1987, he was overthrown in a bloodless military coup while he attended a conference in Canada. Major Pierre Buyoya became president. In 1988 Ethnic violence erupted in the north and killed many Tutsi and Hutu.

## **II.3 The civil war<sup>8</sup>**

Major Buyoya agreed to the restoration of multiparty politics in 1991, and a new constitution was approved in March 1992. The elections of June 1993 brought to office Burundi's first elected president, Melchior Ndadaye. Unhappily, on 21 October 1993 (3 months later), Ndadaye and several cabinet members were assassinated by a faction of soldiers. Ethnic violence continued, launching the country into civil war, with around 100,000 Burundians (all ethnics) killed in this violence. In January, 1994, Cyprian Ntaryamira, another member of FRODEBU (Democratic Front founded by President Ndadaye) was appointed President of Burundi.

On April 6, 1994, he died with Rwanda's President Habyarimana in a plane shot down by Rwandan rebels. The crash marked the beginning of the Rwandan genocide.

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<sup>7</sup> Jamie Stokes, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Africa and the Middle East* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 130; René Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide* (New York – Melbourne: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press and the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1994), 58-130.

<sup>8</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 131-87; Stuart Notholt, *Fields of Fire: An Atlas of Ethnic Conflict* (Leicester: Matador, 2008), 2.26.

According to the Burundian constitution, Sylvester Ntibantunganya, who was the president of the general Assembly, became the next president of Burundi. Meanwhile, the civil war spread in the whole country.

On 25 July 1996, Major Pierre Buyoya, backed by the Burundi military, overthrew Ntibantunganya and promised to organize a "transition Period". The National Assembly continued to function. East African nations cut trade ties to the country and imposed an economic embargo after demanding Major Buyoya to restore the parliament. The African leaders also demanded that Major Buyoya, president of Burundi from 1987 to 1993, begin peace talks with rebels. Yet ethnic violence escalated in the months following Major Buyoya's takeover and CNDD (party for the democracy defense), who claimed officially to be fighting against the political leaders, resorted to killing many civilian innocents.

#### **II.4 Burundi towards a transitional government<sup>9</sup>**

In 1999, in his new role as facilitator of the Arusha Peace Process, Nelson Mandela asked all parties—the government, rebel forces, and international organizations—to sit down and discuss the issues. In the early months of 2000, several such meetings were held in Tanzania, leading up to the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi on 28 August 2000.

From 2001, CNDD-FDD of Pierre Nkurunziza, the main rebel group and the transitional government of Burundi signed a cease-fire, followed by a similar agreement by other rebel parties. Only the Palipehutu-FNL of Agathon Rwasa had not signed a cease-fire with the transitional government by mid-June 2003.

Under the Arusha Agreements, a three-year transitional government was inaugurated on November 1<sup>st</sup> 2001, under the leadership of Pierre Buyoya. On April 30<sup>th</sup> 2003, Buyoya stepped down under the terms of the agreement, making way for a Hutu vice president, Domitien Ndayizeye, to assume the presidency for the remaining 18 months.

On September 17<sup>th</sup> 2004, the National Assembly adopted a post-transition constitution with a new electoral agenda for the summer of 2005. Then, Pierre Nkurunziza was elected president on August 19<sup>th</sup> 2005. He was reelected in 2010 for a second mandate which is to last until 2015.

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<sup>9</sup> *International Council on Human Rights Policy, Negotiating Justice? Human Rights and Peace Agreements* (Versoix: International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2006), 34-6.

### III. Reconstruction and Reconciliation as Huge Challenges of Burundi

#### III.1 The Consequences of Civil War<sup>10</sup>

Burundi's history of ethnic tension and violent conflict has crippled its economy and infrastructure. Mortality rates in the small Eastern African nation are alarming - well above what's associated with an emergency situation. Thousands of Burundians died in mass slaughters in 1972 and 1993, thousands more die each year from infectious disease, and hundreds of thousands of Burundians live in a chronic state of instability without access to basic health care.

The insecurity is the greatest obstacle to development. In the aftermath of a decade-long war, rural and urban residents are confronted with high levels of insecurity and violence. The proliferation of small arms is now the greatest threat to civilian security in Burundi; a civilian disarmament program is under way, but has had little impact. An estimated 80% of households in the capital, Bujumbura, and in the larger provinces possess small arms. For the female population, the consequences are particularly dire.

For women, there is a particular consequence: armed robbery was often accompanied by sexual assault. If women or girls are found when farms and homes are attacked and robbed, they are raped.

Another devastating consequence of armed violence is the high number of orphans and widowed mothers in Burundi. Widows suffer particular discrimination under Burundian law, as they cannot inherit the property of their dead husbands. With no inheritance rights, widows lose all belongings and property to their late husband's family. Poverty and desperation are the direct result of widowhood. Fortunately, on the matter of land inheritance and women, the Burundian government has put in place a law to allow them to inherit land - a huge opportunity for the country to change its mentality on women's rights.

Moreover, Burundi is also facing difficult land issues for Burundians who were born in refugee camps after 1972, for orphans, and for those whose land was sold because they belonged to rebel groups.

Almost every Burundian is suffering from the consequences of divisions and violence and they have to learn how to be peaceful in diversity. Hence, they need reconciliation and trust in themselves and in their neighbors.

According to some witnesses<sup>11</sup>, everyone needs to be considered with dignity and justice. She is a Tutsi and is going to marry a Hutu. She also said

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<sup>10</sup> Tom Bundervoet, Philip Verwimp, Richard Akresh, *Health and Civil War in Rural Burundi*, Policy Research Working Paper 4500, Post-Conflict Transitions Working no. 18 (The World Bank Development Research Group, Macroeconomics and Growth Team, January 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Kaneza Gloria, Burundian, 22 years old, shares her experience: "So me, I cannot judge someone because they are Tutsi or Hutu because there are Tutsi who are not so good. There are Hutu who are not so good. You can judge someone by their actions, their heart,

discrimination between the two ethnic groups still exists, but with the current peace, she said her country will be “very beautiful” in the future.

### **III. 2 Education, a Priority of Nkurunziza's Government**

People are very excited about the future and tired of the war. The huge challenge that Burundi is facing is to manage a good transition from a post-conflictual to a democratic governance characterized by human rights and a lasting development.

The ambition of the "Burundi Vision 2025" plan is to build a competitive and diversified economy. Notably, the vision intends to build a new country by modernizing agricultural production in rural areas, developing the services industry and promoting urbanization. Burundi has adhered to the East African Community (composed by Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Burundi)

All these objectives cannot be achieved without well-trained, competent people who are also competitive in the wider world. Since 2005, the government has been supporting Burundians to construct new primary and secondary schools, along with universities on a community development basis.

According to the Head of the state, Peter Nkurunziza, education is a priority of the actual government. “Indeed, we made education our highest priority. This is reflected in the Burundi's Second Growth and Poverty Reduction Paper (CSLP 2), which highlights the needs for funding in priority areas such as Education”<sup>12</sup>. But what do we mean by education? According to experts, we intend to mention “a permanent process of control and development of the human being in all the aspects of life: physical, biological, sociological, spiritual and moral”<sup>13</sup>.

### **III.3 The Context of Education in Burundi**

The civil war has been very disruptive to education. Few students were attending school in the later part of the 1990's. In the fall of 2005, the government of Burundi introduced free and basic education for all primary education students. This program of free education gave 300,000 Burundian children the opportunity to go to school. This places an overwhelming demand on the country's educational infrastructure. The government has put together an emergency plan to add 5,000 teachers and to increase the education budget by more than \$1.5 million. They are relying on other countries and relief organizations for donations.

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what they are doing. Me, I do not like the expression that I am Tutsi or I am Hutu because it makes barriers.” (“Stories of Lament and Hope: Burundi gathering by Stephanie Wheatley and Jen Stallings, August 2009,” accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles.php/1185?pg=all>.)

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Nkurunziza in a speech given at Dubai on March 16, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> “Survey of ICT and education in Africa: Burundi Country report,” accessed July 15, 2013, [www.infodev.org](http://www.infodev.org).

Despite the problems, free primary education represents a turning point for the country. Previous Burundi's Education Minister, Saidi Kibeya, says this decision to abolish primary school fees is vital to the success of Burundi's post-war reconstruction and development.<sup>14</sup>

The lack of resources is not the only thing hurting Burundi's schools. Twelve years of civil war that killed hundreds of thousands of people has scarred the country's children. Many children did not attend school during this time. The Burundian education system has the extra burden of needing to help the children recover from the trauma of war. These children were born during war times and have witnessed war all their life.

In 2009, the adult literacy rate in Burundi was estimated to be 67% (73% male and 61% female), with a literacy rate of 77% and 76%, respectively, for men and women between the ages of 15 to 24. Literacy among adult women in Burundi has increased by 17% since 2002. Burundi's literacy rate is low due to low school attendance and because literacy in Kirundi only provides access to materials printed in that language. Ten percent of Burundian boys are allowed a secondary education.<sup>15</sup>

Burundi has one Public University with two campuses; the main is at Bujumbura and the other at Gitega.

### **III.4 The Contribution of Churches to Burundi's Education**

#### **III.4.1 Religion in Burundi**

It is important to notice the lack of objective information about religious statistics. Three versions give different data. Central Intelligence Agency gives the following statistic: Catholic 62.1%, Protestant 23.9% (includes Adventist 2.3% and other Protestant 21.6%), Muslim 2.5%, other 3.6%, unspecified 7.9% (2008 est.).<sup>16</sup> The statistics from the International Religious Freedom Report give different data: approximately 60 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 20 percent belongs to indigenous religious groups, and 15 percent to Protestant groups. Muslims constitute 2 to 5 percent of the population, and live mainly in urban areas.<sup>17</sup>

On Wikipedia we find the following information: Christian 75% (Roman Catholic 60%, Protestant 15%), indigenous beliefs 20%, Muslim 5%.<sup>18</sup> Most

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<sup>14</sup> "Burundi Struggles to Implement Free Primary Education," accessed July 13, 2014, <http://www.voanews.com/content/a-13-2006-05-16-voa52/327420.html>.

<sup>15</sup> "Burundi," accessed July 13, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burundi#cite\\_note-79](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burundi#cite_note-79).

<sup>16</sup> "Burundi," accessed July 13, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/by.html>.

<sup>17</sup> "Burundi 2013 International Religious Freedom Report," accessed February 23, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222237.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> "Burundi," accessed July 13, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burundi>.

Muslims are Sunni, although some belong to Shia groups. The remaining population practices other Christian faiths, indigenous religions, or has no religious affiliation.

The Transitional Constitutional Act of 2001 provided religious freedom this right is generally respected in practice.<sup>19</sup> Actually, many new religious movements are registered in Burundi and the Burundians are easily changing their affiliation. The President of the Republic, Pierre Nkurunziza, is organizing two weeks of prayer every year and the staff of the government is involved in these gatherings, at which many people participate.<sup>20</sup> The First Lady is Pastor of the Stone Church (a Christian church) and she was recently awarded a prize for her leadership by the US. There is no state religion.



*Pierre Nkurunziza*

### **III.4.2 Achievements of the churches in peace building in Burundi**

Since the 1960s, The Roman Catholic Church and mainstream Protestant churches have adopted a more respectful position towards other religions and have supported democratic institutions. The main religious churches in Burundi, like Islam and Christianity, also contain principles that affirm the innate equality and dignity of all human beings, social justice, and some form of the Golden Rule.

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<sup>19</sup> "Constitution of Burundi," accessed July 13, 2013, <http://kituochakatiba.org/sites/default/files/legal-resources/Constitution%20of%20Burundi%20in%20English.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Bigirimana, "Burundi's born-again ex-rebel leader," accessed July 13, 2013, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4162504.stm>.



These principles can provide the foundation for democratic cultures.<sup>21</sup> In order to promote human and citizen values, the leaders of the Christian church and the Islamic community have founded a framework of dialogue and common actions. The framework is called the Interreligious Council. A lot of workshops have already been organized on peace building topics. Almost all recommendations emphasize the importance of values of education because Burundi needs a new generation who can accept diversity and work for a lasting development.

### **III.4.3 The partnership of churches in development of education in Burundi**

Bernard Ntahoturi, the Archbishop of the Matana Anglican diocese said: “The churches of Burundi are involved in the peace and reconciliation process, telling people they can live peacefully with their neighbors and that conflicts can be solved without fighting.” He acknowledged that the wounds will take a long time to heal.



*Archbishop Bernard Ntahoturi*

Until 1954, all education was provided by religious missions (mainly Catholics); it was almost entirely limited to the primary grades. The government of the Second Republic, under Bagaza's presidency (1976-87), attempted to curtail the social and educational activities of the Roman Catholic Church. After a military coup in 1987, the issue was temporarily defused, yet the church continues to manage schools and education.

Actually, many religious communities like the Catholic, Adventist, Pentecost, evangelical church of friends and Muslims are involved in education.

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<sup>21</sup> Sheldon Gellar, “Varieties of Religious Doctrines and Institutions in Africa and Their Impact on Democratization Processes,” accessed July 13, 2013, [http://www.indiana.edu/~workshop/publications/materials/conference\\_papers/W07-9\\_Gellar\\_DLC.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~workshop/publications/materials/conference_papers/W07-9_Gellar_DLC.pdf).

They organize their own schools according to a convention signed with the state which recognizes such involvement. The convention defines the role of the ministry and the church regarding the management of education. Every church owning a school is allowed to organize activities to improve the human and moral values of the students in collaboration with the staff and the parents.

#### **III.4.4 Education of values as priority in the church's activities**



*Bishop Gervais Banshimiyubusa*

“Our contribution as a Church shall consist, first of all, in educating consciences for responsible actions in the cause of peace.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, if we do not exercise capable influence on today’s citizen, we face a great risk of seeing whatever we build collapsing like a house built on sand. The reconstruction of Burundi can become a reality through new approaches and proper action, aimed at instilling a Christian and faithful mentality in our surroundings. We are called upon to uproot from the minds of our young (and not so young) brethren the feelings of hatred and exclusion, thus leading to real love. Such is the education we indispensably need for a new society. In fact, as the Bishop Gervais Banshimiyubusa said, if the society wants peace, it has to educate on it: “To have peace, it is necessary to educate with peace. Our catechism precisely says that to prevent the conflicts and violence, it is absolutely necessary that peace starts to

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<sup>22</sup> „Message de la VI ème Assemblée Plénière de l’ACEAC aux fidèles catholiques de la sous-région des Grands Lacs et aux hommes de bonne volonté. Fait à Kigali, le 17 mai 2002,” accessed July 13, 2013, <http://peres-blancs.cef.fr/aceac.htm>.

become a major value in the intimacy of each person; in this manner it can extend in the families and the various forms from communities to all the levels.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The crisis of Burundi is not an accident. It is rather the result of an ever growing decay in moral norms and the obscuring of the moral conscience. The schedule for education in values (human, citizen and spiritual) should reach all categories of people. To work efficiently towards the renewal of society we have to start by redeeming our citizens.

The complete education goes beyond the mere transmission of knowledge: it influences behavior and attitude, the skill of being and knowing. The Church, as the first institution entrusted with the education of peoples, should keep its eyes open on the moral state of its members and act, in their respective surroundings, as "the salt of the earth" whenever needed.

In conclusion, a generation conscious of its human dignity who does not exclude one another, but enrich one another's qualities. In this way it will be able to bring back to Burundi the joy of living in a universal brotherhood, and being capable of hastening the arrival of a climate of justice and peace. Where religion and spirituality are rooted in the everyday life of people and society, they can make an important contribution to sustainable development. They can also strengthen the culture of dialogue. That is what Burundians are expecting from the churches.

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*Ikali Karvinen\**

***HOW TO ASSESS SPIRITUAL HISTORY?  
NORTHERN PERSPECTIVE ON SPIRITUAL HISTORY TAKING BY  
OPENING-MODEL***

**Abstract:** Finland is a Nordic country with strong Protestant Christian roots. It has been a country for emigration for decades but just recently there have been a growing number of people with other than the western background migrating to Finland. The migration to Finland affects various parts of the society, including health care. While a significant number of people indicates that religion or spiritual life is an important part of their lives, and it cannot be neglected in the health care. There are several existing Spiritual history tools for clinical practice. Still, a challenge with the existing one is the language barrier. Another issue is the cultural sensitivity of spiritual and religious issues. This article discus shortly the Opening-model (AVAUS-malli) which was developed in the Finnish social and health care settings to equip health professionals with the tools needed to assess the spiritual needs and the history of the patients.

**Keywords:** *Spirituality, Patient Care Planning, AVAUS-malli, Opening-model, Finland*

**Introduction**

While Finland has always been a natural gateway between the East and the West, its population has been relatively homogenous. However, during the latest years immigration to Finland has been growing notably.<sup>1</sup> According to the statistics, during the year 2012 Finland received roughly 31 000 immigrants which

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<sup>1</sup>Tuomas Martikainen, *Religion, migration, settlement: reflections on post-1990 immigration to Finland* (Leiden: BRILL, 2013).

*Danubius*, XXXII, Supliment, Galați, 2014, pp. 181-187.

is the highest number since the independency of Finland.<sup>2</sup> According to Martikainen immigration has led to “*an increase in religious diversity in Finland and the rise in the number of Muslims, especially, has become an issue of public note*”<sup>3</sup>. While immigration becomes obvious and visible in public life one can ask how well health care providers are equipped to meet the needs of patient with different spiritual and religious backgrounds.

Current literature on health sciences encourages health practitioners to assess patient’s spiritual history routinely in the clinical settings.<sup>4</sup> In this article the OPENING-model (AVAUS-malli<sup>5</sup> in Finnish) is shortly introduced as a tool for assessing the spiritual history in Finnish health and social care settings in order to provide culturally congruent care for patients and clients from different religious and spiritual backgrounds and communities.

## 1. Pluralistic Patient Population in Finland

Finland is a country which belongs to the Scandinavian hemisphere and shares the Nordic culture with its Protestant Christian roots. Finnish culture is characterized by its close relationship with nature since the country is known for its rich nature with lakes and woodlands.<sup>6</sup> As a country bordering with Russia, Finland forms a melting pot for both Eastern and Western European cultures. Interestingly, Finland has six major ethnic groups including Finns (93.4 %), Swede (5.6 %), Russian (0.5 %), Estonian (0.3 %), Roma (0.1 %) and Sami (0.1 %). Religious landscape in Finland has mainly been Lutheran for decades. One can said that the country has been one of the most homogeneous of European countries<sup>7</sup> and still the majority of its population belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran Church (78 %). Other major religious groups are Orthodox (1%), Pentecostal (1%) and Muslims (1 %) while the rest of the population does not belong to any religious groups (19 %).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Official Statistics of Finland (OSF), *Migration [e-publication]* (Helsinki: Statistics Finland, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Martikainen, *Religion, migration, settlement*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Mark LaRocca-Pitts, “The FACT spiritual history tool,” accessed October 10, 2013, <http://www.spiritualityandhealth.duke.edu/images/pdfs/laroccapittsposter.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Ikali Karvinen, “AVAUS-malli asiantuntijan apuna transkulttuurisen henkisen ja hengellisen hoitotyön asiakastilanteissa,” *Pro Terveys* 2 (2012): 20-22.

<sup>6</sup> Henrik Enander, Markku Ilmari Henriksson, Susan Ruth Larson, Carl Fredrik Sandelin, Gudmund Sandvik, Ilmari Sundblad and Jörgen Weibull, “Finland,” accessed July 9, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/207424/Finland>.

<sup>7</sup> Martikainen, *Religion, migration, settlement*: 1.

<sup>8</sup> Titus Hjelm, “Finland,” in *Encyclopedia of Global Religion*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer and Wade Clark Roof, Vol. 1 (Sage Publications, 2012), 403.

In the past Finland has been the country of emigration. Still, just recently, in 2012, Finland reached the highest yearly number of immigrants. The growing number of people with other than western background is now migrating to Finland.<sup>9</sup> A significant number of the new immigrants represent religions other than the mainstream Christian religion. Since immigration to Finland is growing, it affects various parts of the society, including health care. One can ask how is the Finnish health care prepared to meet multicultural patients cultural, or specifically their spiritual and religious needs.

## **2. Spirituality and Health Care**

The significant number of people indicates that religion or spiritual life is an important part of their life. Interestingly, according to Koenig, the majority of research on spirituality and health also finds a positive relationship between spirituality, religion and health.<sup>10</sup> Also Perrin states that: "There appears to be good reason to believe that a causal relationship exists between spirituality and good health. Spirituality, as understood within the scientific world view of medicine and health care, may be difficult to fully understand and measure, but medical literature clearly supports its beneficial role in the practice of medicine."<sup>11</sup>

While there is evidence that spirituality is one important area of human life and has a close relationship with health, it becomes evident that one cannot neglect religion or spirituality in health care encounters either.

The latest research has shown that patients with various backgrounds rely on their spiritual life to cope with their illnesses. For the health provider, this causes a question of the relevant methods of assessment of spirituality in health settings. How can one assess spirituality routinely with the tools which are suitable for patients from different faith communities or with no affiliation to any religious communities?

### **2.1 Patient's Spiritual History**

There are several spiritual history tools which are developed for clinicians to incorporate spiritual history to patient care.<sup>12</sup> One among many is the FICA tool,

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<sup>9</sup> Martikainen, *Religion, migration, settlement*.

<sup>10</sup> Harold G. Koenig, *Spirituality & health research* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> David B. Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> LaRocca-Pitts, "The FACT spiritual history tool".

developed by professor Puchalski.<sup>13</sup> It has been evaluated to be the best tool of spiritual history assessment in older adults.<sup>14</sup> Other well-known tools are the FACT Spiritual history tool and the HOPE. The FACT and the FICA are assessing the following areas of patient's spirituality:

FACT Spiritual History tool stands for the following areas of spiritual history

- Faith of Beliefs
- Availability, Accessibility, Applicability
- Coping or comfort
- Treatment Plan

FICA Spiritual History Toolstands for the following areas of Spiritual History

- Faith and Belief
- Importance
- Community
- Address in Care

Current models are based on the acronyms and they are mostly used for spiritual history taking by covering the questions of faith, coping mechanisms and sources of strength and hope. Some of the models also include interventions. Spiritual history tools provide accurate information about patient's spiritual well-being and how patient's spirituality or religion affects the treatment plan.

Some institutions have been making recommendation for the users of the spiritual history tool. One of them is the George Washington Institution for Spirituality and Health. As a recommendation scholars states the following:

1. *“Consider spirituality as a potentiality important component of every patient's physical well being and mental health.*
2. *Address spirituality at each complete physical examination and continue addressing it at follow-up visits if appropriate. In patient care, spirituality is an ongoing issue.*

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<sup>13</sup> The George Washington Institute for Spirituality & Health , “FICA spiritual history tool,” accessed October 9, 2013, <http://smhs.gwu.edu/gwish/clinical/fica/spiritual-history-tool>.

<sup>14</sup> Tami Borneman, “Assessment of spirituality in older adults: FICA spiritual history tool,” *try this* SP5 (2011), accessed October 9, 2013, [http://consultgerirn.org/uploads/File/trythis/try\\_this\\_sp5.pdf](http://consultgerirn.org/uploads/File/trythis/try_this_sp5.pdf).



3. *Respect a patient's privacy regarding spiritual beliefs; don't impose your beliefs on others.*
4. *Make referrals to chaplains, spiritual directors, or community resources as appropriate.*
5. *Be aware that your own spiritual beliefs will help you personally and will overflow in your encounters with those for whom you care to make the doctor-patient encounter a more humanistic one.*<sup>15</sup>

## **2.2 The development of the Finnish Spiritual History Tool**

Many of the current spiritual history tools are developed in the English-speaking countries by physicians in a specific cultural environment. One can ask whether the spirituality or religiosity can be understood similarly in different cultural contexts. While there can be different responses for that, it still is obvious that spiritual history should be assessed by using the patient's native language.

After being an active researcher in the field of spirituality and health, the author has been combining the best evidence based practice to develop a spiritual history tool for the purpose of Finnish health care. The tool is called Opening-model (AVAUS-malli in Finnish) and it is theoretically based on the previous widely used tools, as well as the research done by the author:

- *Spiritual Health. An Ethnographic Research About the Conceptions of Spiritual Health Held by the Kendu Hospital Staff Members, Patients and the Inhabitants of the Kendu Bay Village.*<sup>16</sup>
- *Nurses Description about Spiritual Care in Multicultural Nursing Framework.*<sup>17</sup>

## **3. OPENING-model / AVAUS-malli**

The Opening-model (AVAUS-malli in Finnish) is a spiritual history and care delivery model, developed for the Finnish social and health care settings. The used language is Finnish. The Opening-model follows the other previous tools in their basic ideas and it is based on the acronym where the letters A,V,A,U and S are all creating the word 'AVAUS' (Opening in English). The letters stand for the thematic

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<sup>15</sup> The George Washington Institute for Spirituality & Health, "FICA recommendations," accessed October 9, 2013, <http://smhs.gwu.edu/gwish/clinical/fica/recommendations>.

<sup>16</sup> Ikali Karvinen, *Henkinen ja hengellinen terveys etnografinen tutkimus kendun sairaalan henkilökunnan ja potilaiden sekä kendu bayn kylän asukkaiden henkisen ja hengellisen terveyden käsityksistä* (Kuopio: Kuopion yliopisto, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> Ikali Karvinen, *Sairaanhoitajien kuvaus hengellisestä hoitotyöstä monikulttuuristen potilaiden hoidossa* (Kuopio: Kuopion yliopisto, 2006).

interview questions which can be used by the health practitioners. Still, the model is not a translation of other models and it is not meant to be followed literally but rather as a guideline.

There are five main themes which the Opening-model is covering:

1. Values and beliefs
2. Sources of strength
3. Assessment of spiritual needs
4. Support from community
5. Spiritual care Support methods

Under each theme there are several possible questions as an example for the user to guide the assessment. There are also small comments the issues health practitioner should raise up while discussing a particular theme. Under the theme of Values and beliefs for example the following questions are provided:

- *“How would you describe your most important values?”*
- *“Do you have any personal beliefs?”*
- *“Do you consider yourself religious?”*

Under this particular theme the following guidance is given to the health practitioner:

“You can encourage patients to describe the meaningful values of different kind or the principles: Meaning of the nature, atheistic beliefs, faith to God, meaning of the being vegetarian etc. When interviewing the patient from foreign cultures you can also ask whether he/she consider illness to have any supernatural cause or origin.”

Other categories follow the same principles: each main theme has sub-questions and recommendations.

#### **4. Recommendations and further research**

The Opening-model is introduced to the various clinical and care settings in Finland by offering training and written materials on it. There are also some clinical applications made for clinical use in Oncology and Dementia care and the model is accepted to be published in the Finnish Nurses handbook (Sairaanhoitajan käsikirja). More research is needed to validate the tool with the larger patient populations and there is need for research in the clinical context. We would also need to discuss, how the used concepts are understood by patients whose native language is not Finnish but who are admitted into Finnish health and social care service.

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*Chue Ming\**

***INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST SANGHA  
AND GLOBAL CONNECTION:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE MASTER HSING YUN***

**Abstract:** In 1999, Judith Nagata wrote the article: *The Globalization of Buddhism and the Emergence of Religious Civil Society: The Case of the Taiwanese Fo Kuang Shan Movement in Asia and the West*. According to his experience of the world religious movement today, the Fo Guang Shan Monastery (hereafter called "FGS"), has shown its features of a globalizing religion as – worldly social engaged engagement and value of various dimension to the civil society and the masses. The result of his study was to figure out the ideal of Humanistic Buddhism and the achievement of Master Hsing Yun (hereafter called "MHY") before 1999. After more than one decade the global movement and socially engaged activities of the FGS will be the core of this article. The author attempts to argue how the *Buddhist Sangha* (community) of the FGS, which was established by MHY since 1967, was considered as an International standard and what is a global connection. Master Hsing Yun is supposed to be a case study in this article.

