

**Diaconu, Luminița (dir.). *Orient et Occident.*
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The fifth volume of the collection *Mediaevalia* gathers most of the papers presented in 2013 at the Colloquium focused on Medieval Identity, organized by the Centre for Medieval Studies (University of Bucharest). *Orient et Occident. Construction des identités en Europe médiévale* consists of studies which bring to light several instances of the complex relations between East and West, from the Late Antiquity to the Late Middle Ages. Identities of individuals and nations alike emerge as results of the interaction between the complex political and social contexts of each epoch and cultural traditions.

Constructions of identities are followed by those of alterities. This topic is the starting point of Mihaela Voicu's *Introduction* to the volume, which surveys the evolution of the various definitions that East and West received, from the point of view of alterity, from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages.

The first article of the volume is Anca Manolescu's study, "Le philosophe évêque et l'évêque philosophe: Synésios de Cyrène et Augustin de Thagaste. Définitions de l'intellectuel dans l'Orient et dans l'Occident chrétiens." It compares the way in which Synesius of Cyrene and Augustine define themselves as "Christian intellectuals," through a similar built identity, based on which they have a comparable perception of both their role in the world and of their positions as bishops. When they have to assume the bishopric, "Augustine offers the model for the Western medieval intellectual" while "Synesius prefigures the Byzantine intellectual" (p. 25).

"The figure of Hermolaos: the Oriental Identity of an Occidental Demon?," written by Robert Mirică, casts light upon a seventh-century Satanic-Antichristic figure, Hermolaos/Armilos, described in an anti-Jewish treatise, *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*. Robert Mirică suggests as a possible source an earlier anti-Christian treatise, *Sefer Zerubbabelet*, where demon Armilos is "a kind of a twin-brother of Antichrist" (p. 37). Giving as further evidence the *Revelations of Pseudo-Methodius*, where Romulus, the founder of Rome, is identified with Armilos, the author states that seventh-century Christian authors "borrowed"

and “reinterpreted” characters from the Jewish tradition, (p. 41) willing to serve the needs of their religion.

In “Paul the Deacon and the Identity of the Lombards between Byzantium and the West,” Ecaterina Lung explores the emergence of Lombard “identity.” Paul the Deacon, in *Historia Langobardorum*, “uses a tripolar system,” (p. 51) in which the Lombards, inheritors of both Christian and Roman values, occupy the central place, in opposition with the rest of the barbarians and the ‘Romans.’ Even after 774, the Lombards preserved their “new identity, which ceased to be barbarian, without becoming Roman and which resisted the Carolingian conquest” (p. 63), and which became the seed of the medieval Italian identity.

Ana-Maria Răducan, in “The Biography of Saint Symeon the New Theologian Seen by Nikita Stethatos. Shaping an Identity,” draws back the way in which Niketas Stethatos, the disciple and biographer of Symeon the New Theologian, builds the identity of his spiritual father after his death. The written portrait of Symeon is shaped with the aim of promoting his sanctity. His characters reveal a tension between “the Byzantine theocratic power” and the monks (p. 74), whose representative Symeon is.

Cătălina Gîrbea, in “*Le dit du vrai anel* ou le paradoxe de l’altérité fraternelle,” discusses a thirteenth-century French text preserved in the ms Français 25566 (B.n.F.). Having a propagandistic agenda for Crusades, both the text and the illuminations describe the relations of the three monotheistic medieval religions. Christianity, the unique inheritor of the true faith, is opposed to Islam and Judaism; but the text alludes also to the spiritual superiority of Judaism over Islam and mirrors the rapports between “the Western Christian states and the Arab world, the Jews representing only a link, a bridge between these two universes of believes” (p. 86).

In “L’autre peut-il devenir mon prochain? Métamorphoses de la perception de l’Oriental par les chroniqueurs français (XIII^e-XIV^e siècles),” Mihaela Voicu explains the aim of the French chroniclers of the Fourth Crusade in depicting a certain image of the Greeks and the Saracens. The texts justify the crusade, showing at the same time that, neither the Greeks, nor the Saracens, can become companions of the Westerners.

Luminița Ciuchindel, in “Le Prêtre Jean à la lumière des chroniques et des relations de voyage occidentales (XIII^e-XV^e siècles),” presents the image of Priest John (Prêtre Jean), king either in India, China, or Ethiopia, in several chronicles and pilgrimage journals written from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. On the one hand, Marco Polo and Jean de Joinville reveal negative characters of him, while the travel journals present to the Westerners a mythical figure that they attempt to approach.

Luminița Diaconu, in “Les Pèlerins occidentaux face à l’altérité orientale: préjugés et vécus d’une rencontre vouée à l’échec (XIII^e-XIV^e siècles)” explores the portrait that three pilgrimage accounts from the thirteenth-fourteenth-century built for the Saracens. The rather negative image, which the Christian pilgrims report, is grounded in the dogmatic differences to the Muslims, which could not be overcome for several centuries.

In “Knocking at the Enemy’s Gate: a Gesture of Power of Bogdan III of Moldavia (1509),” Ovidiu Cristea analyzes the account of Grigore Ureche concerning Voivode Bogdan III’s expedition to Poland. During the campaign, the Moldavian Prince struck the gate of Lvov with his spear and took the bell from the church of Rohatyn. The chroniclers do not offer any justification for the first gesture, but Ovidiu Cristea finds it symbolic, and explains it as “a declaration of war which the lord addressed to the wall defenders and, through them, to the entire kingdom of Poland.” (p. 171)

In “L’étranger dans la société des Pays Roumains au Moyen Âge” Șarolta Solcan presents the large array of attitudes that foreigners encountered at their ingress in the three Romanian Principalities, as revealed in documents from sixteenth-seventeenth century. The attitude depended on the status of the foreigners, varying between hospitality and fear or hatred.

Anca-Irina Ionescu, in “Dimitrie Cantemir and Sofronie Vrachanski – The Beginning of the Modern Bulgarian Culture and Literature,” discusses the identity of Bishop Sophronie of Vrasta, as revealed by his extended work, *The Book of the Three Religions*. The article focuses on its third part, an adapted and annotated translation of almost the entire *Book of the system or the creation of the Mohammedan religion* (Dimitrie Cantemir), the first text in modern Bulgarian. The author explains the context of the emergence of this text and discusses the translation

techniques in relation to the public to which bishop Sophronie addressed.

The *Varia* section contains the article of Óscar Alfredo Ruiz Fernández, “Persia y la lucha europea por la supremacía mundial. Creación de identidades orientales a comienzos del siglo XVII.” The author focuses on the statute of Safavid Persia, found in the middle of complex diplomatic relations, between Spain, Portugal, England, and the Netherlands. The study reveals both the identity of this region and the way in which it was perceived by the other European maritime powers.

Like in all the colloquia that the Centre for Medieval Studies has organized, this volume sheds light on a variety of sources, from a broad time frame and a variety of places. It also reunites different approaches to the written testimonies, from philological analyses to anthropology, revealing that, in building Medieval identities, whether individual or communitarian, alterity has always played a crucial role.

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