

SUDEUROPA

Quadrimestrale di civiltà e cultura europea

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Centro di documentazione europea
Istituto Superiore Europeo di Studi Politici
Rete dei CDE della Commissione europea

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DIRITTI, RELIGIONI E CULTURE

a cura di
Cattedra di Law and Religion,
Università SAPIENZA

In questo numero la Rubrica ospita due differenti contributi. Un primo saggio di Angela Bernardo è dedicato all'analisi della condizione giuridica delle comunità migranti copte in Europa, e presenta come obiettivo specifico quello di verificare l'influenza che la scelta di uno specifico paradigma di "integrazione" da parte degli Stati è in grado di rivestire sulle relazioni con le comunità migranti e sul modello di società sviluppato dalle politiche di gestione della diversità. A tal fine, peculiare attenzione viene riservata al concetto di "relazione" e al suo legame con i paradigmi di "integrazione" e "inclusione" in Europa (particolarmente in Italia e in Germania, con un *focus* specifico sui casi-studio delle comunità copte ive presenti).

Un secondo contributo di Odilia Daniele è, invece, volto a commentare una recente sentenza della Corte di Strasburgo, riguardante l'Italia, in tema di libertà religiosa e educazione della prole. Peculiare attenzione viene riservata, nell'economia del saggio, al concetto di "*best interest of the child*" come elemento prioritario di valutazione nella risoluzione dei casi di contrasto fra genitori appartenenti a fedi diverse relativamente all'educazione religiosa della prole.

Angela Bernardo è ricercatrice (RTD-B) in Storia delle religioni presso Sapienza Università di Roma. Ha conseguito una laurea in Scienze Politiche presso Sapienza Università di Roma, un dottorato di ricerca in Storia d'Europa ed è mediatrice civile professionista. Tra le sue pubblicazioni più recenti: *Reshaping Spaces, Reframing Identities. The House of One and the Minorities Communication in Germany*, in *Historia Religionum*, 11, 2019; *Communicating Religion in the Age of Emergency*, in A. Aghemo, R. Pace (eds.), *Mediterraneo. Tradizione, patrimonio, prospettive. Una proposta per l'innova-*

zione e lo sviluppo, Roma, 2019; *Ricostruire una comunità. La Chiesa copta ortodossa in Europa*, Roma, 2020; *Negotiating religion: The «National Pact for an Italian Islam» between agency, security claims, legitimization and recognition*, in *Civiltà e Religioni*, 7, 2021.

Odilia Daniele è Dottore di Ricerca in Diritto in diritto romano, teoria degli ordinamenti e diritto privato del mercato Sapienza Università di Roma (2015), oltre ad essere in possesso di Dottorato in Iure Canonico presso la Facoltà di Diritto canonico della *Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis* di Roma (2010). Attualmente esercita la professione forense ed è cultore della materia in “Diritto ecclesiastico” e “Diritto Canonico” presso la Facoltà di Giurisprudenza della Università di Palermo. Tra le sue pubblicazioni: *Il caso delle nuove comunità segreganti: i centri per l’immigrazione*, in A. Ingoglia, M. Ferrante (a cura di), *Fenomeni Migratori, diritti umani e libertà religiosa*, 2017; *Processi gestionali e organizzativi del sistema di accoglienza e integrazione*, in <http://www.altalex.com/documents/news/2018/04/11/master-in-welfare-migration> del 23/04/2018; *Simulazione del consenso matrimoniale nel diritto canonico e nel diritto civile*, Excerptum thesis ad Doctoratum in Iure canonico consequendum, Roma, 2021.


Integration as a relational matter: The Coptic Orthodox migrant communities in Europe in the framework of the EU-funded project NEGOTIA*

Angela Bernardo**

1. Theoretical framework.

1.1. Models of society, state policies, and the “integration” paradigm.

The relation between models of society, state policies, and the paradigm of “integration” is complex and multidirectional. Models of society and state policies exert a mutual influence on each other: policies are the expression of a specific idea of society, and, at the same time, they concur in shaping that idea. In the same way, a model of society can determine which paradigm of “integration” is considered desirable, and

*  This article is part of the activities of the EU-funded project «NEGOTIA – Negotiating Religion: Coptic Orthodox diaspora communities. Shifting identities, needs, and relations from Egypt to Europe and back» (<<https://www.negotia-project.eu/>>). This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 896918. It is hosted by Sapienza University of Rome and managed by Dr Angela Bernardo.

This article develops on the lecture «*Integration as a relational matter: The Coptic migrant communities in Europe in the framework of the EU-funded project NEGOTIA*», held by its author at the Institute for Coptic Studies (ICS) of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate on 3th June 2022, in Cairo, Egypt. I would like to thank Dr. Ishak Agban, Director of the ICS, for the organisation of my lecture and his kind hospitality, His Grace bishop Ermia, President of the Coptic Orthodox Cultural Center (COCC), for disseminating my lecture through the media of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, and Mrs. Irene Nashed for the translation of my lecture from English into Arabic and her support during my stay in Cairo. I would also like to thank my friend and colleague Dr Rinaldo Zucca for our fruitful discussions and his kind help in the revision of the English language, especially in developing some sentences of this article to clarify their content. Finally, I would like to point out that the quotations taken from the sources cited in this article were translated into English by its author and that the references in the notes are mainly in English for the international public. However, there are numerous non-English references that would deserve attention. Among them there are, for example, the publications of Alberto Camplani on religious disputes in Christian Egypt and of other Italian scholars who dealt with the concept of “community” from a psychological and pedagogical point of view. This article reflects only the author’s view. The Agency and the European Commission are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

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which state policies can enforce it; conversely, the paradigm of “integration” chosen in designing standards to manage diversity shapes the evolution of a society and its policies. Of course, the obligation to comply to a specific socio-cultural and political paradigm of “integration” depends on the model of society desired and, consequently, on the type of relations expected with and among the members of that society.

Defining “integration”, however, is challenging. Although “integration” is a key concept in the academic discourses on migration, there is no consensus on what this term should mean. The difficulty to distinguish between analysing what is happening in society (by observing processes, the contexts where they happen, and the actors they involve) and implicit assumptions about a normative “ought to be” (an end-goal not-defined through observational data) has been a major issue. For this reason, critics of the “integration” paradigm have increased both in theories and practices at least over the past twenty years. These critics have taken into account several factors and different levels of analysis. Particularly, “integration” has been considered as a multifaceted process occurring in several domains including various dimensions rather than as a single process, and the relations between these dimensions have been proven to be more diverse than analogous. The “inclusion” paradigm has progressively emerged as a new and more proactive approach¹.

The transition from an integration perspective to an inclusive perspective took place in education at first in the late XX and early XXI centuries. The inclusive education movement aimed to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students in general education settings, including those with disabilities and diverse backgrounds. Although the exact years of the shift from “integration” to “inclusion” depends on location and contexts, the passing of the 1975 «*Individuals with Disabilities*

¹ For the issues related to the academic and public debate on the definition of “integration” see: S. SPENCER, *The contested concept of ‘Integration’*, in P. Scholten (ed.), *Introduction to Migration Studies. An Interactive Guide to the Literatures on Migration and Diversity*, Cham-Heidelberg-New York-Dordrecht-London, 2022, pp. 670-709; S. SPENCER, K. CHARSELEY, *Conceptualising Integration: A Framework for Empirical Research, Taking Marriage Migration as a Case Study*, in “Comparative Migration Studies”, 2016, n. 4/18, pp. 1-19; S. SPENCER, K. CHARSELEY, *Reframing ‘Integration’: Acknowledging and Addressing Five Core Critiques*, in “Comparative Migration Studies”, 2021, n. 9/18, pp. 1-22; M. WIEVIORKA, *A Critique of Integration*, in “Identities. Global Studies in Culture and Power”, 2014, n. 21/6, 633-641; and L.M. KLARENBEK, *Relational Integration: A Response to Willem Schinkel*, in “Comparative Migration Studies”, 2019, n. 7/20, pp. 1-8. For a working definition of “integration” and “inclusion” cf. *Infra* sub-par. 4.1.

