



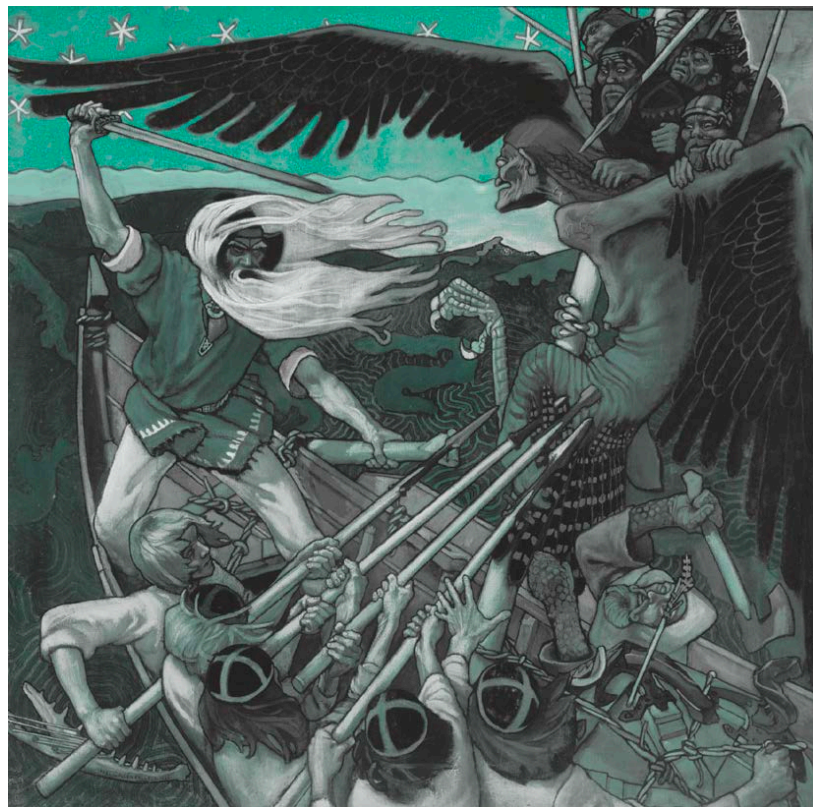
CENTRO STUDI  
DI CIVILTÀ E SPIRITUALITÀ  
COMPARATE  
fondazione ONLUS  
GIORGIO CINI

**HP** History of  
Hermetic Philosophy  
*and related currents*



Program of the Conference

## Religious Dimensions of Nationalism: Interdisciplinary Perspectives



Akseli Gallen-Kallela, The Defense of the Sampo, 1865  
tempera on canvas @Wikimedia Commons

Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, 21-22-23 October 2021  
Centro di Studi di Civiltà e Spiritualità Comparete

## Thursday, 21 October 2021

09:00 - 09:30 Welcome greetings

- ◇ **Francesco Piraino**, Director of the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations and Spiritualities
- ◇ **Marco Pasi**, University of Amsterdam
- ◇ **Joep Leerssen**, University of Amsterdam

09:30 – 11:00 Moderator: Marco Pasi

- ◇ **Simon Halink**, Frisian Academy, “Island of the Gods: Ásatrú and Icelandic National Identity”
- ◇ **Marios Hatzopoulos**, Panteion University, “Sacralizing the Greek Revolution”

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break

11:30 – 13:00 Moderator: Joep Leerssen

- ◇ **Ernils Larsson**, Uppsala University, “Moral Education and the Return of Shinto in Schools: The Revised Fundamental Law of Education and Japan’s Nationalist Right”
- ◇ **Eloisa Stuparich**, Cornell University, “Nāth lore, bīr itihās, and Hindutva: sources of Nepali nationalism in Yogi Naraharinath’s discourse”

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 14:45 Guided tour of the Cini Foundation

14:45 – 16:15 Moderator: Francesco Piraino

- ◇ **Besnik Sinani**, Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, “The Wahhabi Roots of Saudi Nationalism”
- ◇ **Marco Pasi**, University of Amsterdam, “Esoteric forms of nationalism in Europe: From romanticism to modernism”

## Friday, 22 October 2021

10:00 – 11:30 Moderator: Joep Leerssen

- ◇ **Laszlo Attila Hubbes**, University of Transylvania, “Cosmic Religion and Apocalyptic Elements in New National Mythologies”
- ◇ **Giuseppe Grieco**, Queen Mary University, “Religion and Nation-building in the Global Revolutions of the 1820s: the case of Neapolitan Liberalism”

11:30 – 11:45 Coffee break

11:45 – 13:15 Moderator: Francesco Piraino

- ◇ **István Povedák**, Charles University, Prague // Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, Budapest
- ◇ **Marijan Dović**, ZRC SAZU Institute of the Slovenian Literature and Literary Studies (Ljubljana), “Cultural Saints and National Pantheons”