**Keywords:** *Master Hsing Yun, Fo Guang Shan Monastery, Global movement, socially engaged Buddhism, Humanistic Buddhism*

### Profile of Master Hsing Yun (1927~)



Profession: Founder of the International Buddhist Order Fo Guang Shan(FGS)

Educational Background: Temple Discipline

- ✧ 1967 Founded FGS and began promoting “Humanistic Buddhism”
- ✧ 1992 Established the World Headquarter Buddha’s Light International Association, CA, USA
- ✧ 2004 Buddha’s Light International Association granted him NGO status by the United Nations
- ✧ Presented with honorary doctorate degrees by 13 universities in Taiwan and overseas
- ✧ There are 300 branches of the FGS monastery, and 50 schools, as well as 16 Buddhist Colleges, 22 art galleries and 26 libraries throughout the world, and five universities in USA, Australia, Philippine, and in Taiwan.

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#### I. General Overview

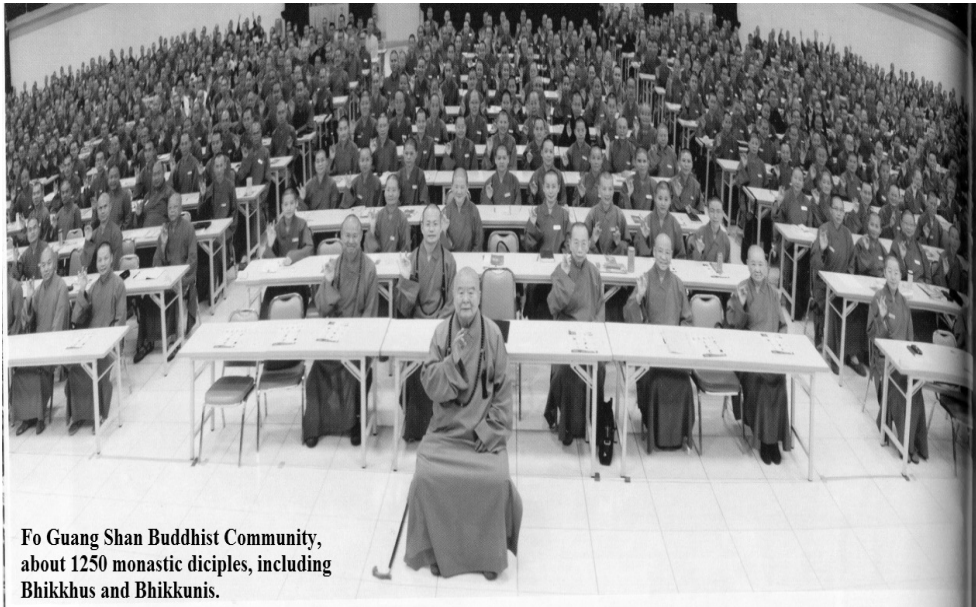
Master Hsing Yun (MHY) was born in Jianshu province in 1927 and ordained in 1941, inheriting of 48th Linzhi Ch’an lineage. In the civil war of 1949, he led a group of monks, i.e., “The *Sangha* Monastics Relief Team”, and crossed the sea to Taiwan. Since then, he started the propagation of Humanistic Buddhism. Today MHY is recognized as a reformer and revivalist of Chinese Buddhism. Thus, MHY is an example of leadership, leading two Buddhist Communities, the Buddhist *Sangha* and the lay Buddhist elite, which mutually co-operated to drive Mahayana Buddhism, also known as the “Great Vehicle” or the “Bodhisattva

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Path”. Following the traditional practice aspects, MHY has designed a landscape of Humanistic Buddhism adjusted to our modern age. He actually has reached not just geographical expansion, but also broke all boundaries between different sectarian religions, as well as the interfaith of various groups of folk religion while he travelled across Taiwan from Mainland China.

In the FGS Monastery, however, there were not one thousand and more disciples in those branches and 47 years back there wasn't any branch of FGS Monastery. Now there are more than 300 branches in Taiwan and abroad. The founder, Grand Master Hsing Yun, came to Taiwan from Mainland China in 1949, with Nothing but the clothes on his back. He was suspected to be a spy from the Mainland and put into jail when he arrived in Taiwan. Initially, he did not have a single penny but he brought Buddhism with a wholehearted enthusiasm to Taiwan.



Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Community,  
about 1250 monastic disciples, including  
Bhikkhus and Bhikkunis.

Over 75 years, MHY, spread his ideal of Humanistic Buddhism worldwide. Buddha's Light is shining in the universe today. On this issue, the writer would like to share with you the feeling that MHY does not desire to have a large kingdom of the FGS Monastery, nor does he want to create a world of his own. Obviously, he established a large Buddhist Sangha, which nourishes Buddhist talents, and where the members of the Sangha take a strict disciplined life and take right guidance from the MHY himself. Today a group of disciples are considered as "Pillars of Buddhism, the Universal Brightness of the Buddha's Light". They have established FGS Monasteries in the world, and those branches serve complex function such as:

Buddhist temple, simple meditation center, education & cultural center, and they also host other dhamma activities, such as Buddhist art exhibition gallery, water drop tea house, bookstore, library as well as Television Station and Merit Time Daily newspaper etc. Each representing Buddhist temples can accommodate as many as one thousand people for dhamma functions and other activities, such as meetings, conferences and so on. At the same time, over fifty Chinese schools, and sixteen Buddhist Colleges were established in Taiwan and abroad: in India, Hong Kong, Africa, Brazil, Australia, and Malaysia. In addition, the Pu-Men High School, the Jun-tou Junior School, the Jun-yi Junior School, and the University of West in the U.S., two Universities in Taiwan: the Fo Guang University in Ilan, and Nan Hua University in Chiayi were also established.

Besides these, in 1957, he began to organize the Buddhist Culture Service Center, he started publishing Buddhist Series in Chinese and English, various Chinese Sutras in the vernacular style, and audio-visual materials on Buddhism. Each of these projects later became part of the Fo Guang Publishing House where various Buddhist books are published. Moreover, he even re-compiled over 300 volumes of the “Fo Guang Tripitaka” (rewriting by modern Chinese) as well as the Fo Guang Buddhist Dictionary in book form and electronic on a CD-ROM. The most significant of these is the Fo Guang Chinese Tripitaka, which was re-edited in a new version and with new punctuation under the supervision of the Grand Master since 1977. In 1999, each section of the Chinese Tripitaka, such as the Aagama series, the Pure Land series, the Lotus Sutras series, and others were continuously finished in book form and electronic on a CD-ROM. Another valuable contribution of the Grand Master with assistance from professors from the Pai Jing University, the Szechwan, the Rinmin University and the Nan Jing University, was the publishing of the 100 volumes of the “Chinese Buddhist academic Series”. This collection of Chinese Dharma books contains Masters’ and Ph.D. theses from the past century from both Taiwan and Mainland China. “A collection of Chinese Buddhist Cultural Essays” was also published in 100 volumes.

Various foundations have been established since 1988: The “Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Culture and Education,” the “Fo Guang Pureland Culture and Education,” and the “Humanistic Culture and Education Foundation.” These foundations are responsible for organizing all kinds of international academic seminars and conferences as well as for the publication of related journals. In order to promote educational, cultural, and charitable programs in different regions, it is resolved that the BLIA Members support the “Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s Education”. They are two universities in Taiwan, Nan Hua, located in the Chiayi County, and Fo Guang in Yilan, the University of the West in LA, California, United States, and Nan Tien established in Australia. MHY (2013), will start the



fifth university named Guang Ming University, in Manila, Philippines. He has received honorary doctorate degrees from twelve universities in Taiwan as well as abroad.

The most remarkable event is that, in order to enshrine a piece of Buddha's relic, MHY devoted his mind to completing the most significant construction, the Buddha Memorial Center, in 2011.<sup>1</sup> To be noted that Buddhism has given new facet of ideas; the newly created space to accommodate all religions and non-religious people as well.



*FGS, Buddha Memorial Center, Kaohsiung, Taiwan (photo by Biyun Chen, 2013)*

According to Fu Zhing, “An uncertain journey would carry Hsing Yun across the open sea, enabling the lamp of Chinese Buddhism to this other shore as a separate transmission [...] The springtime of youth comes only once to a life, but without hesitation, Hsing Yun now entered an era of unavoidable turmoil, and proceeded down his path in search of ideals”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Words from Venerable Master Hsing Yun: “Enshrining the Buddha's tooth relic inside the Buddha Memorial Center was meant to emphasize the supernatural. Rather, the goal of enshrining the Buddha's tooth relics was to create activities that show the Buddha's compassion and wisdom in a way that people can experience concretely.”(Pan Xuan, trans. Robert Smitheram 2013:27)

## II. Historical Overview of Taiwan's religions before MHY arrival

In the early age, Taiwan was merely an island where fishers from China arrived and rested for a few days before going back. After that, around the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, it was dominated by people from Holland who named it Formosa (Beautiful Island). Finally, four centuries ago, mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century, Han migrants from southeastern China introduced Taoism and Buddhism to Taiwan, while Protestant missionaries attached to the Dutch East India Company which established posts in southwestern Taiwan beginning in 1624, proselytized to the Han and indigenous peoples. Meanwhile, Roman Catholic missionaries came in 1626 to the Taiwanese northern coastal area, which represented Spanish colonial holdings in the Philippines. Until 1642, the Dutch drove the Spanish off the island. Other religions were introduced over the next three and a half centuries, with a large influx following World War II, when a new wave of mainland immigrants arrived in Taiwan. These included I-Kuan Tao and several others that are fusions of Taoism, Confucianism and other traditional Chinese schools of religious and philosophical thought. Following the democratization, in the late of 1980s, the establishment of new denominations has lifted their high position in Taiwan.<sup>3</sup>

Particularly, how did the initiation of Buddhism in Taiwan happen? The Chinese coastal provinces of Fujian and Guangdong was the place where the first immigrants brought Buddhism to Taiwan. However, they were considered “*zhaijiao*”, a form of lay Buddhism comprising several sects dating back to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Featuring admixtures of Taoism and Neo-Confucianism, they observed vegetarianism. In the second half of the 17th century, Buddhist monks first arrived from Fujian. Temple construction began in Tainan and progressed northward of China. In 1683, they took control of western Taiwan. According to *Kan Zheng-Chung*, the development of Buddhism in Taiwan has been divided into four periods. The first stage: the transmitting period of Buddhism, which was the time of Ming and Qin dynasty, when Buddhism was brought onto the island from Mainland China by the Han people. This was also called “*The style of Min-Yeh Buddhism*” (the belief in Chan Buddhism but mixed with *Jing-Tu*). There were a few monks only but not very educated, not part of the big *Sangha* (community) and mainly lay people. There were three groups: the Pre-Heaven

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<sup>2</sup> Fu Zhiyng, “Taking on Responsibility for Buddhism’s Rise or Fall,” in *Bright Star Luminous Cloud: The Life of a Simple Monk* (USA: Buddha’s Light Publishing, 2008), 52.

<sup>3</sup> “The Republic of China Yearbook 2012. Office of Information Services, Executive Yuan, 2012,” accessed April 22, 2013, <http://www.ey.gov.tw/en/cp.aspx?n=4ADC064334D460FA>.

school, the Dragon-Flower school, and the Golden-Pillar school.<sup>4</sup> The second stage was the Japanese Buddhism; the period of Japanese Buddhism 1895 to 1945, Taiwanese Buddhist scholars have been influenced by Japan. The textual research with scientific direction, a new methodology in Japan, will be the most modern Buddhist study introduced into Taiwan. Therefore, we are told that, at some level, the situation of Taiwan Buddhism before 1949, however, was something in between localization and injecting new elements. After that, until the 1970's, it was the foundation of Chinese Buddhism, the following political transfer and the further development of Buddhism with the arrival of Chinese monks among the refugees who relocated to the island during the Chinese Civil War in the late 1940s. It is remarkable that Chinese Buddhism had been established during this period of almost 30 years. Evidently, in over more than 60 years, we have seen that the enlarged scope of the missionary work has transformed into a new movement, into new diversities of propagation.

### III. The propagation of Buddhism in Taiwan after 1949



Here I would like to discuss the following question: “What was the political and religious situation of Taiwan when MHY arrived there?” According to the *Chronology of the Venerable Master Hsing Yun*, in 1949, he arrived in Keelung, Taiwan, with a monastic relief group. He was arrested by the police along with Master Cihang and others on allegations of subversive activities, and incarcerated

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<sup>4</sup> Kan Zheng-Chung, “For nearly 50 years Taiwan development of Buddhism in Taiwan,” in *Buddhism in 100 years* (Taipei: East Books, 1999), 209-210.

for twenty-three days.<sup>5</sup> His group and companion monks quickly disbanded. MHY was only twenty-three at that time he was seeking shelter in Taipei. He was repeatedly refused with excuses; the answer was that they were either “full” or, unprepared to accommodate travelers from outside the province. At night he had to deal with extremely cold weather and hunger. He walked into the knee-deep rainwater and soaked his only change of clothes. Finally he curled up for the night under the big bell at the Sandao Temple. As a stranger in the strange land, MHY could not speak a word of the local dialect. Next he went to his classmate at a monastery in Keelung. At the time, he described that he had no food and water. No one was able to provide him anything but a desperate attitude. People were barely able to feed themselves in order to survive. When he realized that the situation was hard, he decided to leave. His friend, however, cooked a pot of porridge for him and paid for the rice from his own small earnings. As MHY held the bowl in his hands trembling and hungry. Being young, and in a strange country, without anyone’s help - it must have been a very difficult situation for him.<sup>6</sup>

Liu Yung-qi describes the economic and social condition of Taiwan from two points of view, first from the point of view of a Taiwanese, and then from overseas Chinese economic status and their development in different countries.<sup>7</sup> He mentions in his “*Cultural Buddhism is the Effective Method to Propagate Humanistic Buddhism*”, that young people living in the villages of Taiwan started to move into cities for work. Due to their hard work and enthusiasm to earn for better living the city improved and this attracted more and more youngsters. However, where the economy developed they lost spiritual development. Gradually they started searching for ways to develop their spiritual life. MHY used modern methods to teach Buddhism to the young men and women. The people found that useful for their spiritual development and accepted. In this process the young generations were helped by Buddhism. This process began in 1970’s.

From the Chinese (overseas) point of view, he describes that the development started during the 1980’s. According to him, the economic conditions of Chinese people living in different countries, started to get better. Among those overseas, many were Buddhist believers. They contributed their donations to building temples, printing of sutras, requesting monks for dhamma classes etc. Due to this, the FGS started propagating Buddhism abroad and gradually it became a

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<sup>5</sup> Fu Chi-ying, “Chronology of Venerable Master Hsing Yun,” in *The Biography of Venerable Master Hsing Yun: Handing Down the Light*, trans. Army Lui-Ma (California: Buddha’s Light Publishing, 2004), 325.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

<sup>7</sup> Liu Yung-qi, “Cultural Buddhism is the Effective Method to Propagate Humanistic Buddhism”, in *Theory and Practice of Humanistic Buddhism* (Chuanghua Bookstore, 2007), 29.

global organization. Not only that, but it also became multicultural and diversified in nature. Due to this, many people came to know Buddhism abroad.

According to Robert P. Weller, the island returned to Chinese control after World War II, but was still considered a backwater. Relations between local Taiwanese and the new government had already deteriorated when the Communist victors of 1949 forced the Nationalist government to flee to Taiwan.<sup>8</sup> Taiwan led by President Chiang Kai-shek, and under the leadership of the National Party (*Guamindang*) was under a “state of emergency”. As a newcomer, MHY has dealt with tough conditions. Around the same time period, Taiwanese Buddhism, nevertheless, had no self-identity, as it was infused with local deities and cults, and some temples in Taipei was undertaken by military recruitment centers.<sup>9</sup> At the Basis of the research of Taiwan’s religious evolution, scholars expressed their belief that the dominant faith was Polytheism, as Daoist temples that were rapidly being built. Many deities such as Mazu, Lu Donbin, the earth gods, rock gods, and tree gods were depicted in conjunction with Buddhist motifs and symbols. We found also architecture, rituals from both Daoist and Buddhist traditions, making it difficult to distinguish between these two traditions.<sup>10</sup> Back then, the Buddhist monasteries, however, could only provide basic necessities of life with the meager finances. Because, Taiwan was experiencing an economic plight, substantial monetary gifts were nearly impossible, but Taiwanese temples were constructed and sustained by donations from devotees and contributions made to monastics.<sup>11</sup> According to Yifa, following a hundred –year decline that began late in the nineteenth century, most people regarded Buddhist teachings as pessimistic, and the religion itself as an escape from society. Beginning in the 1970s, however, a new face of Buddhism has begun.

According to Master Hsing Yun’s writing “*The Founding of Fo Guang Shan*”, we are told that at the beginning of founding the monastery, the place wasn’t accepted by his lay disciples. It was told that even ghosts refuse to haunt that place. But, MHY insisted and pushed his own vision. He said that “It’s okay if ghosts don’t come, it’s fine as long as Buddha comes...”. The place was located in a remote village, named “Martru garden”, in Koahsiung county. MHY had a strong belief: “This may become the Kaohsiung City Center in a few decades.” He has

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<sup>8</sup> Robert P. Weller, “Living at the Edge: Religion, Capitalism, and the End of the Nation-State in Taiwan,” *Public Culture* 12, no. 2 (May 2000): 477.

<sup>9</sup> Judith Nagata, “The Globalisation of Buddhism and the Emergence of Religious Civil Society: The Case of the Taiwanese Fo Kuang Shan Movement in Asia and the West,” *Communal / Plural: Journal Of Transnational & Crosscultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1999): 231.

<sup>10</sup> Fu Chi-ying, “Chronology of Venerable Master Hsing Yun,” 48-49.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

named the mountain, “Buddha Light Mountain-Fo Guang Shan”. Thus on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1967, Fo Guang Shan was founded.<sup>12</sup>

MHY applied new and dynamic methods for dharma propagation, and according to people from different levels of education, age, sex, race, cultural and custom etc. the FGS monastery has developed a transformation from the traditional Buddhist concept of a *Sangha* into a globalized Buddhist community adopting two assemblies: *Sangha* members and laymen.



MHY has built a landscape of Humanistic Buddhism to the new age of Buddhism. He wrote: “For fifty years, devotees from the South and the North have gathered, be it Marzu or Wangye, the many deities gods, have visited the Buddha. The Inauguration of the Buddha Memorial Center Big Buddha, and the Fo Guang Boulevard, have connected the Fo Guang Shan and the Center, so that from here, the Dharma will be propagated throughout the world.”<sup>13</sup>

#### IV. Propagating Humanistic Buddhism

The concept of Humanism is originally innate in Buddha’s thought, and was actively practiced by Buddha himself. In other words, it is an interesting remark

<sup>12</sup> Master Hsiung Yun, “The Founding of Fo Guang Shan,” in *Fo Guang Shan: Our Report*, ed. Miao Kai, trans. Miao Guang (Kaohsiung: Life News Agency, 2012), 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

that the concept of Humanism has been inherent in Buddhism. There are some evidences to support this. Buddhism emphasizes the practice of the teaching in the human world rather than the other world. According to the Buddha to be born as a human is a consequence of the accumulation of meritorious actions of the past and the human realm is superior to the other five realms. The Buddha himself was born as a human being, practiced and attained Enlightenment in this human world therefore, one must make efforts to be a better human and finally to become the Enlightened One.



*Love and Peace Prayer ceremony held inside the Buddha Memorial Center, 2011*

#### **IV.1 The Ideal of Humanistic Buddhism by MHY**

Humanistic Buddhism is not the creation of His Community, i.e., the Fo Guang Shan Monastery and Buddha's Light International Association, rather, the rationale for Humanistic Buddhism derives from the Buddha, because the Buddha was born, cultivated the path, became enlightened, and strived to enlighten others in this world. For the Buddha, it is this world that should take precedence. He lived among the people, and what he transmitted was Humanistic Buddhism. According to Naichen Chen, "Humanistic Buddhism as propagated by Master Hsing Yun is a

Bodhisattva Way leading towards perfect enlightenment.”<sup>14</sup> MHY opened the concept of Humanistic Buddhism, with this statement: “People come into this world because they have a life to live [...] life is not confined to human beings, but is in fact the mind of all sentient.” It means that MHY has proposed the value and dignity on equality of all life forms from the universe, rather considering that only the human is superior. However, MHY would stress that humanism in Humanistic Buddhism. Therefore, MHY propagated the ideal of Humanistic Buddhism to solve our contemporary problems. His main theme was to deal with people and their affairs with respect, to approach others with tolerance and open-mindedness. He directly emphasized that Humanistic Buddhism was needed in our daily lives. In the past, Buddhism placed more emphasis on leaving the world and living apart from it in the forests and mountains. Today, Buddhism is forsaking the forests and mountains for the society, from temples to homes. Buddhism is living life, making life happier and focusing on the family life spirit.<sup>15</sup> Again, he stressed the purification of life through ethical thought and the elevation of both mind and spirit. If you believe in the law of cause and effect and practice it in your life, then the law of cause and effect is Humanistic Buddhism. Thus, the following teachings of Buddha: compassion and practice, taking refuge in the Triple Gem, the five precepts, the six perfections, and the ten wholesome conducts all are Humanistic Buddhism.<sup>16</sup> It is not difficult to understand the theory of Humanistic Buddhism, according to MHY; however, it is hard to practice. Therefore, in order to make this easier for people, he put together a book “*Humanistic Buddhism: a blueprint for life*”. The book contains twenty topics which are based on Buddhist scriptures and examples of virtuous behavior from the past. These topics are as follows<sup>17</sup>:

1. Ethics – the way of home life
2. Morality – the way of cultivation.
3. Livinghood – the way of using resources
4. Emotions – the way of love and affection
5. Society – the way of oneself and others
6. Loyalty and filialness – the way of establishing oneself
7. Wealth – the way of financial management
8. Long life and happiness – the way of ownership
9. Maintaining good health – the way of medicine
10. Compassion – the way of creating affinities

<sup>14</sup> Naichen Chen, “Universal Ethics in the Context of Globalization and Humanistic Buddhism,” *His Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism* 3 (2002): 4.

<sup>15</sup> Master Hsing Yun, Preface for *Humanistic Buddhism : A Blueprint for Life*, trans. John Balcome (Hacienda Heights, CA: Buddha's Light Pub., 2003), x.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, xi.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, xii-xiii.



11. Cause and effect – the way of dependent origination
12. Religion – the way of faith
13. Life – the way of life and death
14. Knowledge – the way of advanced studies
15. Education and amusement – the way of correct life
16. Rituals – the way of right views
17. Nature – the way of environmental protection
18. Government – the way of participating in Politics
19. International affairs – the way of tolerance
20. The future – the way of development

MHY has worked incessantly to preach Buddha's words, establishing universities and general education schools for the society, building temples and Buddhist enterprises, and developing Buddha's Light International Association. He had already created new interpretations of traditional Chinese Buddhism which have gone beyond the Eight traditional Schools. Then Buddha's Light School was founded which based its practice on Humanistic Buddhism and utilizes Buddha's Light Philosophy as a system of interpretation and understanding. Moreover, for the better understanding and introducing new concepts to contemporary people, the Fo Guang Shan Conference for Young Academic held in 1990 was given the theme of "Humanistic Buddhism". At this conference MHY spoke about "The Fundamental Concept of Humanistic Buddhism", which contains six main characteristics of Humanistic Buddhism, as follows:<sup>18</sup>

1. Humanistic character
2. Life-oriented character
3. Altruistic character
4. Joyous character
5. Timeless character
6. Liberation-oriented character

He has taken a painful task as his own holy duty to advocate the idea of Humanistic Buddhism. He found that there are controversies between Mahayana and Theravada or between the Chinese and Tibetan traditions, but he ensured that Humanistic Buddhism became the major current of modern Buddhist thought in China. Thus in 1995, he has given a *Series on Buddhism: Humanistic Buddhism*, which included all the essential teachings of the Buddha, the Five vehicles, the Five Precepts, the Ten Wholesome Acts, the Four immeasurable states of mind,

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<sup>18</sup> Fu Zhiying, *Bright Star Luminous Cloud*, trans. Robert H. Smitheram (USA: Buddha's Light Publishing, 2008), 299-301.

the Six Perfections the Four Embracing qualities, the Karmic retribution through causation, the Middle Path of Chan and Pure Land and so on.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, MHY, has published a set of twelve-volumes of Buddhism Textbook. The eleventh volume was entitled ‘Understanding the Buddha’s Light Philosophy’. The scope of Buddha’s Light (Fo Guang) Philosophy, indicated that everyone has a bodhisattva, is endowed with a life of wisdom, possess a harmonious mental state, and can obtain the joy of the Dharma.<sup>20</sup>

The Buddha’s Light International Association (BLIA) was inaugurated in Los Angeles in May 16, 1992, after the establishing of BLIA R.O.C (now BLIA Chunghwa) in 1991. In 2003, BLIA has also been recognized as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with Special Consultative status in the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. MHY has delivered a keynote speech during the annual BLIA General World Conference, as a means to provide members with spiritual guidance and direction for the future development of BLIA.<sup>21</sup> Thus, he advocated the theme, “*Joy and harmony*” for the first BLIA General Conference in LA, USA in 1992, in order to spread the reality of Buddha’s teaching as the path of liberation and happiness.<sup>22</sup> He suggested the following concepts:

1. Honor every religious tradition, both their teachings and their followers.
2. Adopt the characteristics and methods of others in a positive, willing, and prudent manner etc.
3. Nourish the world and the human race to be independent, universal and to coexist with the Dharma.
4. Be receptive to modern societies.<sup>23</sup>

The essential teaching of these concepts is the fact that people of different races and ethnic groups can live together in harmony. He introduced the theme, *One theme, One Concept*, then, the theme of “*Oneness and Coexistence*” was given for the second and third Conference, in Vancouver, Canada, in 1993& 1994. Though there are various beings, all beings are equal elements within one embodiment of dependent origination. Through compassion, we can accept and appreciate each other; through harmony, we can coexist.<sup>24</sup> MHY presented four points of view on this theme:

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 303-8.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 309-10.

<sup>21</sup> Master Hsing Yun, “Forward-One Theme One Concept,” in *Modern Thoughts, Wise Mentality: A Collection of BLIA General Conference Keynote Speeches (1992-2006)*, trans. Miao His, Miao Guaug (Taipei: Gandha Samudra Culture Company, 2006), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

1. Oneness and coexistence to make this world complete
2. Equality and tolerance to gather the right conditions
3. Selflessness and unbiased minds to coexist and share in the glories.
4. Mutual benefit and dependence for a balanced and natural life.<sup>25</sup>

The theme of the 4<sup>th</sup> Conference in Sydney, Australia in 1995 was “*Respect and Tolerance*”. He advocated that as Buddhists, we should put forth our best effort to protect all life.<sup>26</sup> Thus, he suggested the following four points about respect:

1. Respect the freedom of others.
2. Respect the value of life.
3. Respect the possessions of others.
4. Respect nature.

With regard to tolerance, he has promoted the teachings of tolerance for the sake of world peace:

1. Have tolerance for those who are different.
2. Have tolerance for those who are suffering.
3. Have tolerance when insulted by enemies.
4. Have tolerance for unintentional mistakes.<sup>27</sup>

Because of increasing abuse of power in politics, the uneven distribution of economic wealth amongst religious or ethnic groups is a consequences of inequality and conflicts. Thus he advocated the theme, “*Equality and Peace*”, for the 5<sup>th</sup> Conference, in Paris, France in 1996<sup>28</sup>. Again, the theme of “*Wholeness and Freeness*” in the 6<sup>th</sup> General Conference in Hong Kong, November 29- December 2 1997.<sup>29</sup> The themes of “*Nature and Life*”<sup>30</sup>, “*One Truth of All*”<sup>31</sup>, “*The Human World and Life*”<sup>32</sup>, “*To Resolve and to Develop*”<sup>33</sup>, “*Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha’s Way*”<sup>34</sup>, “*Change the World and Benefit Humanity*”<sup>35</sup>, and “*Bodhisattva and Volunteer*”<sup>36</sup>, were the themes for the 7<sup>th</sup> General Conference in

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 24-37.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 45-52.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 159.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 193.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 229.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 290.

<sup>36</sup> Bodhisattva and Volunteer, Buddha’s Light International Association General Conference, Kaushung, Fo Guang Shan, 2008.

Toronto, Canada, 1998, the 8<sup>th</sup> conference in Taipei, Taiwan, 2000, the 3<sup>rd</sup> BLIA World Headquarters Board of Directors Meeting, in Johannesburg South Africa, 2001, the 9<sup>th</sup> conference in Tokyo Japan, 2002, the 10<sup>th</sup> General Conference in Kaohsiung Taiwan, 2004, the 11<sup>th</sup> General Conference in Taipei, Taiwan, 2006, the 12<sup>th</sup> General Conference, in Kaohsiung FGS, Taiwan, 2008, respectively.

