

## Editorial note

Since their inception Religious Studies in Finland have been dominated by ethnography. In part this emphasis is associated with the creation of a Finnish identity and nation in the latter part of the 19th century, and the need to find roots among perceived brother nations further East in the great Russian empire. When such painstaking linguistic and anthropological fieldwork was combined with the theoretical sophistication of the British evolutionary anthropology of Edward Westermarck (1862–1939), a long series of robust ethnographical studies, such as those conducted by Uno Holmberg-Harva (1882–1949) and Rafael Karsten (1879–1956), was the result.

Much water has passed under the proverbial bridge since these men. Towards the end of his life Westermarck himself had the less than pleasing experience of seeing his contemporaries viewing him as a respected but largely irrelevant historical figure, clinging to outdated and even exploded ideas. Indeed, ethnographic method as a whole is occasionally challenged, as shown, for example, by Martyn Hammersley's thought-provoking *What's Wrong with Ethnography?* (Routledge 1992).

Nevertheless, while theories and methods have developed, the passion for ethnography has remained in Finnish and indeed Nordic religious studies. It is therefore a great pleasure for me to present this ethnographically focused issue of *Temenos*. In the first article Eva Toulouze and Niglas Liivo follow in the trail of the early scholars of Finno-Ugric peoples to Northern Bashkortostan, where the traditional Udmurt religion is still very much alive. Their article focuses on the key figure in Udmurt ritual, the *vös'as'*, or sacrificial priest. Toulouze and Liivo sketch a fascinating pattern of performance and transmission, taking into account the variations in practice in two local groups of villages. The researchers conclude on a sombre note: while Udmurt religion and society are doing quite well, the next few years will probably bring substantial social challenges.

In the second article Sabina Hadzibulic turns our attention to Serbia and the celebration named the *slava* or *krsna slava* (celebration of the christened), in which a family annually celebrates its patron saint. In Serbia the *slava* ranks alongside Christmas and Easter in importance, but, although its roots reach as far back as medieval times, it was marginalised during the communist period of Serbian history. After an overview of the *slava*'s history Hadzibulic turns to the present, as the *slava* has regained its significance and recognition with the reaffirmation of the Serbian Orthodox Church at the end of the last century. It has now transcended the private family sphere,

becoming an indicator of ethnicity and status with little connection to its original religious meaning and purpose. Additionally, what was originally a family tradition has become a festival for many public institutions, companies, and professional associations. The transformation of the *slava* therefore illustrates the profound changes that this Balkan country has undergone in the last few decades.

From the Urals and the Balkans we turn to Finland and netnography. Instead of looking at persons and institutions as the first two articles do, Teemu Pauha examines the rhetorical construction of a global Islamic community in the Facebook prayers of young Finnish Muslims. He convincingly shows that the prayers portray a universalising umma identity. However, he goes further, showing that they are also a mechanism used in its construction. Pauha argues that rhetorically oriented discursive psychology has proven a fruitful framework for approaching online prayers. Perceiving prayers as argumentative communication, Pauha claims, aids in making sense of the questions and contrasts embedded in them.

Staying in Finland, in her exciting article Iлона Raunola examines the conditions of spiritual process in a new kind of religiousness called Lightprayer, founded by a Finnish-German couple. Using extensive ethnographic material analysed through actor-network theory (ANT), Raunola emphasises the contributions and roles of both human and non-human actors in the actualisation of the spiritual process in Lightprayer, arguing that the interaction within the practices of Lightprayer is essential to understanding this new kind of religiosity.

From Finland our journey becomes paradoxically international but simultaneously ephemeral. In his empirically rich article Stefano Bigliardi takes a close look at the booklet *Scientology and the Bible* (1967), reconstructing the historical circumstances of its publication as well as analysing its potential for interreligious dialogue. Through this booklet Bigliardi takes us on a tour of the history of Scientology, showing that for a limited period public relations with other religions became an increasingly important topic for Scientology. Nevertheless, as this transient state of affairs soon disappeared, the booklet, originally published under the ambitious label of a 'manifest', is now no more than an anomalous piece of Scientology ephemera.

Finally, we return to the Balkans and ethnography. The Temenos lectures, sponsored by the Finnish Association for the Study of Religions, are annual lectures by noted international scholars of religion. Last year's lecture, given at Turku University on 26th September 2016, by Professor Mirjam Mencej of the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University

of Ljubljana, affords a fascinating insight into discourses on witchcraft and uses of bewitchment narratives in contemporary rural eastern Slovenia.

Together, these articles show us some of the exciting methodological and theoretical richness of contemporary religious studies. I am sure that Westermarck, Holberg-Harva, and Karsten would be pleased by the ways in which their heritage is being conserved, developed, and reinvented.

Måns Broo