Education Act» (IDEA) in the United States, which aimed to ensure that students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, represented a turning point. After this year, the trend towards “inclusion” continued to gain traction globally and has become widely accepted as a best practice in education².

The shift from “integration” to “inclusion” paradigm in education has had some impact on migrant policies, as inclusive education promotes the equitable educational opportunities for all students, including migrants. The inclusive education movement recognises the importance of addressing the unique needs and cultural backgrounds of migrant students and incorporating these into the educational environment. As a result, some governments have changed their migrant policies and have started to adopt “integration” policies combining “inclusion” and “integration” paradigms. Nowadays, “integration”, in both meanings as paradigms and as policies, and “inclusion” are two topical terms in the public debate on the future of Europe.

As an example of how the choice of a specific paradigm of “integration” or “inclusion” affects the relations with migrant communities in Europe and the model of society put in practice by policies to manage diversity, this paper aims to provide an analysis of the Coptic Orthodox migrant communities in Europe, that will be examined through the theoretical and methodological framework of the European Union (EU)-funded project «*NEGOTIA – Negotiating Religion: Coptic Orthodox diaspora communities. Shifting identities, needs, and relations from Egypt to Europe and back*»³. Specific attention will be given to the concept of “relation” and its link to the paradigms of “integration” and “inclusion” in Europe. The concept of “relation” is one of the key aspects, with identity/-ies and

² For the analysis of the shift from an “integration” to an “inclusion” paradigm in education see M.A. WINZER, *From Integration to Inclusion: A History of Special Education in the 20th Century*, Washington, 2009, especially pp. 118-141 and 292-298, and the IDEA-Individuals with Disabilities Education Act on the website of the Department of Education of the United States (<<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>>).

³ This article is mainly based on the theoretical-methodological framework of the NEGOTIA project I outlined in the book A. BERNARDO, *Ricostruire una comunità. La Chiesa copta ortodossa in Europa*, Rome, 2020. This book embodies the most complete presentation of the NEGOTIA research approach and basic assumptions. I would also like mention the article A. Bernardo, *Religioni e spazio pubblico europeo. Una riflessione teorico-metodologica e di contesto a partire dal progetto Marie Curie NEGOTIA*, in “*Coscienza e Libertà*”, 2022, n. 63-64 (forthcoming), which includes a presentation of the NEGOTIA project and further theoretical-methodological remarks which complete those included in this article.

needs, of the approach of the NEGOTIA research. Particularly, I argue that “integration” and “inclusion” are both mainly a relational matter. To explain this theoretical assumption, I will focus my analysis on the two case studies of Copts in Italy and in Germany, and on the relations existing among the members of each community (intra-communal relations) and with other religious communities (inter-communal relations) and with the Italian and German states.

1.2. My research on the dynamics and rhetorical strategies of Copts in Europe before the NEGOTIA project.

Between 2017 and 2020, I managed a research on the Coptic migrant communities in Europe titled «*Reconstructing a community: the Coptic diaspora in Europe. Relations, dynamics, and rhetorical strategies*»⁴. This research focused on the literary production of modern Copts. It paid specific attention to the discourses and the rhetorical strategies adopted by the members of the Coptic communities abroad, particularly by the local and international leaders of such communities, and to their biographies.

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The main objectives of the research «*Reconstructing a community*» were: 1. to reconstruct the characteristics of the Coptic migrant communities in Europe during the three waves (1950-1970; 1970-1990, and 1990-onward), which have shaped the Egyptian migration in modern times; 2. to analyse the role of the Coptic migrant communities within the European public sphere through the analysis of the profiles (biographies or life stories) and activities (discourses, narratives, literary and/or scientific production) of the members of such communities, with specific regard to the activities of key figures of the Coptic communities and/or associations; and 3. to verify what basics the case study of the Coptic migrant communities in Europe can bring to the construction of a theoretical-practical framework of religious mediation.

The research «*Reconstructing a community*» was relevant to highlight the features of the profile of the Coptic communities abroad. On the basis of its development, I assumed that Coptic communities, and religious communities or communities in general, can be studied by taking into account three key aspects: their identity and the modes of its construc-

⁴ The research «*Reconstructing a community: the Coptic diaspora in Europe. Relations, dynamics, and rhetorical strategies*» was part of my activities during my collaboration with the 2015 ERC project «*PATHs - Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths: An Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature. Literary Texts in their Geographical Context: Production, Copying, Usage, Dissemination and Storage*», directed by Paola Buzi (<<http://paths.uniroma1.it/>>).

tion, de-construction and re-construction across time and space; the needs expressed by Copts in the countries of migration, and the relations established by the Coptic communities with the central and peripheral bodies of the states in which they migrated.

The basic assumption of my studies is that the Coptic Orthodox “diaspora” communities, specifically the ones immigrated in Europe, are not only an interesting case study for their biographies and the discourses they produce, but that they are also a paradigmatic model for the analysis of any religious community in the public space.

The formulation of this hypothesis was inspired by a number of meetings with the Coptic Orthodox community belonging to the Diocese of San Giorgio Megalomartire in Rome, which has become one of the main subjects of my fieldwork during the research «*Reconstructing a community*». The religious and lay members of this Diocese, in particular its youth groups, and its leader, His Grace bishop Barnaba el-Soryany⁵, gave me the opportunity to test my hypothesis on an experimental ground on their community. Methodologically, I used a multidisciplinary approach, which has become increasingly interdisciplinary and integrated by taking into consideration a variety of sources. Furthermore, a careful analysis of the state of the art of the scientific literature on modern Copts outside Egypt has shown that the Coptic Orthodox “diaspora” communities are a subject-object of study not yet adequately analysed.

Before focusing more specifically on the presentation of the NEGOTIA approach to the Coptic migrant communities in Europe, on “relations” and the link between this key aspect and the paradigms of “integration” and the derived “inclusion” policies, I would like to introduce some basic concepts⁶ at the centre of my research on the concept of “religious community”. This will help to better understand the theoretical and methodological framework I am using in my ongoing Marie Curie project.

1.3. Biographies, discourses, and narratives.

As a first approach, we can state that a narrative is something that is narrated and/or a fashion of presenting or comprehending a situation or series of events that reflects and endorses a particular viewpoint or set of ideals and values. A narrative tells a story, a fact or a fiction, and has a

⁵ I would like to publicly thank His Grace bishop Barnaba el-Soryany for his kind support to my research over the years.

⁶ Cf. *Supra* note 3.

structure and an orientation depending on several elements⁷. Generally, narratives are the result of combining multiple discourses produced by persons and groups, and are influenced by the worldviews, life stories, experiences, values, goals, etc. of such persons and groups – actually, by their biographies. A narrative is not neutral. At the same time, a biography is not only a literary genre. The concept of “biography” also includes the development of the lives of persons and groups. A group, a community, an association, an institution, private and public bodies have biographies too.

According to Max Boholm, although the term “discourse” is employed in various ways and different contexts, most of them can be systematically explained by a single definition and a fundamental structure. In dictionaries, “discourse” has been given both literal-material and psychological-figurative meanings. Often the communicative aspect of “discourse” is limited to verbal communication such as a talk, a speech, etc., which is as a pure linguistic account of something. However, “discourse” has undertaken many different theoretical definitions, including language in use, spoken language, language above the level of sentence or clause, etc⁸.

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In the framework of my analysis, I assume that a discourse is a multidimensional concept because it embodies different and intertwined meanings. Specifically, a discourse can be addressed as at least: 1. «Practices which systematically form the object of which we speak»⁹; 2. «A set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements, and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events»¹⁰; and 3. «A system of statements which constructs an

⁷ For some basic definitions of “narrative” see: *OLD-Oxford Learners Dictionaries* (<<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>>); *OED-Oxford English Dictionary Online* (<<https://www.oed.com/>>); and *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* online (<<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>>).

