THE IMPORTANCE, CLASSIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE BASIC CONCEPTS ADDRESSED BY MIRCEA ELIADE IN HIS STUDIES ON THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

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Abstract

Religion, which is first and foremost a state of belief and faith, in other words, a phenomenon unique to humanity, is the subject of research in the history of religions as well as many other disciplines within the scope of religious sciences. The discipline of history of religions not only fulfills an important function today because it comparatively analyzes the phenomenon of religion, religious issues, and the manifestations of the sacred in different religions, but also evolves in a unique line of thinking and understanding like other social sciences. Mircea Eliade is the most important philosopher and historian of religions who grew up in the 20th century in the field of History of Religions, progressed in the line of Rudolf Otto and made his main contribution to this discipline in the hermeneutic sense. Throughout his life, Eliade did not use the basic concepts he used in his work in the field of history of religions in a purely literal sense, but rather he gave these concepts more ontological, semantic, and meaningful significance as he approached them from a broader perspective. Eliade, who frequently uses concepts such as the *sacred, profane, homo religiosus, symbol, initiation, image, myth, hierophany, mana, taboo, archetype* in his studies and works, emphasizes the reality of these concepts and their importance for both primitive and modern societies and reveals their historical manifestations. In this study, the importance, classification and description of the basic concepts Eliade deals with in his works and their positions in the history of religions are tried to be explained from Eliade's perspective by processing them in depth with all their realities.

Keywords: Religion, History of Religions, Sacred, Hierophany, Mircea Eliade

INTRODUCTİON

Among the religious sciences, the History of Religions fulfills an important function today since it examines the phenomenon of religion, religious events and the manifestations of the sacred in different religions as a comparison.[1] Although the discipline of the history of religions, which began to be formed with the idea that ethnological, folkloric, anthropological and religious data obtained from all over the world should be translated into Western languages and that these data should be investigated in a scientific line, has a history of a century and a half, it is seen that the discipline is still in an effort to find a unique perspective due to its complex structure resulting from the synthesis of an abstract term such as the phenomenon of religion with a parametric entity such as human beings.[2] The history of religions, like other social sciences, is on its way to progress in its own special line of thinking and understanding. However, the question of which direction and path this special line of thinking and understanding will ultimately be obliged to take has always

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[1] Mustafa Alıcı, "The Path to the Sacred: A Methodological Approach in the History of Religions or Phenomenology of Religion as a Science", Journal of Academic Research in Religious Studies, Vol: 5, Issue: 2, (2005), p.73.

[2] Ramazan Adıbelli, **Mircea Eliade and Religion**, Istanbul, Dün Bugün Yarın Publications, 2021, p.15..

been the main issue that has always attracted the attention of both the discipline of the history of religions in general and the scholars who study within the scope of this discipline.[3]

Like many other disciplines within the scope of religious sciences, the subject of research in the history of religions is the religion itself, which is a phenomenon specific to humanity, in other words, a human reality.[4] Stating that religious experiences in different periods and places and religious phenomena that emerge in different cultural contexts are not clear enough to be the subject of research, Eliade emphasizes the concept of the sacred as the main constructive factor in the characteristics of such experiences and phenomena.[5] Mircea Eliade is a historian of religions who, in addition to loudly voicing the invalidity of reductionist approaches, accepts as a basic criterion the principle that religion should be approached sympathetically and that religious phenomena should be understood as they are, not as we want them to be. Eliade, who is considered as one of the leading historians of religions of our time, has contributed to the transformation of the discipline of the history of religions into an independent discipline with a unique goal and a unique method, while on the other hand, he has endeavored to realize it as a spiritual discipline that will transform the spiritual aspect of human beings.[6]

One of the most original contributions of the 20th century historian of religions, Eliade, to the discipline of the history of religions is that he attributed the function of creative hermeneutics to this discipline. Eliade's idea of creative hermeneutics is the difference that distinguishes this discipline from other disciplinary fields. Thanks to this perspective, the knowledge of the sacred will not only be limited to the cognitive domain, but will also permeate the existential dimension.[7]

Eliade is also aware that concepts such as History of Religions (histoire des religions) or Comparative History of Religions are seriously ambiguous. In fact, since these terms were widely used in Eliade's time, he felt obliged to use them.[8] It is seen that the concept of History of Religions is used in three different meanings in the scientific and academic literature;

1- History of Religions in the narrow sense: It is the study of each religion in its historical context by following a chronological order.

2- History of Religions in the broad sense: A discipline that blends historical and phenomenological research, including both the narrow history of religions and the phenomenology of religion.

3- History of Religions in its broadest sense: This term, used as a synonym for the German term "*Religionswissenschaft*", is a discipline that encompasses not only the historical study of religions but also the comparative study of religions, the morphology of religion and the phenomenology of religion.[9]

Eliade, who uses the term history of religions in the broadest sense in his studies and works, whether by the term history of religions he means the historical manifestations of any religion or the specific structures of religious life, essentially means by this term the study of religious truths

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[3] Burhanettin Tatar, "The Problem of Historical Consciousness in Mircea Eliade", Milel ve Nihal, Volume: 1, Issue: 1, (2003), pp.9-10.

[4] Ünver Günay and Harun Güngör, **Religious History of Turks from the Beginning to the Present**, Istanbul, Rağbet Publications, 2007, p.25.

[5] Adıbelli, **Mircea Eliade and Religion**, p.66.

[6] Adıbelli, **Mircea Eliade and Religion**, p.16.

[7] Adıbelli, **Mircea Eliade and Religion**, p.16.

[8] Mircea Eliade, "Crisis and Renewal in History of Religions", History of Religions, The University of Chicago Press, Vol: 5, No: 1, 1965, p.1.

[9] Arvind Sharma, "An Inquiry into the Nature of the Distinction Between the History of Religion and the Phenomenology of Religion", *Numen*, Vol: 22, No: 2, 1975, p.81.

in their entirety and their revelation in all their reality.[10] In this context, examining the entire religious experience of human beings in all its historical manifestations is one of the primary topics that the discipline of the history of religions deals with.[11]

In his studies and works on the history of religions, Eliade frequently uses concepts such as *sacred, profane, homo religiosus, symbol, initiation, image, myth, hierophany, mana, taboo, archetype*. However, almost all of these concepts are described in relation to or in connection with the concept of the sacred.[12] In this study, the importance of the history of religions from the perspective of Eliade, the methodological methods he used in his studies in the history of religions, and the importance and classification of the basic concepts he dealt with in his works were tried to be revealed from a scientific point of view.

1. CLASSİFİCATİON OF RELİGİONS

Religion is first and foremost a state of belief and faith. Because of this characteristic of belief and faith, it is also necessary to believe that there is no error or deviation in religious dogmas. In this context, religious beliefs are distinctly different from other beliefs. Essentially, this phenomenon of religion and belief begins with the realization that man is inadequate and powerless as a result of the events he experiences, and that he believes in a creator/sacred being superior to himself, and finally ends with his submission and surrender to the sacred being. In this context, religion is a way of life that emerges in human life as a result of the bond between human beings and the Creator.[13]

Many religions with different characteristics have existed in the world from past to present and will continue to exist in the future. Scientists, theologians, religious scholars, philosophers and historians of religion have made a classification of religion by taking into account the differences in religions. In general terms, these classifications have two characteristics: one is the classification made by the religions themselves, and the other varies according to the parameters taken as a basis by the person making the classification.[14] Taking into account the nature, characteristics and social structures of religions, a classification of religions can be made as follows;

Table 1: Classification of Religions[15]

Classification of Religions	
Religions with God	Religions without God
Monotheistic Religions	Polytheistic Religions
Religions of Revelation	Religions of Culture
Religions with Prophets	Religions without Prophets
Religions with Scriptures	Religions without Scriptures
Universal Religions	Local Religions

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[10] Eliade, "Crisis and Renewal in History of Religions", p.1.

