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Editorial note

In an important study (S*onic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound*, University of South Carolina Press 1993) historian of religion Guy Beck argued that the Western preoccupation with the visual side of Hinduism has obscured what he held to be its most important feature: its emphasis on sound. Considering both the occasionally overwhelming impression the visual side of Hinduism can create in its observers and the departure from a 19th century preoccupation with texts, it is easy to see why such a preoccupation should have arisen. In Hindu cosmogony sound (*śabda*) is held to be the first of the subtle elements (*tanmātra*), which arise before the gross elements (*mahābhūta*) of earth, fire, and so on – though specific sounds may also be considered transcendental to matter altogether. However, the question remains: is sound material enough for scholars working with the material side of religion, compared to the visual and tactile world of experience?

In this issue of *Temenos* we are delighted to feature two important articles dealing with religion and sound, especially music, which show how music can function as an instigator of religious change. In the first Ruth Illman argues that because music comprises elements central to contemporary religiosity in general, such as participation, embodiment, experience, emotions, and creativity, it plays a central role as a driving force for religious change. In her theoretically exciting article Illman approaches her topic through an ethnographic case study of progressive Jews in London who wish to combine a radically liberal theology with increasingly traditional practice. Her analysis of this material supports the view that the relationship between bodies and beliefs, and places and perceptions are key to understanding contemporary religious change.

The theme of music and contemporary religious change is continued by Hanna Rijken, Martin J.M. Hoondert, and Marcel Barnard. In their ethnographically rich article they tackle the question of religious change in today's Netherlands from a surprising angle: by looking at choir dress at popular evensong events. They argue that in wearing Anglican dress, choirs indicate that they belong to the high-quality sound group of English cathedral choirs, and choir members criticise the traditional reformed emphasis on the spoken word. At the same time, by changing the Anglican dress code, choirs emphasise their unicity and individuality, independent of church traditions. Lastly, choir members refer to unarticulated transcendental experiences by wearing ritual liturgical dress.

Rijken and her colleagues argue that the popularity of these evensongs

reflects a longing for different forms of worship with a focus on ceremonies and ritualised behaviour, but they also note that the practice of evensong in the Netherlands today mixes concert practices and Anglican-like rituals. Choirs wearing Anglican-like robes but decoupled from the Anglican church thus illustrate a longing for non-institutional transcendental experiences, which they find in the ritual form and high musical quality of choral evensong.

From simultaneous transcendence and immanence in sound and music, Jonas Svensson leads us to a considerably less harmonious topic: the desecration of the *Qur'an*. He argues that while it may seem simple to understand the mechanics of desecration (humiliation, defilement, destruction, and so on), the psychological infrastructure of desecration has been given little thought. In this thought-provoking and stimulating article Svensson suggests that previously suggested schemata of desecration may be substituted for a single one – one which also explains non-hostile practices directed at the scripture – that is, understanding the scripture as a valued person. It follows from this that inappropriate and appropriate behaviour are inferred from general schemata for interpersonal relations, ethics, and etiquette in the social domain which can be independently assessed.

Finally, Stefan Olsson takes us back in time and to a less contentuous topic: peace agreements in the Viking age. Referring to examples from England and Iceland and utilising a wealth of textual, iconographical, archaeological, and toponymical data, Olsson argues that ritual activities such as giving and receiving hostages, fosterages and intermarriages were crucial for peacemaking during the Viking Age. He discusses such ritual activities in relation to a proposed conflict and consensus model on the macro and micro levels, presenting us with a three-step analytical tool for understanding peace agreements.

As this issue of Temenos sees the light of day, Finland celebrates its 100th anniversary as an independent nation. In popular recapitulations of this century of Finnish history much emphasis has been placed on the years of war (1917 and 1939–44), underlining their importance to the self-perception of the Finnish nation. Nevertheless, there have been 93 years without war, and at Temenos we join the celebrations hoping for many more such years: years of peace, prosperity, and independence of thought and research.

Måns Broo

'Retaining the Tradition – but with an Open Mind' Change and Choice in Jewish Musical Practices

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Abstract

This article focuses on religion and change in relation to music. Its starting point is the argument that music plays a central role as a driving force for religious change, as has recently been suggested by several researchers of religion. Music is seen to comprise elements that are central to contemporary religiosity in general: participation, embodiment, experience, emotions, and creativity. This article approaches the discussion from a Jewish point of view, connecting the theoretical perspective to an ethnographic case study conducted among progressive Jews in London with special focus on music, religious practice, and change.

The article outlines the ongoing discussion on religion and change by focusing on features of individualism, personal choice, and processes of bricolage, critically assessing them from an inclusive point of view, focusing on individuals as simultaneously both personal and socially as well as culturally embedded agents. The analysis highlights a visible trend among the interviewees of wanting to combine a radically liberal theology with an increasingly traditional practice. In these accounts musical practices play a pivotal yet ambiguous role as instigators and insignia of religious change. As a conclusion, insights into more 'sonically aware religious studies' are suggested.

Keywords: *Judaism, Jewish music, religion and change, bricolage*

> We need a kind of … something that retains the tradition; that holds on to these precious traditions and rituals, the music and all the rest – but with an open mind and a much more questioning and open approach to Jewish law.

In these words Rebecca[1] expresses what she strives to achieve in her work as an innovative yet historically perceptive and liturgically informed can-

1 The names of the persons interviewed have been anonymised, and common Jewish names are used as aliases. See the reference list for or more detailed information about the ethnographic research material and research method.

tor in a Masorti[2] synagogue in London. In her view music is the soul of the religious engagement: the breath of life that makes ancient texts and rituals come to life today, creating community with the people around her, with the past as well as the future. Her ideal is to create Jewish musical practices that are firmly rooted and embedded in tradition, historically relevant, and theologically substantial, yet open and flexible so that new influences are allowed to inspire and inform the practice, making the ancient rituals inclusive, egalitarian, and relevant in the twenty-first century. Consequently, she eagerly explores and incorporates aspects of traditional Jewish worship in her services – such as the ritual cantillation *nusach*,[3] the use of Hebrew as the language of prayer, and mystical melodic traditions such as the wordless Hasidic *niggunim*[4] – aspects that have long been absent in progressive Jewish services or have previously only been practised within more orthodox branches of Judaism. As these musical elements are incorporated, however, they are also modified in accordance with the liberal and egalitarian theological outlook of her community. The exploration of Jewish sources is also accompanied by an unprejudiced search for other musical stimuli, such as Sufi chants and contemporary folk and popular music. Thus, retaining the tradition goes hand in hand with exploring and developing new forms of religious expression, and music plays a vital role in this process of change, Rebecca concludes:

> Music […] has a physical effect because we're people, we're not brains only and we're not feelings only, but we are holistic creatures. And music is the language that kind of engulfs everything. … Music is in the ether; nobody

2 In the UK the conservative movement is called the Masorti movement. The role of the cantor in different Jewish communities varies significantly, from being the central ritual leader in many Orthodox settings to taking a backseat or being replaced by e.g. a song leader in some Reform and Liberal synagogues (see e.g. Cohen 2009).

3 *Nusach* denotes traditional Jewish prayer chant; a praxis that has not been maintained in most Reform and Liberal communities, but which is increasingly being reintroduced. Summit notes that *nusach* today is important for many Jewish worshippers in constructing their identity; contemporary conceptions of *nusach* reflect a struggle with modernity and a search for historical authority and authenticity. Today, traditional chant is dear to progressive as well as orthodox Jews, even if they define and express their *nusach* traditions in quite different ways (Summit 2000, 5; Summit 2016, 4).

4 *Niggunim* (s. *niggun*) are religious melodies with roots in the Hasidic tradition that since the turn of the millennium have found their way into all sorts of Jewish communities around the world. They are connected to the performance of repetitive melodies to plain syllables or mantra-like text fragments from the Torah or the Jewish prayer books. Most characteristic are the wordless tunes that are performed to syllables such as *lay-lay-lay* or *ya-ba-bam* (Bohlman 2008: 57).

> has a right to anything! It's sounds; it's carried on waves! Why should we say: is it Jewish? I mean: music is music!

In this article the general topic of religion and change is analysed in relation to music. The starting point is the argument that music plays a central role as a driving force for religious change, which has recently been suggested by several researchers of religion (e.g. Hackett 2012; Partridge 2014; Wijnia 2016; Laack 2016). Music comprises many of the elements seen as central to contemporary religiosity in general: participation, embodiment, experience, emotions, and creativity. This article approaches the discussion from a Jewish point of view, connecting the theoretical perspective to a specific ethnographic case study conducted at Leo Baeck College in London with special focus on music, religious practice, and change.

First, one may ask: what is meant by 'Jewish music' in this context? Mark Kligman suggests that the grand narratives of Jewish music as a coherent genre are currently giving way to contextualised, delimited, and detailed studies, increasingly reliant on ethnographic research and presenting views of practitioners rather than normative categorisations based on theoretical analysis (Kligman 2015, 6–7). The influence from ethnomusicology, social sciences, and cultural studies is prominent (see e.g. Summit 2000, 2016; Bohlman 2008). Melissa Raphael draws attention to intentions, contexts, situations, and cultural patterns, where artistic means are used to say something about Jews, their lives, and relationships to the divine, rather than about creeds, traditions, styles, or genealogies (Raphael 2009, 54). What is perceived as 'Jewish sounds' thus becomes manifest in relation to objects, situations, and frames of reference generally regarded as markers of Jewishness. It is the combination of personal and cultural, cognitive, bodily, and sensory components that constitutes the 'Jewish sound of things', rather than a strict musical canon or style of performance (Cohen 2007, 339–40). Issues of identity thus rise to the fore in studies of music in contemporary Jewish lives (Kligman 2015, 8). 'Jewish music […] contains Jewishness for its potential to express selfness,' Philip Bohlman contends, pointing to the negotiations with otherness, fuzzy border zones, and complex narratives of selfness that are necessarily actualised through religious music: 'It is not by chance that we turn frequently to border regions where identities mix and ontologies are hybrid' (Bohlman 2008, xxxi–xxxii). This open-ended and inclusive perspective provides the platform upon which the current analysis is built: approaching the broader theoretical issues from the vantage point of the ethnographic material and the specific, localised, and context-bound

personal narratives describing what music means in the everyday lives of particular progressive Jews in London.

The article opens by outlining the ongoing discussion on religion and change within the study of religions. Features of individualism, personal choice, and processes of bricolage are highlighted, but also critically assessed from an inclusive point of view, focusing on individuals as simultaneously both personally and socially as well as culturally embedded agents. Thereafter, the analysis turns to the special interest of this study, namely the role of music in the processes of change, and especially the context of Jewish musical practices. Attention is then given to the ethnographic material to explore how the theoretical considerations take form in and resonate with the thoughts of the persons interviewed for the study. Finally, the argument is summarised and conclusions are drawn on the role of change and choice in contemporary progressive Jewish engagement with religiously significant music.

Religious change, choice, and bricolage

Rebecca's outlook, described above, gives words to a visible trend among progressive Jews, not only in Britain but all over the Western world today: the wish to combine often radically liberal theology with an increasingly traditional practice (see Summit 2000, 2016; Graham 2012; Keysar 2014). By introducing a greater use of *niggunim* and *nusach* in the services and increasing the use of Hebrew in progressive services, while simultaneously retaining liberal values of equality and inclusive perspectives, personal ways of living Jewish lives are formed that are experienced as open and flexible yet also meaningfully grounded in tradition (Summit 2016; Papenhagen 2016). New combinations arise that do not fit the traditional scale, where orthodox and liberal are posed as mutually exclusive opposites, a 'post-denominational' trend that has also been discussed in relation to British Jewry, which serves as the ethnographic example in this article (Kahn-Harris & Gidley 2010, 102).

As mentioned above, the article is based on ethnographic research carried out at Leo Baeck College in London, a Jewish educational institution where rabbis for the Reform and Liberal movements are trained, mainly to serve in Great Britain but also within the larger European and international community. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were carried out with ap-

proximately thirty persons[5] connected to the college as teachers, students, or alumni during several visits between 2014 and 2016. From this vast material a smaller number of key informants, with whom the discussion could be substantially deepened over the course of several meetings, have been given special emphasis in the current article. Thus, the research material does not represent statistical validity, but can rather give a detailed insight into a specific sphere of the current research field, offering a prism through which the larger issue under examination can be illuminated. Methodologically, the current analysis rests on the premises of hermeneutical, qualitative research, where the viewpoints of the informants form the outset, core, and guiding principle of the interpretative process. Qualitative research data is by its nature subjective and complex – rich and rewarding at best, at times also confusing and vague, always open to several readings (Wyller & Heimbrock 2010, 25). Hence, the analysis of the ethnographic data has taken form as a theoretically informed close reading of the personal narratives created in the encounter between myself as researcher and the persons who have shared their thoughts and perspectives with me (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 2). The process of knowledge-creation is closely connected to these human encounters, and the themes and topics presented as generalised conclusions of these rich narratives have arisen from both sources: some from the theoretical framework, some from the ethnography.

Furthermore, the institutional adherence of the interviewees varies: most of them are part of either the Reform or the Liberal movement, but Masorti and Orthodox persons, as well as those who define themselves as 'post-denominational', are also included. Generally, they share a Jewishness that is liberal, progressive, and egalitarian but are drawn to forms of Jewish practice where traditional, non-rational elements are reintroduced. Thus, this article focuses on individual interpretations rather than official approaches of any given organisation, and the description 'progressive' is used as a general characterisation of their outlooks, not as an institutional label.

The British Jewish environment in general – and the hyper-urban, cosmopolitan, and multicultural microcosm of London in particular – aptly symbolises the trends of change and choice. The institutional network is vast and diverse, with a long and prosperous history, including everything from highly Orthodox communities to late-modern, experimental Renewal communities, tapping into the contemporary interest in cross-over spirituality, well-being, and personal development. Thus, the Jews interviewed

5 The gender division of the persons interviewed for the study is fairly balanced, with years of birth ranging between 1941 and 1990.

for this study live in the midst of a vibrant, secular culture emphasising individual agency and freedom of choice in matters of faith, where a vast array of religious and spiritual practices and ideas are readily available (Kahn-Harris & Gidley 2010, 2–4; Graham 2012, 97–8).

Like many other researchers of religion today, Christopher Partridge points to the fact that institutional religions and traditional forms of faith seem to be 'experiencing a significant decline in power, popularity and prestige' in the Western world (particularly in Europe). Nevertheless, traditional theories of secularisation predicting that religion would wither away and eventually die, as an inevitable consequence of modernity and the progress of rationality, seem equally unsuccessful in describing the contemporary religious landscape. Instead, Partridge concludes, the secular Western mind seems to be 'haunted by the possibility of an enchanted world' (Partridge 2014, 6). These processes of change within the Western religious landscape are often captured in descriptions such as 'post-secular', 'post-rationalist', or 'post-Enlightenment' (see e.g. Dillon 2010; Giordan & Pace 2012; Illman 2015). Some general trends can be observed within this spectrum of change. One of the important outsets is the rapidly increasing pluralism of Western societies, where a shared sense of religious identity, values, and practices is disappearing (Partridge 2014, 179). In this situation of increased fluidity and fragmentation individual and embodied forms of worship, which are strongly connected to experience-based and emotional dimensions of faith, seem to be gaining ground. Institutionally bound, intellectually grounded religious forms and formal authority seem to be becoming less persuasive (Nynäs, Illman & Martikainen 2015, 17–22). The logics of the market and consumption are also becoming increasingly relevant within the sphere of religion. Influences from popular culture, social media, and the digital worlds are also playing a prominent part in shaping this religious landscape (Partridge 2014, 15–6; Papenhagen 2016, 23–37).

Many researchers have drawn attention to the growing individualism of the contemporary religious landscape, outlining a 'reflexive turn' or a 'trend of privatisation' and 'sacralisation of subjectivities' in the Western world (Woodhead 2012, 24–27; Partridge 2014, 179–80; Hovi 2015, 89–90). In the study of religion and music a 'turn within' has been highlighted, where growing attention is attached to bodily experiences, sensations, and states of consciousness (Wijnia 2016, 43). Rather than simply following in the footsteps of one's parents, adopting the religious outlook of the social and cultural milieu one has grown up in, contemporary individuals seem to value free choice and eclecticism in matters of faith to a higher degree

(Keysar 2014, 160–161). In the sociology of religion one of the established concepts capturing this development is *bricolage*. According to this argument the increasing privatisation of religion in the modern world leads to a situation where institutions lose their hold of individual believers, who hence gain the opportunity to elaborate freely on a vast range of available symbolic resources. Bricolage can be an internal process of exploring 'exotic' aspects of one's own religion, or an interreligious endeavour of combining religious and secular perspectives and practices into a personal, tailor-made worldview (Altglas 2014, 5–6, 12). Bricolage can be understood as an innovative individual practice of breaking boundaries and the *bricoleur* as a playful explorer in a world of nearly unrestrained choices, driven by the neoliberal logics of consumerist culture (Illman 2015, 200–4).

In a study of contemporary yoga and Kabbalah practitioners Véronique Altglas criticises this interpretation of bricolage, as it 'largely overestimates its eclecticism, takes for granted the availability of religious resources, and misunderstands religious individualism' (Altglas 2014, 5–6). As a result, the social and cultural logic of bricolage, as well as the power relations and hierarchies that orchestrate it, are neglected. The focus on radical religious individualism and 'self-authority' omits the fact that coherence and collectively shared aspects are part even of the most innovative bricoleur's meaning system (Obadia 2016, 105–7). Social, ethnic, gendered, and economic restraints form the context in which religious choices are made, granting the process of bricolage both a firm and a foreseeable dimension. In this perspective personal subjectivity, choice, and freedom are easily attributed too decisive a role in the processes of forming contemporary religious and spiritual positions (Altglas 2014, 326–31). These reservations are important to keep in mind in the current discussion of the field of music.

Music as an instigator of religious change

Within the discourse on contemporary religiosity growing attention is attached to music as a dynamic medium for shaping rational responses, social identification, and emotional attachment to religious contexts, narratives, and worldviews (Partridge 2014, 37). According to Isabel Laack music and sound are emblematic of contemporary religiosity for several reasons: they highlight the interest in personal experience, the body, and holistic well-being; they blur the boundaries between sacred and secular; and they bring popular cultural elements into the religious scene. Thus, musical practices provide a religious language that is perceived as border-crossing:

transcending previously categorical distinctions between the intellectual and the emotional, and facilitating innovative, cross-denominational, and interreligious explorations (Laack 2015, 242). Because such boundaries are becoming more fluid and harder to define in contemporary societies, music can provide a context in which to transcend them, Partridge argues. Music has the 'power to extend the natural abilities of the body and the mind', which makes it an apt arena for contemporary religious meaning-making (Partridge 2014, 65, 51). Music also allows for perspectives focused on individual emotions and experience connected to the religious, moving away from 'grand institutional claims'; Lieke Wijnia stresses: 'New forms are found to express the experiential and transforming character of sacred claims,' and such forms are increasingly connected to making, listening to, or participating in music (Wijnia 2016, 40).

Subsequently, many researchers today have highlighted the observation that music seems to play an increasingly important role in contemporary discourses on religion and change, both in general (Hackett 2012; Laack 2015) and in relation to Judaism in particular (Summit 2000, 2016; Bohlman 2008; Kligman 2015; Papenhagen 2016). Relating to this topic, the musicologist Tia DeNora (2000; 2013) offers valuable insights into the power of music in everyday life and its role in structuring emotions, action, and agency in contemporary Western societies. Basing her claims on ethnographic research conducted in Great Britain, she proposes that music has the power to influence people in far more comprehensive ways than merely conveying meanings non-verbally. Indeed, music can influence how people relate to themselves as well as to the surrounding society, to their bodies and emotions, to profound existential issues, and trivial everyday activities and the like (DeNora 2000, 17). Hence, music can offer concrete structures, patterns, and meanings for individuals seeking to orient themselves in the contemporary, changing religious landscape: a tangible point of anchorage relating them to a certain tradition and community but also to their own inner and embodied emotional landscapes (DeNora 2013, 4).

To form the theoretical basis for this kind of in-depth analysis of the role of music in processes of religious change, Rosalind Hackett (2012, 11) calls for 'more sonically aware religious studies'. She emphasises that aesthetic factors, practices, and the sensorium at large are gaining ground in contemporary research on religion – stepping out of the shadows of texts and beliefs, which have traditionally formed the core of academic research. To acknowledge the vast and varying field of sound 'as it is variously perceived and conceptualised' in religious contexts, she suggests the

concept of 'soundscape', which goes beyond the narrower focus on music, spanning the physical environment of sounds as well as how they are perceived. Both sound production and sound perception can be regarded as omnipresent, localised, and embodied in relation to the religious context and experience, she claims (Hackett 2012, 18). Similarly, Laack contends that the 'soundscapes of our world are strongly shaped by religious groups and behaviour, thereby influencing identity negotiations and political conflicts' (Laack 2015, 221). Even if sound and music often lie at the heart of people's religious identities, the field has been understudied because of the intellectual bias of the discipline.

The fields of lived religion and materiality have contributed to the growing interest in sound and music as aspects of religious life in their own right, not merely as ornaments or accompaniment to intellectual contents (Cohen 2007; Hackett 2012, 11). These approaches focus on religion as it is interpreted and practised in everyday life, interlacing aspects of private and public, historical and cultural context, embodiment, social class, and power into a comprehensive image. A central question within the field concerns how theologically unsystematic life-views take form through everyday practices related to institutional religion, which parallels the focus of the current article in important ways (Frisk 2011; Bowman & Valk 2012). From this point of view understanding the meaning of sound is seen as a complex task that involves physical and psychological processes, material objects, and the environment, as well as socially and culturally constructed patterns of interpretation and value. The role of sound in religion is thus a question of interplay and contextualisation, directing attention to the relationship or the space *between* objects and beliefs where sounds function as mediators invested with significance. This interplay also reveals the power of sound in religion: 'Studying sound implies a theory of religion that is inherently communal and intersubjective' (Weiner 2011, 110).

Such insights have opened broader perspectives on how people relate to and use sounds in their religious contexts. People respond to music and sound and use them in a variety of ways as part of their religious practices. Music is a highly personal medium for meaning-creation and dialogue – with the inner self as well as with the larger community – and does not support any absolute hierarchy of values (Wijnia 2016, 43; DeNora 2000, 99). Therefore, understanding such processes in relation to personal narratives of how the thematic troika of music, religion, and change can be experienced and expressed is significant for a deepened understanding of contemporary religiosity at large (Laack 2015, 241). Furthermore, I argue, this is significant

if the processes of change where traditional musical practices are invested with new meanings and developed for new contexts are to be grasped.

To conclude, researching music, sound, and religious change requires a transdisciplinary approach, where music is perceived as a medium created by humans in a historical, social, and cultural context, fulfilling certain functions and offering individuals and groups ways of expressing existential ideas in an embodied fashion. Rather than certain kinds of music being religious *per se*, meaning is experienced in and attributed to music by humans, who interpret sounds and melodies in certain ways (Hoondert 2015, 125). Such an approach acknowledges the 'cognitive, emotional, sensory, bodily and biological aspects of acoustic perception and creation within religions' while remaining sensitive to 'historical, cultural, religious and individual particularities' (Laack 2015, 223). Thus, not only does traditional, institutionally sanctioned religious music become interesting, but also the entire endeavour of producing and perceiving sound in the everyday lives of individuals, who creatively adopt and combine religious motifs and practices as they develop musical practices that correspond to their personal situations, needs, and beliefs. This article strives to outline such a perspective by exploring the ethnographic material and illustrating these claims in relation to the specific Jewish context of the interviews. Understanding the special relationship individuals have to performing, listening to, and taking part in music requires ethnography, Partridge claims (2014, 51). It is therefore time to turn to the interview accounts to further illuminate the issues under consideration.