The BLIA is an organization that consists of both monastic and lay Buddhist, BLIA chapters and subchapters are founded in over one hundred countries or regions across the world and this is currently the world's biggest Chinese community. In addition to promoting Buddhism, the BLIA actively promotes the Reading Association, Young Adult Divisions and Scouts and encourages them to participate in social welfare cultural, educational and charitable works.

Just as 2600 years ago, the Buddha reformed his Brahmins times, he reconstructed – through an educational system - a monastic community, which was democratic and peaceful He refused the gender, race, and caste of discrimination. Buddha created the means of lighting up spiritual lives. Upon taking the same duty to innovate the new age of Humanistic Buddhism, MHY, proposed the revival of Buddhism in Taiwan and all over the world. He thought, it depended on Buddhist education, but not on the numerous temples built. . The two main systematic communities: monastics and lay devotees, were like two wings of a bird, both of the same importance for a bird to soar in the sky. Therefore, the two groups of Buddhist communities cooperated and worked together under the supervision of MHY.

Charles H.C.Kao, in his publishing “*80 Years of Star and Cloud*”<sup>37</sup>, gave a compendious depiction, “The life of Master Hsing Yun reformed the Buddhist religion, bettered people’s hearts, and changed the world.” He describes the Grand Master by saying: “The more time Master spends propagating Humanistic Buddhism abroad, the more he resembles a global citizen.”<sup>38</sup>

Zhao Pu-Chu, the President of Buddhist Association of China said that “What the Buddha had not accomplished is all being done by Master Hsing Yun today”.

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<sup>37</sup> *80 Years of Star and Cloud* is a biography of the Most venerable Master Hsin Yun (an appellation as Grand Master (‘*da-shi*’) by all followers around the world) and an excellent in both of pictures and literary composition. This book was published by Charles H. C. Kao, the funder & CEO, Commonwealth Publishing Group, for celebrating Grand Master’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and Fo Guang Shan’s 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, in order to pay their respect to him. There are more than two hundred extremely precious pictures and as well as a summary of Master Hsing Yun’s life.

<sup>38</sup> Kao, *80 Years of Star and Cloud*.

Fu Zhiying, a Chinese writer of the Master's biography, "*Bright Star Luminous Cloud*"<sup>39</sup>, describes MHY's contributions to the world of Buddhism as quite profound, and she states that he can indeed claim supreme credit for the development of Buddhism in terms of its systemization, its modernization, its globalization, and its orientation towards humanity. With regard to all his contribution, humans not only entered the world, but brought each a part to the whole global spirit.

According to Nagata, the justification for selecting the Taiwanese Fo Kuang Shan, for closer scrutiny lies in three of its distinctive features. The first has to do with its character as a global religion, particularly its inner-worldliness, involvement of laity and of women, ecumenical tendencies and social engagement. Secondly, he discussed FGS's transformation into a global religious civil society. Lastly, the FGS plays a diplomatic and even more moralistic role in Taiwan's International relations, where more conventional avenues are unavailable.<sup>40</sup>

#### **IV.2 The MHY and his achievements**

Over the 75 years of his monkhood, MHY had several contributions as mentioned above, but most importantly the two group of disciples -Buddhist Communities, i.e. Buddhist monastics and Buddhist lay devotees, who cooperated completely to take the great tasks from the island of Taiwan and expanded all over the world. In the recent decades, MHY remarkably achieved the following:<sup>41</sup>

- (1) He was honored at the third Presentation of the Special Contribution Medals of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, on the 72<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Day, on December 13, 2009.
- (2) He received the Chinese Lifetime Achievement Award from the Chinese Culture Promotion Society, when the Nanjing Municipal People's Government and Phoenix Satellite Television jointly hosted the "Wisdom from the East-2009 Figures in Chinese Culture (FCC)" on Jan. 13, 2010.
- (3) On March 11, 2010, the University of Hong Kong conferred upon the Venerable Master Hsing Yun an honorary doctorate degree in recognition of his contribution towards society around the world.
- (4) Korea's Guemgang University President Sung Nak-Seung attended Fo Guang Shan's 2010 Sangha Offering Dharma Function on August 31, and presented

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<sup>39</sup> Fu Zhiying, *Bright Star Luminous Cloud*, trans. Robert H. Smitheram (USA: Buddha's Light Publishing, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> Nagata, "The Globalisation of Buddhism and the Emergence of Religious Civil Society," 231.

<sup>41</sup> *Review of the 2010 Buddha's Light International Association Directors Meeting* (Taipei: BLIA World Headquarter, 2010), 75-9.

the university's first honorary doctorate degree in literature to the Venerable Master Hsing Yun.

- (5) On August 9, 2010, President S. R. Nathan of Singapore awarded the country's honor to BLIA Singapore Executives: the Public Service Star (BBM) to Dr. Derek Goh Bak Heng and the Public Service Medal (PBM) to Mr. Teo Nangieng Heng, Jackson and Mr. Pang Lim. The recognition had brought great honor to BLIA members.
- (6) On behalf of Fernando Chui Sai On, Chief Executive of Macau, Tse Chi Wai, Chair of the University Council of Macau University confers an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Humanities to the MHY in 2013.<sup>42</sup>
- (7) Xu Xianming, the President of Shangdong University presents a Certificate of Honorary Professor to the MHY in 2013.<sup>43</sup>
- (8) Co-organized by Phoenix TV and over ten Chinese media companies across the Strait and the Three Regions, the 2012-2013 the "World is Beautiful Because of You –Most Influential Chinese People" ceremony awards MHY with the Lifetime Achievement Award for World's Most Influential Chinese.<sup>44</sup>
- (9) The Venerable Master Yun Public Education Trust Fund.

In 2008, the MHY established a public education trust fund with royalties from his books. This fund has since given out various awards in culture and education. Thus, the MHY has decided to establish the "*Truthful, Virtuous and Beautiful Media Award*" to reward Chinese Journalists who abide by their principles in purifying humans and bettering society, and also those who endeavor to nurture good journalists in and out of Taiwan. The award has been handed out for five consecutive years. In 2010, he introduced the "*Hsing Yun Global Chinese Literature Award*" during the Centennial of the Republic of China to award outstanding global Chinese writers in contemporary literature, and those who have contributed to literature. In 2011, based on the belief that one's actions can change the future, and that true power comes from real actions, the fund initiated the "*Three Acts of Goodness School Award*" designed as a part of school education, and harmonious campus atmosphere. Then this activity has been, as well as extended from schools to communities. After two years of implementation and presentation, 28 high schools and 44 junior high schools and secondary schools have been selected and awarded.

<sup>42</sup> Miao Kai ed., *Fo Fuang Shan: Our Report* (Kaoshiung: Life News Agency, 2013), 29.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

In 2012, the “*First Hsing Yun Education Award*” was handed out to encourage teachers who abide by their ideas, face adversities fearlessly, and continue to offer full dedication to inspiring their students to strive for the better.

## **V. International Dharma Propagating Activities**

For more than 65 years, close to 30,000 days of dharma propagation, MHY traveled across the bridges between the monastic and secular life, and either thinking, speaking, or practicing were about propagating Humanistic Buddhism, as well as the ideas of the Three Acts of Goodness, the Four Giving, and the Five Harmonies. All of these are based on one idea, “For all who come from the ten directions, and all who go back to the ten directions, together, may we accomplish tasks that benefit people from all directions. For the giving from countless people, and bestowment from countless people, may connections be established between these countless people?” The MHY has indeed engaged in uncountable dhamma talks and speeches all over the world, the most recently worthy of remark are as listed:

- (1) On September 2012, MHY was invited to give a speech on “The Value of Faith” at the World Economic Forum 2012 Summer Davos held at the Tianjin Meijiang Convention Center in China. This was first time in the history of the Forum that a religious leader was invited to speak.
- (2) On April 2013, MHY was invited to a dialogue with Liu Changle, Phoenix TV Chairman, on “The Strength of Honesty and Integrity” at the Boao Forum for Asia.
- (3) On October 2004, the China, Japan, and Korea Friendly Exchanges were held in Beijing with representatives from both sides of the Strait and Three Regions. On 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1975, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun held a three day Dharma lecture inside the National Taiwan Arts Center, and became the first Buddhist to ever lecture on the Dharma inside national halls. After that, MHY, continued to lecture for forty years in front of an audience who has continued listened.
- (4) In 1987, the MHY was invited to speak at the Sha Tin Town Hall and Henry G. Leong Yaumatei Community Centre, and thereby began to propagate the Dharma on the international stage. In 1989, “The Shore, Other Shore Dharma Gathering” was held inside the Hong Kong Coliseum. Thus, MHY delivered 30 years of Dharma Propagation in HK.
- (5) In 2012, the Malaysian Buddhist group of the FGS organized the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Venerable Master’s Dharma Propagation works. To celebrate this, on 24<sup>th</sup> November, the four major Chinese media stations, along with the BLIA members, and Buddhist circles came together and

held the Buddhist Cultural and Dharma Blessing Function where the Triple Gem Refuge and the Five Percepts Ceremony were presided by the MHY.

- (6) In 1980, The MHY was appointed Dean of the Institute of Indian Cultural Studies at the Chinese Cultural University. In 1982, he was invited at the Tunghai University to speak on religious and spiritual contribution for world peace. To date, he has given lectures at over thirty renowned universities across the world.

## VI. International Buddhist *Sangha* and education

We are told that “the establishment of Fo Guang Shan is basically meant for the spread of education.” When the Grand Master first arrived in Taiwan, he just started the Taiwan Buddhist Training Institute. He then realized that the educational level of Taiwan’s monks and nuns was generally quite low. As he was coming from an ancient monastery in China, he could see that “Buddhism needed young people and young people needed Buddhism.”

MHY has built an International Buddhist *Sangha*, with about 1250 immediate disciples (including the monastic of monks, nuns, and lay disciples of ‘*shi gu*’ and ‘*Jai shi*’). All disciples have received guidance from the MHY. Consequently, over 300 branches of the FGS (including Taiwan and overseas branches) were founded around the world. The majority of the *Sangha* members came from Taiwan however there are about 30% of the *Sangha* members from other countries around the world. Moreover, MHY has created an incredible woman spiritual power in the *Sangha*, and there are more than thousand bhikkhunis who gave their life-long service under his supervision. The equality between male and female has been fulfilled in Fo Guang Shan. They support education and leadership opportunities. He has worked to improve the status in Taiwan and has taken steps to make it a global phenomenon.

According to Yi Fa, “Over the course of the last thirty years, as Buddhism in Taiwan has flourished, nuns have overtaken monks in number-at times exceeding a ratio of four to one. Besides, outnumbering monks, nuns also compete with their male counterparts for positions for position of leadership.”<sup>45</sup>

Among the thousands of bhikkhuni, Ven.Tzu Hui, has been a special assistant for MHY for over six decades, she has been engaged in the cause of education, culture in society and *Sangha* affairs, and involved in many activities in education. She organized more than fifty international academic conferences,

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<sup>45</sup> Yi Fa, “Roar of the Lioness: A Women’s Revival in Humanistic Buddhism- A Case Study of Fo Guang Shan,” (paper presented at the International Conference on Humanistic



inviting scholars from the USA, Britain, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Mainland China and other countries to raise the level of academics and promote research on Humanistic Buddhism throughout the world. The Center for the Study of Humanistic Buddhism was cofounded by the Chinese University, Hong Kong and the Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education in 2005. Over the past 9 years, the center annually hosted both the Young Scholars Symposium of Buddhist Studies and the Cross-Strait Four Regions Conference. Again, it took great efforts, for the FGS Academy Research of Humanistic Buddhism to be founded, and for the FGS Monastery, to coordinate with the Nan Jing University in 2012.

A dynamic and chief leader of the bhikkuni disciple, Ven. Chueh Pei, a Chinese living in Argentina, decided to take ordination under Master Hsing Yun in her first meeting with him. She has experienced that “Fo Guang Shan is a Buddhist temple where people are busy with teaching the Dharma and feel joy from helping others.” She felt that she has become a monastic at a right temple. According to her, MHY is an educator because of his lifelong involvement in education. He has a forgiving personality and democratic ways to deal with all sentient beings. He loves all life forms as he loves himself. He never puts strict demands on others, although he received a strict, traditional Buddhist school education. He uses objective ideas to resolve the disciples’ problems and offers good advice to them. He cares about spiritual and religious discipline, not just the formality of it.<sup>46</sup> Another excellent bhikhuni disciple, named Man Ho, has also been interviewed and felt the same as Chueh Pei did. Both felt overjoyed after speaking with their Mentor. After graduating from the National Taiwan University, Taiwan, Man Ho worked in a trading company and the Civil Aeronautics Administration, and had also worked as an English substitute teacher. During that time, in 1987, Master Hsing Yun was building the His Lai Temple in the U.S. and so she helped her Mentor communicate in English by being his interpreter.<sup>47</sup>

As recorded in his book *A Journey Aboard* after visiting some countries of Southern Asia in 1963 and seeing great temple complexes, he became worried that “Everyone is so busy building Dharma centers, and one temple after another is being completed and dedicated, but who is going to run the Dharma centers a hundred years from now?” Building Dharma centers is not an easy task, but keeping them going in the future is much harder. What Buddhism today lacks most of all, is a young *Sangha*. He was aware that a monastic *Sangha* should be

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Buddhism, organized by His Lai University Los Angeles County, California USA, at Taipei International Convention Center, on October 18, 2001).

<sup>46</sup> Wu Jie, “The Honorary Doctorate of Life: Venerable Master Hsing Yun,” in *Taiwan Zan!*, trans. Deborah Lu (Taipei:2012), 26-7.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

placed as a preliminary step in order to restore the fate of Buddhism in modern times.

We are informed that “Foster talent through education” is one of the Fo Guang Shan’s four main objectives in developing Buddhist talents to help spread Buddhism, since the establishment of Fo Guang Shan in 1967. The first residence building of the Eastern Buddhist College was established in 1968.

“Education is considered as foremost for the development of Buddhism.” This idea appeared in the heart of the Grand Master at very beginning of time, and he devoted his entire life to this job. He was educated in a complete Chan (Zen) School, which strictly emphasizes education. He derived his lineage from the 48<sup>th</sup> Patriarch, Lin Ji School, which emphasized the relationship between teacher and student, and the style of teaching known as ‘stick and shouting’. A teacher, who educates, should depend on the nature and character of his students. On the other hand, students must accept all kinds of education from the teacher. Instead of a loving style, the Grand Master, nevertheless, received a harsh style of teaching and discipline from his teacher, Master Zhi Kai. “Today, in order to develop a lasting Buddhism in the world, the first and most significant matter is to nourish the younger talent. Vowing to carry Tathagata’s noble work as our own duty, regardless of all types of hardship, we should never stop to undertake the Buddhist education.” Hence, the MHY has devoted his life to education, thus paving a bright path for Buddhism and humanity.

MHY was a principal at Bai-ta Junior School at age of 21. Due to this, his educational ideas are not a narrow circle in the Buddhist Sangha only but his vision is also open for the whole society. The Grand Master says that “The Sangha must have an education for the Sangha; devotees must have an education for the devotees; and children and women as well must also have an education that is suitable for children and women.” This is the idea that had led Fo Guang Shan to develop its educational mission. Undertaking this great idea, the Grand Master, however, made a complete educational system for both the *Sangha* and the devotees. Zhao Puchu (1907-2000), former chair of the Buddhist Association of China, once said, “the most important matters for Buddhism are threefold: the first, fostering talent; the second, fostering talent, and the efforts at fostering talent.” Great minds think alike, and Fo Guang Shan’s efforts at foresting talent within the Sangha over the past forty years have never ceased.

Education was extremely important for MHY from the beginning of the FGS Monastery, over 65 years ago. Thus MHY created a systematic and complete education under the FGS Monastery. The educational system is categorized into Monastic education and Secular education. In this presentation, the writer wants merely to highlight the features of the monastic education and especially focus on

its international position in accordance with the theme “Buddhism and globalization”.

As far as the Monastic education is concerned, four main streams of education will be discussed down below:

*(1) FGS TSUNG LIN UNIVERSITY- basic Buddhist training and study*

There are over 700 students attending the FGS TSUNG LIN University with 16 campuses in Taiwan and around the world. In Taiwan, the University is currently divided into institution of Chinese Buddhist Studies and International Department of Buddhist Studies (English and Japanese Buddhist College (1986) and the Chinese Program for International Students, 1992), Eastern Buddhist School, the Undergraduate Department of Buddhist College, Men’s Buddhist College, Women’s Buddhist College, Keelung Buddhist College etc.

It may be worth mentioning that many Buddhist scholars from Europe, Asia, and USA have been invited to teach since the establishment of the English Buddhist College 20 years ago. And again, besides improving their English, students there are required to learn how to propagate the dharma in English. Sometimes, there are exchange programs, students may come from Sri Lanka, America, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Canada, Thailand, Singapore, Philippine, Korea, and Japan. It is remarkable that Chinese Buddhism is expanding globally. Apart from this, International Department of Buddhist Studies was established for foreign students in their primary study of Chinese Buddhism. Mostly foreign students were selected for this from branches of the FGS Buddhist Colleges in India, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Africa, Australia, and some few were from Singapore, Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, or Korea.

As analysis of its characteristics by Fu Zhiing, a Chinese writer describes five points of view as following:

- It has been in operation the longest without interruption.
- It has the highest number of continuing students, and it has the highest rate of people engaging in actual Buddhist –oriented work of various kinds after graduation.
- Its quality is the highest and it offers the most opportunities for further study.
- It has the highest level of internationalization.
- It combines traditional spirit with a modern look.<sup>48</sup>

The system of education in these Universities is unlike the other worldly institutions. The MHY emphasizes on critical thinking, Buddhist philosophy and

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<sup>48</sup> Fu Zhiying, *Bright Star Luminous Cloud*, 167.

life education, which is most important. Their education and development are based on the Grand Master's beliefs: "Living life is greater than knowledge; Morality is greater than fame; benefiting all is greater than the self; Self Realization is greater than mere acceptance."

A daily routine is designed for following a schedule, and is to be adjusted at all the branches of FGS Buddhist Institutes and abroad as well.

Early morning at 5:30 am all students wake up, then start morning chanting, and then have breakfast together in the dining hall. After that, they're cleaning their whole environment and from 8:00 am until 11:00 am they attend three classes, 11:30 -12:00 lunch, then 1.5 hours of break time. 1:30 pm until 4:30 continue with three more classes, there are again 2 hours for self -study but students have to maintain silence in the evening. After the evening chanting, students meditate and then take rest. Besides classes, there is also a scheduled community service period, time for studying the Buddhist canon, helping out in the kitchen, and so on. The purpose is to allow students to experience Buddhism by incorporating the learned concepts within their daily lives. This also emphasizes on the moral education of the students.

For each monastic member undertaking this, the daily disciplinary schedule is very essential, how could one define a moral and practice manner for them? What do you mean by saying that there is no practice in the FGS monastery? The concept of practice, is interpreted as such: a person should only engage in meditation and reciting or even retreat in remote areas, forests, etc.. The Grand Master, propounds a traditional mixed with a modern concept. He states that "at Fo Guang Shan, the facilities are its hardware, while Humanistic Buddhism is the Software." And he furthermore said: "My duty is to fill the world with cheers and joys; to attain peace and fulfillment for others. Buddha founded Buddhism for human beings, and hence, Dharma flowed naturally in this world. We have not purposely proposed Dharma to others, but we just give happiness, confidence, hope and convenience."

MHY believed that the principle of "fostering talent through education" can be completed by having a receptive and open attitude, though behaving with positive manners, practicing respect for life, stressing industriousness, emphasizing gratitude, teaching and instilling a strong belief in the dharma and fostering the cultivation of a stable personality. Richard L. Kimball, has given an overview of the methods of teaching. He found the FGS education system to be divided into two: much of the formal education is accomplished through the network of

temples, schools, colleges and universities; informal education is usually a part of monastic life and devotees “Living the Dharma”.<sup>49</sup>

*(2) Branches of FGS TSUNG LIN UNIVERISTY overseas*

The Grand Master, having a global vision, considered that the purpose of the Tsun Ling University, Koashiung, Taiwan, is to expand into international platforms. He established a number of Buddhist Institution around the world, where adults and citizens, are interested in Humanistic Buddhism and practice as well.

SEMINARY IN AFRICA (1994)

FGS DONG ZEN BUDDHIST COLLEGE, MALAYSIA (1996)

FGS BUDDHIST COLLEGE, NAN TIEN, AUSTRALIA (1996)

FGS BUDDHIST COLLEGE, INDIA (1999)

FGS BUDDHIST COLLEGE, HONG KONG (1999)

FGS BUDDHIST COLLEGE, BRAZIL (2004)

In 2004, the FGS BUDDHIST COLLEGE was established in Ru-Lai Temple, Brazil. It was the first Buddhist Institute in the Latin America.

*(3) Selected disciples sent abroad for advanced research*

The early stage of founding the Fo Guang Shan was a difficult time economically. Even so, the Grand Master with a fostering talent and prospective future, sent Tzu Hui, Tzu Jung, and Tzu Chia, Tzu Yi, and Tzu Chung, the earliest and chief disciples, to pursue advanced studies In Japan. When Fo Guang Shan entered its second decade, MHY considered globalization and kept on selecting his intelligent, promising disciples for further study abroad. Beside Japan, Korea, and Mainland China, India in Asia they were also sent to the USA, France, UK, Brazil, and South Africa. Those monks and researchers in different spheres of Buddhist Studies, have mastered Buddhist languages such as: Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, English, Japanese, French, Korean, and Portuguese etc. They all were awarded the highest degree of doctorate.

Today, these selected disciples represent “the pinnacle of well-balanced and outstanding monastics in the history of Chinese Buddhism” said by Fu Zhiing. (p. 213) As former chair of the FGS Monastery, Ven. Hsin Ting, received an honorary PhD from the Chulalongkorn University in Thailand (2005). He stated that he felt very fortunate to have been a monastic at Fo Guang Shan for the past thirty-eight

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<sup>49</sup> Richard L. Kimbal, “Educational Contribution of Fo Gaung Shan Humanistic Buddhism,” *His Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism* 4 (2003), 142-143.

years: “Having a Dharma center in the midst of a bustling place gives you a fortunate opportunity for enlightenment when adversity comes. Fo Guang Shan is the largest and best stage for cultivating merit and wisdom.”

Ven Yi Chun, who holds a teaching post at the University of Hong Kong, but also washed dishes at the Pilgrims Lodge in FGS just entered the order, as commended by Master Ven. Yi Fa, who obtained her doctorate from Yale University (1997). She remembered that “when I was studying at National Taiwan University, a certain professor also asked me whether I would chose to join the monastic order or continue with my studies. I said that the four years of college education was only a small part of my life, but joining the monastic order represented my life as a whole, and that was something worth pursuing.”

Dr. Yi Kong was the first college graduate to be ordained at Fo Guang Shan who went to Tokyo University for further study. At the time, the Grand Master accompanied her all the way to Japan and personally entrusted her to Prof. Mizuno. Since the Master also was concerned about Hui Kai’s living conditions, he made a special trip to the Temple University in Philadelphia. MHY gave lectures at Hawaii University, and Yale University, also in Delhi University (India), in order to show his regards to his researcher disciples, Dr. Yi Fa, and the writer of this article (Chueming), were awarded Ph.D degrees, and served as assistant professors at the Nan Hua University, Chiayi, Taiwan. The MHY was many times a pilgrim to India in order to visit Yi Hua, who studied at the Santiniketan University, India. Dr. Yong Dong got his Ph. D degree from University of West, USA. Ven. Yi Yu then obtained a Ph.D from Japan, and served as the head of the Japanese language department at Yi Sho University, Taiwan. Ven. Hui Kai is now the Vice chancellor of the Nan Hua University, Taiwan. Dr. Yi Kong is a senior professor at Nan Hui University, and executive of board, of Nan Hua University and the University of West. Dr. Yong Dong is a lecturer at the University of West and the Fo Guang University, USA. Dr. Yongyou who got his PhD degree from London University, UK, is now an assistant professor at Nan Hui University. Dr. Jue Ji obtained his Ph.D degree from Hong Kong University and now is a lecturer at the University of West, USA. Ven. Chueh Wen received his Ph.D from the University of West, and worked at Nan Tien University, Sydney, Austria.

The Grand Master sent a number of disciples to mainland China for their further research on Chinese Buddhism, such as for a Ph. D degree, as Dr. Miao Ji at the Si Chung University, Dr. Jue Min at Lan Zho University. Ven. Jue Dou after obtaining his Ph.D from the Rin Min University, then serviced at the FGS International team, and Dr. Man Ting was awarded his PhD from the Sa Men University is now working as a lecturer at the Fo Guang University. Dr. Chueh Guan, got his Ph.D at the Fu Dan University, and now is a lecturer at the Fo Guang University. There are some disciples still undertaking Ph.D courses at

different Universities, such as: Dr. Man Shen at Nan Jing University. Ven. Juefang at Pai Jing University, and Ven. Hui Gu at Hong Kong University. Now, 197 disciples are completing their higher research programs in Taiwan and abroad. Among them, 30 disciples were awarded Ph. D degrees, and 167 disciples obtained Master degrees. The majority these disciples are doing religious or Buddhism studies, however, some of them also undertake other subjects, such as: History, Literature, Sociology, Education, Management, Art, Finances, etc. After the completion of a course, they are engaged in their sphere of work, and are appointed as lecturers, research project coordinators or as abbots, or they are doing administrative work in branches of the FGS Universities, or High, and Junior Schools, while some are doing editing work. As a Chinese saying goes, “It takes ten years to grow a tree and one hundred years to grow a generation of good people.” It is because of this vision that MHY has created a modernized Buddhist army, the one thousand and more pillars of Buddhism who can carry on the *Tathagata* legacy. Buddha’s light shines everywhere.

#### **VII. Dynamic disciples as chair persons leading IBPS FGS branches**

Aiming to be “a global citizen who embraces all living beings”, the Grand Master sets foot on all Five Continents of the World ever year. In 1957, at the age of 30, the MHY wrote an article for *Awakening the World Periodical*. The article was titled “A Plan for Worldwide Propagation”. 1965 was declared by the United Nations as the “Year of Development,” and the Grand Master also made a keynote speech called ‘*Self-awareness and Practicing Buddha’s Way*’ at the 10<sup>th</sup> BLIA General Conference. In his speech the MHY emphasized an important idea regarding the propagation of Human Buddhism to globalization. The Grand Master pointed out the ‘Development of Buddhism through localization’.<sup>50</sup> He said: “We are a ‘Global Village’. We must respect the cultures of other countries and societies and accept the unique characteristics of these cultures. There are differences between practicing in secluded monasteries and practicing Humanistic Buddhism in the society. So the local adaptation that I am advocating is benefiting, friendly, harmonious and enhancing. It does not involve rejection and denial.” Furthermore, the Grand Master indicated that “In the course of propagating Buddhism that started almost twenty five hundred years ago, the fundamental nature, principles, rules and instructions of the Dharma have never changed. However when Buddhism was transmitted to Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand it became Theravada Buddhism. Similarly when it was transmitted to Xinjiang, Tibet and Mongolia, it

became Tantric Buddhism. Each of these forms of Buddhism has evolved into its current state through the gradual influence of the local climates, geographic conditions, customs, needs, and traditions.” He also stated that: “To be successful in the international development of Buddhism, we must ensure the rigorous implementation of the principle of local adaptation.” Therefore, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> BLIA Director Conference held in Johannesburg South Africa on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2001, he had proposed ‘Four Transformations’ in the agenda, as follows:

- (1) To humanize Buddhism,
- (2) To culturally improve our lives,
- (3) To install equality in the monastic and lay societies, and
- (4) To promote local adaptation of monastic establishments.

When the Grand Master proposed ‘the local adaptation of monastic establishments,’ he was referring to the hundreds of Buddhist centers founded and operated by Fo Guang Shan and BLIA. Their ownerships belongs to the community and not to individuals. He sincerely visualized what a spectacular achievement for Buddhism it will be if we are able to install at all of the overseas temples abbots or abbesses of native origin in the coming twenty or thirty years. He most wished that these would be able to assist and guide the native monastics responsible for the management and administration of these overseas establishments.

