RELIGION

and

NATION(ALISM)

Entanglements, Tensions, Conflicts

University of Tartu, Estonia, 10-11 November 2016

Conference program and abstracts

**ESTONIAN SOCIETY
FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS**

TARTU ÜLIKOOL · UNIVERSITAS TARTUENSIS · 1632

International Conference

Religion and Nation(alism): Entanglements, Tensions, Conflicts

10-11 November 2016
University of Tartu

Abstracts

Tartu 2016

Contact information:
Estonian Society for the Study of Religions
Ülikooli 16, 51003 Tartu, Estonia
e-mail: conference2016@eaus.ee

Programme

10 November
Venue: University of Tartu main building (Ülikooli 18)

9.00 – 10.00
Registration in the lobby of the main building

10.00 – 11.30
Opening of the conference (Assembly Hall)
Riho Altnurme, Vice Dean for Research, University of Tartu
Madis Arukask, President of the Estonian Society for the Study of Religions

Session I: Plenary lecture
Chair: Ülo Valk
Frank Korom (Boston University)
   "Religious Nationalisms: India and Serbia Compared"

11.30 – 12.00 Coffee break

12.00 – 13.30
Session II: Relationships between Churches and Nationalisms
(Room 128)
Chair: Alar Kilp
Anna Haapalainen (University of Turku)
   "An Institutionalised Religion Making or Breaking National Identities"
Aušra Pazeraite (Vilnius University)
   "Modern Reception of the Bible as Testimony of the Birth of National Consciousness: Transformation of Religious Collective Identities into National Identities"
Borja W. González Fernández (Autonomous University of Madrid)
   "Building Lebanon Up: the Maronite Church and the Construction of Lebanese Identity"

13.30 – 14.30 Lunch (University Café restaurant, Ülikooli 20)

14.30 – 16.30

Session III: Entanglements with Secularity (Room 128)

Chair: Anna Haapalainen

Katharina Neef (Technical University Chemnitz, Leipzig)

"The National Limitations of the International Community of Freethought in the Early 20th Century"

Kati Mikkola (University of Helsinki/Finnish Literature Society)

"Popular Perspectives on Nation-Building, Secularisation and Transformations of Religiosity in Late 19th and Early 20th Century Finland"

Nerija Putinaitė (Vilnius University)

"Nationalism *contra* Catholicism in Soviet Lithuania's Atheisation Politics"

Atko Remmel (University of Tartu)

"'Estonians, the Atheist Nation': On the Origin of the Idea and Its Development"

14.30 – 16.30

Session IV: Ethnic Boundaries and Religious Symbols (Room 232)

Chair: Madis Arukask

Eszter Győrfy (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca/University of Pécs)

"Religion, Identity and the Construction of Ethnic Boundaries in Coşnea, Romania"

Maija Grizāne (Daugavpils University)

"Russian Old Believers in the Republic of Latvian during the 1920s and 1930s: Forming a New National Identity"

Evy Johanne Håland (Independent researcher, Norway)

"A Gendered National Festival at a Greek Island Shrine"

Bea Vidacs (University of Pécs)

"Religion and Nationalism: The Holy Crown of Hungary"

16.30 – 17.00 Coffee break

17.00 – 19.00

Session V: Secularism and Civil Religion (Room 128)

Chair: Ain Riistan

Alar Kilp (University of Tartu)

"Religious and Political Leaders Constructing a National Civil Religion in Estonia: President Toomas Hendrik Ilves (2006–2016), Prime Minister Andrus Ansip (2005–2014) and Archbishop Andres Põder (2005–2014)"

Christiane Königstedt (University of Lepizig)
> "State Neutrality, Opportunity Structures and Implicit Definitions – The Problem of Political Agendas Re-Defining Religion(s)"

José Leitão (Independent researcher, Netherlands)
> "God, Fatherland, Family – On the Existence of Civil Religion in the Portuguese *Estado Novo*"

Ian Fry (University of Divinity, Melbourne/Victorian Council of Churches Dialogue Commission)
> "Alternative paths. Via Creeds and Doctrine to Conflict, or via Covenant to Peace"

17.00 – 18.30
Session VI: Islam and Ideologies (Room 232)
Chair: Ringo Ringvee

Vladimir Sazonov (University of Tartu/Baltic Defence College)
> "Religious Narratives and Elements of Arab Nationalism in the Ideology and Information Warfare of so-called Islamic State (ISIS)"

Anita Stasulane (Daugavpils University)
> "Current Religious Tensions: Islamophobia in Latvia"

Mirjam Aeschbach (University of Zurich)
"#WhatBritishMuslimsReallyThink:
> Negotiating Religious and National Identity on Twitter"

19.30 – 21.30 Reception (University of Tartu Museum, Lossi 25)

11 November

Venue: University of Tartu von Bock building (Ülikooli 16)

9.00 – 11.00

Session VII: Religion and National Narratives (room 212)

Chair: Milda Ališauskienė

Ain Riistan (University of Tartu)

   "The European Migration Crisis, Religion and Nationalism in Estonia"

Michael Strmiska (Orange County Community College)

   "Modern American Gun Culture as a New Religious Movement"

Igor Mikeshin (University of Helsinki)

   "How Russian is Russian Evangelicalism?"

Marco Giardini (University of Milan)

   ""Sons of Ephraim": The Vitality of an Eschatological Image between Christian British Israelism and Religious Zionism"

9.00 – 11.00

Session VIII: Religious and National Identities in Asia (room 214)

Chair: Frank Korom

Per Kvaerne (University of Oslo)

   "The Tibetan Bön Religion and the Construction of an Alternative National Identity"

Alevtina Solovyeva (University of Tartu)

   "Reconstruction of National Identity and Revival of Religious Life in Post-Socialist Mongolia"

Kikee Doma Bhutia (University of Tartu)

   "*Beyul Demojong* and Divine Prophecies: The Dawn of Buddhism, Bhutia Kingship and Nationalism in Sikkim"

Baburam Saikia (University of Tartu)

   "The Role of the Vaishnava Religion in the Construction of Assamese Identity"

11.00 – 11.30 Coffee break

11.30 – 13.00

Session IX: Dynamics of Russian Orthodox Tradition (room 212)

Chair: Piret Koosa

Elena Stepanova (Institute of Philosophy and Law, Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Ekaterinburg)

"Traditional Values between Universality and Particularism: the Case of Russia"

Alison R. Kolosova (Durham University)

"The Relationship of Orthodox Missionary Work and the Awakening of National Identity among the Chuvash of the Volga-Kama Region at the Turn of the 20th Century"

Tuomas Green (University of Eastern Finland)

"The Role of Russian Orthodox Traditions in the Contemporary Interpretation of the Assassination of Alexander II of Russia (1818–1881)"

11.30 – 13.30

Session X: Native Faith and Paganism (room 214)

Chair: Michael Strmiska

Ergo-Hart Västrik (University of Tartu)

"Nationalist Discourse in the Rhetoric of the Estonian Native Faith (*Maausulised*) Movement"

Agita Misāne (University of Latvia)

"How to Invent a Tradition? Some Lessons from Latvia"

Julia von Boguslawski (University of Helsinki)

"Ethnicity, Culture, and Tradition in Finnish Native Faith"

Eglė Aleknaitė (Vytautas Magnus University)

"From Books to the Andes: Changing Sources and Authorities in the Field of Lithuanian Neoshamanism"

13.30 – 14.30 Lunch (University Café restaurant, Ülikooli 20)

14.30 – 16.30
Session XI: Confessional Dynamics in Eastern Europe (room 212)
Chair: Vladimir Sazonov
Christoffer Stoerup (University of Copenhagen)
   "Moldovan Ethnopolitics in Orthodox Geopolitics"
Kirill Markin, Anna Zueva (St. Tikhon's Orthodox University, Moscow)
   "Features of the Process of Religious Revival in Countries that Have Undergone Forced Secularisation"
Larysa Vladychenko (Ministry of Culture of Ukraine) &
Eugene Kharkovschenko (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv)
   "Ukrainian Policy in the Sphere of Interethnic Relations and Religious Minorities Rights Protection"
Tetiana Kalenychenko (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv)
   "The Religious Factor in Changes in Ukrainian Identity: Focus on Chaplaincy"

16.30 – 17.00 Coffee break

17.00 – 18.30
Session XII: Plenary lecture (room 212)
Chair: Atko Remmel
Milda Ališauskienė (Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas)
   "Religions and Nations in Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe: Is There a Place for Minority Religions?"