'The wish to have a broader sort of thing'

Most interviewees affirm that they recognise the discourse on religion and change presented above in their everyday life: either in their own practice, or as an aspect affecting their local Jewish community or Jewry at large. The wish to combine an inclusive creed with an increasingly traditional practice seemed to be the most common way of formulating one's personal position in the changing religious landscape. 'This is a very typical development,' David contends: a longing for the archaic form combined with a thoroughly modern content. He considers that the changes in practice are 'part of a wider liturgical question about the status of the words and the status of the text'. In his view progressive Judaism 'is heading back towards tradition while trying to hang on to a very radical politics'.

Many informants speak of a wish to find a more distinct way of being Jewish, as a reaction against secularisation and assimilation but also against the strivings of previous generations of Jews to tone down aspects of their faith that could be interpreted as 'striking' or 'uncomfortable' by the surrounding British society. In contemporary multi-ethnic British society many of them feel that such caution and fear of standing out is unwarranted. Many feel their Jewish faith has lost its distinctiveness, as much of the practice has been streamlined within the rationalist ideals of modernity. Hence, they express an interest in incorporating elements felt to be more traditional and specific to the Jewish faith: the chanting, the Hebrew language, music, and embodied ritual actions (such as bowing, moving, standing up) as well as mystical traits. Some of the interviewees describe their own Reform and Liberal traditions as intellectually and theologically compelling but somewhat 'liturgically impoverished', offering too few nuances and ways of practice that engage persons as emotional, embodied beings. What is sought is a compromise that allows for a greater exploration of diverse Jewish practices but still holds on to liberal theology: 'We appreciate musical traditions but we also appreciate the rational, intellectual heritage of progressive Judaism,' Miriam contends. Hence, it may be too strong to claim that the interviewees are attracted to traditional or orthodox liturgy *per se*; it is rather the concrete practice, the 'doing' part of expressing one's Jewishness that appeals to them. It is important to make a distinction between using a traditional liturgy and praying in a traditional way, Dinah emphasises:

> I think that's important: I wouldn't want to use an orthodox liturgy, for example. But some of the practices, particularly the embodied practices, […] the moving back and forth, and the bowing here and there, the use of more traditional melodies sometimes – interspersed, they can be adjusted to fit to a progressive liturgy. Or, you know, laying *tefillin*[6] as I did this morning, these are sort of traditional modes of praying but not using an orthodox liturgy. So I think that distinction needs to be [made], it is very much the practice part and not the liturgy part.

David finds a reason for the ongoing change in the deep insecurity he believes is felt by many progressive Jews today about their way of being Jewish:

6 *Tefillin* consist of two small boxes attached to leather straps, containing the scrolls inscribed with portions of the Torah. Traditionally, they are worn by men at the weekday morning prayers. Today, they are increasingly being used in progressive liturgies by women and men alike (Summit 2016, 152).

'they look over their shoulder' at Orthodox and Haredi Jews, whose practice is stricter and who carry visible signs of their faith in their everyday life, and feel, perhaps unconsciously, that these are the 'real Jews'. They would never hold this opinion intellectually but still cannot avoid it: at times 'I feel that myself,' he concludes. Even if the interpretations of what exactly is changing and why differ between the interviewees, the overall view that concrete forms of practice are gaining ground in progressive circles is affirmed across the interviews.

The role of music in this ongoing change is also widely addressed among the interviewees. 'Music is in the frontline of change', 'music is pushing the issue', and music 'is in the vanguard in some ways' are claims put forward by the interviewees in relation to the broader topic of a changing religious landscape within the progressive Jewish context. This change is understood to be 'happening in theology as well', not just in the context of music, but it is generally understood to be driven by the congregations, their song leaders, and cantors rather than by theologians. For example, Micah, who is a Liberal rabbi, says that the change has come about because the congregants want to incorporate more traditional elements in their practice, even though they are very committed to liberal theology:

> I think it's becoming more and more so all the time, that's definitely an ongoing trend at the moment. I notice it in my own practice and I'm doing it because it seems to be responding to what congregations like. Whether they have consciously formulated what they want is another question, but it's pretty clear what they like: lots of singing, lots of especially participatory singing.

Many other interviewees also single out practices related to music, singing, and the body as both instigators and insignia of this change: particularly the use of *nusach* (see footnote 3) and introducing new types of communal singing, often with roots in the mystical, Hasidic, traditions such as the wordless *niggunim* (see footnote 4) and other forms of mantra-like, meditative songs. Music is egalitarian rather than elitist, Dinah suggests in response to the question of music's importance in the process of religious change: 'For the majority of people, it's the … not in a pejorative way, the lowest common denominator. You don't need a vast level of knowledge to participate in singing, particularly not in a *niggun*. A *niggun*, you don't even need to know Hebrew. It gives more people more access to participation.'

In addition to *nusach* and *niggunim*, Micah points to several small, embodied elements of ritual that have found their way into the progressive services

in recent years: standing up, bowing, covering your eyes, stepping forward at certain moments in the liturgy, and both men and women laying *tefillin*.

> I think the idea of physical bits of ritual, which was once a little bit anathema in [progressive] Judaism, there's been a big shift, qualitatively, towards the idea of doing little things. […] I can't say when [we] ditched all these things originally and emphasised the intellectual and the spiritually rational and de-emphasised anything bodily … But it's all very well for us and I'm doing it, I'm part of this trend to bring back these little rituals because they're fun, because they give you something else to do rather than just reading, it's physical and so forth.

'Bringing back' elements of ritual is not, however, an entirely correct description, many of the interviewees contend: mostly it is not a question of returning to practices that were previously part of the movements' liturgy, but rather to explore other Jewish traditions ('internal bricolage') and to create new rituals inspired by older ones. 'I really enjoy *nusach*,' David exclaims as an example: 'the *nusach* is a new kind of hip, really.' Nevertheless, he points out, the *nusach* developed for progressive settings is 'not the *nusach* you would have in most Orthodox communities, it's a particular version of it that is appropriate for the context, which is fine; it *sounds* traditional'. Similarly, Miriam, who is an academic expert on Jewish liturgy and who has a profound knowledge of the *nusach* tradition, points out that it is positive that the progressive movements have also started to realise that 'they don't have to read everything' but can use tunes to chant the texts instead. However, she says, when bricolage is built on the basis of feeling rather than knowledge, it ends up in 'chaos'. Thus, the interviewees seem to appreciate the freedom to bring in new musical elements and experiment with them that characterises the current liberal atmosphere, but simultaneously stress the importance of doing this in an informed, grounded, and meaningful way.

In speaking of traditional practice, the interviewees are conscious of the fact that many of the elements added to progressive Jewish practice today may not be that traditional after all. 'I think there is an important caveat,' David says, 'which is that a lot of things that are seen as traditional are not quite as traditional as people think. […] It's more things that are *understood* to be traditional, […] there's a feeling of nostalgia, or an association with the 'old world', there's a kind of romanticism about it.' Furthermore, some are cautious about the conservative connotations that many of the imported musical practices might carry with them, such as 'Hasidic styles

of authority' which are at odds with their liberal convictions. Dinah, who is a faculty member at Leo Baeck College, often feels the need to discuss these issues with her students, who are 'flirting with that centre ground and then experimenting with their own spirituality and practice in situating themselves', not necessarily giving enough consideration to the theological implications that certain practices that attract them on an aesthetic or emotional level may contain. 'I wouldn't ever want to go back to something that wasn't totally egalitarian,' Rachel says, but she still admits that she at times finds herself longing for the very professional, cantor-centred, and male-dominated musical landscape in which she grew up. Her thoughts tie into another reservation voiced by many informants in relation to the new forms of practice adapted to the progressive setting: that instead of being diversified it merely becomes simplified – a 'dittyfication of the liturgy', as Adam describes it, 'the problem of good-quality music being replaced by very simplistic music' to meet the needs of being approachable and participatory.

To summarise the discussion based on the ethnographic material so far, we may conclude that the interviewees largely affirm and advance the discourse of change. Naturally, this does not translate into any certain assessments of whether such changes are actually underway in the communities, but it indicates at least that the narrative resonates with their personal positions and perspectives on contemporary Jewish practice. Furthermore, the role of music is placed at the forefront of this process of change, together with other forms of embodied and tangible ways of practising one's Jewishness – melodies, styles of performance, and pieces of ritual that are incorporated into progressive prayers and liturgies. However, it is important to underline the extent to which these developments represent new combinations, not a wish to revert to a more traditional or conservative theology but a wish to broaden and deepen the ways of expressing and 'doing' Judaism in a liberal and progressive form. As David formulates it: 'It's not that I'm reclaiming my Judaism, but it's the wish to have a broader sort of thing.'

'A backlash against rationality'

As presented in the previous section, there is a widespread readiness among the interviewees to recognise the discourse of religious change and to pinpoint the central role played by music in this process. Furthermore, this discourse is often made sense of in the light of a more overarching and deep-reaching epistemological change. The growing interest in elements

of Jewish practice that feel 'genuine' and 'traditional' is, to use Micah's words, part of the 'postmodern rejection of rationality'. Dinah offers a similar explanation, contending that she believes 'we are in an era of backlash against rationality':

> We are all into our technology, that kind of stuff, but there is a craving for something that feels more mystical, more spiritual, less rational. The equation of scientific and rationalist as values above everything else has lost some of its grip because people are finding […] they can programme a computer, but it doesn't fill other sorts of needs. […] We know that in the Enlightenment and then in the Jewish Enlightenment, the Haskalah, there was this sense that eventually science would explain everything; rationality would explain everything. And we've moved well beyond that to a space where we know that there are limitations to that. And then, what do we do with the rest of our stuff? And that's part of why I pray.

Rebecca taps into the same discussion by arguing: 'We've come through all the Enlightenments and our intellectualisation about everything and yet people are still killing each other.' In her view drawing inspiration from traditional musical and liturgical sources gives a 'sanction from the old times' and shows that there is 'an openness now to accepting a broader range of practices' and not rejecting them simply because they are not felt to be 'intellectual'. We have no need to live up to those kinds of ideals any longer, she contends: 'We don't have to prove anything anymore to anybody.' Historically, the interviewees stress, there has been a greater emphasis on rationality in the progressive Jewish contexts, where, to a large extent, they are active; 'music was not focused on before,' Miriam clarifies. Compared to more orthodox settings, 'in the progressive world the idea of the words is much more important, the emphasis on meaning above all else,' David explains. Today, however, 'that idea of pure, rational religion is a very dated one'. Hence, the door is gradually opened towards the emotional and experiential as a reaction against one-sided intellectualism. 'It's a wave now,' Miriam contends, the climax of a development that started with the countercultural movement, neo-Hasidism, and Renewal Judaism in the 1960s.

The fact that traditional forms of religious practice are increasingly adapted to progressive contexts is welcomed by most of the interviewees, who regard it as a vital and timely development, a sign of the times. Some of them belong to a younger generation, who say they feel 'less doctrinal about these sorts of things' than their parents and grandparents. However,

informants born in the 1940s and 1950s are also sympathetic to the development where choirs and organs in the services are replaced by alternative prayer groups exploring *nusach*, *niggunim*, and the use of Hebrew – 'the new traditional', as Daniel says. Nevertheless, it is often pointed out in the interviews that the development is not simple and straightforward: people are both rational and post-rational in their Jewish engagement, depending on the situation. Adam contends: 'There's no one direction of this sort of stuff, it's a set of tensions that are played out differently in different contexts.' The notion of personal choice is, however, an important aspect of the contemporary narrative on religious identity and religious change. In Dinah's words: 'We are in this funny post-*halakhic*[7] world, where everybody, whatever that may say, is freely choosing to do what they do and to make the choices that they make. And some people define that much more within the structure of obligation and *mitzvoth*[8] and some people define it much more within the structure of personal meaning and spiritual reward.' Personal choice, but also personal responsibility for how one chooses to live one's Jewish life, is hence seen as an inseparable aspect of the rejection of rationality and the availability of alternatives to be explored.

Nevertheless, the interviewees are also critical of discourses that focus too heavily on individualism, choice, and self-realisation. Rather than individualism, the current focus on personally meaningful ways of realising one's religious practice is largely understood as a 'potential for hybridisation' that has arisen in the globalised world of instant online communication. As a concrete example several interviewees point out that the traditional musical forms of expression and ritual practices that are explored and adapted to the progressive services are, in their very essence, collective and community-building. Even if personal choice and self-determination in issues relating to religious practice are important, the interviewees emphasise that belonging to a community means settling for a 'vast series of compromises' rather than ferociously furthering one's own view of the ideal service. Choice depends on where you live and religious individualism on who you are, most of them contend. This includes your personal assets, connections, available resources, and entrepreneurial capacity. Ours is a time, several interviewees argue, when, rather than being overtly individualistic and obsessed with free choice, people are tired of constantly having to take a stand and form an opinion on what to believe and how to tailor one's own personal religious outlook.

7 From *halakha*, Jewish religious laws.

8 The plural form of *mitzvah* (Hebr.), commandment (by God).

Eventually, these experiences give rise to a counter-reaction, where music also plays an important part. As Rachel formulates it: 'The world's a bit overwhelming at the moment, you want something perhaps slightly simpler.' In her view it is often through music and ritual that such a comforting and restful space can be found today. As Wijnia (2016, 171) observes, many people today seek an 'extraordinary experience to rely on' in their engagement with religious music: 'There is a longing for the perceived sense of security, homeliness, or understanding that these kinds of messages convey.' In her view the musical context is often appreciated for its ability to embrace the vagueness and intangible character of religious experiences and sentiments that are difficult to put into words (Wijnia 2016, 44; see also DeNora 2000). Rebecca's thoughts about music as 'the soul of the religious engagement' is one example illustrating this argument; another is given by Hannah when she talks about the lure of the wordless, meditative songs called *niggunim*. She suggests these melodies liberate you from the restraints of having to choose and having to be opinionated about the intellectual formulations contained in religious language:

> I think we get very confused by the notions of God, religion, rabbinic authority, and what they represent. All of that, to people who live in the modern world … you know: Where is God in all of this? All these questions. So I think, yes, music has a way of connecting us to the more transcendent experience, without the words getting in the way. I think we give too much weight to words and ideas and they become a bit fossilised in our heads, and then we are bound by them. I think that the wordless *niggun* both cuts through all of that and reaches not only the heart of every individual, but it also connects people. I think people come to synagogue very often to be in a community as much as to be with God, which they don't know what it is and what they mean by it and they get really muddled.

To conclude, this second section dealing with the points of view presented in the ethnographic material shows a more complex and at times contradictory way of relating to the narrative of religious change identified in the theoretical discussion. While the time of rational religion is largely looked on as having come to an end and seen as an ideal of the past, the interviewees are also reluctant to wholeheartedly buy into the idea of bricolage – exalting individualism, personal agency, and choice. The longing for more archaic forms of practice to accompany one's inclusive and liberal theological engagement seems to be spurred by a wish to find more embodied, emotion-

ally engaging, and 'distinctly Jewish' ways of practising one's faith. But this endeavour is generally understood as a process with collective components, not simply a project of finding or enhancing the self.

Conclusion: Religious soundscapes

In this article the broad topic of religion and change has been analysed in relation to music and sound: singing and reciting, wordless chants and ancient sacred texts, listening to music, as well as creating it oneself. The argument that music plays a central role as an expression of – or even driving force for – religious change, put forward by several contemporary scholars in the field, has been taken as the point of departure for the analysis, which has sought to connect theoretical perspectives from both religious studies and Jewish studies with an in-depth ethnographic analysis of the current theme: interviews conducted at Leo Baeck College in London with a special focus on music, religious practice, and change.

The personal narratives shared by the interviewees both confirm and contest the theoretical assumptions put forward in the article. On the one hand the discourse of religious change, highlighting subjectivities, emotions, fluidity, and bodily experiences, has been affirmed as relevant in the interviews. In this specific Jewish context these processes seemed to amount to a generally observed aspiration to combine a radically liberal theology with increasingly more traditional, embodied, and 'post-rational' ways of practice. Thus, the role of music was pivotal to the narratives of change, offering an apt space in which to realise such strivings. On the other hand, the informants were also critical of the processes of bricolage of which they were themselves part, pointing to the risks of 'chaos', loss of meaningfulness, and trivialisation if taken too far. Furthermore, individualism was generally deemed too simple and one-sided an explanation for the processes underway. These findings correspond with Altglas's claims that bricolage must be understood as a culturally and historically situated process formed by collective frames of reference, implicit power balances, and political, economic, and gendered restraints (Altglas 2014, 23, 327, 329). Hence, even if the innovative practices of combining Jewish doctrines and ways of 'doing Jewish' expressively break with previous customs, they are often less free, playful, individual, and eclectic than is assumed.

In relation to the perceived backlash against rationality, Martin Hoondert's idea that musical experiences point to the interconnectedness of the material and the immaterial worlds seems relevant. Such experiences, he

claims, reveal that 'there is more to the world than meets the eye' (Hoondert 2015, 129). Hence, reason and emotion, rationality and experience permeate each other in music and present themselves as two sides of the same coin, separated by a porous, fluctuating line (Cohen 2007, 339). The interviewees focus on embodiment and experiences in discussing musical practices that appeal to them, but simultaneously emphasise the importance of balancing the rational and the emotional in their religious practice. Interconnectedness, both–and, and in-between seem to be key concepts instead of sharp distinctions and dichotomies, as Weiner contended above: understanding sound as part of religion requires that attention be directed toward relationships and interconnections – the space *between*.

The broad perspective suggested by studies of sound and lived religion – where physical and psychological dimensions are combined with objects, environments, cultural patterns, and personal experiences – seems able to bring about a 'sonically aware religious studies', to return to Hackett's call. The intricate ways in which the relationships between tradition and innovation and music and practice are described in the interview material can be understood to point in the same direction. Thus, I conclude, the notion of soundscape, with its bodily, material, emotional, and localised parameters, aptly catches the spirit of this context. Furthermore, the dimensions of identity construction and maintenance, brought to the fore by Kligman and Cohen, seem relevant in concluding the analysis. Along these lines the analysis supports the view that the relationship between bodies and beliefs, and places and perceptions are central aspects of understanding contemporary religious change, crystallised by Rebecca's wish to 'retain tradition – with an open mind'.

* * *

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Ethnographic Material

Twenty-one interviews conducted in London between July 2014 and June 2016 by the author. (Some persons were interviewed twice or thrice, some interviews were group interviews; in all approximately thirty persons were interviewed.) All interviews were recorded as mp3 files and transcribed into text documents by the current researcher. Coding was conducted manually using both inductive and deductive strategies, relying on concepts and themes arising from the theoretical framework as well as paying attention to topics of concern expressed by the interviewees. Recordings and transcripts are stored at the Cultura Archive, Åbo Akademi University, Turku, Finland. Archive codes: IF mgt 2014/028, IF mgt 2014/032-040 and IF mgt 2016/009-019.

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Dress at Choral Evensongs in the Dutch Context – Appropriation and Transformation of Religiosity in the Netherlands

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Abstract

This article studies the appropriation of Anglican choral evensong, and more specifically, dress at choral evensong, in the Netherlands outside the context of the Anglican Church to gain more insight into religiosity in the Netherlands. The authors explore the dress worn at choral evensong in the Netherlands and the meanings participants attribute to it. The concepts of denotational and connotational meanings are used as an analytical tool.

In analysing their interviews, the authors came across three categories of meaning and function participants attribute to dress at choral evensong. The first category was the reference to 'England as a model'. By wearing Anglican dress, choirs indicate they belong to the high-quality sound group of English cathedral choirs. At the same time, by changing the Anglican 'dress code', choirs emphasise their unicity and individuality, independent of church traditions. The second category was the marking of identity: choirs copy the dress from the English tradition, but add some elements to mark their own identity. Besides this marking of identity, aspects of unicity, uniformity, group identity, and gender-marking also play a part. The third category was metamorphosis and transcendence. Choir members refer to unarticulated transcendental experiences by wearing ritual liturgical dress. On the one hand the authors noted a 'cathedralisation' or 'ceremonialisation' of the singers' dress, and on the other a de-institutionalisation, for example, in the dress of the minister, if present. The article's main conclusion is that the fieldwork data reveal that dress at choral evensong in the Netherlands points to changing religiosity at two different levels. First, the authors observe a transformation in the way religion is expressed or ritualised in Reformed Protestant churches in the Netherlands. The popularity of evensong suggests a longing for

other forms of worship, with a focus on ceremonies and Anglican-like vesture for the singers. Second, they observe a mix of concert practices and Anglican-like rituals, which the interviewees in our research refer to as a new form of religiosity. In both practices the traditional dress of the Anglican Church is used, whether copied exactly or adapted. A new phenomenon may be observed: choirs wear Anglican-like vesture decoupled from the Anglican Church as they are longing for transcendental experiences which they find in the musical-ritual form and high musical quality of choral evensong.

Keywords: *choral evensong, dress, music, identity, religiosity, transformation, transcendence*

Since the 1980s a growing number of choral evensongs have been organised in the Netherlands outside the context of the Anglican Church. They attract many people. The choral evensongs are organised either as (mostly reformed) worship or as a concert, or as both worship and a concert. Choirs dress in traditional Anglican choral vesture and sing a complete Anglican choral evensong. Sometimes choirs change the dress code of the Anglican tradition. This semi-ecclesiastical performance in a secularised country like the Netherlands commands attention and raises questions. What does this ecclesial-like 'show' of choral evensongs signify?

In this article we investigate the dress at these choral evensongs from the perspective of ritual and liturgical studies. The article is part of the PhD research project 'My Soul Doth Magnify': The Appropriation of the Anglican Choral Evensong in the Dutch Context', which is embedded in the Research Programme 'Practices of Faith in Socio-Cultural Networks' at the Protestant Theological University in Amsterdam.[1] The research project will explore four liturgical-ritual perspectives of choral evensong: space, language, music, and dress. This article's focus is on the dress worn at these choral evensongs.[2]

The context of our research is the Netherlands. In the first paragraph of this article we called the Netherlands a secularised country. This is insufficiently precise. In line with the severe critique of the secularisation thesis we observe not a decline in religion, but a shift. As early as 2006 the Academic Council for Government Policy published the report *Geloven in het publieke domein*

1 The first author of the article is the project's main investigator. She gathered and analysed the data. The analysis of data was inter-subjectively assessed by the co-authors, who are also the supervisors of the research project.

2 Part of this introduction is based on the article 'My Soul Doth Magnify': The Appropriation of the Anglican Choral Evensong in the Dutch Context – Presentation of a Reserach Project.'- *Yearbook for Liturgical and Ritual Studies* 29 (2013), 83–98.