13:30 – 15:00 Lunch

15:00 - 16:00

**Maurizio Viroli**, Princeton University, “Prophecy and national Emancipation in the History of Italy” (online from Austin)

## Saturday, 23 October 2021

09:30 – 11:00 Moderator: Marco Pasi

- ◇ **Joep Leerssen**, University of Amsterdam, “Beyond the Bible: The Book of Mormon and national religion.”
- ◇ **Federico Gobbo**, University of Amsterdam, “The Religious Dimensions of the Esperanto Collective Identity”

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break

11:30 – 13:00 Moderator: Joep Leerssen

- ◇ **Francesco Mazzucotelli**, University of Pavia, “The Imagery of Christian Nationalism in Lebanon”
- ◇ **Gustaf Forsell**, Uppsala University, “Dreaming of Atlantis: Protochronic Myths in Interwar Swedish Fascism”

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 - 15:15 Moderator: Francesco Piraino

- ◇ **Alberto Scigliano**, Università degli Studi del Piemonte Orientale, “Divine secularisation. A possible genealogy of nationalism”
- ◇ **Marlis Lami**, Jagiellonian University – Krakow, “Andrzej Towiański (1799–1878) – a Transnational Messiah?”

15:30 – 16:30 Plenary

## Abstracts

***Nationalistic features in globalist garb: Guillaume Postel and the salvific role of France***, Maria Vittoria Comacchi, Max Weber Fellow, HEC – European University Institute

Guillaume Postel (1510-1581) was a sixteenth-century polymath, mainly remembered as a mystic and a Christian Kabbalist. He imagined a united Europe and a world with no boundaries between East and West, harmonically unified under one religion and one political ruler. Postel perceived his project of messianic globalism as both a religious and political mission. Despite a Christian inner structure, his idea of a world religion, justified on a linguistic basis, was by definition universal, crossing geographical and linguistic boundaries. Nevertheless, Postel's universalistic vision had a well-defined political hierarchy: France was called to rule a transnational monarchical government. Thus, this paper aims to discuss how from Postel's universalistic form of religion and search for harmony and world unity emerge specific nationalist features. In the first part, by considering Postel's first published books, *Linguarum duodecim characteribus differentium alphabetum, introductio* (1538) and *De originibus seu de Hebraicae linguae et gentis antiquitate* (1538), the paper addresses the nationalistic aspects of Postel's linguistic theories, on which the Frenchman builds his new, world-wide Ecclesia. I will argue that the recovery of a primordial language, i.e., the Hebrew, explains the reasons for both a universal form of religion and the leading role of one nation, France. Postel indeed etymologically and philologically that the French language discloses the natural supremacy of the French nation. In the second part of the paper, I turn on *De orbis terrae concordia* (1544), in which Postel precisely describes his messianic globalist ideology. Thus, I investigate the ties between Postel's designation of France as the chief nation and his universalistic idea of religion and peaceful global unity. Addressing the religious origin of Postel's theory of global sovereignty, which rooted in the unexplored civil features of Marsilio Ficino's *prisca theologia*, I propose to delve in Postel's proclamation of the salvific role of France. I conclude providing a glimpse, then, into how the universal intellectualism and naturalness of religion establish Postel's nationalistic idea of the global supremacy of France.

***Cultural Saints and National Pantheons***, Marijan Dović, ZRC SAZU Institute of Slovenian Literature and Literary Studies

In the course of the nineteenth century, literary cultures across Europe began to massively seek out and venerate their (deceased) artists and intellectuals, who were identified as exemplary representatives of their regional/national cultures. Through the process of canonization, these artists – as “cultural saints” – acquired a social status and symbolic significance traditionally reserved for royal authorities and religious saints. As increasing research into the living commemorative culture of the nineteenth century reveals, there appear to be numerous and surprising analogies between the veneration of religious saints and the inauguration of their cultural counterparts. Especially after the 1830s, cults of cultural saints began to spread rapidly across the continent. Among their most visible quasi-religious features were the handling of relics (pious relic-seeking, ceremonial reburials, repatriation of corpses, erection of shrines), the organization of rituals (religious, even liturgical structure of commemorations, especially monument unveilings), the establishment of memorials as places of veneration and pilgrimage, and the more general organization of social space and time (naming places and institutions, celebrating saints' days, decorating the urban landscape with monuments). Cultural saints played an important role in the newly created “national pantheons” (imaginary entities that often took physical form – secularized churches, national cemeteries, etc.) in which emerging national cultures “exhibited” their great figures. In my talk, I will show that the afterlives of venerated figures – in addition to cultural saints, “patriotic” or “republican” saints in particular were the object of nationalist veneration – are one of the most interesting starting points for an examination of the religious dimensions of secularized national movements – and, more generally, of nationalism as a civil religion. I will discuss a number of interesting cases across Europe that

will shed light on the complex relationships between cultural saints, national pantheons, and national movements.