### **VIII. Leading with system**

In order to realize the ideal of a Humanistic Buddhist community, the FGS Board of Directors was founded with a complete set of bylaws that includes a leadership structure, authority, and rules of election for these members. In 1990, the first meeting was held to elect the 1<sup>st</sup> board of 9 members. Fo Guang Shan’s head abbot was appointed chairperson, setting an unprecedented example in the history of Chinese Buddhism in leadership by constitution, and letting the public elect their abbot. Having a new abbot symbolizes the continuation of the dharma lineage. One way of keeping up with times is to promote and support your subordinates, which is also the way to keep the Order in a sustainable development. In 1985, MHY stepped down as the Head Abbot of Fo Guang Shan, and passed the position to Ven. Abbot Hsin Ping, who became the 49th Patriarch of the Linji School, and also served as the 4th term Head Abbot of the Fo Guang Shan. This action established a democratic system and provided a good exchange of

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<sup>50</sup> Venerable Master Hsing Yun, “Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha’s Way,” in *Modern Thoughts, Wise Mentality*, trans. Ven. Miao Hsi and Amy Lam et al. (Taiwan: Gandha Samudra Cultural Company, 2006), 250-60.



alternating generations. This was also the first branching of the Qixia Lineage and an unprecedented case for abbots of monasteries in Taiwan to serve for a set term. In 1995, Ven. Hsin Ting succeeded Ven. Hsin Ping, and served the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> terms as Head Abbot. In 2005, Ven. Hsin Pei served the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> term as Fo Guang Shan's Head Abbot. He was then succeeded by Ven. Hsin Bao as the 9<sup>th</sup> Head Abbot in 2013. Moreover, in 2013, the MHY transmitted the symbols of Dharma lineage: chanting beads, a dharma scroll, and a kasaya to 72 disciples of the 49<sup>th</sup> generation Linji School.

In addition to this, in 1997, the Fo Guang Shan Ten-Thousand Buddha Triple Platform Full Ordination Ceremony was titled an exemplar ordination ceremony for its precise execution of ceremonies and disciplinary trainings. In the 30 years that followed, full ordination ceremonies were also held in the USA, India, and Austria.

MHY, was not only following the Buddhist tradition, but also innovated, creating a systematic and democracy management for the purpose of embracing the whole of Buddhism and the continuation of a good model for the monastic community for the future. Anyone who identifies with Fo Guang Shan's principles, regardless of their background can come together to propagate it. The MHY stressed that all monastic members must follow the Fo Guang Shan tradition, inherit its principles, introduce new ideas and initiate the bodhicitta to propagate the Dharma.<sup>51</sup>

## **IX. Global connection and Interfaith with other religious leadership**

MHY spent his life promoting the concepts of respect, tolerance and harmony. For this purpose, he travels the world and actively participates in religious exchanges. An analysis of the Grand Master's diaries shows that during the construction period of FGS's branches and the establishment of BLIA Chapters around the world, the distance he travels annually equals that of two and a half trips around the globe, or an average of 160 kilometers per day. Some international conferences organized under his leadership include the World Tantric and Sutric Buddhist Conference, the International Sangha Seminar, the International Buddhist Youth Conference, and the International Buddhist women's Conference. He also met with many religious leaders such as Ven. Dr. Sri Dharmananda-Maha Nayaka Thera, Pope John Paul II, the Dalai Lama, the Prime Minister of Malaysia-Mahathir Mohamad, and representatives from Taoist, Christian churches as well as

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<sup>51</sup> *Fo Guang Shan: Our Report* (Kaohsiung: Life News Agency), 24-25

other religious organizations. By crossing the boundaries of religion, sect, and tradition, he brings the world one step closer to world peace and harmony.<sup>52</sup>

In order to restore the Bhikshuni Precepts in the Theravada tradition, the MHY brought the Full Ordination Ceremony to Bodhgaya, India in 1998.

On the basis of the Global concept, he suggested the urgent training of English-speaking talents, making the beginning of Internationalization for the Chinese Buddhism. The abbots of the branches appointed by the Grand Master, as chairpersons, are supposed to handle all dhammas affairs and cultural activities during the period of their appointment. The majority of abbots of the overseas branches are Taiwanese citizen, but also foreign disciples. Those disciples are fluent in multiple languages and demonstrate intelligent and dynamic leadership. They strictly follow the ideal of the MHY: to propagate Humanistic Buddhism, for localization and for globalization. In order to start the overseas branches and to show his world view, the MHY first named each of the branches around the world 'International Buddhist Progress Society' (I.B.P.S.). Additionally, the Grand Master instructs the direction of the Fo Guang Shan Development with four points of view:

- (1) Harmonize traditional teachings with modern practices.
- (2) Joint management by the Sangha and lay disciples.
- (3) Emphasize cultivation and learning.
- (4) Combine Buddhism with art.

As mentioned above, over 300 branches of FGS were established: 150 branches in Taiwan, and 150 branches overseas in major cities around the world. All branches of the FGS, including his contribution, history, and pictures and activities are published, in the "Fo Guang Shan Monastery and Branch Temple" volume 8 of the series "Fo Guang Shan 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition" (10 volumes in total).

(1) U.S.A.

Two decades after the establishment of the FGS Monastery (Kaohsiung, Taiwan), the first overseas branch, the Hsi Lai Temple, Los Angeles, USA, was inaugurated in 1988. It was considered as the most significant milestone starting the Internationalization of Chinese Buddhism. It was regarded as the largest Buddhist monastery in the Western Hemisphere. Chinese Buddhism expanded into the Western world. Since then, the Hsi Lai Temple served as an International and multi-function Buddhist cultural center. It plays three functions: (1) it is a center

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<sup>52</sup> "A brief Biography of Venerable Master Hsing Yun," in *Keeping Busy is the Best Nourishment* (Taiwan: Foguang Cultural Enterprise, 2002), vii.

that provides spiritual and cultural services, (2) it is a place for westerners to learn Buddhism, and (3) it promotes exchanges between the Eastern and Western cultures. In 1992, the Grand Master established the BLIA, His Lai Temple as the World Head Quarters. In 1996, he established the FGS International Translation Center to recruit translators for Buddhist text translation. Books are published in more than ten languages including Portuguese, Spanish, French, German, Russian, Ukrainian, Thai, Indonesian, Sinhalese, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese. After the Hsi Lai Temple, more than 20 branches were gradually established in different states of the United States of America: the IBPS South Bay (CA), the Hsi Fang Temple (San Diego Buddhist Association, CA), the Sam Bao Temple (American Buddhist Cultural Society), the American Buddhist Cultural Society (Fremont, CA), the Light of Buddha Temple (Oakland, CA), the Lian Hua Temple (Nevada Buddhist Association, NV), the International Buddhist Association of Arizona (AZ), the Denver Buddhist Cultural Society (Denver, CO), the Chung Mei Buddhist Temple (IBPS Huston, TX), the IBPS Dallas (TX), the Xiang Yun Temple (IBPS Austin, TX), the Fo Guang Shan St.Louis Buddhist Center (MO), in Chicago (IL), the Greater Boston Buddhist Cultural Center (MA), the IBPS New York (NY), the IBPS Deer Park (NY), the New Jersey Buddhist Cultural Center (NJ), the IBPS North Carolina (NC), the IBPS Miami (FL), the Hawaii Buddhist Cultural Society (HI), and the Fo Guang Shan Guam.

In 1994, the Grand Master started the first branch in Vancouver, Canada, the Vancouver IBPS. Later on, more branches were established in Edmonton, Toronto, Ottawa, Carleton, Montreal, and Costa Rica.

### *(2) South America*

In 1992, the IBPS Templo do Brasil (Zu Lai Temple) was established in the capital city Sao Paulo. Nearly 400 homeless children were adopted in this temple; they were named as 'The Sons of Fo Guang'. Other dhamma centers were established in Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Rio De Janeiro, etc.

### *(3) Europe*

The Grand Master believes that Buddhism combined with the local history, culture, customs and habits is still very attractive and interesting to the whole world. In 1991, the FGS established its first branch in Paris, France. Afterwards, various IBPS branches were established in London (UK), Manchester (UK), Holland, Sweden, Berlin, Frankfurt, Belgium, Switzerland, Vienna (Austria), Portugal, and Spain.

*(4) Oceania*

In 1995, the Nan Tien Temple was established in Sydney. It developed as leaps in the Southern Paradise. Then more temples were established: the IBAA Parramatta, the Chung Tien Temple in Brisbane, and the FGS New Zealand.

*(5) Africa: Nan Hua Temple in South Africa.*

*(6) Asia:* FGS Tokyo, Motosu, Japan; the Dong Chan Temple, Malaysia; the Fo Guang Shan Singapore, etc. In India, in order to restore Buddhism in the mother land of Buddhism, the Grand Master put a lot of efforts. From 1991 on, 12 Chapters of the BLIA were established, then the FGS Buddhist Center in Kolkata, in 1998, and the FGS Educational and Cultural Center in New Delhi, 2007.

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The MHY, in his life, has received many awards for Education, Culture, Charity and Social Education from the government of Taiwan. However, it's more significant to note that he won high regards abroad. In 1995, he was awarded the Buddha Ratna Award at the All India Buddhist Conference. Thailand's Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai awarded him a "Merit Medal for Great Contribution to Buddhism" at the 21<sup>st</sup> WFB General Conference in 2001. California and Houston have each conferred him Honorary Citizenship, once again proving Master's reputation around the world. The Grand Master has also been invited to conduct various religious ceremonies by the United States government.

While there are many sensitive and political issue between Mainland and Taiwan, the Grand Master has broken the barrier. The second World Buddhist Forum was jointly held by the Buddhist association of China , Buddha's Light International Association, and the Hong Kong Buddhist Association. The Chinese Religious Culture Communication Association was inaugurated in Wuxi, China, on March 28, 2009 and concluded in Taipei, Taiwan on April 1, 2009. Over a thousand guests that included scholars, dharma protectors, and Buddhist leaders from nearly sixty countries and regions in Asia, Europe, Oceania, America, and Africa were invited to the forum. The World Buddhist Forum was established as a higher level platform for global Buddhists to communicate and collaborate. The forum also provides a distinctive junction for international Buddhist interactions.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> 2009 Review of Buddha's Light International Association World Headquarters, ed. Ven. Miao Hsi and Louvenia Ortega (USA: BLIA World Headquarters, 2009), 110.

## Conclusion

From the above brief explanations, which are related to the propagation of Humanistic Buddhism by the MHY, we can say that Fo Guang Shan propagates Buddhism using multi-dimensional ideas: social, cultural, religious, educational, linguistic and so on. The result of the propagation of the Humanistic Buddhism has provided a radical help to the development of Buddha's teaching with respect to the Buddhist literature, Buddhist culture and traditions and the monastic life in Taiwan and all over the world. In the keynote speech given at the 11<sup>th</sup> BLIA General Conference in Taipei, Taiwan, MHY expressed that "For Buddhism's sake, I have dedicated my whole life to "Changing the World" and "Benefiting Humanity," because these are the true meanings Buddhism.

At that time, MHY had proposed four suggestions to all members:

1. Change the World and Benefit Humanity by Self-Awareness and Integrity.
2. Change the World and Benefit Humanity by Resolve and Energy.
3. Change the World and Benefit Humanity by Participation and Involvement.
4. Change the World and Benefit Humanity by Bodhi Wisdom and the Power of Vows.<sup>54</sup>

"MHY has profound implications for the Chinese Culture and world culture, and he is not only a reformer, but also a true founder", said veteran journalist Lu Keng.<sup>55</sup> The writer will contribute with some aspects to observe on the religious mission of MHY, as mentioned below:

1. **Transcending boundaries:** Humanistic Buddhism is of great relevance to the contemporary society and the modern civilization of the world. MHY has undertaken the action of reforming Buddhism. Buddhism is not a kind of ideology, which embraces theology and textual concepts, rather, he proclaims that Buddhism must also gradually overcome its traditional ways of doing things by coming out of the forest and joining society. It must expand the functions of the temple by entering into community service; reaching to families and the nation, and then transcending national boundaries; it must spread around the world. MHY said, "We are promoting harmony for the human race when we develop modern cultural ideals" "Harmony is a necessary part of our world today. Thus, there should not be any discrimination between countries, different ethnic origins, different communities, all sectors of society, and political parties.
2. **Driving the new engineering of Buddhists:** on a broader scale, MHY has transmitted his idea to engage all monastics and lay devotees in activities that would help and benefit living beings. The socially engaged Buddhism is today,

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<sup>54</sup> Hsing Yun, *The Essence of Humanistic Buddhism*, 148.

<sup>55</sup> Fu Zhiying, *Bright Star Luminous Cloud*, 12.

very much applicable and necessary to the society for its developments from agriculture to industry, from travel services to hospice care, from charity to culture and education. MHY has made sustained efforts to promote Humanistic Buddhism, to change conservative thoughts, and to establish all kinds of Buddhist activities under a well-structured plan, in order to benefit society. The Buddhists have been suggested to do a variety of activities, in the areas of : Culture, Education, Social welfare, service industry, and as well as industry in general and the business sector. A Buddhist is certainly encouraged to take part in any undertaking or career that helps change the world and benefit humanity, while being able to contributes to the well-being of the country, its people, society, economic prosperity, and also bringing happiness to the general public.<sup>56</sup>

3. **Be tolerating of Diversity:** MHY has expanded the idea of Humanistic Buddhism from Asian Countries into Non-Asian countries. Today, Buddhism remains fresh and strong as its influences spreads ever farther. Evidently, Buddhism has been enhanced by the power of tolerance of diversity without divisions.
4. **Be relevant to the contemporary issues:** In 2010, MHY, advocated the preserving of the ecological system and relying on everyone's concerted support. To advocate Environmental Preservation and Spiritual Preservation, a Ceremony was organized in 1992 at Fo Guang Shan. He contributed the principle of twelve guidance, in which one can practice the preservation of body and mind.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Hsing Yun, *The Essence of Humanistic Buddhism*, 160-162.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

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*Rachana Kaushal\**

***RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA:  
CONFLICTS AND RECONCILIATION***

**Abstract:** Traditionally, pluralism has always been a part of India's identity. Even in medieval period there were liberal as well as orthodox rulers. The liberal rulers such as Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan ruled with secular and liberal policies while Aurangzeb was orthodox and imposed theocratic practices. Colonial India witnessed western-liberal and secular practices. Communalism too emerged as a part of the "divide and rule policy of the colonial rulers. Independent India adopted a constitution that provides for liberal-democratic values and secular state. However the society is still in the grips of religious and cultural orthodoxy posing challenges to the observation of the universally accepted human rights. The freedom of religion is given to the people as a fundamental right, but many times this freedom is jeopardising the observation of universal human rights and therefore the two kinds of rights are in contradiction with each other. The paper looks into the nature of religious freedom in India and traces how the observation is obstructed in the name of religious freedom.

The regressive practices in the name of religion are not actually a part of religion but they try to draw their legitimacy from religio-cultural sources. The paper also tries to look into the ways and means of reconciling religious freedom and human rights.

**Keywords:** *India, religious freedom, conflict, reconciliation, Muslims, Panchayat system*

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## Introduction

Rights can most simply be defined as claims or entitlements. They define the relationship between an individual and the state. Therefore, citizens are defined as right bearing individuals. The universal acceptance and acknowledgement of human rights makes rights a subject of state membership no more. Though it is difficult to define human rights, one may find that the idea of human rights is bound up with the idea of human dignity. Thus, all these rights which are essential for the maintenance of human dignity may be called human rights.

The UDHR in 1948 is the first legal document laying universal norms on human rights. The Freedom of Religion was given under Article 18 of the UDHR.<sup>1</sup> The Freedom of Religion was accepted as a fundamental right by many countries, including India. Indian Constitution accepted most of the civil, political, social and economic rights mentioned in the UDHR and listed as fundamental rights.

The preamble of the Constitution of India declares India as a secular, democratic, socialist state adhering to the values of equality and human dignity<sup>2</sup>. India did not adhere to any religion in spite of the fact that majority follows Hindu religion or the fact that India was surrounded by theocratic states like Islamic Pakistan on both the sides (east and west) and Hindu Nepal in the north and Buddhist Sri Lanka in the south. The framers of the Constitution of India were very clear on the issue of maintaining religious pluralism. Though the original constitution did not mention the term 'secular' anywhere, however, India has no state religion. India respects all religions and gives equal freedom to all religions. The framers of the Constitution visualised a multi-cultural state with religious pluralism in terms of not only the freedom of religion as a fundamental right but also as a peaceful mutual co-existence of all religions, which definitely amounted to something more than mere tolerance.

India has always been a multi-cultural and multi-religious state. India's heritage has always been plural and multi-cultural, where many faiths and belief systems flourished. Tribalism and a number of sects within the Hindu religion have always co-existed. Besides the Hindu religion, many other religious traditions emerged and existed: like Buddhism, Bhakti and Sufi tradition as well as Islam and Christianity. Islam, which is the second largest religion in India with 14.4% of the country's population, first came to India with Arab traders as early as 7<sup>th</sup> century AD in south India. It was established in north India in the 12<sup>th</sup> century with Turkic

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<sup>1</sup> "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," accessed July 10, 2013, [www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index](http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index).

<sup>2</sup> Durga Das Basu, *Shorter Constitution of India*, 2 Vols. (Wadhwa Nagpur: LexisNexis Butterworths, 2008).

invasions and since then became part of India's culture and heritage.<sup>3</sup> Mughal rulers largely followed a policy of non-interference in the personal/internal matters of other religious communities. Even a Mughal emperor made a new religion called Deen-i-ilahi that was more like a code of moral/ethical conduct.<sup>4</sup> He criticised female infanticide and dowry as the religious-cultural practices amongst Hindus and polygamy amongst Muslims.

Judaism was one of the first foreign religions to arrive in India. Jews, though a minority in India, lived without any instances of anti-Semitism from the local majority population.<sup>5</sup> Christianity, which is India's third largest religion, was introduced in India by Thomas the Apostle who visited Kerala in 52 AD. Although the origin of Christianity in India remains unclear, there is a general consensus that Christianity was rooted in India by the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>6</sup>

British rule did lot of harm to the otherwise existing religious pluralism and multiculturalism of the country. They followed a policy of "divide and rule" and resorted to communal politics that ultimately culminated into the creation of a separate nation for Muslims. Though Pakistan was created, a large number of Muslims decided to remain in India and accepted it as their motherland land. Respecting the religious diversity of the country, the framers of the Constitution opted for a secular state rather than a theocratic Hindu state. Constitution has provided for a liberal-democratic state but the society is entrenched in the medieval institutions and practices that are posing challenge to the observation of human rights. Indian constitution provides for the Freedom of religion as a fundamental right that, to a large extent, defines the nature of Indian secularism. Freedom of religion in India has been dealt with both directly and indirectly, by the constitution. Indirectly, the freedom of religion is provided by Articles 15 and 16.

The two Articles deal with the right to equality and non-discrimination and thus make the state uncommitted to any particular religion/religious belief. Articles 25, 26, 27 and 28 deal directly with the freedom of religion, both individual and collective. The Freedom of religion is guaranteed to an individual as a concern for his "liberty" and "well being". The individual is placed before and above the religion and along with the principles of equality and tolerance This is also the reason, perhaps, because of which the weight of restrictions loaded upon this

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<sup>3</sup> Abdul Gafoor Abdul Majeed Noorani, *The Muslims of India: A Documentary Record* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> "Dīn-i Ilāhī," accessed July 12, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/163768/Din-i-Ilahi>.

<sup>5</sup> "History of the Jews in India," accessed July 12, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_Jews\\_in\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_India).

<sup>6</sup> "Christianity in India," accessed July 12, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity\\_in\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_India).

freedom and particularly Article 25 is the heaviest. Public order, morality, health, and other provisions of part III are some restrictions on the freedom of religion. Our constitution makers did not use the term “secular” deliberately as the term has definite connotation that does not fit in the Indian context. India took a very liberal view of secularism as against the western concept. *The liberty, equality, and dignity of the individual underlie the constitutional philosophy of Indian secularism.*<sup>7</sup> India has no state/official religion but there is no separation of state and religion. Therefore, no ban on the political parties to use religion for political expediency. However political parties have used it negatively. Indian secularism, thus, implies:

- mutual coexistence of all religions,
- respect for all religions,
- religious freedom to all people (citizens or non-citizens)

The Constitution makers were sober thinkers. They laid the foundation of a liberal democratic state in the years to come. The nature of freedom of religion is clearly mentioned through various Articles enumerated in the constitution and includes both the personal and the social dimension of it. The nature of religious freedom under the constitution is positive and constructive. It is not absolute but it comes with reasonable restrictions to make it realistic and useful.

The majority in India is not aware of the exact nature of the freedom of religion as guaranteed to them, nor are they familiar with the reasonable restrictions on the freedom of religion as enshrined in the Constitution. It is an important factor in social relations as well as an important determinant of public space/life. There is no wall of separation between public and the private and therefore religion is one of the pivots around which personal, social and political life and institutions are organized. It determines the inter-community as well as the intra-community relationship and regrettably religion, as an institution, has been more a force jeopardising or obstructing the implementation of human rights in India. Pandit Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, had hoped that with the spread of education and development the role and influence of religion in public life will diminish on its own. Unfortunately that did not happen as the vote bank politics resulted in the communal politics and politicisation of religion.

India has witnessed a large number of violent communal clashes between different religious groups that resulted in large scale violations of the right to life, liberty and property. The state was a mute spectator to the ethnic cleansing of Hindus in Kashmir and of Muslims in Gujarat in 2001. The virus of communalism

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<sup>7</sup> Gahrana Kanan, *Right to Freedom of religion* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1992).

is spreading to the areas where there was no previous history of communal disharmony like Kashmir, Punjab, Karnataka, Orissa, etc. This is a consequence of communal politics which is also responsible for the assertion of religious identity in public by the people who earlier never believed in the public display of their religious belief.

Due to the communalisation of the politics, the society is getting communally polarised. This is further aggravating the already existing divisions in the society due to the casteism, patriarchy and feudalism.

As mentioned earlier, despite the constitutional endorsement of the cultural and religious pluralism, the socio-cultural practices of different religions pose problems which are due to the medieval traits of casteism, feudalism and patriarchy. The issue of religious freedom in India is a complicated one. Theoretically India is a secular state but society is culturally and religiously plural. However it is also mired with medieval institutions such as the casteism and the patriarchy. Therefore it offers ample opportunities to the political parties to play communal cards for political gains. Similarly, various caste groups, religious groups, and social groups bargain for favours from the political class. In the process the human rights standards become the sacrificial goat. The continuance of the Khap Panchayat system, Fatwas and the issue of Uniform Civil Code obstruct the implementation of human rights in the name of cultural and religious freedom.

### **I. The Existence of Khap/Non State Legal Systems**

The Indian social fabric was organised around the village unit, as civilization shifted from nomadic to settled agricultural practices. Throughout the last few millennia, the society of the Indian subcontinent was organised in various forms, such as tribal, village, monarchical, or republican. The mode of governance was that of a council of five, which was called a Panchayat. In the old times, society was organised into clans under a Panchayat system. A clan was based on one large gotra (clan), or a number of closely related gotra. Decisions were arrived at by consensus under the aegis of a Council of five elected members (Panchayat). In times of danger, outside invasion etc, the whole clan rallied under the banner of the Panchayat. A leader would be chosen by the assembly. A number of villages grouped themselves into a Guhaand. A number of Guhaands formed a 'Khap' (covering an area equal to a tehsil or a district) and a number of Khaps formed a "Sarva Khap" each for Haryana and Malwa regions. At what level should a panchayat gather depended upon the magnitude of the problem and the territory involved.

One of the terms used to denote the republic was the 'Khap'. Others were Pal, Janapada, and Ganasangha etc. The Khap consisted of a unit of 84 villages. The individual villages were governed by an elected council, which was known as

the Panchayat. A unit of seven villages was called a Thamba and 12 Thambas would form the unit of 84 villages. We also find Khaps of 12 and 24 villages. Their elected leaders would determine which units would be represented at the Khap level. These Khaps are found to be spread all the way from Northwest India towns to Madhya Pradesh, Malva, Rajasthan, Sindh, Multan, Punjab, Haryana, and modern Uttar Pradesh.<sup>8</sup>

The Sarv Khap (or All Khap) Panchayat (Council) represented all the Khaps. The individual Khaps would elect leaders who would send delegates, who would represent the Khaps at the Sarv Khap level. It was a political organisation, composed of all the clans, communities, and castes in the region<sup>9</sup>

The Khap Panchayat which is a union of a few villages mainly in north India, though it exists in similar forms in the rest of the country, has lately, emerged as quasi-judicial body that pronounces harsh punishments based on age old customs and tradition, often bordering or regressing measures to modern problems.<sup>10</sup> The Khaps have jurisdiction over the Hindu community.

In recent times, the Khap system has attracted criticism for its medieval value system which is based on feudalistic and patriarchal notions and contrary to the modern human rights standards. Traditionally the Khap is a geographical entity and a Gotra Khap is an institutional practice, each with a particular caste or community to resolve disputes regarding marriage, family disputes, inheritance, etc in the light of religious-cultural practices and traditions. Nowadays Khaps have turned into a symbol of resistance to change and stand for regressive practices. They are even demanding an amendment to the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 that legalises inter caste marriage and divorce otherwise not permissible by the Hindu religion.

What do they do:

- they are against inter-caste marriages and inter-religious marriages;
- they are against marriage in the same gotra or clan;
- they are supportive of the caste hierarchy in the conduct of social relations and also of the practice of untouchability;

<sup>8</sup> Bal Kishan Dabas, *The Political and Social History of the Jats* (New Delhi: Sanjay Prakashan, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> M. C. Pradhan, "The Jats of Northern India. Their Traditional Political System - II," *The Economic Weekly*, December 18, 1965, accessed July 12, 2013, [http://www.epw.in/system/files/pdf/1965\\_17/51/the\\_jats\\_of\\_northern\\_indiatheir\\_traditional\\_political\\_systemii.pdf](http://www.epw.in/system/files/pdf/1965_17/51/the_jats_of_northern_indiatheir_traditional_political_systemii.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> "What is KhapPanchayat," *India Today*, October 11, 2012, accessed July 12, 2013, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/what-is-khap-panchayat/1/224274.html>.

- they are highly anti women rights from denying freedom to choose their partners to dress code. They are against wearing jeans as jeans attract inappropriate male attention;

- they do not allow women to carry mobiles as it will facilitate “love affairs”;

- they are strongly in favour of lowering the age of marriage for girls. They should be married as soon as they attain puberty as this would lead to a decline in the rape cases;

- they are in favour of even child marriage and whosoever speaks against it would be declared an outcast;

- however they have stood up for some good things also. They have raised their voices against Dowry a centuries-old religious custom in India, against female foeticide, again a centuries-old religious-cultural practice still prevalent in India – now with a more sophisticated technology of sex determination.

The Khaps function in inhuman, illegal and arbitrary manner. They encourage “honour killings” in the matters of inter caste marriages and marriage within the same “gotra”. They ex-communicate those who do not follow their diktats; many times even the whole family of the girl or the boy who marry against the will of the community will have to leave the village or face death sentence. They also force the couple to commit suicide, many times.

Women’s Organisation AIDWA has made allegations, in some cases where the Khaps allegedly initiated threats of murder and violence to couples who married outside the circle.<sup>11</sup>

The Supreme Court has declared ‘Khap Panchayats’ illegal, which often decree or encourage honour killings or other institutionalised atrocities against boys and girls of different castes or religions who wish to get married or have married.<sup>12</sup> “This is wholly illegal and has to be ruthlessly stamped out. There is nothing to be honourable in honour killing or other atrocities and, in fact, it is nothing but barbaric and shameful murder. Other atrocities with respect of the personal lives of people committed by brutal, feudal-minded persons deserve harsh punishment. Only this way can we stamp out such acts of barbarism and feudal mentality. Moreover, these acts take the law into their own hands and amount to kangaroo courts, which are wholly illegal,”<sup>13</sup> said a bench of justices Markandey Katju and Gyan Sudha Misra. In his report to the Supreme Court, Raju Ramachandran, Senior Advocate appointed by the court to assist it in PILs against

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<sup>11</sup>T.K. Rjalakshmi, “Caste Terror,” *Frontline*, Vol. 2, Issue 25 (December 4-17, 2004), accessed July 12, 2013, <http://Hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2125>.