('Believing in the Public Domain'). This report shows the influence of churches is diminishing, but religion is not disappearing. It is being transformed and transferred, and it emerges in unexpected forms and in unexpected places (Van de Donk 2006). This is confirmed in more recent publications about religiosity in the Netherlands, as expressed in all kinds of ritual forms (e.g. Barnard, Cilliers & Wepener 2014; De Hart 2011/2013; Jespers 2009). The processes of transformation are reflected in ritual practices and these coincide with a reinvention and appropriation of ritual-liturgical repertoires (Rijken, Hoondert, Barnard 2013, 95). The recent publication *God in Nederland 1966-2015* (Bernts & Berghuijs 2016, 25–7) shows that while there is an ongoing decline in churchgoing, there is also a new spirituality outside and inside the churches, with a hankering for transcendence (Bernts & Berghuijs 2016, 172). There are no strict borders between the different shapes that religion assumes: people inside and outside the churches, looking for depth and connection, combine elements from different traditions (Bernts & Berghuijs 2016, 139). The popularity of choral evensong in the Netherlands may be a sign of this hankering for transcendence. By researching part of the material culture of this musical-ritual form, we aim to address this issue. In this article, therefore, we research the appropriation of dress at choral evensong to gain more insight into religiosity in the Netherlands. In general, dress 'provides a window through which we might look into a culture, because it visually attests to the salient ideas, concepts and categories fundamental to that culture' (Arthur 1999, 1). Sociologist Tim Dant explains that society cannot be understood independently of the material culture, including fashion and dress, used within it (Dant 1999, 107). This leads to the article's main question: how is Anglican choral evensong, and more specifically its associated dress, appropriated in the Netherlands outside the context of the Anglican Church? We divide this main question into two sub-questions: (1) what kind of dress do singers wear at choral evensong in the Netherlands? (2) which meanings and functions do participants attribute to dress at choral evensong? The article aims to contribute to the research into the changing position of religion in the Netherlands.

The article is constructed as follows. First, we give some background information about the tradition of choral evensong in England, and explain which liturgical vesture is worn at choral evensong in the United Kingdom and how choral evensong has been adopted and organised since 1980 in the Netherlands. Second, we present our theoretical framework, which uses the following key concepts: appropriation, transformation of religiosity, materiality, and the meaning of dress. Third, we elaborate on the method used. Fourth, we present our field work, exploring dress at choral evensong in

the Netherlands. Finally, we reflect on our fieldwork and relate the results to our theoretical framework.

Choral evensong in the UK and in the Netherlands

Choral evensong in the UK

Choral evensong is a daily prayer service in the Anglican Church celebrated in the late afternoon or evening. According to John Gibaut Anglicans have 'a rich heritage of daily liturgical prayer' (Gibaut 2006, 451). Choral evensong was established in the sixteenth century, during the English Reformation, but its roots lie in the Early Church: early Christianity took over the practice of daily prayer from Judaism (Gibaut 2006, 451). During the English Reformation Archbishop Thomas Cranmer introduced vernacular liturgy to England. When the monasteries were closed, the daily office became part of congregational worship. The services were intended as daily public worship for everyone. Cranmer reduced the liturgy of the hours to matins (morning prayer) and evensong (evening prayer). Vespers and compline were merged into a single liturgy (Gibaut 2006, 453-454). In 1549 the first *Book of Common Prayer* was published, including an order for evensong. After some revisions the Book of Common Prayer reached its final form in 1662. This 1662 order is still celebrated daily at choral evensongs in Anglican cathedrals and colleges. Singing daily choral evensong is one of the main tasks of every English choir connected to a cathedral or college.

The usual Anglican chorister's dress at choral evensong consists of a cassock, 'the basic garment worn by ministers (often black) and choir members (often coloured)' (Ruffer 2009, 131), and a surplice, 'a loose white garment with wide sleeves worn over the cassock by some choirs and lay and ordained ministers at certain services' (Ruffer 2009, 131). In England, during the Oxford Movement[3] in the nineteenth century, the choristers moved from the choir loft to the front of the church building, and began to wear the dress of the clergy. Until today it is a characteristic of vesture at English choral evensongs that the singers wear the same dress as the clergy: a cassock with a surplice, although there are small differences: for example, English boy choristers wear badges and ribbons. During concerts choirs wear cassocks without surplices or formal dress.

3 'A renewal movement centred at the University of Oxford which sought a renewal of 'catholic' … thought and practice within the Church of England (…).', source: Online Encyclopaedia Britanica <https://www.britannica.com/event/Oxford-movement>, accessed November 17, 2015.

Choral Evensong in the Netherlands

In 1983 the Schola Davidica Utrecht was one of the first choirs to introduce choral evensong to the Netherlands. Organist Gert Oost was one of the initiators. Jan Valkestijn, Director of Music at Haarlem Cathedral, and Bouwe Dijkstra, founder and first conductor of the Roden Boys Choir, were two other pioneers in the country. The last thirty years have seen a growing number of Anglican-style choral evensongs in the Netherlands. Boys' choirs and evensong choirs have been established, among them the Roden Boys Choir (1985) and the Kampen Boys Choir (2002).

We have observed three different contexts in which choral evensongs in the Netherlands are organised (Rijken, Hoondert, Barnard, 2013, 85). First, an evensong is sometimes organised as worship linked to – mostly – Reformed congregations (both strictly Reformed and ecumenically oriented Reformed congregations), and sometimes in Roman Catholic or Old Catholic parishes. In Reformed worship the order of evensong is adapted to the Reformed liturgy (there is no altar, no kneeling, no cross and candles, no standing during the doxologies, etc.) and the role of the choir is – compared with Anglican evensongs – sometimes more concert-like: a choir performance added to Reformed worship. Second, in other situations evensongs are organised as concerts (with entrance tickets, a programme, and applause) but performed liturgically according to the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662), with prayers, psalms, lessons, canticles, anthems, and hymns. The choirs rent a church building to perform an evensong (without clergy) as an independent concert-like, but ritualised event. Third, according to the self-understanding of the choirs an evensong is occasionally offered as both concert and worship. It is important to understand that the contexts in which evensongs are organised tell us nothing about the individual appropriation of evensong.

Concepts and theoretical framework

Appropriation and transformation of religiosity

One of the key concepts in this article is 'appropriation', which we derive from the Dutch cultural historian Willem Frijhoff. He defines it as follows: 'Appropriation is the process of interpretation with which groups or individuals provide a new meaning for external bearers of meaning, so that the latter become acceptable, liveable, bearable, or even dignified' (Frijhoff 1997, 108). Frijhoff used 'appropriation' in the context of his historical research,

but in our opinion it is quite applicable to the situation of contemporary liturgical rituals. Frijhoff promotes a change in the focus of research, from top-down to bottom-up. Liturgical research long used to examine the topic through the eyes of the churches and science. Our research also attempts to get an idea of the liturgical ritual practice itself and its reception and perception by participants. The focus of research referred to here can be traced, via Chartier (Chartier 1988), to the Jesuit De Certeau (De Certeau 1984). It has shifted from prescribed ritual to living, liturgical ritual practice. This means that choral evensong is not only seen as a prescribed liturgical order and subject of the scientific research of ecclesiastical guidelines and rubrics, but also as a bearer of meaning in a process of finding meaning and significance. We focus on the material appropriation of dress (which dress participants wear) as well as on the attribution of meaning (why they wear it and what it means).

Another key concept in this article is 'transformation of religiosity'. We recognise this concept in international studies, for example, Wolfe's *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith* (Wolfe 2003) and Norris and Inglehart's *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Norris and Inglehart 2004). We use the term in this article as it is described in the previously mentioned report *Geloven in het publieke domein* by the Academic Council for Government Policy (Van den Donk et al 2006). Religion is making a surprising comeback. Some people speak of post- or de-secularisation, but it may be better to speak of the transformation of religion (Van de Donk & Jonkers 2006, 14). Religion is back, but in new and sometimes radical forms other than those of institutional religion. Sengers speaks of the 'transformation of religiosity' (Sengers 2005), and Borgman speaks of a 'metamorphosis' (Borgman 2006). In *Heiligen, idolen, iconen* Frijhoff mentions a 'transfer of sacredness': '…namely the widening of the use of religious and sacral categories to the domain outside the church […]' (Frijhoff 1998, 37). This transformation requires a re-evaluation of academic concepts. Concerning religiosity in transformation, we use Pete Ward's concept of 'a liquid church' (Ward 2002). This implies a religiosity which is migrating from the walls of the church to outer domains, and which is therefore also a religiosity in transformation (as described by Barnard, Cilliers and Wepener 2014). However, in our research the interesting phenomenon is that choral evensong is not literally moving away from the walls of the church. The musical ritual is performed within the walls of the church building, but often not in the context of worship connected to a church community. Concerning 'religiosity', an open and situational

description has been chosen. In the typology of the sacred elaborated by Matthew Evans (Evans 2003) a broad spectrum of religion and religiosity is discussed (from religion bound to tradition and the institution – the religious sacred – to spirituality connected to individual appropriation – the spiritual sacred). However, our article concerns itself with the interesting fact that it is precisely the traditional form of choral evensong (religion bound to tradition and institution) which is appropriated as a form of new religiosity.

Religiosity and materiality

An important question emerges from studying the research field: is dress at choral evensong linked to religiosity, and if so, how? Birgit Meyer, a leading author on this issue, pleads for a material approach to religion as opposed to a mentalistic understanding of it (mainly grounded in the Protestant Calvinist tradition; Meyer speaks about 'bias'), which takes 'as its starting point the understanding that religion becomes concrete and palpable through people, their practices and use of things […]' (Meyer 2012, 7). This is an important notion because in the (mainly) Protestant understanding of religion there is a devaluation of practices, materials, and forms as merely 'outward' (Meyer 2012, 8). Meyer pleads for an integrating approach in which the mental dimension is included within a material approach (Meyer 2012, 12). She advocates the rehabilitation of 'form' in the study of religion and observes that religions offer 'authorized forms for having certain religious experiences (…)' (Meyer 2012, 11). Later, she emphasises the importance of form as a generator of meaning and experience:

> We need to acknowledge the *indispensability of form*, understood not as a vehicle but as a generator of meaning and experience, in all religious practice, irrespective of whether this is fully acknowledged or neglected from within (Meyer 2012, 11-12).

To arrive at a better understanding of how religious mediation works, Meyer has developed the concept of 'sensational form' (Meyer 2012, 26). This term, which she uses as a methodological tool, refers to a 'configuration of religious media, acts, imaginations and bodily sensations in the context of a religious tradition or group' (Meyer 2012, 26). Sensational forms are authenticated as 'harbingers of what lies "beyond"' and have a double character: 'streamlining or shaping religious mediation' and 'achieving certain effects by being performed' (Meyer 2012, 26). She points to the liturgy of a church service as

an example of a sensational form: 'it stipulates the appropriate steps and, in the course of being performed, induces in participants an experience of divine presence' (Meyer 2012, 26). She underlines the need for a broad definition of religion which allows for this material approach. We follow Meyer in her definition of religion: 'particular, authorized and transmitted sets of practices and ideas aimed at "going beyond the ordinary", "surpassing" or "transcending" a limit, or gesturing towards […]' (Meyer 2012, 23).

The meaning of dress: representation and communication

A third element in our theoretical framework is the meaning of dress, and the relationship between dress, identity, religiosity, and music.

The concept of 'appropriation' is closely related to the concept of 'representation' (Hall 1997). In his book *Representations* Stewart Hall mentions that meaning is produced 'whenever we express ourselves in, make use of, consume or appropriate cultural "things"; that is, when we incorporate them […] and in this way give them value or significance' (Hall 1997, 3 and 4). He explains that representation is 'an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged' (Hall 1997, 15). He uses representation with 'signifying practices': these practices 'use some element to stand for or represent what we want to say, to express or communicate a thought, concept, idea or feeling' (Hall 1997, 4). For example, representation involves the use of dress, which stand for or represent things (Hall 1997, 15).

According to a definition on dress provided by Eicher and Roach-Higgins (Eicher & Roach Higgins 1992/1993, 15) dress is 'an assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements displayed by a person in communicating with other human beings'. We expect this definition to be useful in our context, although in worship there may be an intention to communicate with the divine as well. The definition makes clear that dress, besides a protective function, also has a social function (Eicher & Roach-Higgins 1992/1993, 12).

In this article we focus on this second function: dress 'as a means of communication' (Roach-Higgins & Eicher 1992, 1). Lynn Hume suggests that dress is a communicator of identity, individuality, group allegiance, beliefs, and the social order, for example (Hume 2013, 2). Dress is 'one form of non-verbal communication, full of symbolic meanings through which individuals locate themselves within their society, giving them personal and social identity' (Hume 2013, 3 referring to Goffman[4]). As non-verbal

4 Goffman 1973; the book by her to which she refers is unclear.

communication, dress anticipates verbal communication (Barnes & Eicher 1992/1993, 1). Dress also provides 'aesthetic pleasure' in either 'creating personal display' or in the appreciation of others (Roach & Eicher 1979, 7).

In relation to religious dress Hume notes that dress is 'a visible signifier of difference' (Hume 2013, 2). She maintains that the message communicated is that the wearer chooses to follow a certain set of ideological or religious principles and practices (Hume 2013, 2). In this way dress distinguishes religious communities from each other, and within a group dress marks differences, for example, hierarchies, power structures, gender distinctions, and roles (Hume 2013, 2). The marking of different roles also evokes the wish for behaviour towards the role-taker. 'Knowledge of the person's role is necessary in order that one behaves appropriately toward them' (Barnard 1996/2002, 63). Dress symbolically ties the community together within a group (Roach & Eicher 1979, 18). Barnes and Eicher explain that dress 'serves as a sign that the individual belongs to a certain group, but simultaneously differentiates the same individual from all others: it includes and excludes' (Barnes and Eicher 1992,1). Group identity can be forged by common vesture like uniforms defining 'a particular role or function played or authority held' (Holeton in Bradshaw 2002, 464). Holeton uses the term 'depersonalise' to explain that vesture is often used by institutions to depersonalise the wearer to emphasise the primacy of the institutional role over the personality:

> In most western societies this use of vesture can still be seen in the courts, the universities and the churches. […] [I]n the church, the vested individual acts in the name of the church or community and not on their own authority (Holeton 2002, 464).

Where dress during musical performances (concerts) is concerned, the literature suggests that the performer's dress influences the listener's musical experience (Griffiths 2010, 159–77). '[…] [I]t is only through activity that music comes into being and therefore the visual code, which functions through the performer's body, is vital in transforming music into an embodied experience for an audience' (Griffiths 2011, 32 referring to Small 1998, 54). Not only hearing the music, but also seeing the performers in terms of dress and gesture, are important for the audience. The uniform mode of dress at concert performances sets the performers apart from the audience and 'diminishes the individuality of those who wear it, subordinating individuals to the collective identity' (Small 1998, 65). Wapnick, Mazza and Darrow

have examined the effects of physical attractiveness, stage behaviour, and appropriateness of dress on evaluations of performance quality. Their conclusion is that non-musical attributes affect ratings of musical performances (Wapnick, Mazza & Darrow 2000, 323). Pianists rated by observers-listeners as generically more attractive and more appropriately dressed achieved higher ratings of performance quality from observers-listeners (Wapnick, Mazza & Darrow 2000, 323–36).

To obtain a more profound understanding of the production of the meaning of dress, we use Malcolm Barnard's concept, who, in line with the semiology of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), developed different types of meaning as an analytical tool (Barnard 1996/2002). This is useful in our research because of its multi-layered research field. Numerous interpretations of dress are possible: there are 'numerous interpretations by numerous cultural producers', which can differ from the originally intended meaning of a garment (Barnard 1996/2002, 33). The meaning of dress can differ from person to person, and the question arises if institutions can establish the meaning of dress.

Dress can be considered a 'sign', which is made up of the 'signifier' (the physical part) and the 'signified' ('the mental concept to which that signifier refers', Barnard 1996/2002, 81). Signifier and signified can be connected by a 'code', a set of shared rules (Barnard 1996/2002, 82). Barnard states: '[…] [I]f the code is unknown, then there is likely to be uncertainty as to what a particular signifier is signifying' (Barnard 1996/2002, 82). We use Barnard's concept of two different types of meaning as an analytical tool: a denotational meaning, i.e. the dictionary definition of the garment, and a connotational meaning, which may be described as what the garment makes a person think or feel, or as the associations that the garment evokes for someone (Barnard 1996/2002, 85). The connotational meaning depends on a person's social and cultural situation. Dress will have different connotations for different people. However, people from roughly the same cultural group will come up with almost identical connotations. If someone wants to identify himself with another person or represent an entire group, sometimes one garment is enough to evoke the connotation: for example, a child wearing a helmet 'is' a soldier. The helmet creates the connotation of the army and it does not matter precisely which rank the soldier has.

We use the concepts of denotation and connotation in the analysis of our fieldwork by describing denotationally what performers wear and by adding which meanings the performers connotationally attribute to dress.

Research method

The meaning-making processes which concern us are best served by a bottom-up ethnographic approach, an approach which starts in the field with participant observation and analysis of interviews with key-informants: singers, organists, conductors, ministers, and visitors involved in the evensongs. In our research we observed what dress performers (singers, conductors, lectors, ministers or priests, and vergers, if present) wear at choral evensongs, and in our interviews we attempted to discover the meanings and functions participants attributed to dress at choral evensong. Participant observation has provided us with background information and a deeper understanding of the context, as well as access to interviewees.

Between 2008 and 2009 a pilot study was conducted at the monthly choral evensong of the Schola Davidica in the Janskerk in Utrecht, during which the first eight interviews were conducted. The research was continued as PhD research from May 2013. Between 2013 and 2015 participant observation was continued in twenty places[5] with thirty choirs[6] singing evensong in the Netherlands outside the context of the Anglican Church.

In the first phase of the empirical research we investigated where choral evensongs were held in the Netherlands. We made a general overview, a 'mapping of the field'. The second phase involved participant observation at various choral evensongs in the Netherlands. Our research conformed with the 'codes of conduct' formulated by the VSNU (the Association of Universities in the Netherlands).[7] More specifically, the rules of the *Code of Use of Personal Data in Research* were followed.[8] Research data were stored and will be kept for ten years at the Protestant Theological University in Amsterdam. Names of interviewees and interview places were anonymised.

More than twenty-five interviews with key informants (eight with singers, six with organists, six with conductors, four with ministers, and six with

5 E.g. Nieuwe Kerk Groningen, Martinikerk Groningen, Bovenkerk Kampen, Laurenskerk Rotterdam, Hooglandse Kerk Leiden, Domkerk Utrecht, Janskerk Utrecht, Nicolaikerk Utrecht, Oude Kerk Amsterdam, Nicolaaskerk Amsterdam, Pauluskerk Breukelen, Hervormde Kerk Hoornaar, Martinuskerk Zwaag, Grote Kerk Emmen, Oude Kerk Zeist, and Oude Kerk Zoetermeer.

6 E.g. Schola Davidica Utrecht, Kampen Boys Choir, Roden Boys Choir, Sweelinck Cantorij Amsterdam, Domcantorij Utrecht, Choral Voices Groningen, Anthem Zwolle, Kamerkoor Concertino, Martinuscantorij Zwaag, Magnificat Emmen, Leidse Cantorij, Culemborg Chapel Choir, Woerden Vocaal Ensemble, Projectcantorij Zoetermeer, Vespercantorij Utrecht, Marcantus Houten, Kerkkoor Hoornaar, Cappella Vesperale Eindhoven, Chorale by the Cappella Nicolai Amsterdam, Northern Voices, and Ichthus Cantorij Harlingen.

7 See <www.vsnu.nl>, accessed April 17, 2017.

8 See <www.vsnu.nl>, accessed April 17, 2017.

visitors) were held. Respondents were usually collected via the secretary of the evensong choirs. We contacted the choir secretaries, asked in writing for permission for participant observation, and if it was possible to interview him or her in the week after the choral evensong. He or she also gave us the contact details of the director of music or the organist, and in some cases the minister. We conducted interviews, sometimes immediately after the choral evensong and sometimes in the week following it, with the leading persons (for example, the director of music, organist, or sometimes a minister). Usually, the interviews were conducted individually, but in some cases a group interview with the director of music and organist was conducted. We asked them for the contact details of singers and regular visitors to the evensong. After the interviews with the leading persons we conducted interviews with singers and visitors. Interviews were transcribed and data analysis was undertaken.

The first stage of interview analysis involved the coding of transcripts. We attempted to stay as closely as possible to the texts of the interviews, extracting the words participants used (*in vivo coding*) to describe the meanings they attributed to dress at choral evensong (Saldaňa 2009, 70-7). We compiled a lengthy list of all the keywords used, for example: 'England as a model', 'copy behaviour', 'own accentuation', 'self-created', 'staying in one line with the English choirs', 'showing your unicity', 'become quiet', 'uniformity', 'become part of the group', 'too ecclesiastical', 'metamorphose', 'giving a transcendental feeling', and 'touching the soul'. In the second phase of the analysis we looked for the most frequent keywords or themes (*focused coding*) (Saldaňa 2009, 151). We ordered the codes in three main categories: 'England as a model', 'identity', and 'metamorphosis and transcendence'. The category 'England as a model' involved remarks from interviewees about the popularity of the English tradition. The second category, 'identity', consisted of four subcategories: 'unicity of the choir', 'uniformity', 'group identity', and 'gender'.

Empirical data

We now present the data of our research on the dress of the choristers and ministers at choral evensong in the Netherlands. First, we describe the dress worn; we then elaborate on the meanings and functions attributed to it.

Dress at choral evensong in the Netherlands

In all contexts (concert, worship, and concert and worship together) traditional Anglican dress is worn by the choristers. We observe an appropriation process ranging from exact copying of Anglican vesture to an *à la carte* approach to vesture. If clergy are present – usually one man or one woman – this copying behaviour is not followed.

We investigated the dress of thirty choirs singing choral evensongs: twenty-one wear choral robes at evensong, one choir wears black academic gowns, nine choirs wear black 'concert dress', and no choir wears casual clothing. In most instances (fifteen) choristers wear scarlet cassocks. In England scarlet may only be worn by royal permission, for example, at Westminster Abbey and some Cambridge college chapels. Dutch choirs copying English choir vesture seem to prefer scarlet.

Some choirs copy the scarlet cassocks and cotta of King's College Cambridge and the choir of Westminster Abbey in London exactly (with ruff collars for the boys). This is the case in seven of the thirty investigated choirs. Two choirs copy the black cassock with cotta as worn by the choir of St Paul's Cathedral.

We observe that there are exact similarities in the appropriation of Anglican choral dress, and also differences, for example, in the use of the cotta. In our research nine of the twenty-one robed choirs copy the cotta. The other choirs do not, for practical or aesthetic reasons or because, as interviewees explain, the cotta has too much of a Roman Catholic connotation for them (in the Roman Catholic tradition altar boys and acolytes sometimes wear cassock and the surplice-like cotta). Some choirs have decided for aesthetic reasons that only male singers may wear a cotta. In this case the cotta functions as a gender-marker. In the next section we elaborate on this.

In England choristers rehearse in cassocks and pull on their cottas just before the service starts. Cottas are only worn during worship; during concerts choirs wear cassocks without cottas. In the Netherlands during a concert choirs sometimes also wear a cotta. Although he does not agree with the practice, a conductor explained that one of his Dutch boys' choirs (in a Reformed context) also sang in cottas during concerts, because the red cassock reminded people too much of the Labour Party (interview with director of music, April 12, 2011).

Dutch choirs copy the wearing of badges and ribbons. In the Netherlands not only boys' choirs wear badges and ribbons, but also adults in mixed choirs (interview with director of music, April 12, 2011). At some choral evensongs we noticed a hood, worn by a choir conductor, for example. In

England the hood points to an academic degree; in the Netherlands there is no relationship between the wearing of a hood and a degree from a Dutch university.

In nine places choirs wear (black) concert dress. Singers explained that they decided to wear uniform black dress because they were not singing at Sunday morning services. One choir decided to wear English black academic gowns with a blue accent.