***Dreaming of Atlantis: Protochronic Myths in Interwar Swedish Fascism***, Gustaf Forsell, Uppsala University

This paper seeks to discuss how interwar Swedish fascists utilized the Atlantis story as protochronic myth. Descriptions of the mythological primordial civilization of Atlantis stretches back to Plato and his dialogues *Timaens* and *Critias* and since then many claim to have identified its location. One of the first to argue vehemently that Sweden was the location of Atlantis was Swedish scientist Olaus Rudbeck (1630–1702) in his *Atlantica*, a 3,000-page treatise in four volumes written between 1679 and 1702. It would be a vital publication to interwar Swedish fascists a few centuries later as it 1) allegedly ascribes the Swedish nation a specific purpose in world history, and 2) was interpreted as evidence that the Swedish people is part of the supreme Aryan race. The paper consists of two sections. The first describes how interwar Swedish fascists applied the Atlantis story as protochronic myth in order to envision a supreme Swedish nation with a specific and predestined purpose in world history. The second explores in what way(s) interwar Swedish fascists adapted the Atlantis myth in order to present the Swedish people as superior to other imagined Germanic races. I examine how interwar Swedish fascists in general modified the Atlantis story by scrutinizing how contemporary Swedish fascist journals, pamphlets, and books articulated this protochronic myth. Particular emphasis is placed on the Manhem Society (*Samfundet Manhem*), a vital think-tank to interwar Swedish fascism. Understanding the Atlantis story as protochronic myth in interwar Swedish fascism holds relevance in a wider European context, given that fascism partly emerged from a romantic nationalist environment that characterized early twentieth-century Europe. Italian Fascists sought to establish an alternative modernist form of the Roman Empire, Romanian Iron Guards considered themselves to be of Dacian ancestry, and *völkisch* nationalism in Nazi Germany attributed the German *Volk* an imagined unique cultural and racial essence. Swedish interwar fascism relied on similar premises. The Atlantis myth was included into an ideological system called ‘Gothicism’ (*göticism*), a specific Scandinavian type of romantic nationalism that showed similarities with German *völkisch* nationalism. Scrutinizing fascist adaptations of protochronic myths in a Swedish context can contribute to further knowledge about race as spirituality on the one hand, and nationalism as ‘religious’ phenomenon on the other.

***The Religious Dimensions of the Esperanto Collective Identity***, Federico Gobbo, University of Amsterdam

Esperanto is the most successful planned language ever, as it was the only one to successfully fulfil all the steps from language project to full-fledged living language (Blanke 1985). As it is well known in the literature that its original author, Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof, had in mind not only a *pontolingvo* (‘bridge language’) but also and mainly a *pontoreligio* (‘bridge religion’; for recent accounts in English, see at least Schor 2016 and Korzhenkov 2010). While his first plan eventually became what now is known as Esperanto, the latter – called at first Hillelism, then Homaranism – in terms of acceptance turned out to be a spectacular failure. In fact, nowadays there are Esperanto associations and societies throughout the world, but neither active Hillelist temples nor Homaranists, at least not organized in a collective identity. However, Zamenhof planted a little seed of his religious dimension inside the Esperanto community since its beginning, called *interna ideo* (‘internal idea’). His Hillelism can be seen as a revision of Covenantal Judaism (Schor, forthcoming), while Homaranism can be referred at the universalism behind the Seven Noachian Precepts (Astori 2010). This seed flourished in further religious dimensions still present in the Esperanto Movement, starting from his only daughter, Lidia Zamenhof, a prominent Baha’i figure (Heller 1985). However, most Esperanto supporters have a “neutralistic” attitude to Esperanto, i.e. they claim to be neutral with respect to religious as well as political views. Paradoxically, the ideology surrounding the non-religious parts of the Esperanto Movement often cements its collective identity around typical

nationalistic symbols and rituals, such as the hymn and the flag (Gobbo 2017). This contribution illustrates the intricacies of the religious dimensions of the Esperanto Movement vis-à-vis the pseudo-national(istic) traits that emerged in the second half of the past century.

***Religion and Nation-building in the Global Revolutions of the 1820s: the case of Neapolitan Liberalism***, Giuseppe Grieco, Queen Mary University

