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A Genealogy of Nationalism: the Religion of the Fatherland and its Rites in the Light of Comparative History

The Research project addresses the issue of the so-called “Political” and “Civil Religions”, and the related intertwined processes of secularization and re-enchantment in modern Christian societies. It seeks to contribute to the master “Secular Religion Project” hosted at NKE, and defines a subset focused on the topic of “Patriotism and Nationalism”, i.e. the “Religion of the Fatherland and the Nation”, as well as related concepts (e.g. the “Religion of the State”) and their variations. As the “spectacular-ization” of mass politics is the main characteristic of the Religion of the Fatherland and the Nation, festivals and ceremonies – rites of flags, weapons, Constitution, mass gathering, Altar of the Fatherland, etc. – shall be examined, which is going to be carried out from the standpoint of the “Aesthetics of Politics”-studies.

An interdisciplinary method is adopted: the methodology of the Comparative History of Religions is applied to Political Sciences, specifically: the diffusionist approach of comparison will be tested. The goal is to increase our understanding of the origin of rites common to different nationalisms, demonstrating that they are not independent from each other, but, in the course of their migration, they have been carried from one to the other.

The sub-project intends to discuss the following questions: up to what degree certain rites have been transmitted from people to people; how the meaning, the form, and the function may have been modified during the transmission; where rites are created, introduced, adapted, and/or converted; who is the giver and who the receiver; what the condition/s of the diffusion is/are; and (secondary) point(s) of propagation as well as intermediate types will also be presented and analyzed. The knowledge of the migrations of patriotic and national rites shall shed new light upon the presence of the same rites among nations which did not profess the same ideology and politics, and provide new data for mapping the extent of their relocations and the reconfiguration of nationalism.

As a side-product and added value, the documentation collected will help to indicate terminological distinctions and confusions between Nation, Fatherland and State, and the enlargement of both of the concepts of religion and politics that are relevant to Religious Studies and Political Sciences respectively and jointly.