If we now turn to the dress of ministers and readers at choral evensong in the Netherlands, the data show that the dress of the ministers is not appropriated from England. In nearly every case, with the exception of Old Catholic choral evensongs, there is a contrast between the dress of the choir and the dress of the minister. At nine choral evensongs there was no minister at all. Readers, selected for their correct English pronunciation, wear black clothes or, if they are a choir member, choristers' dress. At fifteen choral evensongs (mainly in a Reformed context) the minister wears his (or occasionally her) own 'Sunday morning vestments': a (black) Geneva gown (seven ministers), a Geneva gown with stole (two ministers), or an alb with stole (six ministers). Two ministers decided not to wear their Sunday morning vestments but a black suit. In two situations the minister was asked not to wear vestments, but casual clothes. One of the choir boards decided the choristers could wear choir dress, but ministers at choral evensong should not, to avoid the atmosphere becoming 'too ecclesiastical':

> Since there are also visitors in the evensongs who do not regularly attend services, and since we would like to keep the threshold as low as possible, we prefer ministers to show in their attire that they are 'close' to ordinary people. Wearing a gown can create a distance for people who are not familiar with the church. (A member of the choir board read this part of a choir document from August 2013 during an interview, January 17, 2015).

Meanings and functions attributed to dress

In analysing the interviews, we identified three categories of meanings and functions participants attribute to dress at Anglican evensong. We present them below, adding some quotations to elucidate our research and, we hope, make it convincing.

The first category we identify is the reference to England as a model. Choral evensong choirs in the Netherlands wear choir dress because English cathedral choirs wear choir dress. A singer called this 'copy behaviour':

> *Why do you wear choir dress?*
> It is of course in the first place copy behaviour. It's because you see the vestments in England. You see the vestments and think: 'Yes, that's the tradition there.' (Interviewed singer, April 26, 2011).

A choral conductor in the Netherlands explained why his boys' choir wears 'Anglican' liturgical dress:

> And, of course also, because it comes from England. If you do something from England, you have to do everything from England. Not half-heartedly, but all the way! And this is then part of it. So, that is the function of the cassock in our situation. (Interview with conductor, April 12, 2011).

A singer explained in an interview that copying Anglican dress can be compared with copying the football shirts of your favourite football club, for example, the top Dutch football clubs Ajax or Feyenoord. For him, wearing Anglican dress marks his identification with the world's best singers (interviewed singer, November 17, 2013).

Dutch choirs copying English choir dress seem to prefer scarlet. One interviewee ascribed the preference for scarlet cassocks to the CDs of the choir of King's College Cambridge, which are popular in the Netherlands (interviewed singer, November 17, 2013). There are pictures of the choir in 'Queen's red' on the CDs' covers. Wearing this colour connotes an identification with some of the best Anglican choirs in the world.

The second category is the marking of identity. In the Netherlands evensong choirs copy dress or elements of dress from the English tradition, but add some elements to mark their own identity and unicity. On one hand the choirs want to share the English tradition; on the other the choirs want to distinguish themselves from England and, within the Netherlands, from other choirs. We will give some examples of this. One choir wears red choral robes (skirt with cape) with a red self-created shawl. The then organist said of these capes and shawls:

> Our gowns look something like a winter cape: the winter cape which conductor Lisette Bernt wore on weekdays was really the example. Richard Seale, at that time choir master of Salisbury Cathedral, asked us if the Dutch climate had influenced our sacred dress (Oost 2008, 18[9]).

The chairwoman explained that the choir decided to wear choir dress after ten years of discussion. They bought it because the choir needed robes for

9 Translation ours.

their trips to England. In earlier periods the choir had borrowed choir dress from another choir, because there was resistance in the choir to wearing it. Half the choir found wearing it 'too ecclesiastical'. After ten years of discussion they decided to buy choir dress because of its connection with England, but with their own accentuation. The chairwoman explained that they decided that the dress also marked the unicity of the choir: 'And we wanted to express our unicity. Then a friend of one of the choral singers, she is a designer, designed this especially for us […]' (interviewed singer, December 3, 2008). In this self-created new form of dress we observe that England is a model and at the same time there is a break with the tradition of the Anglican Church.

Another example is the wearing of a scapular instead of a cotta. As already mentioned, some choirs do not wear a cotta because for some Protestant choirs the cotta is 'too Roman Catholic'. A conductor explained why they decided to wear a scapular instead of a cotta:

> Yes, a scapular […]. When you wear a choral robe in a Reformed church and you also pull on a cotta, then it becomes very… Roman Catholic. Of course, it is Anglican. But that cotta was at the time at any rate a step too far. You associate it too much with Roman Catholic. And a scapular was a nice alternative […]. In England you would have to have a cotta. Because in England they would think: what is that supposed to be? (Interview with conductor, September 24, 2014).

Besides the marking of unicity, there are aspects of uniformity and group identity. Surprisingly, all the investigated choirs wore uniform dress; in no case did the singers wear casual dress. This is interesting because it contrasts with many Dutch Protestant '*cantorij-praktijken*' (regular church choirs at Sunday morning worship, who wear casual clothes so as not to distinguish themselves from the congregation). Interviewees explain that it is important that there is equality and uniformity in clothing. The uniformity also marks the group identity, as one interviewee explained (interviewed singer, March 12, 2015). When wearing choir dress, you clearly stand out to everybody as a member of the choir.

In some choirs the cotta functions as a gender-marker. For example, male singers wear a cotta and female singers wear a small white collar. In another choir we observe gender playing a role in the choice of dress. The female singers wear a red cassock with cotta, while the male singers wear an alb with a red chasuble. In England the chasuble is only worn by priests,

e.g. the red one is worn at Pentecost. Here, the dress code of the Anglican Church has been abandoned and vesture has adopted a new meaning.

In an interview a singer explained that her choir sings four times a year at the morning service in the Liberated Reformed (*gereformeerde kerken – vrijgemaakt*) congregation, since many of the choir's singers are members of this church. She explained that at the Sunday morning and Good Friday services the choir does not wear choral robes. They only wear them when they sing English choral music. 'When we sing on Sunday morning in a Reformed Liberated church, we do not pull on the choral vestments, because then it is…., yes, say…, liturgy (interviewed singer March 12, 2015). It seems that choir dress is not connected with liturgy, but a musical style.

The third category of meaning-making refers to 'metamorphosis and transcendence'. A conductor explained that the function of choir dress in his boys' choir was a 'metamorphosis':

> Yes, the choir vestments, why we do that? Well, the boys undergo a metamorphosis […]. When the boys pull on the cassock, then … Beforehand, you see them jumping up and down the choir stalls and chatting with each other, and then they pull on the cassock… and that very moment, suddenly, they are quiet. Yes. Something changes, without us knowing exactly what it is. How and what … (interview with director of music, April 12, 2011).

A singer explained that wearing choir dress lifts you out of the everyday: 'This garment has a special effect: it gives unity to the choir members, you feel lifted up to a higher level above the daily routine' (interview with staff member and singer, January 16, 2015). The singers connected this metamorphosis with transcendence; they explained that wearing choir dress at choral evensong lifted the singer to another, higher, atmosphere.

> *Are people going to sing in a different way?*
> Singer: Not singing in a different way, but it feels different. You are immediately lifted from the secular to a higher plane. You pull on the gown and then… you are not someone else, that is not the right word, but it feels different. (Interviewed singer, December 3, 2008)

One choir borrowed monastic habits from a monastery. One of the interviewees says that wearing the habits gives 'a more spiritual feeling' (interviewed singer, January 1, 2015).

We interpret this experience of 'the higher' and 'the spiritual' as a transcendental experience. An organist said wearing choir dress at choral

evensong 'touches his soul' and connected it with the desire to experience something beyond everyday life:

> Something happens when you pull on that thing. This is quite strange. When I walk in the procession, […] I feel different, something happens with my soul. […] As people we cannot live without the added value of praise in our lives. And we believe, in ourselves, in our lives, in the added value of our lives. And you have to show this in some way or other. […] Showing it is also how you dress, funnily enough (interviewed organist, November 27, 2008).

Discussion and conclusions

In this final section we reflect on our fieldwork and relate it to our theoretical framework. We investigated which kind of dress is worn at choral evensong in the Netherlands and the meanings and functions attributed to it. We shared Meyer's material approach to religiosity: religion becomes concrete in the practices of people and their use of things (Meyer 2012, 7). We understand the practice of wearing Anglican-style dress at choral evensong as an expression of religiosity referring to unarticulated transcendental experiences. The sensational form of choral evensong generates meanings and experiences.

The data show that Dutch evensong choirs copy Anglican cathedral or college choristers' dress, sometimes very precisely, sometimes more loosely. Wearing choir dress affords a contrast with most Protestant (Reformed) services and with concert practices in general. We also observed that the dress of the clergy is not borrowed from England. In some cases there is no minister at the evensongs, and if there is, he or she may be asked not to wear any vestments, because, in the words of the interviewees, this is 'too ecclesiastical'. In summary, the results suggest that we can speak of a 'ceremonialisation' or 'cathedralisation' of choristers' dress, especially in contrast with what is usual at Protestant Sunday morning worship. It seems that tradition (in this case wearing specific dress) is freely used as a source: it is a game, and original meanings and functions are no longer valuable. If ministers are present, we observe that they are asked to dress casually to avoid appearing too ecclesiastical. What underlies the idea that singers wearing choir dress is not 'ecclesiastical', whereas if the minister wears

vestments it is 'too ecclesiastical'?[10] The analytical tool of denotational and connotational meaning helps to clarify this confusing complexity. Singers start to wear Anglican choir dress because, as they explain in the interviews, it connotes the high musical and ritual quality of Anglican choral evensong choirs. In contrast, the dress of the Reformed minister connotes Dutch Reformed services, with their focus on the spoken word, the minister's dominant role, and little or no attention paid to liturgical choral music and the use of symbols or ritual. Most of the choirs singing choral evensong want to mark a contrast with Reformed practice in the Netherlands.

An analysis of our fieldwork reveals three categories. The first, 'England as a model', underlines that dress at choral evensong in the Netherlands communicates a connection with the high musical-ritual quality of Anglican choirs. Copying the scarlet of the best choirs' dress marks a longing for the highest musical quality. When they wear such dress, choirs become part of what the ethnomusicologist John Blacking has called a 'sound group': 'a group of people who share a common musical language, together with common ideas about music and its uses' (Blacking 1995, 232). However, there are also contrasts with Anglican practice. Dutch choirs create their own shapes and colour combinations to mark their unicity. In these personal transformations of the Anglican style choirs mark their individuality and unicity. In our fieldwork we observe that signifier and signified are no longer connected by shared established codes. Choirs do not follow the authorised codes, but create new meanings by using a 'deliberately different appropriation' (Barnard 1996/2002, 76). However, the authorised code of Anglican cathedrals is not appropriated. For choir members choir dress brings a connotation of Anglican cathedral music. We can perhaps speak of a 'de-institutialisation' (Van der Tuin 2008, 11), in which people turn away from the (institutional) church and deal freely with its traditions (Van der Tuin 2011, 63). Dress is appropriated in different ways and new meanings are generated (Frijhoff 1997, 108). The contrast with the Anglican tradition is also noticeable, for example, in the new meanings ascribed to the cotta, which is worn for aesthetic or quasi-political reasons, or as a gender-marker. According to Van der Tuin 'the vocabulary – words, images, symbols, music – in which these meanings are expressed sometimes contains traditional language: which, used in new contexts, should be interpreted anew […]'

10 We supposed that the difference in the interpretation of 'ministry' between the Anglican Church and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands may have played a part, but surprisingly, this did not emerge from the fieldwork.

(Van der Tuin 2008, 21[11]). The dress code of the Anglican Church is transformed into a new code which can be seen as a form of bricolage indicating an 'unconventional combination of conventional topoi in a completely transformed context' (Barnard 2006, 75; see also Van der Sijde 1998, 56v). Bricolage is characteristic of post-modernity. 'Everybody picks from the separate systems what pleases him or her and makes his own religious system […] (Van der Tuin 2008, 15).

The remarkable combination of ecclesiastical dress worn by the choirs and the explicitly non-ecclesiastical dress of the ministers suggests what the French philosopher Marcel Gauchet called 'the religious after the religion' (Gauchet 1985, 200). There seems to be a deliberate decoupling of the institution and the experience of religiosity (Van der Tuin 2008, 15).

> Once disposed of its institutional ballast and individualized to a personal experience, religion returns in new forms. People are longing for meaningfulness, depth and interpretation. They are looking for something transcending (Van der Tuin 2008, 15).

Anthropologist Anton van Harskamp speaks of a 'new religious longing' and 'new religiosity' (Van Harskamp 2000, 48). In line with this Van de Donk and Jonkers mention that appearances of 'new religion' are not characterised by 'pressure from above' but rather offer 'non-compulsory choice options' (Van de Donk and Jonkers 2006, 14). The references to 'metamorphosis and transcendence' show that participants experience wearing Anglican-like dress at choral evensong as a transcendental connection, although this experience remains unarticulated.

Taken together, the fieldwork data reveal that dress at choral evensong in the Netherlands points to changing religiosity at two different levels. First, we observe a transformation of the way religion is expressed or ritualised in the context of Reformed Protestant churches in the Netherlands. The popularity of evensong suggests a longing for other forms of worship, with a focus on ceremony, ritualised behaviour, and Anglican-like vesture for the choristers. Second, we observe a mix of concert practices and Anglican-like rituals which our interviewees refer to as a new form of religiosity. In both practices the traditional dress of the Anglican Church is used, whether copied exactly or adapted.

11 Cited in Hoondert 2015.

A new phenomenon arises: choirs wear Anglican-like dress decoupled from the Anglican Church as they long for transcendental experiences, which they find in the musical-ritual form and high musical quality of choral evensong.

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Hurting the Qur'an – Suggestions Concerning the Psychological Infrastructure of Desecration

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Abstract
Recent years have witnessed several examples of desecrations of copies of the Qur'an as a display of non-Muslim hostility against Muslims. The present article attempts to answer a fundamental question relating to this phenomenon: how do desecrators know what acts directed at the Qur'an are likely to offend Muslims? The suggestion put forward is that desecration is an act that can be understood across cultural and religious boundaries because it is based on shared, intuitive knowledge of what the sacredness of an object entails. This knowledge, in turn, rests upon certain mental operations involved in the process of sacralisation: i.e. when things are 'set apart and forbidden'. When the mental processes of psychological essentialism and conceptual blending are combined, it results in a partial personification of the sacred object, providing inferences concerning which acts count as desecrations, i.e. acts that, had they been directed at a person, would cause harm, whether physical or psychological.

Keywords: *Desecration, Qur'an, sacralisation, psychological essentialism, conceptual blending*

In July 2010 Terry Jones, a pastor in the *Dove World Outreach Center* church in Gainesville, Florida announced a 'Burn the Qur'an day' as an event to commemorate the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11th September 2001. The actual burning, however, did not take place until March 2011. In an event at which the book was 'put on trial' with a prosecutor, a defence lawyer, and Jones himself as the judge, the Qur'an was sentenced to death and burned. The execution method was, according to Jones, decided by a poll on his Facebook page in which the options were burning, shredding, drowning, or death by firing squad (Banks 2011). As a direct response to the event, riots erupted in Afghanistan, resulting in the deaths of more than twenty people, among them seven UN personnel in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif (The Guardian 2011).

This incident is but one example among many in recent years of Qur'an desecrations performed by individuals or groups antagonistic towards Islam or Muslims. In this article I will present more. The purpose, however, is not to provide a descriptive inventory of contemporary Qur'an desecrations. The examples, which are limited, have largely been gathered from news reports and online sources. The collection process has not been systematic, because it is not the actual, individual instances of desecration that interest me, but the principles that govern them, i.e. what the common denominator is. The problem to be solved is one that, in all its simplicity, constitutes a genuine puzzle: how did Jones, and others like him whose aim it is to desecrate, know what to do? Desecrators can anticipate that Muslims who view a copy of the Qur'an, a *mushaf,* as a sacred object will be offended, sad, or angry in response to the varied actions taken. Acts of desecration constitute successful communication across cultural and religious boundaries that rests upon a pan-human capacity for 'cognitive empathy', i.e. the ability to simulate the mind of 'the other', at times on the basis of limited information, and the possibility to do this without necessarily simulating the emotions of that 'other' (i.e. affective, or emotional, empathy) (see e.g. Bloom 2014; Shamay-Tsoory, et al. 2009). It is precisely this capacity for emotionally detached empathy that makes lying and deception possible, as part of a 'Machiavellian intelligence' (de Waal & Morris 1982).

In what follows I argue that the cognitive empathy underlying Qur'an desecration rests on a shared understanding of the sender (the desecrator) and the (perceived or real) receiver (the person experiencing the desecration as a desecration). This understanding can transcend cultural boundaries because it is built on a set of intuitive or implicit beliefs that are if not universal, then at least cross-culturally widespread, and probably unique, to humans as a species. These beliefs concern sacred objects defined broadly as objects that are, in the words of sociologist Emile Durkheim, 'set apart and forbidden' (Durkheim 1965 [1915], 62). In focusing on unconscious, implicit, and intuitive processes, this article contributes to a broader academic discussion concerning the development of theories for understanding and explaining sacralisation processes and their consequences for beliefs and behaviour within the framework of the cognitive science of religion (Anttonen 2000).

As I describe different forms of Qur'an desecration below, most readers will have no problem in understanding *that* these acts will be offensive to anyone who holds the Qur'an to be sacred. Hence, it may be argued that there is really no need for further explanation. The question 'how do desecrators know what to do?' can be answered merely by stating the seemingly

obvious: it is self-evident to them – it is 'just common sense'. This answer, however, points directly to the problem: why does this, or anything, appear self-evident or the object of common sense? As linguist George Lakoff writes:

> Whenever a cognitive scientist hears the words 'It's just common sense,' his [sic!] ears perk up and he knows there's something to be studied in detail and depth – something that needs to be understood. Nothing is 'just' common sense. Common sense has a conceptual structure that is usually unconscious. That is what makes it 'common sense' (Lakoff 2002, 4).

Hence, although it is easy enough to understand that certain actions directed at a copy of the Qur'an constitute desecrations while others do not, it may be less obvious why this is so easy to understand. The understanding is itself a consequence of unconscious mental processes, probably unique to humans compared with other animals, that can be further explored and outlined. It is to these processes I now turn.

Sacredness and sacralisation

In the context of the academic study of religions 'the sacred', as a general concept, has often been posited in a way that is both elusive and vague, at times as a synonym for 'religion', at times as a transcendental force with a causal effect on diverse beliefs and practices (as consequences of experiences of 'the sacred', whatever that could possibly be). I will not venture into this field,[1] but limit myself to 'sacred' as an adjective (rather than a noun with an unclear referent) (Dawes 2016, 6; Righetti 2014). Here, I side with sociologist Matthew Evans in focusing on the 'set-apart sacred' (Evans 2003). This is in line with the sociologically oriented tradition, associated with Durkheim (Paden 1991), in which sacralisation of objects, places, persons, and even ideas is a commonplace phenomenon in human culture, often analysed under the umbrella concept of religion, but in no way restricted to that context.[2] Evans:

1 For different aspects of traditional references to 'the sacred' in the study of religion among scholars such as Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade see contribution to the volume *The Sacred and its Scholars (*Idinopulos and Yonan 1996). For short overviews see also Evans 2003, 36–38 and Dawes 2016, 4–5.

2 Dawes (2016) proposes that the 'attitude of regarding certain objects, beliefs, practices, institutions, places, or persons as sacred' constitutes a feature that appears to be shared by all religions (although not unique to them) (Dawes 2016, 3). I make no such claims to universality here, but find Dawes's suggestion indicates a worthwhile topic to pursue.

> think[s] the feature common to the set-apart sacred is its valuation beyond utility, and that this mental setting-apart of certain things, sometimes accompanied by a literal setting apart, is largely based on non-rational (which is not necessarily to say *ir*rational) features, like their emotional value (Evans 2003, 39).

Several important aspects are highlighted in this quotation. The act of 'setting apart' is mental, i.e. the result of a process taking place in the minds of human beings. Sacredness is not an inherent quality of the object, it is ascribed (Dawes 2016, 6). There are no sacred objects without human beings considering objects to be sacred. The setting-apart process, however, is not in itself a sufficient condition for an object to be conceived of as sacred, even if it is a necessary condition. The object set apart must also be an object of 'valuation', i.e. must be invested with a value that separates it from other objects, particularly objects that are conceived of as belonging to the same class. The setting-apart aspect is hence relational. A sacred stone is sacred in relation to non-sacred stones. A sacred book (whether 'book' here denotes an individual copy or, as in the case of the Qur'an, a particular sub-class of books) is sacred in relation to non-sacred books. In line with this reasoning religious studies scholar Ann Taves has suggested a dual process involved in sacralisation with two components: (1) singularisation; and (2) valuation (Taves 2013, 143f., 152–4). A set of behavioural patterns follows with the latter process.

Both Evans and Taves regard sacralisation processes as recurring and general features of human culture, observable around the world and throughout history. Occasionally, whatever becomes sacralised is connected to beliefs in superhuman agents (e.g. gods, spirits, ancestors), but such a connection is by no means necessary.

As stated above, it is the general, cross-cultural occurrence of sacralisation processes that constitutes the basis for the argument in this article. Both Qur'an desecrators and their potentially offended audience implicitly know what sacralisation entails and demands as a consequence of singularisation and valuation. However, as a further elaboration on these two aspects of sacralisation, I want to suggest that they not only occur alongside one another but that they are interconnected, and furthermore, that the nature of this interconnection can explain intuitive conclusions on which acts towards a sacred object are appropriate (prescribed) or inappropriate (forbidden). To substantiate this, I turn to two areas of research on the human mind and how it works: the theories of psychological essentialism and of conceptual blending.

Same, same but different: singularisation on the basis of invisible 'innards'

The process of setting apart, or singularisation, becomes most conspicuous when a sacred object is perceptually indistinguishable from non-sacred objects. An example from the religious domain might be the holy water used in the Catholic mass and ordinary tap water. A chemical analysis would show that there is, indeed, no discernible difference between the two. Still, believing Catholics will insist that there is. Another example is that while Elvis Presley's dirty underpants might be sold at auction for £5,000, I would probably have to pay someone to accept mine. A third example is the curious fact that while an original piece of art may be worth a fortune, a perceptually identical copy (or forgery) is almost worthless. In all cases the valuation of the 'special' object rests purely on the human imagination that there is an invisible and undetectable 'something' residing in it that makes it special and different. The three examples given illustrate three commonplace ways in which this something can be perceived as entering into the object: through ritual performance, physical contact (contagion), and origin.

The human ability, or rather proclivity, to categorise objects with reference to invisible inner properties has been well researched since the 1980s, and dubbed 'psychological essentialism' (Medin & Ortony 1989). Today, the evidence is quite robust that the ability/proclivity is widespread, if not universal, and emerges early in children's development (see e.g. Gelman 2003; Haslam, et al. 2013; Meyer, et al. 2013; Sousa, et al. 2002). It is important to stress that essentialism here is treated as a *psychological* phenomenon – as a way of thinking to be analysed as such. Whether there are such things as essences does not enter the analysis (Gelman 2003, 8–11).[3]

In the biological domain humans use essentialist reasoning in categorising plants and animals, and in the social domain it is used to categorise human beings into groups of individuals sharing 'something'. Such perceptually diverse specimens of the category 'dog' as the Great Dane and the Chihuahua both belong to the same category, because they are conceived of as sharing 'dog-ness'. Furthermore, a Great Dane that having undergone extensive plastic surgery perceptually resembles a small horse is still conceived of as a dog, because its inner 'dog-ness' is untouched by the outer transformation. The shared 'something', the essence, need not be

3 This is important to stress since essentialist thinking and charges against persons for being 'essentialists' (which is in itself, curiously enough, an ascription of essence) are used today in academia with defamatory motives. Theories on psychological essentialism do not consider whether this way of thinking is preferable, but merely note that it is commonplace, perhaps inevitable, and comes naturally to humans.

specified. Its function is to serve as a placeholder in a chain of reasoning, a basis for inferences concerning individual examples viewed as belonging to a particular category. In these two cases of essentialism from the biological and social domains the notion of an invisible essence serves to 'explain' perceived commonalities within a category, and differences between categories. Hence, a person's actions may be 'explained' by the fact that she belongs to a particular social category – woman, white, middle-class, heterosexual, Swedish, etc. – and shares the 'essence' all members of that category share, but which is itself not further specified.