⁸ M. BOHOLM, *Towards a Semiotic Definition of Discourse and a Basis for a Typology of Discourses*, in “*Semiotica*”, 2016, n. 208, pp. 177-201, especially p. 181, and K.A. SHERBOBOEVNA, *The Concept of Discourse and its Definition*, in “*International Journal of Progressive Sciences and Technologies*”, 2020, n. 20/2, pp. 126-128. For a theoretical-methodological overview of discourse analysis see M. JØRGENSEN, L.J. PHILLIPS, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, London, 2002, especially p. 60 ff. and K. HYLAND, B. PALTRIDGE (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Discourse Analysis*, London, 2011.

⁹ M. FOUCAULT, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, New York, 1972, p. 49.

¹⁰ V. BURR, *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*, London, 1995, p. 48.

object»¹¹. These definitions describe “discourse/s” as something that “forms”, “produces”, and “constructs” objects and events. This notion of “discourse” has been implemented by Foucault who paid close attention to how power is generated in society. Specifically, he states «Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it»¹². In this case, the process is underlined. Another perspective on “discourse/s” places more emphasis on its generated or “resultative” nature. Hyland and Paltridge define “discourse/s” as «language produced as an act of communication»¹³. From this perspective, the concept of “discourse” is seen as the outcome of a communicative language activity or behaviour, without negating any productive characters. In this case, the object of this communicative action and behaviour is emphasised. It is to be noted that these two perspectives on “discourse/s” as a productive process and a produced object are not mutually exclusive¹⁴.

A third definition of “discourse” that we can take into account states that a discourse can be addressed as «a set of related representations, understood as tripartite relationships between a signifier, a signified element, and an interpretant, and the relationships between the representations at a basic level are continuity and similarity»¹⁵. This third definition includes all the previous definitions of “discourse/s”, and pays particular attention to the concept of “discourse” as it is theorised in *Semiotics*. Of course, practices, power, language, and their symbolic representations are interrelated. In discourses contributing to create narratives and in studying such narratives the process of creation, the object/s created and the actor/s or agent/s who create such object/s have to be analysed together.

1.4. Pluralism and religious pluralism.

“Pluralism” and “religious pluralism” are two more concepts deserving attention. The concept of “pluralism” is a multi-layered topic. Indeed, in discourses surrounding diversity, it has been approached by two distinct points of view: on the one hand, the attention is focused on the descrip-

¹¹ I. PARKER, *Discourse. Definitions and Contradictions*, in “Philosophical Psychology”, 1990, n. 3/2, pp. 189-204, especially p. 191.

¹² M. FOUCAULT, *The History of Sexuality*, Harmondsworth, 1990, p. 101.

¹³ K. HYLAND, B. Paltridge (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Companion*, cit., p. 335.

¹⁴ M. BOHOLM, *Towards a Semiotic Definition of Discourse*, cit., p. 183.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 196.

tive notion of “plurality”, on the other hand, the emphasis is put on the normative meaning of “pluralism”. Standing in this clear distinction, as it is stated in the 2015 «*Resource Book*» of the EU project ReligioWest, «in democratic and liberal societies, a normative commitment to pluralism means that we do not only observe that citizens disagree about many different issues, but also that we believe that such disagreement is not problematic in itself and that the state should not impose on all citizens one single view or way of doing things. (...) Pluralism is therefore the result of conditions of freedom, and it limits the authority of the state»¹⁶.

However, “religious pluralism” is something special, because it embodies three different levels of connotations: 1. «Religious pluralism refers to the coexistence of different religious traditions. (...) Disagreements focus on what the “true” religion is and on what contributes to define “the unalterable essence” of a belief» (inter-religious pluralism); 2. «Religious pluralism refers to the fact that particular religious traditions are themselves internally pluralistic. (...) Disagreements occur concerning the true interpretation of a particular text, event, ritual or traditional practice» (intra-religious pluralism); 3. «Religious pluralism refers to the coexistence of religious and non-religious individuals and worldviews. Religion, whether it is understood as living a religious life, having religious beliefs or having a religious conception of the good, is only “one option among others” (...)»¹⁷.

Furthermore, “religious pluralism” has at least four different meanings: in its first meaning, that is based on a theological ground, “pluralism assumes that other religious paths are true”; in its second meaning, that arises from a sociological perspective or, more generally, from a *Social Sciences and Humanities* perspective, pluralism assumes the sense of “religious plurality” or “diversity”; in its third meaning, pluralism represents “a philosophical school”, the so-called “value pluralism”, in which values are irreducibly plural; in its fourth sense, «pluralism refers to a political ideal of peaceful interaction between individuals and groups of

¹⁶ A. BARDON, M. BIRNBAUM, L. LEE, K. STOECKL, *Introduction. Pluralism and Plurality*, in A. BARDON, M. BIRNBAUM, L. LEE, K. STOECKL, O. ROY (eds.), *Religious Pluralism: A Resource Book*, San Domenico di Fiesole, 2015, pp. 1-9, especially p. 2.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

different faiths, as well as non-believers»¹⁸. In analysing Coptic migrant communities abroad, I firstly assume the concept of “pluralism” as diversity. Therefore, I am analysing these communities by using observation as a tool and applying the theories and methods of the *Religious Studies/ Sciences of Religion(s)* disciplines¹⁹ to collect data on (migrant) Copts. In the last phase of my research, I will move on to a normative approach to pluralism focused on the interaction between «individuals and groups of different faiths, as well as non-believers», and then I intend to explain to what extent a normative system can be built on data collected through observation.

These preliminary remarks are foundation to the analysis of Coptic migrant communities in the framework of the EU-funded project NEGOTIA.

¹⁸ É. ROUMÉAS, *What is Religious Pluralism?*, in A. BARDON, M. BIRNBAUM, L. LEE, K. STOECKL, O. ROY (eds.), *Religious Pluralism*, cit., pp. 11-17, especially p. 11. For a broader overview of the meanings of the concept of “pluralism” and further considerations on its different, often overlapping, uses see: T. BANCHOFF, *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism*, Oxford, 2007; J.A. BECKFORD, *Social Theory and Religion*, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 73 ff.; Idem, *Re-Thinking Religious Pluralism*, in G. GIORDAN, E. PACE (eds.), *Religious Pluralism. Framing Religious Diversity in the Contemporary World*, Cham-Heidelberg-New York-Dordrecht-London, 2014, pp. 15-29; J.V. SPICKARD, *Diversity Versus Pluralism? Notes from the American Experience*, in G. GIORDAN, E. PACE (eds.), *Religious Pluralism*, cit., pp. 133-144; and S. Vertovec, *More Multi, Less Culturalism: The Anthropology of Cultural Complexity and the New Politics of Pluralism*, in “Revista d’Etnologia de Catalunya”, 1999, n. 15, pp. 8-21.

¹⁹ *Religious Studies* and *Sciences of Religion(s)* are names that cover disciplines with different theoretical and methodological approaches depending on various elements. Although this is not the place to address these differences, it is worth noting that all these disciplines have “religion/s” as their object of study. For an overview on the history of the academic study of religion and the names attributed to its related disciplines see: G. ALLES, *Study of Religion: An Overview*, in L. JONES (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. VI, Farmington Hills, 20052, pp. 8760-8767; J.C. Ruff, *Study of Religion: The Academic Study of Religion in North America*, in L. JONES (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, cit., pp. 8784-8789; and G. ALLES (ED.), *Religious Studies. A Global View*, London-New York, 2008.

2. The approach of the NEGOTIA project to the study of the concept of “religious community” in the light of the case of the Coptic Orthodox migrant communities in Europe.

