



Book Reviews

Religious syncretism and deviance in Islamic and Christian orthodoxies

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Gilles Veinstein (ed.), *Syncretisme religieux et déviations de l'Orthodoxie chrétienne et islamique. Synchrétismes et hérésies dans l'Orient Seldjoukide et Ottoman (XIV^e-XVIII^e siècle), Actes du Colloque du Collège de France, Octobre 2001* (Paris: Peeters, 2005) (Collection Turcica, vol. 9), pp. 428, ISBN 904 2 915 49 8.

Various aspects of the question of religious syncretism in the Middle East have repeatedly been the subject of research. Seen from an 'orientalist' and idealistic point of view, this question has been dealt with by national historiographies in a predictably justificatory fashion. Moreover, after the end of the Cold War era, it resurfaced, integrated into wider questions such as that of the politicisation of religion or that of the emergence of "ethnic-identities", an issue which has recently engulfed the institutions of the European Union. In the current enflamed situation, the historian has difficulty in detaching himself/herself from the crucial present debate on religion/culture and conflicts (dictated as an almost exclusive approach and topic of research according to the lines of the 'clash of civilizations' theory). Often encountering retrospective and anachronistic interpretations, (s)he needs to revisit, among other issues, the question of the religious orthodoxies and of the deviances from them. The collective work presented here is, in short, an attempt to explore respective phenomena in their own historical terms. The participants at the *Colloque* of the Collège de France in October 2001 developed new analyses and proposed responses to an historical phenomenon which is linked in various ways to current political-ideological events (Preface by Gilles Veinstein, pp xiii-xiv).

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Our review of this volume is neither an exhaustive analysis of each contribution nor a revision of the papers gathered together and written by authors who have studied this subject in depth for a considerable period of time. It aims rather to make these contributions known more widely and to arouse a lively interest in the historical origins of the ‘Oriental’ phenomenon of syncretism and heresy, deeply rooted also in the Balkans. The *Actes du Colloque*, edited by Gilles Veinstein, examines the religious and political dimensions of syncretism and of religious deviance focusing more on Islam and less on Christianity. Despite this unequal balance, the common angle of approach of these two religions contributes to enriching our historical reasoning and unveils the close links among the peoples of the Middle East which traditional historiographies fail to evoke or, worse still, undervalue, insisting more on their differences. The focus on the process of syncretism and deviance as well as on its social-political dimensions makes these articles extremely interesting.

The first section (“Concepts et antécédents”) begins with a review of neologisms related to our subject, namely the –isms (Michel Tardieu, “Les facettes du syncrétisme: méthodologie de la recherche et histoire des concepts”, pp. 3-16). This re-visit of names is without doubt indispensable for an understanding of the historical notions as well as of the historicity of our conceptual tools of research. The author questions first the etymology and the meaning of the very term “syncretism”. He then gives a clear description of the methods by which these phenomena – syncretism, (cultural) dualism, Gnosticism, Manichaeism, the Cathar heresy – were studied by the French and German nineteenth-century schools of the history of religions and reviews these studies by the German school within the framework of the philosophy of religions and their philosophical repercussions up to the late twentieth century. Following, however, the author’s trajectory of the terminology (mainly the “mixture of cultures and religions” and “Mischkultur”, pp. 10-11), especially nowadays when the cultural perspective dominates, it would be useful to reflect more on the meaning of the term “culture”; that is to say, to take into account that in late-nineteenth century Germany it was suggested, in a Manichaeist way and without taking into consideration socio-political dimensions, that the term “Kultur” should be used to designate the spiritual progress as opposed to the material one attributed to the term “civilisation” (cf. the ancient dualist concepts “nous-matter” and “soul-body” – “νοῦς-ὄλη” and “ψυχή-σώμα” – with which T. Fahd starts his analysis, p. 35). This twofold clear-cut semantic *overcharge*, later taken up by many, is of central importance to our subject, because it is in “culture” that religion is usually inserted – alleged to be a spiritual field – and, also, because this idealistic aspect hinders

us in realising, specifically in time and space, that every religious version (orthodox or deviant), apart from being a philosophical issue, is but a part of the ideology (i.e. everyday practices) established (or expected to prevail) by both the State and the Church (i.e. a state institution). From this historical point of view, one can comprehend how religion, imposing a normative theocratic worldview and specific (material) practices, in reality, organises and controls the flock's actions, gender practices and social relations.

