



bulletin

British Association for the Study of Religions

134: May 2019

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WWW.BASR.AC.UK

ABOUT THE BASR

The British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR) was founded in 1954. It is a member association of the International Association for the History of Religions (founded 1950) and of the European Association for the Study of Religions (founded 2001). The object of BASR is to promote the academic study of religion/s, understood as the historical, social, theoretical, critical and comparative study of religion/s through the interdisciplinary collaboration of all scholars whose research is defined in this way. BASR is not a forum for confessional, apologetic, or similar concerns. BASR pursues its aims principally through an annual conference and general meeting, a regular Bulletin, and a Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions. Membership of BASR is open to all scholars normally resident in the United Kingdom.

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editorial

I've long thought it odd that we spend a decade training to do research, in order to qualify for a job in which research makes up a relatively small part of our time - and in many cases, something we have to do in our own time.

The current build up to REF 2021 has put the spotlight on our research outputs, but I have yet to hear a colleague express that they have had enough time for research and writing, and has plenty of publications to choose from. Even for those of us lucky enough to have a research allocation - and a manager willing to protect it - the reality of day-to-day work is that such Important But Not Urgent goals tend to lose out to the Urgent But Not Important ones pouring into our email inboxes.

In the UK system, most graduates have almost no teaching training whatsoever, though if we are lucky we might have gained some experience, covering for our supervisors or running tutorials. The oversight spotlight is increasingly shining on teaching, however, and many postgraduates are now seeking accreditation through the Higher Education Academy, though this is, again, usually in our own time.

Here's two things we ought to be teaching, though: time management and hustling.

Most academics' time management is awful, let's be honest. We are so regularly late for everything that we assume deadlines will be changed as a matter of course. We over-commit, and underestimate how long things will take. This causes a lot of stress - for ourselves and others. And it is inevitably the research and writing that most of us got into this for in the first place that loses out.

Maybe I'm unusual in this, but I spend a lot of my working time hustling - seeking contributors for multiple projects, getting peer reviews, juggling deadlines and delays, organising transport, managing projects. Be they short-term, like the Religious Studies Project, medium-term like journal issues, or long-term research projects, the higher we get in the profession, the more of our time is spent hustling. And given the emphasis on big research grants for the REF, these skills are increasingly important. I don't see why we shouldn't train people to do the job we ask them to do.

So I hope you have enjoyed the pieces here that I have hustled from the members. Sorry that it is late - it took longer than expected and I had a heavy teaching load. And this isn't even a REFable output!

David G. Robertson
14/5/2019



www.facebook.com/groups/490163257661189/



twitter.com/TheBASR

news, etc

BASR 2019

The call for papers and panels for this year's annual conference has been announced (see page 4). As always, we are offering bursaries to support early career colleagues - see the following link for information and to apply:

<https://basr.ac.uk/2019/02/28/basr-2019-bursary-information/>

We also encourage nominations (including self-nominations) for the 2019 BASR Teaching Fellow. The form is on page 5 and will be available on the website soon. Last year's Fellow's report by Wendy Dossett is on page 7.

AMY WHITEHEAD WRITES

'It is with great relief that I would like to inform BASR members that I have taken up the post of Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology at Massey University in New Zealand, with a focus on teaching subjects in the anthropology of religion and fieldwork practice. My email address is: A.R.Whitehead@massey.ac.nz. I hope to see many of you at the IAHR in Otago, NZ in 2020!'

OU DEGREE

We are very pleased to announce that Religious Studies at the Open University has a brand new degree course, starting this autumn, in collaboration with Philosophy – the BA (Hons) in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics. While there has been a specialist Religious Studies route available in both the BA (Honours) Arts and Humanities and the BA (Honours) Social Sciences degrees, a named RS degree has been absent from the OU for a while, and it has been a long path to get one again. But this new degree underlines

the relevance of the subject and the vitality of the department, and should ensure the subject remains central as the Open University continues the process of future proofing.

In this qualification we explore human systems of thought and practice, both 'secular' and 'religious', in ways which allow you to engage with wide-ranging and often controversial issues affecting different cultures and societies. We investigate a wide range of current questions and themes in these disciplines from both historical and contemporary perspectives. This includes the ethics of war, political justice, multiculturalism, religious nationalisms, the 'sanctity of life' and pilgrimage. In engaging with the core disciplines of religious studies and philosophy, students develop critical skills and expertise in a range of key approaches and methodologies.

CALL FOR ARTICLES FOR THE SPECIAL FEATURE OF RELIGIO: REVUE PRO RELIGIONISTIKU ON "AN UNNATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGIONS"

Religio: Revue pro religionistiku is seeking contributors to its special feature devoted to a discussion of Leonardo Ambasciano's book *An Unnatural History of Religions: Academia, Post-truth and the Quest for Scientific Knowledge* (Bloomsbury 2018). Submissions should be from 5 to 20 standard pages long and should correspond to the standard requirements for articles. Manuscripts should be submitted by email to religio@phil.muni.cz by 15 September 2019.

Religio is an international academic journal published by the Czech Association for the Study of Religions. For more information about *Religio* and our guidelines for authors, please visit <http://www.casr.cz/religioen.php> and <http://www.casr.cz/religio-guidelines.php>.



“Visualising Cultures: Media, Technology and Religion”
Leeds Trinity University, 2-4 September 2019

The [British Association for the Study of Religions](#) (BASR) is receptive to including the participation of scholars in other disciplines and fields of study. This year, the conference will be held in collaboration with documentary film makers from Leeds Trinity University's Media, Film and Culture team and IRIS ([International Research Centre for Interactive Storytelling](#)) and will include the screening of several documentary projects. As such, we welcome papers and panels on the theme of screen media, film and religion as well as on the academic study of religion/s more generally [it does not need to fit the theme].

This can include religion in all types of media, including, but not limited to:

- Film
- Documentary
- Gaming – virtual worlds
- Digital technology
- Production of screen media projects on religion

In addition, we welcome any research approach applicable to the study of religion/s, including but not limited to:

- Visual ethnography
- Filmmaking
- Collaborative practice
- Photo-elicitation
- Other innovative research methods

Selected papers will be published in the peer-reviewed open-access [Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions](#) (JBASR).

Keynote: Dr James Kapalo, University College, Cork, who is the Principal Investigator of the European Research Council Project *Creative Agency and Religious Minorities: Hidden Galleries in the Secret Police Archives in Central and Eastern Europe* (Hidden Galleries). For his research profile, see <http://research.ucc.ie/profiles/A040/jkapalo>

Panel proposal (title, 200-word abstract, participants' titles, abstracts) deadline: 15 May 2019

Paper proposal (presenter/s, title, 200-word abstract) deadline: 1 June 2019

Send to: basrcon@gmail.com

Bursary applications (to cover full conference package) for postgraduate and early-career scholars: please complete the form (which will be available at <https://basr.ac.uk/annual-conference-2019/>) and send directly to the Secretary of the BASR (email is on the form). Deadline: 15 May 2019

Conference team:

[Dr Suzanne Owen](#), Reader in Religious Studies [contact for conference queries]

Dr Stefano Odorico, Reader in Contemporary Screen Media

Ilaria Vecchi, PGR in the School of Arts and Communication

BASR Teaching and Learning Fellowship: Application form

You may expand the boxes below but please do not exceed **4 pages** in total.
Please do not add any additional appendices.

Your name:	
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1. Current Position/Teaching Experience

Please provide details of your current position and an outline of any **relevant** employment history.

2. Affiliations and memberships.

Please list any affiliations, professional memberships, fellowships, awards or other details that indicate your standing in the higher education community and any membership of relevant committees or decision making bodies.

3. Publications and Papers on Teaching and Learning

Please list any relevant papers or publications related to pedagogy



Library of the Centre for Applied Buddhism
Taplow Court, Taplow, Berks SL6 0ER

The Library of the Centre for Applied Buddhism is a fantastic resource for all those involved in Buddhist and related studies. It is available to anyone who wishes to use it. And our on line catalogue can be viewed and searched at www.appliedbuddhism.org.uk/library

*We have a stock of over 17,000 volumes (in many languages) and continue to add to the collection regularly. Our collection of materials for Buddhist study is extensive, including many primary sources and literature (full Pali canon and Chinese canon- the Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo), and the on-going Chinese canon in English project, (pub. Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai). Alongside these, we hold extensive

secondary sources on all traditions and schools of Buddhism, Buddhist Art, Buddhist history and culture.

