



**INTERDISCIPLINARITY OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES:  
INTERACTION OF CULTURE, HISTORY,  
RELIGION**

IRF Press

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edited by  
Tarik Ziyad Gulcu

IRF Press  
Warsaw 2017

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ISBN 978-83-949577-0-4

IRF Press  
Fundacja “Interdisciplinary Research Foundation”  
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## INTRODUCTION

In addition to his characteristics such as eating, drinking, sleeping and reproduction, man has also reason and spirituality. This accounts for his distinction from animals and plants in the nature. Reasoning enables human beings to question and discover his environment. Man's curiosity regarding the order and system in the nature reinforces his efforts to find out its creator. Various answers to the creator of the nature have established the basis of the concept "religion". Religion not only enables the individuals to discover the creator, but it also offers an insight regarding the meaning of life in the world. Therefore, it is not wrong to argue that religion has individual, social and cultural aspects. Hence, this book aims to elaborate on the concept of "religion" in relation to these aspects from a variety of scholarly perspectives.

Man's effort to make his life meaningful with the discovery of God can be linked with human psychology. So, the issue of religion invites discussion in terms of psychoanalytical approach. Rather than Freud's point of view, Carl Gustave Jung's theory of archetype contributes more to the appreciation of religion as a term. At this point, Seyed Yasin Hosseini's chapter entitled "Carl Gustav Jung and Psychology of Religion" enables readers to discover the impact of religion on the individuality of a person. In this chapter, Hosseini argues that the archetype of God is formulated in human psyche by collective unconscious. His argument indicates that the personal choice of belief in a religion is determined by the norms of the society to which an individual belongs. Thus, while the chapter mainly deals with the personal aspect of religion, its approach based on Jungian psychoanalysis implies the social aspect of religion as well.

Literature is one of the best means to reflect the impact of religion on social life. Particularly, before the proliferation of written works in literary history, the legends and folkloric tales contributed to the establishment of religious identities of societies. Nino Ghambashidze's chapter "Christianisation of Georgia in Georgian Folklore and Religious Beliefs" can be considered as an epitome of this argument. In her chapter, Ghambashidze focuses on the emergence and popularity of Christianity in Georgia and argues that the religious occasions as reaction against paganism are still celebrated as festivals. Therefore, Ghambashidze's paper indicates the long-lasting effects of oral literature on the establishment of Georgian religious identity.

In addition to anonymous works, written literature also shapes the religious identities of the societies. Moreover, the literary works can function as a guide for the people in terms of religious beliefs. Tarik Ziyad Gulcu's chapter "'Drunken Deep/Of All the Blessedness of Sleep': Geraldine the Temptress" epitomizes this function of literary works in English literature. In his chapter, Gulcu focuses on Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "Christabel" as a warning for people about their tendency to commit vices and follies, which cause their fall. In the chapter, Coleridge's combination of vampire as an element of Gothic literature with the Miltonic account

of “Original Sin” is judged as an innovative approach to the appreciation of the effects of religious beliefs on people and societies.

Whereas Gulcu’s work deals with English literature to indicate the impact of religion on social life, Vijayakumaran CPV’s chapter “Hindi Literary Approaches to the Religious Bhakti Curriculum in India and Abroad” elaborates on the same issue with regard to the Hindi Bhakti literature. The historical survey of Bhakti literature from the medieval period to the contemporary age presents readers an insight regarding the impact of literature on the Oriental societies. CPV’s paper not only focuses on the significance of literature in social area, but it also deals with the effects of religious identity on the field of education. His emphasis on teaching Bhakti literature at different levels, particularly universities, indicates that religious beliefs also play a central role in the curricula of higher education.

Similar to Vijayakumaran CPV, Kamila Gainulina and Yulia Sergaeva’s paper centres upon the issue of religion in relation to its impacts on educational area. However, different from CPV, Gainulina and Sergaeva’s work focuses elaborately on the adverse effects of imposing the Christian doctrines on the Russian students at the early stage of their education life. Their focus on different aspects of these negative consequences as well as their comparison of the situation in the Russian society with different countries in the world enlighten readers about the case of religious education in Russia.

Religion is not only a need but also a freedom for people. Considered in this sense, the restriction of this liberty can cause the emergence of radical reactions in social area. At this point, Vladlen Makoukh’s chapter “Islamic Movements of Egypt and Egyptian Leadership” dwells on the emergence and development of Muslim Brotherhood as a reaction against the restrictions about the freedom of religious belief by the state authorities. The detailed survey of Muslim Brotherhood’s historical development enables readers to get informed about the clash between secular and restrictive way of ruling a country in the case of Egyptian society. Jacek Skup’s paper “Religion and Secessionism in Northeastern India in Context of Peace, Conflict and Nation Forming” also elaborates on the emergence of radical reactions in the field of religion. Different from Makoukh, Skup also discusses the fundamentalist organizations in Hinduism and Christianity. Therefore, Makoukh and Skup’s works complete each other thematically.

Although the issue of religion has been discussed in different periods of history, it is still a debated subject in contemporary world. Considering the dynamism of the contemporary world as an inevitable consequence of globalisation process, it is somehow inevitable that people turn out to exhibit a more tolerant approach to the recognition and appreciation of religions, cultures and lifestyles that are different from those to which they belong. At this point, Trishna P. Lekharu and Dr. E. R. Tongper’s joint chapter “Postmodern Ethics in Religion: The Conflict of Ethics in Indian Religion” offers a postmodernist reading of the concept of religion. In their chapter, Lekharu and Tongper focus on the characteristics of postmodernism as a dominating worldview on the global scale. Based on the basics of postmodernism, they put emphasis on the reducing impact of religious norms and

increasing effects of ethics on the social life in contemporary world. Their specification of this argument in relation to the case in Indian religions presents an insight regarding the interaction among different beliefs in cosmopolitan Indian society in contemporary context.

This book discusses the issue of religion in relation to different cultures and periods of history. Various beliefs and the interaction among them are reflected in a comparative method. The concentration on religion from an interdisciplinary view offers a significant contribution to religious studies in the international area.

Tarik Ziyad Gulcu