Religious Change in Pluralistic Contexts

The common experience among most if not all ethnic minority religions in the West is the transition from a communitarian system to a secular system with Christianity as the dominant faith, where religions have to function within the private sphere in the first place. In Europe, Judaism experienced this transition primarily in the 19th century, in the Emancipation when Jews were granted citizenship in the European nation-states. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and many other religious traditions of non-Western origin, including African and Arab Christianity, experienced and continue to experience this transformation as a result of their (ongoing) transplantation to Western societies.

The transformation from one system to another is accompanied by many forms of religious reinterpretation and change, many of which may be related directly or indirectly to regulations (laws, political measures, jurisprudence) imposed by the nation-states in order to integrate religious institutions into the normative patterns of the dominant societies. They are often sanctioned by religious authorities under the influence of the social and cultural environment of their respective societies. Two dimensions may be distinguished in this context: (1) the behavioural dimension — e.g. changes in the practice of religious rituals, feasts, dress, and dietary codes, and in the application of religiously based principles of family law; and (2) the cognitive dimension — e.g. reinterpretations of normative religious traditions and dogmatic thought under the influence of dominant social customs and of prevailing philosophies.

Scholars of religious studies from all over the world are invited to submit their proposals (of one page maximum) for the congress before 1 February 2003.

Please send your proposals to:
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