In addition we have been left a number of collections of books from scholars in Religious studies, for example Dr. Bryan Wilson's library of sociology and anthropology. We endeavour to keep up-to-date with current academic research on Buddhism.

*We take about 30 or so academic journals of Buddhist studies from around the world, as well as more popular, practitioner based magazines We also hold a good collection of in-house magazines from a variety of Buddhist schools in the UK and Europe. We hold many back copies and difficult to find copies of these journals and magazines.

We run a lending library & charge a small annual sub (£10 / £5 unwaged). We will post items nationally as required, but not overseas.

If you would like to make use of the library or have any questions please contact:

Sarah Norman, Librarian: sn@appliedbuddhism.org.uk 01628 591217

Or Jamie Cresswell – Director jc@appliedbuddhist.org.uk 01628 591213

We look forward to welcoming you to our centre.

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

News Items	Up to 150 words
Conference Reports	500-1500 words
Conference Announcements	Not more than a single page
Book Reviews	700-1000 words
Features	Around 1000 words
Members' Recent Publications	Maximum 5 items

PLEASE SEND MATERIAL FOR INCLUSION TO david.robertson@open.ac.uk
DEADLINE FOR THE NOVEMBER 2019 ISSUE IS **31 OCTOBER 2019**

features

Religious Education and Worldviews

Wendy Dossett, The University of Chester

In this piece Wendy Dossett outlines recent proposals for school RE, and, in line with her current role as BASR Teaching and Learning Fellow, asks how our undergraduates might actively contribute in this realm of public engagement.

The nature and quality of school-based Religious Studies/Education has significant implications which include, and go beyond, the likelihood of students choosing to study religion/s at undergraduate level. It shapes their analytic framework for processing what they go on to encounter in the undergraduate degree. At school, not only are interests and enthusiasms formed, but ontologies, epistemologies and styles of argumentation are adopted and embedded. Governing assumptions likewise become fixed. For example, the idea that all religions are basically good, loving and peaceful, which seems, anecdotally, to be a popular view amongst freshers in British HE RS departments, is likely to have been formed in school, since we know this is the dominant view of RE teachers (Smith et al, 2018). 'Fundamental British Values' (for which RE provides significant hospitality on the curriculum) are similarly likely to be considered unassailable and viewed positively, rather than as assimilationist (Poole, 2016) and viewed more critically. Religious Education has for the last couple of decades been patterned on a 'Christianity with account taken of the other principle religions represented in the UK, along with (Christian) Philosophy of Religion and (Christian) Religious Ethics' model. Religious Studies academics have every reason to be invested in what gets taught in schools.

The future of the study of religion/s in schools (especially in England and Northern Ireland: Education is devolved in Scotland and Wales) has

never looked quite so bleak. Factors which have contributed to the weakening of the position of the subject on the curriculum include the exclusion of RE from progression metrics such as the Ebacc; the increasing number of Academies and Free Schools which either break their statutory duty to provide RE for their pupils (REC & NATRE, 2017), or provide only a confessional religious education; the dramatic fall in numbers taking public examinations in Religious Studies (a drop of 22% at A level from 2017 to 2018); the patchy provision which arises from the system of local determination, in which faith communities themselves have a significant (but unequally distributed) say; and the poor support for teacher-training and teacher subject knowledge enhancement. Against this rather desperate backdrop, the Commission on Religious Education was formed in 2016 and made its final report in September 2018. The purpose of the report is partly to bring the plight of RE into the light and to encourage debate and engagement, but primarily it offers an ambitious agenda for securing from government a basic National Entitlement to RE for which individual schools (whatever their character) would be accountable. Thus, schools with a religious character could teach their own religious education curriculum, but they must also teach the National Entitlement.

The proposed National Entitlement itself can be read on page 34 and 35 of the Commission's Final Report. It represents a significant and welcome departure from the current paradigm in so far as it shifts the focus away from 'Christianity, the five 'other' religions' (sometimes) plus Humanism.' This shift does not imply an expansion of content; non-religious worldviews have featured on RE curricula since the 1970s. Rather it acknowledges that the

world is not carved up into six world religions to which 'believing and belonging' is exclusive and all-consuming; that frameworks other than 'religion' might be relevant in meaning and moral decision making, identity construction, lifestyle and culture; and that worldviews can't be studied in the abstract without attention to hybridity, secularisation, race, colonialism, migration, etc. The proposal draws explicitly on the work of Adam Dinham and Martha Shaw and the RE4REAL project, but the turn, in RE, to what we might in RS/SoR call 'lived religion' or the 'real religious landscape' actually came decades earlier with the work of the Warwick Project which drew heavily on Eleanor Nesbitt's ground-breaking ethnographic approach to pedagogy and curriculum design (Jackson 1999, Nesbitt 2009).

The term 'worldviews' has its own limitations, of course. It implies a conscious, cognitive stance, which we might want students to question. Much productive RE/RS/SoR occurs when students explore the extent to which experience is governed by hidden (often colonial or patriarchal) meta-narratives, which are usually pre-conscious and non-cognitive. 'Lifeworlds' might have made an interesting alternative but, given that all innovation requires buy-in from current practitioners and policy-makers, this would likely have seemed too far removed from the status quo.

Religious education as it currently stands is open to interpretation by faith and belief community stakeholders as an opportunity to engage in religious/belief nurture. This new proposal moves away from the formational resonances of 'education' and towards a study of 'religion and worldviews'. It also proposes a statutory change in the relationship of faith and belief communities to the curriculum, making their assistance part of local arrangements opted into voluntarily by schools, rather than their input required by law. These proposals will be welcomed by BASR members; reservations about details notwithstanding. However, they are at this stage proposals only, and the initial reception by government has been deeply disappointing (REC 2018).

In addition to government lobbying, there is intellectual work still to be done to engage with critics, and not only those from some explicit faith

and belief communities. Key voices in the 'RE must equate to theology, philosophy and ethics' camp, such as A.C. Grayling (Wiggins, 2015) and Peter and Charlotte Vardy, continue to caricature the study of religions as merely learning (random) facts about religions; 'all about what hats people wear, what pilgrimages they go on and spelling Baisakhi [sic] right' (Vardy 2014). BASR members may wish to engage with this troubling discourse by contributing positively to debates about the principles on which the school curriculum should be based, as well as by continuing to work in university classrooms to clarify the dynamics of knowledge production in our various disciplines, and the teleology of the field.

We know that our graduates do not merely regurgitate random facts about religions. They have a robust sense of the difficulty of (and may indeed be fundamentally sceptical about) the project of 'establishing facts.' They are category-critical and theoretically informed. However, I wonder to what extent they realise the significance and value of this expertise. They could be invited as collaborators in many worthwhile projects which could capitalise on their relative closeness to the school experience compared to that of lecturing staff. Not least amongst possible projects is the need to dismantle the false 'philosophy and ethics' versus 'phenomenology' dichotomy which, as it stands in all its postcolonial glory, threatens to undermine efforts to move the school curriculum in a positive direction.

A small example of such a project is being undertaken by a University of Chester second year group of mixed Theology and Religious Studies students. They are currently tasked with deciding whether they wish to advocate for the Commission on RE's proposals. They will be drafting a letter to their local MP to make their case (either way) in informed disciplinary terms. They are not required to send their letter, but I anticipate that many of them will.

BASR colleagues who wish to support the Commission on RE's work will find helpful suggestions (including template letters) here: <https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/what-can-you-do-to-support-the-national-plan-for-re/> Colleagues interested in co-chairing and/or participating in a panel on worldviews and religious education at the BASR Conference 2020, please get in touch - w.dossett@chester.ac.uk.

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The pros and cons of the Athena SWAN scheme

Naomi Appleton, The University of Edinburgh

In 2018 my department, the School of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh, was awarded a Silver Athena SWAN award in recognition of efforts we have been making towards creating an inclusive and supportive environment for staff and students of all genders. We previously held a Bronze award (since 2014), and we have been the pioneering TRS department in the UK – the first to get Bronze, and now the first to get Silver.

Given that I oversaw the application for our Silver, it will be no surprise to hear that I personally feel very proud of our achievement. Having passed on the baton for Equality and Diversity work to another colleague, I want to pause and reflect on some lessons learned, in the hope that they might be helpful or interesting to colleagues at other institutions.

First of all, what are the benefits of participating in the scheme? The cynical answer to this is that we get a pat on the back from the higher-ups, a logo to display on our website, and an extra sign of a positive culture to mention in our REF submission and recruitment materials. I am not (wholly) cynical, however: it has also led to real and positive changes in the school's culture.

