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18th Annual Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions

IAHR Regional Conference

Pisa, 30 August – 3 September 2021

GENERAL THEME: *RESILIENT RELIGION*

Resilience can be considered as the ability to counteract or absorb a process of transformation. It is also characterized by a capacity to endure changes without having to adapt permanently, an ability to find what best suits new environmental conditions; and an awareness of how to cope with a crisis. In this sense, religion – whether in its institutionalized forms or just as a simple belief in any relationship with a super-human agency – represents a powerful tool for reacting to difficult situations and establishing a relationship with the sacred thanks to the interaction between spirituality, mindfulness, empathy and the emotions.

PANEL SESSION PROPOSAL

ORGANISERS/ CHAIRS: Alice Bencivenni, Beatrice Girotti, Giuseppina Paola Viscardi

TITLE: *Coping with the crisis. Phenomena of religious acculturation and enculturation: Patterns and policies of resilience from the Hellenistic-Roman period and Late Antiquity.*

ABSTRACT:

The present workshop proposal aims to analyze change and resilience in ancient individuals and society, in particular with respect to acculturation and enculturation phenomena occurring in times of *krisis*, as in the Hellenistic age and Late Antiquity, taking into account modern definition of acculturation and enculturation concepts.

Essentially, acculturation is defined as the extent to which people are participating in the cultural norms of the dominant group while maintaining the norms of their original culture (Berry 1980; Segall, Dasen, Berry & Poortinga 1999). Rather, the term enculturation can be helpful in more fully describing the experiences of these individuals, considering enculturation as the process of socialization to and maintenance of the norms of one's heritage culture, including the salient values, ideas, and concepts (Herskovits 1948). Based on this definition, it can be explained that the "cultural maintenance" process that is described above might be better represented with the broader terminology of enculturation.

By these premises, focusing on the Hellenistic age and Late Antiquity as two turning points that marked radical changes "in the ancient political systems, social structures, religious beliefs, philosophical thinking, economic models and cultural trends", we intend to explore policies and

strategies of transition, transformation and mutation with related repercussions on the level of collective and individual perception and creation of new patterns of adaptation, absorption or even resistance capable of facing the collapse of ontologies that results from transformation and, thus, of ensuring the survival of groups and individuals.

We propose a double workshop session, with 5 speakers + 1 discussant and lasting 200 minutes at all.

REFERENCES

- Berry, J.W. (1980). *Acculturation as varieties of adaptation*. In A.M. Padilla (Ed.), *Acculturation: Theory, models and some new findings* (pp. 9-25). Boulder: CO, Westview Press.
- Herskovits, M.J. (1948). *Man and his Works, The Science of Cultural Anthropology*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf.
- Segall, M. H., Dasen, P. R., Berry, J. W., & Poortinga, Y. H. (Eds.). (1999). *Cognitive Processes*. In: *Human behavior in global perspective: an introduction to cross-cultural psychology* (pp. 160–185). Boston: MASS., Allyn and Bacon.

FURTHER READING

- Cecconi, G.A., Gabrielli, C. (eds.). (2011). *Politiche religiose nel mondo antico e tardo-antico: poteri e indirizzi, forme del controllo, idee e prassi di tolleranza*. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Firenze, 24-26 settembre 2009. Bari, Edipuglia.

LIST OF CONVENORS:

Stefano CANEVA (Università di Padova), *A contagion of Soteria: A cultural history of the epithet Soter used of Hellenistic rulers*

Giovanni Alberto CECCONI (Università di Firenze), *Strategies for individual and collective resilience through apostasy in the light of 4th and 5th century homiletics*

Beate DIGNAS (Somerville College Oxford), *Transfers of cults in the Hellenistic world as krisis and resilience par excellence*

Margherita FACELLA (Università di Pisa), *Roman statesmen refusing 'god-like' honors: religious resilience, ethical choices and political prudence*

Lech TRZCIONKOWSKI (Jagiellonian University in Kraków), *The sacred books of the last pagan generations as a form of religious resilience*

Discussant: **Miguel HERRERO DE JAUREGUI** (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

ABSTRACTS

(Stefano CANEVA) Who were the first Hellenistic civic communities using the term Soter as an epithet of euergetic rulers? And by which traditional deities were they inspired? When did Soter first turn from a denomination used in occasional acclamations and/or local honorific practice into a standard royal epithet? What factors and specific needs prompted the passage of the epithet Soter from one dynasty to another? Did Soter ever change its field of applications as it became an increasingly common epithet of Hellenistic kings, civic benefactors, and Roman generals? And finally, do different sources cast a diverging light on the use of soteria as a point of encounter between civic and monarchic agendas? Soteria is a prominent word in the vocabulary of Greek religious and political history and a category intimately connected with the techniques of, and expectations for resilience in times of crises, both at the societal and individual level. Scholarship has repeatedly investigated the success of this concept in Hellenistic culture, identifying it as a crucial field prompting contacts and transfers from religion to politics, and vice versa. At the collective level, soteria has been granted particular attention as regards the relationships between civic communities and political leaders, both internal and external. However, the vast documentation about the link between soteria and the resilience of civic communities in the Hellenistic world is far from having been fully exploited. To date, we can count on a satisfactory understanding of why soteria was considered as an effective category to describe the expectations of communities undergoing periods of severe crisis as well as to fashion the (self-)representation of monarchs and other major political figures as religious figures. However, this general understanding still lacks a detailed analysis of the specific factors, agents, and contexts that promoted the diffusion of soteria as an efficient concept and consequently underlie the creation of a durable cultural tradition. In order to contribute to this research, we must go back to a fine-grained study of sources. Accordingly, this paper will reassess the diffusion of the epithet Soter in use for Hellenistic rulers with a fresh focus on what aspects made its use different from context to context, and with the related purpose of identifying points of rupture and change in the tradition, beyond the more known surface of similarities and continuities.