Closing of the conference

19.00 Conference dinner (University Café restaurant, Ülikooli 20)

Preface

Recent developments throughout the world have shown that the connections between national and religious identity have not lost topicality. The relationships between religion and nationalism are multifaceted and interactive; their dynamics is influenced by social and political conditions. The politisation of religion may support national unity, whereas religion may lead to particular forms of political activism. The concurrence of national and religious identity (or the lack of it) may result in nation building or the shaping of an ideology of the 'chosen people'. Moreover, religious identities may offer possibilities for the formation of communities that cross national borders. Studying the role that religion plays in these complex relationships will offer us insights into the formation, development or disintegration of certain groups and their choices, both in individual and public spheres.

The Religion and Nation(alism): Relations, Tensions, Conflicts conference will bring together scholars from various disciplines who study the connections between (ir)religion and nationalism. The topics discussed within the conference will include both diachronic and synchronic aspects of these connections. Conference papers concern regional and comparative perspectives on ideological entanglements of religion and nationalism, take account of tensions and conflicts between various ethnic and confessional groups, as well as embrace issues related to civil religion and native faith movements.

The principal organisers of the conference are the Estonian Society for the Study of Religions (ESSR) and the University of Tartu in partnership with the Estonian Literary Museum, the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies and the Tartu Nefa Group. The main objectives of the ESSR, founded in spring 2006, are to promote the academic study of religions and to bring together researchers in the field from various institutions and disciplines. In order to fulfil its goals the ESSR has organised annual conferences, meetings and public lectures. It has also represented Estonia in the European Association for the Study of Religions and in the International Association for the History of Religions, providing thus an opportunity for Estonian scholars to participate in the activities of these international institutions.

This conference relies on close co-operation between the ESSR and our sister organisations in Latvia and Lithuania and continues the tradition of holding regular international scholarly forums in the study of religions in the Baltic countries. The event is generously hosted and supported by the University of Tartu, the leading academic institution for the study of religions in Estonia. The interdisciplinary strength of our *alma mater* is manifest in cooperation between the Institute of Cultural Research and Arts, the School of Theology and Religious Studies as well as the Asian Centre.

Organising committee of the conference

Abstracts of plenary sessions

Religious Nationalisms:
India and Serbia Compared

Frank J. Korom
(Boston University)

A generation of scholars have argued that nationalism was solely a product of the West, most importantly Europe. Rabindranath Tagore, for example, stated that India (and the East) never had nationalism. However, Pete Van Der Veer had provided an important corrective to this notion in his book *Religious Nationalism* (1994), in which he argued that while Asia might have never had "secular" nationalism, they most certainly had "religious" nationalism. This lecture will attempt to use two examples, one culled from Europe, the other from Asia, to see whether or not a meaningful comparison of the two can be made. I wish to argue that there are some parallels to be drawn in terms of the resource materials drawn upon by religious nationalist actors in my two case studies. Drawing upon a golden, mythical past, for example, the deification of folk heroes, the anointing of sacred geographical sites, and the composition of epic poetry are all vehicles for the expression of a religious ideology constructed for nationalistic purposes in both contexts; namely, Serbia and India. It is also my contention that such religious ideologies, once constructed, are then used to foment divisive ethnic politics that often result in widespread communal violence. I conclude by suggesting that such a comparative model might be a better way to think about religious nationalism than a simple isolationist analysis in which one single nation or culture is excised from the global context for methodological purposes.

Religions and Nations in Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe: Is There a Place for Minority Religions?

Milda Ališauskienė
(Vytautas Magnus University)

This paper discusses the complicated relations between religions and nations in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe by approaching the problem of religious nationalism, its features and social boundaries. Classical studies of nationalism usually refer to Western European cases and discuss the place of nationalism in these societies. Over last two decades studies of nationalism and its relations with religions in Central and Eastern Europe have attracted the attention of social scientists (Ramet, Zubrycki, Busse et al.). What are the features of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe and what are its social implications for religion and state relations, and particularly how does it influence the position of minority religions in these countries? I will challenge these questions by using empirical data from qualitative as well as quantitative surveys on minority religions in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly using data from surveys conducted in Lithuania between 2007 and 2014.

Abstracts of parallel sessions

#WhatBritishMuslimsReallyThink: Negotiating Religious and National Identity on Twitter

Mirjam Aeschbach
(University of Zurich)

In the discursive construction of intra-national sameness, religious identity is often a key criterion for inclusion or exclusion from the imagined national community. In Europe, such discourses are central to the perception of diaspora communities. In this study, the hashtag #WhatBritishMuslimsReallyThink was examined in order to analyse how members of the Muslim digital diaspora community both construct and reinforce their collective identity as well as employ discursive strategies to negotiate British national identity and their national belonging. Drawing on a corpus of 512 tweets containing the hashtag #WhatBritishMuslimsReallyThink, a qualitative content analysis approach was employed to analyse the topics and strategies present in the hashtag discourse. The conversation is a reaction to the article "An inconvenient truth" published in the Sunday Times April 10th, 2016, in which the predominant argument was the exclusion of Muslims from the British national body and their portrayal as a "Nation within a Nation". By taking this article and the recent historical context of representation of British Muslims in British media into account, the issues addressed and the strategies of belonging employed in the Twitter conversation are embedded in a larger public discourse on British national identity and intra-national boundary making. In the data analysed for this paper, both in the construction of a distinct intra-national 'other' in the British media as seen in the Sunday Times article and in the strategy of adequation and distinction to Britishness Twitter users employ, a contested and multifaceted British national identity can be witnessed, in which religious and ethnic identity are clearly intertwined.

From Books to the Andes:
Changing Sources and Authorities in the Field of Lithuanian Neoshamanism

Eglė Aleknaitė
(Vytautas Magnus University)

Neoshamanism presents a good case for analysing changes of authority in religious/spiritual groups and in Western society in general, as has already been shown in research on some forms of Neoshamanisms and interaction of scholarly and 'popular' anthropology. The paper presents a contribution to this research providing analysis of the topic in the post-Soviet Lithuanian context as well as observations of the whole field (as opposed to specific Neoshamanic groups and their leaders). Using data gathered during fieldwork carried out in Lithuania between 2009 and 2015, the paper aims to analyse variety and changes of authority relevant to Lithuanian Neoshamanic communities.

Authorities relevant to the field of Lithuanian Neoshamanism depend in the first place on that fact that it falls within the New Age milieu. As New Agers, Lithuanian Neoshamans build their evaluations mainly on the authority of the inner Self and on personal experience. However, their Self tend to authorise different sources as authoritative: books, popular culture texts and films, knowledge provided by visiting native (Neo)shamans from 'shamanic' cultures, experience gained during visits to 'shamanic' cultures, personal experimentation, etc.

The paper reveals the importance of the impact of the socio-political context on changes of relevant authority, and the necessity to focus more on ordinary members of Neoshamanic groups.

Beyul Demojong and Divine Prophecies: The Dawn of Buddhism, Bhutia Kingship and Nationalism in Sikkim

Kikee Doma Bhutia
(University of Tartu)

Buddhism was introduced to Sikkim in the 8th century by Guru Padmasambhava. According to mythical tradition he tamed many evil spirits and turned them into local guardian deities, as well as hiding *terma* or the religious texts in the landscape and making various prophesies. This is how the idea of Sikkim as a hidden sacred land, called *Beyul*, one of various *Beyuls* dotted across the Himalaya, came into being. Sikkim is known as *Beyul Demojong* ('hidden land of the fruitful valley') in various religious texts such as the *Denjong Ney-yig*, the 'Guide Book to sacred places of the hidden land'.