<sup>12</sup>Rohit Mullick, Neelam Raaj, “Panchayats turn into Kangaroo Courts”, *The Times of India*, September 9, 2007, accessed July 13, 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/stoi/deep-focus/Panchayats-turn-into-kangaroo-courts/articleshow/2351247.cms>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Khap Panchayat has called for the arrest of the “Self Styled” decision makers and proactive action by the police to protect the fundamental rights of the people. It also asked for the recommendations being converted as directions to all states and the union, till a law is enacted by the parliament.<sup>14</sup>

A Dalit girl in Haryana committed suicide after she was gang raped by four youths. Instead of condemning the incident, the Khap said girls should be married off early so that rapes can be avoided. The Khap has had nothing to say about how it would discipline the perpetrators of rapes.

In Uttar Pradesh, Khap Panchayats in western parts of the state have ruled against women carrying or using mobile phones, wearing jeans or other western attire.<sup>15</sup>

The sheer indifference of politicians and vote-bank politics allows the Khap Panchayat’s writ to run amok. Recently, Congress president Sonia Gandhi visited the residence of the Dalit girl in Haryana who committed suicide after being allegedly gang raped. Though Sonia condemned the incident, she didn’t voice a word against the congress-headed state government.

## **II.1 Muslim Community and Fatwas**

Fatwa is basically an Islamic legal opinion which has its roots in the Islamic history. A fatwa, in the Islamic faith, is the technical term for the legal judgment or learned interpretation that a qualified jurist or mufti can give on issues pertaining to the Islamic Law. In Sunni Islamic law any fatwa is non-binding, whereas in Shia Islam it could be considered by an individual as binding, depending on his or her relation to the scholar. The person who issues a fatwa is called a Mufti, i.e. he gives a formal legal opinion on issues. This is not necessarily a formal position since most Muslims argue that anyone trained in Islamic law may give an opinion (fatwa) on its teachings.<sup>16</sup> However, in modern times, starting from Khomeini’s fatwa against Salman Rushdie, this has become an institution synonymous with creating chaos in the society. Recently, very controversial fatwas related to Muslim women came to limelight in India, and brought dilemmas in the Indian society. This is also highly mythical in the society that fatwa is binding in nature and every Muslim is obliged to follow this. However, being a mere legal opinion, fatwa is not binding at all. It is only Mufti, not even Imam, who alone, can issue fatwa only in response to the query referred to them. It is up to the Mustafti i.e. one who

<sup>14</sup> J. Venkatesan, “Stamp out khappanchayats: court,” *The Hindu*, April 20, 2011, accessed July, 14, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/stamp-out-khap-panchayats-court/article1710337.ece>.

<sup>15</sup> “NDTV- News Home-Khap Panchayat” (for details on various kinds of Khap decisions), accessed July 12, 2013, <http://www.ndtv.com/topic/Khap-Panchayat>.

<sup>16</sup> “Fatwa,” accessed July 12, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatwa>.



questions, whether to accept the fatwa or not and if he/she is not satisfied with that opinion then he can refer the matter to some other Mufti. These fatwas mostly reflect misogynist tendencies as they are issued by the male clergy. The Quran has given various rights to women in the patriarchal society and uplifted not only their social status but equipped them with several important rights, for example, the right to choose their partner in marriage, the right to divorce, and maintenance rights during and after marriage etc. But despite this, Muslim women more often do not get their rights in practice. Muslim clergy denies their rights and enforces duties on them in reverse manner of the Quran. They often issue Fatwa on women to take back the rights that the Quran has granted them.

Fatwas reflect the misogynist tendencies operating in the garb of religious pluralism/freedom. Religion is exploited by the patriarchal forces to issue anti-woman commands. It is to say that the foremost victims of all these acts are women, be it with regard to the Hindu or Muslim religion.

## **II.2 The issue of Uniform Civil Code**

The Indian state is committed to the modern values of “equality” and “liberty” to all irrespective of caste, creed, sex and religion. However, India’s reservations regarding the implementation of gender equality in the matters of “personal laws” (a freedom given to various religious groups to have their own personal laws instead of a Uniform Civil Code) despite being a signatory to CEDAW and despite its Constitutional commitment to UCC is enough to show the dominance of religious freedom or else that of fundamentalism in the name of religion over universal human rights values of equality and human dignity.

There are a number of discriminatory provisions and practices that deny women equal rights and a treatment based on human dignity that underlies any definition of human rights. For instance, Polygamy is prohibited in India but is permissible for Muslims on religious grounds. Similarly, unequal property rights, discriminatory maintenance laws are a few examples of how human rights of equality are clearly denied to women in different religious communities in India in the name of the freedom of religion. For a long-long time, even in the Hindu Community, a number of inhuman practices, like Sati and widow exploitation existed, in the name of religion. Personal laws were also discriminatory and did not give equal property/inheritance rights to women but the State in the first decade of being a republic initiated reforms in the personal laws of Hindus despite resistance from right wing Hindu organisations like RSS and Hindu Mahasabha. Religious Freedom was clearly made subordinate to the human rights, to equality and human dignity. India despite being a signatory of CEDAW maintained an exception in the matters of personal laws and that any interference/reformation in these laws in the

light of human rights and human equality could be possible only with the consent of the concerned community.

### **II.3 The reassertion of Muslim identity since 1992**

1992 can well be considered a watershed year in the history of India since independence, where except for the brief period of partition, there has never been an incidence of demolition of the religious structure of a minority community. It was in 1992 that the historical Babri mosque was demolished by the so called Hindutava forces. The demolition puts a question mark on the secular credentials of the Indian state and its inability to protect the fundamental freedom of religion to the minority community. It not only widened the rift between Hindus and Muslims but also resulted in the reassertion of Muslim identity.

#### **Conclusion: Where are we going?**

From the above it becomes amply clear that the universality of human rights is watered down by relative culturalism. In India, religious pluralism is creating obstacles in the observance of the universal human rights values of equality and human dignity. It is important to note that it is not due to the liberal tradition implied in the cultural and religious pluralism but due to the obscurantist fundamentalist forces that are responsible for obstructing the adoption of liberal democratic values underlying the human rights philosophy. Therefore there is an urgent need to rethink the issues involved in the implementation of universal human rights. There is a need to make a balance between the religious freedom and human rights. It calls for re-examination as to how far and what kind of religion rights/freedom is/are permissible within the framework of universal human rights philosophy.

This should evolve an adjustment between human rights and religious rights. It needs to be determined as to how far and what kind of religious rights/freedom is/are permissible under the human rights. Religious freedom and human rights can be reconciled in a pluralist state like India by drafting secular laws related to a number of issues pertaining to the problem of violation of human rights such as anti-communal laws, anti-discrimination laws, rape laws, and domestic violence acts where the laws are universal, and gender, caste and religion neutral. With regard to the uniform civil codes aiming at gender equality, state as well as non-state actors, like civil society, need to take initiative, as sensitizing and educating the masses, particularly the minorities, so that there is demand from within the community for reforming the personal laws as it happened in the case of Christians and Parsees. A pro-human rights environment has to be created for sustaining a healthy culturally and religiously plural society.

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*Antoine J. Saad\**

## ***NEUROSCIENCE OF SPIRITUALITY & POLITICO-RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS***

**Abstract:** Since the dawn of humanity, spirituality, in all of its forms, has been a focus of interest in all cultures, whether at a philosophical level or at the level of daily life and practicality. This quest has reverberated throughout the evolution for a multitude of cultures. Neuroscience has been able to reveal commonalities related to religious practice and experience that are independent of specific religious affiliation.

**Keywords:** *neuroscience, spirituality, religion, politics*

### **Introduction**

For millennia, people have been interested in the workings of their own minds. This interest has found expression in disciplines as diverse as philosophy, anthropology, medicine, history, sociology and psychology. Today, neuroscience addresses the mind as arising from the brain, a biological organ, although this is still a debatable subject. Brains mediate our daily experiences at every level, from breathing and sleeping to making decisions, loving, learning and even praying. Neuroscience is starting to provide explanations for every aspect of behavior. Tens of thousands of neuroscientists now examine brain function at levels ranging from molecules to cells to circuits to the whole brain and even to the mind and soul. Although neuroscience is often taught in terms of pathology, this is an excessively limited view. We use our brains in our every action. Understanding the brain can illuminate our daily lives and what it means to be an individual as well as a member of society.

For many, science and religion address two fundamentally distinct realms of human experience, but scientists and theologians are increasingly discovering that these realms intersect. Neuroscience is tackling some of life's biggest questions

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while shedding new light on humanity's most ancient and enduring beliefs and practices. Why Do We Have a Spiritual Brain? We humans possess highly evolved brains that enable us to create sophisticated systems of religious beliefs and practices. Examining the theories that seek to explain the development of this astounding organ is showing how and why we have such a powerful inclination to search for a spiritual realm.

The brain is structured in several sections, governs a variety of systems and functions, and is the central processing unit of the human body. Delving into the inner workings of this elusive organ by means of modern neuroscience will help determine how various brain processes may be involved in religious and spiritual experiences. Pursuing knowledge by means of science requires a disciplined methodology. This methodology is based on experimental approaches to its subject. Dissecting the various ways in which science attempts to investigate religious phenomena will allow us to better understand these spiritual experiences in an effort to determine their ultimate nature and makeup.

### **Neurophilosophy**

Rene Descartes' philosophy of the mind, known through his theory of "dualism," assumed that mental phenomena are non-physical or, in other terms, the mind and body are not identical. His notion of the separation between mind and body has infused different disciplines and intellectual arenas overriding the opposite worldview based on the unity principle. According to the unity principle, humans have no attributes, just "given" names, not to be confused with their essence, confusing illusion with reality. Example: I am not my name which is only a given name. Therefore, the central question remains: WHO ARE WE ? Physical or Mental? Neither or both?

Many other aspects of dichotomy may follow in the same way: Body vs. Mind, Egoism vs. Altruism, Object vs. Subject, Personal vs. Public, Ignorance vs. Knowledge, Leader vs. Follower, Theory vs. Fact, Pain vs. Pleasure, Exclusive vs. Inclusive, Relative vs. Absolute, Text vs. Context, Determinism vs. Free will, Creation vs. Evolution, Numerator vs. Denominator, Conservative vs. Liberal, Traditional vs. Progressive, Native vs. Immigrant, Inside vs. Outside, Part vs. Whole, Left hemisphere vs. Right hemisphere, Woman vs. Man, Me vs. Others, I vs. We and many more...

### Neuroscience of Religion/Spirituality

Religion has been a fundamental part of human culture for millennia. If the human brain is hard-wired for religious activity, then why do some people's brains reject the notion of the divine altogether? The answer requires analyzing the current neuroscientific evidence for the differences between the brains of believers and nonbelievers.

It has been shown that human brains develop spiritually and are capable of producing complex spiritual thoughts and states. At what age does this capacity begin? How does this capacity change throughout the lifetime? Tracing the development of the brain from infancy into adulthood and seeing how this physiological transformation corresponds to progressive stages of religious belief is an important element in this regard.

#### *Why do we believe anything at all?*

From a neuroscientific perspective, if anything is supposed to represent everything that exists, everything out there in reality, then somewhere within that is each one of us, and each one of our brains, are floating around, so to speak, trying to absorb a vast amount of information. It is an infinite universe for all intents and purposes. We are able to be subjected to only a very, very small amount of that information. Obviously there are multiple influences, but we are only able to perceive and understand what is going on around us right now in this present time-space realm of existence.

For instance, if we talk to somebody for 45 minutes, they will perhaps remember three or four things as their take-away message. It is sobering that our brain's consciousness can only retain a very small amount of information. So our brain is trying to put together a construction of our reality, a perspective on that reality, which we rely on heavily for our survival, for figuring out how to behave and how to act and how to vote. But again, the brain is filling in many gaps and helping us think certain things that may or may not really be there. That is the benefit of having the transcripts these days, because you might say, "That is what this guy said." Then you go back to the transcript, and you say: "I guess he really didn't say it that way, or it was taken out of context" ... by the distortedly pre-programmed brain inhabiting my skull.

*So what are beliefs from a scientific perspective?*

Again, I am defining beliefs biologically and psychologically as any perception, cognition, emotion, or memory that a person consciously or unconsciously assumes to be true. The reasons why I define beliefs in this way are multi-faceted. One is that we can begin to look at the various components that make up our beliefs. We can talk about our perceptions. We can talk about our cognitive processes. We can talk about how our emotions affect our beliefs. And we can also consider how they ultimately affect us. Are we aware of the beliefs we hold? Or are they unconscious? And which ones are unconscious and which ones are conscious?

Several interesting studies have demonstrated that when you show faces of a person of a different race to people, it activates the amygdala, the area that lights up when something of motivational importance happens to us. But if you show pictures depicting people of a different race who are known to them, and maybe it is a famous person or a friend, then the amygdala doesn't light up. So they tend to have this ability to culturally, cognitively overcome what might be their initial response.

That becomes important because now they go out into the world and respond to things. There may be certain unconscious approaches they take to the world, or certain unconscious beliefs they hold, that may have a deep impact on what they do, and how they behave, and how they think, and how they vote.

We can examine all these different forces on our beliefs. We can look at our perceptual processes, our cognitive processes, the emotions we have, the social interactions we have, to see how beliefs are so heavily influenced. One point I always hope to get across is that as much as we hold onto our own beliefs very strongly - and I think it is appropriate for us to do so - we also have to keep in mind they are far more tenacious than we often like to believe.

Let me review some of these processes in a bit more detail. Let's talk about our perceptions. The brain is out there trying to interpret all of this information. It is trying to take in a huge amount of information and make out some coherent picture of the world for us. But, unfortunately, the brain makes lots of mistakes along the way. The most important problem with that is it doesn't bother to tell us when it does make a mistake. We just go along happily as if we really understand everything going on around us, even though the brain is really misperceiving things drastically.



By way of example, in visual illusions, our brain is shaping the way we see the world and doing it in a way that is inaccurate. Yet it is telling you that you are seeing it correctly. There is no way to convince oneself otherwise.

Now we transition to the cognitive functions of the brain and the relationship between the heart and the head when we make decisions. Of course we use cognitive processes to make decisions and help us decide things about the beliefs we should hold. We use various parts of our brain to do that. This raises all kinds of questions. How much should we assume we can understand about the cause and effect of what we are doing today? Can we start to think about the evaluation of opposites?

This is something our brain loves to do. We don't really like the gray areas in the world. We like things to be left or right. We like things to be right or wrong, moral or immoral. That isn't the way the world is. But our brain likes us to categorize things one way or another. So we tend to construct our beliefs around these different cognitive poles of our brain, and it helps us find proofs that reinforce those beliefs. It also helps us to maintain our beliefs. So if we happen to be liberal or conservative, then when we examine the various issues and information that enter our awareness, we evaluate them from the perspective of the belief system we start out with, and we start to use our rational, logical processes to argue for the information that supports our beliefs or against the information that might go against our beliefs.

The brain parts involved in this complex mental activity are many. Firstly, there is the parietal lobe, which is very involved in abstract reasoning and quantization. Parts of the parietal lobe are involved in helping us orient ourselves in the world and establishing a relationship between ourselves and the rest of the world. Secondly, there is the temporal lobe, which is situated along the side of the brain, and includes the cortex areas that help us understand language, and the inner parts of the temporal lobe are where our limbic system is located. These help us with understanding our emotional responses to whatever stimuli are out there in the world. Thirdly, the frontal lobe helps us with our behaviors and executive functions: the functions of deciding what we need to do: what we're going to do tomorrow, keeping our schedule, keeping our checkbook, and so forth, while also mediating our emotional responses. There is a push-pull between our frontal lobe and limbic system that can get out of whack sometimes. If we get over-emotional, our frontal lobes shut down, and if we become over-logical, our emotional areas shut down. There is a lot of push and pull that goes on in these different parts of the brain.

Emotions are also important for placing value on beliefs. So it's not just that we feel we should do something for the environment, it's not just that we feel we should be a Catholic or a Protestant, but we start to imbue those choices with emotions. We feel strongly about the ways in which we believe and of course this can help us form beliefs.

When you're listening to a speech by somebody you agree with, it probably makes you feel emotionally good. And if you're listening to a speech presented by somebody you don't like, it makes you feel emotionally bad, and then you're much less likely to remember the bad speech, or you're much more likely to reject it because of the emotional responses it elicits.

The downside of our emotions can be given by how they help us defend our beliefs. There has been substantial research concerning the moment when people start to feel combative and antagonistic toward people who disagree with them. This can be how we start to see religious conflicts occurring throughout the world: It is not just that people disagree with each other, but that they get emotional about it. They start to feel hatred; they start to feel anger, and that can foment all kinds of antagonisms, and ultimately lead to violence, which is obviously a big problem for how we deal with the differences in our beliefs.

The emotional areas of the brain are found in a part of the brain called the limbic system, which is embedded in the more interior parts of the brain. The amygdala, for instance, tends to light up whenever something of motivational importance happens to us. The hippocampus, which is right behind that, helps to regulate our beliefs, but also helps to regulate our emotions and write into our memories the ideas that come about from emotionally salient events. That is why we all remember exactly what was happening to us on September 11, 2001, but very few remember what happened on September 10, unless it had some emotional value to us like a birthday or an anniversary or something important happening in our life.

The social milieu becomes very important in influencing our beliefs. We are continuously influenced by those around us. This goes all the way back to childhood and the influence of our parents, who help us to form our initial beliefs, which wire into our brain at a very early age the beliefs we carry with us throughout our lives. That is why it is difficult to change our religious beliefs. It is difficult to even change political beliefs as time goes on. Looking at the larger population, very few people ultimately do change their beliefs in a dramatic way because they are hardwired deeply into our brain at very early ages. But ultimately, as we grow up, we can be influenced, and we can change those beliefs, and that is part of what we have to look at: exactly how and why this happens.

So how do these beliefs form physiologically, and what does this tell us about religious and spiritual ideas, and why religion and spirituality are so ingrained in so many individuals and have been in every culture and every time? There are a couple of statements I like to use. One concept, from the writings of Donald Hebb, is that neurons that fire together, wire together. There is physiological support for this notion, that the more you use a particular pathway of neurons, the more strongly they become connected to each other. There are chemical messengers and other support neurons that do that.

Think very simplistically back to how we remember that one plus two equals three. When we were in school, we said, „One plus two equals three”, and we were drilled in repetition, so that ultimately this pathway was imprinted firmly. The pathway “One plus two equals four” was eliminated from the brain. It did exist at one point, but we got rid of it. We prune a lot of the neural connections we have as a child, so we ultimately go forward in our lives with a set of parameters through which we look at the world.

The other idea about neurons is the old „use-it-or-lose-it” concept, that when we stop thinking about certain things, when we stop focusing on something, then those connections go away. We all probably took courses in college we remembered consistently at the time, but if we are not doing it anymore, then we don't remember it anymore.

How do we begin to invoke that? The practices and rituals that exist within both religious and non-religious groups become a strong and powerful way to write these ideas into our brain. Again, going back to the idea that the neurons that fire together wire together, the more we focus on a particular idea, whether it is political or religious or athletic, the more this idea is written into our brain, and the more that becomes our reality. So that is why when we go to a church or a synagogue or a mosque, and they repeat the same stories, and we celebrate the same holidays that reinforce that, we say the prayers, and we say these things over and over again, there are the neural connections that get stimulated and strengthened. That is a strong part of why religion and spirituality make use of various practices valuable for hardwiring those beliefs strongly into who we are.

### **Spirituality and Health**

Many studies have shown the positive and transformative effects on health of religious or spiritual experiences or practice. Their importance is shown in the study by Koenig et al. in 1999 on the survival rate of around 4,000 people aged 65 and over during a six-year period. They showed that those who went to Church

once a week or more were likely to live around 10 years longer than those who did not. There has been much discussion as to why religion should protect believers from mental illness and why they should be healthy? Or which is the way that the immune system is affected by spiritual beliefs?

In summary, stress mediated by the frontal lobes of the brain stimulates the hypothalamus, which releases corticotrophin releasing hormone, and this leads the pituitary gland to secrete ACTH which stimulates the adrenal gland to release Cortisol. Cortisol is a stress hormone and high levels of it lead to anxiety and depression but it is also an important hormone as it acts on the immune system modifying the immune cell profiles.

These immune cell profiles feedback via the cytokine system onto the hypothalamus and thus modify the Cortisol cycle. This system shows that the brain is very sensitive to immune system changes. One study shows that after their spouses' death, a number of subjects developed cancer: those who did had a high traumatic grief score. Thus mental state is important in determining the likelihood of developing cancer.

The opposite is also true. Uchino et al. in 1996 carried out a review of studies which looked at immune functioning and social support. Their review showed that in groups that had social support, improved immune functioning, and more stable cardiovascular systems, reduced Cortisol levels were found. Thus there is clear evidence of mental state and support being very important in maintaining physical health.

### **Neuropolitics**

This disciplinary domain investigates the interplay between the brain and politics, posing classic questions from political science as to how people make political decisions, form political attitudes, evaluate political candidates, and interact in political coalitions.

Political psychology aims to understand interdependent relationships between individuals and contexts that are influenced by beliefs, motivation, perception, cognition, information processing, learning strategies, socialization and attitude formation. Political psychological theory and approaches have been applied in many contexts such as: leadership roles; domestic and foreign policy making; behavior in situations of ethnic violence, war and genocide; group dynamics and conflict; racist behavior; voting attitudes and motivation; voting and the role of the media; nationalism; and political extremism. In essence, political

psychologists study the foundations, dynamics, and outcomes of political behavior using cognitive and social explanations.

One example of a study illustrating the political brain in action was conducted by Jason Mitchell of Harvard University. His research suggested that people tend to select their political party affiliation either by a process of simulation (self-identification with the political ideals of a given party) or, alternatively, by a process of confrontation (active dislike of the opposing party). Neuroimaging research (brain scans) demonstrates this exact effect when individuals are asked to conceptualize visually same-group political figures and out-group political figures. In these cases, two different regions of the prefrontal cortex are activated, according to the stance of the political leader visualized. These two regions correspond, respectively, to the parts of the brain that are activated when an individual consciously considers the “self” and the “other”.

### **Conflicts: The Theory of ICD “Identity Crisis Disorder”**

From the dawn of humanity, humans have always struggled with the question of “Who am I?” and this question persists. Even though they have, unconsciously, tricked their own minds by using labels for self-identification, they continued looking for more in the extra-sensory world where they naturally belong. This chronically-disturbing condition is something that I have pondered for several years and I have created a term to describe it which I call “ICD” or “ECD” (Existential Crisis Disorder). This condition makes the sufferer always in need of approval, recognition, acceptance, and deep feelings of belonging. All of these needs, if not fulfilled, may generate negative emotions such as fear, hatred, frustration, anger, etc. and this, in turn, can become a chronic emotional disorder that can aggravate the ICD condition, leading to a vicious circle. The only exit from this circle that humans have discovered is through creating a balance of double satisfaction (PP balance):

- First, on the **Personal** level, we became **Pleasure-Seekers**.
- Second, on the **Public** level, we became **Power-Seekers**.

On the first level, any activity stimulating the pleasure-reward pathway in the brain responsible for a hyper-dopaminergic addictive state could be responded to by sex, drugs, etc. On the second level, power can be acquired through either or all of the following options: Money, Politics, and Religion. Finally, this sense of incompleteness generates greed and competition which will be translated into wars and conflicts. This occurs first on the intrapersonal level, to be projected afterwards on the interpersonal, social, national and international levels.

## **Reconciliation**

Peace will never be possible in the world unless we humans develop awareness about who we really are and become prepared to do all it takes to live up to it.

### *The good NEWS about the BIG PICTURE*

Humanity is suffering because of a partial worldview, while in reality, humans are complete and they don't know it, due to a lack of self-awareness. The solution to any conflict or tension, whether personal, social, national or international, lies only in the understanding of "who we really are". Human nature, at its essence, consists of four dimensions that can be likened to the four directions of cross-shaped space (North, East, West, and South = NEWS). These four essential dimensions include the body (individual), the heart (society), the mind (universe) and the soul (consciousness).

Let us start with the most obvious part: the human body is marvelous on all levels, whether structural or functional. The structure is designed in mysterious ways based on its complex DNA, responsible for its own renewal and its unique constitution leading to RNA and protein synthesis known as gene expression or phenotyping. The body holds always the possibility of changing itself with time, according to different factors affecting gene expression (epigenetics).

It is worth noting that only 3% of the human genome is expressed (euchromatin), while the remaining 97% is still dormant (heterochromatin). In addition, those 3% are only partially expressed (exons) in many different ways according to the specialty of the cells/tissues in the organism. The result is formed of biochemical substances called peptides/proteins playing different roles from substrate to enzyme to product, as well as hormones responsible for internal cellular communication (short/paracrine and long/endocrine distance) and external social communication with the outside world. For example, insulin is an anabolic protein necessary for the whole body to grow, while on the other side glucagon, a catabolic stress hormone, provides the opposite activity transforming stored food (sugar, fat, proteins) to be broken down into energy production for sustaining life. This is one of the thousands of examples in which the body exceeds our ability to understand its complexity.

Moving to the heart, there is no doubt of its major effect on general health. It has been shown that positive emotions like joy, love, appreciation, hope, etc. can alter positively an individual's biology by activating the vagus nerve, the longest of

the cranial nerves, which runs from the brain to different thoracic and abdominal organs such as the heart. This nerve sends signals to slow down calmly and safely all activities and this can be measured concretely by the index of vagus tone; the higher it is, the better the situation, while it is found to be low in different medical disorders such as cases of inflammation and heart attacks.

Reaching the mind/brain side, it is well known that every human being has been programmed since early years by specific cognitions related to personal experiences of education and culture. It is only when a person becomes an adult that he or she will have the chance to break free from the prison of earliest learned thoughts and beliefs. One way to reach this state of freedom is either reflecting or meditating, which offers the chance to change our belief system or to be in the space between thoughts where all possibilities are found. Therefore, a second option exists: to pick and choose.

Finally, the fourth dimension of human existence that we can call spirit, soul, the higher self, awareness, consciousness, etc., which lies all around us exists and in the heart of every self-aware human being. Unfortunately, humans are seldom awake to this dimension. It has been evoked and talked about since the dawn of humanity and supposedly religions are expected to bring it forward and take it from the realm of strict words in the scriptures to practical applications in real life experiences. Sadly enough, this has not been done. One way to begin is to gain insight through a half-hour of silence per day and the whole process of understanding the real reality will be launched.

To conclude, in my view, life and the whole universe are similarly made of different aspects of a functional structure from the macro to the micro and vice versa, according to previously designed rules. Humans alone, of all living creatures, are able to change their course by being conscious, and consequently able to change their own destiny for the better by simply understanding their real nature which is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent.

### **From CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) to EAST (Emotional Awareness Spiritual Teaching)**

It has been said that wisdom is essential to leading a happy, satisfying life. This wisdom has a 4-step philosophy, able to solve any kind of problem:

- 1 - Identify your feelings and label your emotions regarding the current situation.

- 2- Know that you are responsible for your emotions and not someone else or the external world, as it is something coming from within.
- 3- Emotions are transient states of mind that start and end; your emotions/feelings are not you at all.
- 4- If you learn how to change yourself, you can change the whole world.

#### 1) Emotions:

Greed, hatred, lust, anger, fear, frustration, jealousy, and many more are considered the inner evil or hidden demons of everyone. In my conception of the EAST (Emotional Awareness Spiritual Teaching) program, emotions come first as we are emoting every single second of our awakened physical life. SEL, or Socio-Emotional Literacy, will help people become emotionally educated in order to manage their emotions in the best way possible, instead of becoming a victim and projecting them onto others. The battleground is ready.

Next, Empathy, or the ability to share the feelings of others, comes into play and causes a specific activity in the nervous system of the person who is showing empathy. In such cases, we find internalized brain activity of other people's mental state. Your body language is internalized by others, which changes their brain function, so don't fill their lives with negativity. If possible, be happy and joyful! We are not islands, but in fact very closely interconnected by how one person can directly affect another's brain.

Finally, and of significant importance, is the observation that the reward circuits are activated when empathy is felt. The empathic person receives a strong reward. To reiterate, it matters what you think and how you are supported.