The starting point of this research rests on the three following subjects:

1. *The Copts*. Over the last century, the Orthodox Copts, that are the anti-Chalcedonian Egyptian Christians²⁰, were affected by a significant migration process, which began in the 1950s and 1960s. Various social, political, economic and religious reasons led the Copts to emigrate from Egypt to other countries. Together with the Arabic-speaking countries, the main destinations of Coptic migration were Canada, the United States, and Australia. Later, Europe also became a stable migration country. The settlement abroad was a gradual process, its timing and characteristics were closely linked to the trend of migratory flows. Initially, those who migrated did it alone, and they faced alone the difficulties of the beginning. As more Copts arrived in the countries where the first migrants had settled, more or less organised groups were formed. At this point, the first communities were born in Great Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, and Italy. As stated, to date these communities have not yet been adequately studied for at least two reasons: firstly, they are relatively new communities in the European public space, and, secondly, they are often invisible in such space because of their assimilation with other Christian communities due to their Christian origins, and their relatively low consistency²¹.

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²⁰ For an overview on the history and the characteristics of the Coptic Orthodox Church see, among others: G. GABRA (ed.), *Coptic Civilization: Two Thousand Years of Christianity in Egypt*, Cairo, 2014; O.F.A. MEINARDUS, *Christians in Egypt: Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Communities. Past and Present*, Cairo, 2006; O.F.A. MEINARDUS, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity*, Cairo, 2010; M. TADROS, *Copts at the Crossroad. The Challenges of Building Inclusive Democracy in Egypt*, Cairo, 2013; N. VAN DOORN-HARDER (eds.), *Copts in Context. Negotiating Identity, Tradition, and Modernity*, Columbia, 2017; and N. VAN DOORN-HARDER, K. VOGT (eds.), *Between Desert and City: The Coptic Orthodox Church Today*, Oslo, 1997.

²¹ Although it is difficult to have reliable estimates of the numerical consistency of the Copts both in Egypt and abroad, it is possible to attest that the numerical consistency of the Copts is around 10% of the Egyptian population – i.e., about 10 million people. The Coptic Orthodox Church in Germany reports that Copts in Germany are about 12,000. On the contrary, the Coptic Orthodox Church in Italy estimates that Copts in Italy are around 70,000. These numbers are reportedly the official data held by the Embassy of Egypt in Italy. Cf. CAPMAS-Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (<<https://www.capmas.gov.eg/HomePage.aspx>>), Koptisch-Orthodoxes Kloster der Hl. Jungfrau Maria und des Hl. Mauritius in Höxter-Brenkhausen (<<https://koptisches-kloster-brenkhausen.de/>>), and Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2022*.

2. *The concept of community and its constitutive elements.* The concept of “community” has assumed a leading role for the disciplines which deal with cultural and religious diversity in contemporary societies. The contemporary study of religions has raised questions of a definitional and methodological nature. In this context, the analysis of the concept of “community” and its essential features was of a fundamental importance. Over the centuries, this concept has been theorised in various ways. Some scholars have examined it in relation to the concept of “society”. Others have used the term “community” to highlight the differences between local and global communities. Others have focused on the emotional and relational aspects linked to the sense of belonging to a community²². Although the concept of “community” has long been studied from perspectives of a predominantly sociological, anthropological and psychological domain, it has also been widely employed in other research fields. In this context, the Coptic Orthodox communities which were established in the countries of immigration represent an interesting case study. In analysing the formation of the first Coptic groups abroad, their development into a community, and their organisation among a church, it is possible to understand how a religious community is born and develops. For example, in all the cases I analysed in my book on the Coptic Church in Europe²³, I noticed recurrent patterns with some characterising elements such as the request for priests who resided in the cities where the communities were formed and grew and the search for places of worship (of their own).

3. *The biographies and discourses* produced by Coptic Orthodox communities in Egypt and in the immigration countries. The profile of the Coptic Orthodox communities can be analysed in the light of the concept of “community” just outlined. More specifically, three key aspects must

22 For an overview of the analysis of the concept of “community” over time and in the various disciplinary fields that dealt with it, see: B. ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities. The Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London-New York, 2006 (or. ed. 1983); F. TÖNNIES, *Community and Civil Society*, Cambridge, 2001 (or. ed. 1887); M. WEBER, *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 2 voll., Berkley, 2013 (or. ed. 1922); T. PARSONS, *The social system*, London, 1951; T. PARSONS, *The position of identity in the general theory of action*, in C. GORDON, K.J. GERGEN (eds.), *The self in social interaction*, New York-London-Sydney-Toronto, 1968, pp. 11-24; S.B. SARASON, *The psychological sense of community. Prospects for a community psychology*, San Francisco-Washington-London, 1974; D.W. McMILLAN, D.M. CHAVIS, *Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory*, in “Journal of Community Psychology”, 1986, n. 14, pp. 6-23.

²³ Cf. *Supra* note 3.

be taken into account: the identity, which for Orthodox Copts rests on a common historical-geographical, cultural and religious origin and on the idea of a shared “tradition”; the needs that have arisen from Copts in the immigration countries, among which there is the need to access to religious services and to have a place of worship of their own or, more generally, a need of “recognition”, and the relations created by Copts abroad, both with other religious communities and with the central and peripheral bodies of the states in which the Coptic migrant communities settled. These three key aspects have been variously articulated on the basis of the individual and collective biographies which characterised the birth and the development of Coptic communities abroad, but also of the discourses, broadly understood, which have marked the public representation of such communities. Biographies and discourses are the tools through which identities, needs, and relations are built. For this reason, their analysis is the basis of my research on Coptic communities.

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The NEGOTIA project is based on the assumptions I set out. It aims at exploring the possibility of producing new models of analysis and interpretation of reality, which are focused on the study of religions in contemporary societies. It analyses the Coptic Orthodox “diaspora” communities in Europe with specific regard to the three key aspects indicated above: identities, needs, and relations. The first goal of my research is to examine the origins and the history of these communities, their cultural heritage and the peculiarities of their religion, but above all the dynamics of deconstruction and reconstitution of the material, emotional, and relational dimensions they experience in the pathways from their homeland to abroad and back. Its final goal is to define the concept and research field of “religious mediation”, which is the normative outcome I described previously by focusing on “pluralism”²⁴. This is achieved through an integrated, methodological approach to Copts, who are a peculiar case study to conceptualise this topic, which has never been systematically studied before.

At the core of the NEGOTIA project is the Church of San Giorgio Megalomartire, established in Rome as an independent Diocese in 1996. This community includes, among others: members with a migratory background; youth groups at least partially born in the “diaspora”; community religious and lay agents. It was a result of the 1960s migratory processes from Egypt and its profile is strongly characterised by continuous

²⁴ Cf. *Supra* sub-par. 1.4.

exchanges with its homeland. Therefore, this Diocese has been analysed in close connection to Copts in Egypt. Particular attention is paid to the Coptic Orthodox Cultural Center, established in Cairo in 2008 «to preserve the rich Coptic heritage as an important epoch in Egyptian history and Christian tradition worldwide», which exemplifies one of the most interesting, contemporary Coptic community centres in Egypt as a hub of sharing culture and values. Through a transnational comparative perspective, the data arising from the analysis of the Roman Diocese will be merged with the data collected by studying the Coptic Church of St. Petrus, der letzte Märtyrer in Hamburg, which is the last focus of my research. This Church, which was founded in the 1970s, is one of the member churches of the North German Communities, which is one of the two Coptic Dioceses in Germany.

At the same time, in the last months I have also started to study the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Milan in order to provide a full picture of Copts in Italy²⁵.

It is worth noting that the NEGOTIA project is the development of the research «*Reconstructing a community*». It added some elements to this research: 1. a transnational comparative perspective on the Copts in Egypt; 2. a more specific intra-European comparative perspective on the Copts in Germany; 3. the opportunity to conduct an in-depth analysis on the material, emotional and relational world of Coptic (migrant) communities; and 4. the opportunity to focus more on the concept of “religious mediation”.