However, there is experimental evidence for another form of essentialist thinking that is more relevant for the issue at hand. It is a form of essentialism that is used not in categorisation, but to separate individual exemplars *within* a category, i.e. to ascribe uniqueness or, to use Taves's terminology, for 'singularisation'. Psychologist Paul Bloom (2010) has noted that this is most marked in separating individual humans from one another within the social domain. The capacity to separate individuals from one another, and imagine that they remain the same over time and despite changes in appearance, is central to our advanced social cognition and according to many scholars is one of the major reasons behind the species' evolutionary success (see e.g. Dunbar, et al. 2007, 110– 27).[4] We construe individuals as unique and stable over time, because they are perceived as carrying 'within' them what Bloom terms a unique 'life force essence' (Bloom 2010, 20). Hence, Anna may appear and behave quite differently when she is three months old, thirty years old, or a hundred and three. The cells in her body have been replaced many times over. However, we conceive of her as being the same person throughout her life. At the same time, she is different from and unique in relation to other persons, even to her identical twin, Malin, with whom she shares her genes. The stable and unique, but invisible, essence may, on the level of reflective thought, be described differently in different cultural settings (Roazzi, et al. 2013). A few examples taken from English are the words 'soul', 'identity', and 'character'.[5] I want to suggest a possible connection between how humans conceptualise other humans as unique individuals and how we conceptualise

4 For a recent suggestion on the evolutionary origins of psychological essentialism as connected to the ability to mentally separate individual exemplars see Rakoczy and Cacchione 2014.

5 This everyday dualism in human thought is so 'self-evident' that humans seldom reflect on its nature as a construction of the mind (see e.g. Bloom 2004, 189–208; Bloom 2007; Fiala, et al. 2011). Certain psychological conditions caused by damage to particular areas of the brain, however, make this evident. One example is the Capgras delusion, where those affected are under the delusion that 'significant others have been replaced by impostors, robots or aliens', remaining perceptually the same, but different on the 'inside' (Ellis & Lewis 2001, 149).

sacred objects. I am not alone in this. Psychologist Susan Gelman, who is one of the most well-known researchers in the field of psychological essentialism, has suggested that the form of essentialism sometimes applied to artefacts (original paintings, celebrity memorabilia, relics, etc.) 'may reflect the important task of tracking individuals through time and space' (Gelman 2013, 450). How then is the connection to be understood?

Sacredness – valuation through the blending of object and person

The theory of conceptual blending was introduced by cognitive linguists Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier in their book *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (Fauconnier & Turner 2002). Recently, Turner has also presented the theory in the book *The Origin of Ideas: Blending, Creativity, and the Human Spark* (2014). While the details of the theory are highly complex, the basic idea is straightforward. When humans construct, or grasp, new concepts, we blend concepts already established in our minds. The blending process, which is usually unconscious, involves a selective transfer of properties from what could be termed two 'parent' concepts (technical term: 'input spaces') into the new concept: the blend. An example would be the mythological concept of a centaur, which is a blend of a human being, or rather a person, and a horse. The blend (the centaur) acquires some of its properties from the person concept, and some from the horse concept. It is, however, something altogether new: a 'horse-person'. However, the latter part of this concept is itself a blend, perhaps less obviously so. Turner suggests that the concept of a person is a blend of the perception of the bodily form of another human being and the concept of 'I' as an entity with unique beliefs, thoughts, feelings, values, aspirations, etc. The blend is a concept of another person with a mind, similar but never identical to my own (Turner 2014, 31–56).

A key assumption in blending theory is that the transfer of properties from source concepts to the blend is selective. What is transferred from the parent concept of 'I' into the blend of 'a person' is the phenomenological experience of having an 'inner world' (Gärdenfors 2004, 238). This inner world of another person is itself invisible: it cannot be perceived, only imagined. Yet it is the imagination of an inner world that in my understanding makes that person unique as an individual, and the inner world, at least in part, corresponds with Bloom's 'life force essence'.

What I wish to hypothesise here is that when we set objects apart as unique in the process of sacralisation, we blend. The parent concepts in the

blending process are (1) the object, and (2) the concept of a person. The blend receives its outer appearance from the former and the notion of individual uniqueness (separateness), due to an invisible essence, from the latter. Sacralisation is thus, in a sense, a personification that imbues the object with a unique identity, setting it apart from other objects, just as an individual human being is set apart from other human beings. To be able to separate objects from one another, we implicitly 'borrow' the notion of a unique, but invisible, essence from the concept of a person. However, something else is borrowed in the transfer process, perhaps as a by-product, which may account for the second aspect in Durkheim's definition of sacred things, i.e. that they are 'forbidden'.

The 'forbidden' aspect of the sacred object relates to notions of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour directed at those objects. Based on the reasoning above, a hypothetical suggestion is that what comes to be seen as appropriate and inappropriate behaviour towards the sacred object is a direct result of the blending process. It is a matter of what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behaviour towards a person.

Answering the question

Here, then, we have a possible answer to the central question of this article. Desecrators know what to do to a *mushaf* because, in understanding that Muslims consider the Qur'an to be sacred, they also intuitively know that Muslims view, also intuitively, the Qur'an to be, in a sense, a (valued) person. Consequently, believing Muslims will construe any act that is *harmful* to a person as inappropriate, or rather forbidden, if directed at a copy of the Qur'an as a sacred object.

However, there are some problems with this suggestion, and this prompts a small theoretical modification. Strictly speaking there is no unique Qur'an considered sacred. Copies of the Qur'an, *mushafs,* are not objects set apart because of their individual uniqueness. Rather, they are special because they belong to a *particular category* of books. Hence, if there is a conceptual blend underlying the sacredness of the Qur'an, that blend cannot be that of an *individual* person and an *individual* book. It must be that of an *individual person belonging to a particular group*, and an *individual book belonging to a particular category of books*. This suggests turning to psychological essentialism in the social domain: groups and group belonging. While members of a social group are not identical, the intuitive bias is that they all partake in something 'shared', albeit to different degrees. This shared 'stuff' unites

them in a group and at the same time forms part of their individual essences, influencing but not totally substituting them (Gelman & Hirschfeld, 1999, 409). A secular counterpart here would be the national flag as sacred object (i.e. the idea that it should be treated in a certain manner). Every flag is a unique object, but it shares a 'national-flag-ness', different from other national flags, and from other pieces of cloth, which unites them and makes them what they are, i.e. sacred objects.[6]

Before presenting examples to substantiate the claim that Qur'an desecrators know what to do because of an implicit and intuitive appreciation of what sacralisation entails, an alternative explanation will be suggested, and discarded.

It might be that would-be Qur'an desecrators have gathered a vast knowledge of how the proper and improper handling of *masahif* (plural of *mushaf*) have been discussed throughout Islamic history, and use that knowledge to come up with appropriate forms of desecration. This would be an alternative answer to the question of how desecrators know what to do. For several reasons, however, I deem this alternative unlikely.

Muslim traditions concerning how *masahif* should be handled – sometimes referred to as *adab al-Qur'an* or 'etiquette with the Qur'an' (al-Nawawi 2003) – contain discussions, for example, of whether copies of the Qur'an should be bought and sold, the correct ways to show respect for the book (e.g. kissing it, placing it on top of other books, embellishing it, and protecting it), and how to handle a copy no longer fit for use, i.e. to respectfully bury it (see e.g. Motzki 2001; Suit 2013; Svensson 2010). Most of these instructions are in line with the suggestion of sacralisation as personification: copies of the book should be respected, venerated, and protected, often in manners analogous to how (valued) human beings are to be respected, venerated, and protected.[7]

There are (perhaps obviously) no direct instructions in this tradition of 'etiquette with the Qur'an' on how to perform desecration. Desecrators might, however, draw useful conclusions from cautionary instructions on *how not to* handle *masahif.* These include using a copy of the Qur'an as

6 I have dealt with this issue at length in a forthcoming article on Muslim beliefs and practices relating to the Qur'an as a sacred object: see Svensson, forthcoming.

7 This is not a feature unique to Islamic tradition. There are similar normative demands on how sacred texts should be handled, as well as folk practices, within other religious traditions. For two collections of articles on the topic see Myrvold 2010; Watts 2013a. In the introductory chapter to the former, the Study of Religions scholar James Watts also clearly identifies as a recurring feature that sacred texts appear to be imbued with 'personas more like people than like books' (Watts 2013b, 25).

a pillow, letting infidels touch it, licking one's fingers while reading it to facilitate the turning of pages, touching it while in a state of ritual impurity, and placing it under other books in a bookshelf. In the examples I have gathered (to be discussed below) there is little evidence that such information has been used. There are, for example, no images of desecrators resting their heads on copies of the Qur'an. Nor are there any videos on YouTube in which people sift through the pages of a *mushaf* while licking their fingers. Put differently: *adab al-Qur'an* as a tradition is of little use in predicting the forms of desecration that occur. The question, then, is if my suggestion above fares any better. I believe it does.

In the following I will introduce a basic distinction between two categories of Qur'an desecration, based on the theoretical outline above. My claim is that these two categories cover most if not all cases of desecration that are easily identified as such. I will also suggest a third category of actions 'harmful' to the *mushaf* which are perhaps seldom viewed as desecrations, but nevertheless fit within the general framework.

Harm through physical violence

In a video published on YouTube on 16th September 2015, entitled 'Christians ripping up Koran at university', a man stands before a crowd, allegedly at an American university campus. He gives a speech on Muhammad, Islam, and the Qur'an. The crowd challenges him, and as the debate gets increasingly heated, the speaker gets increasingly agitated. Eventually, he starts tearing pages out of the copy of the Qur'an that he is carrying, provoking a violent reaction among the crowd and forcing police officers present to intervene.[8] Another YouTube video, featured on *The Deen Show*, an American Muslim web-based talk show, shows a man, also on a campus, ripping pages from a copy of the Qur'an, putting them in his mouth, and chewing them.[9] The footage becomes the starting point for the show's topic of the day: 'How do we respond when someone tries to provoke us?' In another video a man, whose face is not shown, films himself performing a series of acts directed at a *mushaf*, including throwing stones at it, stabbing it with a knife, kicking it, stepping on it, throwing it to the floor, and tossing it into a lake.[10]

All the examples (tearing apart, biting, stabbing, throwing to the floor, etc.) are acts that would cause pain, physical injury, or perhaps even death

8 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgkBLitaVpM>, accessed December 10, 2017.
9 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjbwSDYPEnw>, accessed December 10, 2017.
10 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjobVoYeghM>, accessed December 10, 2017.

to a human being. So would all the execution methods that Terry Jones let his audience vote for on Facebook. One might add here incidents reported from prison camps run by the US military in Guantanamo Bay and Iraq, where prison guards have allegedly used copies of the Qur'an for target practice.[11] Whether these incidents have actually occurred is of little consequence for the argument. Reports still construe the incidents, real or not, as desecrations.

The favoured desecration method within this category appears to be burning. Qur'an burning, or accusations of Qur'an burning, has been a feature of communal violence in India (DH News Service, 2016). On YouTube there are several homemade movies featuring the burning of pages from or whole copies of the Qur'an, as well as images of half-burned *masahif.*

Interestingly, the burning, drowning, and shredding which feature in Jones's list above would not necessarily occur if desecrators were inspired by Muslim religious discourses on how to treat (or not) a *mushaf.* All actually appear in discussions on how to respectfully dispose of copies of the text, or excerpts therefrom, no longer fit for use. Immersing the Qur'an in water, preferably running water, and thereby erasing its text is considered a respectful alternative to burying it (or just storing it in a safe place). Burning is more controversial. Those who accept it cite the example of the third caliph 'Uthman, who, according to legend, collected what became the authoritative version of the text and burned all other versions. Those opposing burning as a method (or reserving it as a 'last resort') see burning as an inherently hostile act or associate fire with hell and the devil (Iblis). Similar reservations are expressed against using a paper shredder to dispose of the text, a practice nevertheless acceptable to some (Svensson 2010).

Nevertheless, believing Muslims have reacted strongly against the burning and shredding (tearing apart) of *musahif,* and would probably also do so to attempts at 'drowning'. The reason is the one stated above. It is not only the *acts* in themselves that count, but the *perceived intent* of the perpetrators, and this intent is to perform an action that would cause harm (pain, physical injury, or death) if the object in question were a person. It should be noted that when Muslim scholars accept the burning, immersing in water, and shredding of *masahif,* it concerns copies of the Qur'an no longer fit for use, i.e. they are metaphorically 'dead' persons.

11 For examples of desecration of *masahif* as a means of psychological torture see Peppard 2008.

Harm through defilement

The first category of acts, therefore, consists of those that if directed at a person would cause pain, physical injury, or death. The second category covers acts that may be expected to cause distress and psychological pain. They are based on the intuitive understanding of how persons react emotionally and behaviourally to what they identify as potential sources of harmful contagion: with disgust, anxiety, and physical withdrawal.

Some research has been undertaken on the human 'psychology of disgust' concerning what human beings in general find disgusting and the behaviour that the emotion of disgust prompts (for an overview see Kelly 2011). Cross-cultural studies have revealed that although there is a great variety in what human beings around the world (and throughout history) find disgusting, some elicitors appear more widespread than others. Among these are bodily waste products such as urine, faeces, sweat, and sexual fluids. Rotting food and decaying flesh are likewise widely viewed as disgusting. Signs of infection, such as festering wounds, also appear to provoke similar emotions among people around the world (see e.g. Curtis & Biran 2001; Rozin, et al. 2008).

Just as in the case of pain, injury, and death, one may expect that widely shared intuitive notions of what elicits disgust may serve as a basis for desecration. A person who is forced into contact with what she finds disgusting may be assumed to experience psychological distress and anxiety. Consequently, I suggest the bringing of copies of the Qur'an into contact with 'dirt' constitutes the second category of acts of desecration.

There are many examples. They feature individuals urinating, defecating, and spitting on the Qur'an.[12] The debut album of the black metal band *Taghut* (a Qur'anic term denoting idolatry) was called *Ejaculate upon the Holy Qur'an*, and the video footage accompanying the YouTube version of the title track contains explicit graphics representing the act.[13] Images are posted online showing copies of the Qur'an thrown in a garbage bin, smeared with rotting food, or being flushed down the toilet.[14] These examples all constitute uses of potentially universal disgust elicitors.

There are, however, examples where desecrators appear to make use of some basic information on Muslim culture-specific objects of disgust. In a post on the blog *Pharyngula,* for example, the self-styled PZ Meyers

12 See e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1P1hi2WuZIc>, accessed 22 December, 2016.
13 See e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0L2yyHEni0>, accessed 22 December, 2016.
14 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7W3iTKKAESE>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zr1tTcRAVgw>, accessed 22 December, 2016.

suggests a form of desecration that consists of making a cover for a copy of the Qur'an, and bookmarks, from slices of bacon.[15] This is probably based on an awareness that Muslims (persons) avoid eating pork and find pork (and pigs) disgusting. Images of this form of desecration are available on the internet, allegedly used in anti-Muslim activism among Buddhist militants in Myanmar.[16] Another example of more culture-specific knowledge being useful for desecration is the allegation that US soldiers in Iraq have made dogs pick up copies of the Qur'an (Peppard 2008), which is based on an awareness that contact with dogs, or rather dogs' saliva, renders a *person* ritually unclean, and is generally avoided.

Harm through verbal abuse and disrespect

The two forms of desecration so far discussed cover most, if not all, cases that may easily be conceived as such both by desecrators and those who are the (secondary) targets of desecration, i.e. those who can be expected to be offended by them. They are conspicuous because they involve direct physical action. If, however, the general explanation given here is correct, then a third category is also conceivable. A person may be harmed by direct violence, causing pain or death, or by being forced into contact with disgusting objects or substances, causing anxiety and distress. But a person may also be, at least metaphorically, 'hurt' by attacks on her self-esteem or social reputation making her the target of contempt, ridicule, verbal abuse, humiliation, or attacks on her character. The act of spitting on the Qur'an may be classified either as an example of a display of contempt or wilful defilement. This leads to the suggestion that the instances of verbal, alongside physical, 'Qur'an bashing' in anti-Muslim activism are structurally analogous to the verbal 'bashing' of persons.

The expression 'Fuck the Qur'an/Quran/Koran' received over 115,000 hits in a Google search on 12th December 2016. It is a phrase that also accompanies forms of physical desecration, for example, being scribbled on the front cover of a *mushaf* that is then defiled or burnt. If directed at a person, expressions such as 'Fuck you!', 'Fuck her', etc. are means of expressing hostility and contempt. Apart from such direct expressions of contempt and hostility, there are also examples where the Qur'an is ill-spoken of in a manner analogous to how human beings may be defamed. In the above

15 <http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2007/07/29/desecration-its-a-fun-hobby/>, accessed 22 December, 2016.

16 <https://twitter.com/nslwin/status/330397662635499520>, accessed 22 December, 2016.

mentioned YouTube video featuring the public tearing of Qur'an pages the desecrator also engages in verbal abuse, screaming, 'The Qur'an is evil […] I hate the Qur'an'. A Google search on the first phrase produced 133,000 hits on 12th December 2016. The choice of wording is important, since it reflects personification. There are similar statements describing the Qur'an in negative terms akin to how a person might be described, as a coherent whole with a worldview, mind, and attitude. These include describing the Qur'an as confused, violent, or misogynistic. Of course, none of these statements could apply to the Qur'an in a literal sense, since they all imply the existence of a mind. They are metaphorical, but the metaphors we use are, if one follows Lakoff and his fellow linguist Mark Johnson, important indicators of our intuitive thinking (Lakoff & Johnson 2003). I do not claim that any negative statement about the Qur'an proffered in this manner constitutes an intentional desecration. The claim is only that this kind of defamation of the Qur'an *might* be used in attacks on Muslims in a manner similar to the forms of desecration described above, and for the same basic reason.

Finally, another much less conspicuous form of desecration can be conceived of in line with the theoretical model suggested. In an article on (unintentional) blasphemy from 2008 the philosopher Elizabeth Burns Coleman highlights the fact that someone who holds an object sacred may react negatively to others merely 'failing to respond' appropriately to its presence or giving the object its due treatment. To illustrate this, she uses a simile that is highly relevant for the current article's overall argument: 'After a musical performance, it is conventionally accepted that clapping hands is an appropriate form of acknowledgment of the performers' skill. Withholding this gesture, or clapping weakly, is a way of expressing dislike. For the performer, a lack of applause must be devastating' (Burns Coleman 2008, 47).[17] Disrespect, expressed dislike, or merely a lack of recognition hurt a *person,* and consequently, in line with the overall argument, when such acts are directed against a sacred object, they constitute desecration. In the context of Qur'an desecration a conceivable hostile act falling into this category would be presenting or treating the Qur'an as inferior to other sacred texts, as devoid of any sacred value, or merely as a book like any other.

17 I wish to express my gratitude to the anonymous reviewer who pointed me to Burns's article.

Additional support for the hypothesis and consideration of alternatives[18]

The current article's admittedly hypothetical answer to the basic question posed rests heavily on the theory of conceptual blending. More specifically, it rests on the assumption of a person-object blend being active in sacralisation processes and affecting the inferences drawn and related behavioural patterns. The argument would be strengthened if it could be shown that other, more obvious person-object blends have corresponding effects.

In *The Origin of Ideas*, Mark Turner describes 'representation' as a 'familiar pattern of blending […] used widely in art and in everyday life' (Turner 2014, 147). A photograph and a person are two distinct material objects. However, because of our blending capacity, humans can appreciate the concept of a 'photograph of a person', where the two material objects are blended to form a representation. More relevant, the way the representation is formed (blending) influences how humans intuitively conceptualise and relate to it. Turner writes: 'We can talk "to the picture" […] People confess, apologize or propose to pictures, upbraid and accuse pictures, insult pictures. They feel ashamed or proud when a "picture" looks at them. They throw darts at pictures' (Turner 2014, 148). We can add other things humans do to pictures (or other forms of representation, such as paintings, dolls, or statues) of others: burning them, stabbing them, tearing them apart, urinating on them. These are all recurring acts in the above examples of desecration.

However, merely searching for support for the suggested explanation is not enough. Alternative explanations must be considered and evaluated. I have already claimed that it is unlikely that desecrators have been directly inspired by the Islamic tradition of *adab al-qur'an*, but there are other 'cultural' explanations to consider. One concerns the specific practice of Qur'an burning. It may be argued that this is a direct consequence of a culturally specific 'Western' tradition of displaying contempt for and political opposition to a particular group or ideology. The prototypical precedent is organised book burning in Nazi Germany. Indeed, this might form part of an explanation if it is shown that burning is particularly commonplace among desecrators in Europe and the United States. However, a culture-specific tradition of book burning fails to explain its occurrence outside the culture for which it is assumed to be specific (e.g. in India), why it is apparently so easily understood outside that context (by Afghan protesters against Jones's Qur'an burning),

18 This section is the result of two anonymous reviewers' critical comments on the original article draft, for which comments I am grateful.

or why some Muslim scholars have historically expressed reservations about burning 'dead' Qur'ans. Most importantly, however, such an explanation does not explain the other forms of desecration outlined above.

Another 'cultural' explanation might postulate a common understanding of sacred scriptures, and how one should relate to them, among those culturally influenced by the 'religions of the Book', i.e. Judaism (or rather the religion of the Old Testament) and its 'offspring' in the forms of Christianity and Islam. Notwithstanding the problematic empirical fact that desecrations of the Qur'an also occur in Hindu and Buddhist contexts, one may, for the sake of argument, compare this explanation with the one proposed here purely on the grounds of parsimony and scope.

An explanation based on tradition would suggest that desecrators, in the course of their lives, have internalised information on suitable forms of desecration they have received from others (parents, teachers, peers etc) directly or indirectly (through observation or instruction, or through books or other media). From this they have formed mental models – i.e. conceptions or beliefs – that determine their actions when they desecrate. It appears unlikely, not least considering the innovation one finds in desecration practices, that every such practice corresponds to a particular mental model (e.g. one of ejaculating on the Qur'an and another of stabbing it). Rather, one would assume a more limited set of culturally transmitted generalised mental models, or 'schemata', of what constitutes desecration, schemata from which inferences can be drawn in imagining forms of desecration, even innovative ones. These schemata may be imagined to correspond roughly with the categories outlined above: violence, defilement, defamation, and, possibly, disrespect. They would have to be internalised separately, since there is no intrinsic connection between, for example, a violent act against the scripture and its defilement.

The current article, then, suggests that these separate schemata may be substituted for a single one, which, incidentally, also explains non-hostile practices directed at the scripture: the scripture is a (valued) person. Inappropriate and appropriate behaviour are then inferred from general schemata for interpersonal relations, ethics, and etiquette in the social domain that can be independently assessed, and have probably been in place long before even the invention of script itself.

Although there is therefore little need to assume that desecrators have gone through a culturally informed learning process specific to the issue of how to handle, or not handle, sacred scriptures, it is still possible that some have. The explanatory framework suggested here does not rule out

the existence, and possible influence, of long-established cultural schemata of the dos and don'ts related to sacred scriptures. On the contrary, it may explain how such schemata came into being, the forms they have taken, and how they became culturally established in the first place.