In this paper, I will explore the concept of *Beyul Demojong* in its relationship to Bhutia kingship (monarchy), ethnicity, and nationalism. *Beyul Demojong* exists as a real place with more or less definite boundaries, but it derives its existence primarily from mythical narratives and prophecies. When, in 17th century, three monks, Lhatsun Chenpo, Kathog Kuntu Zangpo and Ngadak Sempa Chenpo, arrived in Sikkim, it was believed that they found Sikkim untouched by organised religion, which provided a fertile environment for the sustenance and propagation of Buddhism. Later, these three monks searched for a fourth member, Phuntshog Namgyal, who was then enthroned as the first Chogyal (King) of the Buddhist Himalayan Kingdom of Sikkim in 1642. I use the term 'Buddhist Himalayan Kingdom' to stress the interconnecting notions of nation and religion that existed in earliest expression of state formation. The question I will explore here is how the creation of *Beyul Demajong* and its subsequent 'opening' by Guru Padmasambhava provided both the political stage and the spiritual-religious context in which Bhutia kingship could be legitimised. Put differently, this paper relates the idea of *Beyul Demajong* with the 333 year Bhutia monarchy that flourished from 1642 to 1975, after which Sikkim merged as the 22nd state of the Indian Union.

Ethnicity, Culture, and Tradition
in Finnish Native Faith

Julia von Boguslawski
(University of Helsinki)

In this paper, which is based on my master's thesis in history, I examine how contemporary Finnish ethnic Pagans are interpreting ethnicity, culture, and tradition in their revival of Finnish folk religion. My focus is on a Pagan branch that goes by the name of *Suomenusko*, which translates directly as 'Finnish faith' or 'Finn faith'. I have studied this group through their organisation, the Taivaannaula ry association and the Internet forum Hiitola, in order to determine how tradition, culture, and ethnicity is understood and used in the official communication of the association, by which I mean on its homepage, and in the informal discussions on the Internet forum.

I discuss how folk belief is selectively revived and re-interpreted so that nature, people and tradition are tied together into a whole that is perceived as natural and perennial. Folk beliefs that support an ecological lifestyle and critical attitudes towards a modern multicultural and Americanised society are mobilised in support of traditionalist views. Similarly folk beliefs are seen to support the view that people should be connected to the local land they live on and ancestors are seen as a crucial link to the past and to an unbroken tradition. Furthermore, the group's association has gone from profiling itself as a religious organisation to profiling itself as a cultural one that is protecting Finnish tradition.

My perspective is that of memory studies and historical culture. I discuss which currents in the available historical culture this particular group is mobilising and propose that they are synthesising traditional Finnish nationalist themes with themes from a general occulture in the creation of a Finnish faith.

Alternative paths. Via Creeds and Doctrine to Conflict, or via Covenant to Peace

Ian Fry
(University of Divinity, Melbourne /
Victorian Council of Churches Dialogue Commission)

The paper moves through three sections supported by PowerPoint charts.

First. If there is to be a secure human future, the continuum in the evolution of humanity with three phases in the development of systematic religion, the revelation of the concept and implications of divine covenant and the manner in which rigid application of dogmatic statements, creeds and papal encyclicals has generated conflict must be understood. Progressive revelation of divine covenant through commands to successive faith leaders was circumstantial. Each command followed the failure of prior communal leadership.

Second. Rigid application of dogmatic statements, creeds and encyclicals with government and military support is shown to have:
- encouraged politico-religious nationalism and manipulation of ethnic differentiation;
- generated conflict between the three distinct non-homogenous Abrahamic religion-based communities;
- led to the abuse of theology, exploitation of non-adherent peoples and their resources;
- resulted in other communities with unrelated ethnic and religious heritages also becoming involved in conflict.

Third. The major consequences of that pattern of events are:
- failure of religious and national leaders to recognise the 20th convergence of prophetic concepts generated within the primary Abrahamic faiths that could have helped to avoid deepening of the world crises if it had been recognised;
- global realignment into two non-homogenous blocs, the White Western Christian Bloc (WWCB) and the World Majority Peoples (WMP);

- dynamic and irreversible transfer of authority in economic, political and social policy from one bloc to the other in such a manner that efforts by the WWCB to reverse the transfer increases the level of trauma it must accept;
- a comprehensive reassessment of relationships between world faiths, review of dogmatic teaching, exclusivism in worship, theological education, pastoral care and dialogue is vital. The establishment of a global council on religion, culture and the human future can help.

"Sons of Ephraim": The Vitality of an Eschatological Image Between Christian British Israelism and Religious Zionism

Marco Giardini
(University of Milan)

Among the messianic expectations carried by Jewish traditional texts, the return of the Ten Lost Tribes to the Promised Land under the banner of the Messiah Son of Joseph plays a prominent role. During the modern age, much speculation arose, both in Christian and Jewish religious communities, on the supposed location of the tribes. The paper intends to shed light on the particular interpretation that some Anglo Saxon streams of Protestant Christianity and Zionist currents from the second half of the 19th century up to now have elaborated in order to identify the Ten Lost Tribes and to understand the function they are supposed to fulfil in future events.

In particular, attention will be cast first of all on the main assumptions of Christian British Israelism, supporters of which (above all Charles F. Parnham, John Allen and Herbert W. Armstrong) maintained the identification between the Tribes and the Anglo Saxon populations. For these authors, animated by a strong millenarian and philo-Semitic position, the descendants of the British people were racially as well as spiritually tied to the Jews and were entrusted with the same prerogatives that God had bestowed upon the 'Chosen people'.

Secondly, the paper intends to demonstrate that such interpretation has deeply influenced some streams of Religious Zionism (especially those that take inspiration from the so-called text entitled *Qol ha-Tor*). According to these groups, whose interpretation of the tribes departs from the Jewish traditional one, the reunification of the Sons of Judah and Benjamin with the "Sons of Ephraim" will be an essential step in a gradual messianic manifestation; this process has already began, through the foundation of the State of Israel and the growing acknowledgment of its providential meaning by non-Jews, and will culminate with the establishment of the universal Messiah's kingdom foretold in the Holy Scriptures.

Building Lebanon Up:
the Maronite Church and the Construction of Lebanese Identity

Borja W. González Fernández
(Autonomous University of Madrid)

On October 25, 1919, the Peace Conference assembled in Paris attended to a most extraordinary event: a delegation of black-clad, long-bearded Oriental bishops under the command of the Patriarch of Antioch, Iliyas Huwayyik, pleaded vehemently and successfully, after long months of backstage manoeuvring, for the independence and territorial enlargement of Lebanon. The definitive establishment of Greater Lebanon, on September 1, 1920, seemed, thus, to fulfil the historic aspirations of the Maronite Church and community, which had been striving, for well over a century, for the creation of a sovereign, Christian state on its traditional homeland.

By then, the Church was accompanied by a secular élite that defended Lebanese statehood in the distinctively cosmopolitan terms of their rediscovered Phoenician heritage. In spite of their apparent intellectual humanism, theirs remained, nevertheless, an essentially Christian vision of Lebanon, possessing full identity with the Church's idea of the country as a Christian fortress "within a sea of Arab-Muslim hostility".

The creation of the Lebanese state and, later on, full-blown independence was, paradoxically, a mixed blessing for the Maronite Church, which receded into relative obscurity, leaving the centre of the stage to lay politicians, who were able to reach a *modus vivendi* with Lebanese Muslims, enshrined in the famous National Pact. However, their inability to cope with the consequences of the Civil War (1975–1990) led to a renewed prominence of the Church both during the conflagration and in its aftermath.

This presentation will examine these historical episodes while trying to prove that the Maronite Church conceives of herself as the ultimate deposit of *true* Lebanese identity, whose defence, whenever such an identity is threatened by internal or foreign forces, is the ultimate *ratio* for her involvement in the political – and military – arena.

The Role of Russian Orthodox Traditions in the Contemporary Interpretation of the Assassination of Alexander II of Russia (1818–1881)

Tuomas Green
(University of Eastern Finland)

Orthodox traditions and a mythical Orthodox history continue to play an important role for Russian nationalism, as the recent developments concerning the 're-unification' of the Crimean peninsula with Russia shows. The importance of Orthodox traditions for Russia has been acknowledged by generations of scholars, even while they have otherwise held contrasting views on the meaning of those traditions; however, less focus has been given to the temporal events that alter the interpretation of such traditions and their meaning for the Russian nation. This paper addresses the relationship that temporal events and the underlying temporal narrative of traditions had by focusing on the interpretation of the assassination of Alexander II of Russia, and the temporal context that Russian Orthodox, especially monastic, traditions gave to that event.