Starting from the observations I made above, I would like to concentrate now on the concept of “community”, which is the main outcome of my ongoing studies. For the purposes of the NEGOTIA project as for the research «*Reconstructing a community*», the concept of “community” is taken in a broad sense. The term “community” indicates a local and global community, a group of individuals linked by historical, geographical, cultural, social and religious ties (beliefs and practices), but also a

²⁵ Recently, I also received a grant to develop a research linked to the theoretical assumptions and methodological approach of the NEGOTIA project. This new two-year project is funded by Sapienza University of Rome under the SEED PNR (National Research Program 2021-2027) call and named «*DoCoR - Donne copte ortodosse in Italia: identità, memorie e rappresentazioni di una componente religiosa e di genere*» [Eng. «*Coptic Women - Coptic Orthodox Women in Italy. Identities, Memories, and Representations of a Religious and Gender Group*»] (protocol n. SP12218484942869). The research of the DoCoR project is focused on the study the Coptic Orthodox women in Italy, belonging both to the Coptic Orthodox Dioceses of Rome and the Coptic Orthodox Dioceses of Milan.

group of people bond by a common sense of belonging or “sense of community” and motivated by the existence of one or more shared purposes, which may or may not be formalised through a legal obligation. Specifically, a community is a more articulated and complex subject than the simple sum of its parts, which however, similarly to each of its parts, can be analysed on the basis of three key aspects: the identity recognised and represented by its members at every level of community life and action; the needs manifested by its members individually and collectively, and the relations that a community and its members develop, horizontally, within the same community and with other communities, and, vertically, with the state. Since the different articulation of these three key aspects marks the development of the biographical and discursive profile of each community and the processes of which the latter is subject-object, the concept of “community” shapes as a dynamic concept.

The Coptic communities of the so-called “diaspora” fit perfectly into this framework. They constitute local communities, as they live in areas that roughly coincide with the countries in which they established themselves following the migration path. At the same time, these communities identify themselves in a larger, universal and global community, of which the local communities feel as a part, both from the theological point of view and because of the contacts they have established, also thanks, among others, to new communication tools. Despite the specificity of the different geographical contexts in which they live, these communities are linked by a shared history, heritage and cultural references, which are constantly recalled in their discourses. For these communities, the religious bond or the sharing of a creed, practices and a common symbolic apparatus as well as the sense of belonging to the same spiritual community and the purposes connected to this belonging remain distinctive elements. Both the communities abroad and those in Egypt feel this bond. Nonetheless, these communities are characterised by specific identities, needs and relations, which are continually recalibrated on the basis of the socio-cultural contexts where they live and which is reinforced by continuous exchanges with the country they recognise as their common land of origin. As key aspects, identities, needs and relations variously outline the biographical and discursive profile of these communities and the processes which involve them. The Coptic Orthodox communities established in the countries of immigration offer a clear example of how these three key aspects are intertwined.

3. Identity, needs, and relations of Coptic Orthodox migrant communities in Europe.

I would like to give you the main features of each of these three aspects in order to clarify how they are commonly framed in Coptic public discourse/s and narrative/s²⁶.

1. *Coptic identity*. The Coptic identity is based on a double criterion of truth and shows some recurring topics. The double criterion of truth or self-definition concerns the direct descent of the Copts from the indigenous population of Egypt of the Pharaonic era (*ethnic criterion*) and the foundation of the Coptic Church by St. Mark (*religious criterion*). There is no official presentation that does not highlight these two criteria, which combine to build the public narrative of the Copts and their Church by underlining the authenticity of its origins. The discourses of the Coptic activists abroad and the reconstruction of Coptic history made by the local churches in the immigration countries contain numerous examples of the use of these two criteria. The recurring topics in the Coptic discourse/s relating to identity are manifold. Among them, some topics stand out: the role that “tradition” has in the Coptic Church and the role that Coptic monasticism has had for the history of Christianity. The “tradition” is linked to the idea of the Christian and Egyptian “roots”, and therefore to the ethnic-religious principle that arises from the double criterion of truth outlined above. For the Coptic Church this principle constitutes its exclusive characteristic. Within the framework created by these criteria and topics, the younger generations are a crucial element. They contribute to preserve and transmit the Coptic identity and, consequently, to the survival of the Church itself.

2. *Needs of Copts in the countries of immigration*. Among the needs arisen from Copts in the immigration countries as pertains the religious sphere, there are the need for religious services and the possibility of having their own place of worship. These needs are interrelated and, at least in the phase immediately following Copts arriving abroad, they cannot be classified according to an order of priority. The acquisition of a place of worship, in which to recognise themselves, appears as a need that manifests itself in the medium-long term, when the community has already reached

²⁶ Since the three key aspects at the centre of my research are presented in my last book on the Coptic Orthodox Church in Europe and will be detailed in upcoming publications expressly focused on their interrelation, I will not present you in this article an in-depth analysis of identity, needs, and relations. Particularly, a second book on the Coptic Orthodox Church in Europe is under elaboration.

a certain consistency and stability. This need is intertwined with a series of issues relating to the problem of the visibility that contemporary religious communities have in the public sphere, but also to the constraints that this sphere poses. For example, the so-called “Intese”²⁷ in Italy have a controversial nature and causes a number of problematic issues.

3. *Coptic relations in the countries of immigration.* The relations which characterise the Coptic Orthodox communities in the immigration countries are various and cannot be traced back to a single case. This variability depends above all on the institutional framework of the states where the Copts who emigrated from Egypt live and work. Specifically, these relations depend on the history, model of society and policies of the immigration countries. The history, the model of society and the policies of the immigration countries are counterbalanced by the history and socio-cultural system from which Coptic migrants come. In Europe, the variability of the institutional paradigms of the European countries produces a patchwork. Each state has its own peculiarities and a series of socio-cultural norms, which create more or less binding conditions. The Coptic Church has itself its own peculiarities and a series of socio-cultural binding norms. Among them there is the preservation of a compact cultural and religious identity, which constitutes the tool that the Coptic Church chose to use as a “survival” strategy, regardless of the living context of its members.

In this framework, the role of the Coptic churches in the countries of migration is particularly relevant. Indeed, the Coptic churches established in the immigration countries are places where Coptic identities, needs, and relations are continuously re-negotiated and where a tension between preserving a monolithic self-representation of “being a Copt” and adapting this self-representation to new circumstances and processes occurs. This focus on the functions of the Coptic churches abroad will also highlight the role as “integration facilitators” of these churches since they contribute to manage the changes, both of Coptic adults who experienced the migration path and of the young Copts born and raised outside Egypt. Moreover, this focus will help to better understand the topics I presented in this article and the issues related to them.

²⁷ For the international audience we can briefly say that an “Intesa” (“agreement”) is the legal tool adopted by the Italian state to manage the non-Catholic religious communities. However, it has a controversial nature and causes a number of problematic issues, on which I will get back soon by focusing my analysis on the paradigms of “integration” and “inclusion”. Cf. *Infra* sub-par. 4.2.

According to Ghada Botros, the functions performed by Coptic churches abroad are three. The “migrant” churches have the role of “helping” immigrant Copts, of “consoling” the members of the community, especially of the first generation, and of “competing” for their own future and that of their own members, in particular of the young. Each of these functions is carried out in a series of activities, the extent of which is directly dependent on the size of the church and on the organisational and economic resources of the community that supports it. The “helping” function consists of supporting migrants. Indeed, churches offer both, initial reception services, at the arrival phase, and various forms of support during the integration process. The first case is an issue of responding to basic needs including being able to have a place to stay in the new situation. The second case involves providing assistance in finding, for example, a home or a job. This assistance also represents a form of investment for community development: «As Copts become successful as professionals and in business, they provide the funds to build new churches and community centers»²⁸. The function of “helping,” “consoling,” and “competing”, which Ghada Botros borrowed from the analysis of the Coptic churches established in North America, can also be traced in other “migrant” churches. Similarly, it is possible to verify that the role of privileged interlocutors attributed to the new generations represents one of the constants characterising the activity both of the Church in Egypt and of the churches abroad.

In West Germany, for example, even before the reunification of 1990, Coptic churches performed the function of socio-economic “help” in favour of their members. On the occasion of a discussion table, organised thanks to the support of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), with other Orthodox churches and leaders of the German government, Father Sourial, the founder of the first Coptic churches in the country, negotiated a work permit for the Copts who did not have one²⁹.

