



**Mediterranean Programme**  
**10th Mediterranean Research Meeting**

Florence & Montecatini Terme 25-28 March 2009



**Workshop 17**

***Religion, culture and territory in the Mediterranean space***

**directed by**

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***Workshop abstract***

Religions in the Mediterranean space are traditionally associated with a territory, a state and/or an ethnic group. In Spain and in the Balkans expansion and decline of empires led to displacements of religious groups (“moriscos” leaving for the Maghreb, Muslims from Balkans leaving for the Ottoman Empire). The XVII th century principle of “cujus regio ejus religio” led to a relative religious homogeneity of European societies. In pluri-religious societies around the Mediterranean sea, religious minorities used to be associated with minority ethnic groups; this minority might be genuinely ethnic (Turks in Greece, Greeks in turkey) or constructed as a quasi ethnic-group due to the administrative management of religious groups, even if they share cultural and linguistics patterns with their neighbours (Bosnian, Maronites). The Ottoman *millet* system has thus largely survived the demise of the Ottoman Empire (civil status is linked with religion in Greece, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt and Syria). In Greece and Turkey, religious minorities are still seen as “alien”. It took a long time in Europe to disentangle state and official religion, and the process is not really achieved in Spain, Italy, and Greece.

The consequence was a relatively stable religious map, with majority and minorities, and a clear distinction between Muslim, Christian and Jewish states. The recent wars in Balkans illustrated the fact that the process of territorialisation and ethnicization of religion is still at work.

Nevertheless there is a growing process of deterritorialization of religion in the Mediterranean space:

Migrations are slowly producing new religious communities, which do not fit with the traditional ethnic paradigm: many second generation Muslims in Europe refused to be seen as an ethnic Diaspora or minority group, but as a faith community. New Muslim migrants in Greece do not identify with the Muslim Turkish minority and want to be acknowledged as “Greek Muslims”.

Conversions are blurring the lines of traditional religious groups: there is an emergence of “Christian churches” among Arab population that don’t want to be identified with the traditional Arab Christian communities.

Secularisation is also shaking traditional association between state, society and religion.

The workshop will focus on the new religious alignments: conversions (and apostasy), new “churches” and faith communities, recasting of “alien” religions in new national frameworks, changes in state policy towards religions, convergence and divergence towards a common perception of the religious paradigm.