



Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy
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Colocviu național | București | Joi 21 mai 2026
Sala de conferințe a Casei Oamenilor de Știință | Aripa Vest, intrarea din Calea Rahovei |
cu începere de la ora **09.45**.

National Colloquium
commemorating 35 years since Ioan Petru Culianu's death

**The Religious History of Romania as Religious History of Europe:
Diversions, Manipulations and Religious Conflicts
in the History of Romania (1918-present)**

**L'histoire religieuse de la Roumanie comme histoire religieuse de l'Europe :
Détournements, manipulations et conflits religieux dans l'histoire de la
Roumanie (1918 à nos jours)**

**Istoria religioasă a României ca istorie religioasă a Europei:
deturnări, manipulări și conflicte religioase în istoria României (1918-prezent)**

IHR Organizing team: **Andreea Apoștu, Ștefan Lungu, Vlad Șovărel.**

Program & Abstracts | résumés

- 10.00 *Opening remarks*
- 10.15-11.30 **Keynote lecture & general discussion**
JENNY BUTLER
University College Cork | President of the *Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions* | General Secretary of the *European Association for the Study of Religions*
**Theorising the Study of Religions:
Conceptual Categories and Their Implications**
- 11.30-12.00 **DANIELA DUMBRAVĂ**
Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy
**Ioan Petru Culianu: Encountering History of Religions as a Refugee
Notes on Unpublished Documents (1971-1974)**
- 12.00-12.30 **ȘTEFAN LUNGU**
Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy
**Shifting the Materiality of Religion within the Romanian Orthodox Church
in Transylvania: Preliminary Considerations for a Comparative Approach**
- 12.30-14.30 *Lunch offered by the Romanian Society for the History of Religions*

- 14.30-15.00 **ANDREEA APOSTU**
 Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy
Two Unknown Manuscripts of Mircea Eliade's *Spiritual Itinerary*
- 15.00-15.30 **ADRIAN MARCU**
 Chair of Philosophy, Victor Babeş University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Timișoara
**Fundamentali și Reconfigurations of Orthodoxy
 and the Justification of Political Violence in Legionary Thought**
- 15.30-16.00 **EUGEN CIURTIN**
 Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy
***La storia religiosa della Romania, come la storia religiosa dell'Italia, è ancora da fare.* Pettazzoni, Eliade, and the task of the present**
- 16.00-16.30 **BOGDAN TĂTARU-CAZABAN**
 Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy
Culianu, les anges des nations et les malheurs de l'histoire
- 16.30-17.00 **IONUȚ DANIEL BĂNCILĂ**
 Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy
**Affective Epistemologies of Protest
 in Contemporary Romanian Orthodox Conspirituality**
- 17.00-17.30 Presentation of the multiannual project *A Religious History of Romania* and of
**Religions 360° | 22nd EASR & IAHR Regional Conference, Bucharest, 20-25
 September 2026 | <https://www.religions360.eu/> | <https://www.rshr.eu/>**
- 18.30 Inspection by the EASR General Secretary of the Opening Session venue
 of the Congress: the Romanian Athenaeum & concert.

Abstracts

JENNY BUTLER

University College Cork | President of the *Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions* | General Secretary of the *European Association for the Study of Religions*
**Theorising the Study of Religions:
 Conceptual Categories and Their Implications**

As academics, we understand our field through conceptual categories which help us to interpret the world around us, to analyse phenomena, and to communicate our findings within our scholarly community and beyond it. Our field of study of religions—perhaps more than any other—interrogates our internal terms and concerns itself with precise definitions, schema and categorisations. This preoccupation was in part caused by efforts to distinguish our field of study from theology. Despite this, there remains a set of underlying assumptions that impact on our understanding of religion. In fact, our understanding of the category of religion is inevitably situated within our own research endeavours and relates to our precise research topics and also, therefore, informs our research questions. While this may seem axiomatic, it is something we need to consider further as scholars and to reflect on the ways in which culturally constructed terminology influences us in creating our typologies and models of the world. The way we organise knowledge

and convey it both in academic fora and in the public domain in turn solidifies others' understandings. Indeed, scholars of religion introduce theorisations of religion and culture that can be polarising. Through examining my own positionality in the areas of religion, folklore and cultural studies, the nuance and subtlety of terminology is brought more to the fore. In this keynote address, I consider selected categories and definitions utilised broadly in our field in how they relate to my own research areas of folk religion, new religious movements, and esotericism. In doing so, I attempt to highlight assumptions in our field that still need to be challenged.