In Italy, the Diocese of San Giorgio in Rome fulfils all the aforementioned functions, mainly “helping” and “consoling.” Furthermore,

²⁸ G. BOTROS, *Coptic Migrant Churches. Transnationalism and the Negotiating of different Roles*, in N. van Doorn-Harder (ed.), *Copts in Context*, cit., pp. 107-123, especially p. 112 and N. VAN DOORN-HARDER, *Introduction*, in N. VAN DOORN-HARDER (eds.), *Copts in Context*, cit., pp. 1-17, especially p. 15.

²⁹ K. BOUTROS, *Die Geschichte der koptisch-orthodoxen Kirche in Deutschland nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg*, Ägyptologisches Institut/Philosophische Fakultät der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität-Heidelberg, Heidelberg 2007 (MA-Master Thesis), pp. 59-60.

young people are at the centre of its activities and talks. The church of San Giorgio Megalomartire, the heart of the Roman Diocese, represents a fundamental meeting place for those first-generation immigrants who have been away from their country for years. At the same time, it is a place where even younger generations, perhaps born or raised in Italy, can find themselves and recognise the church as their “home”. Participation in the liturgy and in the celebrations is a moment of encounter that restores the memory of the years in Egypt to “adults”, and gives the younger generations, who did not experience them, the idea of what these years in Egypt were like, creating a memory for the future. The organisation of the events planned by the Diocese offers young people the opportunity to strengthen the feeling of belonging to the community and to feel as the protagonists of a unifying project and, at the same time, to reinforce the relations among Copts around the world. This is the case of the “European Youth Conference”, a meeting of young European Copts held every year in a different city in Europe. In 2019, this meeting took place in Rome and was hosted by the Diocese of San Giorgio, giving me the opportunity to participate as an external observer. The young people of the Roman Diocese had a leading role in this event: they were the beneficiaries, but also the main “actors” of the activities carried out. This “feeling at the centre” confirms the new generations in their key role within their community and gives them a new key role as “bridges” among different Coptic communities and between the Coptic communities and societies at large.

4. Integration and inclusion as a relational matter.

In this paragraph, I will focus on the paradigms of “integration” and “inclusion” and on the “integration” policies they inspire as a relational matter in the light of the Italian and German cases. I will also analyse the issues related to the institutional model of “relations” designed to approach religious communities in Italy and in Germany with a specific attention to the Coptic communities.

4.1. Integration and inclusion.

As “religious pluralism”, or “pluralism” in general, “integration” is a multi-layered topic, that is variously addressed according to the field in which it is analysed. For this reason, it is possible to speak about social integration, economic integration, political integration, geographical integration, etc., but also of cultural and/or religious integration. As pre-

viously said, “integration” as a paradigm is particularly used to identify the process related to the mitigation of differences in the educational system. Indeed, in the educational system, the words “integrated” or “included” are frequently used to designate the classroom environment the students experience, and, sometimes, these terms are used interchangeably, referring to children being “integrated into a regular classroom” and “included into a regular classroom”. However, although there is some confusion between “integration” as a policy and “inclusion” and “integration” as paradigms³⁰, “integration” and “inclusion” have distinctive meanings and implications both in the educational system and in other fields in which they are applied.

“Integration” paradigms assume that there is something “other” that has to be adjusted to fit into a specific system. Supports and adaptations are implemented to compel people or groups into an existing socio-cultural, political, economic, linguistic, educational setting. People and/or groups must adjust to these adaptations to succeed; otherwise, they fail. Conversely, paradigms of “inclusion” hold that, despite the fact that all individuals are different, they may all be included into a socio-cultural, political, economic, linguistic, and educational system. Nothing needs to be “fixed” to make those individuals or groups to fit into a specific system. Thus, in “integration” paradigms, people and groups simply interact with the system and accept it for what it is. In paradigms of “inclusion”, the system as a whole is empowered to change to meet the individual needs of all people and groups who are taking part in it. For these reasons, “inclusion” has been described as a more comprehensive and proactive approach that goes beyond simply bringing different groups together and involves creating a welcoming and supportive environment where all individuals are valued, respected, and have equal opportunities to participate and succeed. On the other hand, “integration” has been depicted more strictly as the process of bringing groups or individuals into a larger system or society and often focuses on assim-

³⁰ On the relations between paradigms and policies of “integration” see R. PENNINX, B. GARCÉS-MASCAREÑAS, *The Concept of Integration as an Analytical Tool and as a Policy Concept*, in B. GARCÉS-MASCAREÑAS, R. PENNINX (eds.), *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe. Contexts, Levels and Actors*, Cham-Heidelberg-New York-Dordrecht-London, 2016, pp. 11-29.

ilating and blending different groups into a mainstream culture³¹. The word “integration” is also applied to the policies aimed at managing the relations among different social actors. These policies change in relation to the model of society that inspire them moving from one paradigm to the other. This causes an identification between the “integration” policies and the paradigm that inspire them³². This identification and the wording ambiguity generate some confusion between policies and paradigms and some overlap in the use of the words “integration” and “inclusion”. The following case studies, that I have analysed in my research, exemplify the relations between policies and paradigms in two European countries.

4.2. Italy and Germany as case studies.

In Italy, the relations between the state and religious communities are regulated differently, according to whether they concern the Catholic Church or the so-called “religious confessions other than Catholicism”. Art. 7, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Constitution of the Italian Republic declares that «The State and the Catholic Church are independent and sovereign, each within its own sphere» and «Their relations are governed by the Lateran Pacts». These Pacts, signed between the Holy See and the Italian state in February 1929, were modified by the Villa Madama Agree-

³¹ For an analysis of the differences between “integration” and “inclusion” see I. HARRINGTON, N. KASTIRKE, L. HOLTBRINK (eds.), *Inklusion in Deutschland und Australien*, Wiesbaden, 2016. For an overview of the different paradigms of “integration” (assimilation, multicultural, and intercultural paradigm) in Europe and their related issues see: C. BERTOSI, *National Models of Integration in Europe*, in “American Behavioral Scientist”, 2011, n. 55/12, pp. 1561-1580; J.R. KUNST, D.L. SAM, “It’s on Time That They Assimilate”. *Differential Acculturation Expectations Towards First and Second Generation Immigrants*, in “International Journal of Intercultural Relations”, 2014, n. 39, pp. 188-195; S. VERTOVEC, S. WESSENDORF (eds.), *The Multiculturalism Backlash: European Discourses, Policies and Practices*, London-New York, 2010; M. NASAR, T. MODOOD, R. ZAPATA-BARRERO (eds.), *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism. Debating the Dividing Lines*, Edinburgh, 2016; and L.H. ABDOU, A. GEDDES, *Managing Superdiversity? Examining the Intercultural Policy Turn in Europe*, in “Policy & Politics”, 2017, n. 45/4, pp. 493-510.

³² For example, an analysis of the official documents of the European Union and its related bodies between 2005 and 2021 showed a shift from policies more oriented to an “integration” paradigm to policies more oriented to an “inclusion” paradigm. On this shift see comparatively: Commission of the European Communities, *A Common Agenda for Integration. Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union*, Brussels, 2005 and European Commission, *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027*, Brussels, 2005.

ment of 1984. They are accompanied by non-concordat agreements and local agreements, which regulate specific matters such as the teaching of religion in non-state schools and the management of cultural heritage at the regional level. Art. 8 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic affirms the equal freedom of all religious “confessions” before the law and provides that «Religious confessions other than Catholicism have the right to organise themselves in accordance with their own statutes, to the extent that these are not in conflict with the Italian legal system. Their relations with the State shall be regulated by law on the basis of agreements with their respective representatives». The principle on which the recognition process is based is, therefore, a differentiating “integration” paradigm that marks a profound line of demarcation between a religious majority (consequently taken as a reference model) and communities that do not fall within such majority and that, for this reason, are in fact perceived as minorities. The “Intese” are configured as bilateral agreements between the Italian state and non-Catholic religious communities. They can be stipulated exclusively with religious communities that have obtained the recognition or the so-called “legal personality”, which is the capacity to have legal rights and duties within a certain legal system, pursuant to law no. 1159 of June 24, 1929. The power to initiate negotiations for the stipulation of an “Intesa” rests on the Government, having heard the prior opinion of the General Directorate for Religious Affairs of the Italian Ministry of the Interior. Relations with non-Catholic communities without a formally ratified “Intesa” continue to be governed by law no. 1159 on the so-called “admitted cults” of 1929. In this framework, it is possible to affirm that in Italy satisfying the needs of non-Catholic, or rather minority, religious communities is not an easy process³³. The path to obtain recognition appears long, often difficult to understand by the communities aspiring to obtain such recognition, and not always easy to manage for the actors involved in this field. This path depends on several variables, which substantially affect the achievement of the objective connected to it. Indeed, the legal framework, the political autonomy of the central and peripheral bodies