[11] Paul O. Ingram, "Method in the History of Religions", *Theology Today*, Vol: 32, No: 4, 1976, p.383.

[12] Bryan S. Rennie, **Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion**, New York, 1996, p.17.

[13] Zeki Arslantürk and Tayfun Amman, **Sociology Concepts - Institutions - Processes - Theories**, Istanbul, Çamlıca Publications, 2017, p.327.

[14] İsmail Taşpınar, **History of Religions and Symbolism,** Istanbul, Marmara University Faculty of Theology Foundation Publications, 2017, pp.35-38.

[15] Zeki Arslantürk, **Introduction to Sociology of Religion**, Istanbul, Çamlıca Publications, 2015, p.49.

True Religion	Superstitious Religion
Established Religions	Fictional Religions

2. MİRCEA ELİADE'S LİFE, THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF THE HİSTORY OF RELİGİONS

2.1. THE LİFE OF MİRCEA ELİADE

Mircea Eliade was born on March 9, 1907 in Bucharest, Romania, the middle child of Jeana and Gheorghe.[16] In the following years, with the outbreak of the First World War, Eliade, who was only nine years old in 1916, witnessed the invasion of his country by the Germans.[17] Eliade, who loved research and reading from an early age, not only learned to read with his own effort and talent, but also took a particular interest in natural sciences. He was particularly interested in chemistry and entomology. Even the fact that he built himself a small laboratory to study plants, animals and insects is one of the biggest proofs of his intense interest in this field.[18] Eliade's lifelong love of philosophy, literature, oriental studies and the history of religions began when he was still in high school. Eliade, who published his first article "*How I Discovered the Philosopher's Stone*" when he was only fourteen years old, started to write articles about oriental studies and alchemy in magazines and newspapers such as *Ziarul Stiintelor Populare, Orizontul, Foaia Tinerimii, Lumea, Universul Literar, Adevarul Literar*.[19] A prolific scholar, Eliade published his one hundredth article in 1925, even before he started at the University of Bucharest. Eliade studied philosophy at the University of Bucharest with the support of his teacher Nae Ionescu, during which time he continued his studies in the history of religions and began to learn English, Italian, Hebrew, Romanian, French and Persian. Graduating in 1928 with a thesis on Renaissance philosophers, Eliade traveled to India on a scholarship granted by the Maharajah of Kassimbazar to study Indian culture and Sanskrit.[20] During his 5-year stay here, he had the opportunity to get to know Indian culture and philosophy closely and he also acquired a good command of Sanskrit. In 1933, with his doctoral thesis on Indian mysticism, "Yoga: An Essay on the Origins of Indian Mysticism", he began working as an assistant to his philosophy teacher at the University of Bucharest, where he continued to give lectures, seminars, conferences and symposia on topics such as Indian philosophy, history of religions and Aristotle's Metaphysics.[21]

Eliade, who led a turbulent political life in Romania due to his writings and the groups he belonged to, was first appointed as the Romanian cultural attaché to London in 1940 and then as the Romanian cultural advisor to Lisbon a year later.[22] After the surrender of his country at the end of the Second World War, his teacher's connections with the right-wing, and the death of his wife Nina Mares in 1944, Eliade began to live a life of deep sorrow and misery, and in 1945, upon an offer from France, he traveled to Paris to teach yoga classes.[23] During his stay here, he wrote his

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[16] Ramazan Adıbelli, "Mircea Eliade and Studies on the History of Religions in Turkey", History of Religions in Turkey: Its Past, Present and Future", Symposium Proceedings, December 04-06, 2009, Ankara, Turkish History of Religions Association Publications, 2010, p.91.

[17] Fatma Büşra Yılmaztürk, Mircea Eliade's Understanding of the Sacred, Ankara University Institute of Social Sciences, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2003, p.11.

[18] Yılmaztürk, Mircea Eliade's Understanding of the Sacred, p.11.

[19] Adıbelli, "Mircea Eliade and the History of Religions Studies in Turkey", pp.91-92.

[20] Yılmaztürk, Mircea Eliade's Understanding of the Sacred, pp.11-12.

[21] Rabia Dağlı, Mircea Eliade as a Historian of Religions: His Life, Works, Contributions to the History of Religions, Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Social Sciences, Unpublished Master's Thesis, İzmir, 2004, pp.1-9.

[22] Joseph M. Kitagawa, "Eliade", Encyclopedia of Religions, Encyclopedia of Religions (ER), Macmillans Co., C: 5, New York, 1986, p.85.

[23] Access Date: 29.12.2022; http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/eliade.htm.

works in French and had them published.[24] He left France, where he lived as a political refugee for ten years, for the United States in 1956 with an offer from the University of Chicago on the initiative of Joachim Wach. Eliade, who taught history of religions at the same university, was appointed as the chair of History of Religions in 1958 after Joachim Wach's death and continued to give seminars and conferences in countries such as Mexico and Argentina. Eliade, whose works were translated into English during his time in America, has now become a competent scholar whose works are read enthusiastically and who has made a name for himself in the field of History of Religions.[25] Eliade, who has always been in close contact with non-governmental organizations and organizations both in the countries he lived in before and in the United States, has been an active member of the American Society for the Study of Religion (ASSR), published the journal History of Religions in 1961, and finally edited The Encyclopedia of Religion in 1973. Eliade, who passed away in Chicago on April 23, 1986, having contributed a great number of works to the field of Social Sciences and especially to the literature on the History of Religions, his most important works are as follows: *Cosmologie si Alchimie Babilonia (Babylonian Alchemy and Cosmology-1937), Cosmos and History: The Myth of Eternal Return (1954), Patterns in Comparative Religion (Introduction to the History of Religions-1958), The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion (Sacred and Profane-1959), Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism (Images and Symbols-1961), Myth and Reality (Properties of Myths-1963), Shamanism: Archaic techniques of Ecstasy (Shamanism-1964), The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion (The Meaning and Social Function of Religion-1969), A History of Religious Ideas, 1: From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries (History of Religious Beliefs and Ideas 1-1974), A History of Religious Ideas, 2: From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity (History of Religious Beliefs and Ideas 2-1982), The History of Religious Ideas, 3: From Muhammad to the Age of the Reforms (History of Religious Beliefs and Ideas 3-1983)*[26]

2.2. MİRCEA ELİADE'S CONSİDERATİON OF THE HİSTORY OF RELİGİONS

Eliade's contribution to the History of Religions is an undeniable historical reality, as he analyzed the symbolic language of various religious traditions and tried to analyze and unify the meanings of the myths that form the basis of the mystical phenomenon. Eliade, who, together with Joachim Wach at the University of Chicago, made very important contributions to the evolution of Religious Studies and made a great effort to make the History of Religions an independent discipline by criticizing the condemnation of the History of Religions to the tendencies of the period, states that the History of Religions was confused with disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, ethnology and was subjected to all the crises of contemporary scientific mentalities such as positivist, rationalist and empiricist.[27]

Eliade, who has always criticized reductionist thinking in religious studies and has always expressed the necessity of evaluating and understanding religious phenomena in their own contexts and with their own criteria, has also stated that the historian of religions should claim something that belongs to him to the end. For this reason, he has always tried to analyze, investigate, research, understand and explain a religious phenomenon from the perspective of a historian of religions. He did not belittle the work of ethnological, anthropological, psychological and sociological disciplines that examine religious phenomena from their own perspectives; on the contrary, he insisted on the importance of these disciplines for the clarification of religious phenomena. However, he attached a special importance to the history of religions in terms of the