DANIELA DUMBRAVĂ

Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy

Ioan Petru Culianu: Encountering His Story of Religions as a Refugee

Notes on Unpublished Documents (1971-1974)

Between 13 November 1972 — the day Ioan Petru Culianu (Iași, 1950 – Chicago, 1991) signed his bilingual Romanian–Italian request for political asylum at the *AAI Centro Assistenza Profughi Stranieri di Trieste* — and on 16 October 1973, when the *Magnifico Rettore* of the *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore* communicated to him the award of a bursary in the *Department of Religious Sciences* in Milan, Culianu passed from the juridical status of foreign student on a Romanian passport to that of refugee under the *1951 Geneva Convention*, and from a *laureato in letteratura italiana* into the institutional antechamber of comparative religion. Drawing on three intersecting unpublished sources — the Securitate informative file D.I. 001213 and the criminal file P 13975 of the *Bucharest Military Tribunal* (A.C.N.S.A.S.); the AAI/CIME refugee file no. 74120 of the *Centro di Emigrazione di Latina* (Archivio di Stato di Latina); and the *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore* correspondence preserved within the Securitate dossier — this paper argues that Culianu's refugee status and his vocation as a historian of religions are not parallel events but mutually constitutive.

BOGDAN TĂTARU-CAZABAN

Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy

Culianu, les anges des nations et les malheurs de l'histoire

L'une des contributions historico-religieuses majeures d'Ioan Petru Culianu (1950–1991) aborde avec perspicacité et originalité le thème des anges des nations, puisant ses racines dans la Bible, les textes apocryphes et les écrits de Qumran, et trouvant des résonances dans le christianisme primitif. Les résultats de ses recherches sont présentés pour la première fois dans l'article « "Démonisation du cosmos" et dualisme gnostique » (RHR 196, 1979, p. 3-40), puis repris et approfondis dans deux versions qui, dès le titre, mettent en avant la thématique angéologique et la perspective adoptée par Culianu – le problème de l'origine du dualisme: „Les anges des peuples et la question des origines du dualisme gnostique” (dans *Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique. Actes du Colloque de Louvain-la-Neuve, 11-14 mars 1980*, Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut orientaliste, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1982, pp. 131-145) et „The Angels of the Nations and the Origins of gnostic Dualism” (dans R. Van Den Broek, M. J. Vermaseren, eds., *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, Leiden, Brill, 1981, pp. 78-91). Dans cette communication, nous nous proposons de montrer la nouveauté de l'approche de Culianu, par rapport aux interprétations antérieures de ce thème, ainsi que son importance dans le cadre plus large de ses recherches sur l'histoire des religions, domaine dans lequel il s'était déjà engagé en tant que disciple d'Ugo Bianchi. Dans l'introduction au volume *Iter in silvis II: Gnoză și magie* (Polirom, 2013), Eduard Iricinschi a souligné le contexte savant de l'intervention de Culianu sur les anges des nations. Nous souhaitons également mettre en lumière le contexte biographique, marqué par l'exil et par une réflexion sur les malheurs de l'histoire, qui nourrit et étaye cette préoccupation. Le thème

des anges des nations s'inscrit dans un espace d'interrogations sur « le gnosticisme et le monde moderne », qui relie l'ouvrage sur Hans Jonas (écrit sous une première forme en 1975, mais publié seulement en 1985) au dernier chapitre de *Gnoses dualistes de l'Occident : Histoire et mythes* (Plon, 1990).