The paper by Jean Kellens (“Interprétations du dualisme mazdéen”, pp 17-24) also contributes to the elucidating of the historicity of our intellectual tools, by comparing pre-scientific philosophic/religious (monotheism-dualism) perceptions of mazdeism (founded by Zarathushtra and his disciples who turned it towards either a dualism or a polytheism organised hierarchically), namely the representation of the world as a theatre of the struggle between the good god and the bad one, with the post-seventeenth century research which was conducted on a meticulous epistemological basis. The author's scepticism – albeit the product of rich and useful evidence – shows that the theoretical approach of religious phenomena, like monotheism-dualism, is useful when combined with an historical one: since they are incessantly re-formulated, they cannot be interpreted *in absentia* of their own specific socio-political circumstances.

The following papers focus on the complex question of religious permeability within the context of their historical developments and in relation to interactions between the Chinese, Mongols and Turks. The analysed linguistic exchanges (Louis Bazin, “Les échanges culturels et religieux entre les mondes anciens chinois, turc et mongol”, pp. 25-30) convey broader historical influences. Further, the old linguistic question of the “parenté” turco-mongole ancestrale’ is raised in order to be revisited from the aspect of a “durable coherence between these two languages’ respective evolution”. This approach also has the added benefit of indicating, perhaps, a better interpretive concept which enables us, later, to detach relative European data from their national framework, as in the case, for example, of the (shamanic?) religion of the Proto-Bulgarians, dominant in the north-east of the Balkans from the 680s until their official conversion to Christianity in 865, and, additionally, to trace more closely the structural analogies between Carlo Ginzburg's *benandanti* of the Friuli and the shamans.¹

¹ Ginzburg, Carlo, *Ecstasies. Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 164 “...all these clearly connect the Ossetian *burkdzäutä* to the *benandanti* of the Friuli, the Baltic werewolves like Theiss, to the Balkan *kresniki*, the Hungarian *tdltos*”. Ginzburg, Carlo, *Le fil et les traces. Vrai faux fictive* (Paris: Verdier, 2010), mainly pp. 436 ff.

Religion as a socio-political issue can be illustrated by an examination of Nestorianism, the doctrine of Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, exclusively adopting Christ's human nature (James Hamilton, "Les Turcs et le Nestorianisme. À propos de nouvelles inscriptions sur le Nestorianisme", pp. 31-4). This Christian version, condemned in Byzantium as heretical by the synod of 431, was conversely tolerated or even favoured as orthodoxy in the Orient, especially after the expansion of the Mongols, throughout the vast area from Hungary to China conquered by Genghis Han's successors. As such, the Nestorian version of Christianity, documented by numerous inscriptions and still preserved, constitutes a perfect example of the religious sects' fluctuations in fortune according to different societies and to the unstable relationship and balances between political systems and religion.

Toufic Fahd ("Les sectes dualistes en terre d'Islam", pp. 35-61), starting from the assumption that in Iraq, Persia and Syria the religious dualism based on the ancient Christian and Zoroastrian background re-emerged during the Arabic conquests, suggests a new field of research, namely the Arabic commentaries on the various versions of dualism (Marcionists, Bardaism, Manichaeism, Mazdeanism, Bogomilism, Paulicianism, and so on) diffused in these countries, as well as in Byzantium and western Europe. On the basis of rich evidence, he additionally traces the extent of the impact of dualism according to the refutations worked out by the Arabs during the eighth to tenth centuries, in order, on the one hand, to combat materialism, manichaeism and the extremist Shi'ites as well as the *zanadiqa* (=zednik, free-thinkers, unbelievers, atheists), and, on the other, to secure the official doctrine of Islam "concerning the relationship between the Creator and his creatures and eschatological realities" clearly elucidated by the Qur'an (p. 52). At the same time, he does not fail to illustrate, by means of specific examples, the intrusion into the Islamic doctrine of gnosticist, manichaeist, and mazdeist ideas which contribute to a more nuanced analysis, firstly, of analogous Byzantine dualist groups, like the Paulicians and the Bogomils (a name meaning rather followers of the Bulgarian priest Bogomil –Theophilos in Greek – than "friends of God", p. 39) and the western European Cathars, and, secondly, of the relationship of Byzantium with the Arab emirates where – not surprisingly – the condemned Byzantine dualists found protection.