³³ For an overview of law and jurisprudence about religions in Italy see, among others: R. MAZZOLA, *Church and State in Italy*, in G. ROBBERS (ed.), *State and Church in the European Union*, Baden-Baden, 20193, pp. 265-279 and M.L. LO GIACCO, *The Meaning of ‘Religion’ in the Italian Constitutional Court Jurisprudence*, “Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale”, 2017, n. 39, pp. 91-102. Cf. also *Constitution of the Italian Republic* (<https://en.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/camera_eng/file/Costituzione_EN_9_marzo_2022.pdf>).

of the state, and the strategy chosen by religious communities are conditioning elements.

On the other hand, this recognition is a necessary condition to have access to the redistribution of the so-called “otto per mille” (Eng. «eight per thousand»), a system by which tax payers are required by law to devolve a compulsory 8‰ from their annual income tax return, collected by the state, to the Catholic Church, to one of the other recognised religious communities or to a state-run social-assistance project³⁴.

In Italy, the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Milan and the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Rome have close relations with the central and peripheral bodies of the Italian state. Belonging to the Christian world and the idea of a widespread brotherhood with the Catholic Church help these dioceses to maintain friendly relations at the state level. The leaders of the Italian institutions, in particular the local administrators, are guests of the two dioceses for celebrations in the occasion of holidays or special events. This is the case of the liturgy for the celebration of the Christmas eve and Coptic Easter in Rome. This was the case of the first annual commemoration of the premature death of Anba Kyrolos, first papal vicar for Europe and former metropolitan, held on 8th November 2018 at the church of Saint Mary and Saint Antony in Cinisello Balsamo, in the province of Milan, but also of the 2021 travelling photographic exhibition «*La Chiesa copta ortodossa. Una storia, una presenza*» (Eng. «*The Coptic Church. A story, a presence*») organised by the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Milan with the support of the Service for Ecumenism and Dialogue of the Catholic Diocese of Milan and of the Region of Lombardy, that also hosted the exhibition in its main building³⁵. This being the case, nothing would seem to stand in the way of the signing of an “Intesa” between the Coptic Orthodox dioceses in Italy and the Italian state. However, neither of the two dioceses has yet stipulated an “Intesa”. Of these two dioceses, only the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Rome, that, in the official statistics of the Ministry of the Interior, is referred to as the “Coptic-Orthodox Diocese of

³⁴ D. DURISOTTO, *Financing of Churches in Italy*, in “Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale”, November 2009, pp. 1-12.

³⁵ Cf. the press releases about the commemoration of Anba Kyrolos on the website of the OASIS Foundation (<<https://www.oasiscenter.eu/it/ricordando-anba-kirolos-a-un-anno-dalla-scomparsa>>) and about the exhibition on the Coptic Orthodox Church on the website of the Catholic Diocese of Milan (<https://www.chiesadimilano.it/servizioperleucumenismoedialogo/news_per_home/la-chiesa-copta-una-storia-e-una-presenza-2-4059.html>).

St. George,” is currently a cult institution with legal personality³⁶. Unlike in Italy, in Germany there is no institutionalised leading religious community. Among the different paths of the so-called “State-Church/-es systems of relations” in Europe³⁷, however, Germany places in a middle position between different paradigms. The Basic Law (*GG-Grundgesetz*) establishes a structure that maintains the separation between the state and the Church/-es and that, at the same time, allows a certain level of cooperation between these two bodies, which is constitutionally protected to respond to the needs of the people in a cooperative manner. Therefore, neutrality, tolerance, and equity serve as the cornerstones of the legal foundation of the German State-Church/-es system of relations. In Germany, many of the smaller religious communities as well as those with sizable numbers have the legal status of “public law corporations”. This category includes various religious organisations on the basis of distinctive arrangements. Religious communities with this status are not incorporated into the state like other “public law corporations”. Even though these religious communities are public bodies, they maintain their independence, and the state consider this legal standard as the basis for the “inclusion” of religious communities in public life. Furthermore, only a small number of particular rights are linked to this status. In order to be granted the status of “public law corporation”, every religious community must be able to prove of being a permanent community, through its bylaws and the number of its members, and must apply for recognition in each federal state by following its specific law³⁸.

To the religious communities recognised as “public law corporations”, a system called “*Kirchensteuer*” (“tax for the Church”) or “*Kultussteuer*” (“tax for the cult”) applies. The “*Kirchensteuer*” is the system by which religions are financed in Germany. It is a tax that religious communities collect from their members to finance their expenses.

³⁶ Ufficio Centrale di Statistica (ed.), *Annuario delle Statistiche Ufficiali del Ministero dell’Interno*, Ministero dell’Interno, Rome, 2021 (<http://ucs.interno.gov.it/ucs/contenuti/Annuario_delle_statistiche_ufficiali_del_ministero_dell_interno_edizione_2021-13988980.htm>).

³⁷ For an overview of the systems of relations between states and Church/-es in Europe see, among others, G. ROBBERS, *State and Church in the European Union*, in G. Robbers (ed.), *State and Church in the European Union*, cit., pp. 677-688.

³⁸ For an overview of the law about religions in Germany see G. ROBBERS, *State and Church in Germany*, in G. ROBBERS (ed.), *State and Church in the European Union*, cit., pp. 109-124. Cf. also *Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (<<http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/index.html>>).

Unlike other European states, Germany's religious communities are funded by their members without any mediation by the Federal Government. In collecting this tax, indeed, the state acts only as a guarantor of the process: its intervention is strictly instrumental because it facilitates the collection of the tax imposed on those (and only on those) who declare to be members of a specific religious community, but this guarantee role held by the German state does not involve the distribution of state money. According to article 140 of the German Basic Law, which refers to the rules set out in articles 136-139 and 141, concerning «*Religions and Religious Societies*» included in the German Constitution, the so-called "Weimar Constitution" of August 11, 1919, religious communities with the status of public bodies have the right to impose taxes. By paying the tax, their members obtain the right to be enrolled in the list of those who profess the religious faith and receive religious services such as baptisms, confirmations, marriages, last rites, and funerals. Failure to pay results in cancellation from the list and the right to access to religious services³⁹.

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In Germany, although the Coptic Orthodox Dioceses of Northern German Communities and of Southern German Communities preserve their full legal autonomy with respect to the state, they are not yet recognised as "public law corporations"⁴⁰. Regarding this recognition, Anba Damian, the bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Northern German Communities, stated: «We would be happy if the Coptic Church would receive this recognition after all these years and all the activities» it has performed in Germany⁴¹.

Therefore, the agency of Copts in Germany aims at creating consensus around their communities and at developing close and friendly relations with the representatives of the German state both at the federal and local level. There are numerous examples of state agents participating in events such as the celebrations of liturgies and inaugurations of places of worship, especially monasteries, organised by the Coptic Church in

³⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 120-121 and G. CZERMAK, *Kirchensteuerrecht in kritischer Sicht. Hauptgesichtspunkte einer ideologisch heiklen Materie*, in "Kritische Justiz" 2006, 4, pp. 418-429.

⁴⁰ Cf. the list of the religious communities recognised as "public law corporations" on the website of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (<<https://www.personenstandsrecht.de/Webs/PERS/DE/informationen/religionsgemeinschaften/religionsgemeinschaften-node.html>>).