In the 1820s Southern Europe was shaken by a series of revolutions forming part of ‘a constitutional moment of global liberalism’ (Bayly, 2007) that stretched from Latin America to India, and resulted in the shaping of a new ideas of political community and patriotic allegiances. At that time the Constitution of Cadiz, first established by the Spanish Cortes in 1812 during the anti-Napoleonic war of independence, became a symbol of national independence and freedom in the ‘global revolutionary South’ and was adopted also in the kingdom of Two Sicilies after a liberal upheaval in July 1820. One of the most important feature of the Southern European and Latin American liberal constitutionalism of the early nineteenth century was ‘the centrality it accorded to a religious definition of the nation’ (Isabella, 2015). As a matter of fact, the constitution of Cadiz established Catholicism as the religion of the nation and identified religion with citizenship and nationality. Building on Ibero-Atlantic constitutionalism, Neapolitan patriots not only attempted an accommodation between liberalism and religion, but strove to shape a Duo-Sicilian national identity and patriotism centred on Catholicism. By so doing, they aimed at winning over masses and building a national community on values that could be shared by almost all citizens. In their view, religion provided one of the most powerful ground to overcome political polarization and ideological conflict in a society that had been shaken by two decades of political conflicts and civil wars (1799-1815) due to the profound crisis of legitimacy and sovereignty suffered by the Bourbon monarchy after the French invasion of 1799 and 1806 (Pinto, 2013). As I will show in my paper, Southern Italian liberals merged the religious dimension of Ibero-Atlantic constitutionalism with an intellectual tradition of the Neapolitan Enlightenment (e.g. Genovesi, Galanti, Filangieri) which had stressed the role of civic religion as a source of unity and patriotism necessary to shape citizenship and ‘civil life’ in a political community. By so doing, Neapolitan liberals presented Catholicism as a civic cult centred on sociability and freedom, and praised the religious homogeneity of the nation, though they refused to accept religious intolerance, since it would be a source of conflict and civil war. In their view, Catholicism served not only to win the hostility of the lower classes and create a unanimous public opinion but to establish the Duo Sicilian nationality on a common civic religion that would encourage patriotism and national cohesion.

***Island of the Gods: Ásatrú and Icelandic National Identity***, Dr. Simon Halink, University of Iceland

Since the onset of Iceland’s national movement in the nineteenth century, Icelandic intellectuals have taken great pride in profiling themselves and their fellow countrymen as the descendants of heroic Vikings: those fearless explorers, who had settled the hitherto uninhabited island a thousand years before. The romantic glorification of Nordic antiquity and saga literature dovetailed with popular notions of climatic determinism and the racial superiority of the Scandinavian races, and triggered a profound transformation in the way Old Norse mythology (as preserved primarily in the Old Icelandic Eddas) was perceived. Motivated by an urge to cultivate their primary cultural capital (medieval literature) for the purpose of nation-building – and to (over)compensate for the island’s marginality and tiny population – the Viking pantheon was deemed superior by some, even to the revered Olympian gods of Classical Antiquity. In the view of Icelandic intellectuals such as Grímur Thomsen and Bjarni Thorarensen, the harshness and relative aloofness of the Nordic gods had rendered their followers stronger and more self-reliant than those worshipers of more ‘involved’ deities in the south. This ideological glorification of Viking-Age polytheism, or Ásatrú – a nineteenth-century neologism, meaning ‘faith in the Æsir’ – was initially of an exclusively secular nature, and did not affect the generally Lutheran beliefs of those participating in it. The aim of this paper is to chart the long-term effects this romantic discourse has had

on later Icelandic conceptions of their ancestral faith, and in particular on the development of the popular Neo-Pagan Ásatrúarfélag ('Ásatrú Association'), which has successfully propagated a modern faith inspired by the ancient sources. The association was formally recognized by the state as an official religious organization in 1973, making Iceland the first country to grant a Neo-Pagan movement the status of a recognized religion. How do nineteenth-century ideas on the peculiarity of Nordic culture reverberate in the contemporary Ásatrú scene? In which ways do practitioners link this new faith to their identity as Icelanders, and how do long-standing stereotypes and national self-images influence their contemporary experience of the Æsir? How do they attribute significance to the old gods, in a national sense? And does the heritage of romantic nationalism set Icelandic Ásatrú apart from comparable Neo-Pagan movements in other countries?

***Sacralizing the Greek Revolution***, Marios Hatzopoulos, Panteion University

The second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the surge of the Greek enlightenment, a movement of cultural change transmitting the values and ideas of western enlightenment in the south-east of Europe. Thanks to this movement political classicism and revolutionary nationalism were transmitted to the Balkans taking hold within the traditional cosmos of the Ottoman-ruled eastern Christians. Teaching of classics in local schools, interest in the relics of antiquity, polemics over the form of Greek language, upsurge of interest in things purely secular, as well as a pervasive economic crisis in the Ottoman trade after 1815, provided the material underpinnings and the cultural backbone of the massive armed uprising against the Ottomans that eventually broke out on March 1821. There is no doubt that the Greek Revolution (1821-1830) was a project of modernity – a project conceived by intellectuals, financed and propagated by merchants, but eventually executed by peasants. This paper will seek to study the ways in which the war was sacralised by its very protagonists, the Orthodox masses who joined the revolutionary cause, fought the war and sustained casualties. By focusing on the sacred procedures before, during and after the fight (oaths, prayers, amulets, divination, worshipping of miracle-working icons, war cries, doxologies) it will argue that the Greek Revolution was seen from below as a “holy” enterprise with or without the consent of the nationalist elites who directed the war.