The second section of the volume entitled "Le syncrétisme alévi-bektachi: dualisme et autres composantes", offers, through a plethora of examples, a kaleidoscope of versions of dualism throughout the ages covering a vast geographical expanse of territory in the Orient. Irène Mélikoff ("Le gnosticisme chez les Bektachis/Alévis et les interférences avec d'autres mouvements

gnostiques”, pp 65-74), in a recapitulation of her long research on the topic, raises the question of whether Bektashism/Alevism can be included in the Gnostic tendencies, at least, regarding the Ottoman provinces with a Christian background. Focusing her research on the psalms (“nefes”), she discerns, in the cult of Ali, a divinity, in human form, connected with the ancient Turkic Gök-Tengri (God-sky) as well as, in the Bektaşî/Alevi syncretism, manichaeist elements, besides the Christian and shamanic ones commented on in previous literature. She then focuses on an historical paradigm perfectly illustrating the phenomenon of syncretism in its wider scale, namely the eastern heresiarch Börklüce Mustafa who was preaching poverty (around 1415) and was connected with monks – among them an eremite – and the Cathar Fraticelli (“false-Franciscans”) in the Aegean islands of Chios and Samos. Summing up this synthesis the author recognises dualist elements in Bektaşî-Alevi faith too. Indicating, thus, a much wider area of syncretism and dualism, Mélikoff is here pursuing new lines of inquiry: firstly, that the dualist practical and symbolic structures, developed in a longer period and within the broader Oriental world (Arab/Islamic and Balkan/Russian orthodox), should be comparatively perceived and explored. Secondly, that western heretics can be correlated with those in the Balkans, mainly Bogomils and Paulicians, which were widespread, as numerous place names throughout the Peninsula testify (“Pavlikeni” and “Bogomili” – to which must be added those manifesting the presence of the Monophysit Armenians, for example “Armensko”).² Finally, the socio-political structures contributing to the eradication of dualism (in western Europe) or to its survival (in Byzantium and the Christian Balkan states), after being reformulated in order to respond to dualism, within popular culture and even within the (former monastic) mystic orthodox version, which was dominant in late-medieval Byzantium, are worthy of comparative research.

Concerning the Paulicians’ survival within the Christian Balkan states, we have to keep in mind that their socio-political position (as cattle-breeders or “warlike” groups, usually enrolled in the army) was not identical with that of the Bogomils (an agricultural population) – a trait perhaps explaining the silence of the sources on them. Different nuances of the Balkan dualist

² Jovkov, Milcho, “Toponimite kato iztochnik za istorijata na pavlikianstvo” [Toponyms as a source for the history of Paulicianism], *Vekove* 15/2 (Sofia 1986), pp. 26-32 (with a map). Delopoulos, G., Στου Μπογομίλου [Towards the Bogomil’s (place)], *Proceedings of the Panhellenic Congress «Η Υπάτη στην εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία, την τέχνη και τον ελλαδικό μοναχισμό»* (Athens, 2011), pp. 121-33. The Balkan Paulicians’ survival in Thrace is documented by reliable evidence dated 1835: Karathanasis, Ath., Μια παλιά αίρεση στη Θράκη: Οι Παυλικιανοί [An old heresy in Thrace: the Paulicians], in *idem*, *Περί την Θράκην* [On Thrace] (Thessalonica-Athens, 1996), pp. 165-77.

