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Editorial Note

What does Temenos – the Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion – mean to you? As we take on the task as editors of Temenos, we, the new editors – Minna Opas and Sofia Sjö – have had reason to reflect on this question. Neither of us accepted the task of editor without some hesitation. This hesitation is partly linked to the role Temenos has played for us – it is an important outlet for Nordic research and an essential forum in which Nordic scholars come together. As scholars, we want to ensure the journal continues to fulfil its purpose. Our hesitation is also linked to the question of what we have to offer. How can we guarantee the continued high quality of the journal in the future? How and in which direction should we develop it?

Fortunately, we are not alone in this process or with these questions. Temenos has a fantastic editorial board and editorial team, with many active readers and contributors. We hope we can continue the dialogue with all of you. If you wish to contribute to the journal or have ideas for thematic issues, please let us know. Similarly, if you have any thoughts on new sections, topics, or areas of discussion with which Temenos might engage, do contact us. Although we have a great deal of expertise in the study of religion, it is you, the readers and contributors, who really make this journal what it is. We hope we can continue developing Temenos with you!

This issue not only has two new editors; we also have a new book review editor. We welcome Alexandra Bergholm to the team! If there is a book you want to review, or if you have a book coming out that you would like reviewed, please get in touch with Alexandra! Copyeditor Pekka Tolonen, Editorial Secretary Malin Fredriksson, and Language Editor Rupert Moreton will continue their work in the editorial team. We look forward to working with you!

We start this issue by returning to the conversation started in the previous issue. An editorial mistake meant that Ruth Illman's and Mercédesz Czimbalmos's response to Margit Warburg's comment on their article in Temenos 56/2 is published in this issue instead of the previous one. Måns Broo sends his apologies for this glitch in the editorial process. However, this discussion is just as interesting and current now as then, for it highlights

the challenging question of what is novel in research, and how we engage with previous investigations and fields unfamiliar to us.

This response is followed by four articles. We begin with Sonja Hukantaival's study, which explores the international aspects of Finnish folk magic. Hukantaival has compared objects in two Finnish museums with objects from Nordiska museet in Sweden and the Pitt Rivers Museum in the UK to reveal resemblances and differences in the collections. Many similarities are identified which can at least partly be explained by the historical networks between people, but one can also find variations in practices and beliefs. These variations highlight the dynamic nature of folk magic traditions. Nor must one forget the role museums' collection and curation policies play. The varied formation processes of European museum collections make comparisons between them difficult, but the connections found by Hukantaival are still noteworthy.

In the following article Tero Pasanen explores the Spiritism board, *Yhteyslauta*, designed in the mid-1970s by the Finnish occultist and neo-Nazi Pekka Siitoin. The board represents an unexplored occult subchapter of Finnish gaming culture and the Finnish esoteric tradition. *Yhteyslauta's* game-like elements are introduced, and the game is related to other similar games. Pasanen also introduces Pekka Siitoin and his thinking, and studies the themes and images of the board, situating them in the context of Siitoin's vernacular esoteric doctrine and cosmogony. *Yhteyslauta* can be interpreted as an introductory tool for acquiring the knowledge required to gain spiritual ordination. However, Siitoin never disclosed whether *Yhteyslauta* was used as a medium in his alleged meetings with Christ, Lucifer, and Satan-Moloch.

Encounters with spirits are also the focus of the third article in this issue of *Temenos*. Southwest Finnish folklore, recorded in the early twentieth century, contains many legends about local spirits. They are part of belief systems expressing social norms and regulations. Many of the legends include information that helps locate the places where spirits have been said to appear. John Björkman studies those locations in his article, exploring their place in the structure of village society, using historic village maps. The results shed new light on the nature of borders and boundaries in folklore and vernacular belief, as well as on the view of the social meaning of local spirits.

The fourth article, written by Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen and Kirstine Helboe Johansen, studies how Christmas in schools and public service media for children involves negotiation and renewal of Christian cultural heritage. The studied cases, from Norway and Denmark, illustrate how the

institutions involved seek to realize community. Community is approached differently in different settings; it is either understood restoratively as a process in which children become part of an existing societal community or constructively, as establishing an inclusive community across cultural and religious divides. The writers show how activities associated with Christianity are generally framed in a language of 'museumification', not as part of a living religious practice. Whereas Islam is positioned as a 'religious other', Christianity – understood as culture – facilitates creative heritage making, establishing community across religious divides.

Together, the articles in this volume highlight many current topics for the study of religion in the Nordic countries and beyond. Esotericism and aspects of magic and the belief in spirits are very much on the agenda, but so is exploring the networks and places shaping beliefs and practices. Christian cultural heritage in turn ties research on politics, migration, and education in both Nordic and broader European perspectives together.

We hope you will enjoy this issue!

Sofia Sjö and Minna Opas



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Response to Margit Warburg

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We have received and read Professor Margit Warburg's response to our article with sincere reflection and self-assessment. We regret the shortcomings of the information retrieval process and acknowledge that Professor Warburg's contributions to the conceptualization of the field are indeed valuable and noteworthy. We also acknowledge that she mentioned this to us in a comment on our presentation at the EASR conference in Tartu in 2019, and that we later failed to follow up on it.

It is perhaps always a sign of hubris to employ the words 'novel' and 'new' in a research article, and in retrospect it would have been wise to underscore more clearly the following important caveat (p. 171 and 173): 'The analytical model contributes to the study of vernacular religion by bringing together major themes recognized as relevant in previous research in a structured theoretical and methodological framework and by offering an analytical tool for detecting these themes in ethnographic materials'. This phrase is included in the abstract, which is one of the most important identifiers in commonly used research repositories and information retrieval systems, along with the title, authors, and keywords. This means that our caution should be readily noticed by anyone happening on our article in their information search. However, we acknowledge in response to Warburg's reading that this statement received too little prominence in the argument, skewing it towards the novelty aspect, which should not have been the focus.

Our main objective in this article was to contribute to the ethnographic research within the study of contemporary religions. Thus, the fields of sociolinguistics, leadership training, and educational or even quantitative research within the sociology of religion, for example, were not the main

scope of our reference work. However, we do acknowledge that an excellent study should of course have described and credited all the related fields in which similar terminology had been employed. However, within the limits of a single article this was an insurmountable task.

This underlines the validity of Warburg's observation that in contemporary digital information retrieval processes it is challenging to discover information sources that do not use the keywords at which you target your search as relevant indexing identifiers, that is, in the publication's title, abstract, and keywords. This is especially true of monographs and edited volumes such as those mentioned by Warburg, which clearly offer relevant perspectives on our research theme but have not been indexed in a way that makes them retrievable in a search based on the keywords we used. The concepts of knowing, being, and doing do not appear in the title of Warburg's monograph dealing with the matter, *Citizens of the World: A History and Sociology of the Baha'is from a Globalisation Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), nor in any of its subtitles, abstract, or index terms; they are embedded in Chapter 8, where they leave only faint or no traces in the metadata.

We therefore share Warburg's concern about the increasing dominance of digital publications in our scholarly milieu and the likewise increasing impermeability of the information landscape in which researchers of religion and neighbouring disciplines today are navigating. This flood of information makes it increasingly important for researchers to delimit their objectives and the claims made in their research. The concepts of knowing, being, and doing (which in our simple model can be used in any order or combination) are indeed generic and have thus been used in a great many studies of religion, as exemplified by Warburg. This makes the task of delimiting the discussion in any given article on the theme even more important, as well as clearly indicating which scholarly discussions one regards oneself as participating in and advancing. This became one of our most demanding challenges during the editorial process.

We were rightly criticized by our two anonymous peer reviewers for the broad span of our sources, and strongly advised to streamline and solidify our argument by focusing our references on a more particular area of research. We therefore focused only on scholars who employed the term 'vernacular religion' in their research and regarded their research as contributions to this particular ethnographic tradition (in particular, as an alternative to the more widely used notion of 'lived religion'). Furthermore, we focused on researchers dealing with contemporary Judaism and Jewishness, apart from the section in which we gave examples of various cultural and religious contexts in which the term 'vernacular religion' has been attempted. It was unfortunate that Warburg's excellent study evaded our attention because of its focus on

quantitative analysis, the study of the Baha'is, and its disciplinary rootedness in the epistemological traditions of the sociology of religion. In hindsight, the same can be said of the other examples listed by Warburg: they are indeed examples of prominent research using the generic concepts, but not from the perspective of vernacular religion, ethnographic research, or Judaism, which are the sources of our argument.

Finally, in response to the suspicion that all future researchers will feel required to reference our article we would like to adopt a more modest perspective. As a trained librarian (Illman) and an archivist with vast experience of processing big data (Czimbalmos), we would in the first case advise any researcher not to use Google Scholar as their main tool for information searches, even if it has a strong impact on the visibility of scholarship, as Warburg stresses. We would attach less significance to the fact that algorithmic research tools currently pick up our article in Warburg's search: these results are constantly changing and depend on algorithms that are arbitrary, biased, and substantially shaped by previous information behaviour, location, commercial interests, and chance. Against this background researchers can easily omit our article from their future reference lists if our focus is of no immediate relevance to them. Likewise, we hope that researchers seeking to contribute to other epistemological traditions and conceptual developments within the broad span of the study of religions find their way to the very important studies indicated by Warburg.

We would again like to thank Professor Warburg for her substantial and valid remarks concerning our analysis, and acknowledge her long experience and strong record of excellent scholarship and publishing in the study of religions, as well as the carelessness of our review of previous research in the field. While we have not referenced her work duly in the current contribution, we have amended this shortcoming in our subsequent work in forthcoming publications. Most importantly, we welcome the broad discussion, so eloquently aired by Margit Warburg, of the growing challenges each researcher of religion, or any other discipline, faces today in seeking to conduct solid and informed reviews of previous research in an increasingly unmanageable information environment.

* * *

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International Magic? – Finnish Folk Magic Objects in a European Context¹

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Abstract

This paper explores international aspects of Finnish folk magic. Folk magic objects in two Finnish museum collections (the National Museum of Finland and Museum Centre Vapriikki) are compared to analogous objects in the Nordiska museet in Sweden and the Pitt Rivers Museum in the UK to reveal the collections' resemblances and differences. The material in question dates to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many similar objects occur in these collections. Explanations for this are sought in historical networks between peoples. Yet a closer inspection also reveals variation in practices and beliefs. This reveals the dynamic nature of folk magic traditions, although collection and curation policies also play a role. Moreover, the complex connections between religion, medicine, and magic are uncovered.

Keywords: folk magic, folk medicine, cross-cultural comparison, material culture, Finland, Europe

I have endeavoured to show that Finnish and Lapp magic was isolated, until comparatively modern times, from external influence except that of other Arctic peoples. Among these, however, the practices correspond so closely that Arctic magic is essentially the same from Finland and Lapland on the west to Kamchatka on the east.

The above quotation is from an early twentieth-century paper by Folklorist Wilfrid Bonser (1924, 63). He arrived at this conclusion by studying

¹ The author wishes to thank Raila Kataja of the National Museum of Finland, Sanna Särkelä and Marja Pelanne of the Finnish Heritage Agency's Collections and Conservation Centre, Riitta Kela of Museum Centre Vapriikki, and Nicholas Crowe of the Pitt Rivers Museum. This study is funded by the Academy of Finland (314622).

incantations and the epic poems of the *Kalevala*. This conclusion is likely to have delighted the Finnish national romantics of the time, who would have appreciated the idea of a pure and original Finnish folk magic, or at least one with roots among Arctic (Finno-Ugric) 'kinsfolks'. While the idea of purity has long been both abandoned and irrelevant, recent research has not focused on cross-cultural comparisons between folk magic found in Finland and elsewhere. Similarities and differences in traditions reveal networks and processes of adaptation and rejection of ideas. This is why many archaeological studies take an interest in cross-cultural comparisons. However, in Finland, folk magic has traditionally been studied by folklorists rather than archaeologists. The research history is therefore likely to have caused the lack of discussion.

When reading older Finnish research on folk religion and mythology, one finds ample comparisons with practices and beliefs in Europe, and especially in other Finno-Ugric areas (e.g. Haavio 1942; 1967; Harva 1948). Indeed, in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries a comparative method called the historic-geographic or Finnish method dominated folklore research in Finland and beyond (e.g. Krohn 1971; Wilson 1976; Dégh 1986). This method called for huge collections of material that were compared with similar data from other geographical areas. Its aims were to reconstruct the original 'urforms' of folklore texts, and to trace their place of origin and migration patterns. Later, the method was criticized for its either evolutionary or devolutionary assumptions. Moreover, the folklore texts were often treated as if they were superorganic entities independently migrating from place to place. While research paradigms also shifted, the historic-geographic method became obsolete and fell out of use in folklore research (e.g. Dégh 1986, 78f.). In the case of folk magic, the historic-geographic research paradigm resulted in considerable collections of oral incantations and other folklore concerning magic practices, as well as museum collections, but the paradigm shifted before these were extensively studied.

Recently, questions concerning the materiality of magic practices have interested archaeologists and other material culture studies researchers in Europe (e.g. Wilburn 2012; Houlbrook & Armitage 2015; Boschung & Bremmer 2015; Parker & McKie 2018; Gosden 2020). This paper is therefore part of a project funded by the Academy of Finland that aims to understand the material evidence concerning folk magic in Finland. This project focuses on the folk magic object collections of two museums in Finland, the National Museum (KM) and the Hämeen museo collection at Museum Centre

Vapriikki in Tampere (HM). The objects were acquired by the museums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and were used up to the time of their acquisition. The project's previous publications introduce the National Museum of Finland's collection of magic objects and discuss their agency (Hukantaival 2018; 2020).

This paper focuses on the international (north and west European) aspect of the magic object traditions: is it possible to identify cross-cultural magic objects, and how were ideas about magic objects shared and transmitted? The relationship between religion (Christianity), medicine, and magic traditions is also discussed. In contrast with the old historic-geographic method, the idea is not to find the origins of the magic objects or to trace complete migration networks, but to discuss examples in which networks may have influenced the traditions. The objects in the Finnish museums are compared with similar objects in two other European museums: the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford in the UK, and the Nordiska museet in Stockholm in Sweden (NM). Objects mentioned in historical sources, published folklore, and previous research are also discussed. Comparisons between Finnish and Estonian magic objects are discussed in another paper (Hukantaival, Jonuks, & Johanson, manuscript).

The materiality of folk magic

Snake's court stone: Gneiss. Oval-shaped, cross-section almost round. Surface unpolished. Colour dappled grey. Donated by Moses Pykälistö who had 'received it from Granny Ahola, already dead for 10 years, was over 90 when died. Granny had told that when one kept it in the pocket in court, there was nothing to fear, even if one was a little wrong' Location Saarijärvi, Samuli Paulaharju's scholarship collection in 1905 (Museum Centre Vapriikki, HM 47:159).

The above example from a museum catalogue sheds light on what the material aspect of folk magic means in the context of this paper. Here, the objects in question are classified as belonging to folk magic in the museum catalogues, and this labelling was already done in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Within this label in the two museums we find 451 main catalogue entries of objects used to induce desired results in everyday concerns: as medicine; to ensure good luck in livelihood and other daily activities; to awaken or eradicate love; or as amulets protecting against harm. Some objects are used for aggressive (curse) purposes: to destroy the

growth of a field or the fishing equipment of a rival fisherman; or to punish a thief with a nasty disease. Ordinary people and more specialized healers and cunning folk used these objects (See Figure 1).

Magic is by no means a problem-free category (e.g. Buss, Wax, & Wax 1965; Hammond 1970; Otto & Strausberg 2014). It carries a heavy burden of ethnocentrism, colonialism, patronizing, and othering. It is a scholarly cat-

Figure 1. These seven objects and their wooden container belonged to cunning man Elias Huttunen in Pielavesi (KM F1275). The objects are snakes' court stones, a piece of a thunderbolt, a silver brooch, a ring that had been used to marry three couples, and a bear claw. The catalogue entry includes detailed information on how Huttunen used these, for example, in healing and finding cattle lost in the forest. The objects came to the museum some twenty years after Huttunen's death in 1903. Photo by S. Hukantaival.



egory that may not have been recognized in the cultures where it is applied. As can be seen above, practices labelled as folk magic include elements that westernized modernity does not see as effective or in accordance with reality. However, seeing magic as counter-intuitive or irrelevant only hinders the opportunity to understand diverse worldviews, and how human realities are created. While it is true that choosing to use such labels as folk magic continues this tradition, we still need to communicate with the words we have (cf. Hukantaival 2015).

In this paper the problematic category is embedded in the material, as objects that have been labelled as belonging to folk magic in the museums were chosen for the research. As always, it is difficult to define the boundaries of an abstract category such as folk magic. Do objects mass-produced for sale belong to folk magic? What is the degree of education a person must have before their magic is no longer folk magic but learned or esoterics? Where is the line between magic medicine and academic medicine? As becomes evident below, it is best to acknowledge that the category remains ambiguous. To include a brief remark on the local language, the Finnish word for magic, *taika*, is a loan from a Germanic word that meant 'sign, omen, or miracle' (Häkkinen 2013, 1255).

Of the functions connected with magic mentioned above, medicine is perhaps the most familiar. It refers to something used to restore health in cases of trauma or illness. Naturally, views of sickness and health vary in different cultures. Where medicine is mainly seen as working mechanically/chemically in modern science-based contexts, understanding its efficacy in other contexts calls for familiarity with the specific culture and worldview. Medicine objects may have been used to press against an afflicted area of the body, pulverized and ingested, or worn on the body to cure an illness. An amulet is a small object worn or carried typically for protective purposes (Bailey 2018, 48). The functions of medicine and amulet overlap when an amulet is worn to cure or prevent disease. An amulet may also be worn to ensure good luck, but a good-luck-bringer does not need to be an amulet. For example, objects were placed in buildings to protect the inhabitants and ensure good luck (e.g. Hukantaival 2016; Hoggard 2019).

The magic objects in the Finnish museums belong to the ethnological collections. Yet only a few ethnological publications discuss them (e.g. Sirelius 1906; 1921; Manninen 1933). Additionally, some studies focus on narrative material (folklore), mentioning the use of similar objects (Issakainen 2006; Ratia 2009; Piela 2011). Enthusiastic collectors who participated in a massive

effort to record the local folk culture formed the magic object assemblages. Naturally, their formation has influenced the collections. For example, the collectors' interest in asking about objects and their behaviour towards possible donors or their sellers have had consequences. Moreover, the classification in the museum shapes the collections.

The two reference collections in this paper, those of the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford and the Nordiska museet in Stockholm, were chosen for their geographic representation. The Swedish Nordiska museet represents a neighbouring area of Finland, and it was assumed that its collections would show more similarities with the Finnish collections due to the close contacts between Swedes and Finns, while the Pitt Rivers Museum was chosen as exemplifying objects from areas farther from Finland. The two reference collections differ in volume. The Pitt Rivers Museum houses enormous collections, and different folk magic-related search commands in its Online Database for Objects in the Collections² resulted in a selection of 667³ European objects or sets of objects belonging to the same catalogue entry (see also Cadbury 2015). This is by no means a comprehensive list of magic-related objects in the Pitt Rivers, but the focus was on objects that resembled the uses or forms of objects in the Finnish collections. A similar online search in the Swedish DigitaltMuseum⁴ database led to a selection of 223 catalogue entries in the Nordiska museet.

The results from the online database searches are influenced by how objects have been classified, and the kind of keywords assigned to them. For example, both the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Nordiska museet house commercially made amulets and objects, but these are missing in the Finnish collections. The Nordiska museet houses copper amulets against cholera and small objects called *spiritus*. A *spiritus* is usually a metallic beetle inside a small box and is believed to bring fortune to its owner (Holmberg 1928, 144–7; Östling 2001). The oldest known account of such an object is from the seventeenth century (Holmberg 1928, 146). There is also folklore about the *spiritus* (*piritys*) in Finland – for example, one account explains that these objects could be bought in Turku (Holmberg 1928, 144). For some reason, however, no such objects survive in the Finnish folk magic collections. This may simply be due to chance, but the collection and classification processes

2 <http://databases.prm.ox.ac.uk/fmi/webd/objects_online>, accessed 6 August 2020.

3 A set of 65 objects was selected for closer analysis at the museum. However, this work was scheduled for April 2020, so it was cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The planned visit to the Nordiska museet was cancelled for the same reason.

4 <<https://digitaltmuseum.se/>>, accessed 6 August 2020.

may also have caused this if these objects were not seen as worth collecting or were not classified as folk magic.

The diverse formation processes (the influence of individual collectors, the museum policies, curation, etc.) of the European museum collections makes comparisons between them difficult, and the observations in this paper therefore cannot be complete. Naturally, since visiting the collections abroad was limited because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the progress of the digitalization of these collections also causes bias in the results. Moreover, the selection of the objects for this paper was largely subjective. However, for the purposes of this study these shortcomings cause no major problems. The online searches combined with objects mentioned in historical sources, folklore, and previous studies produced adequate information to reveal both similarities and variation in magic object traditions.

How material magic traditions may have spread: a long-term perspective

The seeming similarity of magic beliefs and practices everywhere in the world and throughout history has caught the attention of many scholars. The classic interpretation saw magic as an ancient relic that remained within cultures (e.g. Tylor 1891; Frazer 1922). More recently, some scholars have suggested explanations based on human cognition (e.g. Pearson 2002; Sørensen 2007). Other scholars have suspected that researchers themselves construct magic by applying this concept to observed cultural phenomena (e.g. Pocock 2006). All these interpretations may contain a seed of truth; however, to further the field of study, scholars of magic need to consider the latter perspective very seriously. Yet as we will appreciate in this paper, when studied closely, magic traditions are less rigid than they appear from a more general perspective. When the worldview allows for magic causation, new elements and innovations may be adopted in the existing traditions (e.g. Stark 2006, 320f.).

Traditional culture-historical archaeology discussed the migration of people and diffusion of ideas as the main causes of the adaptation of new traditions (e.g. Trigger 2006). These two ways remain relevant, but the issue is not quite as simple. First, identifying causes is never straightforward in the complexity of human culture (e.g. Hodder 2016). Moreover, the possibility that similar cultural traits are invented independently in different areas should not be overlooked. This may be due to human cognition, as noted above. Yet contact between different cultures is a major factor, though not everything in another culture is embraced (resistance). Whatever is learned is shaped by the traditions in the new context and takes on new forms and meanings as a result.

There is ample evidence that people in the area of Finland have had contact with other cultures throughout the area's history and prehistory (e.g. Bertell, Frog, & Willson 2019). This becomes striking in the medieval period, with the introduction of the Christian institutions and the rule of the Swedish crown around the late twelfth century. Since the first university, the Academy of Turku, was established much later, in 1640, the officials needed to get higher education elsewhere, the most common places being Paris, Rostock, and Leipzig, and after the 1530s Wittenberg (Nuorteva 1997). It has also been suggested that the mendicant orders, especially the Dominicans, had a notable impact on local culture, since friars would travel and preach to laypeople (e.g. Haavio 1967, 454ff.). The Saint Olav Dominican convent was established in Turku in 1249. Contacts in the context of Christianity are relevant for the discussion of magic practices in several ways. First, students may have picked up influences from fellow students and other contacts in the university town. It is also important to remember that the border between true religion and condemned magic has shifted and been renegotiated throughout history (e.g. Bailey 2008; Cameron 2010). Thus, practices that later became defined as magic may have spread with Christian doctrine. This is especially evident in connection with the question of medicine, which was closely connected with religion.

The spread of medical knowledge across Europe was connected with universities and libraries. However, medical students from the area of Finland cannot be identified with certainty in the medieval period (Nuorteva 1997, 33, 72, 132). Nevertheless, friars and nuns had medical knowledge, including skills in the exorcism of illness-causing demons and familiarity with medical materials of vegetable, mineral, or animal origin (*materia medica*) (Haavio 1967, 456; Wallis 2010). Indeed, mendicant orders had their own education systems that were compatible with those of the universities (Nuorteva 1997, 38–46). Medieval medicine was based largely on humoral pathology, in which illnesses were the result of an imbalance of four basic elements in the body: blood; phlegm; black bile; and yellow bile (e.g. Jackson 2001; Wallis 2010). Many of the medieval medical materials that were understood to restore the balance between these elements occur in later folk medicine. Even much later, in 1686, when the first Swedish pharmacopeia, *Pharmacopœa Holmiensis Galæno-Chymica*, was published, many of the medical ingredients are familiar from folk healers' selection of medicines: for example, adders, toads, and pulverized human skulls (Tillhagen 1962, 14f.).

However, it is clear that medical treatises had an influence even before this first local one was published. For example, medieval books about miner-

als, *lapidaries*, included the medical properties of stones and fossils (Duffin 2005; see also Brévar 2008). The most influential of these, *De Mineralibus*, was written by the Dominican friar Albertus Magnus, who died around 1260. This book includes the knowledge that amethyst was good for counteracting drunkenness and repressing evil thoughts, while carnelian reduced bleeding (Duffin 2005, 61). In his paper about Stone Age tools (thunderbolts) in medieval Lund Peter Carelli notes that such lapidaries were common in Scandinavian libraries (Carelli 1996, 157).