ȘTEFAN LUNGU

Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy

Shifting the Materiality of Religion within the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania: Preliminary Considerations for a Comparative Approach

In terms of materialities, the Romanian Orthodox Church is not quite homogeneous, as the Transylvanian structures were only integrated after WW I. Previous to that, as part of the Habsburg monarchy, the Orthodox Romanians in Transylvania were organized as an autonomous Church since Andrei Șaguna emancipated from Serbian hierarchy and restored the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan See. This autonomous Church came with its own materialities – a particular type of music, architecture and iconography – that were (and, more interestingly, still are) challenged when faced with administrative centralization and social mobility. This proves to be a stimulating context for various efforts to preserve and reaffirm the characteristic features of these religious *realia*. The paper aims to identify preliminary topics for a future comparative approach regarding music, architecture and iconography considered only in their most distinctive aspects. Such an approach would enable us to discern how the general narrative of Tradition enables, in fact, the existence of plural traditions.

ANDREEA APOSTU

Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy

Two Unknown Manuscripts of Mircea Eliade's *Spiritual Itinerary*

The present paper aims to analyze two manuscripts related to the first three articles of the *Spiritual Itinerary* series published by Mircea Eliade in *Cuvântul*, which appeared for the first time in a public auction in the autumn of 2025 and were not properly identified by the auction house. These consist of a folio beginning with the words: “We are the most blessed generation ever seen” and manuscript made up of four folios, measuring 19.5 × 14 cm and 14 × 9.5 cm, entitled “The Psychology of Dilettantism”. Both manuscripts are written in graphite pencil, in a hurried hand, the second one being accompanied by a drawing. The small portraits scattered throughout Eliade's manuscripts were his way of awaiting and summoning inspiration. We may therefore advance the hypothesis that these are in fact his very first notes for the future articles, in which he conceived, not without effort and intense moments of reflection, the conceptual framework of the *Spiritual Itinerary* series.

The notes and ideas contained in these manuscripts were used by Eliade in:

„Itinerariu spiritual I. Linii de orientare” [“Spiritual Itinerary I. Lines of Orientation”] in *Cuvântul*, year III, no. 857, Tuesday, 6 September 1927, p. 1–2.

“Itinerariu spiritual II. Critica dilettantismului” [“Spiritual Itinerary II. Critique of Dilettantism”] in *Cuvântul*, year III, no. 860, Friday, 9 September 1927, p. 1–2.

“Itinerariu spiritual III. Către un nou dilettantism” [“Spiritual Itinerary III. Towards a New Dilettantism”] in *Cuvântul*, year III, no. 862, Sunday, 11 September 1927, p. 1–2.

“The Psychology of Dilettantism” appears to have been the initial title of the second article in the series, “Critique of Dilettantism.” The four folios in this lot actually contain material used by Eliade in the second and third parts of the *Spiritual Itinerary*, namely “Critique of Dilettantism” and “Towards a New Dilettantism”. The lines from the loose folio, framed by the auction house alongside a portrait of Eliade, correspond to the first article, “Lines of Orientation” and constitute a rough, partial outline of it. Certain formulations nevertheless survived almost intact in the final

version published in *Cuvântul*, including the very expression “the blessed generation”: “For those who understand, we are the most blessed generation.”

The present study provides an edited transcription of the two manuscripts, identifies and correlates the notes contained in the five folios with the corresponding passages in the published articles, and analyzes and contextualizes the differences between them. It also sheds light on Eliade’s creative and writing process in his youth, as well as on the evolution of the ideas expressed in *Spiritual Itinerary* throughout his later writings and political activity.

ADRIAN MARCU

Chair of Philosophy, Victor Babeş University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Timișoara
**Fundamentalist Reconfigurations of Orthodoxy
and the Justification of Political Violence in Legionary Thought**

This paper starts from a fairly simple question: how did Orthodox Christianity come to be used, in certain interwar Romanian contexts, in ways that could support and even make sense of political violence? Rather than treating Orthodoxy as a stable doctrinal system, I look at how it appears in legionary writings—as something more flexible, at times selectively invoked, and often folded into a broader ideological vocabulary shaped by nationalism, anti-modernism, and appeals to tradition. Reading a number of texts associated with the movement, what becomes noticeable is not so much a coherent theological position, but a gradual shift in how familiar concepts are used. Terms like tradition, nation, sacrifice, or even salvation begin to carry an increasingly different weight. They are not abandoned as religious ideas, but they are no longer confined to a strictly spiritual register either. Instead, they start to overlap with political language – sometimes subtly, sometimes quite directly. I am not suggesting that Orthodox doctrine, as such, leads to violence, which would be misleading. What seems more plausible is something less direct: that certain conceptual ambiguities, especially when combined with strong ideological commitments, can make particular interpretations available – interpretations in which violence becomes easier to frame as meaningful or even necessary. Seen this way, the legionary case is less an isolated anomaly and more a revealing example of a broader problem. For this reason, the legionary movement case can be read as a particularly clear example of how religious language is reconfigured within a political framework.