phenomenon are investigated by Yuri Stoyanov (“On some parallels between Anatolian and Balkan heterodox Islamic and Christian traditions and the problem of their coexistence and interaction in the Ottoman period”, pp. 75-118), who provides a profusion of comparable examples located in Byzantium, Bosnia, and the Bulgarian state, together with the relevant huge literature. Worthy of mention is the seventeenth-century Paulicians’ encounter with Catholicism and Islam, namely their conversion to the former and their early eighteenth-century flight to Walachia into which they were propelled by the Ottomans. This new dualist wave towards the north of the Danube area is obviously connected to the edition of 1710 of the main Byzantine apologetic work, *Panoplia Dogmatiki*, by the monk Euthymios Zygabenos, which included updated information on Balkan dualism (c. 1110).³ In the paper, the author discusses, in addition to crypto-Christianity, dualist cosmogonies and so on, the interesting question of whether, before the dogmas of Islam had been firmly established, the early adhesion of the Bektāşis to Christian notions and practices, both orthodox and heretic, had been a conscious choice. On the basis of these data and since the Balkans are a prime area for the study of the phenomenon of religious syncretism, the mechanisms of the politicisation of religion and of the social ramifications in terms of discrimination – “διάκρισις” in the Patristic term –, one could equally examine their religious positions from a socio-political point of view. To put it differently: from which discriminations had they suffered as a result of their faith?

The study on the rebellion and execution of the above-mentioned preacher of poverty Börklüce Mustafa by Konstantin Zhukov (“Börklüce Mustafa, was he another Mazdak?”, pp. 119-27), brings to light the different perceptions of the heresy and, consequently, our difficulty in combining information in Islamic and Christian sources on the ways used by different powers to crush syncretist trends.

In a detailed study of the doctrine of angelophany, Jean During (“Notes sur l’angélogologie Ahl-e Haqq”, pp. 129-51) explores the archangels as cosmic forces represented in an anthropomorphic way, and shows that this doctrine is, in fact, the catalyst of mysticism – an analysis without doubt equally transposable to the study of the Christian religion. Similarly, the shamanic element,

³ *Πανοπλία Δογματική... Αφιερωθείσα Επί του ευσεβεστάτου, υψηλοτάτου, και θεοσέπτου αυθέντου και ηγεμόνος πάσης Ουγγροβλαχίας ...Ιωάννου Κωνσταντίνου Μπασσαράμπα Βοεβόδα τού Μπραγκοβάνου, Τω ...νιῶ αυτού... Στεφάνω Βοεβόδα τω Μπραγκοβάνω...Παρά του ...μητροπολίτου Δρύστρας... Αθανασίου, Ού και τοις αναλώμασι νυν πρώτον τετύπεται, Εν τη ...μητροπόλει τη εν τω της Ουγγροβλαχίας Τεργοβύστω,...* (May 1710), reprinted in *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, vol. 130, 1865.

“la plus ancienne composante du syncrétisme des alévi-bektachis” is traced by Françoise Arnaud-Demir (“Le Syncrétisme alévi-bektachi dans les chants accompagnant la danse rituelle *semah*”, pp. 153-62) as a key element of the Alevis-Bektaşî cult. Originally endorsed in the Sufi (masculine) tradition, the dance in question, attested since the ninth century and performed (by both sexes) during ceremonial meetings today, perfectly illustrates the deeply rooted symbolic/religious practices or, in other words, the normative (material) practices of the prevailing/deviant religion, incessantly in evolution.

H. T. Norris (“Aspects of the influence of Nesimi’s Hurufî verse, and his martyrdom, in the Arab East between the 16th and 18th centuries”, pp. 163-75; pp. 165-8 translation of a poem; pp. 176-82 a reprint of the original manuscript) examines the Islamo-Christian dialogue, particularly between Hesychasm and Sufism in the Balkan-Chios-Cairo axis,⁴ in the late Middle Ages, through the case of Nesimi, a poet, Hurufî, proto-Bektashi, mystic, who was in the end considered a Christian martyr!

Denis Gril (“Ésotérisme contre hérésie: ‘Abd al-Rahmân al-Bistâmî, un représentant de la science des lettres à Bursa dans la première moitié du XV^e siècle”, pp. 183-95) focuses on the almost unique paradigm of an early Ottoman writer, originating from Antioch and established in Bursa. Bistâmî (1380-1454), conversant with pre-Islamic knowledge and who applied himself to history, chronology, and to the occult sciences, seems to belong to an esotericist-hermetic tradition allowing him to combine Sufism and science (letters). The paradigm under research of an exceptional intellectual can provide us an insight into syncretism or, in the author’s words, into “synthèse et intégration” (p. 194). As such he gives us rather an idea of a path – not unknown in the rest of the medieval world – followed by an intellectual who shared a rich and eclectic heritage, in troubled times and when the dominant Islamic dogma was not yet formulated.