It is important to separate out the process of filling in the horrendous and huge and complex form from the process of review and discussion that underpins it. We have had to face up to two types of data – gender balance at all levels (including student recruitment and performance, and staff on committees and in management roles), and the satisfaction and perceptions of staff and students about the culture of the school. These gave us insight into a range of areas where we had room to improve. And improve we did.

Long gone are the days of all-male committees, or terrible gender imbalance on seminar programmes. We have all been encouraged to diversify our course reading lists and content. We have improved our support for PG students, including mentoring and discussion groups on topics such as “work-life balance”.

Staff have had training in overcoming unconscious bias, and in inclusive teaching. Everyone is now more conscious of the need to be more inclusive, and to expand our reach in every area of our work.

Inclusion is not only about gender, of course, and one of the major disadvantages of the Athena SWAN scheme is that it has tended to skew all attention into this single area. It made me laugh out loud when, after lengthy and painstaking analysis of the male-female statistics throughout our application, we were suddenly asked what we were doing to support trans people! Well, we could start by having a process that doesn't involve placing everybody in one of two categories...

Another issue with the focus on gender is that it can lead to backlash, from men and from people from other groups that feel they are not being sufficiently supported. A few years into the process we changed our “Athena SWAN committee” into an “Equality and Diversity committee” in order to signal our intention to widen the equality agenda. While this helped, I am aware that we still focus much attention on gender. However, this is in part because it is still such an obvious area for improvement, in an era of increased disclosure of sexual harassment, ongoing discrimination and pay imbalances, and the enduring presence of “manferences”.

While we still have much further to go, especially in tackling other areas of inclusion, I do feel that the Athena SWAN process – and the wider E&D discussions and activities that have resulted from it – have been beneficial. But if you are embarking on the process yourself, make sure you have sufficient support from data specialists and people who have been through the application themselves. It is far from a transparent or straightforward process, and is obscenely time-consuming, but with the right support, and the right intentions, it is still an opportunity to do some real good. And because Athena SWAN is a bigger fish than individual institutions, it offers valuable external leverage for change.

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT ... IN CHILE

*Boris Briones,
Chilian Society for the Sciences of Religion
www.religiones.cl*

While studies of religious phenomena in Europe and the United States have a much longer tradition, studies of such a kind (from a non-confessional perspective) in Latin America are relatively recent. This is because confessional theology occupied an important space for decades in the multidisciplinary study of religions, generating dogmatism and religiocentrism to the different fields of study. However, in recent decades, Latin America has begun to promote a current of thought and research that starts from scientific and non-confessional assumptions, which addresses religious plurality and diversity of beliefs and does not focus on a single religion.

Chile has joined this path, as in recent years emphasis has been placed on religion and its study from the academic world. Although there are still no postgraduate programs for religious studies available in the country from a multidisciplinary viewpoint, Chilean academics have understood that it is increasingly necessary to access this type of knowledge with the aim to understand the role of religion in history and contemporary society.

Recently, the issue of abortion has been discussed in Chile—mirroring current debates in Argentina. The main opposition that Chile had to face from religions themselves, mainly in the form of two of its most controversial standpoints: Catholic and Evangelical (this in no case means that all Catholics or all evangelicals were opposed at the time). Controversy erupted as some parliamentarians intended to

legislate using religious precepts and biblical foundations. Such ambitions eventually failed, and abortion became legal in Chile. However, it is still outlawed in Argentina, while lay groups and civil society continue to fight for the rights of all citizens.

Religion has a strong incidence in the development of public policies. In the case of Chile, we are still expecting an Equal Marriage Law, one that may allow people of the same sex to marry, and we are also waiting for advances in laws on euthanasia or homoparental adoption. All of these are themes that some religious people oppose, claiming that these types of laws are against life as commanded by their prophets and great religious leaders, or simply because they do not like them.

Citizenship in Chile presents a disenchantment with religion, and this is mainly due to the scandals associated with the Catholic Church that have become known in recent times: cases of sexual abuse and concealment that have delegitimized many priests and high ecclesiastical officers. This has dealt a heavy blow to civil society, who have seen the rise and fall of an institution that to this day maintains a strong presence in parliament, with conservative deputies and senators belonging to Opus Dei or to the Legionaries of Christ.

Why is it important to study religion in Chile? If religious phenomena were to be studied in its historical, cultural and social context, this would help us to better understand the present and political

situation by making people aware of the fundamental reasons that certain religions have to maintain particular outlook. More importantly, considering that despite the fact that the Constitution in Chile has Church-State separation since 1925, a Lay State has not actually been guaranteed, since religion still has a strong presence in the public sphere. The drafting of a new Constitution has been called for, among other things, to guarantee the secularity of the State.

One of the most controversial issues today is religious education in primary and secondary schools. In Chile, according to Decree No. 924 dated September 1983 (during the military dictatorship), the teaching of religion in educational establishments is compulsory. Although one of its articles states that education can be based on any creed, in practice this does not happen, since only Catholicism or Protestantism is taught, mainly because there is no training for religion teachers that covers a wider range of religious traditions. However, there is a small group of religion teachers who have been trained in various beliefs and are pushing to extend this class to "religions" in the plural, giving greater emphasis to the multiplicity of beliefs around the world.

Currently, the study of religious phenomena in Latin America is entering a new stage. During the twentieth century, various Americanist anthropologists began to draw new lines of research that contributed to the theoretical and methodological discussion of world religions. They mainly focused their attention on the beliefs of indigenous peoples, which, until that time, had been approached from mostly dogmatic conceptions. Knowledge transcended academic boundaries and settled into history, albeit with the misgivings of more traditional historians who refuse to give surnames to the discipline. According to these scholars, history is simply history, everything is history, and the history of religions, like economic history, is only history and should not bear a surname.

Latin America currently faces an academic challenge of global importance: to promote the study of the non-confessional religious phenomena and to deal with detractors. In this first stage, we must make religious studies known, explain in detail what they consist of, underline what the differences are when

compared to confessional approaches, and disseminate our lines of research among students and academics. If we encourage new generations in this area, in a couple of decades, the field of religious studies will thrive.

Dealing with dissident voices entails several aspects. I am not referring to a sociopolitical confrontation, but to reason and knowledge. Evidently, as in every aspect of religion, there will be countless detractors: on the one hand, believers of religions that defend confessional visions and studies, refusing to allow outsiders to study and interpret their beliefs. On the other hand, perhaps there will be some atheist "activists" who will mock religions and refuse to study them. They often make their appearance with an imaginary moral and intellectual superiority, and they regard believers as inferior beings as they consider themselves at the height of knowledge since they do not believe in a particular faith. They also entirely disregard the field of religious studies. For instance, it is hard to keep track of how often I have been met with questions about the concept of a science of religions. I have already lost count. Nevertheless, we must understand that in no case are we saying that religion is science. The concept of a "science of religions" alludes to the fact that through different scientific disciplines, researchers may approach the study and understanding of the religious phenomena. The term "science" is used for its breadth as a branch of human knowledge and set of knowledge on a given issue. It is not an oxymoron, like some social network pundits want us to believe.

The academic future in religious matters throughout Latin America faces an important challenge: to disseminate and promote knowledge of the sciences of religions. Many more will join this initiative along the way, but we must also understand the social responsibility that comes with studying beliefs. First of all, respect for others: let us remember that believers of certain religions are our contemporaries, so our research may have an impact on them. Caution and prudence are essential. This is one of the challenges we have taken up with the Chilean Society for the Sciences of Religion, and we hope to continue advancing at the national and Latin American levels, through academic investigation and diffusion of the non-confessional study of religious phenomena.

RE:THINKING VICTOR & EDITH TURNER

Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture.

Victor and Edith Turner's seminal study of pilgrimage is a landmark in studies of pilgrimage, bringing a formerly marginal topic centre-stage in studies of religion and anthropology, and helping develop what is now an extensive field of study. The Turners' focus on pilgrimage especially spurred anthropological research putting their theories to the test and producing counter-theories. The book is now regarded as a foundational text in the genealogy of pilgrimage studies (Müller 2011: 197; Badone 2014:9), even as its theories have been challenged.