Specifically, I will be looking at Orthodox religious writings following the death of Alexander II, concerning first the assassination of the tsar, and also the contemporary travel accounts and historical writing that dealt with monasteries and monastic traditions. These writings were published in such religious periodicals of the time as *Strannik*, *Pravoslavye obozrenie* and *Pravoslavnyj sobesednik*. My hypothesis is that the assassination of the holy Russian Emperor generated an effort from the Church to stress the historical unity of the Church and the Russian nation to an increasing degree; and to link the threatening event with forces alien to the unity of the Russian nation and the Church. In conclusion, this project, by closely examining the temporal ties between the assassination of the ruler as an Empire-threatening event and the monastic religious traditions as an interpretative temporal frame for the assassination, highlights the malleable nature of Russian religious traditions in the service of Russian nationalism.

Russian Old Believers in the Republic of Latvia during the 1920s and 1930s: Forming a New National Identity

Maija Grizāne
(Daugavpils University)

During the 1920s and 1930s Russian Old Believers had to reconsider their experience of living under the imperial regime and the restriction they experienced expressing their religious identity. They had to adapt to the new democratic conditions of the Latvian Republic so as to transform internal and external interactions and find a new self-identity in the new political, socio-economic and cultural environment. Old Believer parishes had to prove their loyalty to the Latvian nation and its government in order to build strong relationships and influence domestic policy. One of the first important initiatives was to establish a self-government body to represent all Old Believer parishes to regulate their activities and to unite the previously divided community by unifying common aims for political and social life and overcoming disagreements in religious practice. Second, the return of alienated religious property stimulated research into religious traditions and the restoration of prayer houses. Third, participation in public activities and state projects encouraged the development of civic consciousness and the overcoming of social insularity. Fourth, cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the development of standards for religious education encouraged the reconstruction of education traditions and adjustment to the new system. Fifth, studying Latvian language, culture and history forced the process of integration and identification with the Latvian nation. Formation of the new national identity became a significant task for the whole community of Russian Old Believers in Latvia and demonstrated a successful way in which a religious ethnic group can be incorporated into a newly established democratic nation. After the occupation of Latvia, according to oral history sources, Old Believers identified themselves with the Latvian nation and did not accept the new regime willingly.

Religion, Identity and the Construction of Ethnic Boundaries in Coşnea, Romania

Eszter Győrfy

(Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca/University of Pécs)

My case study examines a village community in the eastern Carpathians, on the historical border of Transylvania and Moldova, that was settled in the second half of the 18th century by people of various ethnic and denominational backgrounds. However, for various demographical and pastorational reasons the community was Greek Catholic in religion until the 1940s and local identity has mainly concerned the dissimilarities both from the neighbouring Hungarian and Romanian communities, reflecting the unique character of the local culture, which integrates Hungarian and Romanian elements alike.

This situation has significantly changed since the 1940s, when Roman Catholic and (after the banning of the Greek Catholic church in Romania) Orthodox pastorisation started in the village. The intensifying politicisation of religion – in this case taking religion as an indicator of ethnicity – was mainly a result of the rival pastorisation of the two churches and the nation-building processes on both sides, and led to the denominational separation of the inhabitants as well as a kind of ethnic separation on the grounds of religious affiliation. As ideas concerning religious and ethnic identity are very diverse and rather incoherent within the community, today's identity schemes include unusual categories like Orthodox believers with Hungarian national identity, Romanian-speaking Roman Catholics with strong Romanian nationalist attitudes, Orthodox people who are Romanian nationalists but do not speak a word of Romanian, etc.

The central aim of my paper is to show (based on archival sources and anthropological fieldwork) how different political and ecclesiastical events, processes and purposes during the 20th century entangled religion and nation(alism)s in local people's identity and everyday religious life and how different historical narratives and perspectives, national affinities, and religious traditions interact, interfere and coexist in this village today.

An Institutionalised Religion Making or Breaking National Identities

Anna Haapalainen
(University of Turku)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) considers itself to be the 'binding force' of Finnish culture and nation. It describes itself as a "folk church" and an "integral part of national history and culture". Despite the fact that its position is becoming more precarious, because of the declining membership rates and decreasing church-based religiosity, the church still emphasises its role as 'nation builder' and the 'voice of the people'. For the church and its representatives ethnicity and nationality are more or less bound to certain values, and the role of the church is to act as a gatekeeper to protect these values. The church's representatives actively take part in public discussions (such as equal marriage rights or asylum seeker questions) in which they often make statements that proclaim a connection between Christian values and Finnish values. Ever-changing social circumstances have provoked the ELCF to produce national identity claims and to define the core values of Finnishness. They mediate a message of national unity in which the ELCF is emphasised as an actor representing all people living in Finland regardless of their religion, ethnicity or other minority positions. This is possible, firstly because approximately 74 % of Finnish people still belong to the ELCF, and secondly because the ELCF is a highly organised institution with an acknowledged position in Finnish society. In my paper I will take a closer look at this process, in which an institutionalised religion actively claims to represent the people and the culture of a nation despite this claim being unwarranted. Furthermore, I scrutinise how the ELCF creates national identities, and what happens when these produced identities fracture.

A Gendered National Festival
at a Greek Island Shrine

Evy Johanne Håland
(Independent researcher, Norway)

In modern Greece, the festival dedicated to the Dormition of the *Panagia* (the Virgin Mary) is celebrated on 15th August. On the Aegean island of Tinos, this fertility and healing festival dedicated to the Dormition of the *Panagia* is particularly important for several reasons. The church of the *Panagia*, *Euangelistrias* ('the Annunciation'), owes its fame to a miraculous holy icon of the Annunciation, which was unearthed in a field in 1821. The miracles worked by this icon have made Tinos a centre of pan-Orthodox worship, and pilgrimages are particularly made to this greatest shrine of Greek Orthodoxy during the Dormition. The Dormition of the *Panagia* is also an important ideological festival for the New Greek nation-state of 1821, as illustrated by several ceremonies during the festival, particularly the procession of the icon from the church to the harbour. In short, 15 August is a special day for Hellenism, combining religion with patriotism, and the Dormition on Tinos is a profound social event. The festival is also an excellent occasion to study the relationship between the female and male worlds. Accordingly, there are several meanings and values connected to the festival and its rituals, popular and official, female and male, since the pilgrimage site on Tinos presents an interrelationship of history, ritual and gender. Here, different interests – sacred and secular, local and national, personal and official – come together: we meet an intersection of social, religious and political life.

The paper is based on several periods of fieldwork carried out between 1990 and the present, involving research into the festival dedicated to the Dormition of the *Panagia* on Tinos. It aims to explore some of the main elements of this festival within a socio-economic and political framework.

The Religious Factor in Changes in Ukrainian Identity: Focus on Chaplaincy

Tetiana Kalenychenko
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The problem of identity became particularly acute for Ukrainian society after the revolution in Maidan and armed conflict in the East. The religious component took on new significance amid growing confidence in the Church, which influenced self-determination and social and political change. This change touched not only religious organisations, but also their cooperation with authorities, NGOs and others. My research briefly analyses the main trends and possible impacts that religious environment had on the formation of a new Ukrainian social identity, and invites further discussion.

I will focus my field data on the movement to renew military chaplaincy. That unique change generated a huge group of religious volunteers and secular activists who became chaplains during the two years of open conflict. Ukrainian military chaplains from Christian, Muslim and neo-Pagan communities represented in their rhetoric new religious and political aspects of identity. During the active phase of the armed conflict, religious volunteers had to seek an emergency response to the theology of war, to understand its place in politics and define their role in public processes.

Military priests became something like spokesmen for the soldiers, actively working with the media and journalists. Because of the high level of trust in the Church, chaplains were able to find their own answers to the questions of war and changes in the political sphere. Such public presentation by chaplains found a new way of re-identification in religious and national fields. That is why it is so important to collect this new data and try to understand how identity is transforming today in post-Soviet society, both during the active phase of the armed conflict and after the revolution.