The authors of the papers of the third section, entitled “Les hérésies dans l’histoire et l’espace ottomans et post-ottomans”, distancing themselves from the hasty simplifications of previous historiography, explore specific syncretist examples not restricted to religious matters, that is which deal also with political/ideological and administrative aspects, such as, for example, the paper by

⁴ On the island of Chios both Christian dogmas interacted, since Genoa had established its earliest company-controlled colony there: Verlinden, Charles, “The transfer of colonial techniques from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic”, in *The Medieval Frontiers of Latin Christendom. Expansion, Contraction, Continuity, The Expansion of Latin Europe, 1000-1500*, eds. J Muldoon and F. Fernández-Armesto (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), vol. I, pp 196 and 201 [re-printed from *The Beginnings of Modern Colonization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), pp 3-32].

Michele Bernardini, “Motahharten entre Timur et Bayezid: une position inconfortable dans les remous de l’histoire anatolienne” (pp. 199-211), which addresses the government of Motahharten or Taherten, 1379-1403, in the wake of the Mongol collapse and Timur’s penetration in 1387 and 1394 – a topic relevant to diplomatic relations with Byzantium and the empire of Trebizond and to the increased Italian metal trade in both Serbia and Bosnia. The insistence on the Gnostic background of the Christian/Byzantine and, later, Islamic/Ottoman deviance in the East, which appeared under different names and with different political ramifications through the centuries, is illustrated with examples from Anatolia over a long time span by Michel Balivet (“Permanences régionales en hérésiologie anatolienne de l’Antiquité aux Ottomans”, pp. 213-24). The author discerns not only different *layers* of dissent, such as the Paulicians’ absolute dualism in the Byzantine period and that in the Seljuk period which became known because of the Babai revolt, but also cases of early Christian/Islamic practices (such as the circular mystic dance mentioned in *John’s Apocrypha*) and the intermingling of Greek-Turkish place names, thus giving space even to puns. The expanse of the investigated diachrony can be extended further towards Roman times, if we take into consideration that the area around Phrygia and Cappadocia was then distinctive or, better, stigmatised as inhabited by cave-dwellers and outcasts, a helpful structural given.

Evidence on the case of the Anatolian nomad (and hence destructive) Kızılbaş, Turcoman and Kurdish Ottoman subjects but disciples of the shah, is investigated by Gilles Veinstein (“Les premières mesures de Bâyezîd II contre les Kızılbaş”, pp. 225-36). The author discusses the renovation by Bayezid II, in 1501, of capital punishment of Ismail’s disciples who initially were considered guilty of secular rather than religious crime, namely disorder and sedition, while simultaneously the Kızılbaş are designed as Sufis or “mürîd”: Here we can follow the early stage of a case of secular dissent expressed by a group persisting in its nomadic structure and way of life. Differently argued, it is about the *pre-history* of the future Kızılbaş religious dissent/opposition against the Ottoman state being in the process of political consolidation and ideological/dogmatic formulation – an excellent paradigm illustrating the political stake of the heretical phenomenon within theocratic states. The evolution from political to religious discourse is traced in the following paper by Hatice Aynur (“Tatavlı Mahremî’s Shehnâme and the Kızılbaş”, pp. 237-48). The author shows how the Kızılbaş were described in the second volume of the poetic historiography, the *Shehname* by Mahremî (d. 1535). Written before 1522, it narrates Selim I’s (1512-21) wars against Shah Ismail, who after Bayezid’s death – in Mahremî’s words – “became the owner of

the crown and plundered many countries. Due to this seditious man, heresy spread, and treachery and rebellion plagued the world” (p. 244). Henceforth, as infidels, and heretics, “their murder is due” (p. 245). After Selim’s victory in 1515, celali rebellion in 1519 was also described in terms illustrating the linkage between robbery, lack of family respect, insolvency, and so on, and infidelity and the enmity of God – not surprisingly, these terms are identical with the ones used in the Byzantine anti-heretical/apologetic literature. Henceforth, more than an “intellectual reinforcement for the Ottoman domination of eastern Anatolia” (p. 248), one can rather discern a formulation process of a dominant theocratic ideology within the Islamic world.