While *Image and Pilgrimage* (1978) is focused on Catholic pilgrimage sites, its influence extends beyond the narrow confines of Christianity (in reality, for the Turners, Catholicism, a faith both had converted to) to studies of pilgrimage cross-culturally. It depicted pilgrimage as a social and ritual process framed by the themes of liminality and *communitas*. Liminality, in van Gennep's analysis, is a transient period in which people during rites of passage are set apart and out of normal social structural order before being reintegrated into society. This liminal period is unsettled but empowering, a gateway to enhanced standing, and the Turners applied this idea to pilgrimage, viewing pilgrims as liminal beings away from home, outside the normal social structures and in the realms of anti-structure. This empowered them and enabled them to develop fleeting but powerful common bonds (which the Turners termed *communitas*) with fellow pilgrims. This spontaneous sense of common purpose and meaning—*communitas*—might dissolve as pilgrims moved away from the goal of

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their pilgrimage and back into normative society, but it represented an idealised state at the heart of pilgrimage and an anti-structural challenge to normal social patterns and structures. One can detect in the notion of *communitas* the Turners' own faith orientations, as converts to Catholicism who found a sense of belonging with others when they visited pilgrimage sites associated with their faith.

Pilgrimage for the Turners challenges functionalist approaches to ritual practices; rather than reinforce social structures, it gives rise to an alternative unmediated, anti-hierarchic, egalitarian state, namely *communitas* (1978: 250). Pilgrimage thus has universal dimensions, bringing people (albeit transitorily) together in an idealised state. While this goal may be utopian, it remains intrinsic to pilgrimage and to what pilgrims seek. The Turners also reinforced Eliadean notions of the sacred and profane by treating pilgrimage sites as sacred centres 'out there', set apart from the everyday world and seemingly innately imbued with special potency.

While such ideas were highly attractive and generated enthusiasm when they first appeared, they also spurred others to test whether they (notably the concept of *communitas*) worked in different pilgrimage contexts. The general result was negative; several criticisms of *communitas* as the central element in pilgrimage developed, most strikingly in John Eade and Michael Sallnow's *Contesting the Sacred* (1991) which argued, via essays examining Christian pilgrimage sites in settings from Europe to Sri Lanka and the Andes, that pilgrimage involved a field of competing discourses and relations and that contest between interest groups (often reiterating social structures), rather the production of an anti-structural coming together, characterised pilgrimage. Conversely, few studies found *communitas* to be a viable overarching interpretation of pilgrimage. Nowadays few in the field would accept that any grand theory, such as that proposed by the Turners, could provide adequate analysis or interpretation of the complex multiplicity of phenomena involved in pilgrimage, and some even felt that the Turnerian paradigm took the field into a "theoretical cul-de-sac" (Coleman and Eade 2004:3). The Turners have also been criticised for reducing pilgrims to an undifferentiated mass (Aziz 1987) and viewing pilgrimage through the lens of social processes while neglecting its orientations as a highly individualised practice (Morinis 1984).

The critiques have continued, while with various studies have drawn attention to how pilgrimages and sites, rather than being set apart and 'out there' as in the Turnerian mode, may be deeply embedded in the dynamics of the mundane world. Anne Gold's (1989) study of Rajasthani pilgrims, for example, showed how pilgrimage was an aspect of their lives rather than something set apart from and liminal to it. Studies such as Suzanne Kaufman's (2004) examination of Lourdes' development as a pilgrimage site and my discussion of Japanese pilgrimage dynamics (2014) have raised and further questioned earlier notions—inherent in the Turners' study—that valorised the 'sacred' as a special agency set apart from the 'profane' world and arguing that instead, it is a construct within the everyday world. Such studies also argued that one had to also understand the role of various agencies (from shrine priests to secular firms and political and civic bodies) involved in the development, promotion and enactment of pilgrimages, rather than (as had the Turners) focusing almost exclusively on pilgrims.

At the same time such critiques have recognised that the Turners helped develop the foundations for later studies, notably via their comment that “a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist” (1978:20), a comment that recognised that pilgrimage and tourism are closely linked. While their focus was more on sacralising (or to see elements of the 'sacred' in) aspects of secular behaviour than in embedding pilgrimage in a mundane environment they did, in such terms, help to draw attention to the interpenetration of the ludic and the sacred in pilgrimage contexts. This has become a dominant aspect of later studies and has helped break down artificially constructed barriers in academic literature between 'religion' and other modes of behaviour including economics and entertainment.

The Turners' 1978 book has thus led to various critiques, and its core theories, portraying pilgrimage as a social process with anti-structural ideals in which *communitas* is its core dynamic and aspiration, have been widely questioned. Although as a theoretical contribution its influence has clearly waned, the ideas it set forth, the interest it provoked in a formerly less well-studied topic area and the debates it stimulated, have played in developing and

creating interest in the study of pilgrimage remain unparalleled. It remains a classic, both the most cited and most critiqued volume in the study of pilgrimage, one few scholars working on pilgrimage fail to refer to it, even as they commonly find problems with it.

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conferences

35TH ANNUAL SANSKRIT TRADITION IN THE MODERN WORLD SEMINAR, MAY 25TH, 2018, UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

We were delighted to welcome 22 participants to the 35th meeting of STIMW on Fri 25 May 2018. STIMW was first convened by Dr Dermot Killingley of Newcastle University in 1984. In 2006 it moved to Manchester. From the outset, STIMW has received precirculated papers, encouraged postgraduate contributions, been open to members of the public and been non-profit-making. Over the years it has welcomed papers from international scholars and early doctoral students alike, with dancers and storytellers also contributing. The entire time allocated to a paper is devoted to a brief introduction to the paper by a discussant followed by open supportive discussion with the author which makes this an ideal forum for gaining feedback for initial ideas through to chapters of books.

This year, Peter Connolly led discussion on Jacqueline Suthren Hirst's exploratory paper on 'The problem of social memory in Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta' (Manchester). Drawing on Tulving's well-accepted distinction between episodic memory, which draws on a person's own past, and semantic memory of content independent of particular memorisers, Suthren Hirst then examined the claim that in the contemporary 'memory boom' social memory has been conceptualised primarily in terms of episodic rather than semantic memory. Noting the relative lack of attention given to the critical analysis of saṃpradāyas as a vital form of social memory transmitting the content and interpretation of the fundamental texts in Indian schools and Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta in particular, Suthren Hirst asked whether contemporary questions about collective

memory, including Ingold's development of the notion of the externalisation of memory, might illuminate a critical discussion of the Sanskrit material. A lively debate ensued on whether such an approach was requiring an inappropriate 'fit' to one particular set of categories in the multi-theorised, burgeoning and ever-developing 'field' of memory studies or whether detailed study of the 'ecology' (Ram-Prasad) of Śaṅkara's understanding of memory might not only challenge a rather 'western-centric' set of discussions but thereby provide new questions to engage with.

Jackie Hirst then chaired discussion of the first of two postgraduate papers, Rosie Edgley's 'Exploring śakti in Śrīdhara's Subodhinī' (Manchester). This paper was part of Edgley's doctoral investigation into the different ways in which Krishna in the Bhagavadgītā is understood in three Advaita Vedāntin thinkers, of whom the fourteenth century Śrīdhara is the second (the others being Śaṅkara and Madhusūdana). Śrīdhara, who also wrote a commentary on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, is often interpreted through the lens of later Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology which emphasises the multiple powers (śaktis) of the Lord. Edgley interestingly proposed that the understanding of Śrīdhara's Advaitin predecessor Citsukha of svaśakti as the inherent power through which words function, and in this case indicate brahman, might provide an alternative way of conceptualising Krishna's sattvic body which thus gives the follower a way of talking about brahman. A theory of performativity, rather than, or as well as, one of language, was suggested as a possible fruitful avenue of thought.

The third paper, by Karen O'Brien-Kop (SOAS), continued an investigation of language with an insightful

exploration of the ‘cloud of dharma’ (dharmamegha) in terms of conceptual metaphor theory. She argued that there is a distinct shift from the full abundant nurturing raincloud of the final stage of the bodhisattva path in various early Mahāyāna texts compared with the contemporary Pātañjaliyogaśāstra’s understanding of the highest ‘cloud of dharma’ state as one of cessation and examined four possible explanations for this shift, thereby highlighting the contribution conceptual metaphor theory has to make to the study of Indian texts. Matthew Clark led the discussion drawing on his own understanding of a wide range of yoga material. Readers should watch this space for Karen’s dissertation which will shortly be submitted.

Lynn Thomas (formerly Roehampton), herself an important Mahābhārata scholar, was then discussant for Brian Black’s (Lancaster) paper on ‘Narrative Plurality in the Mahābhārata: three versions of a dialogue between Duryodhana and Dhṛtarāṣṭra’. This was a particular treat for STIMW participants, as it forms part of a chapter of a book Brian is writing on Dialogue in the Mahābhārata, a book which has sprung from an earlier paper given at STIMW. Brian explored the three very different dialogues about the run-up to the famous Dicing Game and proposed that the richest reading is not to try to remove inconsistencies but to appreciate the different perspectives from which they explore key questions about how things come to be. ‘Fate’, responsibility, freedom, temporality, playing with time through framing, and irony and manipulation were topics of lively debate.