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[24] Access Date: 29.12.2022; http://www.westminster.edu/staff/brennie/eliade/mebio.htm.
[25] Dağlı, Mircea Eliade as a Historian of Religions: His Life, Works, Contributions to the History of Religions, pp.1-9.
[26] Yılmaztürk, *Mircea Eliade's Understanding of the Sacred,* pp.14-17.
[27] Mircea Eliade, Images and Symbols (Trans. Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay), Ankara, Gece Publications, 1992, p.4.

complete clarification of the religious phenomenon. However, the historian of religions is the person who has the right to have the last word on the meaning of the religious phenomenon by blending the information obtained from these disciplines and the interpretations he adds. Historians of religions are the people who can give the most acceptable opinions and information about a religious phenomenon, not as a sociological, psychological, ethnological, philosophical or even theological phenomenon, but as a religious phenomenon.[28]

Eliade, who attributed a great historical task to the History of Religions, argued that the way out of the cultural crisis that Western civilization was in could only be possible through a new humanism, and that this new humanism could only be possible through studies in the literature of the History of Religions. For centuries, the Western world has seen itself as the active subject of history and reduced other civilizations to passive objects in its own eyes, thus making its own culture and civilization an undisputed authority. However, in later years, when Asian communities and other nations, which were called passive objects, shook off this role and tended to become history-making subjects, the Western world embarked on some "understanding" activities in order to learn the religions, belief worlds, cultures and values of these nations. The only discipline that will enable these two different sides to understand, analyze and recognize each other is the History of Religions. In this respect, the History of Religions has been invited to play a very important role in contemporary cultural life. This is not only because it will help to understand archaic and alien religions, but also because the historian of religions will be able to provide individuals with more profound insights by trying to understand the existential dimensions revealed in the documents he or she researches. It is on the basis of such a base of knowledge that a new humanism, which can be current worldwide, will be able to evolve.[29]

According to Eliade, the History of Religions has an important place in the understanding and living of contemporary culture, in the study of ethnological, archaic and great religions, and in the comprehension of all human phenomena and situations that have occurred since the beginning of human existence.[30] In other words, the History of Religions has a heavy responsibility in explaining the unique contribution and special meaning of religion and religions in contemporary cultures.[31]

According to Eliade, who first began his work in the history of religions by accepting the religious experience of "*Homo Religiosus (Religious Man)*", the primary subject of the History of Religions is to reveal and understand the behavior of religious man who has experienced the sacred dimension of existence from the stone age to the present day. This experience expresses the fundamental basis of the sacred and every religious phenomenon that expresses this sacredness. In this context, contrary to the criticisms made against him, Eliade endeavors to interpret the religious phenomena he discusses and emphasizes in many of his works from the perspective of "*Homo Religiosus*", not from his own perspective.[32] It would also not be very valid or accurate to describe the religious person as a historically specific, flesh-and-blood believer who has taken the form of an individual faith. The religious person is most likely a species, a group, a quality, an aspect of human nature that is the object of sacred religious experience. In other words, "*homo*

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[28] Mircea Eliade, Shamanism (Trans. İsmet Birkan), Ankara, İmge Publishing House, 1999, p.11.

[29] Mircea Eliade, **The Meaning and Social Function of Religion** (Trans. Mehmet Aydin), Ankara, Ministry of Culture Publications, 1990, p.9.

[30] Julien Ries, "History of Religions, Phenomenology and Hermeneutics", "**Religion and Phenomenology**", Ed. Constantin Taco, (Trans. Havva Köser), Istanbul, İz Publishing, 2000, p.14.

[31] Ugo Bianchi, Research Methods in the History of Religions (Trans. Mustafa Ünal), Kayseri, Geçit Bookstore, 1999, p.179.

[32] Rennie, **Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion**, p.43.

religiosus is the opposite of homo modernus" as a kind of universal classification. As a result, the religious man is the idealized, obligatory object of religious experience.[33]

Eliade, who criticizes the historian of religions for being stuck in the molds of his/her field of specialization, states that the main task of a historian of religions is to reveal the meaning of religious phenomena. In order for a historian of religions to fulfill such an important task, he or she must also investigate, examine, analyze and evaluate other religions outside his or her field of specialization, and at the same time, by comprehending and comparing religious phenomena such as mythology, rituals, prayer, magic, initiation ceremonies, and the supreme god (deity), he or she must be able to establish the transhistorical meaning and message in them with the help of his or her own interpretation.[34]

Eliade, who disapproves of the evolutionist perspective, which is also influential in religious sciences, states that not only religion but also the mental life of human beings in general is organized by an adaptation due to the degeneration or even disappearance of basic institutions, rather than a continuous historical evolution.[35] According to Eliade, who states that it is not necessary to use a method that progresses from the simplest to the most complex in the study of religious phenomena, a study with an evolutionist perspective would most likely be a study that would start from the belief in mana and reach the belief in one God with a progressive vision. This attitude, which compels the hypothesis that religions have undergone an evolution even though it cannot be verified in any way and is not based on any evidence, would be scientifically misleading. Eliade's aim is to investigate a simple religious form that contains the most basic sacred manifestations.[36]

According to Eliade, who opposes the historian of religions taking on the appearance of an antiquarian who collects old materials in order to conduct an objective and independent study, one of the most important tasks of the historian of religions is to reveal the meaning of the religious data obtained as a result of the studies. However, all religions are the direct subject of study for a historian of religions. Therefore, a historian of religions should not limit his/her work to field research, publishing a monograph, or preparing an inventory of religious-cultural material presented in different ways. If historians of religions act with this idea, they will not be able to carry out scientific and realistic studies and their activities will not go beyond repetition. However, when realistic and meaningful studies are carried out and valid interpretations are applied, the history of religions will cease to be a museum of fossils, debris and outdated things and will become a series of messages waiting to be discovered, understood and unearthed for every researcher and scientist.[37]

Eliade says that the History of Religions is an excellent tool for knowing the continuity and existential position of the religious man, adding that it is also a science that offers a prescription for overcoming the cultural crisis that has arisen in the Western world today, contributing to the rapprochement of East-West and ethnological cultures, and allowing for a more precise realization of the universality of the human condition. From Eliade's perspective, the purpose and contribution of the History of Religions can be summarized as "*homo sum humani nil ame alienum" (I am human, I am not alien to anything human*).[38]

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[33] Douglas Allen, "Eliade's View of The Study of Religion as the Basis for Cultural and Spiritual Renewal", **Changing Religious World and End of Eliade**, Ed. Brian S. Rennie, New York, 2001, p.210.

[34] Yılmaztürk, *Mircea Eliade's Understanding of the Sacred*, pp.34-35.

[35] Mircea Eliade, Babylonian Alchemy and Cosmology (Trans. Mehmet Emin Özcan), Istanbul, Kabalcı Publishing House, 2002, p.19.

[36] Yılmaztürk, *Mircea Eliade's Understanding of the Sacred*, p.35.

[37] Eliade, **The Meaning and Social Function of Religion**, p.2.

[38] Yılmaztürk, *Mircea Eliade's Understanding of the Sacred*, p.36.