***Cosmic Religion and Apocalyptic Elements in New National Mythologies***, Laszlo Attila Hubbes, University of Transylvania

The article presents a comparative case study in Hungarian and Romanian websites of the cultic, or more specifically the apocalyptic milieu. It focuses on those imaginary elements which refer to otherworldly, pre-human and/or extraterrestrial beings that play an eschatological role in the narratives of various interrelated new mythologies of new nationalistic, religious, spiritual, conspiracist, alternative scientific environments in the mirror of their representations in the virtual panoptic of the social media. The interest of the inquiry is directed to the questions of what elements of these iconographies and narratives are common or similar, and which are different /if any/ in Hungarian and Romanian environments. How did these elements originating from ancient mythologies and contemporary global popular culture interfere with national ideologies and religious beliefs? The main question is related to the apocalyptic nature of these characteristics: what eschatological, millennialistic, messianistic fears and hopes do they represent? Last, but not least, we will try to find an answer to why the internet and generally digital media offer such a prolific field for the formation and propagation of these new mythologies.

*Andrzej Towiański (1799– 1878) – a Transnational Messiah?*, Marlis Lami, Jagiellonian University

...

*Moral Education and the Return of Shinto in Schools: The Revised Fundamental Law of Education and Japan's Nationalist Right*, Ernils Larsson, Uppsala University

In December of 2006, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Japan succeeded in its long-term goal of revising the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE). Implemented during the Allied occupation of Japan, the law had been consistently criticized by conservative and nationalist pundits throughout the postwar period for contributing to the deterioration of Japanese tradition and morals. Under the supervision of Prime Minister Abe Shinzō, the FLE was reformed to encourage students to take pride in their national identity. In a key line from the revised Article 2, the law states that a central goal of Japanese education is to foster in the students a “respect for tradition and culture and love for our country.” Earlier in the same article, the FLE also emphasizes that schools must foster a “moral spirit” (*dōtoku-shin*) in the students. The terms “tradition” (*dentō*) and “culture” (*bunka*) are used broadly by actors on Japan’s nationalist right to signify that which should be treasured by the Japanese nation, often juxtaposed to the supposedly immoral and anti-social values of their political adversaries. They are often used in connection to various aspects of “State Shinto,” the prewar system of public rites and emperor worship which was disestablished in December 1945 under the American occupation of Japan. Since the reform of the FLE, tradition and culture have entered the Japanese school curriculum through the new subject of “moral education” (*dōtoku kyōiku*). While moral education remains a rather vague and poorly defined subject, actors from Japan’s nationalist and conservative right tend to view it as a way to reinstitute certain aspects of prewar education that were banned during the Allied occupation. This includes a persistent focus on the virtues of the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890, a document steeped in Confucian values which served as the moral and spiritual basis of Japanese education up until 1945. This paper will explore how nationalist actors in contemporary Japan discuss the topic of moral education in their political writings. I will focus in particular on the lobby group Nippon Kaigi, a self-proclaimed grass-roots organization which serves as a network for different actors who want to reestablish Japan as a “proud” nation. Their monthly magazine *Nippon no Ibuki* contains frequent contributions from various political organizations and Shinto groups, including the LDP and the Association of Shinto Shrines (*Jinja Honchō*). I will also present a case study of one recent moral education textbook championed by Nippon Kaigi, *13-sai kara no dōtoku kyōkasho*, to illustrate how moral education is used as a way to introduce Shinto ideals in a country where religious education is banned in public schools. While outright “religious” language is rare in this work, its sections on the emperor, the Japanese nation, and traditional family values illustrate how moral education can be used to disseminate the ideals of Japan’s Shinto-nationalist right in public schools.

*Beyond the Bible: The Book of Mormon and national religion*, Joep Leerssen, University of Amsterdam

British imperial thought sought to affiliate itself to a Biblical world-historical narrative. The chosen model was that of the "Lost Tribes of Israel", which were traced, by way of medieval Gaelic ancestry myths, to the tribal bloodlines of Ireland and Scotland and hence to the British Monarchy. I explore this "British-Israelite" in its nineteenth- and twentieth-century manifestations and suggest, for the transatlantic part of that religious nationalism, not only Donald W. Armstrong's "Plain Truth" sec but also the imaginire underlying Joseph Smith's narrative concerning the Book of Mormon.