Long-distance trade and travelling craftsmen are also forms of contact distributing objects, skills, and ideas. Turku was part of the Hanseatic trade network through its community of German burghers (Immonen 2007). This mercantile network had a huge impact on material culture in the urban areas of the Baltic Sea region (e.g. Gaimster 2005). Although this question has not been thoroughly addressed, it is likely that various customs and traditions were circulating with ceramics, heating system technology (tile stoves), architectural influences, and travelling craftsmen employed at large building sites. In any case, the area of southwestern Finland, where the oldest town Turku is situated, was clearly integrated with western European networks during the late medieval period.

The effects of the Roman Empire on European culture are also noteworthy. Many of the medical texts mentioned above, including the dominant humoral pathology principle, are derived from classical antiquity (Wallis 2010). Although they were often older than the Roman Empire, this vast network played its part in their becoming widespread. Moreover, magic practices such as curse tablets and the use of certain types of amulets spread as far as Roman Britain (e.g. Parker & McKie 2018; Edmonds 2019). It is likely that several practices now defined as magic were introduced across Europe during this period. However, if these reached the area of Finland, this may have happened later, perhaps during the medieval period.

Medical knowledge in books and treatises may have reached the illiterate part of the population in different ways. People may have learned treatments and medicines by observing medical experts' work. Some friars or nuns may even have taught their skills to a lay apprentice. A lack of evidence means this is speculation, yet the information somehow spread. When literacy became more common, folk healers evidently drew on information from medical books (Stark 2006, 321). A possible example of the oral transition of a written recipe is a handwritten booklet that circulated in the late eighteenth century among church bellringers (*lukkari*), who were also responsible for crude medical treatment. The booklet advises healing bewitched cattle

by drilling a hole in the threshold of the cowshed, inserting a goose quill filled with mercury, and plugging the hole (Alanen 1947, 156f.; Hukantaival 2016, 161). This practice became widespread in nineteenth-century Finland (Hukantaival 2016). However, it is uncertain if the booklet actually initiated the popularity of the tradition, or if it simply portrayed something already practised in the communities.

The points of contact discussed here exemplify the kinds of network that may have influenced the magic traditions, but they should not be seen as the only ones. The complexity of cultural contacts and entanglements that has shaped material culture makes it impossible to consider all the variables. As archaeologist Ian Hodder notes in connection with his human-thing entanglement approach, since causality is problematic due to its complexity, his approach focuses on specific sets of heterogeneous interactions within radically open systems (Hodder 2016, 8). Similarly, this study focuses on specific types of objects that show signs of cultural contact, without claiming to reveal the whole picture of these phenomena.

Cross-cultural magic objects?

There seems at first glance to be a remarkable number of general similarities between magic objects in different areas of Europe. For example, different kinds of natural stones and pebbles, predator canines and claws, and horns or antlers are present in all collections. Similarly, objects that were believed to be bolts of lightning, ‘thunderbolts’, are common (e.g. Blinkenberg 1911; Carelli 1997; Johanson 2009). However, there is also variation within these wider classes of objects. For example, thunderbolts in the Pitt Rivers collection include Stone Age tools, belemnite fossils, and pyrite nodules. Nordiska museet seems only to house thunderbolts that are Stone Age tools, while the Finnish collections include Stone Age tools, whetstones, and some natural stones as thunderbolts (Hukantaival 2019). Some types of artefacts also occur often (keys, knives, coins, etc.). Stones and animal remains were chosen as examples for this discussion.

Stones

In the Finnish collections smooth water-polished pebbles are usually called ‘snake’s court stones’ (*käärmeenärjäkivi*, 30 items). It was believed that adlers would pass this stone from mouth to mouth during their court gatherings in the spring. According to the folklore one could steal the pebble

during this gathering, but the adders would then chase the thief fiercely until they reached a cross-ploughed field where the adders could not follow (Lehikoinen 2009, 199ff.). In some versions of the folklore the stone was a convicted snake that the others had spat on until it turned to stone (*Finlands svenska folkdiktning* VII, 3 1952, 88). The pebble was in any case a powerful magic object that could be kept in the pocket as an amulet, especially when going to court or travelling, or used to heal skin problems and pain by pressing the pebble against the ailing part. In folklore, the stone is often described as spotted or having an indentation or hole in the middle from its having been in the mouths of adders. In the museum collections pebbles catalogued with this name are often flintstone pebbles, but other types of rock also occur. In some cases the snake's court stones are old spindle whorls.

Three objects are catalogued as a 'snakestone' or 'snake pebble', and there is one ammonite fossil with a carved snake's head in the Pitt Rivers collection, but no stones with similar names in the Nordiska museet. However, one flintstone pebble called a 'magic stone' (*trollsten*) was used to heal pain in a similar manner to the Finnish snake's court stones (NM.0131017). The one snakestone in the Pitt Rivers collection comes from France (1985.52.705). It is a green variolite pebble with mottled markings resembling the skin of a snake. According to the entry in the Pitt Rivers database such snakestones could act as an antidote to poison and cure snake bites. The stones were dipped in water, which was then given to the afflicted person or animal to drink. Since the spots on variolites were also thought to resemble smallpox pustules, the stones were used throughout the Middle Ages as a cure for smallpox. The catalogue entry explains that these pebbles were collected from the Durance river bed and distributed throughout Europe. Regardless of the similar name, such stones therefore seem not to belong to the same cultural idea as the Finnish snake's court stones. It also seems that the distribution of variolites did not reach the areas of Sweden and Finland. The two Pitt Rivers' snake pebbles are also from France (1977.5.1–2). However, no images and no further information is available on these objects in the online database. Ammonite fossils have also been commonly called snakestones. The legend about these objects is that a saint (e.g. St Hilda or St Cuthbert) turned snakes into stone (Skeat 1912).

In the case of the snake's court stones we encounter one of the possible pitfalls of the comparative method. It would be a mistake to assume that since there are no similar legends in the other collections, this tradition was purely local to Finland. There are similar traits to the folklore of snake's court stones in folklore from other areas. For example, Rachael Pymm (2017a;

2017b; 2018) has written extensively on the snakestone bead folklore known in the British Isles. These are glass beads that were thought to have been produced by a knot of adders. They were used as apotropaic amulets and in healing (see also Morgan 1983). An account written by Pliny the Elder is often mentioned in connection with them. In his *Natural History* (AD 77) Pliny wrote of an item that he called the *ovum anguinum* (snake's egg). He says that this object was valued in the Gallic provinces, but it was unknown to Greek writers. In the summer snakes would entwine together and form rings around their bodies with the slime and foam from their mouths. The snakes would then eject this 'egg' into the air by hissing, and a person should be ready to catch it in a cloak before it hit the ground. One should then immediately take flight on horseback, because the snakes would pursue the thief until a river created a barrier between them. Interestingly enough, Pliny adds that the possession of this object ensured success in lawsuits (Bostock & Riley 1857, 388ff.). The aggressive pursuit is also known in the snakestone bead folklore (Pymm 2018).

While the connection between different snakestone traditions remains debatable, another type of pebble shows strong signs of cross-cultural distribution: the raven stone. In the Finnish museum collections, these are similar (but usually dark-coloured) pebbles to the snake's court stones. However, the name raven stone occurs less often. In contrast with the 30 snake's court stones, there are only six main catalogue entries for raven stones (*korpinkivi*) in the collections. One is a knitted pouch that contains seven raven stones (KM 7928:59). According to the catalogue these had been in the family of the donor for at least three generations. The donor had explained that the stones had been acquired as follows: when one found a raven's nest, one should take the eggs, boil them, and then return them to the nest. When the raven returned, it would fly to fetch a pebble from the River Jordan. This was the valuable raven's stone that could be used for healing toothache and other ailments. Seven stones were needed to accomplish the pebbles' full potential.

The above story about how a raven's stone was found belongs to the known folklore about these objects (Rantasalo 1956). Naturally, there are variations in the folklore. For example, some accounts say that the raven's nest was invisible but could be spotted through its reflection in water (*Finlands svenska folkdiktning* VII, 3 1952, 87f.). The raven stone is one of the very few magic objects that received scholarly attention in the spirit of the historic-geographic method discussed above. The folklorist A. V. Rantasalo published a paper on the raven stone in 1956 in which he compared the folklore against that known in neighbouring areas around the Baltic Sea

(Estonia, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, and Poland). He also noted a fifteenth-century German manuscript that sheds more light on the above account: when one takes and boils the egg from a raven's nest and then returns it to the nest, the raven flies to the Red Sea, brings a stone, touches the egg with it, and the egg becomes fresh again (Zingerle von 1891, 324; see also Duffin 2012, 185). Rantasalo concludes that the raven stone tradition must have spread to Finland through such literature. The same idea of hurting a bird's young and stealing the magic stone that the bird fetches is recorded in connection with the swallow stone, at least in France (Duffin 2013, 90).

Other types of stones found in many areas are holed stones, cross stones, and calcareous concretions (Imatra stones). Due to the local geology, holed stones in Finland are most often human-made stone tools (often prehistoric) such as clubs and spindle whorls. When stated, these are used in healing; sometimes by pressing the stone onto the body and sometimes by pouring a liquid through the hole when making medicine. The situation is similar in the Nordiska museet, where most small round perforated stones (often old spindle whorls) are called *ältsten*. The name refers to the children's disease *älta* (in Finnish *elttä*, often recognized as rickets). The Pitt Rivers Museum houses 63 naturally holed stones, most of which come from the British Isles. These were used as amulets, tied to cattle horns to prevent fairies stealing milk, and hung next to doors to prevent witches or the Nightmare from entering (sometimes called witch stones or hag stones) (see also Dent 1965; Duffin 2011). In the Nordiska museet there is one naturally holed stone from southern Sweden that was hung in a stable to protect horses against the Nightmare (NM.0138473).

Cross stones are naturally cross-shaped staurolite crystals. There are seven of these in the Finnish collections (KM F1249; 7425:4–9). According to the catalogue these belonged to cunning people, and some were used for healing skin problems like the snake's court stones (see also Hirsjärvi 1965). The Nordiska museet seems to be lacking this type of item, but there are 14 in the Pitt Rivers Museum, all from France. Five of these are amulets from St Barbara's Chapel (Brittany, Morbihan, Le Faouët), but no further information is provided. Some of the other staurolites are called 'Crosses of Coadry', and it is sometimes mentioned that they were used as a charm against evil. Elsewhere, staurolites were called fairy crosses, and one folk explanation for these crystals is that they are the petrified tears fairies shed when hearing of the crucifixion of Christ (Duffin & Davidson 2011, 11).

Imatra stones are eye-catching calcareous concretions occurring in the Vuoksi riverbed area in Finland. Similar concretions occur in other glacial

sediments (e.g. Wu et al. 2021). There are seven of these in the Finnish magic collections, but only one is catalogued as an 'Imatra stone' (KM 1869:74). According to the catalogue this stone was scraped, and the powder used as medicine. One is called a cunning person's stone (*tietäjänkivi*). This one was soaked in water with other powerful stones. The water was then used to wash pain away (KM F1300). Two of the stones are catalogued as snake's court stones (KM F1240; 8104:4), and two are made into spindle whorls (KM 2378:29; 3588:6). The remaining stone is part of a set of a cunning person's paraphernalia in a textile pouch (KM 4808:14).

There are two calcareous concretions from Swedish Lapland in the Nordiska museet, where they are catalogued as *marleka* (NM.0244927A–B). The name refers to the Nightmare and playing (Carlquist & Carlsson 1951, 422–423), and it seems it was thought that the Nightmare was distracted to play with the curious stone instead of tormenting people or livestock. None of these stones was found in the Pitt Rivers Museum database searches. However, calcareous concretions are known as fairy stones, at least in Scotland (Duffin & Davidson 2011, 11f.).

Animal remains

Animal remains that are common in the magic collections are the remains of snakes, badgers, moles, and boar or pig tusks. There are four adders' heads (*Vipera berus*) in the Finnish magic collections (KM F1256; F1262; F2130; 7101:1). One item in the catalogue is snakemeat (KM 7101:2), but it is marked as destroyed. One of the adder's heads was used when making medicine for epilepsy by pouring rainwater through its throat, and another one when making medicine for bloating in horses in a similar fashion. The catalogue entry for one explains more generally that these were kept inside a wall to repel pests from the building, or shavings of one could be put on a snakebite, or if a malevolent person put it above someone's door, this would spoil the appearance of the girl in the house. The last is said to have been used to estrange two lovers. The cunning man Pekka Ruotsalainen had used the snakemeat when making medicine for a bloating horse or for sudden pain. It could be chewed before taking a drink of spirits when used as medicine. The collection also includes a snake skeleton and skin in a box of the cunning man Pekka Ruotsalainen's paraphernalia (KM 7340; Rytönen 1932).

The Nordiska museet houses two snakeskins (NM.0097488; NM.0162542). One was used to heal rheumatism as recently as 1929. This collection also has a piece of a threshold of an animal shelter with two holes drilled into it

(NM.0223480). One of the holes contains a snake, the other some iron objects for purposes of averting evil. Moreover, one container of magical objects includes some pieces of snakes (NM.00974). The Pitt Rivers Museum has a red silk bag amulet said to contain three snakeheads from Switzerland (1985.52.862) and a grey textile bag amulet containing a grass snake skin from Kazan in Russia (1985.52.236). Moreover, medical literature from medieval times until the eighteenth century includes hundreds of treatises advertising the medicinal and apotropaic virtues of snakes (Brévar 2008, 47–51). For example, the Dominican friars in Krakow popularized snake medicine in the early fourteenth century (Brévar 2008, 48). The *Hortus Sanitatis*, first printed in 1491, is one of the medical treatises that mentions the medicinal use of adders (See Figure 2; *Ortus Sanitatis* 1499; Bay 1917).

There are four catalogue entries for pig tusks (*Sus scrofa* or *Sus domesticus*) in the Finnish magic collections. One of these is two boar tusks that were used to heal sicknesses in horses and other farm animals (KM 8967:1420). A third boar tusk was used ‘for healing’, without further information (KM 8967:1421). The other two entries do not contain information about the use of the tusks (KM F1235; 3505:33). There is none of these in the Nordiska museet, but the Pitt Rivers database produced 27 boar tusks. Most of these are from Italy (two are from Switzerland, and one is from Albania), and almost all are mounted in metal with a suspension loop. They are labelled as amulets, some with the information that they used to be fastened to

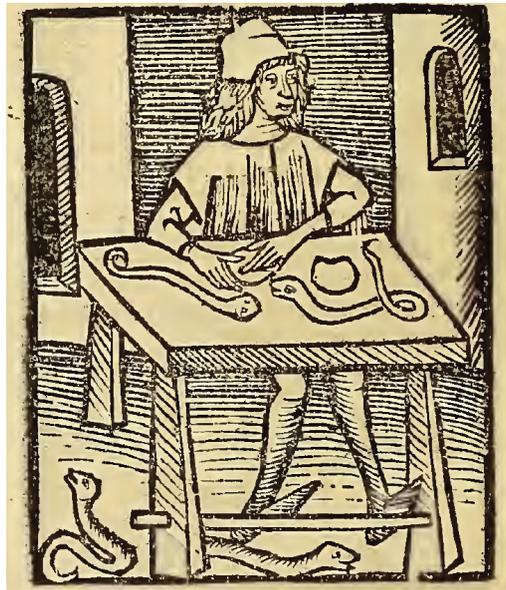


Figure 2. Illustration for the chapter about adders (*vipera*) in the 15th-century medical treatise *Ortus sanitatis* (1499), Liber II (De animalibus), Capitulum CLIII.

horse gear. Boar tusks were also often part of the zoological component of *materiamedica* cabinets and collections from the early eighteenth century; they were powdered and incorporated into prescriptions for diseases of the throat and respiratory system (Duffin 2017).

There is one badger's foot (*Meles meles*) in the Finnish magic collections (KM F1553). It has come to the museum with a pair of fur mittens. Both objects belonged to the cunning man Juho Sarkkinen, who used them when divining the identity of a thief. The catalogue gives a case of a bird stolen from a snare as an example. The complex divining ritual began when Sarkkinen, while wearing the mittens, used the badger's foot to gather feathers remaining from the stolen bird. The Nordiska museet does not have any badger-related magic objects in its collections, but the Pitt Rivers Museum has three badger feet, and six badger skins or hair amulets. Two of the badgers' feet are from the UK and were 'used as a charm' (1985.51.351; 1985.51.353). The third is from Italy, and it is labelled as a 'possible amulet' (1985.50.911). The badger skin or hair amulets are all from Italy. There is fragmentary evidence that a medical treatise on the badger may have existed, and some recipes have survived (Brévar 2008, 8, 38).

'Of all animals it is the mole that the magicians admire most,' declared Pliny disapprovingly, before giving some examples of how the mole was used in divination and healing (Bostock & Riley 1857, 429). There is one dried mole (*Talpa europaea*) in the Finnish magic collections (HM 314:1). According to the catalogue entry it was used as an amulet when hunting bear, because this would prevent the animal from attacking. The entry of another object (tinder pouch) documents that moles were seen as the miniature of a bear, which is why they were thought to offer protection from bears (HM 188:14). However, in this case the informant had not agreed to sell the mole to the collector, even for a hundred marks. There are two dried moles in bags from the UK in the Pitt Rivers Museum (1911.75.15; 1985.51.373). These were used as amulets for protection from danger and to ensure good luck. Moreover, there are seven mole paw amulets in the Pitt Rivers, some of them consisting of pairs of moles' front paws. Five are from the UK, and two from France. They were used to cure toothache or cramps.

Discussion

The above examples of objects that occur in magic object collections across Europe show that while there is similarity, there is also considerable variation. This is not especially surprising, as we are dealing with cultural

traditions that were mainly transmitted orally and bodily (by showing how something is done). Moreover, folk categories are less strict and rigid than academic ones (e.g. Koski 2008). Yet it is interesting that there seems to be more variation in some object types (e.g. snake pebbles) and less in others (e.g. raven stones). This may be because when these traditions were adopted in some areas, older traditions might show more variation than younger ones. However, it would be a mistake to assume that a tradition was communicated in one contact event only (and only in one direction): it is more likely that we see multiple layers of traditions. Nor should the role of innovation be forgotten: perhaps some cunning people elaborated parts of the lore.

Alongside oral and bodily transmission, literature also played its role. Medieval medical literature seems to have had a great impact, and friars, nuns, or other medically adept literate people probably disseminated this information. Since the magic objects and traditions discussed in this paper are from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, medical advice and narratives read in books may also have influenced the traditions multiple times in the postmedieval period. Previously, magic was seen as a relic of prehistoric religions that survived in peripheral areas. It is more likely that centres of human contact like harbour cities and religious centres like convents played key roles in distributing these practices. However, there is also some truth in the older view: where centres constantly receive new layers of popular magic (horoscopes, crystal ball gazing, spiritism, etc.), older layers of traditions may be preserved for longer at the peripheries.

Magic traditions did not travel by themselves, and they were not received passively. For example, local nature had its effect. Since naturally holed stones are rare in Finland, beliefs about them centred around human-made perforated stone tools. Fossils are also rare in the Finnish Precambrian bedrock, so beliefs about them are less relevant here. Nevertheless, uncommon objects have their place in magic traditions. Flint is also rare in Finland, but many of the snake's court stones are flint pebbles. Flint was imported as tools and raw material in the Stone Age and later, in the historical period, as ballast. Flint was therefore accessible, even though it was unusual. Magic fossils may occasionally have been acquired from neighbouring areas (e.g. Estonia, see Johanson 2018), but these have not ended up in the museum collections.

In addition to the natural environment, the local culture with its traditions and customs shaped any new magic traditions. New additions needed to make sense in the prevailing worldview for them to be interesting to people. Traditions may have been reinterpreted several times, and some practices

may have been rejected. Furthermore, in classic literature such as the *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (Description of the Nordic Peoples), printed in 1555, Finns were portrayed as adept magicians (Olaus Magnus 2010). We therefore cannot assume that Finland was only on the receiving end of magic traditions. The reputation may even have attracted magicians or cunning people to travel to learn the craft of the Finns (and Sámi). However, in the light of the available evidence it is difficult, if not impossible, to deduce the routes and directions of the interactions.

Yet when examining the examples above, one question that comes to mind is whether we are looking at branches of the same traditions known in different parts of Europe at all. Perhaps we are seeing the results of human cognition that make us experience magic in similar material things (cf. e.g. Whitehouse 2004; Sørensen 2007). For example, the eye-catching form of the calcareous concretions may have simply intrigued people independently in different areas. Thus, the materiality itself may be enough to evoke an idea of magic agency. This may well be the case with some of the object types, but similar narratives connected to many of them are probably the result of some form of interaction between people. However, as noted, individuals may reinterpret the traditions they pick up according to their imminent needs in the situations in which they find themselves.

There seems to be regional variation in the popularity of certain magic objects. For example, the most common animal occurring in the Finnish magic material is the bear (*Ursus arctos*). The Finnish collections include 74 catalogue entries involving bear remains (bear canines and claws are most common). In contrast, there are 12 bear canine amulets in the Nordiska museet (all but one from Lapland), and only three in the Pitt Rivers Museum (two from France and one from Italy). The Nordiska museet also has two bear claws in its collection. No other bear remains appeared in the database searches. Unfortunately, none of the bear remains in the Nordiska museet and the Pitt Rivers includes information about their use (except for as an 'amulet'). While bear magic was not unique to Finland and Lapland, it seems it was considerably more important in these areas. An obvious reason for this would be local nature and the geographical distribution of bears during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (but this would not explain Sweden). Yet the bear played a special role in Finnish and Sámi (the native people of Lapland) mythology (e.g. Zachrisson & Iregren 1974; Sarmela & Poom 1982). Perhaps the remains of bears in the magic collections reflect a true regional difference. However, this question needs more thorough attention if it is to be properly answered.

Conclusion

While there are differences in the emphasis and uses of the magic objects, we still see similar types of objects all over Europe. Some evidence suggests that beliefs about these objects were very old – for example, when we find them in the writings of Pliny. However, Pliny's ideas were copied and redistributed in medieval literature. It is therefore difficult to know if this literature was indeed the medium that spread the practices. In any case, as has been noted, it seems the influence of medieval medicine must have been significant. As medicine was often connected with religious institutions such as mendicant orders, an entanglement of magic, religion, and medicine is revealed.

However, it was surprising that the Swedish collections were not more similar to the collections in Finland than those of the Pitt Rivers Museum. Instead, similarities and differences with the Finnish collections were found in both reference collections. Further studies are needed to properly discuss this observation, but the influence of individual collectors or museum policies is perhaps partly responsible. In any case, the idea Bonser published in 1925 that Finnish magic was isolated has not withstood the test of time. Indeed, in the light of the ample contacts Finns had with neighbouring peoples, this would have been quite extraordinary. It is telling that even the native word for magic, *taika*, is a loanword. Yet more detailed studies of local forms and international traits would benefit the field by shedding light on the dynamics of magic traditions. This paper should be seen as a preliminary study in this respect, which it is hoped will encourage further research.

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Abbreviations:

HM (Hämeen museo): Hämeen museo collection, Museum Centre Vapriikki. Tampere, Finland.

KM (Kansallismuseo): The National Museum of Finland. Helsinki, Finland.

NM Nordiska museet. Stockholm, Sweden.

SKS KRA (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, Kansanrunousarkisto): The Finnish Literature Society, Archive on Traditional and Contemporary Culture. Helsinki.

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Christus verus Luciferus, Demon est Deus Inversus: Pekka Siitoin's Spiritism Board¹

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Abstract

This article focuses on a Spiritism board, *Yhteyslauta*, designed in the mid-1970s by occultist neo-Nazi Pekka Siitoin. The board represents an unexplored occult subchapter of Finnish gaming culture and exhibits the Finnish esoteric tradition. In addition to analysing *Yhteyslauta's* game-like elements, the article explores the board's themes and imagery, and situates these components in the context of Siitoin's vernacular esoteric doctrine and cosmogony.

Keywords: esotericism, occultism, vernacular culture, board games

This interdisciplinary article aims to combine history-oriented game studies with religious studies by examining an unexplored occult subchapter of Finnish gaming culture, a Spiritism board designed by occultist neo-Nazi Pekka Siitoin. *Yhteyslauta* (Communication Board 1974) is a modification of the Ouija board. It is built around the contradictory esoteric doctrine Siitoin constructed in the early and mid-1970s. *Yhteyslauta* is not merely a unique gaming culture artefact; it also offers a peculiar glimpse into the Finnish esoteric tradition. The topic is approached through the theoretical framework of vernacular culture. The board falls into this category, because it represents nonconformist occultist expression and exemplifies the amateur content creation that repurposes canonized esoteric material.