2.3. MİRCEA ELİADE'S METHODOLOGY İN THE HİSTORY OF RELİGİONS

When the works of Mircea Eliade, who is considered to be one of the best representatives of a history of religions doctrine based on the Platonic perspective in the contemporary world, are examined, it is seen that he generally builds his methodology of the history of religions on three foundations consisting of sacred, mythology and symbol, and that his methodology consists of historical-phenomenological-hermeneutic approaches.[39]

In social sciences, in order to understand and explain a concept, problem, issue or social phenomenon, its past, i.e. its origin (history), must be known very well.[40] Since the information and documents related to the sacred, mythology and symbols that constitute the subject matter of the history of religions come from history, Eliade places history first in the methodological understanding he adopts.[41] Each religious phenomenon is also a historical phenomenon, as it comes into existence and meaning within a specific historical process, and religious phenomena cannot be understood outside of their own history. However, there is no "pure religious phenomenon" outside of its own cultural and socio-economic context. For every "human phenomenon" is also a "historical phenomenon".[42] Religion is therefore not an absolute historical phenomenon like the conquest of Istanbul or Jerusalem. Religious phenomena are also social, historical, political, cultural and psychological phenomena.[43]

According to Eliade, who has similar views with Gerardeus van der Leeuw, Raffaele Pettazzoni and Joachim Wahc in the field of phenomenology of religion and is considered to belong to the school of interpretive historians, the discipline of the history of religions consists of two dimensions, one being "morphological method" and the other being "historical".[44] The historical dimension is a tool that forms the concrete basis for the study of the History of Religions and provides a holistic and clear understanding of religious phenomena. However, in the phrase "History of Religions", the emphasis should not be on the word history but on the word religions.[45] The foremost aim of the historian of religions is therefore to investigate all historical expressions of the religious phenomenon in order to reveal what it means.[46] As can be seen, in Eliade's historical methodology, the History of Religions tends to be a philosophical rather than a historical discipline.[47]

Eliade introduces phenomenology as the second method. Religious phenomena, which fall within the scope of the discipline of the history of religions, are the experiences that occur in the discourses and actions of religious people, and that occur within a certain framework. The multiplicity and diversity of these experiences is directly proportional to the number of religions, cultures and beliefs about which we have knowledge. A religious criterion should be taken as a

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[39] Hilal Çiftçi, "Mircea Eliade and his Approach to Islam", **III. Turkish Postgraduate Studies Congress - Proceedings Book I**, 15-18 May 2014, Sakarya, İlmi Etüdler Derneği Publications, 2014, p.166.

[40] Mehmet Berktaş, **The Views of Society and Religion of Erol Güngör**, Istanbul, Sonçağ Publications, 2022, p.8.

[41] Dağlı, Mircea Eliade as a Historian of Religions: His Life, Works, Contributions to the History of Religions, p.26.

[42] Eliade, The Meaning and Social Function of Religion, p.13.

[43] Eliade, The Meaning and Social Function of Religion, pp.43-94.

[44] Kürşat Demirci, "Mircea Eliade", Turkish Religious Foundation Islamic Encyclopedia (C: 14), Istanbul, Turkish Religious Foundation Publications, p.34.

[45] Eliade, **Images and Symbols**, p.5.

[46] Ries, "History of Religions, Phenomenology and Hermeneutics", p.9.

[47] Mircea Eliade, **Les Moissons du solstice (Memoire II)**, Paris, Gallimard Education, 1988, pp.258-259.

basis for the study of religious phenomena, which represent a multifaceted mass of actions, beliefs and institutions that sometimes reach the dimension of chaos.[48]

According to Eliade, who made his greatest contribution to the field of History of Religions mainly in the hermeneutic line, the hermeneutic method is the process of analyzing the messages that fall within the scope of religious phenomena and are intended to be given. In contrast to the historical and phenomenological method, which proposes to define a religious phenomenon in a religious sense, the hermeneutic method attempts to separate the transhistorique from the religious phenomena and tries to reveal the sacred within religious phenomena. In other words, hermeneutics attempts to analyze the idea of the sacred in religious phenomena with questions such as why and why not, and to transfer it to contemporary people.[49] In any case, a historian of religions, thanks to the special training he or she has received, should be able to decipher meanings and intentions in at least some examples and experiences that are not very comprehensible to others or do not have much value effect.[50] Through hermeneutic methodology, religious documentation can be made intelligible for modern individuals, and thus the History of Religions can fulfill its truly cultural function. However, the primary aim of the historian of religions is not to show schemes or a certain number of typologies of religious action that exist alongside specific theology and symbology, but rather to comprehend their meaning. Ultimately, in the final analysis, the historian of religions cannot avoid hermeneutics (interpretation).[51] In short, Eliade's main reason for studying hermeneutics and mythology so intensively is to reveal the truths in terms of reconstructing today's human connection with history and to point out how much the norms of life in societies are rooted in the past.[52]

3. THE IMPORTANCE, CLASSİFİCATİON AND DESCRİPTİON OF THE BASİC CONCEPTS İN MİRCEA ELİADE'S STUDİES ON THE HİSTORY OF RELİGİONS

3.1. Sacred and Profane: Stating that the sacred manifests in all forms, Eliade says that when the history of religions is analyzed, two concepts common to all religions appear as "the sacred" and "the profane".[53] In this context, the manifestation of the sacred, in other words, the loss of the quality of being absolute by limiting itself, is a characteristic structure that all hierophanies have. It is understood that people have been under the influence of many different religious hierophanies (myths, rituals, gods, etc.) due to their beliefs, lives and cultures. Different hierophanies were considered sacred for different societies. Of course, we can say that the religious beliefs, lives, ways of perceiving the world, cultures and socio-economic conditions of each society are also effective on this issue.[54] Even in societies living in the same geographical location and in close proximity, sacredness varies. For example, while some of the people living in Mecca adopted and worshipped idols (Lat, Menat, Uzza) as sacred, and even considered different idols sacred for different occasions, another social group believed in the sanctity of angels.[55] This clearly shows us how sacredness varies from person to person, society to society and region to region.

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[48] Mircea Eliade, Introduction to the History of Religions (Trans. Lale Arslan Özcan), Istanbul, Kabalcı Publishing House, 2014, p.23.

[49] Ries, "History of Religions, Phenomenology and Hermeneutics", p.11.

[50] Mircea Eliade, Occultism, Sorcery and Cultural Fashions (Trans. Cem Soydemir), Ankara, Doğu Batı Publications, 2022, p.13.

[51] Mehmet Aydın, "Hermeneutics and Methodology in Eliade", Journal of Necmettin Erbakan University Faculty of Theology, Vol. 7, (1997), pp.3-9.

[52] Çiftçi, "Mircea Eliade and his Approach to Islam", p.167.

[53] Mircea Eliade, **History of Religious Beliefs and Thoughts-3** (Trans. Ali Berktay), Istanbul, Kabalcı Publications, 2003, p.207.

[54] Mircea Eliade, **Myths, Dreams and Mysteries** (Trans. Cem Soydemir), Ankara, Doğu Batı Publications, 2020, p.157.

[55] Salih Suruç, The Lord of the Universe, Our Prophet's Life, Mecca Period, Istanbul, Nesil Publications, 2016, pp.151-153.