(Giovanni Alberto CECCONI) The paper will discuss returns to paganism and non-Christian religious practices, by individuals and communities, as a choice of resilience and an adaptation to times of calamities, wars, pestilence, Germanic migrations, social and economic crisis (decades between the 4th and 5th centuries).

(Beate DIGNAS) The paper looks at the phenomenon of cult transfer within relationships between different political and cultural entities in Hellenistic Asia Minor. Examples, such as the transfer of Cybele to Rome, or that of Sarapis from Sinope to Alexandria, illustrate that even in a highly volatile and changing political landscape the resilience of religious traditions was enormous. On first sight, the appropriation of cult images and deities by Hellenistic and Roman rulers was an expression of one-

sided power relations in which local religious identities were violated at the core. However, close examination reveals the processes and implications of such cult transfers as symbolic and open-ended. Ultimately, the religious factor allowed local players to emphasise strong cultural identities well beyond the reach of their political sphere of influence.

(Margherita FACELLA) The refusal of *isotheoi timai* by some emperors and members of the imperial family, attested by literary, epigraphic and papyrological sources, has always attracted the attention of the scholars (see already S. Lösch, *Deitas Jesu und Antike Apotheose*, Rottenburg a. N. 1933). The establishment of what has been defined ‘a system of exchange’ linking subjects and ruler, rested on Roman acceptance of the cult, so while the rejection of these honours certainly speaks in favour of the flexibility of the system, it nonetheless requires an explanation. In an article which has become the standard work on the subject, M.P. Charlesworth (PBR 15, 1939) argued for an ‘Augustan formula’, a tradition of polite refusal set up by Augustus and followed by some of his successors. Cases of refusal attested earlier than the age of Augustus are often mentioned in later studies, but never deeply discussed. The present paper intends to focus on the rejection of cult honours by Marcus Tullius Cicero and Vaccius Labeo from Kyme. Most recently Christopher P. Jones (in *Hommage à Jean-Louis Ferrary: Philorhōmaios kai philhellèn*, Paris 2019) has asked whether beside the intention not to burden the provincials with further expenses, Cicero “felt that such honors were due to gods rather than humans” (p. 478). A close examination of ad Q. fratrem I.1.26 and ad Att. V.21.7 can be helpful to fully understand the nature of Cicero’s concerns and to grasp similarities and distinctions with the later examples of refusals.

(Lech TRZCIONKOWSKI) The paper aims to examine the religious function of pseudo-Orpheus’ poems in late antiquity as a part of the process of resistance of elite groups in the new cultural context. The comparative analysis of various forms of the reception of Orphic hexameters shows an extreme variety of their reception. My research concerns a complex process of incorporating the Orphic text into the new readers’ text. The history of reception should take into consideration the characteristics of reading communities that interpreted the meaning of the poems, begging from the first mentions of Orpheus’ poems in the second half of the 5th century BC to the writings of the last generation of Platonic philosophers in the 6th century C.E. I suggest that in Neoplatonic schools of late Antiquity the Orphic poems became a tool of religious resilience. Considering this perspective, I would like to examine the function of these sacred books (*hieroi logoi*) in philosophical libraries of late Antiquity as the cultural adaptation of the last pagan generations in the new religious context. By collecting, editing, creating and re-interpreting Orphic poems, philosophers responded to the crisis caused by new Christian environment. In consequence, a comparative analysis of the reception of Orphic poems could contribute to the rectification of basic categories for the study of religion: canon / canonical writings, the authority of the sacred text and “sacred books” (*hieroi logoi*).

INTERNAL SCHEDULE:

WORKSHOP SESSION *COPING WITH THE KRISIS*

Thursday, 2nd September 2021

I SLOT (100 minutes): 09.00-10.40

II SLOT (90 minutes): 11.50-13.20

SLOT I

PRESENTATION OF THE PANEL –PRESENTATION OF THE SPEAKERS

- **09.00-09.10** Giuseppina Paola VISCARDI, Beatrice GIROTTI, Alice BENCIVENNI

INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATIONS – lasting 30 minutes for each speaker

- **09.10-09.40** Stefano Giovanni CANEVA
- **09.40-10.10** Beate DIGNAS
- **10.10-10.40** Margherita FACELLA

SLOT II

- **11.50-12.20** Giovanni Alberto CECCONI
- **12.20-12.50** Lech TRZCIONKOWSKI

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS – *Discussant*

- **12.50-13.05** Miguel HERRERO DE JAUREGUI

FINAL OPEN DISCUSSION – lasting 15 minutes

- **13.05-13.20** questions / answers