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Siitoin frequently engaged in public polemics. He is better remembered as a foul-mouthed Nazi figure than as a practitioner of the secret black arts. In the mid-1970s he was the public face of Finnish far-right movements, whose activities were followed by the Finnish Security Police (Kalliala 1999; Kotonen 2018). Siitoin succeeded in creating an image of a widespread fascist threat with the willing help of the left-wing press. In reality, his organizational activities were relatively small in scale (Kotonen 2018, 182–187). Siitoin carved his name in history through political tinkering and shocking public statements. He was perhaps the first Finnish political troll who wholeheartedly embraced his controversial reputation. Siitoin's public character was partly a fictive creation.² The multiple organizations Siitoin founded served as stages on which he could perform. Siitoin has been rightly called 'the dramaturge of his own life' (Pohjola 2015, 45). In the 2010s this self-appointed Nazi leader was demoted to the role of a marginal Finlandization era political dilettante (Koivulaakso et al. 2012). Siitoin posthumously became a popular culture figure, whose likeness has been used, among other things, for coffee mugs, post cards, T-shirts, and independent digital games.

Although Siitoin has been acknowledged in the context of Western esotericism (e.g. Granholm 2009; 2016; Hjelm 2016), much of the contemporary Finnish research on the subject has focused on more esteemed domestic artists, authors, and esoteric practitioners (e.g. Kaartinen 2020; Kokkinen & Nylund 2020; Mahlamäki & Kokkinen 2020). Arguably, this is partly due to Siitoin's controversial public persona. However, *Yhteyslauta* should not be examined through this anachronistic lens, as it was published before his political radicalization. Furthermore, Siitoin was one of the most prominent young occultists in Finland in the early 1970s (Kassinen 1972).³

In contrast with world religions, new religious movements and indigenous religions have used different types of games as ritual devices (Binde 2007). In addition to Tarot, the Ouija board is undoubtedly the best known Western esoteric game. Its origins can be traced to the Spiritualism movement of the mid- and late 1800s in the United States, which used various board designs to communicate with the non-physical spirit world. The Ouija-brand board, designed in the early 1890s, was the most popular com-

2 For example, he claimed to be the bastard son of a German SS officer and a Finnish-Russian prostitute, adopted by the Siitoin family (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 96–100). The name of Siitoin's alleged father, Peter von Weltheim, was also one of his many pen names.

3 According to the clairvoyant Aino Kassinen (1972, 64–65) Siitoin was one of her most promising students. However, the relationship between the two grew cold in the mid-1970s.

mercial talking board, and soon became a synonym for similar parlour games (Horowitz 2009, 66–79). Ouija was adopted in occult practices in the 1920s through the endorsement of the English ritual magician Aleister Crowley and his acolytes (Cornelius 2005, 2–4). The Catholic Church, whose catechism forbids divination and magic practices, argued that its popularity offered ‘additional evidence of the fact that the world is once more relapsing into paganism’ (Raupert 1920, 234). The Christian fundamentalist movements eagerly advocated the notion of the Ouija board as the Devil’s tool in the 1970s and 1990s (Hunt 1985, 93–96). This continues to be a common perception in the popular imagination.

The present article has a threefold objective. First, it traces the esoteric sources from which Siitoin appropriated material for his doctrine. Second, it analyses how these components were used in *Yhteyslauta*’s design. Finally, it explicates the board’s central game-like elements. In addition to Siitoin’s (e.g. 1973; 1974a; 1974b; 1975b) own writings, the article’s primary source material consists of a wide array of esoteric, occult, Kabbalistic, and mythographic works (e.g. Bryant 1774; Scheible 1880; Lévi 1896; Blavatsky 1888/1893; Steiner 1908/1993; Mathers 1912; Hall 1928/2009). Furthermore, Siitoin has been the subject of, or featured in, several popular books (e.g. Häkkinen & Iitti 2015; Pohjola 2015; Keronen 2020; Nordling 2020). These publications include interviews with Siitoin and those who had a personal relationship with him. These accounts provided eyewitness testimonials that help pinpoint Siitoin’s sources of influence and inspiration, for example.

To fulfil these research goals, a close reading analysis of *Yhteyslauta* is provided. The origins of the board’s numerous symbols, images, and textual elements were identified from the aforementioned source material. *Yhteyslauta*’s instruction manual was also analysed, as it contained the rules and other requirements of gameplay. Siitoin’s publications were meticulously scrutinized to excavate all the possible references to *Yhteyslauta*. This was done to determine the manner and purposes of *Yhteyslauta*’s use, as well as its significance to Siitoin’s occult practices.

The first part of this article focuses on Siitoin’s transformation from a nationalist-minded occultist into a far-right caricature. This change encapsulates the evolution of Siitoin’s public image from the 1970s to the 2000s. The second subchapter offers an abridged version of Siitoin’s esoteric doctrine and cosmogony, introducing its key principles, ideas, and narratives. The last two sections examine *Yhteyslauta*’s game-like elements, and analyse the themes and imagery printed on the board.

The vernacular/esoteric frame

Vernacular culture refers to independent cultural expression, produced by non-institutional actors, who employ multifaceted sources and discourses. Dorothy Noyes (2012, 19) describes vernacular as 'the immediate sphere of engagement in which actors negotiate between the tradition, professional, and alternate discourses available to them, drawing on multiple resources to create a practical repertoire'. Esotericism is also a nebulous concept with manifold emphases (Asprem & Strube 2020). It can be perceived as a craft of the initiated adepts, which requires detailed erudition concerning its subtleties. In this article esotericism is used as an umbrella term to describe various religio-philosophical and spiritual currents that are historically related, and share similar discursive practices, forms of thought, and/or traditions (Hanegraaff 2005, 336–340). Despite the obvious discrepancies, esotericism and vernacularity share many similarities. They are both non-institutional cultural practices that meet with a certain disparagement and derision (Koski 2020, 170–173).

Esotericism has been historically characterized as marginal, rejected knowledge, and oppositional culture (Asprem 2020). This dissent and deviant conception of esotericism has allowed occultists to position themselves as an 'enlightened elite' (Asprem & Strube 2020, 5). This mindset is very much evident in Pekka Siitoin's work. His esoteric doctrine was anti-establishment, but not exceedingly anti-Christian, although it was anchored in Satanism and Luciferianism. This nonconformist belief system represented Finnish counterculture during the Cold War. It opposed the cultural mores of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and in its anti-communism reflected Siitoin's adverse stance towards Finlandization era politics.

Siitoin's homebrewed doctrine can be labelled vernacular esotericism. It blended elements of folk magic, ufology, Satanism, politics, and Nazi mysticism with traditional esotericism. In addition to metaphysics, religious principles, and ceremonial magic, his books featured an assortment of folkish spells and curses (Siitoin 1974b, 92–103; 1975b, 44–51). Siitoin's body of work exhibits vernacular cultural production at several levels. Through creative adaptation Siitoin offered alternative interpretations of canonized esoteric texts and ideas, reshaping them into his own philosophy. Siitoin regularly called upon vernacular authority (Howard 2013, 80–83) in his claims making. The hidden knowledge he possessed was allegedly handed down to him from the spirit world. Siitoin (1973, 138–139; 1974a, 5) claimed to have personally met Christ, Lucifer, and Satan on several occasions. In addition to wisdom gained from this heav-

only host, Siitoin based his claims on the esoteric tradition. He quoted or copied direct passages – often with little respect for copyright or intellectual property rights – from the works of Rudolf Steiner, H. P. Blavatsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, Manly Palmer Hall, William Blake, Johannes Greber, Aino Kassinen, Anselm Kaste, and Reijo Wilenius, for example. According to Siitoin (1973, 186) these sources demonstrated that the ideas he wrote about were not merely figments of his own imagination. The vernacularity of Siitoin's esoteric doctrine was also apparent in his peculiar delivery. Siitoin gave down-to-earth analogies and unceremonious accounts of his meetings with spiritual beings. He also adopted inexpensive production techniques that were familiar in underground cultural circles. Siitoin's (1985/1999; 1977/2000) later amateur publications were released in zine format. For example, he appropriated the cover art of black metal bands and flyers from American satanic organizations to illustrate his own works.

Yhteyslauta – a localization of the Ouija board – was a material manifestation of this vernacular esoteric doctrine. It repurposed elements from Ouija's design and appropriated imagery from several esoteric and occult sources. *Yhteyslauta* was marketed as a game for laymen to communicate with the spirit world. The board contains occult symbols and principles that require esoteric knowledge to understand their meaning, but the game itself can be played without this contextual information. Furthermore, familiarity with Siitoin's own doctrine helps interpret the board, as the instruction manual is a little vague concerning certain details of *Yhteyslauta's* design.

Siitoin's persona and his esoteric oeuvre have been retrospectively reinterpreted through a Dadaistic lens. This process has led to a certain double vernacularization. Siitoin's notorious escapades and writings have been mimicked and adopted by postmodern parody religious groups and independent political actors. For example, a Finnish Discordian group listed Siitoin's books on black magic as its holy texts in their unsuccessful application to become a registered religion (Mäkelä 2019). On another occasion a few members of the Oulu Pirate Party released a video just before the 2017 municipal elections, which parodied an infamous scene from the documentary *Sieg Heil Suomi* (Stenros 1994).⁴ Interestingly, these organizations attempted to institutionalize themselves by appropriating and repurposing Siitoin's vernacular content.

4 See *Oululainen piraattineuvosto* (the Oulu Pirate Council): <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q029CDjh9tk>>, accessed 21 April 2021.

From a nationalist-minded occultist to a Satan-worshipping neo-Nazi

It is perhaps an understatement to call Timo Pekka Olavi Siitoin (1944–2003) a controversial figure. He has been most aptly described as ‘a lewd neo-Nazi who worshipped Satan in the name of God’ (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 108). Siitoin adopted many roles during his lifetime. Siitoin called himself a vulgarian – *rivologi* in Finnish – who revelled in debauchery and lewdness. He was a prolific author who wrote numerous esoteric and political books under various pseudonyms. Siitoin founded several organizations that integrated occultism with Nazism (Granholm 2016, 326–327). Many of these organizations were never officially listed on the national registry of associations and political parties, which complicated their prohibition. According to Kotonen (2018, 181) their membership ranged from a few dozen to more than a hundred members.

In the 1960s, prior to his occultist turn, Siitoin was an avid amateur filmmaker, who worked as an understudy in the Turku City Theatre. In the mid-1960s he founded a photography store, Siitoin-Filmi Oy, as well as an importing company Importpeak Ab (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 98–100).⁵ The early 1970s marked a spiritual and political awakening for Pekka Siitoin. After his photography business suffered financial hardship Siitoin sought guidance from clairvoyant Aino Kassinen and became her student. He later claimed that Kassinen had introduced him to Satanism in the early 1970s (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 101). In 1971 Siitoin founded the *Turun Hengentieteen Seura* (THS, the Turku Occult Society). The THS became the hub for his mail-order business, which focused on esoteric literature. He also practised remote spiritual healing. *Föreningen Veronica* (the Veronica Organization) was founded in 1972 to extend the mail-order business to other Nordic countries (Kalliala 1999, 261). Siitoin was also active in party politics in the early 1970s. For example, he served as the vice-chairman of the Turku local branch of the *Suomen Maaseudun Puolue* (SMP, the Finnish Rural Party). However, Siitoin’s occult activities were frowned on in the party, and he left the SMP after the 1972 municipal elections, briefly joining the Finnish People’s Unity Party (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 98–101).

Siitoin’s radicalization from a nationalist-minded occultist to a far-right provocateur occurred in the mid-1970s. He attempted to join the Constitutional People’s Party in 1975, to no avail (Kalliala 1999, 263). Subsequently,

⁵ Häkkinen & Iitti (2015, 98) also pointed to a story according to which Siitoin studied in the Theatre Academy. Siitoin also referred to his theatre studies in his now closed website. This is probably just another urban legend about Siitoin, as he was then living in Turku.

Siitoin founded several organizations to serve his political aspirations: *Pegasos-seura* (the Pegasus Society) in 1975; *Isänmaa ja vapaus* (Fatherland and Freedom); and the *Isänmaallinen kansanrintama* (IKR, the Patriotic People's Front) in 1976. These organizations' activities provoked indignation among politicians, trade unions, and the Finnish-Soviet Society. Siitoin's open anti-communism trespassed the most prominent Finnish political taboo of the Cold War era, arousing the interest of the Finnish Security Police. A group of MPs from the communist *Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Liitto* (SKDL, the Finnish People's Democratic League) drafted several written parliamentary questions, which claimed, for instance, that the THS was preparing the resurgence of Nazi Germany in Finland.⁶ The MPs also demanded political measures be taken against the fascist threat, the distribution of Nazi propaganda, and other activities that violated the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947.⁷ The state was unconcerned about his antisemitism (Kalliala 1999, 264–271). The press wrote hyperbolic articles about Siitoin's public stunts, contributing to a narrative of a fascist threat looming over Finland. In addition to his political activities, Siitoin eagerly showcased his satanic practices for the media, even performing sexual rites in a soft porn magazine (*Jermu* 8/1976). The IKR was also featured in several television programmes and documentaries, in which its members defiantly proclaimed their agenda and preparedness for armed insurrection.⁸

The IKR's provocations escalated into direct action in 1977, when some of its members perpetrated acts of antisemitic vandalism and mailed smoke bombs to the offices of a communist newspaper and the SKDL's youth organization (Kotonen 2018, 190–191). Siitoin published *Paholaisen katekismus* (*the Devil's catechism* 1977) in the same year. Among other things the book featured ten satanic commandments. The state authorities' patience with Siitoin came to an end on 4 November 1977, when the Ministry of the Interior disbanded all his associations apart from the Veronica Organization for conflicting with the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947. On 26 November 1977, the communist printing house *Kursiivi* was burned down in an arson attack. Siitoin was quickly apprehended with two other IKR members. The IKR commenced an intimidation campaign to protest against their trial

6 KK 17/1974: Turun Hengentieteen Seuran Neuvostoliiton vastaisen toiminnan lopettamisesta. 7.2.1974.

7 KK 242/1976: Fasismien vaaran ehkäisemisestä. 21.9.1976; KK 242/1976: Fasismien vaaran ehkäisemisestä. 21.9.1976; KK 346/1977: Pariisin rauhansopimuksen vastaisen toiminnan kieltäminen. 28.11.1977.

8 Veckans Puls: Pekka Siitoin ja Isänmaallinen Kansanrintama. Yle 21.10.1977; Pirjo Honkasalo and Pekka Lehto: *Vaaran merkki* (*The Sign of Danger* 1978).

(Kalliala 1999, 274f.; Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 136–40), which resulted in yet another written parliamentary question that demanded the government act against fascist activities.⁹ The *Kansallis-demokraattinen puolue* (KDP, the National Democratic Party) was founded in the summer of 1978 to replace the banned IKR. On 13 November 1978 Siitoin was sentenced to five years in prison for incitement to arson.¹⁰

The 1980s were a period of decline for Siitoin's political activities. During this alcohol-fuelled downward spiral the Kekkonen era dissident became a Nazi caricature, appointing himself as the Finnish Führer. Having been released on parole in March 1981 Siitoin founded the *Kansallis-mytologinen yhdistys* (the National Mythological Society). He still made occasional appearances in the media. Faithful to his political performance, Siitoin continued to issue shocking public statements (Nordling & Koskela 2006, 7–11, 72–5, 103). In 1989 he published his last book, *Kohti uutta uskoa* (*towards the new faith*), which lacked the blasphemous undertones of his previous esoteric works.

Siitoin re-emerged in the 1990s. He reduced the anti-communist rhetoric, which had become outdated after the fall of the Soviet Union, and adopted the contemporary ideals of white supremacy and anti-immigration, made public in Finland by the skinhead movement. In 1993 Siitoin joined the American Church of the Luciferian Light and adopted the title of the Archbishop of Lucifer¹¹ without the Church's consent (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 152–7). Siitoin also co-founded the *Kansallinen liittoneuvosto* (the National Union Council) with other Finnish far-right figureheads.¹² In 1996 Siitoin ran in the Naantali municipal elections, urging people 'to elect Nazi Siitoin to the council'. He received the sixth highest vote count, but the proportional representation system prevented his election (Pohjola 2015, 7). In the late 1990s Siitoin started to operate mainly through his website (Kalliala 1999, 282).

Pekka Siitoin withdrew from the public eye in the 2000s. He died of oesophageal cancer on 8 December 2003. Before his demise Siitoin nominated Kai Mikael Aalto as his successor as the Finnish Führer. Aalto was his former disciple, who in 1986 had planned to use the Siitoin-inspired hypnotic-magnetic gaze method to hijack a plane (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 152).

9 KK 149/1978: Fasistisen toiminnan estämisestä. 17.3.1978.

10 The Turku Court of Appeal increased the sentence to five years and seven months in 1979.

11 According to Siitoin (1974b, 7), the Finnish religious circles named him as "the Devil's Archbishop" in the 1970s. Presumably Siitoin derived the title "Archbishop of Lucifer" from this moniker.

12 Documentary *Sieg Heil Suomi* (Stenros 1994) captured the inherent campness of Kansallinen liittoneuvosto's founding meeting. The documentary also made it painstakingly clear that Siitoin had become a burden to Finnish far-right movements.

Siitoin's esoteric doctrine, cosmogony, and anthropogony

Pekka Siitoin's mishmash esoteric doctrine drew inspiration from various sources such as H. P. Blavatsky's theosophy, Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy, Christian tradition, ufology, and Jewish mysticism. All of these were infused with Satanism.¹³ However, Satanism was not the defining aspect of Siitoin's belief system, but rather brought shock value to his public persona (Hjelm 2016, 475). Siitoin was also influenced by Gnosticism and Luciferianism. Siitoin outlined the key principles of his doctrine in three books, *Yhteys ufoihin ja henkimaailmaan* (*connection to UFOs and the spirit world*) (1973), *Ufot, uskonto ja paholainen* (*UFOs, religion and the devil*) (1974a), and the two-volume book *Musta magia* (*black magic*) (1974b; 1975b). There are certain discrepancies between the books that Siitoin never bothered to explain. Siitoin (1974c, 7) claimed to have received his occult knowledge from the spirit world. However, there is a more secular explanation for its source. Siitoin borrowed core elements of his doctrine directly from Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* (1888), Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers' *Kabbalah Unveiled* (1912), and Manly Palmer Hall's *Secret Teachings of All Ages* (1928/2009). Furthermore, Siitoin directly copied parts and passages from the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* (Scheible 1880).

Isä-Jumala (Father-God), an impersonal electromagnetic force field, held the highest seat in Siitoin's heavenly hierarchy. Immediately below him was Christ (Siitoin 1973, 135; 1974a, 14). The nine-step echelon of spiritual ordination was also a central element in Siitoin's (1974b, 40–7) doctrine. These consecutive ordinations were a path to higher levels of existence, and they were separated by different vibration frequencies. Siitoin's (1974a, 15) pantheon also consisted of ten deities, who originated from *Isä-Jumala* and were named after the sephiroth – or the nodes – from the Kabbalistic Tree of Life (Mathers 1912, 30; Hall 1928, 373), even though he did not explicitly identify them as such. These ten sephiroth corresponded to the name of the biblical God, the four-letter Tetragrammaton (YHWH). Siitoin also listed ten adverse sephiroth (qliphoth or shells), which appear as archdemons in Assiah, the last world of the Tree of Life. Interestingly, he adopted a mixed spelling of their names from both Mathers' (1912, 30) and Hall's (1928/2009, 368) books.

Siitoin (1974b, 48–56) offered a new and partly conflicting version of the heavenly hierarchy in his next book. This time he used the term 'sephiroth' (or 'zefiroth') to describe the deities, but renamed them after the names of

13 Siitoin considered theosophy as a form of Satanism (see Nordling & Koskela 2006, 192). This conception is in line with Blavatsky's theosophical sympathy towards Lucifer (Faxneld 2012).

Siitoin 1974a, 15	Mathers 1912, 30	Hall 1928/2009, 368–73
Kether/Saatan-Moloch	Kether/Satan and Moloch	Kether/Satan and Moloch
Chokmah/Beelzebub	Chokmah/Beelzebub	Chochmah/Adam Belial
Binah/Lucifer	Binah/Lucifuge	Binah/Lucifuge
Chesed/Astaroth	Chesed/Ashtaroth	Chesed/Astaroth
Geburah/Asmodeus	Geburah/Asmodeus	Geburah/Asmodeus
Tiphereth/Belphegor	Tiphereth/Belphegor	Tiphereth/Belphegor
Netzach/Baal	Netzach/Baal	Netsah/Baal Chanan
Hod/Adrammalech	Hod/Adrammalech	Hod/Adramelek
Yesod/Lilith	Yesod/Lilith	Jesod/Lilith
Malkuth/Nahema	Malkhuth/Nahema	Malchuth/Nahema

God presented in *Semiphoras and Schemhamphoras*, the third appendix of the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* (Scheible 1880, 65ff.). He also copied several passages from its Finnish translation to describe the sephiroth.¹⁴ The names were identical or bore a close resemblance to the divine names of God in Atziluth, the highest world in the Tree of Life (Mathers 1912, 30; Hall 1928/2009, 364). The sephiroth of the earlier book were now described as class numbers of these deities (Siitoin 1974b, 48–53).

Siitoin 1974b, 48–53	Mathers 1912, 30	Hall 1928/2009, 364
Eheje = Eleie = Ether Elion	Eheieh	Eheieh
Jehowah	Jehovah	Jehovah
Tetragrammaton Elohim	Jehovah Elohim	Jehovah Elohim
El	El	El
Elohim	Elohim Gibor	Elohim Gibor
Eloha	Eloah Vadaath	Eloah Vadaath
Tetragrammaton Zebaoth	Jehovah Tzabaoth	Jehovah Tzabaoth
Elohim Sabaoth	Elohim Tzabaoth	Elohim Tzabaoth
Sadai	Shaddai, El Chai	Shaddai, El Chai
Adonay Melech	Adonai Melekh	Adonay Melekh

Siitoin (1974b, 42) also used the Pythagorean tetractys model, also familiar from the Kabbalistic tradition, to depict his heavenly hierarchy. Presumably, he adopted the triangle from either Blavatsky (1888/1893) or Hall (1928/2009).

¹⁴ Siitoin (1974d) had republished the Finnish version under the name of *Musta raamattu* (*black bible*) in 1974. For more about the Nordic black book tradition see Davies (2008, 123–32).

In the new hierarchy the sephiroth were situated above Christ in spiritual rank. Twelve angels of darkness, led by Lucifer and Satan, and twenty angels of light, led by the Archangel Michael and Buddha, resided below *Isä-Jumala*, the sephiroth, and Christ (Siitoin 1974b, 55–56). Siitoin named these angels after the spirits mentioned in the *Tabellae Rabellinae Spiriti-Commando* appendix of the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* (Scheible 1880, 51).¹⁵

Siitoin's (1973, 176–9; 1974a, 11–25; 1974b, 14–36) cosmogony and anthropogony mixed religious elements with racist science fiction. According to his version of Genesis Lucifer was a malevolent demiurge who created the Solar System by the order of the Space Government. The human prototypes were brought to Earth in spaceships from unnamed planets beyond the Milky Way. The planet was built as a colony for an older culture. The progenitors of modern man established the realm of Atlantis 90,000 years ago.¹⁶ When the Space Government ordered Lucifer and his cohorts to depart Earth, they refused to leave. Lucifer had fallen in love with his creation and wanted to reign over it as a supreme god. Because of this defiance, Earth was banished from the union of planets (Siitoin 1974a, 11ff.).

Earth was destined to undergo seven developmental phases. This process could take millions of years, during which humanity would undergo repeated cycles of rebirth (Siitoin 1973, 61f.; 1974a, 180ff.). The current fourth phase, the Earth period, would witness the coming of seven root races.¹⁷ The first two unknown root races were followed by the Lemurians, whom Siitoin described as giant gorilla-like cyclops. The fourth root race, the Atlantians, was divided into seven tribes. The fifth root race, the Aryans, was descended from the Semitic tribe, except the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Jews. Furthermore, the Negroid race was a crossbreed of animals, ape-like cavemen and the Atlantians. The Chinese

15 The angels of darkness were: Thebot, Wethor, Quorthonn, Xvote, Yrzon, Xusorym, Zyvoy, Puchon, Tukes, Legioh, Xeror, and Woryon. These spirits were also called upon in an incantation to make a covenant with Satan (Siitoin 1974b, 69f.). The angels of light were: Chymchy, Asbeor, Yzazel, Xomoy, Asmoy, Diema, Bethor, Arsose, Zenay, Corave, Orowor, Xonor, Quiheth, Auato, Wevor, Gefove, Gorhon, Woreth, Hagyr, and Wolor. Again, Siitoin's spelling differs from their original source. In the English and Finnish versions of the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* (Scheible 1880; Siitoin 1974d) Wethor is spelled as Vethor, Tukes as Tukef, Woryon as Voryon, Arsose as Arfose, Orowor as Orovor, Wevor as Vevor, Woreth as Voreth, and Wolor as Volor.