According to Söderblom, one of the leading figures in the History of Religions, the first and greatest religious word of a religion is sacred. He even stated that this word is more important than the word god. A religion may not have a clear concept of God, but in every religion there has always been an understanding between the sacred sphere and the profane sphere. Therefore, sacredness symbolizes the most fundamental transcendental dimension in a religion. Likewise, when one encounters a sacred object or situation, one realizes one's helplessness and powerlessness. In this way, the sacred exerts its influence and splendor on people. Therefore, the sacred is always attractive, magical, frightening, mysterious and extraordinary.[56]

Mircea Eliade is the historian of religions who, after Rudolf Otto, the person he was most influenced by on the subject of the sacred, has treated and included the concept of the sacred in depth in his works. He sees the sacred as a phenomenon that has reached universal dimensions. These phenomena have emerged in many different forms as long as humanity has existed. The sacred is not a level in the human mind, but a factor that exists within the human mind. At this point, archetypes are the first sources of the sacred. Symbols with ontological features are very important for a better understanding of the sacred. Because symbols are codes that enable humanity to understand concepts that it has not been able to grasp throughout history and also to communicate with beings with divine characteristics. In addition, cosmogonic myths also have an important place in the definition of the sacred. For the sacred reveals itself through hierophanies. These hierophanies also appear as kratophanies, which are the manifestations of the divine being that possesses power, unknowability and uniqueness.[57]

Eliade used the concept of the sacred extensively, especially after the Second World War[58] which he described as "the most catastrophic historical crisis of the modern world". The relationship between the sacred and profane acquires a dialectical character. The most important characteristic of the sacred is that it is equivalent to the concept of reality. Because the sacred is not mortal but real. Eliade came to this conclusion by analyzing the attitudes of people living in archaic societies. If an object, event, phenomenon or act acquires the quality of reality by acquiring a value, it is because it participates in a reality that transcends itself. In other words, every event, behavior and act of the gods or ancestors is included in the sacred sphere and thus becomes a model for humans to follow.[59] Eliade has identified three ways in which something becomes real:

1) For archaic man, reality depends on the imitation of a celestial archetype.

2) Shrines, temples, palaces and houses become real because they symbolize the center of the world.

3) Rituals and meaningful non-religious behaviors become real, where gods, warriors, heroes or ancestors repeat the actions they originally performed.[60]

While emphasizing sacred and non-sacred objects, Eliade also took into account the events that took place in a certain place and time, and made use of the documents of those periods. In accessing and researching these documents, he emphasizes the unity of sacredness and history. This is because sacredness and religious hierophanies have always occurred in certain historical periods. However, no matter what kind of documents related to sacredness (rituals, ceremonies, myths, beliefs, etc.), they only gain value when we want to understand and know this religious

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[56] Münir Yıldırım, "'The Concept of Sacred and Sacred Time in Mircea Eliade", Journal of Religious Research, Vol. 10, No. 28, (2007), pp.64-65.
[57] Yıldırım, "The Concept of the Sacred and Sacred Time in Mircea Eliade", pp.65-69.
[58] Eliade, **Images and Symbols**, p.22.
[59] Eliade, **The Meaning and Social Function of Religion**, pp.9-10.
[60] Mircea Eliade, **The Myth of the Literary Return** (Trans. Ayşe Meral), Istanbul, Dergah Publications, 2017, pp.13-19.

phenomenon. Moreover, the historical and spatial characteristics of each sacrament are different. That is to say, while some sacraments take place on a small scale and are known and considered sacred only by a certain group, some sacraments can be regional and universal. For example, in India, a tree called asvattha is considered hierophany for Indians rather than just any tree. This tree is sacred only for Indians, but it does not have a universal sacredness. However, there is also a type of tree in India called the cosmic tree. This type of tree is also known in many regions because it was present in all ancient civilizations. Thus, the cosmic tree hierophany has a universal sacredness and characteristic because of its wide distribution.[61]

According to Eliade, kratophanies are in every sense a sign of power and might. Kratophanies and hierophanies have always been either revered or shunned. Thus, two states of these sacred modalities have emerged: Attraction and repulsion. Sometimes a word has been subjected to very different definitions. For example, sacer has been used to mean both "cursed" and "holy", or hagios has been used to mean both "pure" and "polluted". It is because of the existence and peculiarity of these situations that Eliade speaks of the concept of "the contradiction of the sacred". According to him, the contradiction of the sacred is realized not only at the spiritual level but also at the level of values. Its realization at the level of values depends on the fact that objects can be both "sacred" and "polluted".[62]

According to Eliade, all kinds of kratophany and hierophany that are strange, untouched, undefined, unique and foreign have been recognized as sacred by societies. Within the framework of this inviolability, objects have either been taboo from the beginning or later on. These tabooed objects are endowed with a power that comes from their own essential state or from nature. If people reach or touch these taboos, their sanctity ends. But there are some objects or beings that, even if you reach or touch them, they never lose their taboo and sacred modality. For example, kings, mountains, islands, mines, etc. This taboo mechanism also manifests itself in food. For example, certain sacred foods should not be eaten in large quantities, or not all of them should be eaten. For this reason, Moroccans attending shrines or celebrations do not finish all the food they are offered or eat very little.[63]

3.2. Structure of the Hierophanies: Eliade says that all kinds of hierophany and kratophany give us the modalities of the sacred, and at the same time, he states that when objects are integrated with meaning, sacredness emerges. The hierophanies that emerged in different periods and societies required a choice. These selected hierophanies were generally considered dangerous, forbidden and contaminated. There is no religion that consists only of hierophanies and kratophanies. Even in the most primitive religions, there are hierophanies and through these hierophanies sacredness has been created. However, not all sacraments have had the same impact on societies. While some saints (the belief in a supreme being in the sky) are universal and can be seen in every society, some saints remain at the regional and local level. Another important point is that some of the saints and the hierophany and kratophany, which are the manifestations of this sacredness, have either disappeared over time, or have emerged as a new sacredness over time, or some of them still exist. In this way, the lost sacred is no longer believed, and the sacred modality that emerges through new hierophanies is internalized. There is always a dialectic in the structure of sacredness. The sacred never fully reveals itself, but only declares its sacredness through hierophany and kratophanies.[64]

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[61] Eliade, **Introduction to the History of Religions**, pp.27-30.
[62] Eliade, **Introduction to the History of Religions**, p.39.
[63] Eliade, **Introduction to the History of Religions**, pp.40-41.
[64] Eliade, **Introduction to the History of Religions**, pp.47-49.

3.2.1. Diversity of Hierophanies: Eliade used the concept of hierophany for the first time in his work ''Traite''.[65] In the light of the documentation, there are many categories of hierophanies available. Each category has its own diversity, complexity, density and rich morphology. Therefore, when we look at each hierophany in terms of sacredness, we are confronted with an infinite range of documents and situations. While emphasizing the diversity of hierophanies, it is necessary to talk about the "modality of the sacred". According to Eliade, the different application and interpretation of hierophanies by the people, starting from the upper religious class, is the reason for the diversity of hierophanies. He also lists myths, rituals, ceremonies, stories told by the initiated and the people, objects worshipped, animals, plants, theologoumene[66] and similar places as types of hierophany.[67]

Eliade emphasizes that in order for all hierophanies to speak of the modality of the sacred, it is necessary to find out very well what the content of these hierophanies is. Therefore, when analyzing these hierophanies, they should not be analyzed from a single point of view (ritual, myth, etc.) but from all aspects in the light of all the different documents. This is not only an attempt to uncover the history of the hierophanies, but also to identify the modes of the sacred. For example, plant hierophanies (sacredness emphasized through plants and vegetation) appear in the form of a wide variety of sacrednesses: the cosmic tree through symbolism, the Tree of Life through metaphysical myths, the May tree in folk rituals, folk beliefs linking the origin of humanity to the plant species.[68]

3.2.2. Multiplicity of Hierophanies: According to Eliade, the fact that there are so many hierophanies in the past and present is actually extremely important in revealing and understanding the modality of the sacred. In the light of the information and documents available to us, the aim is not to make a definition of what the sacred is or is not. What is important here is to reveal the sacred and the modalities of the sacred through the information and documents that these hierophanies offer us. Each hierophany appears as the manifestation of the sacred in the minds of people who were considered sacred in one way or another and who believed in a sacred.[69]

