

Words from the guest editor

This special issue of *Temenos* is published in honour of Håkan Rydving. Rydving was born in the small town of Vännäs outside the city of Umeå in 1953. His parents, Tore and Maja, were both teachers at the elementary school (*folkskola*). His interest in languages began at an early age when he saw the Eurovision Song Contest and heard 'La Suède, 12 points'. This also triggered a lifelong passion for music: he has worked part-time as a cantor.

He moved to Uppsala in the 1970s and started his studies in languages and history of religions. At a very young age he became a teacher at the university of both Finno-Ugric languages and religious studies. He also studied Semitic languages, mainly Arabic and Hebrew, as well as Indo-European languages like Sanskrit and Pashto. However, the Sami languages and religion became his major interests. At Uppsala he met Professor Jan Bergman, a historian of religions specialising in the religions of the Near and Middle East. Rydving took part in Bergman's inspiring seminars on various topics within the history of religions in the 1980s and early 1990s. Eventually, Rydving became Bergman's research assistant, and they made several journeys together to Israel, Egypt, and other places. Although Bergman was not an expert on Sami religion, he encouraged Rydving to take his doctoral degree within this field. As Rydving recalls, he received an offer from the Swedish Bible Society (*Svenska Bibelsällskapet*) to supervise the new translation of the Bible into Swedish. On the same day Rydving met Bergman on the stairs to the Department of Religious Studies. Bergman asked Rydving if he wanted to write his thesis on a theme related to Sami religion. The thesis *The End of Drum-Time: Religious Change Among the Lule Saami, 1670s–1740s* (1993) has become a classic, much quoted and considered an exemplary text.

In 1994 Rydving and his family moved to the city of Bergen. As one of the very few Finno-Ugric specialists in Norway, he was appointed Professor in History of Religions, specialising in Sami religion. He is currently the only such professor in the world specialising in Sami religion. At the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion he met prominent scholars within the history of religions like Einar Thomassen, Lisbeth Mikaelsson, Michael Stausberg, Richard Natvig, Dag Øistein Endsjø, Maria von der Lippe, Sissel Undheim, Knut Jacobsen, and Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, of whom the last two have contributed to this volume.

Håkan Rydving has written and co-written more than a hundred papers and several books on Sami topics as well as themes within other fields. He

has supervised fourteen doctoral students, among them Olle Sundström, a contributor to this issue. His teaching has covered various topics such as 'Old Scandinavian religion', 'Sami religion', 'Jewish and Arabic philosophy', 'religion and music', 'religion and art', and 'religion and politics'. He has tutored international as well as Norwegian students.

The papers collected here in honour of Håkan Rydving's sixty-fifth birthday present different interpretations of the theme 'Religion and Politics in the Past and the Present'.

Is it possible to see religion and politics as separate entities? The answer might be obvious, but the relationship between religion and politics can be considerably more multifaceted than we might think. For example, the use of history has proven very important for different religious organisations (see *Temenos* 2011 on religion and the importance of history). Religious organisations may rely on old texts as authoritative records. A state may make decisions concerning how to regard religious movements as appropriate or not, depending on their message. A state may also decide what is to be regarded as suitable in its records within its own religious history and thus censor parts that it deems not to fit. At different times religions may be fitting for a state or organisation in a way that was once fitting but is no longer. These are some of the topics the following articles address.

Olle Sundström reflects on the concept of 'shamanism' as the Soviet authorities understood it from the Russian Revolution onwards. With the Revolution shamanism was categorised as 'religion' along with Christianity and other religions. In the 1930s shamans were persecuted but they were also protected and given back their civic rights. However, the debate concerning whether shamanism was to be considered religion continued until the 1950s. Sundström shows that the concept of religion – as in numerous cases – depends on the political context.

Veikko Anttonen deals with the impact of the Reformation on the mental and moral landscape of the Nordic Countries. There has been a scholarly view that Lutheran Reformation notions (ethics) were transformed into the ideas of the later nineteenth-century Nordic Welfare States. Anttonen points out that this transformation was not unambiguous: religion played various roles in the Nordic countries, including in the political movements of the nineteenth century. Anttonen offers examples of the significant differences between the Christian notion of land and the notions of indigenous cultures. Christians identified the landscape with Jerusalem in opposition to the traditional view of the Sami people. Thus, the notion of Lutheranism has shifted, which is important to note within the study of religions.

There has been a great deal of debate regarding the Emperor Constantine's relationship with Christianity. According to Morten Warmind the faith of Constantine may be dubious, since the sources are written by Christians under the supervision of later, Christian emperors. Rather than focusing on motivation, Warmind exposes the legal actions of Constantine: what did the emperor actually do? There is some evidence that ancient customs remained important to the public. There are not many non-Christian authors. However, the historian Flavius Eutropius – who deals with the laws of Constantine – mentions the 'observance of ancient customs' if public buildings should be struck by lightning. According to Warmind one has to distinguish between the personal religious behaviour of the emperor and the attitude towards public religion.

Knut Jacobsen's paper is on the revival of Sāṃkhyayoga and Indian Buddhism, which had almost disappeared from India, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sāṃkhyayoga texts probably affected the understanding of Hinduism as one religion. One authority of these texts was Swāmī Hariharānanda Āraṇya. At the same time Buddhism was rekindled in the nineteenth century, and it was claimed that the true essence of Buddhism was only to be found in ancient texts. These texts became important for the Dalit (Untouchables) Buddhist movement in India. One of the leading figures in this movement was B. R. Ambedkar. As Jacobsen claims, Āraṇya and Ambedkar were different characters, but both relied on what was believed to be original teachings that diverged from the contemporary traditions. There were no authorities left on these ancient traditions. New identities could therefore be formed around them.

Religious power and authority is closely associated with clothing. Ingvild Sælid Gilhus examines the charismatic authority of monastic dress in Egypt in the fourth and fifth centuries. The incorporation of clothing in monastic rules was essential to how monks understood it. Experiences, monastics, and the moulding of bodies were equally important. The *melote*, the sheepskin, was central to the monks. It expressed and reflected the authority of the monks' charismatic leader. Sælid Gilhus shows that all these ideas of religious authority were embedded with the wearing of monastic dress.

Guest editor
Stefan Olsson