16 There are certain similarities between Siitoin's and Esko Jalkanen's (1973) writings. Both authors produced pseudo-prehistoric accounts that incorporated UFOs, black magic, astral planes, and components of the Atlantis myth.

17 Siitoin borrowed the ideas of root races, lost continents, and Earth cycles from Blavatsky's theosophy. He did not name the last two roots races that would follow the Aryan root race.

and the Japanese originated from a destroyed planet, located somewhere between Earth and Mars (Siitoin 1974a, 17–24, 177). Jehovah, who in turn had rebelled against Lucifer, created the Jewish people to usurp power on Earth (Siitoin 1973, 85ff.; 1974a, 26–9). To achieve these goals, the Jews developed communism, large-scale capitalism, and Judaism (Siitoin 1974b, 20–22). Jehovah also tried to prevent Moses from revealing the secret of witchcraft to all humankind. The keys to these secrets were passed by the sephiroth and hidden in the *Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses*. However, Christ circumvented Jehovah's plans (*ibid.*, 14–7).

Apart from the obviously racial overtones of this anthropology, Siitoin's doctrine lacked overt racist themes. At the time of its conception Siitoin's notion of Aryanism referred to spiritual development, not racial supremacy. Trevor Ravenscroft's pseudo-historic *The Spear of Destiny* (1972/1982), translated to Finnish in 1974, initiated Siitoin in Nazi occultism (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 108–109). For Siitoin the book was a philosophical nexus, which combined elements of theosophy, anthroposophy, Nazi mysticism, and Ariosophy.¹⁸ Ravenscroft's influence became evident in Siitoin's publications from the mid-1970s, although he did not revise his doctrine to reflect his new interests. True to his vernacular habits, Siitoin appropriated details from Ravenscroft without citing their original source. According to Siitoin (1975b, 21f., 74) Hitler was a skilled occultist and an expert practitioner of black magic, who with other members of the NSDAP inner circle had regular meetings with Satan. Furthermore, Hitler had been Landulf II of Capua – 'the archbishop of darkness' – in his previous incarnation. This idea was taken directly from Ravenscroft (1972/1982, 86ff., 145f.).

The *Yhteyslauta* instruction manual

The original *Yhteyslauta* was published in 1974 by the THS and the Veronica Organization. Siitoin also released the main body of his metaphysical works the same year. In 2014 the THS – briefly revived in 2010 as a parodic online community – published a reissue of the game board to honour Siitoin's

18 Blavatsky's influence also draws an interesting parallel between Siitoin's doctrine and Aryan esoteric theories that drew inspiration from her theosophy. Siitoin did not appear to have a detailed knowledge of Armanism or Ariosophy, but the name of Guido von List – a pioneer of Germanic occult mysticism – is mentioned several times in *The Spear of Destiny* (see Ravenscroft 1972/1982, 59, 71, 76, 168). We can therefore assume that Siitoin was at least aware of List. There are also incidental similarities between the works of List and Siitoin. For example, von List (1902, 107–108) based his runic system on Kabbalah's Tree of Life. For more about Ariosophy and Armanism see Goodrick-Clarke (2004).

seventieth birthday. The society described *Yhteyslauta* as 'the cornerstone of the revered Master's mail-order business'.¹⁹

Siitoin (1973, 27f.; 1974a, 44) made short occasional remarks about Spiritism boards in his writing, noting, for example, that humans can use them to interact with spirits, who dwell on higher planes of spiritual existence, or directly with God. Aspiring disciples could also use *Yhteyslauta* to enquire if Satan had accepted them as his neophytes. This process also included rituals that involved boiling live cats or having sexual intercourse with virgins (Siitoin 1974b, 63ff.). Siitoin also corresponded about the subject. One customer even claimed to have become schizophrenic after an *Yhteyslauta* session.²⁰ Siitoin also gave lectures about Spiritism and organized seances during 1974–5 (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 124). Presumably, the board was sold at these events.

Before we can delve more deeply into *Yhteyslauta* as a game or analyse its themes and symbolism, we must familiarize ourselves with its instruction manual. The manual was printed in Finnish and Swedish.²¹

You have just got your hands on the so-called YHTEYSLAUTA, through which you can receive messages from the spirit world. The game follows the principles of the old-style Spiritism, but it is not identical with the Spiritism game. This new game strives to convey reverence for God through specific descriptions and images printed on the game board. By correctly combining these words and markings, different spirits can easily manifest themselves through the Divine power that is hidden in the secret mysterion marks.

Explanation of the game marks:

Each corner of the game board is printed with a pattern that contains a Latin word. These words are the names of the four material elements that God uses to carry out his intentions. IGNIS = fire, i.e. heat. AQUA = water. AER = air, and TERRA = earth. These four elements contain different types of spirit. The name TETRAGRAMMATON with numbers is the secret Latin name of God, and the semicircle with the eyes and a star inscribed between it represents God's greatness in the macrocosm and that He is omniscient. The swords

19 See the archived THS blog post: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20140602073439/http://turunhengentietenseura.wordpress.com>>, accessed 21 April 2021.

20 See the archived Mesikämmenen blog post: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20160917224246/https://mesikammen.wordpress.com/2013/05/26/turun-hengentieteen-seuran-kirjeenvaihtoa-70-luvulta>>, accessed 21 April 2021.

21 The English translation of *Yhteyslauta's* instruction manual and its ad blurbs by the author.

portray His might. The so-called magical sword on the left of the board holds a mysterion that grants access to secret knowledge. The serpent and the egg on the right depict eternal wisdom and eternal life. The cross in the middle of the board symbolizes the divergence between spiritual and physical life, and a certain indifference to suffering if one desires to develop further. The two Divine wisdoms above and below the cross translate to Finnish as the Christ is the True Lucifer and the Devil is the God inverted.

There are two ways to communicate, which I will now instruct you about:

1. Communication with God's spirit world.

Set the game board on a flat table. Place a crystal bowl containing a litre of water and a burning candle on the same table. Place a small glass bottom up in the middle of the board. The participants, of whom there should be at least two, and preferably between three and five, then read the Lord's Prayer and the Priestly Blessing aloud. The participants must then recite in unison: 'Dear God Tetragrammaton, send us messages from beyond with the help of your subordinates. Your will be done, not ours. Amen.' The participants then gently place their index fingers on the glass's bottom. Their elbows must not touch the table's surface. The hands can thus easily follow the glass as it moves from letter to letter. One player must record the letters and numbers onto which the glass moves. Do this with one hand. The letters will form words and sentences that the spirits tell. You can also ask the spirits questions to a certain extent. The game board has the words NO and YES for this purpose. The game room must be silent and dark, apart from candlelight.

2. Communication with the Devil's spirit world.

Otherwise proceed as before, but do not recite the Lord's Prayer or the Priestly Blessing. Instead, make this request: 'O great and mighty prince of darkness Satan-Moloch, send Thebot, Wethor, Quirthonn, Xvote, Yrzon, Xusorym, Zyvoy, Puchon, Tukes, Legioh, Xeror, Woryon, or another of Your minions to speak with us. Amen.'

The spirits do not appear if the participants fool around or doubt these things. Order this book for more information about the spirit world: The Original Black Bible/Moses, 242 pages, price 39,00-. Among other things the book deals with white and black witchcraft etc. matters.

The game-like elements of *Yhteyslauta*

Games have numerous definitions, with each underlining different aspects of gameplay. Jane McGonigal (2011, 20–22) infers four unifying traits found in all games: 1) the goal (the outcome/objectives players aim to achieve); 2) the rules (the formal/informal restrictions that define how the goals/objectives can be achieved); 3) the feedback system (the interactive loop that informs players that they are achieving the goal/objectives); and 4) the voluntary participation (players accept the aforementioned factors and can start/quit the game on their choosing).

Siitoin modelled *Yhteyslauta* after the Ouija-like boards, which have been defined either as games or as occult communication devices, depending on the context of their use. Stoker Hunt (1985, 4) referred to Ouija as 'a universal folk device', because various cultures have been using similar spiritual boards for centuries. Bill Ellis (2004, 175) called Ouija 'a game-like ritual', situating it in the same category as other forms of spiritualistic play. Board game manufacturers have defined Ouija-like boards as games and toys.²² Conversely, some occult practitioners have perceived Ouija as a genuine occult tool not to be carelessly played with (Cornelius 2005, 3).

Interestingly, Siitoin himself labelled *Yhteyslauta* a game, even though he described Spiritism boards as ritual devices in his writing. The relatively complex and specific instructions can also be interpreted as an effort to elevate *Yhteyslauta* above common toys. In some advertisements *Yhteyslauta* was alternatively marketed as a 'communication board/game with the spirit world' (Siitoin 1977, 37; 1989, 4). Furthermore, Siitoin used the term 'play' to describe the board's use, which created a connotation of frivolous activity. This is congruent with the Finnish Spiritism tradition, in which using Ouija-like boards is referred to as 'playing Spiritism' (Virtanen 1974, 143). We can conclude that *Yhteyslauta* is not a game in the traditional sense, but contains several game-like elements. These elements become evident when we compare *Yhteyslauta*'s instructions to the common game traits discussed by McGonigal (2011).

Although the core elements are the same, *Yhteyslauta*'s design differs to some extent from Ouija. The alphabets and numbers are situated in a circular formation instead of horizontal lines. The goodbye marking, which is used to end a Ouija seance, is absent from *Yhteyslauta*; nor does the instruc-

22 In the 1920s a company in Baltimore claimed that the Ouija board was a religious device and should have tax-exempt status. The court did not support this assertion and ruled it as a taxable game/toy (Hunt 1985, 6f.). This ruling remains valid today.

tion manual explain how the communication process is terminated. This omission suggests that the ending is voluntary and does not require any specific measures to be fulfilled. The planchette is replaced by a shot glass. This choice follows the Finnish Spiritism board tradition, which prefers handmade boards and household wares to commercially produced items (Virtanen 1974, 144–146). Alternatively, it can be read as a nod to Siitoin's love for alcohol. The mandatory multiplayer setting and the option to practise black or white magic are some of the most notable differences. Ouija has no limitations concerning the number of participants. Furthermore, in Ouija the communication process occurs with random spirits of the dead, not with high angelic or demonic entities. Interestingly, the manual only mentions the evil deities by their actual names. This demonstrates Siitoin's fascination with the darker side of the esoteric arts, but is also another exhibit of the Finnish Spiritism board tradition of the mid-1970s, in which it was common to call upon the Devil during the gameplay (Virtanen 1974, 144f.). Folklorist Leea Virtanen (1988, 272ff.) argued that this tendency was a remnant of centuries-old oral folk tradition.²³ In addition to these obvious differences, the two designs share certain similarities. For example, the Lord's Prayer, recited in an attempt to communicate with God's spiritual domain, is a common protective prayer used to open a Ouija session.

Yhteyslauta's objective is straightforward: to communicate with either God's or the Devil's spirit world. The board is supposed to function as a medium through which this process occurs. However, the preferred goal depends on the play's context. We can distinguish two standard approaches to gameplay: occult- and entertainment-oriented. The former serves genuine ritualistic or spiritualistic purposes with the aim of establishing a real connection with the non-physical planes of spirits, whereas the purpose of the latter is playful, and its aim is to seek tension and excitement through a game of make-believe.

Yhteyslauta is presented as a rigorous rule-based system. Players must follow the instructions to the letter to create a channel to the spiritual sphere. For example, the rules determine the number of players, the required game pieces, the game space conditions, and the mindset required for gaming. The ad blurbs (Siitoin 1974a, 192; 1974b, 179f.; 1974c, 166; 1975a, 155) stress meticulous adherence to rules.

²³ Virtanen (1988, 252) is probably referring to Siitoin's mail-order business when she discusses the dissemination of the *Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses* in Finland. However, she does not mention Siitoin by name.

Do you want to gain access to the new world of spirits? Through the original YHTEYSLAUTA or SPIRITISM GAME you can communicate with the spirit world and receive prophecies and knowledge from the beyond. The game works reliably if you follow the instruction manual. This millennia-old method is extremely popular in North and South America.

Another advertisement (Siitoin 1974e, 126) underlined the importance of owning the actual instruction manual with the approved rules written by Siitoin.

With the communication board of the spirit world you can use the original method to play white or black Spiritism. Various spirits speak to you through the game. The game does not work without the instruction manual.

The imperative to follow the rules offers a fail-safe for the designer. Siitoin could always plead to possible rule violations if the board did not work. The manual states that even an iota of doubt is enough to ruin a communication attempt.

The feedback system is undeniably the most challenging game factor to demonstrate objectively. There are two possible ways to construct a working interactive feedback loop between the board and the players. These methods are related to the approaches discussed earlier. According to psychology the working principle of Ouija-like boards is based on the ideomotor response, in which concentration on a task can prime the unconscious or involuntary movement of the fingers, for example (Andersen et al. 2019). In the occult-oriented approach the interactive feedback loop is produced precisely through this effect, although the occultist may contend that the planchette is moved by an outside force from the spirit world. In the entertainment-oriented approach the rules are intentionally broken to facilitate gameplay. A player can adopt the role of a game master and deliberately move the shot glass to create messages, and thus form a player-to-player feedback loop.

The *Yhteyslauta* board design

Yhteyslauta is a patchwork that merges motifs of theosophy, anthroposophy, classical mythology, and Jewish mysticism. It was designed during a period when Siitoin was focusing on occultism instead of politics. The game board is therefore devoid of any far-right or fascist imagery. It also lacks distinctly satanic symbols. The board's colour scheme draws on Blavatsky's

theosophy. Yellow is the colour of the spiritual soul, reflecting intelligence, knowledge, and communication (Hall 1928/2009, 251). The classic elements of fire, water, air, and earth are situated in the board's corners. According to Siitoin (1973, 61) these elements form the human body. They also represent the four kings of nature (Siitoin 1973, 178), who reside below Satan and Buddha in the heavenly hierarchy. Siitoin (1975b, 86–91) stated that while these kings were under Satan's direct control, they could also be commanded by individuals with a high spiritual ordination. The cross in the middle of the board, symbolizing the divergence between the spiritual and physical life, is the only exhibit of original content in *Yhteyslauta's* design. The remaining elements and imagery were appropriated and repurposed from other sources. Most symbols and images have only ornamental purposes. They are a visual manifestation of Siitoin's esoteric doctrine. The game manual also lists paraphernalia such as the crystal bowl which serve no gameplay function. The bowl refers to the ancient tradition of lecanomancy and creates an archaic aura around the gameplay experience.

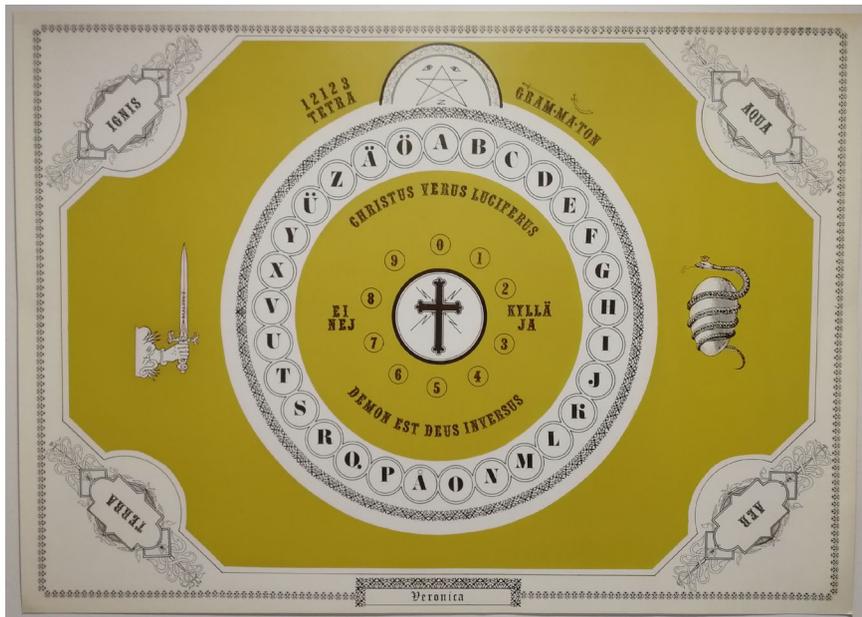


Figure 1. *Yhteyslauta*. Photo: Tero Pasanen.

The Tetragrammaton – situated on the upper rim of the alphabet circle, between the eyes and the pentagram – had the utmost importance for Siitoin, who ‘worshipped Satan in the name of God’ (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 108). This four-letter name of God (YHWH) is called upon when communicating with God’s spirit world. The Tetragrammaton text is divided into two sections: ‘tetra’ and ‘grammaton’. The central elements of this conception – the eyes, the pentagram, the number sequence 12123, and the Western long sword and Eastern scimitar – were taken from Éliphas Lévi’s (1861, 25) drawing of the Tetragrammaton Pentagram, which was reprinted in Hall’s (1928/2009, 317) *Secret Teachings of All Ages*. Siitoin owned a copy of the book (Nordling & Koskela (2006, 192). Like Lévi’s pentagram, *Yhteyslauta*’s five-pointed star is drawn in an upright position, not in the Goat of Mendes arrangement with two points up. This microcosmic arrangement symbolizes a human.

The decision to name the highest deity of his heavenly hierarchy the Tetragrammaton is perhaps the most glaring inconsistency in Siitoin’s confusing antisemitic esoteric doctrine. The instruction manual incorrectly referred to the Greek term Tetragrammaton (YHWH) as ‘the secret Latin name of God’. Yet Siitoin designated Jehovah or Yahweh, vocalizations of YHWH, as the principal antagonist in his cosmogony. For example, Jehovah was identified as the serpent in the fall of man²⁴ and the Devil in the temptation of Christ. We can only speculate about the reason for this discrepancy. Siitoin may have been unaware of the meaning of these vocalizations, or he simply disregarded the obvious contradiction as a creative choice.

The magical sword with the name of the feminine sephira Malkuth engraved on its blade is situated on the left-middle side of the alphabet circle. It is a photocopy of Éliphas Lévi’s (1896, 40) drawing the Magical Sword. On the opposite side of the board is a hand-modified photocopy of the Orphic Egg, engraved by James Basire. Its original source was Jacob Bryant’s (1774, 241) *A New System, or, an Analysis of Ancient Mythology*. Siitoin (1974a, 24) used the unedited version of the illustration in *Ufot, uskonto ja pahalainen*. The serpent coiled around the egg symbolized a phallus for Siitoin, which he equated with Satan-Moloch. Together, the sword and egg formed a duality of female and male. These images were also reprinted in Hall’s (1928/2009, 41, 311) book.

24 In his narrative about the fall of man Siitoin (1975b, 65) provided one of his most colourful analogies, as he compared Eve to Marilyn Monroe and described Adam’s wife as a heavenly sex bomb.

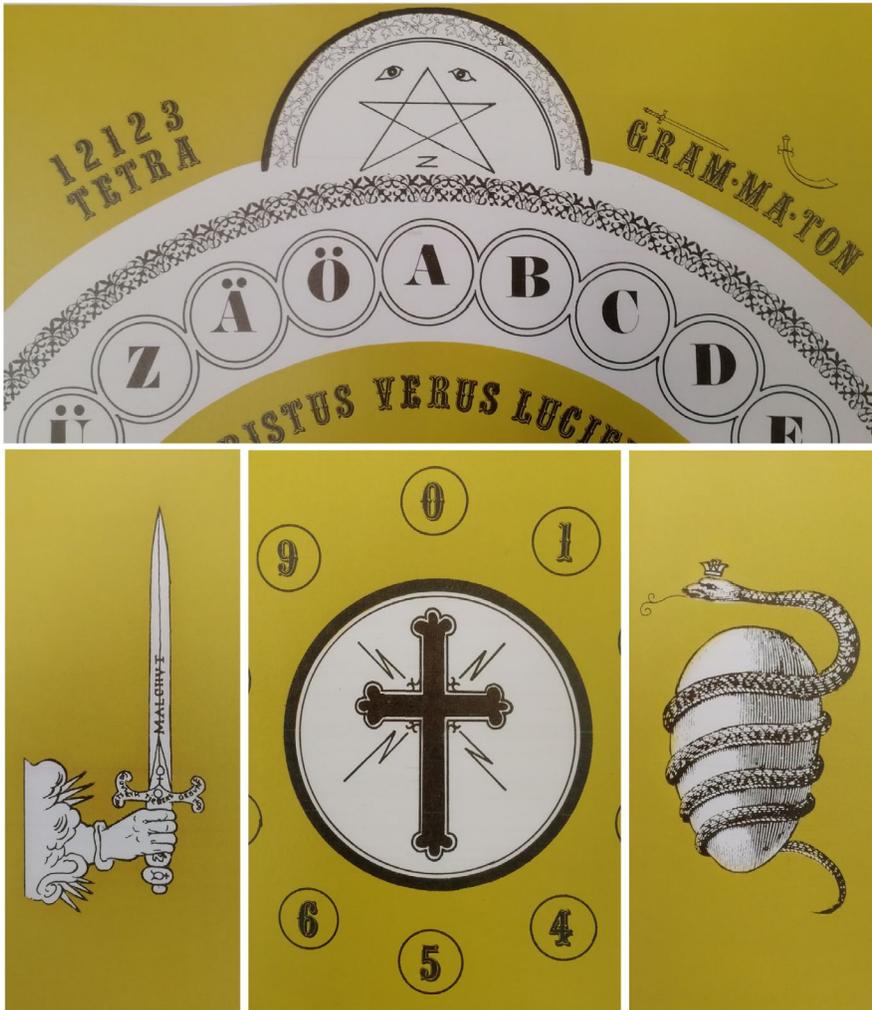


Figure 2. The pentagram, the sword, the cross and the Orphic Egg. Photo: Tero Pasanen.

The Latin proverbs printed inside the *Yhteyslauta's* alphabet circle were central tenets of Siitoin's (1973, 145; 1974a, 182) occultist philosophy. These principles, defined as 'divine wisdoms' in the manual, were adopted from Rudolf Steiner's (1908/1993) and H. P. Blavatsky's (1888/1893) works. According to Steiner (1908/1993, 130) the first phrase, '*Christus verus Luciferus*' (Christ is the true Lucifer), refers to Christ as the light-bringer, who brought independence to humanity. Luciferic beings attempted to do the same, but humanity was insufficiently mature before it was unified by Christ through

spiritual light. Siitoin (1974a, 100ff.) interpreted this notion a little differently, arguing that enlightenment could be achieved either through Christ or Lucifer. Christ had redeemed humanity and returned it to God's spirit world through the crucifixion or 'Golgotha mysterion'.²⁵ The rise in spiritual echelons, achieved through universal knowledge and truth, was the path to salvation and the escape from rebirth. In turn, those who remained in Lucifer's material world were destined to be reborn on Earth until it had completed the seven developmental cycles (Siitoin 1974a, 72–6, 180ff.). Siitoin (1977) later claimed that the phrase also meant that Lucifer was the true god of Christians.

The second phrase, '*Demon est Deus Inversus*' (the Demon is God inverted), refers to the concept of an absolute God that concurrently entails the essences of good and evil. These forces were co-dependent: one could not exist without the other (see Blavatsky 1888/1893, 441–445). In this context Siitoin (1974a, 144f.) wrote about Christ- and Lucifer-consciousness in humans. Siitoin argued that good and evil were necessary for spiritual development, and that both forces were blessed by God, because they were derived from Him. Siitoin (1974b, 118) also used the phrase in an incantation of a sexual rite.

Conclusions

Siitoin's occult works exemplify vernacular esotericism by offering a folkish reading of interconnecting and multifaceted esoteric philosophies. The impression of vernacularity is also conveyed by Siitoin's verbal expression and do-it-yourself production methods. *Yhteyslauta* was a material manifestation – a popular culture novelty – of this philosophical omnium-gatherum. There is no definitive proof of whether Siitoin was the sole author of *Yhteyslauta*, or whether it was co-designed with other members of the THS/Veronica Organization. However, this is probably the case, because Siitoin produced most of the original content published by his organizations. *Yhteyslauta* can be interpreted as an introductory tool that was useful for achieving the first pieces of the universal knowledge required to gain spiritual ordinations, as it supposedly enabled communication with spirits who dwelt on higher astral planes. Unfortunately, Siitoin did not disclose whether *Yhteyslauta* was used as a medium in his alleged meetings with Christ, Lucifer, and Satan-Moloch.

25 Siitoin probably borrowed the idea and the term from Pekka Ervast (e.g. 1911/1987, 205–17). Siitoin sold Ervast's books through his mail-order business.

Occultism offered a way for Siitoin to quench his thirst for recognition. When Siitoin became acquainted with the esoteric arts, he quickly constructed his own esoteric doctrine instead of advocating or following an existing philosophy. He also formed several organizations to advocate his esoteric and political beliefs. Moreover, Siitoin built a small business around his occult activities, although his public Nazi role later impeded his commercial affairs.