*The Imagery of Christian Nationalism in Lebanon*, Francesco Mazzucotelli, University of Pavia

The causes, effects, narratives, and practices of sectarianism in Lebanon are the subject of a very extensive literature and ongoing academic nature, which has questioned the modern origin of sectarian politics (Makdisi 2000, Beydoun 1984), its primordial or instrumental nature, the selective appropriation of memory and history (Salibi 1988), the construction of the other as existential threat (Darwich, Fakhoury 2016), the combination of parochial and colonial interests (Firro 2003), the nexus between sectarianism and clientelism (Traboulsi 2014), or the construction of everyday sectarianism in urban spaces or through the provision of material assistance (Cammatt 2014, Nucho 2017). In this framework, the politics and the identity-building dynamics among the Christians of Lebanon have been interpreted as an array of attempts at maximizing and preserving their hegemony over a power-sharing system predicated upon the allocation of parliamentary seats, public offices, and resources along confessional lines. My contribution explores recent developments and trends of identity politics among the Christians of Lebanon under the notion of “Christian nationalism” that has been advanced by Felsch (2016). The concept of a Lebanese Christian ethnic nationalism, sometimes ridden with overtones of identity-based introversion, is based on claims of historical continuity, rootedness on the land, and precedence over non-Christians. In recent times, it has fed informal practices of segregation against Muslim residents, Syrian refugees, South Asian and African migrant workers, and the LGBT community. The construction of Christian nationalism in Lebanon echoes past narratives on Lebanese Christian exceptionalism, the insulation of Lebanon (often equated with Christianity) from the rest of (Muslim-majority) Middle East, and the claims of a distinct history that were elaborated by different currents of Phoenicianism (Kaufman 2004, Bawardi 2016), some of them postulating the non-Arab identity of Lebanese Christians. In many respects, current expressions of Christian nationalism in Lebanon are the result of the ideological developments occurred during the civil war (Aulas 1985, Snider 1984, Phares 1995), which caressed the idea of a Christian homeland (state or canton) molded on the lines of the Jewish state (Nisan 1999), and postulated quasi-ethnic definitions of Christian identity. Tensions within the ranks of the Maronite Church were also particularly significant (Henley 2008). Following Sassine (1979), this contribution will focus on the tropes and recurrent themes that construct the imaginative geography of Christian nationalism, exploring different images of homeland, the village idyll, the notion of the mountain as safe haven and refuge (Maasri 2008), and the iconography of the cedar tree, which is ridden with Biblical references and therefore contains elements of historical continuity with the Ancient and the New Testament, as well as a geography of sacred spaces (Fartacek 2007).

***Esoteric forms of nationalism in Europe: From romanticism to modernism***, Marco Pasi, University of Amsterdam

Nationalism, understood both as an ideology and as a variety of concrete political movements, has undoubtedly been one of the major forces influencing the cultural, social and political landscape of Europe in the last two centuries. Several theories have been elaborated by scholars to interpret this phenomenon, which remains one of the most interesting but also complex ones in modern politics. However, despite the growing amount of literature devoted to the subject, not enough attention has been given to the ways in which the history of nationalism has been interlocked with particular aspects of religion, such as alternative spirituality and western esotericism. Not all nationalist authors had esoteric or mystical leanings, but some of them did, and in those cases the relationship between the esoteric beliefs of these authors on the one hand, and their political ideas on the other, calls for analysis and interpretation. In my lecture, I would like to discuss the curious relationship that seems to exist between three different and apparently unrelated phenomena: European nationalism, religious individualisation and Western esotericism. The interpretation of this relationship is based on the examination of a number of case studies, taken from different periods and different countries. These case studies focus on four significant figures of European cultural history: the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855), the Italian political activist Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872), the Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), and the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935). All of them played a significant role in the nationalist discourses of their respective countries, and produced highly sophisticated oeuvres, which, in the case of

the three poets at least, were also of extraordinary literary significance. Furthermore, apart from their involvement as intellectuals in the production of nationalist ideology, they were also subjected, especially after their deaths, to a process of iconisation, which turned them into fetishised symbols of national identity. In this lecture I will discuss these different cases and relate them to the interesting triangular connection between nationalism, individualisation and esotericism.

***Re-inventing sacred Hungarianness***, István Povedák, Charles University, Prague – Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, Budapest

This paper introduces the modes of sacralization of the past revived in Hungary after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The sacralization of history in Hungary is rooted mainly in the “Trianon trauma” caused by the territorial losses suffered in the Treaty of Trianon (June 4, 1920), and the politics of memory under communism. The fact that Hungary usually emerged at a loss from the tumultuousness of 20th-century history caused a turn from the recent past to the “golden age” of Hungarian prehistory as a foundation for collective identity-building for many. While only a minor segment of society was involved in the pseudo-scientific sacralization of history in the 1990s, complex mythology emerged in the new Millennium that permeates banal (neo)nationalism and the broad layers of popular culture. Pseudo-historical fantasies such as the prophet role of Hungarians, the “Hungarian Jesus”, or the esoteric reinterpretation of the Holy Crown of Hungarian kings, and the neo-mythological reconstruction of many Hungarian saints’ legendry has gained increasing popularity. Furthermore, conspiracy theories emphasizing that the “glorious” Hungarian history was deliberately concealed during communism have intensified and gained increased visibility in media. This cultic milieu of pseudo-historical sacralization also provides the ideological foundation of contemporary paganism in Hungary.