#### 2) Spirituality:

Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to Nature, and to the significant or sacred. Spirituality is an ongoing process aiming to awaken us from the illusion of the constructed reality in order to understand the real reality in a detached way, no matter what the religious affiliation.

This BEING or spiritual lifestyle, compared to the HUMAN or physical lifestyle, can be triggered to become dominant in our everyday life by different techniques, since both exist in us in a specific proportion at a specific moment in



time. Sometimes these two aspects fluctuate depending on the context, but without any exclusivity for one or the other.

We are Human Beings, by nature. Harmony within oneself will be extended and expanded to the outside world, and will ultimately become one and the same. Body and mind should first be synchronized, meaning it should reach the state of presence. Deep Breathing Techniques (DBT) will act on the body, activating the relaxation response through the parasympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system, while meditation/prayer will train the mind to become deliberately free from any kind of previously-programmed mindset, and the connection is there.

### **Conclusion**

Having explored how our brains construct and interpret reality, we have yet to address why we assume the correctness of our mental constructions in any area of life, whether politics or religion. The time has come to test the boundaries of our worldview and probe the possibility that spiritual experiences may speak to an underlying reality that is hidden from us in our everyday lives. Many limitations are built into the human brain, but rather than feeling despondent about this, we can find great reason for optimism. Recognizing limitations can actually make people more open to new ways of seeing and exploring reality.

In addition, the idea of integrating the perspectives of science and religion would perhaps offer people new ways of looking at the world. Whether you are religious or not - a scientist or not - as a human being, you have a passion for inquiry that allows you to see if you can ask the right questions and somehow find the new paths that will lead to the answers. To this point, humanity seems to have taken one of the two approaches: the scientific approach, which typically tries to reduce reality to measurable, material quantities; and the spiritual approach, which seems to culminate in this mystical experience that is beyond the reach of science. Perhaps, however, there is also a third option. Maybe our best chance of understanding reality - indeed, of understanding ourselves - lies in taking an integrated approach to this problem that allows the spiritual perspective to inform the scientific perspective, and vice versa.

Seeing yourself in others instead of waiting for others to see you is a true challenge of going beyond religion and becoming untouchable and in this way you replace the love for Power with the power of Love... - A quotation to ponder.

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*Ramis Sattarov\**

***SPIRITUALISM WITHIN RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: SOCIAL ISSUES  
OF URBAN SHAMANISM IN TASHKENT***

**Abstract:** Since Uzbekistan gained its independence, the overall attitude towards religion has greatly changed. Within the framework of law, religious organizations have been granted free and open activity in the society. Uzbekistan is a secular state, the religious way of life and thinking lives in harmony with that of the secular in the country. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On freedom of faith and religious organizations” of 1998 secures the right of the public to profess any religion individually or in group, to observe religious customs and rites, and to offer pilgrimages to holy sites. Most of the population of Uzbekistan follows the Sunni Islam. Aside from that, there are representatives of more than 15 religious confessions in the country: Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and others. All of them act for the sake of the prosperity of the Homeland, the consolidation of national independence, as well as the promotion of political and social stability. The processes of globalization has since then increased the income of new spiritual ideas and created a synthesis between native forms of indigenous healing as well as new samples from the culturally and regionally diverse population of CIS countries and the world in a whole. This article aims to contribute to the discussions on social issues and its 'contents' in light of the urbanization processes in Tashkent. The main argument is that social actions within urban shamanism maintain the everyday spiritual needs in the community. The analysis focuses specifically on practices of solving problems related to family, marital, financial, and effect issues. It shows how these practices help people and modify the context of Tashkent.

The aim of this paper is to outline the current situation of urban shamanism in Tashkent. It examines the relationship between spiritual specialists and society, the phenomenon of urban shamanism and the emergence of spiritual business in Tashkent. The study is partly based on a 2

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year-long fieldwork in Uzbekistan (2011–2012). During this time, the author came into contact with spiritual practitioners, healers, had interviews with their clienteles, and attended a number of rituals that they conducted. The field study was conducted at a time when these practices had already “grown”, i.e. they had recruited a vast number of members and attracted enough clients to operate, but still had not reached the stage of economic prosperity.

**Keywords:** *Urban shamanism, religion, spiritual practices, spiritual specialists, healers, Tashkent, Uzbekistan*

Social action in urban shamanism is a process of receiving an experience through overcoming conflict and daily problems. These actions occur in the society, which divides values, views and has common worldviews. During the field research in Tashkent, it became obvious that social action in urban shamanism could be reasoned with the malfunctioning of social relations which can't be solved by usual means. This is followed by asking for the help of urban shaman, for finding a solution of the problem. It can be done through reintegration and returning to status quo or acknowledging the existence of a crisis and the modification of social bonds. In both cases there is symbolic (metaphorical) reflection, where actors illustrate their unity in the form of social action via an urban shaman as a performer of a rite. In its turn, evaluation of ritual effectiveness in social action happens with consideration of symbols in a primary values system, infiltrated into human consciousness during the entire lifetime within local communities, therefore reflecting coherence and clear integration with the social system.

This survey was based on an ethno-sociological approach such as questionnaires and interviews.<sup>1</sup> Research covered 293 individuals from seven different city districts – Bektemir, Mirzo-Ulugbek, Unus-Abad, Chilanzar, Almazar, Shayhontohur, Uchtepa and the Tashkent suburban areas of Yangiul and Keles. Special developed 5 questionnaires types were used (Form of Ethnological Research – FER): as following – FER01 – 149 individuals; FER02 – 52 individuals; FER03 – 22 individuals; FER04 and FER05 – 70 individuals. Questionnaires were composed of blocks of questions – perception of urban shamanism, gender, age, duration of contact with healers, faith factor, social defragmentation, type of problems, social status of clienteles etc. with a total of 50 questions. Also a special questionnaire form was worked out– SFER03 developed for practicing urban healers -this had 43 questions. The survey covered people

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<sup>1</sup> The author's field research, materials and survey were carried out as part of the PhD program at the Department of Archeology and Ethnology at National University of Uzbekistan. Tashkent, 2011.

within the 20 – 70 years old range. The social structure of the participants-respondents was diverse, including farmers, industry workers, office workers, businessmen, high educated staff in institutes and colleges.

### **General Information**

Uzbekistan is situated in Central Asia, north of Turkmenistan, south of Kazakhstan. Its area is slightly larger than California. It borders Afghanistan 137 km, Kazakhstan 2,203 km, Kyrgyzstan 1,099 km, Tajikistan 1,161 km, and Turkmenistan 1,621 km. Uzbekistan is a landlocked country although it includes the southern portion of the Aral Sea and along with Liechtenstein, it is one of the only two double landlocked countries in the world with mostly mid latitude desert, long, hot summers, mild winters; semiarid grassland in the east.

### **Historical Overview**

Uzbekistan occupies the heart of Central Asia, the area historically known as Turkestan. Some of the earliest known inhabitants of this region were Indo-Iranians, who are thought to have migrated to the region around the second millennium B.C. By the 4th century B.C., after the campaigns of Alexander the Great, the trade along the Silk Road increased, and the area emerged as an important trading center; cultural contacts intensified, and a variety of religions flourished. After the Arab campaigns of the 7th and 8th centuries, Islam replaced Buddhism as the dominant religion, and by the 10th century the area had become an important center in the Muslim world. The Mongols, led by Genghis Khan, invaded the area in the 13th century and caused great destruction. During this time, migrations of nomadic Turks from the northern steppe areas increased. In the late 14th century the tribal prince Timur (Tamerlane) created a vast empire with Samarkand as its capital, but the political stability he established crumbled after his death. In the early 1500s, Shaibani Khan led a major invasion by the Uzbek tribes from the north. From this time on, the Uzbeks dominated the political life of central Turkestan. Three independent khanates, centered in Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand, dominated Turkestan between the 16th and the 19th century.<sup>2</sup>

Russia conquered the territory of present-day Uzbekistan in the late 19th century. Tashkent became the administrative center of Turkestan, and a colonial relationship was established. Cotton began to supplant other crops. The resistance

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<sup>2</sup> “The World Factbook 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013,” accessed July 12, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

to the Red Army after the Bolshevik Revolution was eventually suppressed and a socialist republic was established in 1924. During the Soviet era, intensive production of “white gold” (cotton) and grain led to overuse of agrochemicals and the depletion of water supplies, which harmed the land and left the Aral Sea and certain rivers half dry. Independent since 1991, the country seeks to gradually lessen its dependence on the cotton monoculture by diversifying agricultural production while developing its mineral and petroleum reserves and increasing its manufacturing base.

### Ethnic Groups and Religions

From September 1991 to July 1993 the Republic of Uzbekistan was officially recognized by 160 states. On March 2, 1992 Uzbekistan joined the United Nations Organizations as an equal member, and joined the Helsinki process by signing the Final Act of the Summit for Security and Cooperation. The total population is 28,661,637 (July 2013 est.). Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write, compared with to the literacy of the total population - 99.3%. Urban population is 36% of the total population (2010). The rate of urbanization is 1.4% of the annual rate of change (2010-15 est.).<sup>3</sup>

Table 1. Ethnic groups represented in Uzbekistan (1996 est.):

Uzbek	Russian	Tajik	Kazakh	Karakalpak	Tatar	Other
80%	5.5%	5%	3%	2.5%	1.5%	2.5%

Table 2. Languages:

Uzbek (official)	Russian	Tajik	Other
74.3%	14.2%	4.4%	7.1%

Table 3. Religions:

Muslim (mostly Sunni)	Eastern Orthodox	Other
88%	9%	3.0%

The Republic of Uzbekistan is a secular state, where representatives of different religions and professions co-exist peacefully. Up to date 2225 religious organizations of 16 confessions are registered in Uzbekistan. So various in

<sup>3</sup> “The Governmental portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan © 2001—2013,” accessed July 12, 2013, <http://www.gov.uz/en/>.



structure, the ethnic picture of Uzbekistan shows that the country is tolerant to religious issues and different confessions peacefully get along with each other here. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan guarantees freedom of conscience for everybody. According to the Constitution everyone has the right to profess any religion or profess none (Article 31 of the Constitution).

The prevalent religion of Uzbekistan is the Islam of Sunni sect, professed by 93 per cent of the population, except for 1 per cent of Muslim-Shiah who live in the territory of Bukhara and Samarkand.

It is important to mention that, Uzbekistan had an ancient tradition of sufism as a mystic and ascetic belief and practice in Islam. This appeared first in the West of the Islamic world (Egypt, Syria, Iraq) under the influence of eastern Christian monasticism at the turn of the VIII and IX centuries. By the X century having separated from asceticism, Sufism became an independent and progressive for its time religious philosophical-moral sect within Islam spreading widely over the whole Islamic world in the vast Arab Caliphate from Egypt to Spain in the West to Eastern Turkestan in the East, including Iran and Central Asia.

Central Asian Sufism in particular was formed under the influence of the local forms of Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Nestorianism and other eastern Iranian and religious sects of Mawarannahr that existed in pre-Islamic Central Asia. At the beginning of the XII century three large orders formed in Central Asia – the Kubrawiyya (in Khorezm), the Kadyriyachapter (in Fergana) and the Turkic fraternity of Yassawiyya founded on the basis of Yusuf al-Hamadani's teachings by AkhmadYassawy in Turkestan (the south of Kazakhstan). Various Sufi unions – tariqah were leading a fight for greater impact on believers, which sometimes took a desperate form. A lot of Sufi monuments and mansions have been preserved in Uzbekistan up until today: the memorial complex of Bakhaud-din Nakshbandi in Bukhara suburb, the Khoja Akhrar Mosque and Tomb, Gur Emir Mausoleum, Ruhabad Mausoleum and others in Samarkand, the Sheikh Zainutdinbobo Mausoleum, referred to the Sukhravardiya Order in Tashkent; also the Shaikhantaur Mausoleum and Mausoleum of Kaffal Shashi in the capital. The Zangiata Mausoleum in the suburbs. Furthermore several female Sufi mansions where women could only join were established in Central Asia. The Kiz Bibi complex was the most prominent among them. All these places are holy for Sufis and possess healthfulness. People from far off countries are coming there to find healing and wisdom.

The next dominant religion according to the number of believers is Christianity: Orthodoxy (4%), and Catholicism (3%), In 2011 Uzbekistan will celebrate the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Russian Orthodox Church in Middle Asia. It is easy to count that Orthodoxy came here in 1871 together with joining of these lands to the Russian Empire and the establishment of Tashkent and Turkistan

eparches. The church under the Tashkent hospital was established the same year. Today it turned into the most beautiful Cathedrals of the Holy Dormition – the main church of the Tashkent eparch. The majority of believers come here, although there are more churches in Tashkent (for example, the church of Alexander Nevskiy at the Botkin cemetery, the church of patriarch Ermogen, the church of the great prince Vladimir). There are some beautiful and ancient churches in other cities of Uzbekistan – in Samarkand (Cathedral of Saint Aleksey), in Kokand (The Church of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God) etc. Also, the convent of Saint Nikola is opened in Tashkent (this is the first opened convent in Middle Asia) and the Tashkent theological seminary.

The Catholic confession is not so large in Uzbekistan. But the church (kostel) of Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ existed in Tashkent almost for a century, which is also the beautiful sightseeing of the city.

The history of kostel begins in 1912, when its construction was started. The underlying reason for it was the growth of the catholic believers. As far back as the end of XIX century, during the military campaign of the General Kaufman on annexing Asian lands to Russia, settlers arrived, mainly comprised of military forces and exiled people, which included Germans, Lithuanians, Poles, Czechs and others. By 1917, the Soviet government reorganized the territory of the union, the church was turned into a storehouse, and later into a dormitory. Only in 1992 was the building of kostel handed over to the catholic parish of Tashkent. Sunday Masses are held there ever since.

Churches of other significant confessions in Uzbekistan include the Armenian Apostolic church and the Jewish synagogues. Speaking of synagogues, it should be noted that the Judaism of Bukharian Jews – some only part of Jews, living in the territory of Middle Asia (especially in Bukhara, hence the origin of the name). Jewish community in Bukhara is mentioned in sources of the XIII century. There, Jews lived in separate neighborhoods and engaged in weaving and dyeing crafts, and also in trade. Afterwards, Bukharian Jews began to settle in large numbers in Samarkand, Kokand, Andijan. For centuries they could preserve their language, religion and traditions. Today, the number of Bukharian Jews in cities of Uzbekistan has decreased greatly, as many left for Israel, America, Australia, Canada. Only two synagogues of Bukharian Jews remain in Bukhara, two – in Samarkand and one in Tashkent, which fell into ruin and will soon be replaced by a new one, the construction still being in progress.<sup>4</sup>

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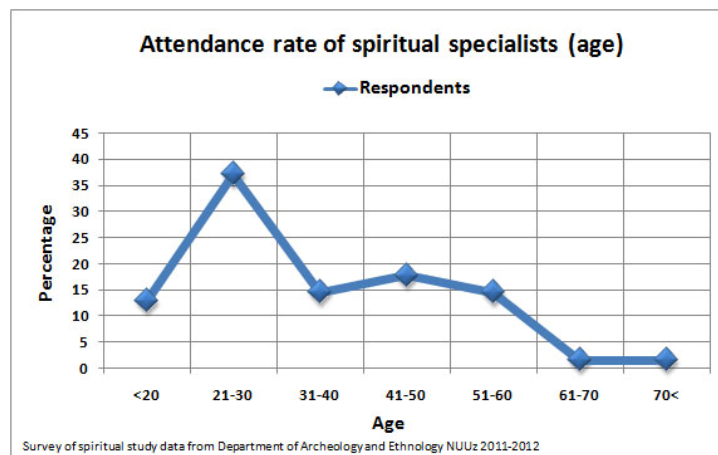
<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Table 4. Religious organizations registered on November 1, 2001 (Committee of Religious affairs of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan)

#	Religious organisation	Total	Centers	Religious organizations	Educational institutions	Monasteries	Location
1	Islam	1857	2	1844	11		Tashkent-city, Karakalpakstan, all areas
2	Russian Orthodox Church	32	1	28	1	2	Tashkent-city, Andizhan, Bukhara, Dzhizak, Fergana, Kashkadarya, Navoi, Samarkand, Surkhandarya, Syrdarya, Tashkent areas
3	Roman Catholic Church	3	1	2			Tashkent-city, Fergana, Samarkand areas
4	Evangelical Christian Baptist Church	23	1	22			Tashkent-city, Bukhara, Dzhizak, Fergana, Khorezm, Navoi, Namangan, Samarkand, Tashkent areas
5	Full Gospel Church	22	1	20	1		Tashkent-city, Andizhan, Bukhara, Fergana, Khorezm, Navoi, Samarkand, Syrdarya
6	Seventh-day Christian Adventist church	10		10			Tashkent-city, Bukhara, Fergana, Navoi, Samarkand, Tashkent areas
7	Evangelical Lutheran Church	4		4			Tashkent-city, Fergana, Samarkand, Tashkent areas
8	New Apostolic Church	4		4			Tashkent-city, Bukhara, Navoi, Samarkand areas
9	"Jehovah's Witnesses" Church	2		2			Fergana, Tashkent areas
10	Armenian Apostolic Church	1		1			Samarkand area
11	Christian Church "Voice of God"	1		1			Navoi area
12	Korean Protestant churches	58		58			Tashkent-city, Bukhara, Dzhizak, Fergana, Kashkadarya, Namangan, Samarkand, Surkhandarya, Syrdarya, Tashkent areas
13	Communities of Bahai	7		7			Tashkent-city, Bukhara, Dzhizak, Kashkadarya, , Samarkand, Tashkent areas
14	Jewish religious communities	8		8			Tashkent-city, Bukhara, Samarkand areas
15	Society for Krishna Consciousness	2		2			Tashkent-city, Samarkand area
16	Bible Society of Uzbekistan	1	1				Tashkent-city
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2034</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	

### Challenges of Big City and Urban Shamanism

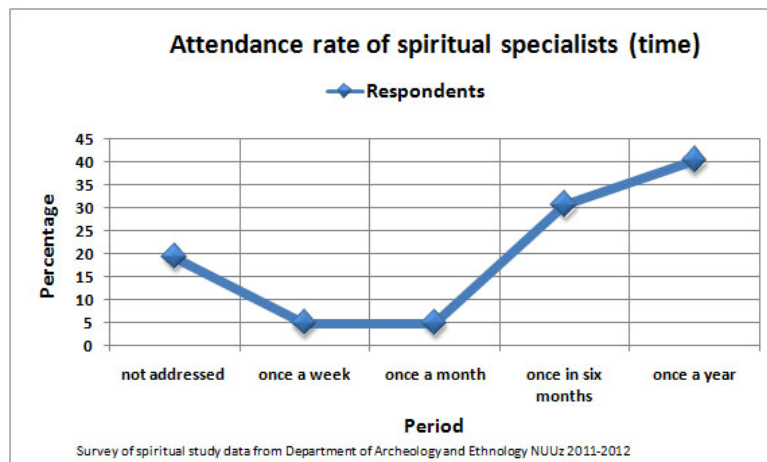
Urban shamanism in Tashkent is characterized first of all by addressing to supernatural realm which reflected in healing practices. According to the survey data the process of replacement healing with natural means (e.g. herbs) into supernatural means (e.g. spells, prayers) was sought after. That process in fact lies within the mentality of oriental society, particularly the one in Central Asia, which is defined by interlacing the empirical experience in medicine and hygiene with religious and mystical views, as the source of the problem is regarded as divine punishment for sins, or evil eye, and curse.<sup>5</sup> Comparative analysis of practices among urban and rural shamans illustrates prevalence of using amulets, spells, prayers and dealing with problems caused by supernatural powers in contrast to rural ones, which deal mainly with physiological problems caused by natural reasons (e.g. headaches). For instance, people who visited these spiritual specialists told when interviewed that if someone has problems with his/her partner, the urban shaman would give them an enchanted object to put in the partner's wardrobe in order to change the situation. Another example is the widespread use of ordering talismans or amulets for "opening the way" of fortune and welfare as a whole. The same technique is used in love issues for preparing love-potions or even in dealing with cases of depression and irritability that happen often in urban areas.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>5</sup> M. El-Islam, S.I. Abu-Dagga, "Lay explanations of symptoms of mental ill health in Kuwait," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 38 (1992): 150-6.

<sup>6</sup> P.T. Саттаров, "Элементы шаманского целительства в традиционной культуре," *Мозийдан Садо* 3, no. 39 (2008): 8-11; Саттаров, "К вопросу о шаманском целительстве в традиционной культуре," *Общественные науки Узбекистана* 3-4, no. 98-100 (2009): 98-100.

Researches support several basic similarities and differences in healing practices among urban and rural shamans; differences in praxis lay in the heterogeneity of the present day community's life conditions<sup>7</sup>. In the centre of the observed process also lay a number of profound factors such as individualization and acculturation which become more obvious in large cities than rural areas. Anthropologists recognize that urban shamanism fulfils the function of social adaptation, which determines actions aimed at solving conflicts or crisis like situations.<sup>8</sup>



For the urban society, it is typical to illustrate a tendency for significant social transformation in the process of acculturation. People who moved from rural areas to the city were influenced by the urban society and perceive their way of life on a certain level, thus getting involved into global processes. During that process, borders between old and new, internal and external are vanishing and that happens with cultural traditions as well; some of the customs get forgotten and some of them undergo transformations<sup>9</sup>.

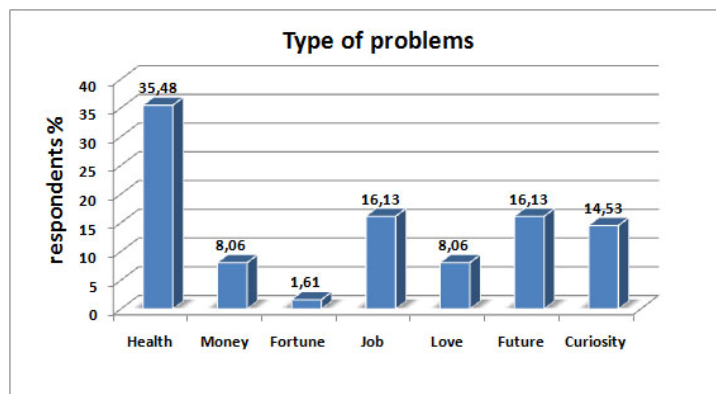
One of the reasons influencing an increase in the activity of urban shamanism in Tashkent is the transition from big patriarchal families to small

<sup>7</sup> S. Krippner, "The epistemology and technologies of shamanic states of consciousness," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7 (2000): 93-118; Larry R. Decker, "Combat Trauma: Treatment from a Mystical/Spiritual Perspective," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 47, Issue 1 (January 2007): 30-53; Alean Al-Krenawi, "Explanations of Mental Health Symptoms by the Bedouin-Arabs of the Negev," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* Vol. 45, Issue 1 (Spring 1999): 56.

<sup>8</sup> Саггаров, "Тема шаманизма в западноевропейской и американской историографии," *Ўзбекистон тарихи* 1 (2010): 54-61.

<sup>9</sup> Саггаров, "Адаптация традиционного целительства к условиям урбанизма," *Ўзбекистон тарихи* 1 (2012): 80-88.

families among young people<sup>10</sup>. During the last decade, the number of small families rapidly increased, therefore increasing proportion of marital relations in the list of problems spiritual specialists deal with. According to the survey data, in most cases women make up for the majority of their clients, who seek to eliminate the source of troubles by supernatural means or take advice to overcome the crisis. In the XX<sup>th</sup> century, the main expression of female identity was the stay at home wife status and since 1980-1990s it started to change<sup>11</sup>. Employment and financial independence led to achieving another identity - as breadwinner, which in its turn led to a conflict with traditional Uzbek families and later to an increased divorce rate. Thus, individualism or diffidence, social fragmentation makes the majority of women to address their problems to shamans. On the other hand, the increasing gap in the level of education and income affects numerous problems and diffidence. In this case, faith and relations are the stepping stones of motivational power in the constant flow of city life, fulfilling a positive function, providing stability and reinforcement for the vicissitudes of life.<sup>12</sup>



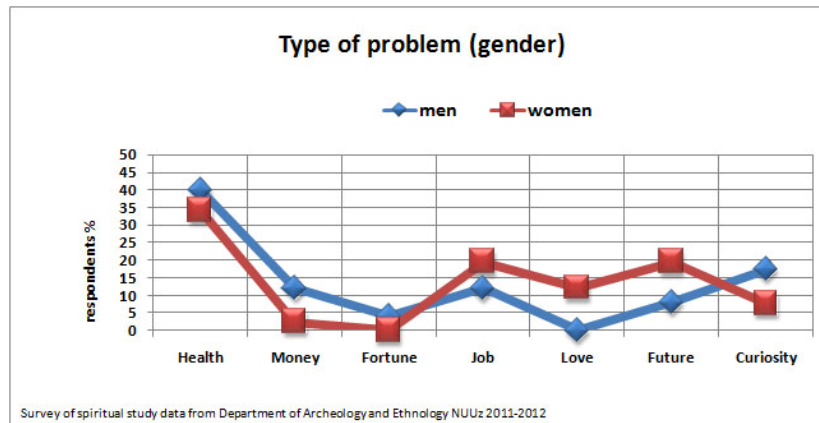
Observations illustrate a correlation in the conflict between traditional and progressive, which leads to an increase of personal and social problems which in turn lead to the need of addressing urban spiritualists. Standard medicine can deal with physical and emotional problems; however sometimes it can't manage the alterations of life conceptions and values occurring in large urban areas. Thus, in

<sup>10</sup> И. Джаббаров, *Узбеки* (Ташкент, 2007), 153-166.

<sup>11</sup> З.Х. Арифханова, Г.Ш. Зунунова, *Обрядово-ритуальная жизнь узбеков Ташкента в условиях независимости* (Ташкент, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> W.W. Meissner, "The Phenomenology of Religious Psychopathology," *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic. Boston Psychoanalytic Institute, MA* Issue 55(3) (Summer 1991): 281 – 298.; Brian M. du Toit, "Modern Folk Medicine in South Africa," *South African Journal of Ethnology* Issue 21(4) (December 1998): 142 – 52.

the last decades, a new trend started taking place in modern medicine : integration between specific patterns of alternative medicine and general medicine.<sup>13</sup>



Antagonisms between the personal and collective, modern and traditional affect people in large cities which reflects in conflicts with the cultural fixed notion. These conflicts mostly make up for the practices of urban shamans. On the other hand, widespread migration of rural youth to Tashkent and the continuing process of urbanization lead to initial alienation and in consequence to establishing a contact with a spiritual specialist. Such process leads to the weakening of family bonds and values as well as to increasing the numbers of urban shamans' clients seeking spiritual or supernatural help. Predominantly, these practices are carried out by women, however there are also men who provide spiritual assistance, although the traditional religious society blames such activity. From the women's point of view, it is profitable, suitable and legitimate to be a spiritual healer, as most of them work non prestigious poorly paid jobs. People who provide such assistance usually have secondary or higher education and are between 30 – 50 years old. They speak both Uzbek (official) and Russian (the official language in Tashkent) and are able to find a common language with traditionalists as well as with progressives. Their marital status can be described as widow/widower/divorced or remarried. Thus, urban shamanism is privately acknowledged and makes profit, even if society passively condemns it.

<sup>13</sup> L.K. Suryani, G.D. Jensen, *Trance and possession in Bali: A window on western multiple personality, possession disorder, and suicide* (Singapore, 1993); C.E. Vontress, "Traditional healing in Africa. Implication for cross-cultural counseling," *Journal of Counseling and Development* (1991): 70, 242 – 49; Philip J. Leaf, Martha Livingston Bruce, "Gender Differences in the Use of Mental Health-Related Services: A Re-Examination," *Journal Of Health & Social Behavior* 28, No. 2 (1987): 171-83.

**Traditional and holistic**

Permanent change in a culture, accompanied with historical upheavals represents an important context for urban shamans. In the conditions of the new post-soviet society challenges such as market economy reanimated the phenomenon of urban shamanism, as it addresses to deep-laid values and subjects shared by the individual and the community. In the multicultural urban layout, people face a creative transformation and a hybridization of mass culture, as well as forming superficial bonds with tradition and cultural values<sup>14</sup> Now, globalization has accelerated the process of cultural confrontation, challenges and changes which the population of Tashkent faces. The contemporary world presents new situations where tradition's coherence and its in-depth connection with culture and worldview are roughly tested. Symbols rooted in cultural traditions of many societies have become available for everyone in the course of globalization. The effectiveness of urban shamanism depends on the shared cultural consciousness whose qualitative characteristics can vary from individual to individual, from the ethnic, physiological, social and spiritual point of view. It can provoke acute contradictions for people living at the turn of different cultures.