Considering Siitoin's ostentatious public persona and antics, it is perhaps impossible to determine the true intentions behind his occultist practices. Siitoin may have been a genuine seeker of hidden truth, whose esoteric principles reflected not only his metaphysical beliefs, but also his views on the politics of the Finlandization era. However, he may also have been a charlatan, who played the occultist's role to bask in infamy. What is certain is that occultism was not merely an interim phase for Siitoin. He remained firmly on the Left-Hand Path even after his focus had turned to far-right politics. Undoubtedly, many of his public appearances as a Satan worshipper were made for provocative purposes. Nevertheless, his former associates claimed that Siitoin called upon Lucifer on his deathbed (Nordling & Koskela 2006, 162–163).

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The Spirit of the Place and the Place of the Spirit: Local Spirits, Boundaries, and Social Order in South- west Finnish Folklore

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Abstract

Southwest Finnish folklore recorded in the early twentieth century contains a wealth of legends about local spirits, residing and acting both in the wilderness and on farm premises. They belong to belief systems that express social norms and regulations. Many of the legends contain enough information to allow us to locate exactly where local spirits are said to appear or interact with people. In this paper I study these locations and their place in the structure of village society, using historical village maps. The results shed new light on the nature of borders and boundaries in folklore and vernacular belief, as well as on the view of the social meaning of local spirits. Borders and border zones are common ground between several societies, lacking a clearly defined master. In places of uncertain mastery local spirits, endowed with taboos and the authority of the surrounding societies, play a social role in regulating the activities of people on such common ground.

Keywords: local spirits, borders, liminality, folklore, the sacred, vernacular belief

This paper's background lies in a broader study of revered sites of folklore in Southwest Finland. My initial studies of sites considered sacred have led to a network of places sharing similar cultural-geographical characteristics and topographical features connected with different types of lore. They are varyingly considered sacred, magical, frightening, or haunted. Some are also known to have been used for festive or ritual gatherings.

Many of these sites are connected with the idea of a local spirit residing in them or communing with one when offerings to it are left. Many of the places are also connected with different kinds of border or boundary.

The concept of boundaries has featured frequently in the research of both folklore and the vernacular sacred. In this study I present new perspectives that expand and specify the connection between borders and local spirits. I analyse how local spirits in Southwest Finnish folklore have interacted with people and analyse identifiable places connected with reported appearances. I compare the actions of local spirits, and their places in the wilderness and farmsteads, seeking patterns, similarities, and differences.

Employing Jochum Stattin's theory of the social role of the supernatural and Veikko Anttonen's view of the vernacular understanding of the 'sacred', I focus on spirits as social beings with social meanings endowed by their affiliated societies. I further attempt to understand the meaning of borders related to the significance and social roles of spirits and their places.

Most of my research material consists of records from the Finnish Literature Society's folklore archives and the *Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning* compendium of Finland Swedish folklore. The *Finlands Svenska folkdiktning* consists of Finnish-Swedish folklore records gathered in the early twentieth century and organized into genre-specific books. Of these, I have researched Volumes II.3.2 (mythical tales) and VII.1. (supernatural beings), and picked out the records for my study area. The folklore archives of the Finnish Literature Society (referred to as KRA) contain a larger corpus of similar material in Finnish. The KRA material is organized both thematically and by parish, but as I have found the parish material more comprehensive, I have focused on selecting all records describing encounters with local spirits. I have also used books on local history and historical maps.

My study area is the region of Finland Proper, otherwise known as Southwest Finland. As the study region consists of more than 60 historical parishes, I have selected a manageable sample of material from 27. In total, the material for this study consists of 264 folklore records describing local spirits, with 131 from Finnish sources and 133 from Finland-Swedish sources. Of these 264 records, 57 contain references to identifiable places. Sometimes several records refer to the same place. Sometimes it is impossible to locate the places mentioned, because placenames have changed or been forgotten, refer to buildings which no longer exist, or the descriptions are simply too vague. I have been able to identify and visit 21 sites in total. I have pinpointed each individually identified site on historical village maps mostly from the time of Partition (the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries) to gain an understanding of each place as part of their cultural milieu when the recorded practices and beliefs prevailed. Field visits and observations made at the actual sites enable me to identify traits, patterns, and similarities

that are not apparent in the lore. As this paper is part of a broader study of revered sites in the study region, the material used here is only a sample selected around the specific theme of local spirits.

Theoretical perspectives

According to Veikko Anttonen, who has studied the Finnish concept of the sacred, the sacred cannot be viewed simply as a religious or transcendent concept, but must be seen as deeply rooted in its culture in a broader sense. The concept of the sacred as something reserved for God or a divinity is a later semantic change of the word (Anttonen 1996, 158). Anttonen has studied the meanings of the sacred in relation to corporeal, territorial, social, and temporal categories, and in relation to how it defines limits. The concept of the sacred defines territories, social groupings, and periods and can be seen as ‘a signifier of limits between cognitive categories for society and the individual, or the transgression thereof’ (Anttonen 1996, 151–7, 216). It is noteworthy that Anttonen has mainly studied the sacred from the departure point of the nominal, that is, that which is named ‘*pyhä*’ (the Finnish word for sacred). Anttonen’s proposal of the sacred, based on Finnish word ‘*pyhä*’, as a border has later been criticized by linguist Janne Saarikivi for its lack of etymological evidence. Saarikivi’s critique is based on the known meanings of the word ‘sacred’ (Saarikivi 2017). However, the phenomenon of the heightened meaning of ‘borders’ in belief systems has been well known in the study of folklore, irrespective of Anttonen’s research, and it gains further weight in this study.

In his classic study of the water spirits of Swedish folklore, Jochum Stattin has argued that supernatural beings such as water spirits act as ‘tools for thought’. These beings appear in all kinds of border zones between clearly defined categories like areas that cause unease and anxiety because of their ambiguity, and the beings of folklore that ‘act out’ that meaning. The beings also strive to strengthen and maintain social norms and roles, and regulate human interaction with nature and each other: ‘The rules of daily life were also applied to activities in nature, on the fields, meadows, pastures, forests etc., which were therefore subjects to control. Since it could not be subjected to human surveillance, nature was populated by supernatural beings’ (Stattin 1984, 44–57; quotation, 57). Mikael Häll has developed the concept, discussing the idea of supernatural beings as a ‘thought model’ exemplifying and illustrating social norms or their breaching (Häll 2013, 516–30). The idea of supernatural beings being connected with social norms has often

been emphasized in research: Matti Sarmela has pointed out that in Finland this trait is typical of the western parts of the country (Sarmela 1974, 343; 1994, 158). Kaarina Koski maintains that the moral rules and repercussions embedded in stories of the supernatural may have been understood either metaphorically or literally as direct supernatural forces from an invisible world (Koski 2011, 342).

Häll criticizes Stattin's idea of supernatural beings as liminal entities in the sense of existing on boundaries between categories as too vague (Häll 2013, 538). Boundaries can seem vague if we lack a proper picture of their social meanings and how space is structured in the society we study. To overcome this, culturally specific or emic borders need first to be identified.

Matti Sarmela has pointed out that the folklore of local spirits enforces social norms, especially in Western Finland (Sarmela 1974, 343; 1994, 158). Changing norms and new cultural influences have with time been incorporated into the lore. For example, Camilla Asplund-Ingemark has shown how Christian texts and values have influenced the folklore of supernatural beings by introducing new models, norms, and values (Asplund-Ingemark 2004, 176–80, 206–17).

Ilkka Pyysiäinen has delved further into the question of spatial boundaries and ritual performance. Pyysiäinen emphasizes the social aspect of such performances, and how social performance is tied to a community's willingness to cooperate (Pyysiäinen 2008, 287f.). Laura Stark-Arola has also emphasized the meaning of spatial boundaries in her studies of Finnish and Karelian women's magic. Stark-Arola has identified ritualized emic boundaries between an 'inside' that consists of the household and several concentric layers of 'outsides' such as farms, the village, and the forest. All these boundaries need to be magically protected against malign external influences (Stark-Arola 1998, 36).

The 'scale' I employ in studying the social context of local spirits and their places is that of the local society – the village and the farm. The landscape of a village and the landscape of a farm or household follow certain mental patterns with central areas, insides, and outsides. Boundaries of different kinds organize the landscape, create a spatiality of meanings, divide shared spaces from private spaces, and separate the dominions of different farms, villages, or parishes. Village partition maps show us precise borders and boundaries that were adhered to by inhabitants, and an emic way of structuring the landscape. If it is possible to see what kind of landscape features supernatural beings are attached to, there may also be connections with their social functions. Their place in the structure of the landscape can shed

light on how they can function as metaphors, tools for thought, or actual enforcers or norms.

The study of places in folklore, folk religion, and folk belief has seen a resurgence in recent years. Terry Gunnel has studied how certain features in the terrain are protected by folklore in Iceland and Ireland (Gunnel 2018). In Estonia the international term 'placelore' (Valk & Sävborg 2018) has seen the focus shift from studying regional differences and geographical spread in different phenomena to understanding their local and social context. Timothy Tangherlini has taken a particularly close perspective, studying the locations of tales with a frame of reference in the individual lives of storytellers (Tangherlini 2010). The historian Simon Young has mapped the locations of folklore beings on historic maps of local societies in Northwest England, seeking patterns for their locations in the social landscape (Young 2020). I am conducting my research on a very similar scale to Young, which afford an interesting comparison between Northwest English and Southwest Finnish placelore.

The archaeologist and folklorist Sonja Hukantaival has taken a different kind of 'close perspective', comparing archaeological finds in old buildings with descriptions of offering and depositing customs in folklore records (Hukantaival 2016). Otherwise, Finnish research has focused on encounters with the supernatural as a connection with another 'invisible' or 'supernatural' world (see e.g. Koski 2011). I choose a different perspective, observing the 'supernatural' or local spirits as functioning parts of human society.

Local spirits in Southwest Finnish folklore

Local spirits are a very prominent feature of Finnish folklore and are frequently associated with revered sites. The material used here comes from an area in which both Finnish and Swedish are spoken. Based on characteristics such as appearance, function, and context, the same folklore beings can be said to appear in the material of both language groups. My focus and selection of material is based on the role and context of the beings, that is, place-bound supernatural beings who are told to interact with people. The names of beings with these functions can be quite varied.

The most commonly used generic word for a local spirit in Finnish is '*haltija*', with variants such as '*haltti*' or '*haltja*' in southwestern dialects. The equivalent in local Swedish is '*rådare*', often shortened to '*rå*'. Both words can roughly be translated as 'owner' or 'ruler'. When the name '*haltija*' is used, it is often with a prefix revealing the place over which it rules, such

as the *haltija* of the house, sauna, forest, and so on. Household *haltijas* are also very commonly called 'tonnttu' in Finnish, or 'tomte' in Swedish. It is noteworthy that the Finnish 'tonnttu' and Swedish 'tomte' are almost identical, with the meaning in both languages denoting a lot of land containing or reserved for a dwelling, that is, 'tonntti' in Finnish and 'tomt' in Swedish. The similarity in the names is explained in a medieval text about the *tomte* by St Bridget of Sweden. She calls it 'tompta gudh', meaning 'god of the lot' (Klemming 1861, 197).

The names of spirits appearing in the wilderness are much more varied. In writings about Finnish folklore they are often gathered into types such as 'forest *haltija*', 'water *haltija*', and 'mountain *haltija*'. Gunnar Granberg observed the similarity of the roles and functions of Nordic wilderness spirits in his 1935 study (Granberg 1935, 67). My material reveals an even wider and more mixed use of names, and a mixing of what in the literature are often considered separate 'types' of supernatural beings with similar functions. Wilderness spirits are often called ghosts ('*kummitus*' or '*haamu*'), trolls, or devils. In her dissertation on encounters with the devil in folklore Ulrika Wolf-Knuts has pointed out that the devil enforces order and norms, partly through threats, whereas Ülo Valk has observed that in Estonian folklore breaching norms usually precedes encounters with the devil (Wolf-Knuts 1991, 242, Valk 2001, 194). The spirits can also have individual names such as '*Laakkarin taata*' ('the Grandfather of Laakkari'). A very typical form of the forest *haltija* is that of the 'lady of the forest' (Finnish: '*metsänneito*'; Swedish: '*skogsfrun*'), who is described as a beautiful lady often dressed in a white gown. In Swedish-speaking regions the local dialect name '*träskiskäringar*' ('lake crones') is used for water spirits. Some wilderness spirits are known as 'border devils'.

Both household and wilderness *haltijas* are often either confused with or believed to be ghosts. A being may be called a ghost with the physical characteristics and role typical of a *haltija*, or a being named a *haltija* may be revealed to be the ghost of a murdered child or is said simply to 'haunt' a place. The word 'haunt' (Fi. '*kummittelee*', Swe. '*spökar*') is frequently used to describe the activities of a spirit, irrespective of what it is called. According to Sarmela the conception of the *haltija* as the ghost of a person buried at the place is one of the dominant ideas of the origin of the *haltija*, especially in regions where settlement was well established during the medieval period (Sarmela 1994, 158ff.).

In an interesting example from Nousiainen the *haltija* is equated with the patron saint of a church: 'Thus, the *haltija* of the church of Nousiainen was

St Henry, for he was the first person to be buried there. And when thieves and witches, who at nighttime would enter churches and open their doors with the power of words, they could not enter the church of Nousiainen, as it had such a sacred *haltija*, who would not open the church doors, no matter how they asked' (SKS KRA Nousiainen, Leivo F. 2397. 1937). Spirits appearing both in the household and wilderness are also often called devils (see *Finlands svenska folkdiktning* VII.1, 280–7).

Although my material shows even the traditional division of local spirits into cultural and wilderness spirits (see Granberg 1935, 67, Sarmela 1994, 158) to be somewhat obscure, I will next present the material roughly following those groupings: the spirits of the farm and household; and the spirits of the wilderness.

Spirits of the farm and household

Farm or household *haltijas* are known to help around the premises, at least if treated well. Many types of *haltija* dwellings on farm premises are mentioned, typically the sauna, *riihi* (a kiln house used for smoking grain), the barn, and the main dwelling room. Whether these are specific types of *haltija* or just alternative places where the farm *haltija* is assumed to live is unclear.

One of the oldest literary references to household spirits in Sweden is in the *Revelations of St Bridget of Sweden* (Book 6, Chapter 78), written in the fourteenth century, already mentioned above (Klemming 1861, 197). The first mention in Finland is found in Michael Agricola's foreword to his 1551 Finnish translation of the Psalter of David: 'The *tonntu* ruled the activities of the room' (Agricola 1551, translation by the author.).

Some of the most frequently mentioned ways the *haltija* can help are tending the fire, helping with farm work, waking people up when required, warning of danger, and amassing a fortune for their farms, even by stealing from neighbours (this trait is mentioned only in Swedish-speaking regions). It has even been said to provide a good harvest or luck in making liquor. An oft-repeated motif is that of the *haltija* either giving omens or warnings through booming or knocking sounds. Some records mention the booming sounds as a frightening or 'haunting', while others mention it as a sign of the *haltija*'s contentment.

As well as being known as helpful, the house *haltija* is also referred to as a frightening being who can appear in monstrous forms, and is mentioned as living in the house's darkest and most frightening corners. The house

haltija can cause trouble, mischief, and bad luck, even to the extent of burning houses down and killing people.

Misfortune caused by the house *haltija* is often caused by improper behaviour or acts of disrespect towards the *haltija* itself. Farm residents are often punished, but strangers and visitors even more so. For example, the *haltija* is said to disrupt the work of unfamiliar threshers in the threshing barn, or assail passing travellers who stop to rest in a sauna or *riihi*. A farmer who calls the sauna spirit a devil is soon scared by the apparition of a flayed calf bursting out of the sauna. The most extreme punishment motif is directed at a person who likes to swear and curse, and bathes too late in the sauna. The protagonist, in one account a farm matron, in another a priest, is later found dead, and in various accounts either decapitated or flayed, with their skin stretched out to dry on the wall. The sauna is one of the most clearly taboo-laden and sacred places around the farmstead. I explore this in more detail below. These examples illustrate how the house *haltija* can function as a thought model that illustrates proper and improper behaviour around the farm premises.

To remain on good terms, farm residents went through different measures to appease the house *haltija*. Typical measures include greeting the *haltija* on entering a building, avoiding making noise, or sometimes even the opposite – firing shots in honour of the *haltija* on certain days. The most frequently mentioned way of maintaining good relations with the *haltija* is to leave offerings at certain locations on the farm premises. Appeasing the *haltija* with offerings, especially food, is considered a western Finnish trait by Matti Sarmela. This is because the western Finnish *haltija* is thought to be like a human (Sarmela 1974, 351f.). Martti Haavio has speculated that leaving the first milk or the first bread made from the first grains for the *haltija* may be a result of the tabooed nature of the first share of food (Haavio 1942, 452).

Typical offerings mentioned are often related to food – a share of the same food the farm residents are eating (porridge, milk, alcohol, fresh bread) or unthreshed sheaves of grain. New clothes, shoes, and coins are also mentioned. Offerings can be left every day, on Saturdays, when performing certain work like baking, or for certain seasonal events, typically Christmas and harvest/threshing time.

The household spirits had their own revered places on the farm premises. As the following record from the Swedish-speaking parish of Nagu shows, they could often be seen as ominous and frightening:

All abodes of the *tomte* evoke both fear and reverence. Those who are even slightly afraid of the dark especially fear certain buildings on the premises, as well as the attic and the oven (this is the name for the space above the hearth between the chimney and the wall (*Finlands svenska folkdiktning* VII.1, 335, translated from Swedish by the author).

In my material it is generally impossible individually to localize the places of the household spirits. The records usually simply refer to a place that can exist in any household. It is still not unusual for individual farms to be mentioned. However, even in these cases it is highly unlikely that individual farm buildings mentioned in records from the early twentieth century would remain today.

The most commonly mentioned place for leaving sacrifices is the *riihi*. Other commonly mentioned locations for sacrifices are on the floor in the rear corner of the common room (this location is especially mentioned for the pouring of alcohol as a sacrifice), in the sauna, at the yard tree, in a special room reserved for the *haltija*, in a chest or wooden bowl, and, as one interesting description mentions, at a wooden pole erected in the forest for leaving food offerings to the *tomte*. There are occasional mentions of sacrifices made on stones in the fields. A local trait in the Pöytyä-Oripää subregion is a special room in the household reserved for the *haltija* where sacrifices were left. One record mentions this room being in the attic (SKS KRA Pöytyä. E. Vihervaara b) 1268. 1910). Both mentions of money offerings in wooden containers are from the archipelago.

According to Sonja Hukantaival's dissertation on building concealments, offerings to the house *haltija* could also be placed in the corners of the house, as a foundation ritual, in the walls, above the ceiling, under the floor, or more rarely, the hearth or threshold (Hukantaival 2016, 109, 144).

Yard trees as sacred or supernatural places where offerings are left have been the subject of two master's theses (Tuohiniemi-Hurme 2006, Malinen 2015). In Southwest Finland such trees often have the prefix '*tonttu-*' or '*haltija-*', such as the '*haltjamänt'* pine in Suoloppi, Muurla (SKS KRA Muurla, Suoloppi. Arvid Kuusola TK 50:49. 1961). Typical customs and beliefs regarding revered yard trees include pouring milk sacrifices over the trees' roots after the first calves are born in the spring, the belief that the tree protects the house and its inhabitants, and a taboo against cutting down the tree (see e.g. Malinen 2016, 35–58, Tuohiniemi-Hurme 2006, 41–52, Landtmann 1922, 8f.).

The two most commonly mentioned places for the *tonttu* to appear are separate buildings, which were found on most farmsteads. The most com-

monly mentioned location for a *tonttu* is the *riihi*. The *riihi* is mentioned in 56 of the 153 records describing household spirits in my material. The second is the sauna, a bathhouse equipped with a similar kiln to that in the *riihi*. Although the sauna is mentioned in only 19 records, its sacred nature is explicitly described in several records from both the Finnish- and Swedish-speaking regions.

People used to say the sauna was comparable to the church. You were not allowed to speak dirty words or curse there. The *haltija* would get angry, and accidents would follow. One had to say good evening upon entering the sauna, farewell when leaving, and make a blessing when closing the doors. If you farted while bathing in the sauna, nasty boils would follow. Children behaved well in the sauna when they were scared by being told the *tonttu* would get angry and come into the sauna. ... (SKS KRA Nousiainen. Leivo, Frans. N:0 2101 – 1936, translated from Finnish by the author).

The concept of the sauna as a revered and ritualized place is well known in Finland. The sauna was (and remains) primarily used as a place for bathing. Previously, the sauna had many more functions, most of them involving human vitality and health. The sauna was used for healing diseases, including bloodletting, as the place for childbirth, for the final washing of the dead, for the ritual of ‘raising love’ in a maiden (i.e. making her more attractive to suitors), but also for purposes like smoking meat and malting. Bathing in the sauna is often mentioned as an important ritual at the beginning of annual festivities like the autumn festivals and Christmas, when the spirits were given their own turn to bathe (Pentikäinen 1999).

It is important to note that although sauna bathing was seen as important at annual temporal borders like New Year and Midsummer, there were also strict prohibitions against being in the sauna at the temporal border of midnight. People were therefore expected to purify themselves when approaching the temporal border, but not at the exact moment when the border was crossed. At that moment the sauna *haltija* would drive out, as-sail, or even kill and flay the late bather.

When the records were gathered, the dominant type of sauna was the chimneyless smoke sauna, the heating of which was a time-consuming process that involved a significant risk of the whole sauna burning down if done carelessly or without experience.

Although the *riihi* is mentioned more frequently as the abode of the household *haltija*, its sacred or ritual features are much less distinctive in

the lore than those of the sauna. A *riihi* was used at the final stage of the harvest. Harvested sheaves of grain were smoke-dried in the *riihi*, which had a similar chimneyless kiln to the smoke sauna, and finally also threshed there. In vernacular Finnish threshing is called 'killing' and is seen as the final stage of the harvest cycle (see e.g. Vilkuna 1935, 108–14). It may thus have been seen as an important boundary. There are several mentions in the material of sheaves of unthreshed grain being left in the *riihi* as an offering to the *haltija*. Food or clothes brought to the *riihi* as an offering to the *haltija* are also mentioned several times.

It is noteworthy that the material also mentions *haltijas* in connection with further grain processing stages such as milling and baking, as well as earlier stages, with some offerings or acts of honouring the *haltija* said to be made in the grain fields. The material also contains references to offering stones in the fields, although without more specific details regarding what has been offered or to whom. It is possible that a peculiar group of standing stones, the 'tonntu stones' of Merikarvia (outside the study region), are said to improve the fertility of the fields and are related to the phenomenon of offering stones to the household spirit (see Salo 1972).

Spirits in the wilderness

The local spirits of the wilderness are less frequently described in Finnish folklore than the house *haltija*, and many take more diverse shapes and names (as previously described). Sometimes the name or appearance described is similar to that of the *tonntu*. The similarities and mixing between wilderness and household *haltijas* were already noted by Gunnar Landtmann, who proposed that the *tomte* was actually a wilderness spirit, presiding over the lot of land on which a house was built (Landtmann 1922, 9–17, 21–30).

Uno Harva describes the typical traits of a forest *haltija* in his writing on 'the spiritual folk culture of Finland Proper'. The forest *haltija* is encountered most frequently in the form of a beautiful tall woman dressed in a white gown. She can be experienced as both frightening and alluring or erotic. However, she looks like 'a pile of twigs' or 'a burnt pine stump' from behind, and touching her is considered dangerous. It is said that she can lead a person into the cover of the forest, rendering the victim unable to find a way out of the forest and invisible to others (Harva 1935, 126ff.). According to Gunnar Granberg the shapes and roles of forest spirits depend on the livelihoods and activities carried out in the forest. The motifs typi-

cally found in Southwest Finland resemble those in the pine forest regions of Sweden, where the forest economy was a predominantly male domain (Granberg 1935, 229–42, 53–60).

The lady of the forest is said to be as frivolous as the mermaid. She brings the most wonderful hunting game to the path of her lover (*Finlands svenska folkdiktning* VII.1, 640, translated from Swedish by the author).

As the above example from the parish of Pargas illustrates, wilderness spirits are said to be helpful in many ways, although an element of insecurity or instability is often involved. Ways in which wilderness spirits have been said to be helpful include pulling up a man who has fallen into a river, granting wishes, tying sheep to a tree to stop them running away, or even blessing a hunter's gun so he will never miss his prey. The most commonly mentioned way of being helpful concerns the economic activities performed in the space controlled by the wilderness spirit. It could grant a good catch in hunting or a plentiful berry harvest, or help by tending animals grazing in the forest.

To receive its blessings, one had to give offerings to the spirit. This typically involved part of the catch – for example, releasing the first fish caught back into the water, or being courteous and respectful to it in other ways. Although Veikko Anttonen has claimed them to be unknown (Anttonen 2000, 298f.), I have been able to identify several sites where offerings were left in the forest.