For the final session, we were delighted to welcome Alice Collett from Nālandā University, North India, whose intriguing paper reminded us of the dangers of reading inscriptions through the lens of normative brahminical Sanskrit texts. Her focus was a Prakrit inscription in the largest cave at the top of the Nānēghāṭ mountain pass which, though badly damaged, has been attributed to the Sātavāhana queen Nāgaṇikā, first century BCE. Her paper carefully laid out the views of key previous scholars, whose interpretations all differed considerably but shared the desire to interpret the inscription through particular brahminical texts of their choice and thereby to undermine Nāgaṇikā’s own agency in a variety of ways. Alice’s bold contention was that if we read the inscription carefully and without such a lens we see a feisty female leader acting in her own right. Reminding us of the importance of acknowledging custom

and practice even in dharma texts themselves, she then proposed that perhaps Nāgaṇikā could be seen as a trend-setter who even influenced textual formulations. Simon Brodbeck, the discussant (Cardiff), asked whether we could find evidence of such a direct influence and initiated a conversation about what we know of the importance of Vedic rituals and who would be responsible for their continuation in the case of a regency. Slides of the location and the inscription formed a stunning backdrop to a fascinating day and the organisers would like to thank all those who have contributed papers, acted as discussants and attended the symposia over the last 35 years.

The likely date for the next STIMW will be Fri 24 May 2019 with the location in Oxford. A link will be put up on the website (www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/stimw) when this is confirmed.

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‘BETWEEN REASON AND FAITH: SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS WORLDS IN THE (POST-) MODERN AGE’, XXVI BATH READINGS CONFERENCE, 29-30 MARCH 2019, MOSCOW

The Bath Readings gatherings are organised by editor and founder of the prominent publishing house New Literary Observer (NLO), Irina Prokhorova. NLO publishes three journals, hosts two annual conferences, publishes around 80 books per year, and is involved in a range of education and research projects. The 2019 conference was at InLiberty, a cultural centre in the Presnensky district, on the theme “Between Reason and Faith: Secular and Religious Worlds in the (Post-)Modern Age”. The result was a scholarly discussion that problematised the idea of postmodernity and the postsecular, blurred the boundaries of the religious and the secular, interrogated social phenomena including consumerism, nationalisms, science and civic life, and ranged widely over religious and spiritual phenomena, with a strong emphasis on contemporary Russia. The conference was organised in four sessions over two days, and every speaker had an hour for the presentation and questions.

The first session, Spirituality as a New Cultural Category, opened with Boaz Huss (Ben Gurion University of the Negev) on “Spirituality as a New Cultural Category and the (Post)Modern Transformation of the Religious and the Secular.” He sketched the traditional uses and meanings of the term spirituality, located its current usage in the post “New Age” context, and argued for a more nuanced view of how spirituality as an idea bridges the religious and the secular. Mark Sedgwick (Aarhus University) then spoke on “Traditionalism as a Critique of (Post-)Secular Modernity”, revisiting René Guénon’s ideas about modernity and his embracing of Sufism as an alternative. The third and fourth papers, Elena Stepanova (Institute of Philosophy and Law, Russian Academy of Sciences, Urals) on “Morality and Religion in a Secular Age,” and Alexey Zygmunt (Social Philosophy at Russian Academy of Sciences) on “The Phenomenon of Martyrdom in Western Nationalisms of the 18th to the 20th Centuries” remained broad in focus. Zygmunt on martyrdom was the most controversial paper of the conference, as he collapsed the distinction between dying for a religious cause and dying for a secular cause, claiming the two phenomena were in fact identical.

The afternoon session, Cults and Invented Religions, focused on new religio-spiritual phenomena, with distinguished NRMs scholar Boris Falikov of the Centre for the Study of Religion at the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH), addressing “New Religions as a Postsecular Phenomenon.” He was followed by two entertaining papers, Olga Khristoforova (director of the Center for Typological and Semiotic Folklore Studies at Russian State University for the Humanities) on “Mind the Gap: Flat-Earthers Between Experiment and Imagination” and Alexander Panchenko (director of the Center for the Anthropology of Religion at the European University at St Petersburg) on “Ufology as a Religion.” The last presentation of the first day was Carole M. Cusack (University of Sydney) speaking about “Fiction and the Memory of ‘Cultic Violence’: Charisma, Power, and Gender in the Peoples Temple and the Manson Family.” The conference dinner was held that night at Optimist, a nearby Serbian restaurant.

The opening session on the second day, A Genealogy of the Postsecular Age, began with Dmitry Uzlaner (Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences) who offered “Four Genealogies of Postsecularity” (sociological, normative, postmodernist and theolo-

gical). Greg Yudin (Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences) shifted the focus to politics with a presentation titled “A Political Theology of Plebiscitarianism” which discussed populism in contemporary religion and politics. One of the best papers followed, veteran scholar of fringe movements and religions Victor Shnirelman (Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology) on “Geopolitics, Katechon and the New Irrationalism,” which addressed post-Soviet Russian Orthodox fundamentalism. The final morning paper was Sergei Shtyrkov’s (European University at St. Petersburg) “Between Civic Initiative and Academic Inquiry: Religious Studies as Practiced by Ethnic Activists in North Ossetia,” which concerned the interactions between activists reviving Ossetian religion and the folklorists who study and preserve its traditions.

The final session, The Secular and the Religious in the Post-Soviet Context, focused on contemporary issues in the Russian Federation. Victoria Smolkin (Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, Wesleyan University, US) spoke on “The Second Baptism of Rus’?: The Soviet Experiment Between Secularization and De-secularization”, a theoretical paper. This was followed by Anna Sokolova’s (Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences) detailed study of “Cremation in the Late Soviet Union: From Discourse to Practice.” The final two papers were similarly related, with the more overview presentation of Nikolay Mitrokhin on “Religiosity and the Soviet Intelligentsia from Mid-Century to Perestroika: The Attempt at a Systematized ‘Religious Revival’ in the Soviet Union” followed by Zhanna Kormina (Higher School of Economics, St Petersburg) on “Genetics and the Sacred: On Necropolitics in the Post-Truth Era,” which was concerned with the bodily relics of the Romanovs and the custodianship role of the Russian Orthodox Church with regard to them. The conference closed with a reception on the evening of 30 March. It was a privilege to attend this event at the invitation of Irina Prokhorova, and thanks are due to the translator who made it possible for the three non-Russian speakers (Sedgwick, Huss and Cusack) to comprehend the papers delivered in Russian. It was fascinating to get an insight into the discipline of studying religion in the Russian Federation, as well as an idea of the key issues in religion in Russian society, culture and politics.

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University of Sydney*

RELIGION AND WELFARE IN EAST ASIAN CONTEXTS – A RESEARCH ROUNDTABLE. MARCH 1ST, 2019, UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS.

On 1st March, the Centre for Religion and Public Life and the department of East Asian Studies held a day-long research round-table aimed at exploring the role of religion and social welfare in the East Asian context. Religious groups and teachings have long played an important role in social welfare, with significant amounts of education, medical care, and social services being provided to the general public by religious organisations. In many ways, the East Asian context offers a stark contrast to dominant European welfare models in the lack of uniformity within the region. Yet, there remain some common cross-national characteristics, including low public expenditure on welfare; adoption of a facilitating role by the state; the central role of the family and community in informal provision of assistance, rooted in strong and pervasive cultural-religious values stemming from Confucianism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity. This research day featured presentations from a range of scholars working across the region (including Chinese and Japanese contexts) to discuss changing discourses and patterns based on ongoing innovative empirical projects and fieldwork with different religious traditions.