Conclusions

This article has attempted to answer one question: how do Qur'an desecrators know what to do? I have argued that the explanatory model proposed for desecration is more parsimonious and has a wider explanatory scope than alternative models. In conclusion I would also claim that it has the additional value of being testable, or at least that it is possible to pinpoint the kind of empirical work that can be done to test it.

A more thorough exploration of historical and contemporary instances of Qur'an desecration than the one presented here is needed to determine whether they fit within the general exploratory framework. Are they all actions that if performed on a person would cause harm, physically or psychologically, including anxiety and distress? If not, this would pose a challenge to the model. It may also be tested because it generates predictions. There will be actions that I have yet to encounter which, given the general framework, may be construed by most onlookers as Qur'an desecrations: for example, running over a copy of the Qur'an with a car (violence), calling the Qur'an sexually perverse (defamation), or using pages from the Qur'an for blowing one's nose (defilement). I stress again: the problem is not to understand *that* desecrators and believing Muslims alike construe such actions as desecrations, but to understand *why* they do it, beyond stating that it is self-evident or 'common sense'. One may also assume that the *degree* of harm that an action performed on a person is perceived to cause correlates with the degree to which the same action directed at the Qur'an is considered a desecration. For example, hitting a copy of the Qur'an with a hammer would probably be construed as a more severe act of desecration than slapping it with an open hand.

This article's focus has been on forms of Qur'an desecration, but the explanatory model is of potentially wider significance, because it rests on assumptions of a conceptualisation process related to sacred objects that is generally human. This suggests that similar, if not identical, patterns identified in Qur'an desecration will be found in relation to the desecration of any object 'set apart and forbidden'. Whether there is empirical support for this is a question for future research.

This article has not covered the question *why* humans tend to sacralise their surroundings (material objects or places), either individually or collectively. The theoretical model suggested has no direct impact on theories of the social or political roles of sacralisation or desecration, e.g. as a social glue, as a means for ordering the world, or as an expression for, and part of, social conflict,[19] although it may provide insight into the psychological underpinnings of such potential roles, and in consequence a firmer theoretical basis for them.

* * *

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19 For an overview of current (2000-2010) theoretical work on the social roles of the sacred see Righetti 2014.

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Peace Agreements through Rituals in Areas of Confrontation in the Viking Age[1]

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss peace agreements and rituals from the perspective of the history of religions. Hostages, fosterages, intermarriages, and other ritual activities were associated with peacemaking during the Viking Age. These ritual activities will be discussed in relation to a proposed conflict and consensus model on the macro and micro levels, with examples from England and Iceland. The examples include the treaties between the Viking ruler Guthrum and Alfred the Great in the 880s as well as conflicts and agreements in the *Landnámabók* and the *Íslendingabók*, in addition to iconography (some archaeological objects) and place names. Through these examples I will present an analysis of peace agreements, or peacemakings, as mutual understandings, as well as power relations within a ritual framework. The agreements in the examples are also seen in relation to other societal activities and forces such as economy, politics, and law. The paper brings together a synthesis of previous research and new readings and interpretations of primary sources.

Keywords: *Peace processes, hostages, fosterages, intermarriages, Viking Age, conflicts, conflict solutions, rituals, Iceland, England*

What is a peace process? Peace processes have rarely been examined in Viking Age Studies. Some medieval historians, however, have focused on peace, or the means to stabilise a society. The medieval historian Gerd Althoff has discussed the nature of vertical bonds between German nobles. Others, such as the historians Lars Hermanson and Jón Viðar Sigurðson, have stressed the importance of personal bonds, 'friendship', within Scandinavia and Iceland during the Viking Age and the Middle Ages (Jón Viðar

1 The article is an expansion and translation into English of some sections of Part I of my doctoral dissertation *Gísl: givande och tagande av gisslan som rituell handling i fredsprocesser under vikingatid och tidig medeltid* ('Gísl: Giving and Taking of Hostages as a Ritual Act in Peace Processes during the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages') (Bergen 2016). A shorter Swedish version has been published in *Krig och fred i vendel- och vikingatida traditioner* (Stockholm 2016).

Sigurðsson 1999; Althoff 2004; Hermanson 2009; Kershaw 2011). These studies describe the bonds that maintained a society from within, i.e. vertical bonds of friendship. Through such bonds a ruler could control a territory or subjugate the territory of a rival.

Within the history of religions – in addition to a focus on mythical narratives such as the one about the so-called *Fróða friðr* (Froði's peace) – analyses have been undertaken to determine the vertical bonds of 'friendship' in relation to the power ideology of rituals, or in relation to the cosmological superstructure of the Viking Age hall (e.g. Sundqvist 2002, 2016; Nordberg 2003). In my investigation I will focus on how counterparts, i.e. rulers and their subordinates, but also on how people at other societal levels communicated across territorial boundaries during peace processes. I will especially emphasise horizontal, rather than vertical, bonds, and suggest how rituals may have functioned as a communicative means to reach consensus between conflicting sides.

Territorial boundaries, consensus, and communicative acts

A conflict may occur either (a) across borders or (b) within a society. In this paper my concern is with the former, even if the distinction between the two may be difficult to discern. I define these boundaries as areas of confrontation.

If a border, or territorial boundary, was the subject of low-level warfare and temporary peace agreements, it must, contrary to the stable *Limes Germanicus* in the Roman Age, have been maintained by certain instrumental means. The historian Eva Österberg describes such means in an article about farmers and central powers in border societies (Småland) in early modern Sweden (Österberg 1989, 73ff.). Although Österberg describes conflicts within border societies in the 16th and 17th centuries controlled by a feudal state, she emphasises the mutual agreements in certain communicative spaces. She is influenced by the Marxist consensus concept, but uses it at the microlevel. The concept of consensus is understood as a solution of mutual agreements through a willingness to negotiate and communicate, where the level of interaction is important. Österberg's understanding of conflicts in border societies is crucial for my own understanding of peace processes across areas of conflict. Borders and boundaries are understood as areas which must be upheld communicatively. I define these borders

and boundaries as areas of confrontation.[2] These existed both within and outside a society. An example of an area of confrontation is the present-day Southern Göteborg Archipelago, which was the venue for various meetings involving trade, but also peace conferences, during the Viking Age and early Middle Ages.[3] The ideas of Österberg might therefore be used to analyse the conflict and consensus of border societies during the Viking Age (Österberg 1989, 74–6). In my opinion her principle of agreements can also be used in analysing Viking Age society. Österberg (1989, 73–6) understands consensus as a mutual will to reach an agreement, where the willingness to negotiate is determined by the level of interaction.

Certain communicative spaces existed in the areas of confrontation. Österberg mentions the assembly places in Småland, still referred to in the 16th century as the (Swe) *tingsplatser*, 'thingsteads', as such communicative spaces. It seems likely that ritual places, thingsteads, and other kinds of gathering place also had this communicative function in the areas of confrontation during the Viking Age. In recent years it has been suggested, for example by the Scandinavist Stefan Brink (1997, 403ff.), that both cult places and thingsteads were multifunctional (see also Sundqvist 2002, 101ff.), but this idea has been disputed.[4] I will not discuss this here, but would like to add another aspect: the mobile features of both cult places and thingsteads. The mobile cult place might be compared to the traditional practices of nomadic peoples such as the Sami, but also to lifestances and religions such as Islam.[5] A mobile feature of a cult place is mentioned in the *Landnámabók*, when stocks from high seats or coffins were brought from the homelands and discarded off the Icelandic coast.[6] This might be compared to Sundqvist, who claims that the cultic object *seiðhjallr* was used only in times of need and not permanently (Sundqvist 2012). The mobile feature could also be a

2 According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) 'conflict' means 'strike together', 'clash', 'contend' (OED 1989, 713). It may further be related to 'collision', 'to clash', 'to be at variance', 'to be incompatible' (OED 1989, 713). I will instead rely on the OED definition of 'confrontation' as 'the bringing of persons face to face; esp. for examination of the truth' (OED 1989, 719). It may also be related to 'the coming of countries, parties, etc., face to face: used to a state of political tension with or without actual conflict' (OED 1989, 719).

3 Several sources describe Brännö (*Brenneyja*) as an island where kings met every third year for festivities.

4 In a recent article the archaeologists Sarah Semple and Alexandra Sanmark (2008, 245–259) cast some doubt on the multifunctional thingstead. Andreas Nordberg (2011, 21) is cautious concerning the division between funeral place and cult place.

5 The *goahti* of the Sami could be multifunctional even if the construction differed depending on location. In Islam the prayer mat becomes a cultplace.

6 This custom can be intermingled with Christian imaginations, since Christians in the *Landámabók* practise the same custom.

characteristic of thingsteads. Torsten Blomkvist touches on the mobile feature of the thingstead in stressing the distinction between gatherings and places which were fixed in the landscape (T. Blomkvist 2002, 104ff.). The *Hirdskraa* (*Hirdloven* ca. 1273) describes how the spoils of war were divided: they tied a *vébǫnd* and shared the spoils within that area.[7] Saxo Grammaticus (Book 8) also mentions this custom. I will not further outline the mobility theme here. It seems, however, that times of mobility such as war, plague, or drought have had some impact on the nature of ceremonies and rituals, which may also have influenced where people met and how they interacted.

I will describe the functions of those communicative spaces and in areas of confrontation later in this paper. First, it is necessary to describe the society in which the communicative spaces and areas of confrontation occurred.

Development of society, spacial and temporal variation

Some historians have pointed out the importance of temporal variations and societal changes during the Viking Age and the early Middle Ages. Sverre Bagge (1986, 158ff.) and Nils Blomkvist (2005, 265), for example, have described a process of change for early medieval Norway and Gotland, respectively. Bagge portrays the pre-state society as decentralised, dominated by a ruler and competitive 'big men' (Sw *stormän*; OI *mikill maðr*), and a societal web which relied upon personal bondage. The state society was dominated by a king with a dependent aristocracy, ground rents, and a fixed societal hierarchy (Bagge 1986, 81ff., 92f., 97f.). The means to achieve this fundamental societal change can be seen in the directed mission in late Iron Age societies such as Saxony (9th century) and Norway (late 10th century). Archaeologists like Alexandra Sanmark (2004, 43–53, 91–106) have also drawn attention to this change.

By 'society' I mean a society in the early stages of state formation. It was characterised by periods of peace and violence. In this period there was also a horizontal division of what Brink (1997, 403f.), in a study of aspects of space and territoriality in Early Scandinavia, calls the administrative divisions of OSw *rike*, *land* and *hundrade*. It is my purpose to distinguish the personal bonds occurring among groups and individuals in and between such administrative divisions.

I will present a model as a tool for understanding the relationships between society, areas of confrontation, and communicative spaces. Its purpose

7 *Hirdloven* ch. 33: Um Þat skipti et guð getær sigr [oc] hærfong.

is to describe the dynamic processes before, during, and after a conflict. It is almost a truism among political scientists that a society reshapes after pandemics, war, natural disasters, or other crises. Historians like Thomas Lindqvist (1988, 32f.; cf. Stylegar 1999, 116f., 122ff.) have pointed out that the main reason for war or raids during the Viking Age was plunder. But crises such as drought or plague seem also to have caused migrations and, therefore, engagements (fig.1).

Interest – mutual or unilateral – in creating peace may arise during conflicts. In the Viking Age and early Middle Ages such interest was located in communicative spaces at various levels. There were at least three steps in these peace processes.

The first step was the establishing of social relations through ceremonies involving rituals like oaths, gift-giving, banquets and perhaps a decision to exchange hostages and tributes (ON *geld*), and to intermarry. These ritual performances often (but not always) occurred in communicative spaces such as things and halls. The symbolic expressions of these ritualistic performances varied and depended on the situation in which they occurred.

The next was the stabilising of economic relations, such as trade or cooperation between crafts, and access to resources. This might mean admission to fertile lands, pastures, woods, and coastal areas with harbours and fishing rights, etc. These trade cooperations or land sharings between opposing sides might be implemented through ritual.

Finally, the peace agreement needed to gain legal force. It might be written, but was in most cases oral. The agreement had then to be accepted by both sides.

These steps were not necessarily communicated at assembly places; they might also be communicated at market or other societal spaces which were sometimes temporary. These spaces were flexible in their function, but existed within the areas of confrontation. An important aspect was the societal consequences of the peace processes. Conflicts may have brought an influx of new ideas which might be seen within the society at the judicial, societal, and economic levels, and these were reflected in the sources that described the events.

The model may help us in our analysis of the opposing sides, their symbolic actions in peace agreements, and their adaption to the society after the conflict. Clearly, as a model it is merely a simplification of reality. It is also important to stress that peace processes during the Viking Age and early Middle Ages were never straightforward. If, for example, one side was stronger, the weaker had to submit. To underline these differing conditions

and to exemplify how the model can be used, I will briefly present two case studies. The first deals with the peace processes between Alfred the Great (OE *Ælfrēd*) and the Viking ruler Guthrum (OE *Guðrum*) in late 9th century England. The second addresses the various conflicts and solutions described in the Icelandic *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*. These include conflicts at both the macro and micro levels.

The peace processes between Alfred and Guthrum

In the second half of the 9th century Wessex (OE *Westseaxna rīce*) and East Anglia (*Ēast Engla Rīce*) were societies in the midst of dynamic changes which were sometimes at war but which also enjoyed periods of peace. After Alfred the Great, the Christian ruler of Wessex, had defeated Guthrum, the heathen ruler of East Anglia, at the Battle of Edington (OE *Eðandune*) in Wiltshire between 6th and 12th May 878 (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MS F, 71 f.). Christianity gradually gained a foothold in the Danelaw.[8] According to Alfred's biographer, Asser (d. 909), the Danes fled to a fortification after the battle. The Danes were besieged for two weeks, enduring much hardship, until they surrendered to Alfred. The peace treaty was much to Alfred's advantage. The written treaties cannot be trusted as neutral documents because they are written from the Anglo-Saxon perspective. However, from the perspective of power balance it is important to note that Guthrum was not completely defeated: he kept his lands and thus the ability to raise more troops. This process probably culminated with the death of Eric Haraldsson 'Bloodaxe' (OI *Eiríkr Haraldsson*) at York in 954.

Ritualistic performances

The rituals performed during the peace conferences between Alfred and Guthrum exemplify the activities in areas of confrontation that can be analysed with the help of the model. When the first peace conference was held after the Battle of Edington, the Danes sent hostages to the Anglo-Saxons to guarantee the peace. This is an example of the establishment of communication, as envoys were probably also sent.

Asser claims that the 'heathen' swore to leave Alfred's realm, which

8 The term 'Danelaw' (OE *Dena lagunema*) appears for the first time in the *Doom Book* (*Code of Alfred*) of 1008. The term was used more frequently in the 11th and 12th centuries, when the term denoted Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Leicstershire, Northamptonshire, and Buckinghamshire (Hadley 2000, 2 ff.).

implies that oaths were taken within a ritualistic framework (*The Medieval Life of King Alfred the Great*, 33; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MS F, 71 f.). From other Old English sources we know that these could be ring oaths for the heathens, and an example of what I refer to as the mobile feature of the ritual place, i.e. ritual objects were moved to a place in the area of confrontation which became a communicative space where the oaths were sworn (see Olsson 2012, 69). Guthrum, however, vowed to let himself be baptised.

Seven weeks later Guthrum arrived with a retinue of thirty men for a second peace conference at the royal estate of Wedmore. Guthrum was baptised and Alfred became Guthrum's godfather (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MS F, 72).

There is only a brief explanation of the rituals performed when Alfred and Guthrum negotiated and agreed on peace terms. These ceremonies and rituals do not seem to differ from those of peace processes among continental Germanic peoples (see Lundgreen 1995, 603–12; see also Olsson 2012). An understanding of something of its contextual character might be obtained from the theoretical perspective of performance suggested by the historian of religions Catherine Bell (1997, 159–62). Performance models suggest active rather than passive roles for ritual participants, who reinterpret symbols as they communicate them.[9] Cultural life has come to be seen as the dynamic generation and modification of symbolic systems, as something constantly being created by the community. In performances actions are important. Performances like the exchange of hostages were performances in the sense that they aimed to reach something beyond themselves.

As a description the treaty cannot be considered a neutral text recorded by only one side. Furthermore, it was perhaps written some decades after the peace building. The notion of an Alfred who took pity and chose a limited number of hostages may be a Christian interpolation. Despite this the treaty must be considered contemporary in its original setting. While the peace processes were very much on the terms of the Anglo-Saxons, one can assume that the symbolism in the account, as well as in reality, expressed the symbolism of the victor. However, the heathen Danes and the Christian

9 This type of symbolism can be seen in the history of Normandy by Dudo of Saint-Quentin from the late 10th century. The Duke of Normandy, Rollo, identified as Ganger Hrolf by the Icelanders, was required to kiss the foot of King Charles as a condition of the treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte in 911. Rollo refused to perform this act, and ordered one of his warriors to kneel in his place. The warrior took Charles's foot to his mouth and the king fell on his back (*Normandiets historie under de første Hertuger*, 62ff.). It must be added that Dudo of Saint-Quentin lived several decades after these events, so the story should be taken with a grain of salt.

Anglo-Saxons seem to have understood the rituals in a similar way, which indicates that the Danes shared similar knowledge of, and presumptions about, peace processes with the Anglo-Saxons. If we accept the accuracy of the gesture of limiting the number of hostages, it may have been a signal of goodwill in an early form of *chivalry*.

Oathtaking was involved in the peace processes, combined with the exchange of hostages; it constituted the essential element of rituals (see Kershaw 2011, 17). Formally, the oaths taken by both heathens and Christians were considered equal. There is therefore no clear label for the meeting grounds for these oathswearings and exchange of hostages, and this may confirm some of my assumptions of a temporary communicative space, or spaces, if the rituals were performed not only in one location but also on separate occasions. The Danes may have brought sacred objects such as rings and sworn on them.

This ritual probably gave the impression that Guthrum (OE *Guðrum*) had formally submitted to Alfred, and it might be understood as consonant with the ideology of a Christian ruler who had no rival but relied on his own *auctoritas*, 'authority'. However, Alfred also had to give up something to secure this agreement. According to Asser Alfred gave 'many fine houses', probably estates, to Guthrum (*The Medieval Life of King Alfred the Great*, ch. 35; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MS F, 72).

Guthrum may have seen Alfred as an ally. East Anglia was hardly a unified realm, but was rather several separate territories under earls and chieftains, and successive wars weakened Guthrum. The history of the Danelaw has neglected the importance of eccelesiastical power, but alongside royal power it might also have proved useful to Guthrum as a source of alignment for the control and defence of his territory (cf. fig.1) against internal enemies. What is important, however, is that these rituals were performed in communicative spaces, even if the Anglo-Saxons and Danes may have differed in their interpretation of the rituals' significance. The rituals' performances illustrate the first part of the model: the establishment of social relations.

Economic and judicial matters

When Alfred and Guthrum signed a treaty at Wedmore, the border between Wessex and the Danelaw was constituted. Several years later, between 886 and 890, Alfred and Guthrum signed a new treaty, the *Treaty of Alfred and Guthrum*, which is preserved in two manuscripts in a body of legislation

from the late 11th century.[10] This agreement included the division of the Thames but also some judicial matters and trade relations, which were to some extent ritualised (*Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* 1, 126f.).

The treaty constituted: (1) the land boundaries asserted through waterflows up the Thames and some tributaries (the Lea, to Bedford, up the Ouse to Watling Street); asserted (2) that if a man were killed, whether English or Danish, there should be a fine of eight half marks; (3) that if one of the king's thanes was accused of murdering, he should take an oath in the presence of twelve of the thanes, and a man of lower degree in the presence of eleven men, but if he refused he should pay threefold (*Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* 1, 126f.). The swearing of oaths probably occurred in some sort of communicative space, for example, a thingstead.

The treaty covered some trade issues, including also some rituals. According to the treaty: (4) a guarantor well known (to both sides) should guarantee the acquisition of slaves, horses, and oxen; (5) in the oathswearing it was ordained that neither slaves nor freemen should go to the other side for commerce with cattle and goods without hostages given to show goodwill (*Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* 1, 126f.). These are examples of how rituals or ritual actions connected with commercial interests functioned as an access to effect or regulate the area of confrontation. Hostages were a vital strategy in this regulation to avoid conflict. And it is important that the hostages could be used as a tool by both sides and were not necessarily themselves subordinated. In my opinion it is also important to note both the degree of subordination in cases like these but also the possibility they afforded to effect peaceful relations.

The *Treaty of Wedmore* suggests violence occurred in the area of confrontation. If this were not the case, the regulations would have been unnecessary. It therefore exemplifies the third step in the peace process, in which the agreement became lawful and was accepted by both sides. On this occasion it appears to have been the end of a lengthy process. Almost a decade elapsed between *The Treaty of Wedmore* and *The Treaty of Alfred and Guthrum*. The latter was probably the result of the experience gained during this interim period.

I have given examples here from larger areas, realms, which might be analysed with the help of this model. I will also give an example of how a narrative might arise because of confrontations and peace processes. Next,

10 The manuscripts (MS 383) are preserved at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (Kershaw 2000, 44, 48). The treaty should not be confused with the 11th century agreement *Laws of Edward and Guthrum*, written by Archbishop Wulfstan II.

I will show how the model can be used as an analytical tool for understanding feuds and personal disagreements, with examples from the Icelandic *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*.

Conflicts and conflict solutions in *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*

The *Íslendingabók* and the *Landnámabók* are problematic sources, because there is a time discrepancy of between 130 and 300 years between when they were written and the period they describe, the colonisation and Christianisation of Iceland. I will not address here the extensive debate about their source value. It is enough to note that the conflicts probably originated in the struggle for resources during the Landnám era, during which Iceland was settled (Orri Vésteinsson 1998, 8–9; Hayeur Smith 2004, 16–7; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2008, 51).

In early Icelandic society conflicts often occurred at the levels of kin-based groupings and individuals. There were no rulers with the rank of the Earls of Lade (ON *Hlaðir*) in Trøndelag in Norway, for example. The Icelandic *goðar* had political and judicial as well as religious functions, but their influence was probably limited and their dominance largely depended on their lands in attractive coastal regions with fertile soils, woods, and access to fishing grounds, harbours, and driftwood. Land disputes were the main cause of the 126 conflicts that I have noted in the *Íslendingabók* and the *Landnámabók* (table 1). The blood feud was a special mechanism of violence. In table 1 (in appendix) I have noted the blood feuds which immediately escalated into conflicts where revenge was the single motive. An insult beneath the surface may have caused these feuds.

Other causes of conflict were accusations of witchcraft, heritage disputes, theft, molestation, and murder. The periods of agreement between the conflicts, for which there was some kind of consent, are important here. Naturally the reason for the consent varied. But I would like to emphasise this consent as an attempt at consensus. These are examples of conflict and solutions relieving each other within areas of confrontation.

In the longer perspective the main result of the conflicts during the Landnám era was the creation of the Alþingi, the general assembly, in 930 and the later organisation of legislative districts, *fiórðungar*, which resulted in territorial strengthening. This is not new information; I merely wish to point out that the experiences drawn from the areas of confrontation strengthened the communicative spaces.

Areas of confrontation and communicative spaces

A lack of information makes it difficult to define areas of confrontation. Naturally, this is true of the conflicts in the *Íslendingabók* and the *Landnámabók*, where descriptions are cryptic. The locations of the disputes limited the significance of the areas of confrontation: the texts describe how clashes took place on high ground, in valleys, or in the backwoods between farmsteads. These became boundaries when periods of collaboration followed conflict.

In these contexts there are examples of how communicative spaces such as thingsteads and farms could be transformed into areas of confrontation. The *Íslendingabók* (ch. 5) tells of the chieftains Hönsetore (OI *Hænsa-*Þórir) and Tunge-Odd (OI *Tungu-Oddr*), who fought the lawman Thord Gellir (OI Þórðr gellir) several times at the Althing (OI *Alþingi*).