Especially in the material from the Swedish-speaking regions, the wilderness spirits can also be found performing chores similar to those performed by the household spirits. In one account from Iniö the 'man of the forest' offered to sharpen the axes of woodcutters while they were sleeping. However, he sharpened them so intensely that the blades were completely gone by morning (*Finlands svenska folkdiktning* VII.1, 641).

Just like the household spirit, the spirit of the wilderness also has a dangerous side. It can stop or turn around horses, set a pack of wolves on hunters, or discipline people physically. However, it usually just scares people away by appearing in frightening shapes or making booming sounds like the household spirit. Likewise, the punishments and malign actions of wilderness spirits often seem to be bound to people's disrespect for boundaries and rules. A common example is that of the spirit punishing those who have gone berry picking, hunting, or fishing during a church service.

A common spirit encountered in the wilderness is that of the ghost of a murdered and secretly buried infant who haunts a place until it is buried in

consecrated ground. This is obviously a warning against infanticide, which is also presented as the extreme consequence of actions beyond the bounds of social norms. Sexual conduct outside accepted social norms (among the unmarried) could lead to pregnancies outside the accepted social structure. In the worst case children who lacked a place in society might have to be secretly killed and buried in a place of undefined social association, such as at a border. The ghost of such a (probably hypothetical) child thus becomes a guardian appointed to keep watch against such unbound behaviour in places where no one is on guard. Juha Pentikäinen, who has written a doctoral thesis on the Nordic dead child tradition, has emphasized that ghost children are ‘without status or membership’, which is also acknowledged to be a result of social neglect, that is, a breach of social norms (Pentikäinen 1968, 356, 360).

The specific sites where different kinds of spirit are known to appear in the wilderness, or where offerings have been left to them, are quite often named in folklore records. In some cases placenames have been changed or forgotten, or the descriptions are too vague to identify. A study of the identifiable sites where wilderness spirits are encountered on village maps shows that a little more than half the locations are at or very close to the defined borders between villages or parishes.

These are not natural borders like a riverside, forest’s edge, or dusk, as suggested by Jochum Stattin. Nor are they boundaries with an ‘unknown world’. They are administrative, agreed borders between social groups – parishes and villages. As such, they are also very precise, and watching over these precise borders is integral to the social order. Some of the local spirits have functions related to borders. The material mentions ‘border devils’, who haunt border stones that have been moved secretly, and who will find no rest until the stone has been restored to its rightful place.

In her dissertation on the land partitions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the historian Kirsi Laine has suggested that borders between villages in wilderness areas were not exactly defined until the Partition process. Before Partition forests and wilderness were somewhat diffusely claimed as common property (Laine 2020, 124f., 61f.). The drawing of borders in the Partition has thus brought about a change in the social context of the sites’ meaning. It is the ‘border devils’ mentioned above that have a new function, derived from the Partition, of local spirits keeping watch over newly defined borders.

Almost all the localized sites of wilderness spirits are on the outskirts of villages, usually within a few kilometres of habitation. Remote islands are also

featured in the archipelago. However, none of the locations is to be found in the furthest forested regions of the studied parishes, or the 'Korpi' regions.

Some common traits for the terrain of spirit sites are mentioned: 'paths ... between ugly rock fields' (SKS KRA Nousiainen. Leivo, F. 2197. 1936.), '... places far from habitation. These are usually by roads and paths...' (*Finlands svenska folkdiktning* VII.1, 337). Often-mentioned terrain features include woods by the road, steep hillsides, hilltops, boulders, caves and crevices, lakes, rapids, bridges, and in the Swedish-speaking area, small islands. Some of the sites are described as 'gloomy' or 'grim-looking'. There are occasionally mentions of rocks containing foot or hand imprints made by local spirits.

Visiting the places themselves has brought many insights and revealed features that are not evident in the written lore. Recognizing the sites has also become easier, as they seem to share certain traits. In particular, they usually stand out from the surrounding terrain in an eye-catching way. For example, they may have unusual rock formations. Many of the sites also have notable features familiar from other folklore sites, though unmentioned in the lore, such as frequently recurring springs and solitary boulders. I have myself experienced feelings such as 'ominous', 'eerie', or 'grim-looking' in most of the places, though these are subjective experiences. A critical description of experiencing the terrain in spirit places requires a lengthier analysis, which must be undertaken in a future study. I next present some places of wilderness spirits.

Case: the Grandfather of Laakkari

The slope of Laakkari lies along the forest road in the village of Ilmarinen. Close to that slope is a rock, and on its side is a large imprint of a hand. It was struck there by the Grandfather of Laakkari. If you should see him, your wishes will be granted. He is that kind of grandfather. A man named Rihko from the village of Pakurla went there once, hoping to see the Grandfather. When he was stumbling through the forest, an old man appeared, asking, 'What do you want?' 'Would I want shit from an old man like you?' answered Rihko. When he returned home, he found shit thrown precisely all over the place. Rihko had thought the Grandfather to be someone slightly more impressive, not a poor old man like that (SKS KRA Lieto. Posti, F.H. KRK 8:23; translated from Finnish by the author).

I was able to locate the slope of Laakkari with the aid of local informants in 2020. The place is not actually on the lands of Ilmarinen, but in an area of

forest which used to be the common property of several villages until the twentieth century.

The rock is visible from the road, and there are some small springs in front of it. On top of the rock is a recess like a large human hand and forearm. Immediately behind the rock there is a larger hill, which is a border marker with the parish of Maaria (now in the city of Turku). On both sides of the border are relatively large expanses of forest.

The tale of Rihko and the Grandfather of Laakkari illustrates that a local spirit could be either benign, granting wishes, or mischievous and even harmful to those who behaved disrespectfully. The legend does not categorize the Grandfather as a particular 'type' of spirit, though his social function corresponds with themes in stories of the devil (Wolf-Knuts 1991, 243). The Grandfather, like the devil, acts as a projection of socially unapproved hopes by granting any wish. Yet he also acts as a reflection of social norms. Rihko hoped to gain the unnatural luck granted by the old man but ended up being punished and ridiculed for his arrogance and disrespect – and quite possibly for trying to transgress his status.

The site lies in a forested area relatively far from habitation that is shared by many stakeholders. There is a border in the forest, not just a line between villages, but one which divides one parish from the next. The border is not merely a boundary between an inside, known world and an unknown outside in the sense outlined by Anttonen, Stark-Arola, and Koski, among others. It is also an insecure zone between two societies, both of them very much in this world, and it is very precise (albeit invisible), not a vague or arbitrary natural boundary. The forests around the border were the common property of several villages. The presence of a frightening spirit could help prevent unapproved behaviour, especially to avoid conflict between the land's stakeholders on both sides of the border.

Case: Tomte places

On some of the islands south of Turku there are a few known locations (in both Finnish- and Swedish-speaking areas) that are typical of wilderness *haltijas*. However, the spirits appearing there are referred to as *tonttu* or *tomte*, and are exclusively described as threatening or frightening. Such places include the 'Tonttukoivu' birch between the villages of Nikkilä and Kaivoinen on the island of Satava (see Tallgren 1909, 13, Ahola-Riikonen 2000, 97), and the hill of Virvelängsberget in Pargas:

Tomtes can also appear in places far from habitation. These are usually close to roads or paths and are called 'tomte sites'. One such site is said to exist east of the Lampis lake by the hill of Virvelängsberget (*Finlands svenska folkdiktning* VII.1, 337, translated from Swedish by the author).

The Lampis lake is in the northern parts of the Ålö island in Pargas. Although the name 'Virvelängsberget' is not marked on any map, the *tomte* site is quite easy to point out with the help of Partition maps. East of the Lampis lake, an old village road crosses the village border between a steep cliff and the lake (MML Lampis; Isojako 1776–1776 [A78:41/4-5]), again exemplifying the typical placement of local spirits at administrative borders between villages.

Another account describes the actions of the *tomte*, saying that he is now mostly inactive, 'only sometimes he can give a cuff on the ears to some boy who is out at night on courting adventures' (*Finlands svenska folkdiktning* VII.1, 379f.). Young men out at night on courting adventures were at least partially out of bounds. The disciplining *tomte* at Virvelängsberget can be seen as a thought model, a warning to young people seeking romantic or sexual encounters outside the surveillance of farm premises and at night.

Conclusions

A comparison of the social roles of wilderness and household spirits reveals many similarities. Both spirits watch over and enforce the social norms intended to be followed in their domains. The norms often contain elements of showing respect and reverence to the spirit itself, and its associated place or abode. Sometimes the spirits are even honoured with offerings, which are often part of the produce gained from the spirit's domain. Both wilderness and household spirits are presented as able to affect the outcomes of economic activities in their respective territories. This could be a bountiful harvest for a farm, or luck in fishing and hunting in the wilderness.

Both types of spirit are said to act, appear, or dwell in specific places that can be feared, laden with taboos, or sometimes even deemed sacred. Observing the places on village maps reveals that they are often on socially and administratively defined boundaries or agreed borders.

Both Veikko Anttonen and Jochum Stattin emphasize the importance of boundaries of all kinds – boundaries between the self and the outside, boundaries between categories, and natural boundaries such as waterbodies, or the sacred being between boundaries. Stattin has pointed out that

the spirits of folklore often turn up in situations where cultural divisions or categories are weak or diffuse (Stattin 1984, 44–52, Stattin 1990, 151).

Observing functionally revered sites on village maps reveals a new aspect of boundaries in folklore – that of administrative boundaries between communities such as villages, parishes, or farms. These boundaries exist to set apart yours from mine and can be seen as emic, as they have been defined by the affiliated societies. By separating spaces claimed by different owners, borders play an important role in the creation of social order. The folklore of the spirits inhabiting such places, punishing or frightening people who breach the social order by moving border stones or moving around at night, functions as tools for thought, exemplifying social rules.

As a consequence of the insecurity around the mastery and ownership of a shared border, an external master over that zone is required. A local spirit, sometimes a *haltija*, *rådare*, a ghost, or something else, bears the authority of both (or all) societies sharing a border or common area. These spirits are parts of thought models, acting as symbolic guardians of a cultural and socially ordered environment, including its norms and restrictions, both in the household and wilderness. This may explain why the spirits seem absent in the furthest reaches of the wilderness, which must have been used very seldom.

Like the farm and village, the forest was also a culturally significant shared space. Before the Partition process, all forests were shared between several villages and exploited together. Some forests remained common property even after the Partition. Different agreements were employed to make sure no one overexploited them (Laine 2020, 31–4). But as people often operated independently in the forest, the knowledge or thought model of watchful and fearsome spirits could help enforce these agreements.

The places of the spirits are charged with stories delineating taboos and threats, creating an aura of both fear and reverence. Some of the records describe ritual actions like leaving offerings at the sites. Such acts may have been a way of heightening the meaning of the place of the spirit. This can also be seen as a way of ritually marking borders and performing the social cohesion of the group, as well as marking the group's claim to the land (see Pyysiäinen 2008, 287ff., Laine 2020, 61). I suggest it is possible that ritual actions at shared borders or spaces may also have marked the participant's use of the space, thus reinforcing their engagement with and right to it.

The material from Southwest Finland studied here has revealed the shared nature of the border. Another kind of border, that between the inside and outside, which has been emphasized in previous research by Anttonen

and Stark-Arola, for example, can also be distinguished in some cases: above all the house's outer boundaries, but also its walls, corners, attic, and floor, which are all known as abodes of the household spirit. A possible explanation for the difference between border types is the settlement density in Southwest Finland. Even the more remote locations of wilderness spirits, including islands, were then less than four kilometres away from the nearest habitation. The material used by Stark-Arola comes mostly from Eastern Finland and Karelia, where the distances between habitations are greater. Denser population and settlements also increase the need for precise, mutually agreed borders and respect for them.

This study has merely opened the possibility of historical maps as a source material for a detailed understanding of the context of folklore. This requires further exploration. The examples of the sauna and *riihi* also reveal borders in time and work. A comparison and juxtaposition of physical and temporal borders in folklore could yield very interesting results concerning vernacular conceptions of spatiality.

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Negotiating Christian Cultural Heritage: Christmas in Schools and Public Service Media

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Abstract

This article shows how Christmas in schools and public service media for children (PSM) involves negotiation and renewal of Christian cultural heritage. Across the studied cases from Norway and Denmark, we find that the institutions involved seek to realize community. However, community is approached differently in different settings. It is either understood restoratively as a process in which children, including immigrant children, become part of an existing societal community, or constructively as establishing an inclusive community across cultural and religious divides. A major finding is that activities associated with Christianity such as school services are framed in a language of ‘museumification’ and not as part of a living religious practice with the capacity to change and transform. Whereas Islam is positioned as a ‘religious other’, Christianity understood as culture facilitates creative heritage making, establishing community across religious divides. Contrary to political rhetoric, Christian cultural heritage in schools and PSM is by and large not dominated by a safeguarding nationalistic discourse. Rather, traditions and activities related to Christianity are negotiated and appropriated for the benefit of an inclusive community. A premise for making this succeed in schools and PSM is to negotiate Christian cultural heritage as culture, not as religion.

Keywords: Christian cultural heritage, public schools, public service media, practice theory, culturalization, heritage making, citizenship, mediatization, lived religion, Christmas.

Christmas as lived religion practices in schools and the media

In the last couple of years references to the ‘Christian cultural heritage’ have been made frequently in political debates. The term is most often used in a polarizing manner as part of a protective rhetoric, and is linked to discussions of immigration and integration (Beaman 2020). This article’s research trigger was the need to identify how the concept of Christian cultural heritage was understood when analysed as embedded in social practices.¹ In the Nordic context two public institutions have a special obligation in this respect. Public schools and Public Service Media for children (PSM) are independent public agents in increasingly pluralist and multicultural societies, which they should mirror and serve. Yet they are also formally obliged to inform and educate children in their country’s cultural, national, and Christian heritage.² How do they do this? This article examines how school principals and PSM leaders operationalize Christian cultural heritage in schools and on screens.

As Daniele Hervieu-Léger theorizes, the dominant agents in traditional chains of cultural memory have been family and religious organizations (Hervieu-Léger 2000). We focus on public institutions, because they are agents negotiating the content of this cultural memory – perhaps even dominant agents for the broader population. The empirical material consists of interviews with two school principals from the Oslo region in Norway, called OsloUrban and OsloSuburban, and two from the Aarhus region in Denmark, called AarhusUrban and AarhusSuburban, as well as an interview with two programme directors in NRK Super (Norsk rikskringkasting) and two in DR, Ultra and Ramasjang (Danmarks Radio). The six interviews were conducted in February 2019 in Norway and in November 2019 in Denmark. Both Denmark and Norway have dominant majority churches adhering to

1 ReNEW Reimagining Norden in an Evolving World supported this project with two grants in 2019. A workshop grant enabled an interdisciplinary workshop at Aarhus University, where preliminary analyses of the material were discussed. A mobility grant to Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen made it possible to conduct interviews with school principals and PSM leaders in Denmark in February 2019. <<https://www2.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/reimagining-norden-in-an-evolving-world/funding>>

2 Norway: Public Service Media Regulation, see §18 <<https://www.nrk.no/informasjon/nrks-vedtekter-1.5392438>>, Education Act <<https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/education-act/id213315/>>. Denmark: Public Service Media agreement 2019–2023, Chapter 2 <https://kum.dk/fileadmin/_kum/2_Kulturomraader/Medier/DR/DR_s_public_service-kontrakt_for_2019-2023_med_note_om_film_.pdf>, Education Act § 1 and § 5 art. 2c <<https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2020/1396>>, accessed 7 January 2021.

Evangelical Lutheran Christianity. In Denmark on 1 January 2020 74 per cent of the population were members of the Church of Denmark. In Norway in 2020 68 per cent of the population were members of the Church of Norway.

Christmas is our selected timeframe, simply because we expected it to be the time of the year when Christian cultural heritage issues were most at stake. Ole Riis and Linda Woodhead argue that Christmas is a major example of how the sacred secular is enacted in contemporary Western societies (Riis and Woodhead 2010). Similarly, Christopher Deacy claims that public institutions such as schools and PSM are doing religion in their demarcation of appropriate and inappropriate religion in a secular space (Deacy 2018).

Our empirical research question is: what do school principals and broadcasting leaders aim for in their Christmas efforts? The research interest guiding this question is what Theodor Schatzki terms *the teleoaffective structure* (Schatzki 1996), meaning the ends – the motivation or engine – of what schools and PSM are trying to accomplish in their ‘sayings and doings’ when they enact Christmas. Our interest in the whole Christmas spectrum thus signals an approach in which we abstain from both narrow and broad definitions of religion. Inspired by the lived religion trajectory (McGuire 2008, Ammerman 2007), our emphasis is on Christmas as part of the everyday within the studied institutions. Like Nancy Ammerman (2020), we argue that it is beneficial to study lived religion through the lens of practice theory (Johnsen and Afdal 2020), since this theoretical framing allows natural hybridity to come across as equally true to religiously designated practices and any other practice, and it affords analytical attention to ‘[h]ow patterns of socially constructed action are ... both habitual *and* emergent, constrained and creative’ (Ammerman 2020, 12). Approaching Christian cultural heritage as lived religion from a practice-theoretical perspective implies that we analyse what school principals and PSM leaders do when they create activities for children at Christmas even though they may not – due to culture, history, and law – themselves deploy the term religion.

However, even if practice theory takes practices as their central concern, it is not a unified approach (Schatzki et al. 2001). As Riis and Woodhead maintain, Christmas cannot be understood without taking emotionality into account. We have chosen Schatzki’s definition of practice, because it connects habitual and creative patterns of action with affectivity. More specifically, Schatzki defines *a social practice* as an organized set of sayings and doings joined by: 1) understandings of what these sayings and doings mean; 2) ‘explicit rules, principles, prescriptions, and instructions’; and 3) ‘teleoaffective structures comprising hierarchies of ends, tasks, projects,

beliefs, emotions, moods, and the like' (Schatzki 1996, 98f.). Importantly for our analysis, the teleoaffective structure refers to both the ends within a practice, understood as the normatively regarded oughtness and rightness, and to emotions – how one feels about it – when engaged in these ends (Schatzki 1996, 101). Thus, we have an analytical focus both on the rules that the school principals and PSM leaders articulate as normatively right and wrong actions at Christmas and the affective atonement attached to what they do. Given the sociocultural position of Christmas in the Nordic countries, in Schatzki's terms Christmas can be understood as a 'gigantic nexus of practices and arrangements', or what he labels 'the "plenum of practice"' (Schatzki 2017, 133). Taken together, the analysis of Christmas as an organized set of sayings and doings provides a way to identify and discuss how understandings of Christian cultural heritage play out and are part of schools and PSM. The analysis proceeds stepwise, first by identifying what the school principals and PSM leaders aim for in what they do at Christmas, and second by linking the festival's practices to larger theoretical discourses, asking the following questions: How do school principals and PSM leaders in Norway and Denmark frame 'Christian heritage' in relation to secular values and other religions, and Islam in particular? What kind of citizenship discourses are expressed in their views of 'cultural heritage'? And finally, where is it possible to trace fixed and more open-ended understandings of 'Christian cultural heritage'? Our examination of how Christian cultural heritage is embedded in Christmas as a situated practice within schools and PSM exemplifies that a lived religion approach combined with practice theory enables a linkage between the study of every day social life and larger structures of opportunity and constraint.

Scholarly discourses about Christian cultural heritage

A great risk is attached to employing the term 'Christian cultural heritage'. The concept has a wide range of meanings, and many are, as argued by Lori G. Beaman (2020), highly contentious.³ We have chosen to make Christian cultural heritage researchable by locating how issues related to it are discussed by researchers addressing it from a Dutch context. There are substantial differences between Dutch religious history and the Nordic

3 The relationship between religion and the state in the Nordic Countries, and especially the changing religious landscape, has recently been investigated in the NOREL project, which also illuminates important differences between the Nordic countries. See especially (Furseth 2018, Furseth et al. 2019).

context. However, we connect with scholarly debates from the Netherlands because issues of Christian cultural heritage have been even more at stake there. The first scholarly discourse we encounter focuses on how *Christian heritage* has received renewed attention in political analyses. The Dutch scholar Ernst van den Hemel has studied how right-wing politicians in the Netherlands apply references to the Judaeo-Christian West as part of their argument in the media for a secularity that excludes other cultures, and particularly Muslims (Hemel 2018). However, van den Hemel claims that this discursive practice is not exclusive to right-wing politicians, and argues that it is part of a broad reframing of the social imaginary of Western Europe in which it 'is decided who can partake of Western secularity and who is excluded' (van den Hemel 2018, 254). According to van den Hemel, secular and religious-cultural heritage are fused in a way that means 'all sorts of progressive values that, historically, one would not expect to be connected to a religious past, such as feminism and gay rights, are presented as hallmarks of "Judeo-Christian" superiority' (van den Hemel 2018, 253). Our interest is not in studying public media discourse, but examining how school principals and PSM leaders frame 'Christian heritage' and 'Christianity' in relation to secular values and other religions, and Islam and Muslim children in particular.

The second scholarly discourse we link with focuses on *cultural heritage*. Jan Willem Duyvendak and Evelin Tonkens have found that culture has become increasingly important in contemporary discussions of citizenship (Duyvendak & Tonkens 2016). They argue that citizenship has changed discursively in the Netherlands, and employ the *culturalization of citizenship* to capture 'a process by which culture (emotions, feelings, norms and values, including religion) has come to play a central role in the debate on what it means to be a citizen, either as an alternative or in addition to political, juridical and social citizenship' (Duyvendak & Tonkens 2016, 3). To be a full citizen can imply showing particular feelings, or 'feeling rules' (Hochschild 2003), towards cultural activities within a society. To understand the various manifestations of how culturalization takes place in social practices, Duyvendak and Tonkens distinguish between *restorative* and *constructivist views* of culture, as well as *functional* and *affective* ways of mobilizing it in the service of citizenship (Duyvendak & Tonkens 2016, 6–9). In outlining the content of these concepts in the analysis, we ask what kind of citizenship discourses the school principals and PMS leaders express through their views of 'culture', and especially how children from a minority background are approached.

The third discourse to which we relate also has *cultural heritage* as its main occupation. Birgit Meyer and Marleen de Witte identify two processes ‘at the heart of the interplay between the field of “heritage” and “religion”’ (Meyer and de Witte 2013). The first is the *heritagization of the sacred*, how ‘religious traditions become represented and recognised (or contested and rejected) as heritage’, and they use the phrase ‘the language of “museumification”’ to describe a process in which a living religion becomes a cultural heritage – or a memorial site. The term is used to describe cultural fixation processes; it is not a term that represents museal activities as such (Meyer & de Witte 2013, 276). The second, the *sacralization of heritage* is where ‘certain heritage forms become imbued with a sacrality that makes them appear powerful, authentic, or even incontestable’ (Meyer & de Witte 2013, 277), and refers to processes of heritage making in which everyday objects acquire a sacralized quality if coded as heritage. Our concern is to study how school principals and PSM leaders negotiate the interplay between heritage and religion. In particular, we address how school principals and PSM leaders approach parts of their Christmas activities as fixed and others as an area of innovation.

State of the art

Religion and school

Most research on religion in schools in Norway and Denmark addresses issues related to the subject of religious education (RE), and often consists of analyses of political and juridical policy documents. How Christian cultural heritage is spelled out in these documents is a heated topic. Tim Jensen and Karna Kjeldsen argue that the juridical regulation of the school system – and particularly RE – in Denmark presents Christianity as ‘the main provenance of the foundational and core values of democracy, the welfare state etc’, and that the RE syllabus constructs the majority religion as a universal life philosophy and ethics, and not as a religion as such (Jensen & Kjeldsen 2013, 216). Similarly, Bengt Ove Andreassen describes the integrative subject of RE in Norway, introduced in 1998, as based on a cultural heritage perspective (Andreassen 2013, 139). Andreassen perceives ongoing political intentions of promoting Christianity as cultural heritage as a potential threat to the equal treatment of religions. A possible renewal of a Christian cultural heritage perspective, especially in primary and secondary education, is something

he regards as 'a real setback after several years of positive developments' (Andreassen 2013, 160).

Yet as Marie von der Lippe and Sissel Undheim underline, empirically based knowledge about how political controversies and revisions of curricular documents influence teaching activities is very limited, and because activities related to Christmas, for example, are not part of a particular subject, they are the least studied (Von der Lippe & Undheim 2019). Sidsel Vive Jensen has also employed a broader concept of religion in school (Jensen 2019). Some research has been conducted on school services (Øierud 2019, Bråten 2019, Løvland & Repstad 2019). This is a central Christmas activity in schools in both Norway and Denmark, and it is also an activity that has been heavily debated in the media in both countries.⁴ Ane Kirstine Brandt and Pia Bøwadt have studied how Danish school principals and pastors describe and reflect on school services as part of school hours. Most argue that it is part of culture and not a problem (Brandt & Bøwadt 2014). Olav Hovdelien and Gunnar Neegaard show that school services in Norway often squeeze school principals between formal curricular guidelines on the one hand and requests from parents on the other (Hovdelien & Neegaard 2014). However, every school in Norway is juridically obliged to offer an educational equivalent to this activity because it involves religious practice,⁵ but almost no one has studied what occurs in these alternative activities (Von der Lippe & Undheim 2019), and only a few have studied other Christmas-related activities such as Lucia processions (Undheim 2019).