Religious and Political Leaders Constructing a National Civil Religion in Estonia: President Toomas Hendrik Ilves (2006–2016), Prime Minister Andrus Ansip (2005–2014) and Archbishop Andres Põder (2005–2014)

Alar Kilp
(University of Tartu)

In Estonia, 'civil religion' is the nexus of traditional religion (church religion) and the rites of political community. Consequently, only some of the rites, symbols, identities and beliefs of civil religion are (or can be) represented by a religious institution. Similarly, only some of the beliefs and practices of church religion are related to the rites of the political community. Against this background, the paper identifies and assesses the role and influence of religious and political leaders in the construction of national civil religion. The paper argues that President Toomas Hendrik Ilves (2006–2016), Prime Minister Andrus Ansip (2005–2014) and Archbishop Andres Põder (2005–2014) constructed the type of national civil religion that contributed to rising inter-ethnic and inter-cultural opposition. In contrast, the preceding President (Arnold Rüütel), Archbishop (Jaan Kiivit junior) and Prime Minister from the Reform Party (Siim Kallas) constructed civil religion in a more inclusive way that tended to support inter-religious dialogue and inter-ethnic integration. Finally, the paper assesses the challenges ahead for the new incumbents in the offices of religious and political leadership in the emerging political context shaped by the refugee crises, the rise of populist nationalism and increasing securitisation of cultural and religious identities.

The Relationship of Orthodox Missionary Work and the Awakening of National Identity among the Chuvash of the Volga-Kama Region at the Turn of the 20th Century

Alison R. Kolosova
(Durham University)

The paper will discuss the influence of the missionary ideas of N. I. Il'minskii, who, in collaboration with the teacher-graduates of the Kazan Teacher's Seminary, created alphabets and worked on biblical and liturgical translations into the vernacular languages of the Turkic and Finno-Ugric peoples of the Volga-Urals and Siberia in the late 19th century.

The paper will discuss the grassroots application of Il'minskii's ideas at the Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School founded by Ivan Iakovlev in the late 1860s. The School trained the first generation of teachers to develop a network of Chuvash-language village primary schools and laid the foundations of Chuvash-language Orthodox parishes and an indigenous clergy. Using archive material the paper will show how the development of a Chuvash written language, the involvement of the wider Chuvash community in the collective translation process, the regular conferences of teachers and clergy for training and consultation, and the flourishing of vernacular choral singing led to a popular Orthodox movement accompanied by an increasing sense of Chuvash national identity. This resulted in research and publications on Chuvash ethnography, history and philology, and a cultural ferment which developed against the background of the 1905 revolution. Chuvash national identity was expressed after the 1917 revolution in the context of the Church by the pursuit of a national diocese and, by some, for autocephaly, and in the context of the State, by the pursuit of political autonomy.

The Tibetan Bön Religion and the Construction of an Alternative National Identity

Per Kvaerne
(University of Oslo)

By the 11th century AD, Buddhists had not only achieved political and social dominance in Tibet, but were engaged in creating a historical narrative according to which the ascendancy of Buddhism was the result of a divine plan, implemented in the 7th–9th centuries by the Tibetan kings, themselves construed as emanations of divine beings. At the same time, in the Buddhist perspective, the perception of Tibet gradually shifted from being a land on the periphery of the religious map of the world to becoming the very centre of the Buddha's Dharma. This narrative has remained the core of Tibetan Buddhist identity.

At the same time, certain milieus in Tibet constructed an alternative historical scenario, according to which the true religion, styled 'Eternal Bön', had been established in Tibet long before the advent of Buddhism. Although Bön – according to this narrative – was persecuted by the Buddhists, it nevertheless survived and never forgot its origins in a land outside Tibet, usually located by its adherents somewhat vaguely to the west.

The paper will look at how present-day Bönpos make use of this narrative to assert their 'Tibetanness' as well as their specific religious identity, especially in the Tibetan diaspora and among Western converts and supporters of Bön. It will be argued that this assertion of identity is a dynamic, on-going construction which is changing the character of the 'Eternal Bön' religion, and that the Bön exile monasteries in India and Nepal are playing a crucial role in this process.

State Neutrality, Opportunity Structures and Implicit Definitions – The Problem of Political Agendas Re-Defining Religion(s)

Christiane Königstedt
(University of Leipzig)

One important task of the state in contemporary democracies is governing religious plurality. A particularly interesting arrangement had been implemented in France in 1905, where the state is defined as secular, laic, in the sense of being 'free from religion'. The country's current constitution states that the state is neutral in questions of religion, i.e. it would favour or recognise none, yet the status of *association cultuelle* functions as an equivalent to recognition since not all communities are eligible for this. Since the 1970s this has become increasingly problematic for new and non-traditional religious communities, which were involved in conflicts with 'countercult' and 'anticult' movements and the population. In the end, opponents of 'sects' succeeded in implementing special legislation to fight those groups in particular, despite the legal principles that grant freedom of thought, and from discrimination, to every citizen. In this paper, I will first describe the process that finally led, in 2001, to a law that has been harshly criticised by the EU for being discriminative, by focussing on the strategies employed to conform this law to legal principles, not at least by re-defining the religious groups targeted. Second, I will report on the reasons why this law, and its proponents, suffered a steep decline in credibility and political dominance in France between 2004 and 2012. I will argue that it was interest groups in cooperation with the mass media, which used the opportunity of the absent official definition of religion, rather than the French state's 'natural hostility' towards religion, that led to the intermediary success of the antisect agenda on the legal level.

God, Fatherland, Family –
On the Existence of Civil Religion
in the Portuguese *Estado Novo*

José Leitão
(Independent researcher, Netherlands)

Starting from an analysis of the idea of the sacrality of the Portuguese state from the 14th century onward, this paper firstly exposes the main avenues of manifestation of this idea in Portuguese history, mainly codified in the ideas of the Miracle of Ourique, Sebastianism and the Fifth Empire.

Arriving at the early 20th century, with the implantation of the first Portuguese republic, an outline of the basic ideas regarding the foundation and construction of Portuguese Civil Religion are also presented. Coming finally to the *Estado Novo*, analysing Salazar's close relationship with the Catholic Church, the actual and concrete existence of a state orchestrated Civil Religion in dictatorship Portugal is questioned.

Analysing the use of explicit Catholic notions, ideologies and aesthetics by Salazar, both in his public speeches as well as in his social organisational efforts, this suggests that the privileged position held by the Catholic Church as the non-official state religion in Portugal, and the mutual support and appropriation of elements between the state and the Church, could actually signify a double position of Civil/Ecclesiastic Religion for Catholicism during the Portuguese dictatorship. However, this relationship between State and Church can be seen to be extremely tense, as Salazar seems to constantly frame the national reality in Catholic religious terms, but at the same time prevent Church authorities from acquiring effective power over any aspect of political decision making.

Features of the Process of Religious Revival in the Countries that Have Undergone Forced Secularisation

Kirill Markin, Anna Zueva
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After the collapse of the Soviet Union and economic crisis during this process, all opinion polls registered the growth in the Orthodox population. However, first surveys of this phenomenon showed that the increase in the number of practicing Orthodox was really small compared with religious self-identification. By the end of 2010 80% of Russians called themselves Orthodox, although only 10% took part in the most important rituals. Russian sociologists propose some hypothesis to explain the situation. (Karpov, Lisovskaya, & Barry, 2012; Zorkaya, 2009; Filatov & Lunkin, 2005; Furman & Kaariajnen, 2007) Nevertheless, few papers demonstrate the basic mechanisms of religious decline and religious revival in Russia. We want to present our attempt to interpret the process of forced secularisation in the USSR and subsequent revival of Orthodoxy in the new Russia. We understand the concept 'secularisation' not as a decline in religiosity but as a process of specific decrease in Orthodox tradition. In our case because of state repressions, the Orthodox Church practically did not exist by the end of the 1930s. At the end of the 1980s religious activity started to revive. Based on different descriptions of pre-axial religiosity (Bellah & Joas, 2012) we suppose that in countries with broken tradition its reconstruction begins with pre-axial forms. Moreover, pre-axial forms can exist both directly (witches, sorcerers, fortune tellers) and as a reconstruction of the main religious tradition. Actors identify themselves as Orthodox and at the same time demonstrate the attributes of pre-axial religiosity, such as: the conception of a supernatural realm of beings and forces, although it is not clearly organised into a cosmology; no clear religious value system; some calendric rituals, but with most rituals performed ad hoc; pantheon (Turner, 2003). If we are right, cross-national surveys of religiosity face obvious problems. For instance, the classic question about faith in God represents different realms. While in Catholic countries God is interpreted in the Catholic traditional context, in Russia there is no Orthodox tradition. Modern Russian Orthodoxy is a motley and varied reconstruction even in the church community.