Another narrative in the *Landnámabók* tells how Erik the Red (OI *Eiríkr Þorvaldsson hinn rauði*) broke into the house of Thorgest (OI Þorgestr) at Breidabolstead (OI *Breiðabólstaðr*) to retake his high-seat pillars, which he had entrusted to Thorgest. It is not clear if Breidabolstead functioned as a *hof*, a cultic building, but perhaps there were some ritual restrictions linked to this place. The break-in was a crime in any case, and Erik was summoned to the thing. This escalated into a blood feud between him and Thorgest.

The feud between Erik and Thorgest is an example of cooperation involving trust from its outset, and it can be compared to the examples given concerning the swearing of oaths. In this case, however, each side may have blamed the other and differed about the nature of Erik's offence. This is another example of regulation in areas of confrontation, since they were both able to affect the result of the feud. Erik and Thorgest met several times at the Thorsness Assembly (OI Þórsnesþingi), i.e. at a communicative space.

The model makes possible an analysis of the details of narratives such as the one about Erik and Thorgest which assists in understanding the confrontations and communicative spaces, with a focus on various concessions, demands, and compromises. From a broader perspective mediation between different areas such as hostages, intermarriage, and fostering might then be explained in a wider setting. They were tools to regulate borders or boundaries at different levels and in different contexts in different parts of Scandinavia as well as in the Viking diaspora. The actions could also be seen within a framework in which economy, laws, and social issues belong together and depend on one another.

The story of the thingstead at Thorsness illustrates the need for balancing structures like the thingstead and the presence of negotiators.

The feud at the Thorsness thingstead

The feud at the Thorsness thingstead is described in both the *Landnámabók* (125–126, ch. 85) and the *Eyrbyggja* saga (14–18, ch. 9–10). Here is a summary of the *Landnámabók*'s account: Thorulf Mostur-Beard (OI Þorólfr Mostrarskegg) took possession of a headland between the Staf River (OI *Stafá*) and the Thors River (OI Þórsá) in the Breidafjord (OI *Breiðafjǫrðr*). Thorulf named the area Thorsness (OI Þórsnes). Near the headland was the holy mountain of Helgafell. Thorolf also established a *hof*, which he dedicated to Thor (OI Þórr), and a thingstead for the district assembly (OI *heraðsþing*). An agreement was made between Thorolf and the people who visited the assembly that they should not ease themselves and defile the ground at Thorsness, which was believed to be holy. Instead, a special rock, Dirt Skerry (OI *Dritsker*), was set aside for the people's need. Thorulf was succeeded by his son Thorstein 'Cod-Biter' (OI Þorsteinn þorskabítr). Then Thorgrim Kjallaksson (OI Þorgrímr Kjallaksson) – a chieftain of the Kiallekings grouping – and his brother-in-law Asgeir of Eyr (OI Ásgeirr *á Eyri*) refused to go to the rock. Thorstein and Thorgeir the Bent (OI Þorgeirr kengr) fought Thorgrim and Asgeir at the assembly and many men from the Kiallekings and the Thorsnessings were killed and wounded before they were separated. However, Thord Gellir took responsibility for a reconciliation, and since neither side gave away, the field was considered polluted by the spilling of blood. It was decided that the thingstead should be moved to the eastern part of the headland, which was now also considered holy (126, ch. 85).

In the more extensive 13th-century version of the *Eyrbyggja saga* (17–18, ch 10) Thord is attributed with having the solutions to the conflict in detail. Thord, the mightiest of the chieftains of Breidafjord, was called to a peace meeting (OI *stefnulag*) between the parties, the Kiallekings and the Thorsnessings, and obtained a truce (OI *griðr*).[11] He called the fight in the thingstead a breach of the peace (OI *friðbrot*). It was on his advice that the thingstead was considered polluted and was thus moved inland when neither side was prepared to stand down. He decided that Thorgrim should bear half the cost of the *hof* and in return receive half its debts (OI *hoftollr*). Half the men of the assembly were to support Thorgrim. Thorgrim was to assist Thorstein in all his law cases and in the foundation of the new thingstead, however holy Thorstein considered it. According to the *Eyrbyggja saga* Thord also arranged a marriage between his female relative Thorhild

11 For a discussion of the concepts of *griðr* and *friðr*, see Olsson 2016, 267–81.

(OI Þórhildr), the daughter of his neighbour Thorkel Main-acre (OI Þorkell meinaker), and Thorgrim. Bestowed with these honours, Thorgrim took the name *goði*, a title which included judicial and cultic functions as well as general leadership positions (see Sundqvist 2009, 22–53).

In this story the ritual actions at the Breidafjord were a means of asserting authority for the people involved. Recently, Sundqvist (2016), with the support of both text sources and archaeological material, has shown that attacks against thingsteads may have had a ritual dimension. If someone severed the peace bands (OI *vébǫnd*) that surrounded a thingstead or burned down a farm belonging to the opposing side, it could serve as a ritual marker against a hostile rival. According to Sundqvist (2016, 169) these actions were performative: i.e. ritual actions had the ability to change society as well as individuals. In my opinion similar power demonstrations can be seen in the confrontation between the Kiallekings and the Thorsnessings.

The confrontation mediated at the thingstead may be related to the model I presented at the beginning of this article:

Social relations were established. In this case it included a wedding and the future common rituals associated with the *hof* and thingstead.

There were economic settlements concerning the expenses for the *hof*, whereas debts were seen as shared income between Thorgrim and Thorstein.

Both sides accepted the settlement: both had to give something connected with pride to give away (see below). According to the *Eyrbyggja saga* the agreement stated that neither side should pay fines for manslaughter and woundings. After the thingstead was moved to the ness, Thord made it the Quarter Thing (*fjórðungsþing*) of all the Westfirthers (OI *vestfirðingr*), which may be seen as an inclusive act within laws and rituals.

The conflict started when Thorulf Mostur-Beard effected the hallowing of the thingstead. The restrictions were too much for the neighbouring Kiallekings. The *Eyrbyggja saga* mentions that Thorgrim and Asgeir did not care about the pride of the Thorsnessings, and their hostile actions had begun when Thorstein was very young and had recently succeeded his father. Thorgrim and Asgeir may have seen Thorstein as too weak to oppose them. As was the case with the peace processes between Guthrum and Alfred, this conflict had it roots many years earlier than it was solved. (Thorgrim inherited the conflict from his father).

When the solution was accepted by both sides, the actors strengthened their societal positions. The *Eyrbyggja saga* (18, ch. 11) tells us that Thorstein became a man of great generosity; he had sixty freemen (OI *frelsingja*) in his household and often went to sea as a fisherman. Thord, as the text describes,

confirmed – and even strengthened – his position as leader (lawspeaker) with the establishment of the Quarter Thing. Thorgrim's new honours made him – at least in name – an equal of Thorstein and Thord. He was, however, less powerful than Thorstein, whom he had to support in all his affairs.

In this case economic, legal, social, and religious actions and functions were mixed and renegotiated. In accordance with the model this societal restructuring may be due to times of crisis. The thingstead was thus a multi-functional place and the concept of 'holiness' could therefore be questioned.

Some scholars have pointed out that the *Eyrbyggja saga* could only make dark assumptions of the past, which is bestowed with sorcery, superstitions, and heathen rituals (e.g. Ármann Jakobsson 2007, 44). Both the *Landnámabók* (126, ch. 85) and the *Eyrbyggja saga* (18, ch. 11) state that the Westfirthers used to sacrifice humans at the Quarter Thing at Thor's rock (OI Þórssteinn), or Thor's Boulder, a statement which has been regarded as an exaggeration (see Näsström 2002, 44, 57). On the other hand, Theodore M. Andersson (2006, 154) points out that there is little exaggeration in the narrative style of the *Eyrbyggja saga*, which may reflect the author's intention to 'produce something more like history'.

Even if the story of the Thorsness dwellers cannot be trusted – as it is described in the *Eyrbyggja saga* and in the sense that it depicts an historical event – the main structure of the story is the same as in the *Landnámabók* version.

Conclusion

The model I have used is designed as an analytical tool to investigate what I refer to as areas of confrontation during the Viking and early Middle Ages, when peace and war closely followed each other. Rituals were part of the regulations in these areas. I have given examples from the peace processes between rulers of Wessex and the Danelaw, where the swearing of oaths and other rituals was essential to the regulating of areas of confrontation beyond law and economy. The resolution of this conflict exemplifies how previous experiences contributed to the making of consensus through communicative spaces such as thingsteads, market places, and churches.

In the cases from the *Íslendingabók* and the *Landnámabók* the sum of the experiences from different conflicts may explain the emergence of regulations between individuals and groupings. This was the case with the feud between the Kiallekings and the Thorsnessings. The conflict began with the actions of Thorulf Mostur-Beard, who hallowed, and thereby protected, his

headland. This was accepted for a time by the neighbouring communities. However, the initial agreement was not enough to prevent the conflict from emerging after many years, and it was not until the old thingstead was abandoned and moved to a new place that the conflict ceased, whereupon a new society took shape. With the new societal order balancing regulations such as gift-giving, weddings and economic and judicial collaborations were made possible, which were to an extent ritualistic, as in the English case, and a result of the conflict's solution.

By searching for hierarchies and other vertical patterns, the possibilities for both counterparts in a conflict to affect peace processes can be emphasised and discussed. Such an approach identifies both power and anti-power in peace processes which research would otherwise not elucidate.

* * *

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Abbreviations

OE	Old English
OI	Old Icelandic
ON	Old Norse
OSw	Old Swedish
Swe	Swedish

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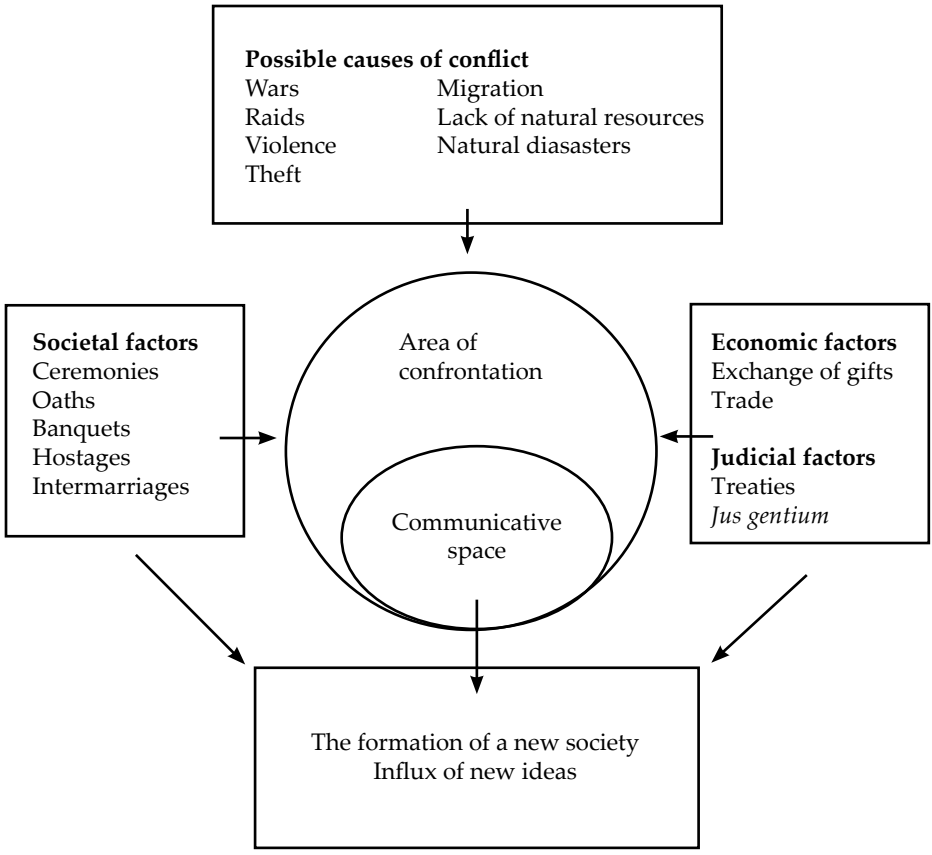
Appendix:

Table 1. Causes of conflict reported in the *Íslendingabók* and the *Landnámabók*.

Land disputes	35
Blood feud	18
Murder	17
Insult	11
Witchcraft	9
Duel	5
Lawsuit	5
Heritage disputes	5
Theft	4
Molestation	4
Riot of thralls	2
Suicide	1

Figure 1. A schematic description of conflicts and conflict solutions in the Viking Age and the early Middle Ages.



Book Reviews

Philip A. Mellor and Chris Shilling: *Sociology of the Sacred: Religion, Embodiment and Social Change.* London: Sage, 2014, 202 pp.

Philip A. Mellor and Chris Shilling's book is a convincing attempt to restructure the discussion of secularisation. The book's central argument is that the process of secularisation is ongoing, and depends on the extraordinary power accorded to the bio-political and bio-economic forces active in the world today. These two forces are dominant in the contemporary world, but some religious modalities still thrive.

The authors start by commenting on the secularisation debate. They identify four reactions to the classical secularisation thesis: the 'revitalisation of religion'; 'moderate secularisation'; 'the resurgence of the sacred'; and 'strong secularisation'. Although these are usually seen as incommensurable, the authors point out that there are also convergences pointing to the recognition of the advance of secularisation. Two theoretical dimensions, other-worldliness and social differentiation, are introduced to incorporate these different views, which produce four modalities (socio-religious, transcendent, bio-political, and bio-economic) of the sacred. The authors further emphasise the separation of micro-, meso-, and macro-levels in analysing the secularisation and revitalisation of religion.

The relationships between the four modalities are examined under the headings of intoxication, pain, charisma, eroticism, and habitus. The writers emphasise the embodied base on which these processes habituate, without neglecting an analysis of belief systems, or reflexivity.

The concept of the sacred, according to the writers, is usually seen as unitary and reflective of religious or quasi-religious processes. In departing from this approach, they develop a model of distinct, competing, and interacting modalities of the sacred. Sacred things are extraordinary manifestations of objects, relationships, and ideas, things that are set apart from the mundane. Thus far the model seems quite similar to Gordon Lynch's notion of competing sacred forms which can be religious or not, as he sets out in *The Sacred in the Modern World* (2012). The difference is that Mellor and Shilling's model is more rigid, based on two theoretical dimensions arising from their reassessment of the secularisation discussions, whereas Lynch focuses on empirical sacred forms, such as 'care for children' or 'Catholic nationalism'.

I think this rigidity is both the strength and the weakness of the model they present: it is most convincing when it restructures the secularisation debate, and the facts seem to support it especially when one considers the current clashes between secularism and (certain) religion(s) in France or Turkey, but

its weakness seems to lie in its inability to consider the nuances of sacralisation. One might question the relevance of either of the theoretical dimensions to certain 'manifestations' of the sacred, such as Lynch's care for children. Mellor and Shilling identify other-worldliness with religion and this-worldliness with the secular. The authors are wedded to these identifications, and criticise such 'anthropologies of secularism' which treat secularism as a competing form of religion (Knott, Franks, Wilson, Lynch), and scholars who seek to analyse 'implicit religion' for failing to notice the different directionalities of the religious and the secular. At this point I remain unconvinced: what would happen to the theoretical model if we did not accept the transcendent as the essence of religion, but paid more attention to the constructedness of the boundary between the 'religious' and the 'secular' and its maintenance?

The previously mentioned four modalities of the sacred are anchored to the writings of Durkheim and Weber. The authors maintain that the polarisation of these two classical approaches in terms of secularisation and de-secularisation is invalid: both highlight the emergence of competing religious and secular modalities. The socio-religious modality comes from Durkheim. In his work society is sanctified as religious, and modality is constructed and maintained through an other-worldly cosmology. The commitment of some forms of Islam to a 'total' religious society is cited as an example of this modality.

The transcendent modality of the sacred emphasises the polarisation between the sacred and profane, but also distinguishes between the temporal and spiritual realms. Unlike the socio-religious modality, it thus contributes to the existence of the secular sphere. This typology of religion is reminiscent of Bruce Lincoln's division between 'maximalist' and 'minimalist' religion in *Holy Terrors* (2003), but also of Craig Martin's elaboration of it in *Capitalizing Religion* (2014, 37), which contends that minimalist Christianity is implicitly capitalist Christianity and has social effects far beyond the religious sphere. I think that Mellor and Shilling capture this well in pointing to certain religious forms such as prosperity Pentecostalism's compatibility with the bio-economic modality.

Ideas concerning the bio-political sacred are based on Weber's analysis of bureaucratisation, Giorgio Agamben's writings on the bare life, and Michel Foucault's concept of bio-power. Bio-political modality is concerned with the rationalisation and management of life. It sacralises sovereignty over life, and it is evident in discussions of euthanasia, genetics, and the risky lifestyles of mothers-to-be. The Nazi death camps present an extreme example. Bio-political modality complicates the experience and expression of this-worldly matters from other-worldly perspectives. Bio-economic

modality is based on Durkheim's and Michel Maffesoli's ideas. It is concerned with the consumerisation of the sacred, and does not seek to control people's actions, disenchant, or confine the other-worldly.

The writers raise the important issue of vagueness in defining the 'sacred', and not paying attention to how the sacred is formed. They build on Hubert and Mauss's theory of sacrifice, which is defined as the setting apart and giving up of something by which that something is made sacred. They suggest that things are not made extraordinary by the making of sacrifices alone, but by '*engaging* with sacrifice (via promoting particular forms as valid, prohibiting others as invalid, or even seeking to create a society without sacrifice)' (p. 45). It is therefore relevant to analyse how different modalities are engaged with sacrifice.

Based on Bataille and Girard, the authors compare the socio-religious and transcendent sacred in terms of sacrifice. They use Islamic suicide bombings as an example of the former, and Christianity, with its emphasis on the renunciation of one's desires, of the latter. The bio-political and bio-economic modes tend to be unwilling to sacrifice. In the bio-political mode, in Agamben's terms, everybody becomes sacred (*Homines sacri*), and bare life is appropriated to the state. For the bio-political mode there is no 'outer' existence in relation to which sacrifice might be operationalised. Bio-economic modality is concerned with attachment to economic flows, as opposed to the 'giving up' of egoistic religious modalities in the wider context of the liberation of goods from social constraints. At this point one thinks of nationalism: should the sacralised imagined nation demanding the blood of its soldiers be considered as belonging to the socio-religious or bio-political modality, or is it a kind of hybrid? The absence of examples of other forms of violence than the socio-religious (and the brief mention of the holocaust in the discussion of the bio-political) leaves one wondering if this stems from the emphasis on the embodied and experiential, i.e. micro-level: is the violence caused by the bio-economic liberation of goods invisible to the (western) consumer because of social differentiation?

From chapter three onwards the embodied, habitual, and experiential aspects of the four modalities are dealt with in more detail, and the way the modalities shape beliefs and practices and affect social change is demonstrated with empirical cases. Chapter three deals with other-worldly and this-worldly intoxication. The idea of socio-religious intoxication comes from Durkheim's collective effervescence, which also directs people's actions. Because of social differentiation shared experiences of intoxication become scarcer. The authors use prosperity Pentecostalism as an example of a transcendent form which adapts itself to the bio-economic environment by recapitulating the Calvinist distinction between the religious and secular. Sport (including fan-

dom) is an example of this-worldly intoxication. The authors make clear that sport is not religious, but that it can be an arena of religious expression. In the bio-political mode intoxications (including illegal drugs but also collective marches, meetings, and worship) are regulated by the state. As collective life is stripped from intoxicants, people are drawn to occasionally dangerous forms of egoistic intoxication. The authors point to sacrificial killing as an example of an intoxicating effervescence which challenges the bio-political by reasserting otherworldly authority.

The fourth chapter deals with pain as a medium of religious experience and the construction of collectivity. In contrast with intoxication, in the West the direction of change has been less ambiguous: towards bio-medicalisation, anaesthetics, and the removal of pain, which is tied to the marginalisation of religion. Shi'a self-flagellation and indifference to pain is the counterpart of Christian doctrines of redemptive suffering and modern western bio-medical practices of pain relief. Christian doctrines are often embraced as medicine fails, but are 'sanctioned normatively only in the context of palliative pain relief' (p. 81) when death becomes inevitable. The authors speculate that this development is connected to the specific religious history of Christianity, with its sensitivity to pain, and a later shift from the attempt to save the world through pain to save it from pain.

The next chapters on charisma and eroticism draw from Weber and Bataille among others, and extend the concepts to cover material forms (aesthetic charisma and fetishism) as well. These chapters offer some interesting new points for the discussion concerning material religion, aesthetics, and branding. The last thematic chapter examines the conditions for a religious habitus in the contemporary world. The contemporary religious habitus is renewed reflexively, and may assume many forms. Reflexivity does not equate with free choice, and it is required even from those who wish to follow traditional religious habits. In the final chapter the authors conclude that transcendent and socio-religious modalities continue to foster the religious habitus, but are constrained by the bio-economic and bio-political modalities.

The theoretical model the book presents is invigorating, and it convincingly reconstitutes the discussions about secularisation. Although rigid, this model opens up many directions, as the thematic chapters demonstrate. This model also recapitulates the distinction between the sociology of the sacred and the sociology of religion (see for example Lynch's book mentioned above, or N. J. Demerath III's article in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39:1, 2000). The thematic chapters exemplify the theory well, but the authors might have relied less on classical data in supporting their own theories and used some other examples. Nevertheless, the

book is recommended reading for everyone interested in the debates about secularisation and, of course, the sociology of the sacred.

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Henry John Walker: *The Twin Horse Gods: The Dioskouroi in Mythologies of the Ancient World*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2015, 271 pp.

This work, written by a classicist who in recent years has undertaken a study of Vedic religion, is the first book-length comparative study of the Indo-European twin-gods since the heyday of Georges Dumézil and his school from the 1960s to the 1980s. Two young men, sons of the sky-god, riding horses, and typically said to come to the aid of mortals in peril, these gods are found in Vedic, Graeco-Roman, and Baltic mythologies. Divided largely into two parts, the book deals first with the Vedic twin-gods, the *Aśvins* or *Nāsatyas*, tracing the development of their myths and cult through Vedic literature, then with the *Dioskouroi*, their counterparts in Greek and Roman religion. Walker makes skilful use of recent research, such as the archaeologist David Anthony's work on Indo-European origins and the domestication of the horse, and the Sanskritist Michael Witzel's outlining of the social and political development of the Vedic priesthood and rituals.

The author's central thesis is that the twin gods originated in the early phase of Proto-Indo-European horse domestication, before the invention of the spoked wheel and the war chariot. Drawing on the work of Anthony mentioned above, Walker notes that horse riding at this early stage was probably not an activity of high-ranking warriors and noblemen; its primary use appears to have been in cattle herding. Keeping watch over herds was probably a low-status activity; in many Indo-European societies (ancient Greece, Iran, India) it was undertaken by young men who had yet to enter a settled married life and were not full members of society. The riding twin gods, envisaged as youths, were divine counterparts of these cattle herders, and their position in the pantheon was correspondingly low. Their mythical roles as helpers, healers, and rescuers from peril are also ascribed to their servile nature.

By contrast, when the war chariot was invented in the late third millennium BCE, it became the symbol of status *par excellence*. The gods and heroes of Greece and India are frequently pictured as driving chariots; riding is seldom mentioned. In accordance with their lower position, the Dioskouroi alone among the Greek gods continued to ride on horseback; and although their Vedic counterparts have been updated and are envisaged in the Vedic hymns as driving a three-wheeled chariot, Walker seems to be correct in considering the Greek (and Baltic) situation to reflect older conditions.