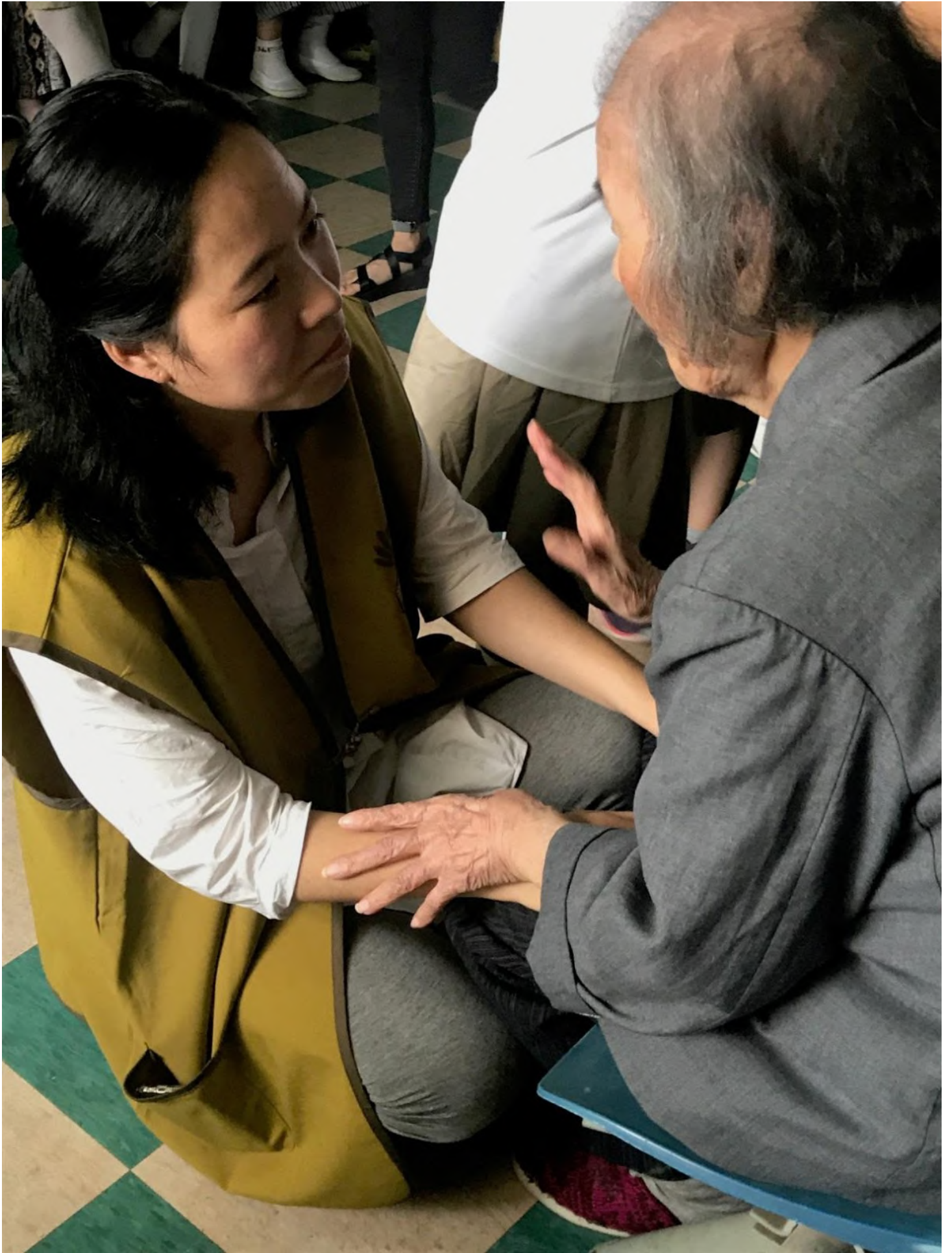
Dr. Jane Caple (University of Copenhagen) opened the discussion by unpacking notions of welfare and virtue in contemporary Tibet. Drawing from her extended ethnographic fieldwork on Buddhist communities in the Tibetan plateau, she examined the impact that socio-economic transformation, cultural change and politics of welfare had on ideas of wealth, virtue and the social good. In relation to religious activities and practices of giving more specifically, she unpacked different and competing ideas of welfare within the community. While recent years were marked by an increasing engagement of Buddhist monks in community development and welfare activities, practitioners did not always agree with these developments, Caple reported. At times traditional forms of religious giving (e.g. funding the construction of a temple) in their quality of merit-making actions were seen as more valuable to the community.

In her presentation, Hollie Gowan (University of Leeds) offered some of the insights emerged from her doctoral research, which investigates the inter-

section of gender, religion and volunteering in contemporary China. Her paper focused on the accounts of women working for religiously inspired charitable organisations, most notably the Buddhist NGO Tsu-chi. Based on the notions of 'goodness' articulated by her participants in interviews, Gowan suggested that narratives of social welfare promoted by Tsu-chi provided women with a space of legitimacy where they can gain social recognition in compliance with the limits prescribed to their sex. For these women, volunteering and 'being a good Tsu-chi member' turned into a means to be acknowledged for their efforts and skills, whilst conforming to cultural values, social expectations and politically constructed gender roles.

Aura Di Febo (University of Manchester) presented some of the findings from her PhD thesis, centred on the social welfare activities of Risshō Kōseikai, a Japanese lay-Buddhist organisation. Di Febo drew from her ethnographic data on practices of informal provision of care implemented by the organisation in the Tokyo metropolitan area to discuss their intersection with the broader framework of Japan's social welfare system. The key concept behind Kōseikai's engagement was the idea of filling the 'gaps in the system', i.e. address the needs left unattended by other formal or informal providers of care. While practitioners conceived these efforts as a form of missionary practice, Di Febo suggested that social care activities also served to carve out a space for Kōseikai as a religious organisation, and renegotiate its position within contemporary Japanese society. The outcome of this negotiation, however, was only partially successful.

Further insights on the Japanese context were offered by Dr. Takahashi Norihito (Tōyō University, Japan), who discussed the support activities for foreign residents and asylum seekers promoted by religious organisations in Japan. Takahashi reported that religious organisations are involved in a wide range of relief activities, including livelihood aid, legal counselling, assistance with bureaucratic practices and promotion of intercultural exchange and inclusivity. The case-studies presented (a Catholic church and a Muslim organisation), however, offered a glimpse into the many obstacles faced by religious organisations, including formal constraints related to Japan's immigration law, the constitutional principle of separation between religion and the public sphere, ethnic and religious discrimination, practical limita-



tions and difficulties in gaining cooperation from state and local communities.

Dr. Caroline Fielder (University of Leeds) added to the discussion on the complex relationship between state, religion and society with her paper on charitable organisations in China. In recent years, the Chinese state increased opportunities for the intervention for religiously inspired organisations in social welfare provision. Religious groups have assumed growing relevance in fostering social inclusivity for vulnerable groups. However, Fielder argued, the spaces where these organisations operate are made 'fragile' by the relative lack of regulations defining them. This ambiguity may give religious organisations some leverage to 'push the boundaries' in the planning, promotion or implementation of their activities, for example in terms of articulating their religious connotation. The lack of regulations, however, puts religious groups in a risky position, exposed to accusations of illegitimacy.

Overall, the presenters drew attention to the multifaceted and shifting definitions of social welfare and 'goodness', and the ways in which these are put into practice by various actors in different socio-cultural contexts. They highlighted how theoretical conceptions and practical circumstances of social welfare provision (or lack thereof) opened potential spaces of action for religious actors, creating both obligations and opportunities for intervention. Within these spaces, religion can play a role in the promotion of collective good. At the same time, social welfare becomes also a site for the remaking of institutional boundaries and the redefinition of social roles and personal identities.

This research day laid a stepping stone to a more in-depth exploration of these dynamics and further collaboration between the Religious Studies and East Asian Studies departments at the University of Leeds. As commented by Dr. Caroline Starkey, member of the Centre for Religion and Public Life and co-organiser of the event: "My aim for the research day was to cement the positive relationship between the CRPL and EAST, where we could come together and discuss themes and topics of mutual interest to us both. The research day meant we were able to think across a range of East Asian contexts, giving us a space to discuss similarities, differences and synergies. By creating this space, we were able to learn a lot from one another and I look forward to working together in the future on possible publications and research projects."