How deeply rooted the heterodoxy and the religious syncretism in the Islamic world was, is investigated by Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (“Syncretisme et esprit messianique: le concept de Qotb et les chefs des mouvements messianiques aux époques seldjoukide et ottomane XIIIe - XVIIe siècle”, pp. 249-57). The author is interested, especially, in the ideological and religious aspect of the rebellions attempted by (semi) nomads in Seljuk and Ottoman Anatolia and in Melami-Bayrami messianic movements in Anatolia as well as in Istanbul and in Bosnia during the reign of Süleyman I. Between the participants of the revolt he discerns, firstly, mystic and “charismatic” – in the Weberian sense of the term – chiefs, often *şeyhs*, and, concerning the Turcomans, chiefs of tribes, perceived as the “celestial saviour” sent by god (“qotb-mehdi”); secondly, a circle of disciples and adherents; thirdly, nomads or Muslim peasants and heterodox Christians disappointed with the regime; and finally adventurers, robbers and the like with whom the author is not concerned. In fact, the exploration in the sources of the mystic and dualist elements ascribed to the leaders by their followers, gives an insight into the dogmatic base which enabled leaders to inspire such heterogeneous multitudes. However, one has also to try to understand why this specific dogmatic version was used, also in Byzantium and the Balkan states from the mid thirteenth century, as the *banner* of the protest or, better, as a symbolic means to a social struggle, which clearly had a variety of aims.

Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr (“Le district de Kırşehir et le tekke de Hacı Bektaş entre le pouvoir ottoman et les émirs de *Zulkadır*”, pp. 259-82) draws precious information on the Bektaşî community from the Ottoman register of the first censor of the province of Rum (transliterated on pp. 273-82), ordered in 1485 and documenting the Hacı Bektaş *tekke* in the district of Kırşehir. The author reconstructs the triangular relationship between this “mother-house”, the heterodox tribes, and the sultan, that functioned as a communication channel, in a way similar to that of the Orthodox and Armenian patriarchates.

Machiel Kiel (“Ottoman urban development and the cult of an heterodox Sufi Saint: Sarı Saltuk Dede and towns of Isakçe and Babadağ in the northern Dobrudja”, pp. 283-98) re-examines, in relation to the Ottoman town, a syncretist saint *par excellence*, Sarı Saltuk, “an ecstatic mystic” (d. 1297/98), venerated at Babadağ before the destruction and decimation provoked in 1462 by the prince of Walachia, Vlad Țepeș, known also as Dracula. This study, based on new documentation, calls to mind another possible example – one could describe it as a rival paradigm of Sarı Saltuk’s cult –, namely the emerging Christian saint John who was martyred c. 1330 at Λευκόπολις (Akkerman) and whose influence spread over the eastern Balkans as well as to the north of the Danube in Walachia and Moldavia. On the initiative of the Moldavian Prince John Alexander (1400-32), the saint’s relics were transferred to Suceava, to the Episcopal Church constructed in 1415, and John the Neomartyr was proclaimed the patron-saint of his state. This development pushed forward the spread of his cult along the coasts of the Black Sea, that is to say in the area where Sarı Saltuk’s cult was already diffused. If this correlation is correct, one can glimpse not only Islamic-Christian syncretist convergences but also religious/symbolical divergences because of political rivalries within the Orthodox/Islamic realm; through this paradigm, one can also be provided with an insight into the relationship between the patron saint and the city in the same worlds.