***Divine secularisation. A possible genealogy of nationalism***, Alberto Scigliano, Università del Piemonte Orientale

The fraught notion of secularisation often refers either to the exclusion of religion from political discourse or to the transfer of confessional arrangements into civic religions. On the other hand, modern nationalism is generally believed to be born on secularist arguments, as a merging of identitarian claims with religious formulas. Seventeenth century, so the story goes, has been characterised by a progressive banishment of religion from public sphere. Spinozism and the emerging nucleus of modern statehood began to replace the Medieval political theology. My idea is that the traditional vision I just sketched is quite too schematic. On the contrary, I do believe religion nourished indeed a peculiar form of secularisation. My attempt is to offer a new account of nationalism’s path. I will try to show how proto-nationalism, and an alleged undermining of religion, were not a product of rising secularisation, but rather fruits of the utterly theologised century of modern era. My arguments will start from a specific case-study: Low Countries during the Dutch Revolt. Accordingly, I will make the case how Reformation’s hebraist scholarship during the struggle against Philip II argued that Moses’ biblical constitution placed religious and civil laws on the same level. My claim is that in Holland we do not observe one of the first feedbacks of Schmitt’s “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularised theological concepts”, but rather a religious practice that was *per se* nationalistlike. It may come as surprise, yet, to some extent, calvinist theology and political hebraism combined to produce a “divine secularisation”, in which the national and erastian process lingered on the figure of Moses, national political leader and religious prophet at once. For that reason my paper will challenge notions taken for granted, providing a possible interpretation to nationalism and religion

***The Wahhabi Roots of Saudi Nationalism***, Besnik Sinani, Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient

Nationalism was considered an impossibility in Saudi Arabia, not only due to its tribal composition but also due to the prominence of a universalist religious identity. In the 20th century, Saudi Arabia

spearheaded an ideological battle against Arab Nationalism, and King Faysal emerged as the celebrated leader of a competing form of mobilization based on religion, known as Pan-Islamism. Saudi religious scholars depicted nationalism negatively as tribalism. When King Abdullah first recognized the Saudi National Day in 2005 and later declared it a National Holiday, he did so against the verdicts of the religious scholars, who had prohibited its celebration. Nationalism was promoted as an attempt to curb religious movements and ideologies that sought to comprehensively Islamize the various sectors of Saudi society. The process of state-sponsoring of nationalism has only been intensified in contemporary Saudi Arabia, where scholars speak of a xenophobic, right-wing, militaristic form of Saudi nationalism promoted against Muslim and pan-Arab forms of identification. These accounts, however, do not explain how Saudi nationalism became from an impossibility into a dominant state ideology. Seeking to contribute to the understanding of the emergence of nationalism and the changing role of religion in the kingdom, I attempt in this paper to show how Wahhabism served as a constitutional part of the formation of Saudi nationalism. Eric Hobsbawm has pointed to the seemingly paradoxical role a universalist religion can play in the formation of nationalism as in Pakistan or Ireland, where Muslims and Catholics are surrounded by other religious communities. Saudi Arabia, which was never colonized, emerged as a political entity surrounded by fellow Muslims and often by the same tribal communities. In this paper, I argue that it was Wahhabism that created the differentiation, and the unifying paradigm that would result in the formation of Saudi Nationalism. Wahhabi salvific exclusivism negated the faith of surrounding Muslim populations in those early days of the Saudi state, and barely recognized them later as Muslims. Wahhabism constitutes what Ernest Gellner depicted as a Protestant-type religion, which diminishes forms of religious mediation, it focuses attention into scripture and doctrine at the detriment of rituals and 'works', serving consequentially as a powerful agent of literacy. The spread of Wahhabi literacy was instrumental in the formation of a community out of the four regions that constituted the Saudi kingdom, and in diminishing the power of the tribes. As I try to demonstrate, Wahhabism endowed the Saudi kingdom with a mission and a mystique, making its defense a divine obligation. The dominant contemporary manifestation of Saudi nationalism is not a form of religious-nationalism, because it was effected by competing conceptualizations of modernization. However, this process, I argue, does not negate the articulation of the Wahhabi case for the unique status of the Saudi kingdom. I conclude that in a society fragmented by design, the seemingly paradoxical Wahhabi endorsement and the secular hyper-nationalism co-exist as discursive tools of legitimization of the Saudi kingdom.

*Nāth lore, bīr itihās, and Hindutva: sources of Nepali nationalism in Yogi Naraharinath's discourse*,  
Eloisa Stuparich, Cornell University