While people live in society, they are also in social, cultural, commercial, physiological and economic interaction with other people and societies. From the past to the present, the influence of hierophanies in these areas is seen in every society. Any object, item, event, movement, etc. many hierophanies have gained sanctity in certain periods of human history and lost their sanctity in certain periods. There is no hierophany in any event, object, plant, animal, etc. that has not become sacred. The fact that a behavior, a ritual, an activity or even the habits and behaviors of people in their daily lives can be counted as a hierophany and that hierophany as a sacred modality can be encountered in every moment of our daily lives reveals the multiplicity of hierophany. As a result, the objects, myths, ceremonies, activities, plants, animals, stones, lands and other objects that we will accept as hierophanies have been accepted as hierophanies that lead to sacred modality at a certain time and place in history, and every society has somehow had its share of the transformation of religious life through these hierophanies.[70]

3.2.3. Dialectics of the Hierophanies: Eliade underlines that everything finds meaning through its opposite. Even in our daily lives, in order for an object or substance to gain properties, it must have an opposite in nature or an object that complements it. This is also true for hierophanies.

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[65] Adıbelli, **Mircea Eliade and Religion**, p.107.
[66] Theologoumene: Theological utterances that reflect a personal reflection and argue against a particular dogma.
[67] Eliade, **Introduction to the History of Religions**, pp.32-33.
[68] Eliade, **Introduction to the History of Religions**, pp.33-34.
[69] Eliade, **Introduction to the History of Religions**, p.35.
[70] Eliade, **Introduction to the History of Religions**, pp.36-37.

After all, in all religious phenomena, the sacred and the profane are also presented as opposites. In all religions in this religious phenomenon, sacred beings and objects as well as non-sacred objects and beings have coexisted. The difference here is the religious beliefs of people and the understanding of holiness that exists in societies. For example, if we look at the sacredness of stone, the stone called Al-Hajar Al-Aswad (Black Stone) in the Kaaba has a sacredness feature in terms of hierophany. Not all stones can be considered sacred because of this stone. For this reason, some stones are ascribed sacredness for some societies, and some stones are considered objects for some societies. Therefore, for an object to be sacred or non-sacred lies in the fact that societies see it as a hierophany.[71]

Here Eliade asks the following crucial question: "If somehow everything becomes sacred, then to what extent is the sacred-unsacred dichotomy[72] realized?" Indeed, the dialectics of the hierophanies requires a selectivity and abstraction of objects, beings, plants, animals and other groups. An object can only become a hierophany when it is different from other objects. Everything that is different, strange, ambiguous, unknown, undefined becomes legendary and open to interpretation in religious and magical terms. Over time, these different objects become accepted as objects that people either flee from or worship. A.C. Kruyt gives the following example: "If a dog is always lucky in the hunt, it is a measa.[73] Likewise, being very successful in the hunt worries the Toradjas. The magical power that enables the animal to catch its prey will bring fatal consequences for its master: Either he will soon die, or there will be no rice harvest, or, as is often the case, the buffalo or pig herd will be plagued by an epidemic. This belief is widespread throughout the Sulavesi Islands." To give another example, in the same island life, the belief that if two lemons grow on the same branch of a lemon tree, there will be twin births on that island is also a measa.[74]

3.2.4. Revaluation of Hierophanies: Stating that all kinds of hierophany that are interesting, gigantic, extraordinary and whose characteristics are not fully known can be a sign of the sacred, Eliade also states that people now see the sacred, which they accepted as the supreme being, as sacred in every sense and in every field, and that they attribute different values to it. They also identified these interesting and new hierophanies with this sacred. For example, they equated the sky god with a gigantic animal or object and attributed it a sacred characteristic. They even believed that the creator was found in the structure of these hierophanies, so they always attributed the events they saw and experienced to the sacred. In the same way, they believed that earthquakes were the footsteps of the god, that the god got very angry when there was lightning, that the waters overflowed because the god walked in the water, and that the god sometimes took the body of animals and walked among people. The reappropriation of the meaning and value of these hierophanies can be found even in the most primitive religious institutions. After all, every hierophany is a manifestation of the relationship between man and god.[75]

3.3. Mana: According to Eliade, different, foreign, unusual and extraordinary objects have always been different from the normal and have acquired a sacredness, that is, a mana. The idea of mana is most common in Malaysia. According to them, mana is a secret and very effective power possessed by people, especially the spirits of the dead. Some societies have even influenced other societies with this mana feature and idea. The British enslavement of the Maoris is the most striking example of this situation. Because the "mana" of the British was stronger than the Maoris.[76]

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[71] Eliade, **Introduction to the History of Religions**, pp.36-37.
[72] Dichotomy: The division of objects, concepts, etc. into two fundamental parts that are considered to be fundamentally different and irreducible to each other.
[73] Measa: Bad omen, bad luck.
[74] Eliade, **Introduction to History of Religions**, pp.37-38.
[75] Eliade, **Introduction to History of Religions**, pp.49-52.
[76] Eliade, **Introduction to History of Religions**, p.43.

Created objects, beings and people also have mana. In order to express mana, these beings have received power from the sacred or superior. Of course, the power here is different from physical power, and comes from the integration or relationship with the soul of the holy one. Furthermore, one cannot speak of the "impersonality" of mana, a concept that makes no sense in outdated thinking. Therefore, for an object, a creature, a cosmic phenomenon or a being to acquire mana, it is only through the intervention of a divine being. For example, the hero, who is a great warrior, did not gain this quality because of his size, his physical strength or his horse, but because of the mana given to him by another great warrior who was dead. If an animal has mana, it is fast; if an arrow has mana, it hits the bull's-eye. However, the idea of mana is not only found in Malaysian culture but also in other regions and is expressed in other terms. It is expressed as oki in Huron, zemi in Antilles, and megbe in African Pygmies. In conclusion, whatever is perfect, flawless, efficient, dynamic, different and creative in human beings is thanks to mana.[77]

3.4. Initiation

One of the most fundamental concepts that Eliade, the famous historian of religions, frequently uses in his understanding and literature on the history of religions is initiation. Perhaps one of the most important distinguishing features of the ancient world and the modern world is the disappearance of meaningful rites of initiation. Whereas the ritual of meaningful initiation was of fundamental importance in traditional communities, in the modern western world it is almost non-existent. Only a few Christian communities retain traces of some form of initiation, albeit at different levels of structure. Thus, while baptism is in fact a confirmation ritual, ordination to the priesthood bears the marks of an entrance ritual. Compared to traditional communities, however, the novelty of contemporary man lies in his decision to accept himself as a purely historical being, that is, to want to live in a cosmos cleansed of the sacred. Through the rite of passage of traditional societies, man begins to understand and accept the image of the new man envisioned through the rite of passage. It is a well-known fact that all pre-modern societies gave primary importance to ideology and methods of initiation.[78]

In the broadest sense, initiation is a concept that refers to a set of rituals and teachings whose goal is to bring about a decisive change in the social and religious status of the person to be initiated. In other words, initiation corresponds to a fundamental change in the existential situation. The person to be initiated emerges from this ordeal as a completely different body from the one he or she had before the initiation ritual and becomes someone else. At the same time, through the rite of passage, the person is recognized as a responsible member of the society in which he or she lives. Through the coming of age ritual, the adolescent enters the spiritual and cultural world, while learning the norms of behavior of the society in which he or she lives, the institutions of youth, the sacred myths and traditions that are important for that society, the names of its gods and their dates of operation, and perhaps most importantly, the relationship of the society in which he or she lives with supernatural beings.[79]

The majority of initiatory tests mark a ritual death followed by a resurrection or a new birth, though not necessarily in a very clear way. Each initiation ritual is represented by a ceremony that symbolizes the death of the person and their return to society. Through this ritual, the person to be initiated returns to life as a new individual (human), accepting a different form of being. In addition, the initiatory death also signifies the end of infancy, ignorance and irreligion.[80]

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[77] Eliade, Introduction to the History of Religions, pp.43-46.
[78] Mircea Eliade, Nativity and Rebirth - **The Religious Meanings of Initiation in Human Cultures** (Trans. Fuat Aydın), Istanbul, Kabalcı Publishing, 2015, pp.11-12.
[79] Eliade, **Birth and Rebirth**, pp.12-13.
[80] Eliade, **Birth and Rebirth**, p.16.