The paper by Hans Georg Majer (“The Koran: an Ottoman defter?! Ottoman heretics of the 18th century”, pp. 299-310) is useful for several reasons. Using two examples – obviously exceptional – of Ottoman heretics, Bosnavi İbrahim Efendi in Istanbul, of Hungarian descent, and the Bosnian Derviş Emini at Monastır (Bitola, Macedonia), executed in 1746 and 1747 respectively, he demonstrates the fragile character of Sunni orthodoxy. Through the Muslim versions of the Christological question and that of the virgin Mary, he reminds us of various Christian and Islamic circles’ close communication on the issue of Christ’s dual nature, much debated in Byzantium from the fifth century onwards and which resurfaced in the late-medieval version of mystic orthodoxy (Hesychasm), also dominant during the first two centuries of the Ottoman conquest. Moreover, he provides us with the possibility of perceiving the Christian-Islamic Balkan syncretism in relation to the Bogomils’ rejection of the Christian ritual and of the Old Testament, as well as to western influences, Catholic or Protestant. Apart from other examples of Ottoman rejection of the Islamic fundamentals and questioning of religious/temporal power, the author permits us to revise, in a wider time frame, religious deviance as an historical phenomenon having long term socio-political implications. It is thus not surprising that heretical groups, despite

their differences, have been considered equally dangerous by their respective societies.

The synchronic dimension of the *dedes'* role in leading the life of Alevis, through the last version of the book-source of inspiration entitled *Buyruk*, is examined by David Shankland (“The *Buyruk* in Alevi village life: Thoughts from the field on rival sources of religious inspiration”, pp. 311-23) in such a way that makes evident, firstly, the local diversity and the concomitant tolerance characterising the Alevis/Bektaşis and, secondly, the important changes in religious phenomena expressed by contemporary terminology, at the end of the Cold War era (1988-1990); thus he calls attention to new assessments and detects broader rather than local interactions between religion, society and politics, on a national and international scale. The relation between heresies or versions of religious syncretism and politics in an emblematic Balkan example is also studied by Alexandre Popovic (“L’instrumentalisation des théories sur le syncrétisme et l’hérésie en Bosnie-Herzégovine”, pp. 325-34). Firstly, he focuses on the political usage of the Islamic memory of Bosnia during the period of the Austrian-Hungarian occupation decided at the Berlin Congress in 1878. In an attempt to differentiate the Bosnian Moslem ruling elite from the co-religious dominant Ottomans, from 1882 onwards, Bosnia’s Austrian governor Baron Kallay “invented” and diffused the idea of a “Bosnian nation”, thus representing the Bosnian Islamic past/present as having originated from the late-medieval Bogomilism, a version of moderate dualism adopted also by the political elite. A second key issue, namely, the time and the reason of Bosnians’ conversion to Islam, is connected to this *politically correct* explanation. Despite the evidence, elaborated during the early post second World War period, documenting the opinion about the voluntary conversion of the Bogomil ruling elite, the previous simplistic opinions were not, however, challenged because of the new political stake, namely the legitimisation of the Muslim nation within Tito’s Yugoslavia. Stretching his research into the post-Cold War period, the author mentions the equally – in his opinion – politically dictated ideological *layer*, that is the one of Bektashism, added to the already rich Bosnian historical amalgam after the collapse of Cold War Yugoslavia.

The fourth section (“Les religions ottomanes: pluralisme et coexistence”) examines the acceptance by the Ottomans of religious orientations and dogmas as well as the dogmatic cohesion of Islam. György Hazaï (“Conceptions et pratiques de l’Islam à travers deux ouvrages anatoliens des XIVe-XVe siècles”, pp. 337-52) focuses on two works which draw two contradictory pictures of Islam – the one “severe”, the other “joyous”. The first focuses on the asceticism of Sufis and their detachment from political power, while the

second underlines the joy of richness and material goods. This double aspect of early Islam must be due to its lack of a dogmatic construct: it could neither crystallise in a single teaching nor define daily practices. However, its presence poses the following question: is this a matter of an Ottoman phenomenon related to the absence, at the same time, of a political ideology?

The demographic study by Stéphane Yérasimos (“À propos des sürgün du Karaman à Istanbul au XVIe siècle”, pp. 353-62) reverses the Greek national representation habitually projected onto the “Turcophone Christians”. The Christians with Turkish names in two non-Muslim inventories of Istanbul and Galata (1540 and 1544) constitute striking examples of the phenomenon of the “interpenetration between ethnic and religious categories”, as well as the “fusion of rites (Orthodox and Gregorian)”. It is essential to tackle this issue which runs counter to national historiographies.