Minority issues and a concern for diversity have been significant in discussions of religion in schools. Some empirical studies analyse how activities associated with Christianity play out for pupils from a minority, and especially a Muslim, background. Iram Khawaja (Khawaja 2014) and Laura Gilliam (Gilliam 2019) show that Danish schools with a small Muslim minority tend to show little awareness of the Christian content of many school traditions, while more multi-ethnic schools have made efforts to reduce the Christian dimensions of traditions over the years.

4 The debate on school services was especially intense in Norway in 2016. The media debate resulted in a discussion in parliament in which the prime minister took an active role and defended the tradition <<https://www.nrk.no/norge/solberg-advarer-mot-a-droppe-skolegudstjenester-1.13230140>>, accessed 7 February 2021. In Denmark the debate became heated in 2017 when a school in the northern part of Zealand cancelled the school Christmas service: <<https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/skole-i-graested-i-haard-modvind-har-sloejfet-julegudstjeneste>>, accessed 7 February 2021.

5 <www.udir.no/regelverk-og-tilsyn/skole-og-opplaring/saksbehandling/skolegudstjenester/>, accessed 20 January 2020.

Departing from practice theory, we especially follow the path laid by researchers such as Lippe and Undheim, Vive Jensen, and Khawaja, in that we focus on how Christmas is practised in school activities that are not necessarily connected with RE. As part of this, we also contribute to existing research on school services.

Religion and PSM

Religion within the media field, and particularly PSM, has also been a topic of discussion in Norway and Denmark (Lundby 2018a), but it has not approached the controversies surrounding religion in schools. The theoretical perspective referred to as *mediatization* has been highly influential in scholarly debates about the media and religion in the Nordic countries (Lundby 2018b). Mediatization, according to Stig Hjarvard, is the long-term process of media-induced changes in culture and society. The concept includes both how media transforms social institutions, and how the media has become an institution in itself, partly replacing other institutions like the church (Hjarvard 2016). A key finding from empirical media research is that religion is newsworthy when it is extremist in one way or another (Hjarvard 2016, 14).

Thus, the many examples of religious extremism, such as the terror attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, are according to Knut Lundby et al. a primary reason why the total coverage of religion in the secular media has increased in recent years. Overall, media interest has shifted from the majority churches to Islam (Lundby 2018b, Lundby 2019, Reintoft Christensen 2019). As part of this situation, references to Christian cultural heritage have been activated both in Norway and Denmark. Recent media studies show that references to Christianity often concern Denmark's national identity (Reintoft Christensen 2019, Nielsen 2011). Similarly, in Norway Christian cultural heritage, according to Cora Alexa Døving and Siv Ellen Kraft, has increasingly been linked to arguments about being Norwegian, used as a contrast to immigrant cultures, and most prominently as part of the populist right-wing discourse (Lundby 2019, 254, Døving & Kraft 2013).

Relevant to our study, Lundby et al. have measured the coverage of Christianity before Easter and Christmas in 1988 and 2008, which was no greater than in other periods in the Nordic countries (Lundby 2018b, 209). However, they only measured direct or explicit references to Christianity. Building on Sofia Sjö's research on religion in Nordic films (Sjö 2012), it is noteworthy that Lundby et al. distance themselves from this concept of religion when analysing popular media. Hence, they argue that religion in the Nordic countries

is often presented without direct references to faith or supernatural beings (Lundby 2018b, 211). Thus, Lundby et al. employ a generally narrow definition of religion, while admitting that this concept is insufficient when studying religion in the Nordic media. Contrary to this narrow definition, we analyse Christmas as a nexus of interlinked practices in which the involved actors negotiate what counts as religion, and what does not.

Analysis: Christmas in schools and PSM for children

Our analytical strategy has been to analyse the material thematically, first, by coding the interviews, inspired by Schatzki's definition of practice, and second, to address how the interview material is connected with the three different scholarly discourses related to Christian cultural heritage. We aim for thick descriptions in our following analysis, moving gradually into more theoretically oriented discussions of the material.

Aims – The teleoaffective structure of Christmas

What do school principals and PSM leaders aim for in their efforts around Christmas? We begin by addressing what Schatzki identifies as the teleoaffective structure of a practice, including hierarchies of ends, tasks, projects, beliefs, emotions, and moods.

Across schools and the media, as well as national contexts, the main aim of Christmas in these institutions is to live out, express, and enhance the experience of community. This is most directly expressed by the school principal at OsloUrban:

... we want to convey very fundamental values about the importance of taking care of each other across every divide. The most important issue is not what kind of faith you have, what kind of colour you have on your skin or which sexualities you have, or the kind of roles you have in everyday life, but to stand up for others, take care of others, and treat them like yourself ... well, yes, those are the things we speak a lot about (school principal, OsloUrban).

The leaders at DR responded very much like her, but less passionately than the school principal:

It [Christmas] is a lot about community. About understanding each other. Meeting around something you share. It is not a unique position. We don't seek to create something unique (leaders, DR Ramasjang and Ultra).

Their distancing of themselves from occupying a unique position at DR is expressed in comparing their celebration of Christmas to other sites of Christmas. In other words, Christmas is a nexus of practices in which community and mutual understanding is a key aim. However, the school principal also understands community more generally as an ambition: creating a community across every divide is a driver throughout the year. It thus seems that Christmas is an opportunity to intensify the kind of community the schools always seek to accomplish. The school principal at OsloSuburban focuses more on the traditions existing within the overall societal community in which the pupils live:

At the same time, I think that whether or not one believes in something, I think it is sad that people do not know ... if people do not know that there was a person named Jesus, and who did this and that [in the different religions], independent of belief. Also to know differences and similarities with Islam. We emphasize all that with traditions and culture. That's important to me (school principal, OsloSuburban).

Most of OsloSuburban's children come from the majority culture. The school principal's affective expression about being sad concerns making everyone knowledgeable about central issues within this tradition, as well as about other traditions, including Islam.

AarhusSuburban is even more homogeneous than OsloSuburban, and it was difficult in our interview with this school principal for us to detect his motivation in relation to the celebration of Christmas. Christmas seemed a tradition so self-evidently given that it needed no further explanation. The opinions of the principals in the suburban schools resemble what Duyvendak and Tonkens describe as a restorative view of culture. Such a view implies 'the idea of culture as a given – that its content is fixed and mostly also known' (Duyvendak & Tonkens 2016, 6)

However, it is not only in the two suburban schools where a *restorative view* is key to understanding their concept of community. The school principal at the very diverse AarhusUrban eagerly expresses a similar understanding. However, her departure point is different. Like the other interviewees, she distances herself from Christmas as religious, pointing to community and mutual understanding:

You could say it's not this 'preachy Christmas' we engage in – we care about the joy and community around Christmas, the tradition and so on

... it's always about getting to know each other's worlds (school principal, AarhusUrban).

She connects this aim closely with restoring the cultural knowledge of a group of children with little prior knowledge of this tradition:

Well, it's this concept of cultural formation that we want to include in the school. And I'm very much engaged in the whole question and task of integration, and it's crucial to me that those parents who have chosen to live in Denmark with their children know about the society they live in, and about what is important for the majority in this society. It doesn't mean that they should love it ... but they should know about it, because I believe knowledge creates better understanding and insight, right? (school principal, AarhusUrban).

This school principal uses affective language to describe this restorative task. However, the term 'restorative' may be misleading here. The minority children to whom the school principal refers have other religious and cultural backgrounds than the majority. Thus, her approach is restorative in that she facilitates minority pupils in discovering the traditions of the majority culture in their country of residence. Enhancing this transfer of cultural knowledge seems a key engine in how she facilitates Christmas in this school.

However, in two of the Norwegian cases we find a rather different elaboration of Christmas as community.

As evident in the first statement of the school principal at OsloUrban, community is not predominantly restorative knowledge of Christmas as part of the majority culture; it is instead elaborated as community across religion, skin colour, and sexuality. When asked directly what she thinks about the relationship between Christianity and Norwegian culture with respect to Christmas, she responds:

I think, yes please, both. We can't put away the Christian bit of Christmas; it is after all an important cultural heritage we carry with us. But at the same time I think we have a longer history, a broader perspective than just looking at what is really a very marginal celebration – so yes, both in a historical perspective, but also in a global perspective (school principal, OsloUrban).

To achieve her goal of an inclusive community at Christmas, she seeks to open up the interpretation of Christmas historically and to move beyond

the Christian celebration globally as well. Such a view approaches what Duyvendak and Tonkens describe as a constructivist view of culture, 'where culture is seen as a process in the making' (Duyvendak & Tonkens 2016, 6).

A similar constructivist approach was also evident at NRK Super.

We don't in any way wish to be excluding. We don't wish that children of a different religion should opt out of us because we communicate things that their parents don't wish for us to communicate to their child' (Leaders, NRK Super)

This aim was communicated to us with affective engagement. The interviewees underlined that NRK Super had a clear vision of not offending anyone from another religious background. To do this, they tried to avoid direct references to the Christian origin of Christmas and sought to be inclusive by transforming what they referred to as the Christmas gospel into new stories conveying the same values.

...we talk about the same values that lie at the heart of the story, the Christmas gospel ... The value in that story, we try to tell that through other stories (leaders, NRK Super).

However, the leaders said that NRK Super presented the Islamic festival of Eid during Christmas to make this religious tradition more comprehensible for most children in Norway.

We got complaints when we broadcast a programme about Eid and Islam on the second day of Christmas. My assessment is the opposite... Such a programme at Christmas puts it [Eid] into a context that children can relate to more profoundly. Well, this was a digression, but our concern is to mirror every worldview (leaders, NRK Super).

The analysis thus far indicates that school principals and PSM leaders understand community as the ultimate *telos* of their Christmas efforts. However, their concepts of community differ, and are categorized here as restorative and constructivist views of culture. Most of our cases seek to make children part of traditions existing in society at large, but OsloUrban and NRK Super explicitly seek to construct communities across religious and cultural divides. In particular, NRK Super attempts to convey that every religion and worldview is respected and treated alike. Yet Christianity and Islam

are positioned differently. As Nadia Jeldtoft argues, creating new stories such as Christmas serials directly inspired by the values of 'the Christmas gospel' casts Christianity as an 'authorized religion' as part of a 'secular normality'. In contrast, portraying the Eid festival as a distinctly religious festival during Christmas implies a position in which Islam inhabits a deviant role as the 'religious other' (cf. Jeldtoft 2013, 26).

Rules – the principles and instructions of Christmas

Following Schatzki's definition of practices as an organized set of doings and sayings, our next analytical step focuses on how explicit rules, principles, prescriptions, and instructions influence how school principals and PSM leaders realize Christmas. Objective clauses, curricula, and directives from educational offices are examples of such explicit rules framing what schools are doing and saying. Similarly, PSM is also linked with political signals, vision and strategy documents, and state directives. However linked, explicit rules do not determine a practice, both because the different instructions must be put into practice and because rules themselves are an evolving area (Schatzki 1996, 104).

Despite minor differences, Christmas in schools and PSM contain many similar elements. The principals and leaders told us about Christmas trees, Christmas ornaments, arts and craft activities, small competitions, lighting candles, Christmas songs, Christmas food, countdown activities, gatherings, and a great deal about Santa Claus. Everyone emphasized that Christmas was a tradition, and that tradition was about doing the same thing each year. However, they also told us about newly invented activities.

One such newly invented activity takes place at the two Oslo schools; their innovation is directly connected with an explicit rule issued by the Norwegian school authorities. The heated debate on school services in 2016 mentioned above ended with new guidelines for all schools in Norway. These legally binding guidelines encourage every school to take part in school services before Christmas in their local Lutheran church. However, the guidelines make it mandatory to arrange an alternative activity for pupils not attending, and this activity ought to be an equivalent of the school service.⁶ Both school principals at the Oslo area schools told us how they had realised this obligation to arrange an alternative to the service. They

⁶ <www.udir.no/regelverk-og-tilsyn/skole-og-opplaring/saksbehandling/skolegudstjenester/>, accessed 21 January 2020.

emphasized that many elements such as most of the Christmas songs and the fact that the pupils were active in performances of songs and drama were identical to the school service. The main differences were that the nativity play in church was replaced by stories from the pre-Christian era, and that Santa played a large role. A major concern to both school principals was that the alternative event at school should be as solemn as the service in church.

It ought to be something that transcends. It might be a light festivity or something about traditions or a folk fairy tale. At least, it's not supposed to be like a regular school day ... The alternative arrangement is supposed to have the same function, to gather, to light candles, to do something together, to get that community feeling the other pupils get at the school service (school principal, OsloSuburban).

In Denmark there is no such explicit rule about alternatives. Parents can exempt their children, but most children participate in the school service. The few exempted children stay in the school library or watch a film while the rest are away. The school principal at AarhusSuburban regards school services as a regular part of school:

That service is part of tradition. And if anybody asks, it is part of school. It is just like Christianity classes [a mandatory subject until 7th grade]. Nobody is exempted from Christianity classes either. Well of course, we have migrant children and children from Muslim backgrounds, but they participate just like everybody else (school principal, AarhusSuburban).

An equivalent view is not found at AarhusUrban, where most pupils have minority backgrounds. The principal at this school reports that school services are not part of what they do. Instead, the school principal initiated a new arrangement some years ago. In the afternoon of the last Friday in November the school invites all neighbours and parents, many of them unaccustomed to Christmas celebrations, to gather around an enormous Christmas tree in the school's front yard. At this gathering the tree is lit for the first time. They sing no hymns, but traditional Christmas songs that 'suit a very tall tree', as the school principal puts it; the older pupils sell traditional Christmas goodies, and the school principal gives a short speech.

A similar gathering has been invented at OsloUrban for the last day of school before Christmas, reflecting school guidelines in Norway stating that Christmas gatherings on the last day before the holiday should assemble

all the pupils.⁷ The school principal at OsloUrban describes all pupils and teachers gathering in the dark at the school and parading out into a nearby forest with lit torches in their hands. They sing traditional Christmas songs, leading the parade to a big bonfire. The ultimate highlight for the children is when the school principal shouts ‘Santa is here’, and everybody runs to find sweets hidden in the bushes, before they walk back to school, where parents volunteer to serve Christmas porridge.

These newly invented Christmas activities at the OsloUrban and AarhusUrban are closely linked to their aims of establishing community beyond divides. Community has also been decisive in how NRK Super and DR Ramasjang and Ultra have invented Christmas TV serials in recent years.

When we understood where it was going [towards streaming], one of the things that we really worked hard for was to figure out the kind of content that could gather the whole family. What is it that makes them turn on the big screen, saying; ‘Come on, let’s watch it together?’ (leaders, NRK Super).

Their solution was to create a new Christmas serial with what they called ‘our own Charles Dickens universe’ about ‘the real Santa Claus, the one you just have to believe in’. This serial, and the ones that followed, combining spectacular imaginary worlds with the everyday lives of children, did what the producers hoped for. They gathered the family in larger numbers than the NRK leaders thought possible, and it was almost ‘like returning to a time we didn’t know existed any longer’. The newly invented Christmas calendars at DR have also been very successful.

Hence, despite the first impression that Christmas is primarily a tradition, we find several examples of innovative processes in which schools and PSM have intentionally created new activities. We find that the explicit obligation to have an alternative to school services in Norway has had a stimulating *heritage formation* effect on both schools, regardless of whether they have few or many pupils from minority backgrounds. Similar heritage formation processes have also taken place in Denmark, where there has not been a similar legislative process – but only at AarhusUrban, where most pupils are from minority backgrounds.

Meyer and de Witte describe heritage formation as a process in which heritage forms become imbued with sacrality, and everyday objects acquire a sacralized quality when coded as heritage (Meyer & de Witte 2013,

7 <www.udir.no/regelverk-og-tilsyn/skole-og-opplaring/saksbehandling/skolegudstjenester/>

279). Our analysis shows that the Christmas serials, alternatives to school services, gathering around the Christmas tree, and outings in the forest all create solemn community experiences for the family, at school, and in the local area. The principals consciously employ and adapt heritage elements already imbued with a sacralized quality, and this enables the coding of the new activities as heritage. As Undheim finds in her research on St Lucia processions (Undheim 2019), elements with diffuse religious connotations – such as the Christmas tree, the lighting of candles, and modern Santa narratives and stories from the pre-Christian era – are preferred in these heritage formation processes. Hence, the explicit rules and principles for how Christmas is observed in schools and PSM are not only a matter of tradition but an evolving field creating new ritual spaces in these public institutions.

Yet we also find that explicit regulation of an activity, and the tendency to understand something as a tradition, can facilitate *heritage preservation* processes – what Meyer and de Witte refer to as the heritagization of the sacred (Meyer & de Witte 2013, 278). The school principal in AarhusSuburban is confident that the local church shares his understanding of the school service as a tradition and part of school. Both school principals from Norway emphasize that their school services do not violate the official guidelines and describe in detail how the services are the same every year. This year, one teacher reported that the pastor had included a new and too ‘evangelizing’ song in the school service, whereupon the school principal had immediately called the pastor and urged her not to use that song next year. According to the school principal such incidents put a tradition like the school service at risk.

If I get too many complaints, if too many new things are introduced [by the church], it [school services] will come to an end. I have too many fights as principal, and I have to choose them (school principal, OsloSuburban).

In sum, the incident with the new song introduced to the school service in OsloSuburban illustrates how school services are ruled by what Duyvendak and Tonkens refer to as a *historical canon* (Duyvendak & Tonkens 2016, 8). A focus on retaining school services as something given resonates with Meyer and de Witte’s heritagization of the sacred, whereby religious traditions become represented in a framework of heritage (Meyer & de Witte 2013, 277). As such, the school principals talk about school services in a ‘language of “museumification”’ (Meyer & de Witte 2013, 278). School services are not envisioned as a transforming field or seen as part of a living religion that

changes and evolves (Johnsen 2020, Nielsen & Johansen 2019). The visit to the local church is instead coded as a visit to a memorial space where pupils learn about a specific cultural heritage. However, the alternatives to the school service and the new Christmas calendars are examples of heritage making. The intention in both schools and PSM is to provide children with experiences of Christmas as something that transcends the everyday. To achieve this, elements associated with Christianity become appropriated in ways that make the new heritage forms appear powerful and authentic.

Understandings – the meaning of Christmas

The analysis so far provides insights into what school principals and PSM leaders are seeking, and what they do to achieve these aims, but, following Schatzki, a practice is also constituted by understandings of meaning. This final section of the analysis focuses on what the different aims and actions mean to the interviewed principals and leaders, and how the meanings they attach to Christmas are related to different citizenship discourses.

The leaders at DR Ramasjang emphasize that it is their obligation to offer a safe Christmas space:

Christmas is absolutely traditional with Santas and Christmas. The world of Ramasjang is not that complex. We have a Christmas calendar that is absolutely safe and free of risk. ... Our promise at Ramasjang is that it is safe, and that you will not be scared and frightened (leaders, DR Ramasjang and Ultra).

The active pursuit of a minority perspective is not an option. For example, having programmes about Islamic festivities during Christmas, as NRK does, is unthinkable to the leaders from DR. 'We always get reactions when we do something on Islam. We have never focused on Islam during Christmas, and I cannot imagine that we will ever do that.' Accordingly, this assessment by the DR leader can be traced to the 'hypervisibility' of Islam and Muslims in public and political debates. Dominant understandings of a 'secular normality' as culturally linked to Christianity make programmes about Islam during Christmas seem impossible for the directors in DR (cf. Jeldtoft 2013).

The citizenship discourse at the other three schools and NRK Super can be coded as having *functional* and *affective* views of the meaning of Christmas. Duyvendak and Tonkens describe a functional view of culture as including

skills such as speaking the language of a country, gaining knowledge about a country's history and traditions, and getting to know conventions in politics and education (Duyvendak & Tonkens 2016, 7). We find this meaning of Christmas clearly expressed in AarhusUrban, here exemplified by how they decorate the school at Christmas:

We decorate when it's Christmas, we do that, and I usually say that we generally overdo things here, going all in, without any modifications... I'm thinking, there's a lot of schools making less out of Christmas than we do, but there are a lot of children here who never celebrate Christmas at home ... Several families tell me that they appreciate that their children get to know what Christmas is here (school principal, AarhusUrban).

The school principal underlines that the decorations are not religiously motivated, but a way to help children, often from other religions, understand 'why Danes go crazy almost from October and onwards'.

The school principal at OsloSuburban has a similar functional approach, even if the demography is much less dominated by minority pupils. The principal wants as many pupils as possible to attend the school service:

It seems to me that most people support it [the school service] because you often go to church for a wedding or a funeral, and then it's good to know just a little ... to take off your cap, to sit for an hour, that is also important. It's something not everybody learns nowadays (school principal, OsloSuburban).

The school principal also expresses a functional attitude towards a minority that defines the celebration of Christmas as sinful. Instead of reducing or changing the school's Christmas programme, she renames activities: for example, the Christmas lunch becomes 'winter lunch'.

The emphasis is therefore to provide a kind of functional cultural literacy, and this view is aligned with the restorative approach to culture as something given, as mentioned above. Christmas activities are there to equip children – and particularly minority children and their families – with implicit codes of culture and conduct needed in society. The focus is to make children knowledgeable about Christmas conventions, not to negotiate Christmas afresh. The citizen discourse at these two schools, one urban and one suburban, is therefore functional, and particular feelings about Christmas are not expected from immigrant children or parents.

As opposed to a functional view, Duyvendak and Tonkens explain that 'an affective view on culture privileges emotional meanings attributed to culture' (Duyvendak & Tonkens 2016, 7). Thus, if one is to be recognized as a citizen, certain feelings are prescribed.

As has been shown, the OsloUrban school and NRK operate with a constructivist view of culture. They aim for a renegotiation of Christmas that includes cultural and religious differences. We find that their constructivist approach to Christmas is combined with a more affective view of cultural citizenship. The engine driving their Christmas programme is to create and envision a community across all divides. Being inclusive is at the top of their hierarchy of aims, and this affects how they understand the meaning of what they do. The aim is communicated to us through the affective intensity with which the school principal and PSM speak about it, and is also visible in their disappointment when they feel they have failed in this.

The NRK leaders emphasize strongly that 'We are afraid of being exclusivist', and that 'there is a lot that bears that mark'. It is important to them that their Christmas activities contribute to a special Christmas feeling for all the children living in Norway.

Creating the Christmas feeling is at least something I find important when children watch TV at Christmas. That they get an experience of it as something special, that they get this ... this slightly intangible Christmas feeling (leaders, NRK Super).

The extent to which they believe they can create this feeling becomes decisive in their self-evaluation. Christmas on NRK Super this year was a disappointment to one of the leaders:

It wasn't good this year, and I'm not thinking that it did not contain the Christian Christmas gospel, but there was a lack of Christmas colours, Christmas decoration, Christmas traditions. It was all coloured too little by things children associate with Christmas (leaders, NRK Super).

Thus, the meaning the NRK leaders attach to Christmas is associated with feelings. They do not focus on functional skills related to Christmas conventions but on the creation of a special Christmas feeling. However, this feeling is intangible and unrelated to the pursuit of the kind of feelings to which Duyvendak and Tonkens refer, such as feelings for the nation or being Norwegian. We find that the feeling rule they prescribe is connected to their

overall *telos* of creating a community in which every child, and particularly immigrant children, can feel at home.

Similarly, as has been mentioned, the school principal at OsloUrban was enthusiastic about their Christmas programme, and particularly the fact that they could do it in a school with many nationalities:

We have pupils from more than 20 nationalities, and we've had more ... bringing their cultural heritage with them, and it's of great value to all of us to get to know one another's cultural heritage (school principal, OsloUrban).

Here, however, neither certain feelings for Norway as a nation nor feelings attached to being Norwegian are being prescribed. Rather, it is expected that all pupils and their parents will take part in, and probably also feel at home within, the school community. This expectation becomes particularly clear when the school principal reports with sadness that a couple of children have been exempted from attending every activity related to Christmas. Not being able to include everybody is more emotionally disappointing to her than to those principals and leaders with a more functional approach to citizenship. Exempting one's children from Christmas activities does not imply withdrawing them from a cultural canon. It is a symbolic action that goes against all this school aims for in being a community across every divide. Not attending is therefore an action that violates a constitutive feeling rule that is expected at this school.

Taken together, Duyvendak's and Tonkens' hypothesis is that constructive notions of culture facilitate access to full citizenship better than restorative notions (Duyvendak & Tonkens 2016, 8–9). They argue that a constructivist view leaves more room for 'immigrants and natives who do not adapt to dominant groups and their norms' (Duyvendak & Tonkens 2016, 8). However, our finding is that a constructivist view, combined with an affective view of citizenship, facilitates feeling rules that expect everybody to participate to demonstrate their belonging to the community. The analysis shows that a restorative view of culture makes cultural conventions available, but such a view is not necessarily suppressive, as Duyvendak and Tonkens claim. When it is combined with functional notions, a restorative view of culture can contribute knowledge about Christmas without attaching specific feelings to it.