How Russian is Russian Evangelicalism?

Igor Mikeshin
(University of Helsinki)

In my paper I reflect on the unusual branch of Christianity, Russian Evangelicalism, its specificity and especially its 'Russianness'. I argue that Russian Evangelicalism is glocal. It is, at the same time, a part of the global Evangelical movement, as well as a culturally and especially linguistically Russian phenomenon.

The history of 150 years of Evangelicalism in Russia involves constant oppressions and marginalisation, which resulted in its isolation. Hence, for a long period Russian Evangelicalism developed in its own way dogmatically, liturgically, and hermeneutically. Moreover, it reacted to the transformations of Russian society, its social, political, economic, and cultural changes, and adapted to the modern Russian language and sociolinguistic discourse. Being constantly marginalised, Russian Evangelicals still occupy a rather marginal, but very important niche, working with marginal people (the incarcerated, homeless, addicted, orphaned, sick, etc.) and marginal peoples (in distant regions of, for instance, the far east).

The specificity of the Russian version of Evangelical Christianity is manifested in three major aspects: its relation to Orthodoxy, interpretation of Protestant dogmatics, and the hermeneutics of the Russian Synodal Bible. The Evangelical response to Orthodoxy is often focused on its superficial manifestations, such as worship of icons, saints, and Holy Mary, while on the conceptual level it differs by approach to soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). More generally, Protestant tenets are revisited and reinterpreted by Russian Evangelicals as a reflection on contemporary Russia. Lastly, the Russian Synodal Bible is a specific translation, very much influenced by Orthodoxy; to a great extent it defines the sociolinguistic discourse of Russian Evangelicalism.

Popular Perspectives on Nation-Building, Secularisation and Transformations of Religiosity in Late 19th and Early 20th Century Finland

Kati Mikkola

(University of Helsinki / Finnish Literature Society)

In my paper I will focus on nation-building, secularisation and transformations in religiosity 'from below', in other words, from the perspective of non-privileged persons, their experiences and points of view. I seek to illuminate the transformation secularisation that occurred at the grassroots level in late 19th and early 20th century Finland. How did people interpret the phenomena that have been characterised as secularisation?

Secularisation studies have almost invariably been conducted at the macro-level using quantitative methods. Such surveys tell us nothing about how individuals interpreted the processes of secularisation. In order to reach the perspective *from below*, different data must be studied. In my paper I will utilise autobiographical, descriptive and contemplative texts written by the common people, such as diaries, recollected narratives and letters.

I will illustrate with examples what kind of syntheses of worldviews the texts and oral memoirs of the common people contain, and how the common people saw the relationship between the Lutheran teaching, folk religion and new ideologies like nationalism, socialism, Darwinism and theosophy. I will show that the nationwide campaign to enlist rural commoners in collecting folklore, motivated by the nation-building project, helped to alleviate the trauma of secularisation. Toward the end of the 19th century the Finnish nationalist elite's views gave a new meaning to folk religion: it was seen as a valued tradition and proof of Finland's long history. For example, the knowledge of sorcerers and healers was no longer officially condemned but seen as important national heritage. The Finnish Literature Society was a central actor in collecting this heritage. My hypothesis is that particularly those common people who were involved in the collection of folklore saw the new interest in folk religion as something that alleviated the anxiety involved in changing one's worldview.

How to Invent a Tradition?
Some Lessons from Latvia

Agita Misāne
(University of Latvia)

Since 1985, the term *invented tradition* has been widely used, particularly in social sciences discourse. 'Invented traditions' are seemingly ancient, but actually quite new, deliberately created and formally accepted, easily recognisable customs or ethnic markers, texts, etc., which are produced, in E. Hobsbawm's words, with the purpose of "maintaining certain values and norms of behavior by repetition so that they automatically provide continuity with the past".

The concept is applied to the customs and rituals, national regalia, historical legends, folk costumes and objects, architectural styles, as well as in the nineteenth century European folklore- and history-based epics. The invented traditions, even though their time of origin and authorship are traceable and professional researchers know that well, the wider community perceive them as authentic and old, and they occupy a very important place in the nationalism discourses in different European countries. Some 'invented traditions' are religious.

This paper will use four Latvian examples (so-called Namej's ring, Lielvārde's belt, the Latvian Pre-Christian revivalist movement *Dievturi* and the newly created sacred site 'Pokaini'), discuss their common features and analyse the pattern of their invention with particular reference to the religious environment at the time of their creation, and the collaborative and/or competitive interaction of nationalist and religious ideas in the process.

The National Limitations of the International Community of Freethought in the Early 20th Century

Katharina Neef
(Technical University Chemnitz, Leipzig)

Anticlericalism, secularism or – in general – organised forms of irreligion mushroomed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries throughout Europe. The protagonists and organisations networked intensely and internationally, imagining themselves to be ambassadors of cultural human progress. Internationality and international cross-references respectively were important parts and practices within this self-imagination as the intellectual avant-garde. It functioned as a strategy of legitimation, likewise, for example, by framing their own organisational efforts within an evolutionary scheme. Here, international cooperation became the way of representing a high standard of human progress, thus becoming an extremely good adapted and modern form of human living. Another practice was to link the ideal of transnational progress to the development of science during the 19th century with its international co-operation and receptivity.

However, the scope of this abandonment of national thinking turned out to be quite narrow, especially in times of crisis. This limited scope forced the protagonists to focus on their direct networks rather than on their discursive partners abroad. Wars were a threat par excellence to these international networks. With the beginning of World War I, the mass of pre-war internationalists returned directly to nationalist positions, whereas only a small number remained pacifist. The paper will draw attention to both sides of the story: to the topos of internationalism as a means of overcoming nationalism, and to its limitations.

Modern Reception of the Bible as Testimony of the Birth of National Consciousness: Transformation of Religious Collective Identities into National Identities

Aušra Pazeraite
(Vilnius University)

A variety of Hebrew and Greek words used in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint and the New Testament, denoting various types of collective identity, in translations are usually transformed into collective identities as they are actually conceived by contemporaries. In my paper I will present my research on modern changes in reception of biblical texts by radical changes in translation into Lithuanian that occurred in the first half of the 20th century, and how these changes correlated with the emerging modern conception of nationhood. Methods of textual analysis of sources, biblical exegesis, the historical-critical approach and historical research can be handy in making a cross-section of texts to show how in these translations it is possible to grasp modern transformations of consciousness. How does collective identity, which can be found in biblical texts, and which has traditionally been given religious significance, became national, and how did this new Bible, which was transformed into some kind of source book of national history, enable the radical changes that occurred in the twentieth century in the Christian perception of Jewish, and self-consciousness, and also Jewish self-perception.

Nationalism *contra* Catholicism in Soviet Lithuania's Atheisation Politics

Nerija Putinaitė
(Vilnius University)

The presentation will deal with the attempt of Lithuanian Soviet authorities to contradistinguish Lithuanian national identity from the Christian faith. Just after the war the Lithuanian communist party leaders made an attempt to subjugate the Catholic Church in Lithuania to political control. While it was unsuccessful, later the authorities treated the Church as the most dangerous political opponent that (potentially or actually) proposed the ground for resistance against the regime. The Lithuanian authorities tried all kinds of measures to fight the religion in order to distract people from the influence of the Church.

The most successful measures were connected with the use of the symbols and narratives of nationalism. The authorities made efforts to separate national identity from Catholic identity so as to strengthen the image of the Catholic Church as the enemy of Lithuanian nation.