⁴¹ B. LASSIWE, *Seit 25 Jahren: Ein Stück Ägypten in Norddeutschland*, in "Meine Kirchen Zeitung" (<https://www.meine-kirchenzeitung.de/c-eine-welt/seit-25-jahren-einstueck-aegypten-in-norddeutschland_a5069>).

Germany. Furthermore, some of these events find prominence on the institutional communication channels of the German State.

On 28th May 2015, for example, the German Minister for Federal Interior and Community, Thomas de Maizière, visited the Coptic Orthodox monastery in Höxter-Brenkhausen, in North Rhine-Westphalia. This visit was reported on the official website of the Federal Ministry of Interior and Community with a press release that presented the Coptic Church in Germany as a valuable interlocutor for the state. Specifically, this press release celebrated the involvement of the Coptic Orthodox Church, together with other religious communities, in looking after refugees as an “important contribution” offered by Copts “to civic culture in Germany”⁴².

4.3. Comparison and concluding remarks.

The comparison between these two case studies shows a patchwork of differences and similarities.

On the conceptual level, the differences are noticeable. The Italian normative system is openly asymmetric making a constitutional difference between the majority religion and minority religious communities. Moreover, it requires a leadership (and therefore a hierarchical organisation) from the religious communities which seek recognition. The German normative system does not make an official distinction between a mainstream religion and minority communities and poses no requirements on the internal organisation of the communities to be recognised. Nevertheless, despite its more “inclusive” paradigm, it produces similar deadlocks as in the Italian case. In fact, the Coptic Orthodox communities await recognition (and therefore financial support) in both countries.

At the level of institutional “relations”, the agency of the Copts in both countries is very similar: both communities have friendly relations with the representatives of the Italian and German state in spite of a very different normative framework. In Italy, the Copts are perceived as a minority, they are not considered problematic because of the Christian “faith” but they are still a minority that must constantly negotiate their rights in a framework where the Catholic Church has a position of primacy. In Germany, even if they are a religion like any other in a frame-

⁴² Cf. the press release about this visit on the website of the German Federal Ministry of Interior and Community (<<https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/kurzmeldungen/DE/2015/05/bundesinnenminister-trifft-koptisch-orthodoxen-bischof-anba-damian.html>>).

work with variable levels of inclusiveness, they also have to struggle for recognition.

Although the Italian and German normative frameworks are inspired by different paradigms, one more aimed towards “integration” and the other more towards “inclusion”, the system of relations with the social actors in the public sphere have led to “integration” policies of religious communities that show more similarities than differences (at least from a practical point of view). It is important to find mechanisms for composition of diversity that make the recognition of religious communities in Europe substantial, and not merely legislative. Finding a way in which institutional relations can be concretely translated into practicable relations is an open issue to which the tool of “religious mediation” could be profitably applied.

Abstract

The relation between models of society, state policies, and the paradigm of “integration” is complex and multidirectional since these elements exert a mutual influence on each other. A model of society can determine which paradigm of “integration” is desirable, and which state policies can enforce it; and conversely, a specific paradigm of “integration” shapes the evolution of a society and its policies. As an example of how the choice of a specific paradigm of “integration” affects the relations with migrant communities in Europe and the model of society developed by policies to manage diversity, this paper aims to provide an analysis of the Coptic Orthodox migrant communities in Europe, that will be examined through the theoretical and methodological framework of the European Union (EU)-funded project «*NEGOTIA - Negotiating Religion: Coptic Orthodox diaspora communities. Shifting identities, needs, and relations from Egypt to Europe and back*». Specific attention will be given to the concept of “relation” and its link to the paradigms of “integration” and “inclusion” in Europe. The concept of “relation” is one of the key aspects, with identity/-ies and needs, of the approach of the NEGOTIA research. Particularly, I argue that “integration” and “inclusion” are both mainly a relational matter. To explain this theoretical assumption, I will focus my analysis on the two case studies of Copts in Italy and in Germany, and on the relations existing among the members of each community (intra-communal relations) and with other religious communities (inter-communal relations), and with the Italian and German states.

Keywords: The concept of “religious community”, Identities, needs, and relations, Coptic Orthodox migrant communities, Integration and inclusion, Religious mediation.

Abstract

Il rapporto tra modelli di società, politiche statali e il paradigma di “integrazione” è complesso e multidirezionale poiché tali elementi si influenzano reciprocamente. Un modello di società può determinare quale paradigma di “integrazione” sia desiderabile e quali politiche statali possano attuarlo; viceversa, uno specifico paradigma di “integrazione” indirizza l’evoluzione della società e delle sue politiche. Quale esempio di

come la scelta di uno specifico paradigma di “integrazione” influenzi le relazioni con le comunità migranti in Europa e il modello di società prodotto dalle politiche di gestione della diversità, questo articolo si propone di fornire un’analisi delle comunità copte ortodosse immigrate in Europa, che saranno esaminate attraverso il quadro teorico-metodologico del progetto europeo «*NEGOTIA - Negotiating Religion: Coptic Orthodox diaspora communities. Shifting identities, needs, and relations from Egypt to Europe and back*». Particolare attenzione sarà data al concetto di “relazione” e al suo legame con i paradigmi di “integrazione” e “inclusione” in Europa. Il concetto di “relazione” è uno degli aspetti chiave, insieme a quelli di “identità” e “bisogni”, al centro dell’approccio della ricerca NEGOTIA. In particolare, ritengo che “integrazione” e “inclusione” rappresentino entrambi principalmente una questione relazionale. Per spiegare questo presupposto teorico, focalizzerò la mia analisi su due casi di studio rappresentati dai copti in Italia e da quelli in Germania e sulle relazioni esistenti tra i membri di ciascuna comunità (relazioni intracomunitarie) e con altre comunità religiose (relazioni intercomunitarie) e con gli Stati italiano e tedesco.

Parole chiave: Il concetto di “comunità religiosa”, Identità, bisogni e relazioni, Comunità copte ortodosse migranti, Integrazione e inclusione, Mediazione religiosa.

L'Istituto Superiore Europeo di Studi Politici, ISESP, costituito a Reggio Calabria nel 1971, ha lo scopo di promuovere e diffondere la cultura politica con specifico riguardo alla zona meridionale e alla regione calabrese e nella prospettiva dell'integrazione europea.

Una delle attività dell'Istituto è la gestione del "Centro di documentazione europea", CDE, depositario ufficiale degli atti e delle pubblicazioni istituzionali dell'Unione europea, di cui questa rivista è emanazione.

SUDEUROPA, dunque, fa parte delle pubblicazioni della rete dei CDE della Commissione Europea e viene realizzata anche con la collaborazione scientifica dell'Università Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria, dell'Università di Padova, dell'Università Bocconi di Milano, dell'Università LUISS di Roma e dell'Università La Sapienza di Roma.

Questo fascicolo

Il secondo fascicolo del 2022 si presenta denso di tematiche. La Rubrica "Diritti umani, oggi" presenta una dimensione poco analizzata nella riflessione sull'ambiente, quella religiosa mentre per "Economie, politiche e società" ad essere discussa è la genitorialità nel momento in cui è lo stesso concetto che chiede nuove qualificazioni o conferme non solo sul fronte pedagogico. La Rubrica "Lo scacchiere del Mediterraneo nel Medio Oriente" ritorna col format delle tre domane su... destinate a Brexit, Mediterraneo e conflitto russo-ucraino.

La Rubrica "Diritto, religioni e culture"

presenta due saggi, uno sull'integrazione della comunità copta, l'altro un commento ad una recente sentenza della Corte di Strasburgo su libertà religiosa e educazione della prole.

Anche la Rubrica "Normativa e prassi internazionale" presenta due contributi: il primo il testo, con commento introduttivo, della risoluzione dell'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite sull'aggressione dell'Ukraina; il secondo sulla platform economy.

Chiude il fascicolo un saggio nella corrente Law and Humanities che discute due opere della scrittrice argentina Belén López Peiró.

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