Today there is a necessity for finding new schemes of understanding possible effectiveness of cultural models in urban shamanism. The intensity of the new stage means that individuals don't possess the same level of enculturation through childhood, when they produce intensive, effective associations<sup>6</sup>; in terms, the community doesn't possess the same level of coherence. Thus, the members of the community may not have a developed experience and unconscious knowledge giving meaning to symbols and an associated effect to a positive expectation.

Meanwhile, looking for tradition in the form of urban shamanism may strengthen the ethnic cultural identity as well as having a value meaning for those who are in a transitional state between cultural worlds and ambivalent in the existence of the old and new order. People are striving to accept new values and approaches in relation to their health, and the reason of searching and accepting all "new and best" that is part of consumerism; in addition, the reason might be in dissatisfaction of present day state institutes leading to the idealization of "traditional" and "holistic" that possibly can restore the lost values of harmony and community. In traditional community, urban shamans are part of smaller communities and their effectiveness is given by neighbors and relatives. When they distance themselves from local communities or cultural systems in urban systems, social methods of authority regulation and urban shaman practices are displaced with market dynamic.

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<sup>14</sup> Арифханова, Зунунова, Обрядово-ритуальная жизнь узбеков Ташкента.



According to the nature of social conflicts, in time of crisis, people tend to synthesize single elements of behavior from their traditional existing system with evenly changing reality to satisfy the specific social situations they collide with. Individual actions, performed by people according to their own motives and interests, are a reflection of macro processes within social systems, or the society as a whole. By analyzing social problems, urban shamanism deals with Tashkent needs of attention to social processes and analysis of structures and systems constructed for their stability. An important issue in that process encountered gradual social changes during last 20 years in terms of repeating and changing social formations. It can be referred to the Manchester school principles when a “conflict” and its settlement supports the stability of society through the destruction and then reconstruction of the bonds among the members of a community.

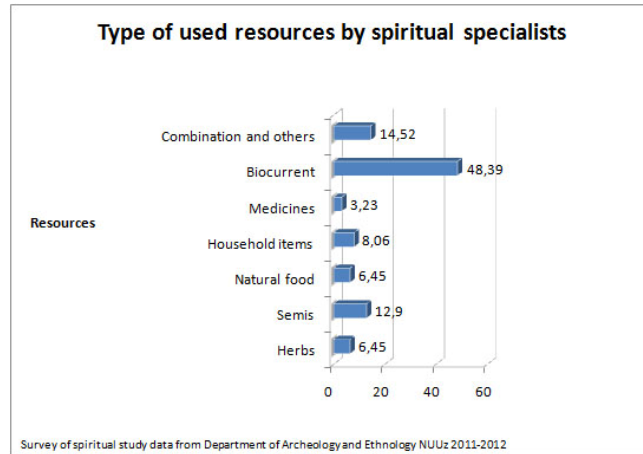
### **Individual culture**

The spectrum of problems referred by the population to urban shamans with supernatural abilities are various :health, financial welfare, family, future. Our research illustrates that financial and love issues made up 8.06%, however the “Fortune” only accounted for – 1.61%. Other answers were more popular among clients. For instance, 35.48% of the interviewed indicated that health matters was important. The second place finds problems related to the workplace and future predicting both with 16.13% correspondently. Finally only 14.53% of the interviewed chose to address urban shamans just out of curiosity. According to these factors, the way of life and outlook of the present city population are preserved elements of pre-religious development, as well as mythological etiology of present day problems<sup>15</sup> that define human nature, consciousness, the way of life etc. They are meaningful motivational forces for the city’s population, if we consider the paradigm – faith provides positive function, bringing stability and reinforcement when facing with the vicissitudes of fate and life.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Джаббаров, *Узбеки*, 153-66.

<sup>16</sup> Meissner, “The Phenomenology of Religious Psychopathology,” 281 – 298.



It is important to notice that adepts of urban shamanism in Tashkent have their own individuality, urbanism, and distance from nature; influence of religion, science, psychology; access to information about other cultures. During the research in Tashkent, it was defined that part of the city's population asking for urban shamans to heal them and recover their relatives who suffer from diseases, or daily problems brought about by evil spirits and big eye effect.<sup>17</sup> According to local sources, urban shamans can heal and foresee the future, cast a spell and protect from evil. Sometimes they use their abilities to find lost objects or "foresee" crimes in order identify the criminals. Recent anthropology researches<sup>18</sup> approved for urban shamanism a function of social adaptation<sup>19</sup> that aimed to solve unfavorable

<sup>17</sup> Joao Ricardo Faria, "The Economics of Witchcraft and the Big Eye Effect," *Kyklos* Vol. 51 Issue 4 (1998): 537-46, accessed July 12, 2013, <http://ideas.repec.org/a/bla/kyklos/v51y1998i4p537-46.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Krippner, "The epistemology and technologies of shamanic states of consciousness," 93-118; Decker, "Combat Trauma: Treatment from a Mystical/Spiritual Perspective," 30-53; Yisrael Rich, Rachel Gali Cinamon, "Conceptions Of Spirituality Among Israeli Arab And Jewish Late Adolescents," *Journal Of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 47, No. 1 (2007): 7-29; Karl Ericson, "Preventing Mental Illness: Some Personal Discoveries," *Journal Of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 26, No. 1 (1986): 61; Jeffrey S Nevid, James Morrison, "Attitudes Towards Mental Illness: The Construction Of The Libertarian Mental Health Ideology Scale," *Journal Of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 20, No. 2 (1980): 71; Mordechai Rotenberg, "Alienating-individualism and Reciprocal-individualism: A Cross-Cultural Conceptualization," *Journal Of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 17, No. 3 (1977): 3; James Morrison, "A Reappraisal of Mental Health Education: A Humanistic Approach," *Journal Of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 19, No. 4 (1979): 43; Alean Al-Krenawi, John R. Graham, "Gender and Biomedical/Traditional Mental Health Utilization Among the Bedouin-Arabs of the Negev," *Culture, Medicine & Psychiatry* Vol. 23, No. 2 (1999): 219-243.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Krenawi, Graham, "Gender and Biomedical/Traditional Mental Health Utilization Among the Bedouin-Arabs of the Negev," 56.

or conflicted situations. One of the potential answers is that the practice of urban shamanism can be organized individually without congregation, fact which was proved when the ethno sociological survey was conducted in Tashkent. One should note that such practices in the city are viable, as they don't tie people to each other and gather them into a group; it leaves to individuals to their self anonymity while "negotiating" with supernatural beings.

Otherwise, urban shamanism culture is individual, and should be understood through symbols. For instance, we can trace it up to the ancient history of the Central Asian region. Practices of urban shamans in Tashkent illustrate a synthesis of religious traditions with pre-Islamic elements<sup>20</sup>. Cultural traditions and customs have been forming during thousands of years and, in their formation, they have adopted cultural and religious values from different eras, while displaying a constant synthesis of traditions and syncretism of the phenomenon<sup>21</sup>. In explaining the existence of urban shamanism there is some interpretation in recent researches, for example in the socio-economical processes, when individuals can reach some level of authority and influence<sup>22</sup> or get legitimized in their community<sup>23</sup>, or as reaction of social fragmented groups to unknown processes of globalization<sup>24</sup> that make them suffer while others prosper<sup>25</sup>.

Elements of urban shamanism practices can be defined as rituals or praxis conducted in order to come to some concrete solutions or transform the supernatural realm; however, such activities occurred in response to specific situations which appeared as crisis or conflicts. It is known that in cases of social, economical or individual crisis, people tend to address traditional means of rehabilitation from their cultural past.<sup>26</sup>

By comparing these factors, we can observe that factors as love – 8,06%, money 8,06% account for a minimum share in their popularity among the surveyed group, although the smallest percentage was attributed to fortune – 1,61%. On the

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<sup>20</sup> Джаббаров, *Узбеки*, 153-166; Джаббаров, *Общественный прогресс, быти религия*. (Ташкент, 1973), 37; Р.М. Мустафина, "Бытовой ислам в Казахстане," in *В сб. Обычаи и обряды казахов в прошлом и настоящем* (Алматы: НИЦ Гылым, 2001) 32.

<sup>21</sup> Арифханова, Зунунова, *Обрядово-ритуальная жизнь узбеков Ташкента*, 24.

<sup>22</sup> I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession* (London: Routledge, 1998).

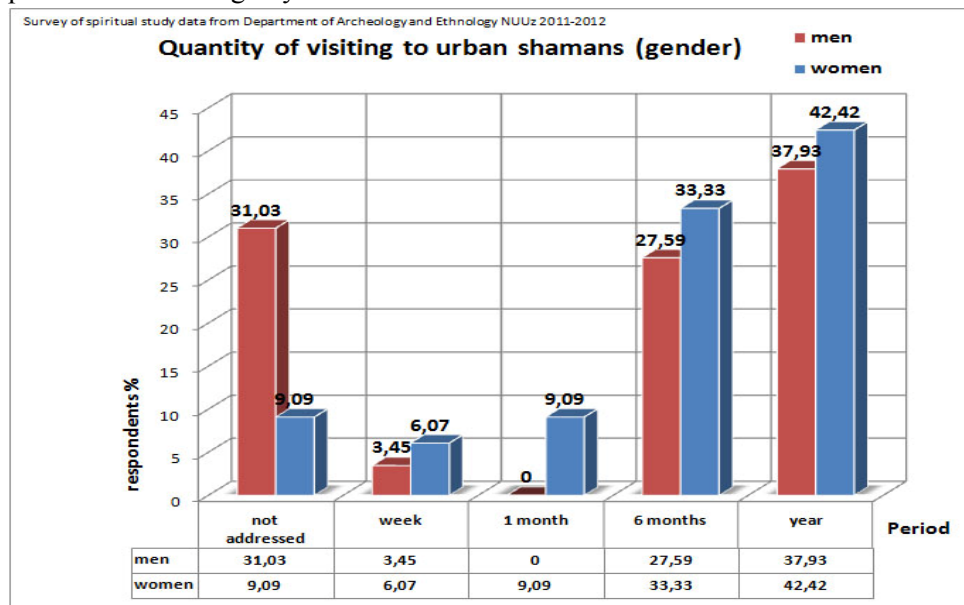
<sup>23</sup> I. Beller-Hann, "Rivalry and Solidarity among Uyghur Healers in Kazakhstan," 3 (2001): 73-98; Galina Lindquist, "The Culture of Charisma: Wielding Legitimacy in Contemporary Russian Healing," *Anthropology Today* Vol. 17, No. 2 (2001): 3.

<sup>24</sup> Jean Comaroff, John L. Comaroff, "Occult economies and the violence of abstraction: Notes from the South African postcolony," *American Ethnologist* Vol. 26, No. 2 (1999): 279-303.

<sup>25</sup> Саттаров, "Тема шаманизма в западноевропейской и американской историографии," 54-61.

<sup>26</sup> Brian M. DU Toit, "Modern Folk Medicine in South Africa," 142 – 52.

other hand, the most pressing issue was health – 35,48%, and job, fortune – for 16,13% correspondently. Curiosity accounted for 14,53% of the respondents. Furthermore, both graphic curves in the gender dimension illustrate considerable divergence in job and curiosity for women– 20% and 12% in comparison with men 20% and 8% correspondently. It is interesting that love and fortune issues show gender opposite divergence, for example for the men who participated in the survey, love issues don't represent a cause of visiting an urban shaman, while for the women it is a significant matter and on the other hand, when it comes to fortune, women are not interested, while 5% of the men are. It is worth mentioning that urban shamans use for physiological disorders a method which is very similar to psychotherapy or psychoanalysis. In both cases, the goal is to transfer internal unconscious conflicts into the sphere of conscious thinking, because they were suppressed by other psychic forces, or these processes are not of a psychic nature but a physiological one. The conflicts disappear because such knowledge makes this possible for the experience. This is final goal of an urban shaman's spells and praxis inside the big city.



There are also elements of hypnotic affection carried out on people in urban shamanism praxis in Tashkent that identifies the manifestation in their faith. For instance, one of our female respondents told us about her starting a career as a spiritual specialist: "...although I didn't know many prayers or any spells, I decided to try it. Once I had a séance with my client and I asked her to tie in a bungle red handkerchief in her pocket. She followed my request, without hesitation". Another example of evil eye as an imposed influence is presented in

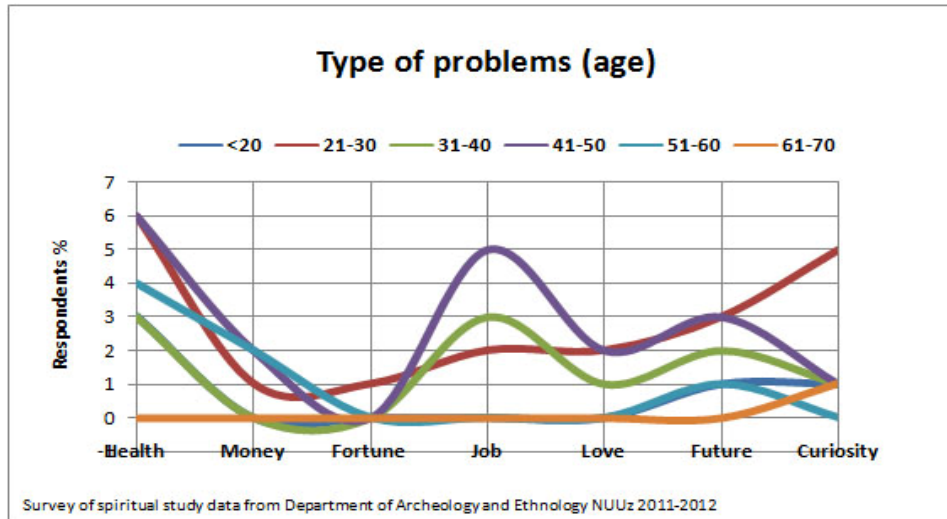
the urban witchcraft praxis. There are various types of such praxis where people were affected by evil eye or curses. Psycho-specialists describe this condition as taking place when a disease has a psycho-somatic origin, caused by the awareness of being cursed or put under the evil eye curse; however, that definition can be described by a person, who, in spite of being physically healthy, becomes aware of the probability being cursed with evil eye at any moment, the curse being imposed by enemies<sup>27</sup>.

One episode illustrates the case of casting a curse on a person in the urban area. A young lady brought to an urban healer her old mother in law who had problem with her eyes. The old woman had a daughter who practiced black magic, and it influenced all her close family relatives. After a couple of meetings, the healer felt herself very bad and was taken to a hospital. The healer told to the old woman not to come any more as her daughter's black magic was very strong. So we can observe in this example the fact that an illness origination from knowing and expectation the impact of a negative "energy" i.e. black magic or envy. According to the surveyed data, an evil eye curse can be cast upon person by envious people, who suffer from their problems and transfer their suffering to successful people. Such connection creates a negative effect in the relationships between people and it manifests itself in the form of instantly repeated psychosomatic disorders. Upon seeing this envious people will repeat the action thus establishing a vicious circle.

It is worth to note that many of the respondents generally consider witchcraft – evil and harmful magic– as one of the major reasons of evil eye and curse origination. However, in many cases, the source of evil was in the circle of close family relatives, as show by the data in the survey. For instance, one of the persons in the survey, Rachima, told us that a cursed person or object can also transmit a negative effect to people they communicate with (for example, to husband or wife, to children, friends and so on). The person affected by witchcraft becomes nervous and depressed or can be a carrier of evil. Such views are shared by a number of people, according to whom that evil eye or envy in most cases comes from their own families, close relatives or friends and rarely indeed from strangers. Thus, the reason for envy can be rooted not in person's richness but in his/her success or well-being.

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<sup>27</sup> Walter Bradford Cannon, "Voodoo Death," *American Journal Of Public Health* Vol. 92, no. 10 (2002): 1593- 6; E.E. Griffith, P. Ruiz, "Cultural factors in the training of psychiatric residents in an Hispanic urban community," *Psychiatric Quarterly* Vol. 49, no. 1 (1977): 29–37.



If we sum up the survey indicators for the respondents of age, it is clear that the problem of health is very important for all age groups. It is to be noted that the second place in youth group is held by curiosity, while in middle age group it goes to job problems. The third place in both groups is taken by the will to foresee the future; however, the aged group (51 years and older) is not interested in clairvoyance and they choose to focus on more important issues, such as health and money. Graphics illustrate that although 40 % of the respondents visit urban shamans no less than once during year. On the other hand, 9.6 % – visit a shaman no less than once in a week or month and 30.65 % – from couple of months to half a year. Only 19.35 % of the respondents never got in touch with a shaman.

There were similar research studies which tried to investigate the interconnection between intended witchcraft and the origin of illnesses. For example, by comparing the survey data in gender dimension, we can see following situation. 40 % of men consider that health problems are an important reason to visit urban healers for and 20 % do it because of curiosity, while women perceive it more serious with only 8 % seeing shamans out of curiosity and 35 % because of health problems. The money issue force men to address spiritual specialists four times more than women do – 12 % and 3 % correspondently.

## Conclusion

Representatives of different religions have been living in harmony in Uzbekistan; however, the processes of globalization and urbanization, individualization and acculturation, the transition from an extended to a small family, all this defined a new image for urban shamanism in Tashkent. The urban shaman is different from the rural one and the distinction comes from the environment, age, level of education, traditional or progressive way of thinking and marital status. Moreover, spiritual specialists in the city have large numbers of clients, of various social levels and ages and at the same time make profit of it. On the base of illustrated taxonomy, we can conclude that the surveyed group was inclined to see the cause of their problems predominantly in the supernatural field, however they limit this to the context of human actions (i.e. evil eye, witchcraft, or envy – human factor) taking into consideration that supernatural influence is provoked first of all with human actions and not otherwise.

Life crisis and disappointment in life caused by a loss of faith and the deep urban socializing environments can seriously influence an internal conflict, depression and following social fragmentation and alienation. The way urban shamans practice requests a mutual belief in the healer's supernatural power and the successful outcome; in the same way, the clinician specialists work in hospitals<sup>28</sup>. Thus, we can conclude that the supporting factors for sustaining urban shamanism in Tashkent are firstly the fact that the local population has a profound faith in people with supernatural abilities. In addition, faith sometimes was the only thing that could help people to overcome the problems in life. The faith issue is a rather serious element, or even a key factor indicated by previous conducted ethno-sociological research in Tashkent.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, most illnesses would probably disappear in time, and addressing them to urban shamans just adds influence to shamans. Thirdly, methods and herbs urban shamans use rather effectively in treating illnesses and diseases. In medicine,

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<sup>28</sup> Andrew J. Weaver, Kevin J. Flannelly, "The Role of Religion/Spirituality for Cancer Patients and Their Caregivers," *Southern Medical Journal* Vol. 97, no. 12 (1997): 1210 – 14; Al-Krenawi, Graham, "Social work and traditional healing rituals among the Bedouin of the Negev, Israel," *International Social Work* Vol. 39, No. 2 /1996): 177-188.

<sup>29</sup> Саттаров, "Элементы шаманского целительства в традиционной культуре," 8-11. Саттаров, "К вопросу о шаманском целительстве в традиционной культуре," 98-100; Саттаров, "Тема шаманизма в западноевропейской и американской историографии," 54-61; Саттаров, "К проблеме существования традиционного целительства в современном обществе," in *IX Конгресс этнографов и антропологов России: Тезисы докладов*. Петрозаводск, 4–8 июля 2011 г. / Редкол.: В.А. Тишков и др. (Петрозаводск: Карельский научный центр РАН, 2011), 373-4; Саттаров, "Адаптация традиционного целительства к условиям урбанизма," 80-88.

there are well known cases of successful herbs used for treating illnesses (Johnson 2003:20-32). True human faith in healing is really what can help the recovery process. This scientific principle is known as a social somatic factor. There are people among our sources in Tashkent who have abilities to use their bio potential for healing illnesses<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, it can be considered that aiding factors for urban shamanism existence are religious-mysticism worldview of local communities, who traditionally treat the cause of many events in life as having a magical or supernatural origin (for example, the conception of witchcraft, big eye effect and curse integrated in the comprehension of the nature of an illnesses). In this case, choice is characterized by a dynamics towards the reconfiguration of social norms through an alternative communication and role interaction. The choice itself reflects the stress between individual autonomy and society in an alternative view, which, tied with scale social dilemmas in industrial urban communities in Tashkent and cultural worldviews of local communities, regard supernatural forces existing in the human world. Practices based on traditional cultural models, on one hand provide interrelation with spiritual identity and cultural tradition of urban community; on the other hand counter cultural view and practice are a rudimentary manifestation of social and private needs that urban residents are faced with. Thus, urban shamanism represents a phenomenon developed in Uzbekistan quite recently and it illustrates the symbiosis of the local cultural traditions within the globalization and urbanization processes.

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<sup>30</sup> Bio potential (bioelectric potential) – common characteristics of charge interrelation placed in living tissue, for instance in different brain zones, cells, and other structures. Measurements illustrate bioelectric activity and character of metabolic processes. Nowadays science and medical diagnose use bio-potential for receiving information about a



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condition and functionality of different organs, that has for a long time been practiced in shamanism.

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*Michael Kpughe Lang\**

***MAINSTREAM CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AS OBSTACLES  
IN THE PATH OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN CAMEROON  
SINCE REUNIFICATION***

**Abstract:** The religious landscape of Cameroon has significantly changed over the previous century, especially after the 1961 reunification of British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon. This change, driven by a plethora of forces, resulted in the present multi-religious setup of the country. The challenges connected with this religious diversity (comprising Catholics, mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, indigenous religions, Islam, Orthodox) heightened the need for religious freedom and religious pluralism. In spite the efforts made by the state to establish a plurality tradition in the religious landscape, there are persistent impediments to this project.

In light of this, the aim of this paper is to examine how mainline Christian churches have served as impediments to the religious pluralism project in Cameroon. The contextualization of Cameroon's religious diversity is followed by an overview of religious pluralism in the country. The paper further discusses the multifaceted ways by which mainline Christian churches (Catholics and Protestants) have perturbed religious pluralism in this secular state. It also pays attention to the response of discriminated religious groups to the anti-pluralism practices of mainline churches.

Finally, the paper provides some recommendations as informed by what upholds elsewhere. The essay asserts that mainline churches do not believe in religious pluralist inclusiveness and have, in a multifaceted manner, obstructed the establishment of an inclusive culture of religious pluralism in Cameroon.

**Keywords:** *Religious diversity, religious pluralism, public presence, secularism, Cameroon, Christian churches*

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## Introduction

With the political independence of French Cameroon in 1960 and her subsequent reunification with British Southern Cameroons a year later, the Cameroon federation that emerged from this union opted for the secular state machinery with the hope of rendering the young state operational. From this moment, religious traditions that were present in Cameroon had to negotiate their presence and activity within the framework of national law. The law made religion to occupy a distinct sphere, separate, yet regulated by the state. Among the many issues that lingered on the minds of the political leaders was the fashioning of a workable strategy capable of surmounting the dilemma of profound religious diversity which Cameroon had inherited from the oppressive and exploitative British and French colonial governments. It was in this context of dire necessity to address the religious multiplicity problem that a religious pluralism project, though seemingly not well defined, was envisaged and constitutionally embedded in the secular status of the state. According to the 1961 Federal Constitution, Cameroon became a *de jure* multi-religious society with the same powers of existence and public presence given to all recognized religious faiths.

Drawing from this religious freedom and pluralism tradition adopted for experimentation in the religious landscape of Cameroon, it was hoped that the various religions (Christianity, Islam, Bahai, Orthodox and Indigenous Religions) including the myriad of groups within each of these religions were to be peacefully accommodated by the new state. Their followers, apart from being free to believe in what they wanted to, had to be accommodating and friendly towards those who did not share the same beliefs with them. Put differently, they had to believe and practice in a manner capable of enhancing a culture of pluralism among the people of the over 250 ethnic groups<sup>1</sup> and numerous faiths in Cameroon.

From the beginning, this *de jure* religious freedom and vision of pluralism which seemed to take roots, was challenged by the incessant splits within mainstream Protestant churches and the planting of hundreds of various branches of Evangelical churches. The latter are commonly referred to as “Born Again” churches among Cameroonians. Worse still, other religions such as Buddhism and Greek Orthodoxy were also introduced in Cameroon. This significant multiplication of faiths made the task of executing the pluralism project extremely difficult for the state. Besides, some of the religious faiths, especially the dominant and conservative ones, became involved in attitudes that were injurious to religious tolerance and pluralism. In addition to this, the government, in some specific situations, shelved the secular state apparatus by extending an aura of favors to mainline Christian churches and Islam. Consequently, the state and the faiths it favored became obstacles in the path of secularism and religious freedom and

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<sup>1</sup> J. Willard, *The Cameroon Federation. Political Integration in a Fragmentary Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 2.

pluralism. Indeed, they acted as if they were yet to come to terms with the meaning of the culture of pluralism.

Although religious pluralism is a commonly-used term with numerous distinctive meanings, it generally revolves around the central idea of different religious traditions working together. As observed by many scholars of religion, religious pluralism refers to the coexistence of people who hold divergent and incompatible religious views within a defined political community. Eck, the author of a monumental work on American religious pluralism, sees the term as the dynamic process through which different religious traditions engage with one another in and through their very deepest differences.<sup>2</sup> The interpretation of these definitions is that religious pluralism should be evidenced by an unchallenged culture of tolerance of religious difference alongside an inclusive free exercise of religion. Hence, the state has to ensure that the exercise of any religious faith does not impede others from enjoying the culture of tolerance and public presence. As Eck further notes, frank dialogue between religions with the encouragement of the government can place pluralism on a good path. This gives religious pluralism the status of an unending process that gains roots with time and circumstances. The process of pluralism, as evident in the United States and elsewhere, is constrained by numerous forces. But its persistence and success hinges on how committed and truthful the actors are to dialogue on the project.

In Cameroon just like elsewhere, especially in Africa, it seems that the governments either opted for secularism, religious tolerance and pluralism either without a proper appreciation of what they meant or deliberately not attaching any commitment in view of guaranteeing success. The religious conflicts in Nigeria, Mali, Egypt, Algeria, among others are indicative of the failure or non-application of religious pluralism. Although the situation in Cameroon is yet to gain overt conflict proportions, there has been suspicion and skirmishes between followers of Christianity and indigenous religions and between Christians and Muslims in the northern part of the country.<sup>3</sup> In light of the foregoing, this paper projects the argument that mainline Christian churches have contributed in a multifaceted manner towards the absence of an inclusive culture of religious pluralism in Cameroon. The paper starts with a presentation of the historical roots of Cameroon's religious diversity before it seeks to provide an overview of religious pluralism in the country. Included in this paper is an examination of the multifaceted ways by which mainstream Christian churches have obstructed the culture of religious pluralism in the secular state. In addition to this, the paper discusses the response of the discriminated religious faiths to the assault on their

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<sup>2</sup> See Diana L. Eck, *A new Religious America: How a "Christian Country" has become the World's most Religiously Diverse Nation* (New York: Harper One, 2001), 70.

<sup>3</sup> "International Religious Freedom Report on Cameroon, 2012, by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor", accessed July 5 2013, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2006/71290.htm>.

religious traditions. Finally, it seeks to provide some recommendations in view of placing the pluralism project in Cameroon on a good course.

### **Historical Roots of Religious Diversity in Cameroon**

The population of Cameroon is a blend of more than 250 different ethnic entities, whose indigenous religions differ significantly.<sup>4</sup> Each ethnic group has its indigenous religion characterized by prayer, rituals, sacrifice and a plethora of beliefs that are embedded in the culture of the people. A cross-cutting feature of these indigenous religions was the belief in a Supreme God whose appellation was as varied as the ethnic groups. They are not limited to beliefs in supernatural beings (God and spirits) or to ritual acts of worship, but affect all aspects of life, from farming to hunting, from travel to courtship. It is important to remember that while there are similarities between indigenous religions in Cameroon, there are also differences that can be likened to what upholds in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. So, prior to the introduction of Islam and Christianity, the area that eventually became referred to as Cameroon was host to numerous indigenous religions. The observance of these religions within their ethnic boundaries was communal and absolute since they were interpreted as a way of life.

