

Gert Pickel and Kornelia Sammet (eds.)

Transformations of Religiosity. Religion and Religiosity in Eastern Europe 1989 – 2010

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REVIEWED BY Péter Török, Semmelweis University, Hungary

The reader may find the subtitle of this book somewhat misleading as the contents cover not only Eastern Europe but also Central Europe, and in several comparative studies, Western Europe surfaces as well. Nevertheless, this book will fail to satisfy the reader in search of a *general* overview of trends in the region's religion and religiosity *in unequivocal terms*. This transpires not because the editors give us no such overview; the editors, from Leipzig University, for instance, do an excellent job in their introduction in that regard. However, all they can honestly write is that "the status of religiosity and religion in Central and Eastern Europe remains indeterminate" (p. 7). Gert Pickel and Kornelia Sammet summarize elegantly and even evaluate briefly the different theoretical approaches, but in the end they are forced to conclude that "it seems plausible to assume that there are a number of different processes that run parallel" (p. 13).

Beyond the editors' introduction with its general overview and theoretical focus, the reader does get another example in Friedrich Fürstenberg's theoretical consideration of the religious factor, specifically the emerging forms of secularization. Beginning with David Martin's analysis of the Eastern European pattern of secularization and basing his frame of reference in the form of three hypotheses on Matthes' "new horizon of perception ... as potential orientation of one's conduct of life" (p. 23), Martin analyses religion in Eastern Europe on micro, meso, and macro levels. (Despite his several references to his own study published in 2009, Martin does not cite it in his reference list.) He concludes that scholars analyzing religion must use "multiple research methods including those of cultural anthropology" (p. 27).

Willfried Spohn takes on probably the most difficult task: analysing the role religion may or may not play in the reconstruction of collective identities in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe. The strength of the late Spohn's study lies not in the incidentally included statistics in the only table of the study demonstrating—presumably in percentages—several indicators of religious vitality and secularization (where the confessional structures of three countries add up to more than a hundred percent), but in the properly structured presentation of the well-targeted and to-the-point historical analyses of the different countries.

Kornelia Sammet and Daniel Bergelt provide an excellent analysis of the changing relationships between religion and gender induced by modernization, wherein they apply both qualitative and quantitative methods. While the former consists of biographical interviews and probes, among other issues, the development of worldviews, the latter includes cross-national analyses. The only shortcoming of this study the reader may encounter lies in the fact that for their quantitative analysis the authors use the database of the International Social Survey Programme (2008), which fails to provide facts, for instance, on Poland and the countries of the Balkan. An analysis of the relationship of gender and religion in these societies might have produced interesting results.

The next three studies focus on different aspects of religion and politics. Gert Pickel and Anja Gladkich examine religious social capital using datasets of both the World Value Studies and European Value Studies in combination with basic statistical data including international comparative data on religious social capital. As they conclude, their findings "are ambivalent

with regard to the *association* between political trust and religious social capital. Religious social capital has an effect on indicators of political support... [and it] is clearly bridging and encourages tolerance towards other religious groups" (p. 89, italics in original). They also analyse implications for both political communities and Christian churches and conclude that further secularization has a greater chance in Europe than does revitalization of religion.

Gergely Rosta found similarly ambivalent results in analysing relationships between political values and religiosity as manifested in eight post-socialist countries through the European Values Studies (EVS 1990–2008). Apart from the statistical data, Knutsen's theory of the declining vs. constant impact of religiosity provides his analytical framework. Rosta notes that religion has lost its influence in the Central and Eastern European political field, thus supporting Knutsen's hypothesis of decreasing religious power. "Yet this decrease is characteristic not only of the countries where religiosity decreases, but also of those showing a religious upsurge since 1990, so it can hardly be interpreted as an obvious effect of secularization" (p. 106). Examining carefully and systematically the impact of religion on voting behavior, Susanne Pickel comes basically to the same conclusion. Although religion continues to influence the outcomes of elections, it has lost momentum and has begun a decline.

In his study on the religiosity of East Germany in comparison with other European societies, Gert Pickel takes into account the process of modernization, cultural and historical heritage and political conditions, i.e. repression, in the case of the former communist countries. They "either reinforced or contradicted each other in part" (p. 149). In this light, "East Germany is only exceptional in so far as it displays a *particularly unfavorable combination of conditions*, under which institutionalized as well as non-(institutionalized) individual religiosity has to try to prevail" (p. 150, italics in original).

A superficial look might give one an impression of the Romanian religious revival as the opposite of East Germany's strong secularization trend. Examining cohort replacement and contextual changes, however, Mălina Voicu and Andreea Constantin claim that "this religious revival is based on a combination between incomplete modernization and a higher reinforcement of nationalist ideas and ideology. Economic growth and continued modernization will transform Romanian society, eroding religion by secularization" (p. 168). They also predict that religiosity will increase until modernization wanes, but they add that declining nationalism must also be involved in that process.

Not so in Croatia, because the religious revival seems to be over there, as Krunoslav Nikodem's analysis of religion and family values demonstrates. The data taken from EVS (1999, 2008) indicates for him "that while family is very important for religion, religion is no longer as important for the family. [He considers] this fact to be more significant for a possible strengthening of secularization influences, than the marked loss of the social influence of the Church" (p. 192).

Marit Cremer's essay on the tense relationship between Sharia, the secular Russian constitution, and Adat, traditional Chechen law, also points toward the family in the final analysis. The presence and competition of the three legal systems result in conflicts and the disorientation of the Chechnyan people. "[C]onflicts divide clans and families. The consequence is the collapse of the family and with it the loss of its socially protective function which is of vital importance especially for women" (p. 211).

With the exception of Cremer's contribution, all of the studies presented in this book deal to a certain extent with the issue of secularization. The reader will no doubt get the impression that, according to the authors and in the long run, secularization will have the upper hand. Yet the authors practice caution in stating this conclusion bluntly and openly. Without exception,

they mention modifying circumstances, and they leave it to further researchers to evaluate the outcome. Given this underlying uncertainty, this book does not make for easy reading, but by the same token, it proves very interesting.