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<https://religioninpublic.wordpress.com/2019/04/08/religion-and-social-welfare-in-east-asian-contexts-research-roundtable-review/>.

reviews

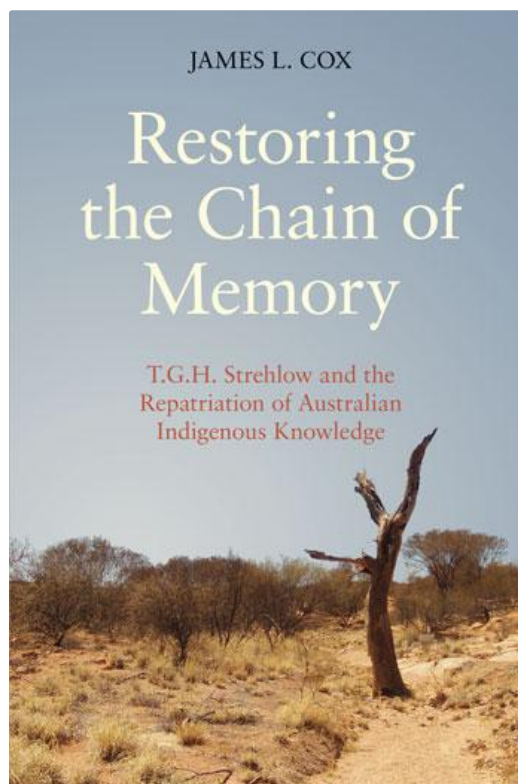
COX, JAMES L., RESTORING THE CHAIN OF MEMORY: T.G.H. STREHLOW AND THE REPATRIATION OF AUSTRALIAN KNOWLEDGE. SHEFFIELD, BRISTOL: EQUINOX. 2018, XIX, 202 P. ISBN 978-1-78179-337-4

The publications of Theodor Georg Heinrich (T.G.H.) Strehlow and his father Carl have accompanied my academic journey from the very beginning. One of my first essays I wrote as a student of anthropology (at Marburg University) was about the very complex Australian kinship system and based on Strehlow's work. Later on, I became familiar with their writings about Australian religions and was keen to visit Hermannsburg, the mission station where Carl Strehlow worked and T.G.H. Strehlow grew up. Finally, in 2006, I managed to visit the place that is now turned into a museum. But it was not until I moved to the UK and started teaching study of religions that I learnt about the controversy around the work of both Strehlows, father and son. Carl Strehlow's work was widely rejected by his contemporaries, in particular

British anthropologists, because of his work as a missionary of the Lutheran church. His critics regarded his insights into the Australian indigenous religion as biased due to his theological background. I

wondered even then why they overlooked his knowledge of several Australian languages and his defense of Australian aboriginals against the growing threats of cattle ranchers. And as Theodor lived as a child in Hermannsburg, his work seemed tainted by association.

Therefore it gave me great pleasure to read this excellent evaluation of Strehlow's work by James Cox. *Restoring the Chain of Memory* presents a detailed assessment of Theodor Strehlow's work as well as a critical discussion of those who challenged it. Cox starts with an outline of the wider context (including Carl Strehlow's influence) and summarizes carefully Strehlow's insights into the mythology, theistic understanding, religious practices and more (chapters 3-5). He further outlines the wider academic context



by discussing the relevant theories of religion (chapter 2). In chapter 7, Cox even argues that Strehlow could be seen as a phenomenologist of religion though as an anthropologist I find this argument not very convincing as Strehlow could also be seen as a typical anthropologist of his time. To some degree, the phenomenological argument seems to distract from the main point of the book which is about the loss of religious knowledge. Cox's detailed discussion of the repatriation of Australian indigenous knowledge and the contribution of the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs will lead the way for further studies.

His excellent insight into the impact of the Strehlow archive on today's indigenous Australians and its contribution to understanding makes this book a "must read" for anyone working on Australian indigenous cultures. But the impact of the book goes beyond Australian studies. Cox's assessment of Strehlow's understanding of indigenous cultures in Australia makes a wider contribution to scholarship through his careful discussion of the ethical challenges of using insights into knowledge that was regarded as secret/sacred. This discussion is of wider significance for academia, for scholars working on indigenous cultures, not only in Australia but elsewhere. Cox carefully assesses the accusations against Strehlow and points towards the agency of the elders who had shared their knowledge with him. It reminded me of a small exhibition in Melbourne I saw several years ago. In the exhibition background voices spoke about their disappointment with Baldwin Spencer, former director of the museum and other early scholars of aboriginal tradition, who published the knowledge they had shared with them without their permission. One accusation was that they shared with these outsiders only stories they would use to educate the younger generation. Hence the argument of this audio-visual exhibition was that Baldwin and others misrepresented the Aboriginal cultures in their publications. The small exhibition (from 2006) still resonates in my memory as it also made sense in my own research area, the African derived religions in the Americas, in which access to knowledge is organized according to the stage of initiation. Cox's argument goes in the same direction with his detailed discussing of types of knowledge. He presents in his book a strong case for the importance of the agency of the elders and their authority over knowledge. He then links the discussion to skills of the researchers, in particular linguistic skills.

Already in the discussion of the criticism against the Strehlows (father and son) Cox highlights the language skills of the Strehlows. While Carl Strehlow became familiar with some languages, Theodor Strehlow had grown up with indigenous children and became fluent in several languages which later enabled him – according to Cox – to gain the trust of the elders. While I wonder how much the memory of Carl Strehlow was still present among the elders and might have helped Theodor to win their trust, Cox's careful explanation about the misunderstanding of the so-called dreaming due to translation errors sheds an important light on the mistakes of the early anthropologists and its impact until the 21st century.

My only critical point is the missed opportunity to discuss the significance of gendered knowledge. Although Cox refers to the role of women in ceremonial traditions (pp. 77ff), he overlooks the importance of gendered access to knowledge which also has an impact on how knowledge is shared with others. Strehlow – as well as his critics – as a man would consequently have had access to the secret/sacred knowledge of male elders. His insights into female knowledge must have been minimal if not non-existent. While Cox corrects a common misconception that women do not have any ceremonial role, he could have followed this line of thought further by linking it also to Strehlow's access to knowledge. However, this is a sideline. I welcome Cox's discussion of Strehlow and the debate about repatriation of knowledge. We hear a lot in the news recently about repatriation of objects. The British Museum as well as the Victoria and Albert Museum and other museums all over the world receive nearly weekly demands about the repatriation of objects stolen during the colonial times. The repatriation of oral knowledge is little discussed. Cox's insight into the archive and the way the Strehlow Research Centre is handling the issue of secret/sacred knowledge offers a way other archives (present and future) can follow. His study makes an important contribution to the study of religions, as well as to anthropology and archaeology.

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**MANISHTANA, ARIEL SAMSON: FREELANCE RABBI
(2018 MULTIKOSHERAL PRESS)**

Ariel Samson is the first novel by African American Orthodox rabbi, blogger, and author of two works of non-fiction, *MaNishtana*. It is billed as semi-autobiographical and indeed, it tells the story of African American Orthodox rabbi Ariel Samson who quite clearly shares *MaNishtana's* experiences, values, and even sense of humour.

The first thing to note is that at 400 pages it's long for any novel, and must present quite a challenging read for the uninitiated: a ten page glossary of Yiddish and Hebrew terminology opens the book, and these terms are given in bold throughout the text. There are a few possible reasons for this, but principally *MaNishtana* has an enduring passion and focus for all things Jewish and revels in the tradition; his fascination is infectious and endearing, at least for those sympathetic to it.

Despite this, *MaNishtana* is an amusing and entertaining writer. His style is engaged and the characters are sympathetic, even if slightly overloaded with snarky contemporary humour. The frontispiece review quote describes the book as "messy", which is not a word I'd choose: *MaNishtana* is enthusiastic writer, and loves to deal in depth with everything from modern politics to descriptions of Talmudic debates so his writing style is effervescent, but not sloppy; structure-wise the text is well paced and interesting throughout, with some unexpected twists and some surprisingly vulnerable moments given the overwhelming sass of his style. At times I wondered if there were some element of wish fulfilment to just how cool and dynamic Ariel is – at least until about

halfway in when we begin to see more of Ariel's inner turmoil and some of his flaws and challenges – but this is also a facet of the author's own enthusiasm for his subjects.

In terms of what a scholar (or interested layman) may learn, the book is rich (indeed, as mentioned, it would be hard going for anyone without a passing interest and knowledge of modern Judaism). Rich in terms of Jewish tradition, literature and history, but also in terms of 21st century American racial politics as well as modern dating and life in New York generally.

The trials and tribulations of black Jews in America are recounted fluently and with palpable frustration;

Samson, a Jew by birth, faces repeated questions about either why he converted or how he is Jewish – questions never raised for paler coreligionists and which function as the equivalent of "So where are you from? No, originally I mean"; he passes his rabbinic smicha but is still assumed to have only a passing knowledge of Judaism; he is berated for identifying as black or even raising matters of race, when Judaism is colourblind and Jews "not black and not white" (*Mishnah Negaim 2*). Even when he leads a congregation with aplomb he still exists on the periphery of Judaism and faces outright racism on top of daily microaggressions. His faith, his attachment to

the tradition he grew up in and knows as an integral part of his own life is constantly challenged by not just the white Jewish establishment which sees him as an oddity or even an imposter, but also by the non-Jewish African American community which sees him as a traitor or a victim of Stockholm syndrome.

