

## ABSTRACTS

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**Giuliana Chamedes and Elizabeth A. Foster**, Introduction: Decolonization and Religion in the French Empire

Scholarly attention to decolonization in the French Empire and beyond has largely focused on the political transitions from colonies to nation-states. This introduction, and the essays in this special issue, present new ways of looking at decolonization by examining how religious communities and institutions imagined and experienced the end of French Empire. This approach adds valuable perspectives obscured by historiographical emphasis on French republican secularism and on the workings of the colonial state. Bringing together histories of religion and decolonization sheds new light on the late colonial period and the early successor states of the French empire. It also points to the importance of international institutions and transnational religious communities in the transitions at the end of empire.

*Keywords:* decolonization, France, French empire, late colonialism, religion, transnational

**Pascal Bourdeaux**, Regards sur l'autonomisation religieuse dans le processus d'indépendance du Vietnam au milieu du vingtième siècle [In French]

Indochina played a pioneering role during the decolonization of the French empire, and the religious issue proved important to the process. Even to this day, state-church relations bear signs of this contentious and painful past. The historiography of the Indochina War, as well as that of the Vietnam War, clearly call attention to the activism of religious leaders and religious communities, especially Buddhists and Catholics, who fought for independence, peace, and the needs and rights of the Third World. And religion was put to the service of shaping public opinion both in Vietnam and internationally. Naturally, ideological convictions during the era of decolonialization account for the dominance of political analysis of this subject. But with the passage of time we can now develop a more sociological understanding of people's religious motivations and practices and the role they played in the conflict



between communism and nationalism. The historian can also re-examine the secularization process in decolonized societies by analyzing, on the one hand, the supposed loss of ascendancy of religions in society and, on the other hand, the appearance of new religious movements that tended to adapt to modernity. This essay explores these politico-religious dynamics in the context of the decolonization of Vietnam.

*Keywords:* Indochina War, nation-state, religious institutionalization, secularisation, Vietnam

**Charlotte Walker-Said**, *Science and Charity: Rival Catholic Visions for Humanitarian Practice at the End of Empire*

This paper explores the conflict between local expressions of Christian charity and new theories of scientific humanitarianism in the final years of French rule in Africa. Compassionate phenomena inspired by Catholic social organizing had transformed everyday life throughout French Cameroon's cities and villages in the interwar and postwar years, and yet, in 1950, poverty, crime, poor public health, and social tensions remained prevalent. Seeking a more deeply transformative approach to social rehabilitation, ecclesiastical leaders in the Catholic Church in Europe and French foreign missionary societies in Africa partnered with international medical and scientific organizations to invigorate charity with technical expertise. Revised ethics and practices departed sharply from preexisting models of collective social action, as European leaders lacked confidence in the intentions as well as the outcomes of African-led religious organizing. European humanitarian approaches conceived after World War II demanded a new focus on particular African subjects, namely the child and the family, which alienated indigenous Christian principals, who, along with large and diverse African Christian communities, had previously determined the direction of Catholic social action on the continent.

*Keywords:* Africa, Cameroon, charity, children, Christianity

**Giuliana Chamedes**, *The Catholic Origins of Economic Development after World War II*

The conceptual history of 'economic development' is often told as a US-centered story. The United States, according to the standard account, turned to economic development as a tool in its struggle for global dominance during the Cold War. In line with recent research, this article demonstrates that the post-World War II boom in economic development had European origins as well, and that it originated as a joint response to the Cold War and to the unraveling of European empires. In particular, emphasis is placed on the little-studied contribution of a French Catholic activist who helped redefine economic development in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Dominican Father

Louis-Joseph Lebret stood at the head of an influential movement, which conceived of economic development as a way to save both France and Christianity in a moment of crisis for the French empire and for the Roman Catholic Church. In his writings, Lebret bestowed renewed legitimacy on the French 'civilizing mission.' He also revived elements of interwar Catholic thought to argue for the imperative of building a new moral-economic order that was neither communist nor capitalist. Far from a marginal historical actor, this theorist-practitioner was successful in his efforts, and gained followers for his vision of economic development in France, in Vatican City, at the United Nations, and in various former colonized countries.

*Keywords:* anti-Americanism, Catholicism, civilizing mission, decolonization, economic development, United Nations, Vatican, Vichy

**Naomi Davidson**, "Brothers from South of the Mediterranean": Decolonizing the Jewish "Family" during the Algerian War

Almost all of Algeria's estimated 140,000 Jews had immigrated to France by the end of the Algerian War in 1962, many of them to the Paris region. Their arrival was a source of ambivalent hope for metropolitan Jewish religious and community leaders. This article demonstrates that the period of decolonization was one in which metropolitan Jewish leaders tried to simultaneously celebrate and efface Algerian Jewish difference. This struggle took place in local religious sites, where French and Algerian Jews were accustomed to a variety of liturgies, melodies, and behaviors. The tensions that erupted when Algerian Jews asserted their right to religious particularism should be read as evidence of the paradoxes of decolonization. While a near-century of colonial citizenship had made many Algerian Jews "French," decolonization and migration to the metropole made them Arab in the eyes of many metropolitan Jews.

*Keywords:* Algerian War, community institutions, decolonization, Judaism, migration,

**Darcie Fontaine**, After the Exodus: Catholics and the Formation of Postcolonial Identity in Algeria

As French officials negotiated the terms of Algerian independence with the Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria (GPRA) in 1961–62, among the issues discussed was the future of the Christian population. After colonial occupation and armed struggle, in which the defense of "Christian civilization" in Algeria had been a major ideological justification for French violence against the Algerian population, the future of Christianity in post-colonial Algeria was not self-evident. This article examines how European Catholics negotiated their position in post-independence Algeria. I demonstrate that Catholic attempts to "become Algerian" and decolonize the Church were intertwined with global religious politics, economic necessities,

and colonial history. Yet their continued presence in Algeria demonstrates that the standard narratives of postcolonial rupture between the European and Algerian populations do not hold up, for, in the early years of post-independence Algeria, European Catholics played an active role in the construction of the postcolonial nation.

*Keywords:* Algeria, Catholic, Christian, pied-noir, postcolonial