Contemporary scholarship on the transnational dimensions of Hindu nationalism has mostly focused on the contribution of diasporic communities in the West, often financially and institutionally linked to nationalist organizations in India. The place of Nepal in the broader imaginary of Hindu political projects, however, has received much less attention. Institutionally peripheral to the organizational structures of the Hindu nationalist networks in India, the Himalayan region has nonetheless occupied a central place in the symbolic imaginary of Hindu nationalism, embodying until 2008 the "only Hindu kingdom" of the world (*ekmātra Hindu-rājya*) against the forces of secularism that constitute a challenge to right-wing understandings of Hinduness in the broader South Asian context. Studying the polarizing figure of Yogi Naraharinath (2015-2003), a religious leader affiliated with the Nāth ascetic order, allows us to investigate how pre-modern religious elements from the local Nepali past can take new shape in nationalist discourses in conversation with Indian articulations of political Hinduness. Acclaimed as a saintly figure by his disciples, Naraharinath was controversial among political activists who fought for multiparty political representation in Nepal, as he pursued throughout his life the project of preserving his country as a uniquely Hindu absolute monarchy, modeled on a notion of Vedic *dharma* that he regarded as the primordial religion of the Himalayan region. I will argue that three themes emerge as essential foci in Naraharinath's understanding of Hindu politics: a reinterpretation of local Nāth lore in nationalist fashion, a historiographical rhetoric of *bīr itihās* ("brave history") centered around the martial tradition of

the Gurkha soldiers, and significant echoes from the Hindutva political movement in India, following the trend of the neo-Hindu reformulations of the late colonial era.

***Prophecy and national Emancipation in the History of Italy***, Maurizio Viroli, Princeton University

The Nobel Prize laureate Eugenio Montale was surely right when he penned, a few days after the horrific fascist terrorist attack in Milan on December 12, 1969, that “Prophets and prophecies shall disappear, / if ever they existed.” Since then, no prophet of social emancipation has emerged in Italy. Prophets of social emancipation have existed throughout the history of Italy, however, and they have left significant marks on the Renaissance, on the Risorgimento and the antifascist Resistance. In my presentation I intend to show how prophetic poets - Vittorio Alfieri and Alessandro Manzoni in particular - have resorted to prophetic language to encourage the Italian people to fight for national independence. I shall also contend that the most prominent and effective prophetic voice of the Italian Risorgimento was Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872). From his youth, he elected as his life's mission to inspire in his fellow Italians a faith that would give them the moral strength to begin a journey of redemption. He regarded himself as a redeemer, as a new Prometheus who had stolen the light of emancipation from God. God and his conscience were his only guides. He constructed an innovative redemptive vision wherein national redemption, republican liberty, and religious regeneration were inseparable. If we do not examine its prophetic dimensions cannot hope to properly understand the historical meaning of the Italian Risorgimento.

***“Blood of the Martyrs Is the Seed of the Nation”: The Phenomenon of Nationalistic Martyrdom in the 18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Centuries***, Aleksei Zygmunt, Sociological institute of the Russian Academy of Science Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology

When it comes to the relation between nationalism and religion, political martyrdom is one of the most direct links between the two, though extremely underrated. However, in the 18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries, many nationalistic movements and established nation-states feature ideologies of martyrdom and cults of martyrs. Among the most spectacular examples are the cult of “martyrs of liberty” during the French Revolution of 1789; the “presidents-martyrs” tradition in the United States; the ideology and commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin; cults of martyrs in 20<sup>th</sup>-century fascist movements in Spain, Germany, and Romania; and the sacrificial ideologies that emerged in decolonizing and the post-colonial world from South America to Africa and Asia.

Such “nationalistic martyrdom” is not historical, but contemporary phenomenon: today, a civil holiday called “Martyrs’ Day” is celebrated in more than 30 countries around the globe. Many countries introduced it only in recent years; in Ukraine, the revolutionary cult of “Heavenly Hundred” took form in 2015; in Bangladesh, such holiday appeared in 2017. The ideologies of martyrdom still fuel many political movements around the world - Kurds, Tamils, Welsh, Catalans, or Indian Maoists (Naxalites). Flags of more than 50 countries feature a red colour that symbolizes the blood of those who died, fighting for freedom and the establishment of an independent nation-state.

The central thesis of the paper is that ideologies of martyrdom and cults of martyrs are the intrinsic features of modern nationalism. They give nascent nationalisms a discursive and practical mechanism that allows them to develop, achieve their goals and preserve what has already been made. This mechanism came from Christianity but defined the nationalistic struggle in societies with Islamic, Hindu, or Buddhist culture. To analyze this mechanism in case studies, I offer a “grammar” model of martyrdom, composed of three motives – founding, militancy, and mobilization: (1) Martyrdom is perceived as “fruitful death” that creates a new reality. In our case, that is the nation itself, or free and united country “sealed with martyrs’ blood;” (2) A martyr is always conceived as a warrior who fights against the “dark forces”, be it internal and external enemies or abstract notions like “despotism” and “tyranny.” Thus, for

nationalists, they set the example of the struggle for liberation; (3) Martyr's death mobilizes their adherents to continue the battle and provides the nationalistic movement with the initial or additional impetus to achieve its goals. The memory of the martyrs forces their devotees to complete their "cause" or avenge them. In most cases, when the goal of the nationalists is achieved, the cult of the martyrs routinizes and declines, becoming one of the elements in the "civil religion." The report illustrates this model in many examples taken from modern and recent history.