The racial tension of 21st century America is ever present; with perspicuous clarity he describes the moment Ariel enters his housing block to find four



cops at the entrance; a too enthusiastic greeting lands their hands on their holsters and Ariel's heart in his throat as he realises that, shabbat evening and he is without his phone, wallet or ID; simply another young black man in a hoodie, his rabbinic ordination meaningless, and his Jewishness irrelevant and invisible.

This is clearly important work and the issues facing the black Jewish communities across the western world are very similar – whether by birth or conversion, black Jews are judged as not naturally Jews, and often relations between the (non-Jewish) black and (non-black) Jewish communities are fraught, with black Jews caught in the middle. This is especially the case in America, where the twentieth century has seen brief unifying moments (the all too commonly raised example of Herschel marching with MLK being a point of bored contention) but all too many difficulties in the present moment; in particular the tension over issues such as the position of Jews (notice the lack of racial qualifier, an absence which itself represents a presumption, by most, of Jewish homogeneity) in the spectrum of white privilege and racial hierarchy, and the vexed question(s) of Israel-Palestine. These issues are touched on, and MaNishtana is clear about where he locates European

Jews on the racial spectrum, while emphasising the historically multi-(and not just bi-) racial nature of Judaism.

In these times the question of black Jews' status is growing beyond America; not only the Ethiopian Beta Israel, but a surprising number of communities in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Ghana are either claiming long tribal traditions of descent from Israelites, or are pursuing conversion as a spiritual quest. The enthusiasm of these groups and the falling religiosity of the western Jewish community has led some scholars to claim that this century will see a fundamental reorientation of the Jewish world such that the majority of practicing Jews will soon be black, or at least from the global south [An argument made by William Miles in *In the Shadow of Moses: New Jewish Movements in Africa and the Diaspora* ed. Daniel Lis, William F.S. Miles and Tudor Parfitt (Loyola: African Academic Press, 2016), p.9]. While not dealing explicitly with any communities outside of America, MaNishtana's book serves as a readable primer for issues which are only set to multiply.

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Members' Recent Publications

Leonardo Ambasciano

- 2019 (with Thomas J. Coleman III) "History as a Canceled Problem? Hilbert Lists, du Bois-Reymond's Enigmas, and the Scientific Study of Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfz001>
- 2018 *An Unnatural History of Religions: Academia, Post-truth and the Quest for Scientific Knowledge*. London and New York: Bloomsbury. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/an-unnatural-history-of-religions-9781350062382/>.

George D. Chryssides

- 2019 *Historical Dictionary of Jehovah's Witnesses*. 2nd edition. Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- 2018 'Suicide, Sucidology, and Heaven's Gate.' *Journal of Religion and Violence* 6(2): 191-205. ISSN 0738-098X. doi: 10.5840/jrv20188153
- 2018 *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter. Entries on: Lectionary II.D; Letter, Letters V.E; Leviticus, Book of IV.B; Lie, Lying IV.D; Liturgical Books II.E; Logos IV.D.; Lord's Day II.F; Lord's Day Observance Society; Lord's Prayer III.D; Lord's Supper II.G. Vol.16: 11-12; 230-231; 387-388; 514; 856-857; 1022-1023; 1117-1118; 1119-1120; 1133-1134; 1174-1175.

Alastair Lockhart

- 2019 *Personal Religion and Spiritual Healing: The Panacea Society in the Twentieth Century*. SUNY Press. <https://www.sunypress.edu/p-6674-personal-religion-and-spiritual.aspx>

Moojan Momen

- 2018 "Millennialist Narrative and Apocalyptic Violence: The Case of the Babis of Iran." *Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religion* 20, 1-18. <http://www.jbasr.com/ojs/index.php/jbasr/article/view/24/27>

Eleanor Nesbitt

- 2018 'Sikhism' in Hilary Callen (ed.) *International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- 2018 'A Focus on Sikhism', *Community Practitioner*, April, 34-36.
- 2018 'Reflections on Two Centuries of Western Women's Writing about Sikhs'. *Religions of South Asia*, 12, 2.
- 2017 'The Hindu Tradition and Childhood: An Overview' in Anna Strhan, Sue Ridgley and Stephen Parker (eds) *Childhood and Religion: A Reader*. Bloomsbury, 33-40.

2017 'Contemporary Sikh Society', 'Rāmgarhīās', 'Bhāṭrās' and 'Nānaksar' in Knut Jacobsen, Gurinder Singh Mann, Kristina Myrvold and Eleanor Nesbitt (eds) *Brill's Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, Brill, respectively pages 219-225, 274-282, 294-299, 380-385.

Paul Weller

2018 "Learning from Experience, Leading to Engagement: Lessons from Belieforama for a Europe of Religion and Belief Diversity", *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, 27 (2), 423-432.

2018 "Religious Minorities and Freedom of Religion or Belief in the UK", *Religion and Human Rights: An International Journal*, 13 (1), 76-109, DOI: 10.1163/18710328-13011160.

2018 "Religious Freedom in the Baptistic Vision and in Fethullah Gülen: Resources for Muslims and Christians", in John Barton, (ed.), *A Muslim Sage Among Peers: Fethullah Gülen in Dialogue with Christians*, Blue Dome Press, 133-156.

2017 (with Kingsley Purdam, Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor and Nazila Ghanea), "Religious Organizations and the Impact of Human Rights and Equality Laws in England and Wales", *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, 18 (1), 73-88, DOI: 10.1080/21567689.2017.1297235.

2017 "Christian-Muslim and Muslim-Christian Dialogue Initiatives, Movements and Organisation", in David Thomas (ed.), *Routledge Handbook on Christian-Muslim Relations*, Routledge, 423-432.

Michael York

2019 *Pagan Mysticism: Paganism as a World Religion*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing,

obituary

Dr. Jean Lydia Holm

1943 – 2017

Jean Lydia Holm died in Northbridge Hospital, Auckland N.Z. on 13th August 2018 in her 96th year.

Jean and I go back to our first meeting at the Vacation Term for Biblical Studies at St Anne's College in Oxford in the early 1960s when I was a young teacher. Notable about her then and in the later contexts of the Shap Working party on World Religions in Education and The British Association for The Study of Religions was not only her intelligence and commitment to religious education and religious studies but also her warm friendliness and encouragement of others. As the years went by I became more and more aware of what a splendid role model she was.

Later when I was working at St Martin's College in Lancaster, married with a young family, Jean used to stay with us when she came to the committees overseeing the Schools Council Project on Secondary Religious Education based in the new and exciting Religious Studies Department at Lancaster University. She was equally at home with early morning visits and chats with the youngest member of the household as with high-powered theological conversation.

Jean's written work, including that with John Bowker, is still relevant and on my shelves and represents the best of the exciting expansion of religious studies and religious education into multi-faith issues. She was one of UK's pioneers and very successfully crossed and erased the boundaries between involvement in school practice through her work as Head of Department at Homerton, which has two portraits of her, and academic excellence in her work for the Cambridge University Faculty of Divinity.

In 1994, the year Jean returned to her homeland, I

was on an academic exchange with Peter Donovan of Massey University and visited Jean in her new home, a bungalow in Auckland with a garden already in production. She was a great gardener. In her typically generous way she renewed her acquaintance with the young conversant from Lancaster days, about to be a JRF at St John's Cambridge and currently Professor of Graeco-Roman History in Oxford. Jean with her typical generosity, provided her with a lift from the NZASR meeting in Hamilton back to Auckland with an overnight stay at her home before driving her to catch her flight home. We have since enjoyed being educated in the politics, social, ecclesiastical, interfaith and educational issues of Aotearoa /NZ by reading together Jean's amazingly informative Christmas letters.

Jean had been very committed to the formation of the new National Research and Education Centre for the Study of Religious Diversity (RDC), with a base in the Department of Religious Studies at Victoria University at Wellington under Professor Paul Morris, and with a branch in Auckland. She donated her books to the Auckland branch and they now form the Jean Holm Library. This national organisation has established an annual lecture to be known as the Jean Holm Lecture and details of a short biography on Jean is on the Religious Diversity Centre web site.

Her family has found it very consoling that Jean died knowing of these decisions and are glad that her work has been acknowledged.

Jean's star has shone brightly and we remember her with love and admiration.

*Peggy Morgan
Mansfield College, Oxford*

“‘Religion’ itself is
part of our cultural
imperialism.”

Timothy Fitzgerald 1997, 96