According to Eliade, initiation rituals can be classified into two categories: first, puberty rituals, in which young people become human beings, and second, specialized initiation rituals, in which people transcend their human status and become supernatural beings or even their equivalent. In addition, it is possible to categorize the initiatory models into the simplest models, the most dramatic models, models of a new gestation period expressed in embryological and gynecological terms, models with a soul search, models specific to heroic initiations, models with the distinctive feature of initiation on fundamental religious issues, and paradoxical models.[81]

Whether in the form of age-sorting rituals, initiation rituals into closed societies, or, finally, initiatory tests necessary for the realization of a mystical ability, initiations universally spread throughout the primitive world were, in the eyes of their performers, revealed by deities and supernatural beings. Thus initiation is essentially an imitation of deities, and when a person performs the initiation ritual, they both relive sacred primordial time and participate in the presence of deities or mythical ancestors. In addition, the phenomenon of initiation, as in any culture, is in fact a historical phenomenon. In other words, the concrete expressions of initiation rituals are closely related to the general social structure and history of the society in which they take place. On the other hand, while coming of age implies an existential experience that expresses the experience of ritual death and the understanding of the sacred, it also reveals transcultural and transhistorical dimensions.[82]

3.5. SYMBOL AND IMAGE

One of the concepts that Mircea Eliade deals with most frequently in his work is the symbol. Symbol, which refers to an action, an object, or any sign or pseudonym made by people that draws attention to a reality other than itself, represents or substitutes for something that cannot be indicated by the senses, is the representation of something mostly specific and concrete by something else, often of a general and abstract nature.[83] In other words, a symbol is the visible manifestation of an abstract idea or something invisible. According to Eliade, a symbol is the transformation of an object or an action into something other than what is visible in terms of profane experience. The symbol continues to play an important role in all societies, whether static or degraded, and its function in societies has not changed. This is because symbols reflect people's need to continue to sanctify the world in perpetuity. This is therefore related to the basic characteristics of *homo religiosus* and the concept of longing for paradise.[84] Therefore, symbol, which is a matter of intuition rather than a matter of reflection, is a matter of capturing an existing truth.[85]

Stating that symbol and hierophany assume the same function, Eliade also adds that symbol sustains the dialectic of hierophany. Everything that is not sacred or not directly sanctified by the hierophany becomes sacred through contact with the symbol.[86] In this context, while all symbols are hierophany, not all hierophany is symbolic.[87] According to Eliade, who frequently uses the symbol in areas related to the sky, sun, moon, water and stones, the symbol is not only related to

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[81] Eliade, **Birth and Rebirth**, pp.251-254.

[82] Eliade, **Birth and Rebirth**, pp.252-253.

[83] Galip Atasağun, "Symbol and Symbolism", Necmettin Erbakan University Journal of Faculty of Theology, C: 7, S: 7, (1997), pp.369-370.

[84] Eliade, **Introduction to History of Religions**, pp.373-376.

[85] Mircea Eliade, **Symbolism, the Sacred and the Art** (Edited by: Diane Apostolos-Cappadona), New York, 1986, The Crossroad Publishing Company, p.13.

[86] Eliade, **Introduction to History of Religions**, pp.374-375.

[87] Eliade, **Images and Symbols**, pp.234-235.

the level of consciousness of the person. The symbol, just like the sacred, has a deep structure because it takes place at the subconscious level of the person.[88]

According to Eliade, who says that symbolic thinking is not a quality that the individual acquires later, but a quality that has always existed in him, all religious phenomena necessarily have a symbolic meaning for the content of symbolism in all the acts and behaviors of man, who is a *homo symbolicus (symbol man)*. From Eliade's perspective, the basic qualities of symbols can be listed as follows;

∗ Religious symbols can perform a mode of truth or a world structure that is not self-evident at the level of concrete experience.

∗ For primitive societies, symbols are always religious, either because they relate to something real or to some structure of the cosmos.

∗ It is a fundamental characteristic of religious symbolism that it has the capacity to convey many meanings at the same time, whose correspondences are not self-evident at the level of concrete experience.

∗ Religious symbolism not only reveals a structure of truth or a dimension of existence, but also gives meaning to human existence.

∗ By enabling individuals to recognize a certain unity of the cosmos and, with it, their own destiny as an integral module of the world, religious symbols have the capacity to reveal many fictitiously interconnected meanings.

∗ It is perhaps the most important function of religious symbolism that it has the capacity to express paradoxical situations or some structures of absolute truth that cannot be expressed in other ways.[89]

Stating that there is a close relationship between the word image[90] which means imagining, visualizing, visualizing in the mind, and the word symbol, Eliade states that images create recesses towards a world beyond history. The use of the concept of image in many different fields and places in Eliade's works shows that its semantic field is extremely wide. The concept of image is sometimes used in the sense of symbol and sign, as well as in the sense of archetype. Although Eliade emphasizes the concepts of imagination and conception with the concept of image, the differences between the two concepts in terms of evoking or pointing to a reality outside of their cats should not be ignored.[91]

3.6. MYTH

The concept of myth,[92] which means a folk tale (mythos) with an imaginary, allegorical narrative about gods, goddesses, the birth of the cosmos, which is traditionally spread or shaped by the imagination of the society, is one of the key concepts Eliade emphasizes in his studies of religious sciences. It is one of the key concepts Eliade emphasizes in his studies of religious sciences. Eliade, who examines the myths and mythologies of primitive, archaic and traditional societies that existed before the societies that constitute modern societies, reveals the fact that mythologies are alive and vital in such societies and that myths direct all kinds of organizations and

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[88] Mircea Eliade, **Sacred and Profane** (Trans. Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay), Ankara, Gece Publications, 1991, p.112.

[89] Mircea Eliade, **Mephisto and Erdishi** (Trans. Hanife Güven), Ankara, Doğu Batı Publications, 2020, pp.292-305.

[90] Turkish Language Association, **Turkish Dictionary**, Ankara, Turkish Language Association Publications, 2005, p.962.

[91] Adıbelli, **Mircea Eliade and Religion**, pp.155-157.