The author takes issue with the theory of 'universal Dioscurism' (the term used by Donald Ward in his 1968 study of the Indo-European twin gods), which attributes the place of twins in myths and religious customs to the pre-modern notion of the double paternity of twins: a double birth being the result of two men having fathered offspring with

the same woman. Connected with this idea is the attribution of different sets of characteristics to mythical twins: the notion that one of the Dioskouroi was immortal, begotten by Zeus of Leda, and the other mortal, the son of King Tyndareos, is one famous example. Dioscurism has also been used to explain the ambiguous status of twins in various cultures: while often considered sacred, and figuring in myths, rites, and festivals, they have also been regarded with suspicion and dread, sometimes being killed or exposed on birth.

Looking to more recent ethnological studies for support, Walker brings the universality of Dioscurism into question: the notion of double fatherhood is not the dominant theory of the cause of twin-births in early cultures; nor are twins everywhere surrounded by taboos. There is no evidence that either ancient Indian or Greek culture knew the theory of a dual paternity of twins. Reviewing the sources concerning the birth and parenthood of the Dioskouroi, Walker points out that the idea that one of the twin gods was the immortal son of Zeus, the other one mortal and fathered by Tyndareos, first appears in the 6th century, and seems to be an attempt at syncretising older, conflicting accounts found in the Homeric epics. Originally, there was no difference between the two; both were immortal, while not enjoying the same status as the Olympian gods, and both were sons of Zeus. Their separate characteristics, though – Castor being a famed horse-breaker, Polydeukes a boxer – are already to be found in Homer.

The author maintains that the Vedic twins, unlike the Dioskouroi, had no separate characteristics. This accords with his attempt to show that the twinhood of these Indo-European gods was of minimal importance. But while Walker succeeds in raising doubts about the theory of Dioscurism, he offers no explanation of why the gods were conceived as twins. If they originally had no individual characteristics, what would have been the purpose of imagining two horse gods rather than one? Admittedly, their twinhood is a problem scholars have tackled from various angles since the 19th century. The possibility of their being the morning and evening stars, which would account for their connection to twilight, has been discussed by Donald Ward, as well as by Thomas Oberlies in his volumes on the religion of the Ṛgveda (not cited), but receives very little consideration in this book; nor does Douglas Frame's suggestion that they represent the twilights. 'Nature mythology' is briefly discussed and dismissed as a 19th-century fantasy. Of course, gods may represent natural phenomena while at the same time being modelled on social types; and I think this is the case with the divine twins, whose family, indeed, consists entirely of nature deities.

The 'Dumézilian' theory of the twin gods saw them as embodiments of different social functions. First proposed by Stig Wikander in

1957, it was elaborated by Dumézil, Ward, Frame, and Hiltebeitel. Wikander (whose work is not cited) observed that Nakula and Sahadeva, the Aśvins' twin sons in the Mahābhārata, are assigned different characteristics, one being warlike, the other wise. While this evidence is late, Wikander saw that it was foreshadowed in some Ṛgvedic stanzas; a comparison has also been made with the Dioskouroi, one of whom is a boxer, the other a horse tamer – in the Mahābhārata, Nakula figures as a horse doctor. While it is a sound principle to treat ideas not clearly found in the oldest sources as being probably later, it seems too unlikely a coincidence that these separate characteristics should have developed independently in Greece and India.

In his treatment of the Vedic twin gods Walker shows that their 'outsider' status is expressed in ritual: in the soma sacrifice their offering is given separately from those of the other gods. The *pravargya* offering, dedicated to them, differs from the elaborate soma sacrifice, being a simple offering of hot milk which reflects the gods' humble origins as divinities of riding cowherds.

The book presents a detailed discussion of the myth of Dadhyañc, the Atharvan seer who revealed the knowledge of the 'honey' to the Aśvins; as Indra had threatened to cut off his head should he impart this knowledge to anyone, they switched his head for that of a horse, which was then cut off. Drawing on the work of Witzel, Walker suggests that the origin of this story is to be found in a Central Asian cultural substratum, from which the *soma* cult also originated. Noting that Vedic *atharvan* and *aṃśu* (the name for the soma plant) are substrate words of presumably Central Asian origin, he suggests that the soma cult was introduced to the Indo-Iranians by the priesthood of the substrate culture, who were eventually assimilated as the Atharvans. As evidence for a North-Central Asian origin of the myth itself, Walker adduces the find of a headless human skeleton with a horse skull in place of its human head in a bronze-age grave in Potapovka. David Anthony and N. Vinogradov reported this find in 1995. However, in an endnote in his book *The Horse, the Wheel, and Language* (2007) – on which Walker draws extensively – Anthony has revised his initial report, noting that radiocarbon dating has now placed the skeleton between 2900 and 2600 BCE, and the horse skull about a thousand years later, different strata having collapsed into each other (p. 501, n. 17).

Nor is it clear that the 'honey' (*madhu*) in this myth originally referred to soma. Though soma is often called *madhu* in the Ṛgveda, the Aśvins are frequently connected with a 'honey' which is clearly not soma, but 'bee-honey' (*mākṣika madhu*), which may once have formed part of their sacrificial offerings. True, in Middle Vedic retellings of the myth the honey is identified either with soma or with the Pravargya (included in the soma sacrifice),

and the story tells how the Aśvins, having been originally excluded, were able to gain a place in the soma sacrifice. But no rite that may have been connected with the Ṛgvedic myth can be identified. Some scholars, notably, van Buitenen in his study of the Pravargya (1968) and Oberlies have suggested on the basis of some Vedic stanzas that the Pravargya offering may originally have included honey.

As for ancient Greece, Walker shows that, as in India, the rites associated with the twins are of an unusually simple and archaic kind: the *theoxenia* is a guest offering reminiscent of the oldest forms of Vedic sacrifice, in which the gods were invited to partake of the food and drink offered to them; the twin gods were thus thought to come to their worshippers, in keeping with their habit of walking the earth and associating with mortals. They were in fact 'not fully gods', but 'ambiguously positioned between gods and men' (p. 133).

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Elizabeth Shakman Hurd: *Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015, 200pp.

A couple of decades ago religion was of little interest in international relations. The change has been dramatic. According to Timothy Fitzgerald, of about 1,600 articles published in selected IR journals, only six between 1980 and 1999 featured religion as an important influence. Vendulka Kubálková locates the 'turn to religion' in IR to the latter part of the first decade of the twenty-first century, although she notes that one of the foundational conferences took place in 1998. It is one thing to examine why this took place, but another to examine how religion has been conceptualised. Opting for the latter approach, Fitzgerald argues in his *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth* (2011) that among those who study religion and politics there is a 'tendency to talk about religion as though it is a thing or even an agent with an essentially different nature from politics' (p. 107).

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd's approach is related to Fitzgerald's, but it is not identical. While Fitzgerald's study concentrates on scholarly conceptualisations, including some popular non-academic authors, Hurd examines how the category of religion operates in global politics and governance as manifested in state-led policies, supranational courts, the European Union, NGOs, and others. Her argument in *Beyond Religion Freedom* is that there is a tendency to 'religionise' issues and conflicts in contemporary international politics and use religion as a somewhat unproblematic explanatory category and causal factor. In this sense the study represents an argument against the 'religion made them do it' approach, but it also demonstrates the kind of contemporary global politics enacted when the category of religion is employed.

The opening example is striking. Hurd demonstrates how the numbers of 'Christian martyrs' have been exaggerated, as they have included people who happened to be Christian, rather than being limited to those who have died because of their Christian identity. The problem is that complex, overdetermined situations are reduced to the narrative of religious persecution and that the overall result is a politics defined by religious difference.

The study does not focus on a particular empirical case. Instead, it uses various examples from different parts of the world to make the argument plausible and concrete. It discusses the Alevis in Turkey, the Rohingya in Myanmar, and the K'iche' in Guatemala, among others. The examples vary from brief references to quite detailed explorations of particular situations, the Alevis in Turkey being an example of the latter. While many of the expert statements the book mentions are based on 'the West' (and some supranational organisations), the empirical location of the examples is most often outside the western

world, without neglecting, however, the involvement of the United States. This combination justifies the concept of 'global politics' in the subtitle of the study.

The first chapter is an introduction. In addition to laying out the parameters of the argument it introduces three concepts which organise the whole study. These are expert religion, lived religion, and governed religion. Expert religion is 'religion construed by those who generate "policy-relevant" knowledge about religion' (p. 8), whereas lived religion is the more diverse and multiform 'religion as practiced by everyday individuals and groups' (p. 8). Governed religion is what is identified as religious for the purposes of law and governance. Experts' constructions of religion (as governed religion) are typically coherent entities which are used in analysing complex situations and by which economic, historical, and political contexts are obscured. It is rarely – if ever – capable of representing the instability and incoherence of particular 'religious' entities, and it lacks the proper means to represent non-orthodox versions, doubters, and dissidents. In this way it can be said that governed religion, as constructed by experts, is a simplified version of the huge variety inherent in lived religion.

The second chapter, 'Two Faces of Faith', deals with contemporary politics' distinction between good and bad forms of religion. 'Good religion' refers to the idea that religion contributes to the common good (much better than secular organisations), and takes the wind out of the sails of extremist movements. 'Bad religion' refers to the 'rotten apples' sometimes labelled as fundamentalists or terrorists. It is not simply that this discourse divides religions into good and bad – that would not be an original insight – but that the former is offered as a solution to the latter in contemporary global politics. When I asked my students to read a couple of interviews with senior international politicians like Tony Blair and John Kerry, who have recently been commenting on religious issues, and reflect on what they have said on the basis of Hurd's analysis, they were convinced that Hurd had a point. What remained unclear for them was how to go beyond the distinction. It is obvious, however, that this discourse tends to marginalise those who identify as secular or secularist.

Chapters three to five explore expert constructions of religion and their policy implications by shifting the focus from one chapter to another, from freedom in 'International Religious Freedom' (Chapter three), to religion-related US foreign policy operations and bodies in 'Religious Engagement' (Chapter four), and rights in concentrating on minorities in 'Minorities under Law' (Chapter five).

Chapter three argues that rather than seeing religious freedom as a fundamental human right, it should be understood as an 'historically situated form of governance' (p. 38). According to this view religious freedom singles out groups for le-

gal protection as religious groups, pushes them to clearly defined orthodoxies, and privileges a modern, liberal understanding of faith (i.e., religions are seen to be based on beliefs). Chapter four suggests that American religious engagement programmes, including attempts to export a model, are evidence of the continuing promotion of the idea that the United States is the best model for religious freedom. The main difference in recent decades has been that the target has changed from strategic moves against communism to reshaping religion everywhere to match the ideals of the United States. Chapter five's focus is on the Alevis in Turkey, asking what happens when religion becomes an operative category in the protection of minorities. Hurd demonstrates admirably what there is to gain and lose, depending on whether Alevis are classified as part of the Sunni tradition, a non-Islamic community, or even as having a non-religious identity.

The sixth and final chapter, 'Beyond Religious Freedom', presents conclusions. While it repeats the main ideas expressed in the previous chapters, it is here that Hurd explains most clearly the study's subtitle. The new global politics of religion is something which 'intervenes by inviting individuals and groups to self-identify as religions' (p. 112) and makes 'religion the point from which social relations are enacted and institutional policy' developed (p. 113). Furthermore, she points to a path for future studies by suggesting that instead of reproducing normative religion-related discourses 'one can study the ways in which religion is delimited and deployed in specific legal, institutional, historical, and political contexts, by whom and for what purposes' (p. 121).

The overall aim of Hurd's argument is to provide 'a glimpse of what the world would look like after religion is dethroned as a stable, coherent legal and policy category' (p. 7). This reminds me of Winnifred Fallers Sullivan's claim, presented in *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* (2005), that religion cannot be satisfactorily defined for legal purposes and that it might therefore be a good idea to drop the category from legal use.

One problem is that although she powerfully – and correctly, in my opinion – criticises the political salience of state-sponsored 'expert religion', Hurd leaves the category of lived religion intact. This is also true of Sullivan's study. While it may not be either's intended message, it is possible to read them as suggesting that lived religion is authentic (as opposed to a less authentic, politically salient, and conceptually problematic expert religion). It is significant that in the above quotation Hurd does not write about dethroning religion as an analytical category but about dethroning religion as a coherent legal and policy category.

Furthermore, it is intriguing that she makes no mention of Fitzgerald, although his *Religion and Politics in International Relations* contained a

lengthy commentary on her earlier book. Fitzgerald's critical point was that while Hurd's analysis of the historical construction of separation between religion and (secular) politics was useful, she still – contrary to Fitzgerald's own preference – keeps religion in her analytical vocabulary. This criticism applies to *Beyond Religious Freedom*. While she masterfully challenges the rationale behind the production of 'religion' for the purposes of law and governance, she does not find it problematic to write about religious practices throughout the study.

Furthermore, if there is a danger in 'romanticizing lived religious practice' (p. 13) in using the opposition between governed and lived religion, as Hurd herself points out, why not simply write about people's messy and complex practices rather than about lived religion? At least it should be obvious that it is not only expert religion that involves power relations. What she calls lived religion is not really any different, as everyday life is also full of negotiations about social positions and struggles over scarce resources, and religion is a category which operates in such processes in an equally problematic manner, even when experts and officials are not involved.

Hurd's study indicates that there is great potential in furthering the conversation between international relations and the study of religion, since both have great interest either in religion or in what people deem to be religion. Despite her references to scholars in the study of religion, there are still gaps which need to be bridged. One such gap is the approach between those who are critical of using religion as an explanatory category in global politics, but keep religion in their analytical vocabulary (like Hurd), and those who agree with the criticism concerning governed religion, but see little value in any analytical definition of religion, including lived religion.

Overall, Hurd's contribution is an excellent and highly useful reminder that there are good reasons to be critical of the explosion of discourse on religion in governmental practices and global politics, and that there are equally good reasons to conclude that religion is a category which is actively involved in how power relationships are organised in the world.

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Marion Bowman and Ülo Valk (eds): *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life: Expressions of Belief*. Sheffield: Equinox, 2012, 404pp.

This edited volume of eighteen chapters contributes to the critical process of seeking and justifying new approaches to and conceptualisations of the more or less 'ordinary' religious behaviour, action, and experience which happen mostly outside religious institutions, but often also in complex and dynamic relationship with tradition. It offers a case-study based approach to the current lively discussion of how to distinguish the two traditional underlying categories of religious studies – 'world religion' and 'folk religion'. These categories have long been built into our discipline's teaching curricula and methodological approaches. The category of 'world religions' has been especially widely debated since Tomoko Masuzawa's *The Invention of World Religions* (2005). In their introduction the editors, Marion Bowman and Ülo Valk, briefly note the complexities and controversies which various categories of religion, and notably 'folk' and 'official' religion, have brought into the history of research. One obvious problem with these categories is that 'folk religion' has often been regarded as 'only' a popular oral version of some 'official' 'world religion'.

Moreover, such categories as 'folk', 'popular', 'world', and 'official' religion have also taken on their own life outside academia as powerful cultural and political tools in the hands of both the secular and religious authorities. The question of how to name the kind of religion we study is therefore far from innocent; nor is it simply a matter of taste. Although there may well be no single good solution to the problem of avoiding this minefield, serious attempts to correct it have been proposed. A valuable overview of this discussion can be read in Robert Orsi's preface to the third edition of his book *The Madonna of 115th Street* (2010).

Religious studies is an interdisciplinary field of research, not a discipline with strict boundaries, and we can identify slightly different solutions to the dilemma of how to approach what was previously called folk or popular religion, especially as it exists in contemporary societies. These approaches overlap in many ways, but they may also have some distinctive features. They often share an inductive and largely ethnographic approach to particular cases and instances falling within a scholar's expertise – which this volume does too. These studies often produce nuanced micro-level and almost emic descriptions of the different ways in which what was previously often called 'folk religion' still flourishes (with important continuities and changes) in various places in the globalising modern world. The level of theoretical clarity and elaboration naturally varies between different scholarly enterprises, and this is the case with this volume. Many scholars also differ in

how they connect their topics with wider cultural and social dynamics.

There are two influential conceptualisations which attempt to capture something important associated with this phenomenon today. They are 'lived religion' – stemming very much from the history and sociology of religion – and 'vernacular religion', the frame chosen by this book – which owes more to folklore studies. The book's editors do not explicitly discuss the relationships and overlaps between the two, but I provide this framing as a simple mapping device for students in our field. I also hope it can help position some of the features of *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life*.

For some years sociologists of religion have used the term 'lived religion' widely when their concern is to discern the contours of the religious action and expression occurring either outside or inside religious institutions, but which is not confined to the institutional and/or dogmatic setting. The emphasis is often on everyday religious or spiritual practices. The North American sociologists of religion Meredith McGuire and Nancy Ammerman and the historian and religious studies scholar Robert Orsi are the oft-cited key figures in this approach. Lived religion is very much motivated by interest in the ethnographic approach and the qualitative methods of the sociology of religion, because quantitative methods leave many gaps and intriguing micro-dynamics (of religious change) for future research. The emphasis of lived religion often prioritises religious practice over belief: McGuire's background theory is Bourdieu's theory of praxis, for example. One aim of the lived religion approach is to critique the opposition between official/unofficial (or popular) religion which has often guided the sociology of religion, but which is now increasingly considered as value-laden and potentially misleading.

Penny Edgell, another North American sociologist of religion, describes lived religion in her 2012 article 'A Cultural Sociology of Religion' as 'a practical, everyday activity oriented toward interacting with superhuman others […] drawing on sacred sources of power […], generating experiences of transcendence and meaning […], or some combination of these goals' (p. 253). She positions lived religion as one of three important *foci* within today's sociology of religion's attempt to understand religious diversity and change in the modern world. The others are the institutional fields shaping belief and practice and their religious cultural tools and symbolic boundaries. Edgell's division shows that 'lived religion' is a wide research area and approach rather than a theory, and this also applies to 'vernacular religion'.

The term 'vernacular religion' was coined by the North American folklore scholar Leonardo Primiano in 1995. He advises that we need to study any religious expression without value judgements or comparisons which suggest it is less

important than other religious forms or versions. Vernacular religion, he suggests, is religion as it is lived – as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practise it. This definition is the starting point of *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life*. The vernacular religion approach has been increasingly adopted and used in British religious studies today, for example, with Marion Bowman and Graham Harvey among its important proponents. Some scholars who take the material religion approach also favour vernacular religion as their overall guiding concept (e.g. Amy Whitehead).

The Finnish folklore scholar Anna-Leena Siikala has adopted 'vernacular religion' and translated it in her *Itämerensuomalaisten mytologia* (2012) (Mythology of the Baltic-Finns) as '*rahvaanuskonto*'. ('Vernacular' and '*rahvas*' refer to the common language into which the Bible was translated from Latin after the Reformation.) Siikala considers the older category of 'folk religion' as, on the one hand, too connected to the Christian traditions of the European peasantry and, on the other, too broad a definition for today's scholarship, because it does not do justice to social and class differences. 'Popular religion', in her opinion, refers mostly to popular versions of institutional religion. She identifies the background of 'vernacular religion' as sociolinguistics, which, she suggests, allows for multidisciplinary research. She agrees with Primiano that it is insufficient to approach religion only at the level of the individual, and that the social background with its various institutions needs to be given serious consideration. Earlier, although perhaps more impressionistically, the professor of comparative religion Juha Pentikäinen proposed that we should distinguish between religion with a capital or small 'r'. The latter, he suggested, was akin to one's mother tongue, that is, the religion into which one was born. This echoes the distinction between 'big' and 'small' tradition. Vernacular religion is not, however, restricted only to such innate religion. In choosing this notion scholars emphasise that the 'vernacular' does not hide important but often neglected social, ethnic, or other differences, and thus takes seriously the issues of identity and representation. This is an important emphasis, and religious studies would do well to increase its sensitivity towards intersectionality.

The contributors to *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life* come from such disciplinary backgrounds as ethnology, ethnography, cultural anthropology, communication studies, literature, religious studies, and folklore studies – the latter representing the majority. This places special emphasis and sensitivity on narratives and other oral expressions in their communicative and performative contexts. Although the book acknowledges the importance of culture's material aspects, the chapters give this somewhat less space. Instead of starting with, testing, or developing a set of theories of religion,

the editors present the volume's chapters as individual discussions of their respective scholarly cases. This serves to make the vernacular approach a very general conceptual umbrella for the chapters, which evince their own theoretical preferences and very diverse materials (archival texts, observations, media materials, etc.). The eighteen chapters and cases present a wide range of topics and materials: household work in pre-modern Russian Karelia (Marja-Liisa Keinänen); a Hungarian healer's identity construction (Judit Kis-Halas); Komi hunting narratives (Art Leepe and Vladimir Lipin); stories of Santiago pilgrims (Tiina Sepp); Hungarian dream narratives (Ágnes Hesz); angels in contemporary Norway confronting the church (Ingvild Gilhus); Argentinian narratives about haunted houses (María Inés Palleiro); acting and animate objects and artefacts and new animism (Graham Harvey) – to name just a few examples. In the last chapter Seppo Knuuttila discusses some epistemological issues in folklore studies, which he summarises as research that has taken as its task the production of different academic theorisations of vernacular theories.

In his epilogue Leonardo Primiano sketches a frame in which he discusses the importance of allowing folklore studies to fertilise religious studies. (In Finnish scholarship this is, of course, nothing new, although in recent years this collaboration has been less visible, and sociological approaches have gained in popularity.) Primiano emphasises that vernacular religion 'highlights the power of the individual and communities of individuals to create and re-create their own religion' (p. 383) and that although individuals live their lives, they also theorise them. This emphasis on individual religious agency is important and frequently presented with various theoretical underpinnings. Primiano maintains that the most important context in vernacular religion and religious agency seems to be the system of communication and folklore genres. He welcomes performance theory and actor network theory as potentially fruitful ways of approaching the complexities and ambiguities traversing vernacular life and religion.

As many of the volume's authors are experts in language, oral expression, and communication, they are well placed to pay close and nuanced attention to the diversity of genres such as myth, legend, personal experience narrative, etc., as well as their varying communicative functions and contexts. This sophisticated level of distinction between communicative genres and their frequently specific functions is certainly not always found in the lived religion approach. It might, however, afford a valuable perspective to be applied and further developed in the more sociological study of lived religion in complex modern contexts. Nancy Ammerman has suggested that modern society, with its more or less 'private' and 'public' spheres and their increasing overlaps, is especially characterised less

by either/or, but by a frequently very complex co-existence of religion's absence and presence. This also means that religion can be present in many ways and degrees in different contexts of communication which, moreover, further multiply and increase in complexity with the increasing pluralisation of societies, worldviews, and ways of life. Given the modern (urban, multicultural, and media saturated) settings and situations, scholars of lived religion from a sociological perspective might profit by learning from their colleagues trained in folklore of the registers and modalities of communication. Yet sociologists of lived religion might perhaps teach folklore scholars to apply a greater emphasis to (macro-) social dynamics and structures. Alternatively, there might be grounds for an acknowledged division of labour.

In their introduction the editors emphasise that what the very different chapters and cases challenge above all is the idea that there is an homogeneity of belief, even in 'traditional' contexts. It is important that they draw attention to the notion of belief: they thus distance themselves from any simplistic suggestion that we should (or indeed can) research vernacular, or any, religion by focusing solely on either belief or practice. Instead, relevant and dynamic ways of framing and accommodating these two sides of the religious coin are needed. This is important, and it might have been elaborated further. The complex issue of belief, and how it should and can be understood and approached in relation to practice and identity, has also been taken up again in the contemporary sociology of religion. Furthermore, this suggests interesting possibilities for increased mutual collaboration between scholars of vernacular and lived religion.

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