The authorities created different kinds of civic substitute for religious rites and rituals that amply used national symbols and elements. Instead of religious rites of marriage, baptism and funeral parallel civil rites were created for name-giving, marriage and burial that involved the use of national costume, traditional folk-songs, folk-dances, and other folk elements. Near places of religious pilgrimage huge folk festivals were organised to distract people from participating in the Church festivals.

The communist authorities also reshaped the narrative of Lithuanian national history in a specific way. It featured the pre-Christian pagan epoch as the authentic period in the history of the nation and associated the degeneration of the nation with Christianity as an enforced and alien to Lithuanian identity. Opera spectacles and theatre plays, dramas and movies were created that depicted the heroic struggle of Lithuanians against attempts to Christianise the land.

'Estonians, the Atheist Nation':
On the Origin of the Idea
and Its Development

Atko Remmel
(University of Tartu)

In popular usage, Estonians, along with Czechs, sometimes claim to be 'the most atheist/irreligious nation in the world'. In both cases this meme already seems to have become somewhat connected with national identity. Based on media analysis from the late 19th century to date, the presentation gives an overview of the probably origin of this idea in Estonia and sheds some light on its development.

The European Migration Crisis, Religion and Nationalism in Estonia

Ain Riistan
(University of Tartu)

Over the last ten years Estonians have acknowledged themselves as the most unreligious nation in the world. This fact has been the source of pride for some and a topic to worry about for other, mainly Church-related, people. There are two sometimes competing narratives in Estonian nationalist self-awareness. The first says that religion, specifically Christianity, was brought to Estonia with 'fire and sword' by German crusaders and is therefore essentially foreign to Estonia. The second says that Estonia's culture owes a great deal to the Lutheran pastors who translated the Bible, founded the education system and inspired Estonians to develop their own cultural awareness as a nation with valuable cultural heritage and openness to the future. In the last two decades the first narrative has been more dominant with the accompanying idea that religion is a thing of the past. It has been reinforced lately by the discussions about the gender-neutral partnership law that was passed by the Estonian parliament in 2104. The law was officially opposed by all Estonian Churches and some religiously motivated interest groups became very visible in the media. For the supporters of the law this was once more a sign of the 'backwardness' of religion. However, the migration crisis that started last year in Europe has changed things considerably. Fear of the 'Muslim invasion' has made the idea of the Christian roots of Estonian culture very popular again. Interestingly enough those who would seemingly gain most from these developments – the Christian Church – are not very happy about it as they have launched a campaign to help refugees in the name of the brotherly love that was taught by Jesus Christ.

The Role of the Vaishnava Religion in the Construction of Assamese Identity

Baburam Saikia
(University of Tartu)

The Vaishnava religion is one of the major branches of Hinduism. The Vaishnava movement in Assam had strong connections with the current of Vaishnava revival that swept over India between the 12th and 15th centuries. Sankaradeva (1449–1568), the great Assamese social reformer, led the neo-Vaishnavite movement all over North East India, Assam in particular. Within three hundred years the movement firmly established the Vaishnava faith as the supreme religious order of the Brahmaputra Valley. The movement also developed a new institutional structure known as Sattra, which introduced dance, drama and music as a medium of worshiping God and of spreading the faith; this in turn also helped to sustain and stabilise Vaishnavism by making it part and parcel of Assamese social life. The official name of the Sankardeva's Vaishnavism is ekasarana namadharma, the religion of supreme surrender to one, and that One is Vishnu, who in the form of Narayana assumes incarnations from age to age. The schools of Vaishnavism might differ in the philosophical niceties and outward religious observances, but the fundamental basis of these schools do not differ very much. Sattra, Sattriya dance and the Vaishnava faith have had a strong impact on the religious and cultural identities of the diverse ethnic communities of Assam. My study aims to discuss the role of the Vaishnava religion in ethno-political movements in contemporary Assam. Recently, it has become a major factor in the home policy of the Government of Assam.

Religious Narratives and Elements of Arab Nationalism in the Ideology and Information Warfare of so-called Islamic State (ISIS)

Vladimir Sazonov
(University of Tartu/Baltic Defence College)

In the modern Middle East extremist forces are becoming increasingly visible – Islamist religious fanatics, who have recently been quite successful in the establishment of so-called Islamic state (ISIS).

The ideology of ISIS consists of several fairly simple, but universal and quite skilfully compiled, narratives. Some of them are borrowed from the early Islamic traditions, other from modern extremism or Arab nationalism; some are based on the experiences of successful Western PR campaigns.

It is necessary to clarify a number of things in order to understand the ideological foundations of Islamic religious fanaticism and the concept of *jihad* at the beginning of 21ˢᵗ century and how it is used by ISIS from the ideological point of view. What is the ideological basis? The most important cornerstone of Islamist movements is the Quran. The famous radical Islamist theologian al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1938 declared: "Allah is our ideal. The Prophet is our leader. The Quran is our constitution". All Islamists follow the same dogma. The so-called caliphate was declared by leaders of ISIS in 2014 and the title of Caliph was usurped by the Islamists' leader. The caliphate was originally founded in early medieval Arab society, but this idea is also successfully used by Islamists today. The caliphate is certainly a brand that is popular; at the same time it is simple, logical, easily understood, and available and does not require special PR. That's why it has been used by ISIS as a propaganda weapon. The ultraconservative Sunni sect known as the Salafis idealise the identity of the Prophet Muhammad and the first caliphs. Their official goal is to return to the roots and origins of Islam – to the society, concepts and values of the beginning of the 7ᵗʰ century. Many of their ideologists propagate that their goal is the establishment of the clean and undistorted Islam of Muhammad and the first caliphs. But this is just a tool for brainwashing and enticing supporters to their ranks. The leaders of ISIS are pragmatic

politicians, their movement can be called military, political or ideological rather than religious, although, of course, with a noticeable touch of religious background and elements of Arab nationalism.

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Reconstruction of National Identity and the Revival of Religious Life in Post-Socialist Mongolia

Alevtina Solovyeva
(University of Tartu)

Today Mongolian culture represents one of the most interesting and complicated examples of historical development and gives rich material for research into ways of construction national identity.

For the last century the great Mongol Empire, famous for its conquests in the Middle Ages, was first part of the Chinese Empire (with a period of revolutions 1911–1921) and then a socialistic republic (the Mongolian People's Republic until its collapse, 1985–1996) under the influence of the Soviet union. It also saw events that were painful for society and culture, but common for the time, like a cultural revolution, persecution of religion and a struggle against 'superstition' (the 1930s). The processes of release in social and religious life, and the search for a new national identity, started in Mongolian society in the late 1980s and early 1990s after the revolution and the establishment of the democratic Republic (1996). These processes are reflected in different forms, the most significant of them being:

- national movements for a return to original Mongolian traditions and customs,[1]
- processes of revival (and renovation) of religious life, together with a huge wave of interest in different kinds of mysticism and spiritism,
- movements for westernisation and more open conditions for acquaintance with foreign cultures, including contemporary Western mass culture.

Some of the main features of these movements will be discussed in the report, as will the results of these processes reflected in the contemporary Mongolian culture and society.

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[1] About similar processes in the post-Soviet space see (Gofman 2010).

Current Religious Tensions:
Islamophobia in Latvia

Anita Stasulane
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In Latvia, Islamophobia existed surreptitiously in theory before 2015, but the migration and refugee crises provoked a wave of anti-Muslim rallies. Islamophobia in Latvia manifests itself mainly as ill feeling towards the 'other', fear of the unknown and hostility towards Muslims. The negative attitude towards Muslims stemming from aversion to the otherness has not grown into discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion of Muslims from social, political and civil life of Latvia. Anti-Muslim sentiment has entered the Latvia public domain and threatens to transform into the dominant reaction of Latvian society when faced with challenges caused by globalisation. The issue of the reception of refugees in Latvia revealed the fragile border between prejudice and open hatred based on the influence of ancient phobias (anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia) and radical ideologies (national socialism, communism). The otherness is viewed as an enemy in Latvia, radicalism continues to strengthen and jeopardises the benefits of recently regained freedom and democracy. The terrorist attacks of 2015 have strengthened stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims. The most common stereotypes are as follows: Islam is a religion that encourages violence and restricts the rights of women, Muslims are a united monolithic community whose members are fundamentalists who want to introduce Sharia law worldwide. Since people in Latvia have gaps in awareness of Islam and not all of them have met a Muslim, the fact that Muslims are different not only by their ethnic or national origin but also by their socio-economic status and religious practice is disregarded. Recognition of diversity is an important step towards avoidance of simplifications.