Nathalie Clayer (“Quand l’hagiographie se fait l’écho des dérèglements socio-politiques: le Menâkıbnâme de Münîrî Belgrâdî”, pp. 363-81) analyses an interesting example of bio-hagiography written at Belgrade in which the Islamic religion (of Melami inspiration) and a Suriyani political model are interconnected. According to the author the work, known from a single example, seems to be not only an expression of discontent (with mystic overtones) with the disorder and corruption but also a promoter of specific social groups, the *şeyhs* and perhaps the bureaucrats, at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Suraiya Faroqhi (“An Orthodox woman saint in an Ottoman document”, pp. 383-94) using a little known document of 1582, studies the persecution of the rich Athenian Regul(l)a/ Philothei, the future saint Philothei, because of the converting of her convent into a place where she gathered Islamised slaves, mostly women, in order to free them and lead them back into the Christian flock before evacuating them to “Fringistan”. The author speaks of the relations between the Catholic world and the celebrated family of Benizelos who belonged to the local nobility – their mansion still exists today. One could perhaps more specifically relate the actions of the Athenian saint (d. 1589) with the analogous and contemporary activity of the Order of the Trinitarians (Naples in 1560, Genoa in 1569, Palermo in 1581 etc.).⁵ This specific Ottoman document can in the future cast more light on the phenomenon of colonial slavery in the Levant.⁶ Given that the slaves’ re-baptism did

⁵ Epstein, Steven A., *Speaking of Slavery Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 192-3.

⁶ Verlinden, “The transfer of colonial techniques”, mainly pp. 214 ff.

not lead to their emancipation, one wonders whether Philothei's convent was involved in the eastern Mediterranean slave market.⁷

Based on precise historical examples, the work of Elizabeth A. Zachariadou (“À propos du syncrétisme islamo-chrétien dans les territoires ottomans”, pp. 395-403) sheds light on the influence of the “governed” over the “governors” through cultural relations and practices. Referring to the Seljuks at Constantinople, who in the twelfth century “déclarèrent qu'ils étaient chrétiens et que leurs mères les avaient baptisés sur les territoires turcs alors qu'ils étaient petits enfants”, she gives us an idea of the long period of osmosis which preceded the Ottoman conquest; in other words, she indicates, through the established and almost self-evident interchange of religious Islamic/Christian practices, the firm historical base and the structural traits of the eastern-frontier syncretism.

The 27 studies reviewed here and published in a volume of proceedings, make up a well-documented, geographically expansive, and coherent historical synthesis which does not simplify its subject matter. The articles in this collection shed ample light on religious dualism – particularly Islamic – from different points of view and various social and political aspects. In this way, this collection convincingly overturns static representations, both in national historiography, with its well-known anachronisms, and in a certain current of *politically correct* discourse with its relativism and emphasis on cultural approach, representing religions as a collection of one-dimensional ideas and practices in conflict. With these papers we are provided with a complex, dynamic and historically nuanced perception of dualism and its connection with some of the socio-political issues at stake, for which different orthodoxies are put forth in multi-religious societies. In particular, the studies on heretical Islamic versions open the way for comparative analyses of complex syncretist phenomena with long-term consequences in the wider Middle Eastern world: on the one hand, the mystic late-medieval/early modern Christian orthodox version, namely Hesychasm, a response to dualism proclaimed as a constituent element of the political ideology of the Christian states of the Byzantine commonwealth, and, on the other hand, its Islamic counterparts, dominant also in a part of the Islamic world – needless to say, also the analogous marginal western European trend.

This volume is thus useful for the abundance of information offered both to the historian, to the historian/sociologist of religions as well as to the specialist

⁷ Verlinden, Charles, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, vol. II, *Italie - Colonies italiens du levant - Levant latin - Empire byzantin* (Gent: Universiteit te Ghent, 1977), p. 207, cf. 1032.

of contemporary multi-religious societies and the alleged religious conflicts in the Balkans and in the Islamic world. It will be valuable also for the social anthropologist who will enrich his/her synchronic approach with the multiple diachronies indicated in many of the contributions. The indexes of persons and divine names, of geographic and ethnic terms, of religions and religious movements and of doctrines, ideas and works, which conclude the volume, make the corpus of papers easier to consult and, to a certain extent, compensate for the lack of a map of the “Orient” which would have facilitated still further the orientation of the reader in space.