The imposition of Islam in the northern region of Cameroon in the first half of the nineteenth century through an Islamic revolution that was linked to Uthman Dan Fodio's jihad launched the real beginning of religious diversity in the country. For the first time, the people in the region were divided between followers of indigenous religions and Islam. Indeed, the dominance enjoyed by Islam in the present day northern region of Cameroon is a product of the nineteenth century jihad.

But from around the mid nineteenth century, Western Christian missionary bodies (London Baptist Mission, Basel Mission, American Presbyterian Mission, Pallotine Fathers, German Baptist Mission, etc.) began planting Catholicism and Protestantism in Cameroon. This new religion which came on the heels of European scramble for the annexation of Cameroon further mutated the country's religious landscape. Initially annexed and governed by Germany (between 1884 and 1916), the territory was eventually partitioned and placed under Britain and France's governance, first as mandates of the League of Nations and later as trust territories of the United Nations. In October 1961, the southern portion of British Cameroon reunified with French Cameroon to constitute Africa's pioneer bilingual federation.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the colonial period, Protestant and Catholic denominations

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<sup>4</sup> See Willard, *The Cameron Federation*.

<sup>5</sup> For insightful treatment of the colonial history of Cameroon, read V. G. Fanso, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges*, Vol. 2, *The Colonial and Post Colonial Periods* (London: Macmillan, 1989); V. G. Ngoh, *History of Cameroon Since 1800* (Limbe: Presbook, 1996). The northern portion of British Cameroon was officially attached to Nigeria following the results of the February 1961 plebiscite.

were established in Cameroon largely on regional and ethnic basis. The Christian churches in Anglophone Cameroon had little or no connection with their counterparts in the Francophone zone. Numerous Christian churches emerged from the ecclesiastical colonial mould, such as: the Roman Catholic Churches in both Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and the Cameroon Baptist Convention (that were limited only in the Anglophone zone) as well as their counterparts in the Francophone zone (*Eglise Evangelique du Cameroon, Eglise Presbyterienne Camerounais*, etc).

The young state encompassed people who were not only separated by ethnic and colonial experiences, but also by marked religious disparities (indigenous religions, Islam and various branches of Christianity).<sup>6</sup> It is therefore evident that Cameroon's diversity was (and still is) also reflected in the parochial and regional character of its various religions. The Christian population was and is still divided between Catholics (38.4 percent of the total population), mainstream Protestants (26.3 percent), and Evangelicals (4 percent).<sup>7</sup> The two Anglophone regions of the western part of the country are largely Protestant, and the Francophone regions of the southern and western areas are mostly Catholic. In the northern region, the dominant Fulani ethnic group is mainly Muslim since the imposition of Islam in the area in the first half of the nineteenth century by Muslim jihadists. But the overall population is fairly evenly distributed among Muslims (20.9 percent), Christians (69.2 percent), and followers of indigenous religions (5.6 percent). The recently introduced religious groups (Orthodox Church, Buddhism and Hinduism) represent only four percent of the total population.<sup>8</sup> In light of this religious diversity that has gained roots with time and circumstances, there was need for

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<sup>6</sup> See E. Mveng, *Histoire des Eglises Chrétiennes au Cameroun : Les Origines* (Yaoundé: Imprimerie Saint Paul, 1990); A. Ndi, *Mill Hill Missionaries in Southern West Cameroon 1922-1972: Prime Partners in Nation Building* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005); M. B. Funteh, "A Historical Survey of the Strategy for Church Expansion in Cameroon: The Case of the Mainstream Denominations," *Kaliao*, Volume 1, No. 2 (December 2009): 49-68. See particularly, K. Werner, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon* (Victoria: Presbook, 1969).

<sup>6</sup> For more information on the limitation of churches' activities to specific areas of Cameroon, see D. H. Chimi, "Les Organes de Promotion de l'unité des Protestants au Cameroun 1941-2005" (Mémoire de Maitrise en Histoire, Université de Yaoundé 1, 2007); O. Etuge, "Church Union in Cameroon" (Bachelor Dissertation in Theology, Theological College Nyasoso, 1977): 32-45.

<sup>7</sup> See "Cameroon", accessed May 10, 2012,

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/171604.pdf>. This implies that Christians constitute about 69 percent of Cameroon's population (about 20.4 million).

<sup>8</sup> Information on the religious demography of Cameroon is contained in the "International Religious Freedom Report on Cameroon, 2012 by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor," accessed July 5, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2006/71290.htm>.

practical and effective methods aimed at ensuring pluralism in Cameroon's religious landscape. The argument sustained in this discussion is that mainline churches in Cameroon have failed to wholeheartedly embrace and recognize the religious diversity that accrued from various historical accidents as well as from the country's religious freedom tradition. Amazingly, they have, to a significant extent, impeded the transformation of Cameroon's religious diversity to religious pluralism in nearly all the forms it is supposed to take.

### **An Overview of Religious Pluralism in Cameroon**

Following the reunification of Cameroon in 1961, the Federal Constitution on the basis of which the federation had to function provided for freedom of religion and worship. The tradition of religious freedom was not unprecedented since the Mandate and Trusteeship agreements under which British and French Cameroons were governed for nearly half a century made provision for it. Apart from approving religious freedom, the 1961 constitution alongside all its amended versions made Cameroon a secular state. It is stated in the preamble of the 1996 constitution that "The state shall be secular. The neutrality and independence of the state in respect of all religions shall be guaranteed. Freedom of religion and worship shall be guaranteed."<sup>9</sup> This implies that there has to be a level playing ground for all religions that are present in the Cameroon religious landscape. Besides, there is need for a clear boundary between religion and state in Cameroon. This constitutional religious freedom resulted in significant religious diversity, as earlier mentioned. Interestingly enough, the tradition of secularism enshrined in all the successive constitutions (1961, 1972 and 1996) provided the potential for religious pluralism in the country.

Just like elsewhere, religious pluralism in Cameroon has its strengths, shortcomings and challenges. Since 1961, as evident in most literature, the government has through a plethora of ways tried to enhance religious pluralism in the country. Presently, Christian religious bodies are present throughout the country, including Roman Catholic, the Baha'i Faith, Baptist, Presbyterian, evangelical Protestants, Methodist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unification Church, Seventh-day Adventists, New Church of God, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), among others. In addition to these Christian bodies, there is also Islam, whose presence is evidenced by the proliferation of mosques across the country and specifically in its fief in the northern region of the country. The government, in spite some shortcomings, generally respects the right of religious freedom in practice. As a matter of fact, there is no official religion in Cameroon. Besides, Christian and Muslim religious holidays are celebrated as national holidays. These include Good Friday, Ascension Day, Assumption Day, Christmas Day (all Christian holidays), the Feast of the Lamb and the End of Ramadan (Muslim feasts).

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<sup>9</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, 18 January 1996.



The Law on Religious Congregations governs relations between the Government and religious groups. Religious groups must be approved by and registered with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINAT) to function legally. Interestingly, the government has never denied permission to any religious group seeking to operate in the Cameroon Religious landscape.<sup>10</sup> On the whole, government policy is intended to enhance pluralism in Cameroon's religiously diverse landscape. Efforts at offering equal public presence opportunities to these religious groups are consistent and rewarding irrespective of some drawbacks. Quite often, the government steps in to resolve disputes between religious groups resulting from their public presence-related activities. The public presence of Christian and Muslim religious groups is felt through their involvement in education, health, evangelization, media, ecumenism, and humanitarian works. Their activities largely correspond to the boundaries of the nation-state. Over the years, almost all branches of Christianity (Catholic faith, mainstream Protestants, and evangelical churches) have been planted in the Muslim dominated northern region where they function nearly unperturbed. Similarly, as already pointed out, Islam is gaining grounds in the Southern part of the country as Muslim clerics are establishing mosques in all nooks and crannies.

Furthermore, the state-owned television channel carries two hours of Christian programming on Sunday mornings, normally an hour of Catholic Mass and an hour for a Protestant service. There is also one broadcast hour dedicated to Islam on Friday evenings. State-sponsored radio broadcasts Christian and Muslim religious services on a regular basis, and both the radio and television stations periodically broadcast religious ceremonies on national holidays or during other national events.

Although religious pluralism has gained roots in Cameroon with a present potential to further progress, there has been an anti-pluralism behavior orchestrated by government and dominant religious groups, especially mainstream churches. In fact, the aura of indigenous religions spread across Cameroon are neither recognized by followers of other religions nor allowed to practice their beliefs without being perturbed. Apart from this, most of the evangelical churches, especially the fundamentalist-oriented ones that grew out of mainstream Protestant churches are quite often discriminated and openly attacked by followers of Catholicism and mainline Protestantism. Amazingly, the Evangelicals, probably because of their conservative attitude, are consistent in their outright rejection of indigenous religions as evidenced by their intolerant and anti-pluralism songs, prayer, sermons and leaflet evangelism. They go as far as destroying sacred sites reserved for the observance of indigenous religious practices (prayer, sacrifice, rituals ceremonies, etc). Apart from failing to check the discrimination suffered by indigenous religions, the government has fashioned a religious studies program for secondary school and high school students without bringing indigenous religions

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<sup>10</sup> This view is expressed in annual reports on religious freedom in Cameroon by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

on board. The prayers and Bible and Quran reading in public and private schools, so far condoned by government, does not only disregard indigenous religions, but also contradicts the secular status of the state.

The foregoing notwithstanding, mainline Christian churches, as earlier noted in the introductory section of this paper, constitute a serious obstacle in the path of religious pluralism in Cameroon. Thus, the following section pays attention to the various ways by which mainline churches have impeded religious pluralism in Cameroon.

### **How Mainline Christian Churches have Obstructed Pluralism**

The religious freedom tradition and pluralism project in Cameroon have been challenged by mainline Christian churches in multiple ways. These religious groups are presented by their followers as the dominant religious tradition, ignoring the existence of others, particularly indigenous religions and fundamental Evangelical faiths. Members of these churches go as far as disqualifying and condemning other religions. This kind of intolerant attitude peddled by dominant religious groups, as Jose Maria Vigil observes, “can, logically, lead to a crisis that at times can be profound.”<sup>11</sup> In this section, I address how the mainstream Catholic and Protestant churches have disregarded religious pluralism in Cameroon.

The ministers and followers of mainline churches had, on numerous occasions, disqualified and even condemned some religious groups. According to the 2006 International Religious Freedom Report on Cameroon published by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, the multiplication of new unaffiliated religious groups, most of which are Protestant, led established churches to vigorously denounce what they label as “sects” or “cults.” Leaders of established religious organizations characterize and denounce these “sects” as detrimental to societal peace and harmony. Some religious leaders reportedly warn congregations during major celebrations to beware of such groups.<sup>12</sup> Akoko confirms this anti-Pentecostal attitude in these words: “The attitudes and beliefs of some non-Pentecostals towards the Pentecostals are so disturbing that some people would not feel comfortable associating with the faith. In Cameroon, it is generally believed (rightly or wrongly) that only frustrated people join the faith. Some call them ‘social misfits’ because of their practice of avoiding certain places considered ungodly, such as nightclubs and bars, whatever their popularity with other people”.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Jose Maria Vigil, “The Challenges of a Theology of Religious Pluralism for Traditional Fundamentalist Faith,” *East Asian Pastoral Review*, Number 4, Volume 44 (2007): 67.

<sup>12</sup> “International Religious Freedom Report in Cameroon, 2006 by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor,” accessed July 5, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2006/71290.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Robert M. Akoko, “New Pentecostalism in the Wake of the Economic Crisis in Cameroon,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2002): 365.

What Akoko fails to stress upon is that the majority of those who held the above view about Pentecostals were (and still are) ministers and Christians of mainline churches. Interestingly enough, Akoko goes further to mention that mainline doctrinal conservatism has obstructed the growth of Pentecostalism in Cameroon. For him, parents who are devout members of mainstream churches were consistent in stopping their children from becoming Pentecostals.<sup>14</sup>

Although mainline churches denounced fundamental churches and labeled them as harmful sects, the leaders of these frontline churches seemingly welcomed the castigation of indigenous religions by some followers of “Born Again” churches. For example, when Bafut indigenous religious sites were destroyed and burnt by followers of the Kingship International Ministries in 2012 led by Prophet Afanwi Frank, no official response came from mainline churches. As a matter of fact, the Prophet and his followers destroyed a 600 year old shrine (tree) where important traditional religious rituals were always performed.<sup>15</sup> In a multireligious and accommodating society, response to such vandalism and violence is usually swift and strong. If the mainstream Catholic and Protestant faiths were not anti-pluralists, they would have exploited the various communication channels, through which they usually proselytize, to denounce the attacks. Amazingly, just one week after the attack, some ministers of mainline Protestant churches preached against indigenous religions over the state-owned radio and television. It is therefore undeniable that mainline churches were (and still are) complaisant with the assault on indigenous religious sites in Bafut. It is important to stress upon the fact that the destruction of the shrine of the traditional worshippers resulted in social unrest in Bafut. The anti-religious pluralism act in Bafut was not an isolated case. It represents a growing attitude among followers of the dominant Christian religion who disqualify, condemn and castigate indigenous religions. They label the beliefs, prayer, rituals and instruments of these religions as satanic.

In May 2013 when I was delivering a lecture on African systems of thought to undergraduate history students at the Higher Teacher Training College Bambili, some students who identified themselves as devout members of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon insisted that all indigenous African religions (especially their concept of God, creation, sacrifice and rituals) are satanic. They advised me as well as other scholars to “stop misleading God’s children by exposing the basis of these false religions.” Interestingly enough, some ardent followers of indigenous religions responded by stressing that religious freedom requires every person to believe in what he/she wants. The fierce debate that followed alongside the consistent rejection and castigation of indigenous religion by the students only exposed the dilemma in which followers of indigenous religions are trapped. The students were only re-echoing the views of their pastors about indigenous religions.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> “Mayhem in Bafut over destruction of 600 years old shrine by self-proclaimed Prophet”, accessed on July 10, 2013, <http://cameroonlatest.blogspot.com/2012/04/mayhem-in-bafut-over-destruction-of-600.html>.

This bigoted and intolerant way of expressing Christianity has been persistent and consistent in the Cameroon religious landscape.

Consider also the case of my family, which for some time now has been seriously divided between followers of Christianity, Indigenous religion and Islam. After the demise of our father in November 2006, an unperturbed Indigenous religious burial rite was conducted. But when some of my brothers decided to organize a remembrance traditional funeral celebration a year later, the adherents of Christianity objected arguing that it was a satanic religious practice. It is worth noting that this ceremony is a ritual among the Weh people designed to honor ancestors.<sup>16</sup> The ritual is marked by sacrifices that family members offer to the dead. Followers of the Weh religion believe that after the ritual, ancestral spirits are called upon to bless the people and bestow on them economic prosperity, as well as peace and good health. The virulent rejection and obstruction of the ritual by the Christians resulted in a series of meetings marked by heated debates on the issue. Some of my brothers who came from far and near for the religious ceremony were frustrated since the Christians successfully stopped the ceremony. This confirms Mbaku's observation that Christianity has had a significant impact on indigenous religions in Cameroon.<sup>17</sup>

More still, given that many devout adherents of mainstream churches in Cameroon continue to preserve and observe some aspects of their indigenous religions, as Mbaku (2005: 61) notes, conflicts between Christians and practitioners of indigenous religions at funerals are common. The bone of contention has always centered on whether such persons should be buried according to Christian or traditional religious rites. At the funeral of Right Rev. Chief Jeremiah Kangsen in 1988 (he was former Moderator of the PCC and Chief of Kesu), for instance, the Aghem people insisted that a traditional burial ceremony be observed. The Christians of the PCC led by their Moderator, Right Rev. Henry Awasum, steadfastly favored a Christian burial. The conflict that resulted from the misunderstanding on the day of the burial necessitated the intervention of security forces in favor of the Christians.<sup>18</sup> So, Kangsen was not buried in the cemetery of the PCC in Wum and not in the Kesu palace. This rendered the performing of prayer and sacrifices on his grave by his predecessors impossible. Similar burial conflicts were witnessed in many other parts of Cameroon.

The condemnation and disqualification of indigenous religions by mainline churches through offensive gospel music is also worth discussing. It is common to

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<sup>16</sup> For more on Weh belief systems, read Christraud Geary, "The Weh Chiefdom in Menchum Division", paper presented at CNRS's Symposium on the Contribution of Ethnographic Research to the History of Civilizations in Cameroon, Paris, 24-28 September 1973.

<sup>17</sup> John Mukum Mbaku, *Culture and Customs of Cameroon* (London: Greenwood Press, 2005), 41.

<sup>18</sup> D. N. Kumbong, "The Right Reverend Jeremiah Chi Kangsen: A Church Leader and Politician 1917-1988" (DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS Yaounde, 1999): 67-69.

listen to church songs during the Sunday services in Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist and Evangelical churches launching serious attacks on indigenous religious practices. The songs are unanimous in describing the Supreme Being served by adherents of these religions alongside their diverse ritual ceremonies (birth, death, marriage, cleansing, infertility and farming, among others) as satanic. During the last decades, so many gospel music albums have been released by artists who follow mainline churches. Like church songs, they also virulently attack indigenous religions. In nearly all these offensive gospel albums, the Supreme God served by followers of indigenous religions is presented as a “man made god” that cannot talk, walk, see, hear and provide solutions to peoples’ problems. This type of offensive music was at the centre of a religious conflict in Ndu between adherents of Wimbun indigenous religion and Christians of the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC). Rev. Stephen Biyeh, a CBC pastor in Ndu released a controversial gospel music album in which he used Wimbun Sacred Society music and condemned indigenous religion. This resulted in clashes on March 10, 2012 when CBC pastors and Christians were attacked by devout followers of indigenous religions.<sup>19</sup> This was only a response to the intolerant attitude of this mainline Protestant church.

Another sphere in which mainline churches have constrained religious pluralism is education. The confessional schools they operate, in spite their multireligious make up, function in a religiously monolithic mode and even in outright denial of religious plurality. Such a religious exclusivity approach in educational institutions (both in belief and practice) frustrates adherents of other religions. Normally, the numerous Catholic and Protestant educational establishments in Cameroon should serve as places where followers of various religious traditions interact and share with one another. Amazingly, as already pointed out, the authorities of these institutions act in ways that tend to project only their faith. Only their ministers are allowed to preach to the students. This discriminatory and proselytizing attitude is injurious to pluralism. It appears that these schools are tools used by mainstream churches to compete for souls.

Worse still, the discriminatory nature of prayer in educational institutions operated by mainstream churches does not enhance pluralism. In public schools, prayer was/is offered by Christians in the Christian dominated south and by Muslims in the Muslim dominated north. There is strong disregard for indigenous religions as well as other religions such as Buddhism in the school prayer. Since students who are not followers of Christianity and Islam are not given the option not to participate, prayer in the confessional schools favored mainstream Christian Churches and Islam and violated the constitutional clause relating to religious freedom. This favoritism impedes pluralism since it results in the domination of public presence by mainstream denominations. More still, the religious exclusive nature of prayer in schools certainly made indigenous religion children prone to

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<sup>19</sup> Hilton Ndukong Kimeng, “Cameroon: Ndu Masquerades Banned for a Year,” *Cameroon Tribune*, 22 March 2012.

psychological harm since they quite often listened to Bible verses, prayer and Christian songs that castigated their religious practices. Reference to indigenous religion as satanic was commonplace in the school prayers and Christian songs. This can be likened to the manner in which Jews felt in America when their children were ridiculed by the Christian prayer and Bible reading tradition in public schools. Consequently, the American Supreme Court outlawed prayer and Bible reading in public schools in the early 1960s.<sup>20</sup>

In light of the above, it is evident that mainline churches do not believe in religious pluralist inclusiveness. Their disqualification and condemnation of other religions are indicative of the fact that they are not steadfast supporters of the legislation defining the Cameroon religious landscape as diverse, tolerant and pluralist. In some situations, as already discussed, followers of indigenous religions were not allowed to worship as they wished irrespective of the fact that their public conduct did not challenge the laws. Indeed there has been no purposeful commitment of mainline Christian church participants to the principle of entrenching pluralism in Cameroon. By being consistent in their assaults on indigenous religions and Evangelical fundamentalists, they do not bother about the psychological trauma and frustration their unconstitutional behavior can inflict on the adherents of these faiths. Based on this intolerant attitude of mainline churches, the response of the condemned and marginalized faith groups did not come as a complete surprise.

### **The Response of Discriminated Religious Groups**

The incessant obstruction of religious pluralism by mainline Christian churches eventually resulted in the emergence of an active opposition to this anti-pluralism attitude among devout followers of indigenous religions and fundamental Evangelicals. This opposition was fueled by people who hated a mainstream Christian church which refuses to recognize other religious groups, which attacks other religions through songs and prayer during their services and by way of the media and which celebrates the destruction of the sacred sites of indigenous religions. Some of the people I interviewed in the course of this study, especially Tieherr Akwo, Miselele Akwa, and Gladys Nnam (all committed followers of indigenous religions) were unanimous in observing that the public attitude of the members of mainline churches alongside their ministers was, in every respect, the opposite of religious freedom and plurality. Given that indigenous religions were not institutionalized, there were no people who could lead the opposition on a national scale. Expectedly, their response, though fierce, was sporadic and segmented.

There were independent protests that developed in the ethnic groups with the goal of protecting indigenous religions. The Bafut people, especially ardent followers of the indigenous religion were unanimous in criticizing the destruction

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<sup>20</sup> For more on this, read Eck, *A New Religious America*.

of their shrine and other sacred sites in 2012. Responding to an article posted on the internet relating to the assault, most of the comments regretted why the perpetrators were not killed. For those who posted the comments, mob justice would have been the best response. Good enough, the peace-loving Fon Abumbi II of Bafut did not choose the path of violence. Rather, he calmed his people before alerting the security forces resulting in the arrest and detention of the prophet alongside some of his crime mates. The conflict is still being resolved in the court. This can be likened to the response of the traditional worshippers in the Nigerian state of Anambra when their indigenous religious tools were burnt by a particular Christian faction.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Way Forward**

What emerges from the preceding sections is that, at the moment, Cameroon remains a *de jure* and not *de facto* religious pluralistic society. Thus, a rethinking of the process, with the intent of placing religious pluralism on a success path is a dire necessity. It should take the form of inclusive consultations and discussions so as to ensure that the views of all actors are obtained. This would provide the potential for consensual religious pluralism decisions to be arrived at. It is worth stressing that such an embracive dialogue should initially focus on enabling followers of each religion to understand the other religions, since it is evident that the actions of these religions are not well appreciated by the people. For me, an unchallenged culture of pluralism in Cameroon can be attained only if all religions, especially indigenous ones, are well understood by Cameroonians. Awareness of the bases of religions to which we do not belong can motivate the general public presence of all religious groups irrespective of their incompatibilities. This line of thinking ties with Eck's observation on the American religious landscape that "Pluralism requires participation, and attunement to the life and energies of one another."<sup>22</sup>

Ali Abtahi confirms Eck's observation by stressing that inclusivism and the inclination towards openness and dialogue, which is embedded in religion, can result in pluralist and multiminded behavioral patterns. Abtahi, in his "Religion and Media", calls on religious leaders to use the media to enhance pluralism.<sup>23</sup> So, the mainline churches in Cameroon, in light of Abtahi's proposal, should restrain from using their private and public media organs to condemn other religious faiths. As

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<sup>21</sup> For more details concerning religious intolerance in Nigeria, refer to Rose C. Uzoma, "Religious Pluralism, Cultural Differences, and Social Stability in Nigeria," *Brigham Young University Law Review*, volume 2004, issue 2, accessed July 10, 2013, <http://digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2197&context=lawreview>.

<sup>22</sup> Eck, *A new Religious America*, 70.

<sup>23</sup> Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi, "Religion and Media," in *Part of the Problem, Part of the Solution: Religion Today and Tomorrow*, ed. Arvind Sharma (Westport and London; Praeger, 2008): 163.

noted earlier, exclusivist ministers of mainline churches employed the media to present indigenous religions as satanic faiths. It is therefore time for Catholic and Protestant religious authorities to use the media (press, television and radio) to advertise religious tolerance, dialogue and pluralism.

Besides, mainstream religious traditions should consider sacrificing their privileged status as unique and absolute in the eyes of their adherents. From every indication, such a profound shift is yet to be envisaged by many mainline religious groups. They continue to interpret pluralism as a means of dethroning and dispossessing them of their position as the traditionally dominant religions. They are surely scared by the mutation of religious demography to the detriment of traditionally majority religious faiths. In the United States for instance, the enforcement of tolerance and pluralism, despite some flaws, has resulted in the significant growth of the Evangelicals who are already threatening the dominance enjoyed for a long time by mainstream Protestants.<sup>24</sup> Given that religious diversity in Cameroon is so obvious and that the constitution makes provision for tolerance, mainstream churches need to be sincere about issues relating to religious pluralism. They should overcome the fear of losing their majority privilege by adapting to the stubborn reality of the manyness in a level playing field. Akoko, as observed by John Forje, “challenges mainline churches to face the realities of emerging religious fundamentalism.”<sup>25</sup> It is time for its leaders not only to truly embrace the vision, but to start encouraging their Christians to adapt to the new but real situation. The Indigenous religions they disqualify and condemn mattered and still matter profoundly to their followers. So, they deserve their place in an inclusive pluralistic Cameroonian society.

The Cameroon Government can emulate what is practiced in the United States of America. There, people are free to believe what they want but they are not necessarily free to act on it. This implies that there are laws governing the manner in which the followers of a particular religion should act. For instance, if what you believe in pushes you to overtly attack other religions as the Cameroon situation evidences, the government steps in to reprimand such excesses. This is because no religion has prominence over the other despite the variance in numbers and public presence. Some are new, while others are old; some proselytize while others do not. But there must be mutual recognition of all religions especially as there is a religious freedom doctrine enshrined in the constitution. It is the role of the government to protect indigenous religions and “Born Again” churches that are often castigated by some followers of mainstream churches. Amazingly, it seems that the government, since reunification, has championed and encouraged the violation of its own laws related to tolerance and state secularity. After exposing

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<sup>24</sup> For more on this, read Catherine L. Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*, Fifth Edition, (Boston: Wadsworth, 2012) and Eck, *A New Religious America*.

<sup>25</sup> See John W. Forge, Review of Akoko, Robert Mbe, “*Ask and You shall be Given*”: *Pentecostalism and the Economic Crisis in Cameroon* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2007), accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=23129>.



the multiple ways by which the Cameroon Government has trampled on the secularity and religious freedom laws of the country, Alex Mbom steadfastly observes that “the complicity of the State and the Christian clergy in marginalizing the minority groups is obvious.”<sup>26</sup> There is need for the government to strictly respect the secular status of the state and terminate its complicity with mainline churches.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this current study was to examine how mainline Catholic and Protestant churches served as obstacles in the path of religious pluralism in Cameroon. Overall, what becomes clear from what precedes is the rather obvious conclusion that mainline churches do not believe in religious pluralist inclusiveness and have in myriad of ways constrained the establishment of an inclusive culture of religious pluralism in Cameroon. The response of the followers of the marginalized religious traditions, especially practitioners of indigenous religions, which took different forms, did not come as a complete surprise. This makes it very clear that the pluralism project in Cameroon remains at an early stage. Concrete measures, including those already highlighted, are therefore required to strengthen religious pluralism in Cameroon. Apart from being inclusive in the manner in which they interpret the doctrinal texts of their religion, the authorities of mainline Christian churches need to accept bringing all religions on board an inter-religious dialogue. The latter has been presented by many scholars as part of the solution to the dilemma of religious anti-pluralism. It is also the common conclusion of scholars that many paths (religions) lead to God. Hence, a culture of religious pluralism can gain roots in Cameroon only if the adherents of all religions truthfully engage with one another in and through their very deepest differences.

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<sup>26</sup> Pierre Alex Mbom, “State, Society and Secularism in Cameroon,” accessed July 13, 2013, <http://iheu.org/content/state-society-and-secularism-cameroon>. Alex Mbom is the President of the Association of Free Thinkers of Cameroon.

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