Traditional Values between Universality and Particularism: The Case of Russia

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Picturing Russia as the world's last bastion of the defense of traditional values is an integral part of the idea of the on-going conflict between two opposite civilizations: Western and Russian, where the former stands for liberalism, secularism and individualism, while the latter represents traditionalism, moralism, religion and community. The idea of Russia as a separate civilization presupposes that tradition is the way to preserve the nation's culture, which must be protected from foreign influence. The Russian Orthodox Church as the main proponent of traditional values views Russia as a great nation with an exclusive divine appointment to defend Christian civilization. Today's Russia strives to offer a narrative of traditional values that goes beyond its national specificities, has universal value, and thus can be accepted, integrated, and reinterpreted in other contexts. At the same time, Russia as civilization is viewed in the context of the concept of the 'special path' (*osobiy put'*), which presupposes the claim of distinctiveness and exceptionalism because of Russia's geographical position, historical circumstances, religious faith, and national character. Nevertheless, the fulfilment of the global mission of defending traditional values is not an easy task because of the substantial ambiguity: it combines universal significance of traditional values with particularism of the ideology of the 'special path' and spiritual exclusiveness of Russia symbolised by Russian Orthodoxy. The discourse of the universal definitely yields to the discourse of particularism, and the idea of uniqueness stands behind both the principle of autocephaly and the principle of national identity, thus creating a double and interconnected particularism of a Church and a nation. As a result, Russia as a country and Russian Orthodoxy may claim hegemony, but this hegemony is only relevant locally, within a particular territory, and not universally.

Modern American Gun Culture as a New Religious Movement

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The widespread American love of guns that is often coupled with the equally widespread fear that a tyrannical government will one day deprive gun-loving Americans of their precious firearms has many of the trappings of a religious movement. For many Americans, the gun is clearly holy, the ownership of guns is viewed as a sign of religious maturity and a test of patriotism, the Second Amendment to the US Constitution, which speaks of gun rights in the USA, is treated with the reverence of scripture, the NRA (National Rifle Association) functions much like a church, and any government office or official who dares to propose any restrictions on the use and ownership of guns is regarded as nearly Satanic. For Americans who do not share this quasi-religious devotion to guns, gun enthusiasts are viewed as "gun nuts". This paper will examine the ways in which modern American gun culture fits the definition of an NRM, or New Religious Movement, compare it with other religious movements, analyse its origins and development, and attempt to explain the reason for its rising popularity and influence on popular culture and identity formation in America.

Moldovan Ethnopolitics
in Orthodox Geopolitics

Christoffer Stoerup
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Changing governments in the Republic of Moldova have fought for a single orthodox church covering the country's believers regardless of their ethnicity. This has been seen as possible by keeping the local churches under the Muscovite Patriarchate. The Romanian Orthodox Church has made claims to jurisdiction in Moldova, thus mirroring Romanian nationalist claims. Moldovan nationalism has been called a "strange beast" as it created a Moldovan state, but not a nation, or a nation divided in the question of its Romanian or Moldovan identity. This has led to the categorisation of political parties in Moldova as ethno-political parties. Orthodoxy in Moldova has thus become a dispute over jurisdiction, inside a question of ethnicity, wrapped in competing geopolitical projects.

This paper examines how the churches are phrasing the question of ethnicity, who they address, and by which rhetoric strategies?

Nationalist Discourse in the Rhetoric of the Estonian Native Faith (*Maausulised*) Movement

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An analysis of media texts about the followers of the Estonian native faith (maausulised) in the Estonian press over the last two decades indicates that a functioning alternative religious movement has developed. In this talk some ideological statements from maausulised spokespersons, contesting conventional views on Estonian history and folklore, will be addressed.

The wider ideological framework of the maausulised movement was formulated during the Soviet occupation, in the 1960s and 1970s, when essays criticising the mainstream Western orientation of Estonian national culture were disseminated among students and the literati. Since its institutionalisation two decades ago, members of the movement have been active in public discussions on such issues as religious freedom and religious education, safeguarding historical sacred sites, and evaluating Estonia's national and cultural heritage using opportunities offered by the Internet and the mass media. Despite the fact that the movement represents a quite specific nationalist discourse in public statements, it has generally received positive media coverage and the ideas of the maausulised have enjoyed unprecedented popularity in recent national surveys.

In public statements maausulised spokespersons constantly highlight the continuity and local specificity of this religion, its essential relationship with vernacular languages, and its roots in indigenous ethnic traditions and customs. Invoking linguistic affinity and common origin, maausulised relate their religious principles to the analogous traditions of kindred peoples – ethnic groups whose languages belong to the Finno-Ugric and Uralic language families – and have not sought connections with similar Baltic, Slavic and Germanic modern Pagan movements in neighbouring countries.

Media representations of adherents to the Estonian native faith in the main Estonian daily and weekly newspapers between 2010 and 2015 will be analysed in more detail.

Religion and Nationalism:
The Holy Crown of Hungary

Bea Vidacs
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Although by the end of socialism Hungary was significantly secularised, the post-socialist period saw the revival of religious sentiment and the emergence of a wide variety of religious groups. Beyond catering to the religious needs of their constituencies the rhetoric of these groups is often saturated with nationalism and frequently resonates with earlier discourses from the interwar period, when Hungary responded to the territorial losses it suffered following World War I with revisionist, ultra-nationalist rhetoric. An important part of this was the revival and strengthening of the so-called Holy Crown doctrine, which holds that the Hungarian Crown as an object has divine powers, while it is also a potent symbol of national identity. Under socialism both religion and nationalism were discouraged and these discourses disappeared only to come back during the post-socialist period, often co-mingling with an amalgam of religious convictions from neo-Paganism to very doctrinal Christianity, as well as the Holy Crown doctrine.

In recent years I have conducted research in a south central Hungarian village among the followers of a female seer who has relived the passion of Christ every first Friday of the month since 1994, attracting a group of followers. Early in her career as a seer she had a vision of the Crown. The nature of the crown is hotly contested between those who do not accept the doctrine and argue that rather than uniting, the doctrine divides, and those who see it as the most important symbol of Hungarian nationhood and a guarantor of Hungarian sovereignty and claims to the lost territories. I will examine the discourses of the group regarding the Crown to determine the role these visions play amidst the followers of the seer while also placing them in the larger context of Hungary.

Ukrainian Policy in the Sphere of Interethnic Relations and Religious Minorities' Rights Protection

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Being a multi-national state proud of its cultural heritage Ukraine maintains the basis for the long-term tradition of tolerant and peaceful co-existence of different nationalities on Ukrainian land as well as the establishment of proper conditions to protect their rights. In view of the external aggression, Ukraine is clearly aware of the fact that the threat of a breach of inter-ethnic peace cannot be eliminated without implementation of a responsible and balanced public ethnic-national policy. Starting from 2011 the specially designated central executive authority in charge of development and implementation of state religious policy is the Ministry of Culture.

Ukraine is a poly-confessional state; as of January 1, 2016 the religious network of Ukraine is represented by 35,709 religious organisations exercising Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, ethnic religious beliefs and new religious movements. Some of the religious organisations (in particular reformers, Lutherans, Judaists, Muslims, etc.) have ethnic-confessional features that separate them from the general religious network of the state. The geography of distribution of ethnic-confessional religious organisations covers all the regions of the state. Inter-church advisory boards play a special role in the provision of positive dynamics in the development of inter-confessional relations in Ukraine.

The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations (AUCCRO) has a significant influence on inter-religious relations. The AUCCRO approves inter-confessional initiatives, the establishment of mutual understanding and tolerance in interaction among different confessions, as well as the improvement of the legal framework of church and state relations. In particular, individual conflicts in the religious environment, issues of increase in intolerance and confrontational rhetoric in statements from religious organisations and the results of monitoring inter-confessional opposition were examined at the meetings.