EUGEN CIURTIN

Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy
La storia religiosa della Romania, come la storia religiosa dell’Italia, è ancora da fare. Pettazzoni, Eliade, and the task of the present

In a Fascist context during the World War II, being invited by Scarlat Lambrino to deliver a lecture at the Accademia of Romania in Rome and becoming a member of the Associazione Amici della Romania, Raffaele Pettazzoni writes “La storia religiosa della Romania, come la storia religiosa dell’Italia, è ancora da fare” (1942). He understands this comparative rapprochement of tasks as deriving from his 20-year study and publications contributing towards a European history of religions. Yet the context is clearly Fascist/dictatorial. In a draft longtime unknown and certainly understudied, as many of Pettazzoni’s works, the grand Italian master even added, to prove his acknowledged Romanian connections: “La storia religiosa della Romania dalle origini pre-romane al movimento mistico della Legione dell’Arcangelo Gabriele [*sic!*] e della Guardia di ferro” (Gandini 2004, Ciurtin 2008). This paper will analyze the interwar and war connections of Pettazzoni and Eliade in the context of their connected or unrelated scholarly projects which included the study of the present as last chapter of a new religious history of their own native countries, with unpublished documents and as many illustrations as those prepared as a proto-powerpoint by Pettazzoni himself (14) for his Romanian colleagues. The significant failure of both

Pettazzoni and Eliade's projects, including Eliade's *A religious history of Dacia*, will offer the ground to inspect the distance covered by other scholars since then and the present institutional task of conceiving (at least) *A religious history of Romania*.

IONUȚ DANIEL BĂNCILĂ

Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy
**Affective Epistemologies of Protest
in Contemporary Romanian Orthodox Conspirituality**

As simplified imaginings and narratives of the power relations perceived to be at work in the contemporary world, conspiracy theories bring their public together in a community of feeling the same. This is how "conspiracy milieus", as locations of alternative knowledge production, are formed. The consistency of these milieus is not given by the content of the narratives produced, but by the affective stance of their agents: These fluid networks of distrust are powered by strong affects and emotions, particularly characteristic of structures and social situations in which inequalities and power relations are perceived to play a major role. Introduced in academic discourse by two sociologists (Ward/Voas 2011), the term "conspirituality" was originally intended to hint at the intersection of conspiracy theories with Western alternative („New Age”) spiritualities in contemporary religion. It is my thesis that, when applied to recent social and religious dynamics in Eastern Europe this term is surprisingly well-suited to accurately describe the specific blend of a conspiracist mindset with Orthodox Christian spirituality and religion, with conspiracism taking *the function* of (Christian Orthodox) spirituality itself.

Taking up the recent theoretical insights on the „epistemologies of protest" (Medina 2023), I plan to map the genealogy of the counter-cultural animus of selected conspiracy narratives promoted in the fringe Romanian Orthodox milieu, addressing their anti-Western, anti-Modern, anti-ecumenical and anti-Masonic stance. While on Orthodox theological anti-Modernism and anti-Westernism there already is an important amount of literature available, the discussion on the Orthodox anti-ecumenism should also consider the convoluted reception of the Pan-Orthodox Council of Crete in 2016 among Orthodox hardliners. Apart from this, even if strangely anachronistic in view of the wealth of knowledge available on modern secret societies, the anti-Masonic conspiracy narrative is important in potentializing (covert) anti-Semitic and populist myths about the evil (Satanic) elite, thus fuelling a sense of insecurity and agency loss. In this context I will also address the specific hermeneutics of suspicion privileged in these milieus, amounting to a kind of „historiosophy" strangely similar to instances of the classic Orthodox traditional (ecclesiastical) historiography itself.



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