

Bucharest conference 2006

EASR President's Report

As President of the EASR I am very happy to welcome the Participants to the 6th EASR and IAHR Special Conference. I would also to express my personal and heartfelt thanks to the President and all the Colleagues of the Romanian Association for the History of Religions for their hard work and care in organising this important meeting in Bucharest, as a forum for discussion of the fundamental problems and methods of our discipline. On this occasion is my duty and pleasure to remember the valuable contribution made to the progress of historical religious research by Mircea Eliade. I am also proud to remember the amicable and scientific ties between the great Romanian Scholar and the Master of Italian religious historical studies, Raffaele Pettazoni. This relationship is a proof of the need and usefulness of the dialogue between scholars and different research methods for the development of our discipline.

The activity performed by the EASR during its few but fruitful years of life, from its foundation in the epoch-making year of 2000, is the clear demonstration of how true this is, and at the same time confirms the need for scholars working in our field of research to be aware of a constantly-open channel of communication, as an important means of verification for the results of their research. I would like to add that in our age, marked by dramatic economic, political and socio-cultural conflicts, whose protagonists so often try to relate these conflicts in one way or another to the complex web of their respective religious worlds, the research pursued by those who dedicate their intellectual energies specifically to these worlds, may make a fundamental contribution. Scientific study, historically founded on facts resulting from research, as objective as possible and respectful of all the phenomena studied may offer important insights into how to settle and overcome these conflicts. Beyond the bounds of the Academia and the restricted field of specialists, the finding of historico-religious

research may undoubtedly provide tools to help us achieve that knowledge of "others" cultures and religions, consequently learn to appreciate them and, in mutual respect, live together in peace and unity.

This in fact should perhaps be one of the objectives of our scientific community, which from the initial seed of its inspiring principles has sprouted and flourished. The Congress which has just ended, with its rich and authoritative variety of voices intervening in the debate on the "Religious History of Europe and Asia", showed effectively that this objective can be pursued and indeed achieved. For my part, I am happy to conclude by once more expressing my heartfelt thanks to the Romanian Association for the History of Religions which hosted this magnificent Congress and to the Secretary of the EASR, Kim Knott who, in the footsteps of our first indefatigable secretary, Tim Jensen, has worked with care to maintain the relationship between the representatives of the national Societies, collaborating in the realisation of this project.

Giulia Sfameni Gasparro