[92] Turkish Language Association, **Turkish Dictionary**, p.1403.

behaviors of people.[93] Myth, however, is the element that reveals the often unconscious, pungent aspirations *of homo religiosus.*[94]

According to Eliade, myth,[95] which is an intricately intricate cultural reality that can be approached and interpreted from many different and complementary perspectives, is also a historical and social reality because it expresses the true reality for the archaic realm, that is, the emergence of the sacred.[96] The fact that it always expresses a story of creation is one of the main features of myths, but the fact that it tells how something came into being and how it came into being also reveals the ontological dimension of myths.[97]

According to Eliade, who says that myths are not at all a fabricated legend, tale or story that is contrary to reality, the main structural features of myths are that they reveal a mystery, reveal the initial events by justifying a structure of truth or a human action.[98] In this context, myths, which are an ontophany, not only provide important explanations about the structure of time, but also reveal a reality that cannot be obtained through empirical and rational means.[99] At the same time, it is an undeniable reality that myths, which have an etiological character by expressing how the cosmos, humanity, animals, plants, etc. came into being and by whom, under what conditions and why they were created, make life more meaningful not only for primitive societies but also for all other societies and people.[100]

3.7. HOMO RELİGİOSUS (RELİGİOUS MAN)

After the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, many Western thinkers have argued that man is a thinking animal. The most important feature that makes human beings superior to other living beings is that they have reason. While many philosophers argued that the irrational actions and attitudes of human beings consisted of animal impulses before rational thought became dominant in the world of science, it is seen that some knowledge and perspectives on human beings have changed with the acceptance of rational thought as the sole criterion with the Age of Enlightenment. Concepts such as *homo sapiens* to distinguish human beings from other living species, homo ludens to emphasize the playfulness of human beings, *homo faber* for the ability of humans to control their environment in line with the tools they have invented through invention, and *homo significans* to touch upon the meaning-making aspect of human beings have been derived. In addition to all these concepts, the concept of *homo religiosus* was also used to emphasize the point of having faith and believing, and it is seen that due to such perspectives on human beings, Eliade handled the concept of *homo religiosus*, which he used in his studies in the discipline of religious sciences, within the deep traces of this historical context.[101]

Eliade, who knows that man is a multidimensional being and at the same time recognizes that man is a *homo symbolicus, homo faber, homo ludens, homo sapiens*, states that man's ability to have religious feelings is one of the most typical characteristics that distinguish man from other beings.[102] This is because Eliade used the concept of *homo religiosus* not to characterize the

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[93] Mircea Eliade, **Briser Le Toit De La Masion: La Creativite et ses Symboles**, Paris, Gallimard, 1986, s.79.

[94] Mircea Eliade, **Initiation, Rites, Societes Secretes**, Paris, Gallimard, 1959, s.134.

[95] Mircea Eliade, **Myths Features (Translated by Sema Rifat), Istanbul, Simavi Publications, 1993, p.16.**

[96] Eliade, **Images and Symbols,** p.50.

[97] Mircea Eliade, **Fragments d'unjournal I: 1945-1969**, Paris, Gallimard, 1973, s.246.

[98] Eliade, **Myths, Dreams and Mysteries,** pp.13-15.

[99] Eliade, **Introduction to History of Religions**, p.350.

[100] Eliade, **Features of Myths,** pp.180-181.

[101] Adıbelli, **Mircea Eliade and Religion**, pp.159-162.

[102] Mircea Eliade, **Religious Beliefs and Thoughts History-1** (Trans. Ali Berktay), Istanbul, Kabalcı Publications, 2003, p.19.

charismatic individual but to characterize all human beings.[103] Eliade also used the term to refer not to the human species as a whole, but to the human way of being before the emergence of contemporary, secular consciousness.[104] Eliade, who started to use the concept of *homo religiosus* in the late period, uses the term in two main senses in his works; one is the ideal meaning he uses to characterize the archaic human being who experiences the sacred in the purest, cleanest, most natural and most realistic way, and the other is the concrete meaning he uses to indicate religious individuals who experience the sacred in different cultural-historical contexts.[105]

According to Eliade, who says that just like the contrast between the sacred and profane, there are two attitudes that people have accepted throughout history in the face of religion, two essential and opposite ways of being in the cosmos and experiencing it, on the one hand there is *homo religiosus*, who believes in a pure truth, that is, the sacred, and adopts a way of life along this line, and on the other hand there is the *irreligious person* who rejects the ontology of a god.[106] The concepts of archaic man and modern man are of great importance and meaning in the formation of these two types of human typologies. Modernity constituted the breaking point in the history of religion, especially in the West. Because modern man has de-sacralized his cosmos and accepted a profane existence.[107] Therefore, pre-modern man, who embraces the sacred, and modern man, who embraces a profane existence, are opposites.[108] As a result, *homo religiosus*, regardless of the historical context in which he is situated, always believes in the sacred, in the existence of an absolute truth that, despite transcending this cosmos, manifests in it and thus sanctifies it and gives it truth.[109]

CONCLUSİON

Religion is one of the most important elements in shaping and rebuilding all societies and cultures since the creation of the first human being. Different belief systems and religions have existed from past to present. The most important function of the discipline of the history of religions is to examine these religions with its own unique method and to reveal them in all their reality. When 20th century scholar Mircea Eliade, one of the cornerstones of the discipline of the History of Religions with his unique method, looks at his religious studies as a whole, the correlation between his life experience and the issues he emphasized in his religious studies and the way he handled them is evident.

Eliade, who evaluates the hermeneutic approach as a method and uses it in his studies, states that the aim of the discipline of the history of religions is to create a "new humanism" and the method he uses to realize this is "creative hermeneutics". However, the existential crises that occur as a result of the liquidation of metaphysical truths constitute the main problematic issue that directs the research and activities of the science of religion. Since this problematic issue is generally philosophical in nature, Eliade thinks that the ultimate goal of the history of religions should also be addressed from a philosophical perspective.

When we look at Eliade's work, it is seen that each concept such as sacred, profane, hierophany, initiation, mana, symbol, image, taboo, homo religiosus, myth, archetype, etc. has its

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[103] David Cave, **Mircea Eliade's Vision for a New Humanism**, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993, p.92.

[104] Gregory D. Alles, "Homo Religiosus", Lindsay Jones (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York, Macmillan Reference Usa, 2005, p.4110.

[105] Antonio Barbosa da Silva, **The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem: An Analysis of the Theoretical Background of the Phenomenology of Religion in General and of M. Eliade's Phenomenological Approach in Particular**, Uppsala, CWK Gleerup, 1982, p.196.

[106] Adıbelli, **Mircea Eliade and Religion**, p.166.

[107] Eliade, **Sacred and Profane**, p.19.

[108] Eliade, **Sacred and Profane**, p.83.

[109] Eliade, **Sacred and Profane**, pp.171-172.

own specific meaning, although it is difficult to determine their semantic fields with precise lines. With his own concept of hierophany, Eliade wants to express the phenomenon of the manifestation of the sacred, a factor that religious phenomena share in common. Eliade's basic approach is to reveal the structures of phenomena such as myth, meaning, symbol, hierophany, sacred space, sacred time, etc. rather than revealing when religious phenomena were formed and their historical evolution lines. Eliade also underlines that a religious phenomenon should be studied as a religious phenomenon, not as a psychological, social, ethnic, philosophical or theological phenomenon, and states that reductionist perspectives are not suitable for revealing the intense and deep meanings of religious phenomena and that historians of religions can best do this job.

Eliade, who identified the concept of the sacred as an essential object of analysis in the study of religious phenomena, dealt with the distinction between the sacred and profane in order to rearticulate this concept in the field of religious phenomena rather than in the field of social phenomena. The fact that the opposition between the sacred and profane is dialectical rather than antithetical also determines Eliade's theory of secularization. Eliade, who considers the feeling of sacredness as an inseparable essence of human beings and therefore thinks that no matter how profane a person is, he carries a homo religiosus within him, has entered into the analysis of religious phenomena in his later works and has formed the semantic framework of concepts such as sacred-profane dialectic, hierophany, kratophany, archetype, myth, mana, taboo, homo religious, maturation, symbol, etc., which constitute the theoretical structure of religious studies, and has used these concepts in his works by attributing different meanings to these concepts.

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