Findings and conclusion

This research project was triggered by the observation that Christian cultural heritage is often used rhetorically in political debates, and often in a safeguarding way, particularly with an edge towards immigration and integration. We asked ourselves how this fuzzy concept was dealt with by institutions that must operationalize it as practice in tangible everyday life. Our choice was to employ Schatzki's practice theory, framed by the lived religion approach, in a study of public schools and PSM in Norway and Denmark, with Christmas as the selected timeframe. Our hunch about Christmas as particularly interesting when studying how public spaces demarcate appropriate and inappropriate religion (Deacy 2018) is confirmed. However, our analysis both confirms and nuances van den Hemel's finding that Christian heritage is framed as a form of secularity that excludes other cultures, and Islam in particular, in public and political debates (van den Hemel 2018). Our main finding is that school principals and PSM leaders frame 'Christian heritage' and 'Christianity' in ways that place activities associated with Christianity at a demarcated periphery, as is the case with school services. Yet we also find that elements from Christianity become fused with secular values and other religions in ways that make it intangible, as is the case with the Christmas serials. Our material therefore indicates that Islam becomes visible as a 'religious other', while the coding of Christianity as culture – particularly at Christmas – facilitates a 'secular normality' in which central religiously coded elements such as the nativity story are made invisible.

In relation to the findings of previous research on school and religion that Christianity is still given a dominant position at the expense of secularly formulated values (Jensen & Kjeldsen 2013) (Andreassen 2013), our analysis shows that policy discussions about curricula and guidelines have a significant impact on how school principals understand and perform Christmas activities. With one exception precarity is reflected in how the school principals treat Christmas activities with strong associations with Christianity. To a large extent, even if not said directly, human rights and secular values have a more regulative impact on what the school principals deem appropriate and inappropriate activities at their schools than references to Christianity as the majority culture.

One of the Christmas activities that has received most public and media interest, as well as considerable research attention, is school services. The distinction shown in our study is that approaching school services as a tradition creates a heritage preservation effect. Changes to the annual school service, initiated by the local churches, threaten this tradition. Thus, local

churches seem to pay a price for being included as a tradition in school life. As Beaman claims concerning law and public discourse, a move from the realm of religion to culture denies religious communities an active social or cultural role in modern society, but the movement assumes new life for practices and symbols formerly characterized as religious (Beaman 2020, 131; cf. Hervieu-Léger 2000, 86). However, we find the same dynamic in schools and public service media. Churches are included more as 'heritage' than as 'lived' religion. We argue that public debate and the school authorities' regulations, especially in Norway, situate school services as a museum or memorial site, not as part of a living religious practice with the capacity to change and transform (Nielsen & Johansen 2019, Johnsen 2020). Our study shows that elements known from school services often play a significant role when school principals and PSM leaders develop new Christmas activities to create a community across religious divides.

As von der Lippe and Undheim argue, newly formed activities are an under-investigated but growing research field (Von der Lippe & Undheim 2019). This study's contribution is to show how formal and legal instructions concerning alternatives to school services in Norway have stimulated heritage formation processes within the schools studied. We also show that no similar process has taken place in Denmark, where such regulations do not exist. However, a similar heritage formation process has taken place in the Danish school where they do not arrange school services with a large number of migrant pupils. By and large, our study confirms Khawaja's (Khawaja 2014) and Gilliam's (Gilliam 2019) studies showing that schools with many pupils from minority backgrounds downplay traditions with explicitly Christian origins, but we also find that most school principals are sensitive to their schools' cultural and religious diversity.

We argue that functional notions of culture can especially enable significant cultural literacy in pupils of different origins. Those school principals who combine a restorative and functional view of culture do not demand special religious or national feelings from those attending Christmas activities. However, we find that a constructivist view of culture combined with an affective approach to citizenship understands attendance more emotionally and expects everyone to feel at home within the secularly defined school community.

As has been mentioned, the mediatization discourse has influenced religion and media research, particularly in the Nordic countries. DR leaders especially expressed a low level of positive affectivity in relation to Christmas. An explanation of their modest engagement might be that Christmas

goes against the logic whereby religion is primarily newsworthy when its actors are out of sync and extremist in one way or another (Hjarvard 2016). This is probably even more evident in our material, because we have interviewed leaders responsible for PSM aimed at children. Christmas puts PSM back in time – to a time that was thought scarcely to still exist. For example, Christmas serials cannot be taken away without an outcry. This can be interpreted as an example of mediatization, because it signals that PSM channels for children have become institutions in themselves, and even more so when attendance at institutions like the church is in decline.

The central finding, that media coverage as a whole has shifted from the majority churches to Islam, does not hold on the DR and NRK children's channels during Christmas. The broadcast of any programme directly focusing on Islam is not an option at DR, while this has been done by NRK. As has been shown, there is a difference between the two PSM institutions' aims, particularly at Christmas. Being a channel for all children, and not excluding children and families from a minority background, is a driver at NRK, while the leaders at DR seem to have accepted that Christmas serves the majority population. However, Christian preaching of the Christmas gospel was absolutely not an option at NRK, and DR did not address it as an issue at all. Yet our study supports Sjö in arguing that religion needs to be studied more broadly. Christmas was everywhere at DR and NRK, even if direct and explicit references to Christianity were minimal.

This study has analysed Christmas in schools and PSM to move beyond Christian cultural heritage at a rhetorical level in public media debates. The tendency to use this concept in a polarizing way and as part of a protective rhetoric about immigration and integration runs contrary to our findings. Overall, schools and PSM operationalize Christian cultural heritage during Christmas by maintaining a critical awareness of activities identified as Christian, activating both a restorative and constructivist view of culture, and engaging in a heritage formation process that provides cultural literacy and creates sacralized spaces in secular institutions. In conclusion, what school principals and public service media leaders aim for in their Christmas efforts is an inclusive community. A premise for making this succeed is the negotiation of Christian cultural heritage as culture, not as religion.

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Book Reviews

Damian Janus: *Psychopathology and Religion: Structural Convergences Between Mental Disorders and Religion*. London: Lexington Books, 2019, 248 pp.

In *Psychopathology and Religion*, the author, who is a clinical psychologist and a practising psychotherapist in Kraków, Poland, navigates the reader through the complex field of religion and mental disorders, a subject that has long been a field of enquiry by both academics and practitioners in religion, psychology, medicine, and anthropology. Scholars from these disciplines have attempted to establish the nexus between these two fields, as well as where they intersect or conflict. The author admits from the outset that the book is 'more about psychopathology than religion' (p. 1). In his approach the author adopts a 'hermeneutics of disorders' to unpack the blurring conceptualizations of mental disorders that have given rise to different interpretations and meanings of mental illnesses. This approach, which is phenomenological in nature, the author believes, will help in providing a 'non-reductionist' view of mental disorders instead of the reductively centred approach of the biomedical model of the disease. He seeks to achieve this through the lived experiences of patients he encounters directly or indirectly. By 'empathizing' with patients and their stories, the author aims to intuitively extract information from them,

which he believes 'makes it possible to synthesize the information and reach a conclusion that would not be available in a purely rational way of thinking' (p. 14). The author is of the view that such an approach 'changes the understanding of mental illnesses, and consequently affects the style of the physician's or therapist's contact with patients' (p. 13). He argues further that this 'has serious consequences in the preferred treatment method, ways of informing and cooperating with patients' families... perhaps most importantly dealing with patients' (p. 7).

In Chapter 1 the author examines the 'non-reductionist approach' to psychopathology and religion, and teases out three nexuses between religion and mental disorders: the first approach sees religion as a form of mental disorder; the second explicates psychological disorders in the light of Christian theology; and the third disengages psychopathology from religion and examines their issues discretely. This is followed by a discussion of the reductionist approach to mental disorders of biomedicine that draws out the weakness of this approach in diagnosing mental disorders. Among other factors, the author cites the exclusion of social, behavioural, and spiritual factors in the treatment of mental disorders by biomedicine. To address this therapeutic challenge, he proposes 'objectivism and constructivism', an approach to knowledge the author believes when

applied will help offer a holistic understanding of the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. He briefly surveys the view of religion as neurosis as espoused by Freud in his work, *Future of an Illusion*, and popularized in the works of Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and Marx.

Chapter 2 problematizes the relationship between religiosity and neuroticism. The author challenges Freud's argument that neurosis could be the basis for explicating any religious act or behaviour. Citing other authors such as Erich Fromm, who made similar arguments to those of Freud, the author questions the basis of Freud's arguments of religion as neuroses if such an argument is examined in the light of the reductionist approach to mental disorders. He states that 'if we compare neurosis and religion, expecting that they will relate to each other in some unambiguous way (e.g., religion will prove to be "simply a neurosis"), we will fail' (p. 24). The author argues that mental disorders are multidimensional, and we can only search for 'common structures that concern the "symptomatology" of neurosis and religious phenomena' (p. 25) especially because, since the problem concerns the individual, the application of knowledge of both psychopathology and religion, with a focus on the individual and not on the game of the two abstractions, 'religion and neurosis' will provide a holistic understanding (p. 25).

The debate on the complexity of the relationship between religion and neurosis is further examined

in Chapter 3, which examines the allegory of the parent-child relationship in the light of the heavenly relationship that exists between the Christian and God. The author argues that when one considers Freud's concept of the neurotic, which views the human person as a purely dependent being without personal autonomy over his or her life, the individual falls into a state of despair that does not rid the person of a childlike mental attitude, as it were – culminating in an immature attitude even in adulthood. He examines the linkage between childhood trauma – for example, sexual abuse – and pathological views of and projections onto God. The author advances an argument that a positive or healthy relationship during childhood development tends to incline a child towards a more positive relationship with God, resulting in less neurotic images of God. Chapter 4 focuses on how the withdrawal from food to maintain one's physique and self-image has mental health implications. The author argues that the self-perception of the anorexic depends on the view of the people around them, which sometimes affects their personal relationship with others.

In Chapter 5 the author deals with the subject of schizophrenia as a form of psychotic disorder but cautions attempts to overgeneralize the clinical diagnosis of psychotic disorders, because it can be culturally relative and at the same time subjective. The author argues that a delusion of grandeur may awaken

in people a sense of power and authority akin to God. Individuals with such conditions tend to express moods that equate to maniacal and schizophrenic disorders. Chapter 6 turns the discussion to 'demon possession' and mental disorders. In this chapter the author argues that despite the complexity surrounding the act of possession, and differences in how the disease is manifested in people, psychiatrists mostly associate or recognize possession with or as a mental disorder. He argues that although there are psychopathological phenomena that are expressive of or similar to possession, they are not always the case. Chapter 7 focuses on the role of the spirit after death. He argues that the internal image of a deceased person 'can have an extremely strong, sometimes destructive impact' resulting in mental disorders (p. 191). He also emphasizes that the psychological background that conditions a belief in spirits may be akin to that which leads to "'psychopathological" contact with the dead' (p. 192).

Overall, this is an important contribution to the discourses on religion and mental disorders, as the author succeeds in illuminating some of the enduring problems involving religion and mental disorders. However, the book has several weaknesses. First, the author fails to engage instructively and extensively with the case studies, which are mostly presented at the end of each chapter. Indeed, the author's failure to properly integrate the case studies with the discussion weakens the

hermeneutical or phenomenological approach he seeks to employ. This makes it difficult to follow the arguments the author wants to make by indirectly or directly drawing on the experiences of patients. Second, there seems to be no logical connection between the book's chapters and/or sections. Each chapter ends abruptly, with no summary or conclusion, and without setting out the background or stage for the next chapter. A summary of the major arguments at the end of each chapter would have greatly helped readers follow the arguments' consistency. Third, the case studies are somewhat poorly translated and are not easily comprehensible (e.g. 70, 72, and 76). Finally, the author quotes extensively from earlier Christian writers and philosophers with very little or no explanation of or contextual relevance given to such quotations. This makes the text itself difficult to read, and the argument's logic difficult to follow. In sum, although the author admits that the book is more about psychopathology than religion, the continuous interspersions of philosophical debates (sometimes quoted extensively from earlier writers) seems to have overshadowed the religious convergences he seeks to explore between psychopathology and religion.

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Hans-Günter Heimbrock and Jörg Persch (eds): *Eco-Theology: Essays in Honor of Sigurd Bergmann*. Paderborn: Brill – Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2021, 311 pp.

This volume is a book of friends, a *liber amicorum* as the authors themselves express it, to honour their friend and colleague Professor Sigurd Bergmann on his sixty-fifth birthday. Professor Bergmann was born in Germany, where he began his academic studies. In 1980 he graduated in theology from Uppsala, receiving his doctorate from the University of Lund in 1995. For twenty years, between 1999 and 2019, he was Professor of Religious Studies in theology, ethics, and the philosophy of religion at the Department of Archaeology and Religious Studies at the University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway.

It is as a *liber amicorum* that the book should be read. It consists of fourteen chapters or essays, as the subheading of the title states, with authors from Germany, Sweden, Norway, Finland, the UK, Montenegro, South Africa, and Indonesia, with the largest component five essays from Norway. According to the editors the book has two intentions: first, to highlight important issues and engage with scholarly analyses; second, to focus on the religious dimension of nature, the environment, and climate change, reflecting Professor Bergmann's lifelong academic work within critical thinking, responsible eth-

ics, and the ingenious spirituality of the earth as a protected habitat. The chapters cover topics such as eco-theology (namely, aesthetics), moral philosophy, theology, the history of religion, the philosophy of education, the history of literature, political theory, and economics, and are divided into five sections with the keywords crisis, nature, spirit, politics, and praxis. As is often the case with text compositions by various authors, the essays show a great variety in context and standard, with some very informative, and others less consistent. It stands out that among the authors there is only one woman, the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, Antje Jackelén.

All the contributions were written during the Covid-19 pandemic, with various lockdown restrictions in all the authors' countries. This casts a shadow on some of the essays, with extensive reflections on the current situation with less optimistic outcomes. When these essays were written, Donald Trump was still president of the US, giving little hope at a global level of a climate change and environmentally friendly policy. In the first essay, the Professor Emeritus in Theological Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion at Åbo Akademi University, Tage Kurtén, emphasizes one of Bergmann's critiques of the important features of modernity dealt with in Suvielise Nurmi's research. Nurmi scrutinizes the individual's position as moral legislator from the notion of moral agency. Kurtén acknowledges that Nurmi has made

several important and critical observations, but he would like to see more consistency in her formulation of an ethical theory that adopts an ecological relational moral agency. This, Nurmi writes, should be one that cares about the ecological virtuousness of the moral agent, which Kurtén maintains is insufficiently radical.

In the first third of the volume the word 'radical' is mentioned in various contexts. Given Bergmann's lifelong achievements within the field of eco-theology, it is surprising that there are not more forcible formulations of theories and solutions in the volume. Because it is a *liber amicorum*, there is less new eco-theology analysis and content, and rather more reflections on and dialogue with Bergmann's work. As eco-theology is a small but growing discipline, the use of theories by (eco-)theologians tends to revolve. A favourite among the theologians quoted in the volume is the Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at the University of Tübingen, Jürgen Moltmann.

A refreshing exception to the spiritual dimension of environmental studies that goes beyond the Jewish and Christian religious traditions is Jon Skarpeid's chapter on the Hindu Declaration on Climate Change (2015), which was written for the Paris Climate Agreement. The initiative for the declaration was from the Oxford Centre of Hindu Studies in collaboration with the Hindu American Foundation, and the multifaith and inter-

religious movements GreenFaith and OurVoices. While the chapter reminds the reader that Hinduism is not practised uniformly, and that eco- or green theology is not exclusively Christian but can also be found in other religions, there is a danger that the chapter maintains a deep-rooted apprehension of eco-theology or ecological movements in non-Jewish-Christian traditions. The academic discipline of religion and nature/environment/ecology is not always directly applicable to non-Christian traditions, and its outcome does not necessarily reflect the big picture in general and the grassroot movements of other religious traditions in particular. Environmental movements and rituals are easily overlooked, often requiring ethnographic fieldwork to be distinguished.

The last part of the book, 'Praxis', includes a chapter by Jan-Olav Henriksen and contains an example of hope, namely the interreligious Hope Cathedral in Norway. In the city of Fredrikstad the Lutheran diocese has taken the initiative of building a cathedral whose construction material will be the plentiful plastic waste from the ocean. Reflecting on the meaning of building a cathedral, Henriksen notes that it stretches over several generations but is also a response to a particular situation. Human practices and actions can be understood as responses to challenges, problems, needs, and difficulties, but also involve hope. A cathedral unites people; it connects heaven and earth; it manifests

the relationship between God and the world: but it can also represent human repentance and acknowledgment of our abuse of the natural world when it is built from plastic waste. Henriksen concludes that whatever meaning a cathedral is given, no meaning or sign functions unless it is used by someone for that purpose.

The volume's last chapter, by Hans-Günter Heimbrock, reflects on practical theology. During the last two centuries, religion, culture, and life have been almost exclusively perceived as social phenomena within this theological field. Heimbrock asks how practical theology can benefit from dealing with the phenomenological approach to the sensual perception of the reality of nature, and how it can acquire an understanding of nature following 'lived experience' in the environment. Heimbrock answers these questions with a threefold task, consisting of several objectives of practical theological research, the special dimension of religious practice, and methodology.

The first task deals with how the study of religiously related experiences of nature exemplify how to benefit from phenomenologically oriented practical theology to gain a new understanding of natural phenomena. Using a qualitative empirical approach, it leads theology to question whether the traditional distinction between 'culture' and 'nature' has ever worked.

Concerning the second task, language, time, and body are di-

mensions of any religious practice. Heimbrock notes that for half a century German protestant practical theology in particular lacked the relevance of architectural surroundings in worship, focusing instead on its verbal content. The 'special turn' known in cultural studies was also picked up by theology. This provided a considerable shift from the older focus on 'time' as the dominant axis to the topological axis. Likewise, it aimed at a shift from taking social activity from a restricted perspective to merely human inter-subjective interaction. This enables a new understanding of how meaning making evolves and develops, not only through cultural but also natural processes. Space is inseparable from human experience based on bodily existence, mediated and produced to a great extent by individual decisions and actions.

Heimbrock's third task for answering his questions is methodology. A movement within theology has followed science in redescribing practical theology as 'Life Science'. The content of this new formula is to elaborate on a new understanding of what the focus of practical theology should be. According to Heimbrock the focus should be on praxis, because practical theology's task is to describe and reflect on religious praxis.

By asking questions relevant for our time, as Heimbrock did, and answering them by challenging and finding space for the answers within the existing academic theological tradition, the authors continue to

follow the path paved by Professor Bergmann within eco-theology.

Apart from occasional and repeated printing errors and strangely divided words like 'ev-erything' and the German '*geschich-tlichen*' and '*si-chtbar*', the book's structure is straightforward. Although its writing was overshadowed by lockdown and Covid-19 restrictions, the volume is timely. As the Stockholm+50-conference is to be organized in the summer of 2022 to mark fifty years since the first United Nations conference on the human environment, an intensified and varied lobbying movement can be anticipated. A volume that gives eco-theology a voice will be valuable.

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Joseph Camilleri and Deborah Guess (eds): *Towards a Just and Ecologically Sustainable Peace: Navigating the Great Transition*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 363 pp.

The subtitle gives an indication of this book's urgency: as a global community we are facing a 'great transition' to a future that will of necessity be ecologically sustainable, because there is no alternative, and we have no option but to negotiate and 'navigate' this transition. The question is whether this transition and its outcome will be both peaceful and just. The diversity of approaches and foci for discussion in the essays included here demonstrates the intrinsic connections between the themes of peace, justice, and ecological sustainability. The book is a product of a series of symposia in Australia, beginning in 2015, organized by representatives of various religious communities, as well as secular agencies like the Medical Association for the Prevention of War and the local Peace and Conflict Studies Institute. The series, which is part of a larger research project on the ecological aspects of war, culminated in the 'Earth at Peace' conference in April 2019. Although the occasion for the book was the question of ecology and peace in Australia, both local and international contributors call attention to the global scope of these topics and their interconnections.

The book begins with an introduction, setting out the structure of the investigation, by one of the

editors, Deborah Guess, and concludes with a survey of the essays by biblical scholar Mark Brett and some pointers to the future by the other co-editor, Joseph Camilleri. Within these introductory and concluding brackets, as it were, the collection is divided into three large parts. The underlying axiom, voiced by Zuleyha Keskin and Mehmet Ozalp, is that religion can be and needs to be 'part of the solution rather than part of the problem' (159).

Part I is a philosophical search for a holistic approach to the interlocking issues of justice, peace, and sustainability, with essays by Joseph Camilleri, Heather Eaton, Ariel Salleh, and Freya Mathews. These essays concern themselves with the links between violence and forms of cultural objectifying, or 'othering'. This is to be counteracted by the development of global 'dialogical citizenship' (Camilleri, 40) based in 'social imaginaries' (Eaton, 51) or ways of seeing that foster respect and interdependence. A way towards this will be the overcoming of 'othering' and its replacement by essentially maternal acts of 'holding' (Salleh, 73ff). The final essay in this section revisits certain older strands of European religious thought and proposes a connection with the Indigenous experience of 'walking the land' (Mathews, 97ff).

Part II considers the roles of cosmology and religion, addressing the question of peace with the earth from several religious perspectives. Islamic approaches to the environment are introduced by Zuleyha

Keskin and Mehmet Ozalp. Salim Farrar surveys the theory and practice of reconciliation after conflict in the Islamic world, with particular attention to 'transitional justice'. Justice is not merely an end that may justify any means to attain it; justice is to be embedded in the transitional process itself. Christian approaches are offered by Norman Habel, the initiator of the Earth Bible Project, and Bruce Duncan, with his survey of responses to the papal encyclical *Laudato si'*. Duncan also emphasizes the vital role of Indigenous peoples worldwide: though only five percent of the world's population, they care for 22 per cent of the world's landmass and 80 per cent of its biodiversity (Duncan, 199). The theme of interconnectedness, especially in Hindu and Buddhist thought, is brought to bear on the issues by Shelini Harris and Chaiwat Satha-Anand, the latter drawing the trope of 'breathing' as the activity that draws all living things together. This sense of interconnectedness is the main criterion for a valid spirituality.

The essays in Part III are in some ways the most practical in their concerns, applying to local Australian circumstances (Camilleri, 337) the visionary proposals of the earlier essays. The Indigenous writer Tony Birch builds his contribution on the startling words that in some ways voice both the horrific experience and the calmly defiant aspirations of Indigenous people: 'we've seen the end of the world and we've decided not to accept it'. The essay is an

invitation to reconsider the baleful legacy of colonialism, and to show the maturity to listen to Indigenous voices in protecting country. Anne Elvey continues this line of thinking with her call to reimagine what it is to live on the island-continent, to truth telling about its past, and to the contextualizing of ecological action as a global citizen nation. The challenge is to 'respect Indigenous epistemologies', a huge potential turnabout in the typical ways Australians see their own country, and to acknowledge Indigenous sovereignty. In the final essay Allan Patience calls on Australia, as a matter of strategic priority, to move from seeing itself as a regional 'middle power' to being a good global citizen – again, a huge potential shift in self-perception. Patience sets out in detail the steps that such a move would involve, steps that are by no means beyond the imagination or the energy of the nation. At the top of the list, he concludes, must be the recognition of Indigenous peoples, hospitality to asylum seekers, and the swift transition to a carbon-free economy. These steps are also applicable, of course, in many countries.

It is significant that the initiatives in this book have emerged in Australia, a country often and with justification seen as lagging behind most other OECD countries in its national responses to climate change. The contributions are diverse in their interests, the platforms from which they start, and the particular interests that they evince. Some open themselves to criticism at

particular points, though each essay is supported by an exhaustive bibliography. As products of the 'wider ecumenism' of interreligious dialogue, however, they have a great deal more in common. They point to an emerging recognition of 'the inherent rights of land' (Birch, 257) and the need for a global 'dialogical citizenship' (Camilleri, 40). Their viewpoints may still be marginal, but this is an open marginality that sees itself at the threshold of a new vision for the country in which the conference was held, and even more significantly for the world at large. It is a world already embarking on 'the great transition', and therefore in need of navigating by those able to see further into this future than seems possible for many of our national leaders. These essays hold out a hope in an age in which people increasingly feel weighed down, the hope that things can and shall be different. This is no empty hope, for these essays offer both a grand vision and some practical steps towards achieving this vision. But the steps need to be taken by each one of us; this is not simply a book for reflective reading or even silent, indignant anger. 'Our grandchildren will not thank us,' says Mark Brett in his concluding comments, 'for righteous indignation that simply leaves our politics broken' (Brett, 331). This collection should be read by everyone who may at times feel despondent about the future, everyone who has caught a glimpse of the possibilities, everyone who wants a place at the helm in navigating the

great transition, and anyone who may doubt the role of religions as part of the way forward.

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