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Words from the guest editor

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Guest editor
Stefan Olsson

'I haven't fully understood – is shamanism religion or not?' Some reflections on the concepts of shamanism and religion in Soviet discourse

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Abstract

In this essay the Marxist-Leninist understanding of the concept 'religion' is analysed in relation to how it was applied to the so-called shamanism of the indigenous peoples of the Soviet North. The point of departure is the correspondence between the head of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults in the Soviet Far East and his superior in Moscow. Further, the legal consequences of the somewhat varying Soviet understandings of 'religion' for people adhering to indigenous worldviews and ritual traditions in the Far East is presented. The essay aims to exemplify how definitions of 'religion', as well as the categorising of something as 'religion' or not, rely on social and political circumstances, and whether one finds 'religion', as well as the entities classified as such, to be positive or negative for the individual and society.

Keywords: *concept of religion, concept of shamanism, Soviet policy on religion, Marxism-Leninism, indigenous religion, Nanai, Soviet Far East, Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults*

It was not I who formulated the question in this article's title.[1] Nevertheless, I fully understand the bewilderment it expresses. It is not unreasonable that I should be expected to give a straight answer to the query. After all, I am a professional historian of religions, specialising in the study of so-called shamanism. Simple as it may seem, however, I must first – as part of my profession – pose a few counter-questions: What does 'shamanism' mean

1 This article is a revised and extended version of my article 'Jag har inte fått tillräckligt klart för mig – är schamanism religion eller inte?', published in Swedish in *Thule. Kungl. Skytteanska Samfundets Årsbok* (2013, 65–82). I thank the Swedish Research Council (*Vetenskapsrådet*) for its financial support for the project 'Repression of "shamans" in the Soviet North in the late 1920s through the 1950s: an archival study' (Dnr 2009-1992). But above all, with this article, I wish to express my gratitude for the many years of learning and encouragement that I have been given by Professor Håkan Rydving, University of Bergen, Norway.

in this context? What is meant by 'religion' here? And in what context is the question asked?

In the following I will present how the question of whether 'shamanism' might be considered 'religion' was discussed in the Soviet Union, and why this became an issue at all. For it was the head of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults in Khabarovsk, in the Soviet Far East, who expressed his confusion concerning whether shamanism was religion or not. His name was B. M. Grebennikov.

The Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults

The Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (*Совет по делам религиозных культов*) was established in May 1944 during the Second World War. In the previous September a corresponding council for the affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church had been founded by the Soviet government.[2] Grebennikov's council's task was therefore to handle issues related to all religious bodies except the Russian Orthodox Church. The creation of the two councils – which were under the direct supervision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR – was a consequence of the partial recognition that certain religious organisations received in the Soviet Union during the war. Before this, in the 1920s and 1930s, Bolshevik policy was directed at marginalising the influence on Soviet society and its citizens of the Orthodox Church and other religions. In the long term the goal was to eradicate religious organisations and beliefs, and develop the ideal, rationality-based society that the Marxist-Leninist ideology predicted. However, despite large-scale repressions, the Communist Party had not succeeded in completely expelling religions or religiosity. Faced with the threat from Nazi Germany, the Stalin regime needed national consolidation, and especially the moral support of the Russian Orthodox Church. Religions were therefore granted a reprieve, and anti-religious campaigns were called off. The newly inaugurated Patriarch of Moscow, Sergius, who had already declared the Church's loyalty to the communist regime in 1927, encouraged all Christians to defend the Soviet Union from the attacking fascists (see Sundström 2007, 77–94).

Formally, freedom of conscience and religion prevailed in the Soviet Union. Admittedly, alongside the declaration of this right, in paragraph 124 of the constitution, a Bolshevik policy statement was interposed: 'Freedom

2 In December 1965 the two councils were fused into the Council for Religious Affairs (*Совет по делам религии*). This council was dissolved in November 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

of religious worship and *freedom of antireligious propaganda* is recognized for all citizens' (italics mine).[3] According to the 1927 law on religious associations there were also several restrictions on religious practice. All public religious instruction and propaganda, including the dissemination of religious literature, were forbidden. Religious instruction was permitted only in private and to no more than three persons at a time. The only places where religious rituals, or 'prayers' (*молитвы*), were allowed were premises registered for this purpose by registered religious organisations. A religious association was allowed no more than one such building for services. To become a registered religious association, it was required to show that there was a permanent congregation with at least twenty members.[4]

It was the responsibility of the two councils to authorise or deny the registration applications of religious organisations, as well as of their leaders (priests, ministers, rabbis, imams, lamas) and houses of worship. The councils were also to gather information on and monitor religious associations and ensure that relations between these groups and governmental or local authorities were correct and ran smoothly. In reality much of the work of the councils consisted in dealing with complaints from congregations and their members, both concerning disagreements with the authorities and internal disputes within congregations. In handling the cases the councils should constantly be guided by both the constitutional freedom of religion, and the government's general goal outlined in its policy on religion. Since the underlying aim of the Communist Party was to combat religion, it also fell upon the councils' officials to support organisations and institutions that pursued anti-religious work (Luchterhand 1993; Serdiuk 2011). Thus, representatives of the councils had a rather ambiguous position: on the one hand they should satisfy the constitutionally legitimate demands of religious groups; on the other they should take measures to withhold the same groups' development potential (Serdiuk 2011, 100).

B. M. Grebennikov took office as head of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults in Khabarovsk Krai in 1948. He was a veteran of the last battles of the Civil War in the Russian Far East and had long been committed

3 This applies to the Soviet constitution of 1936 (see Konstitutsiia SSSR 1936: www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/cnst1936.htm; for an English translation, see 1936 Constitution of the USSR: www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/36cons04.html; accessed on 21st May 2018). It might be added that the right to pursue *religious* propaganda – which was declared in the first constitution of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic – was thereafter omitted from the text.

4 For translations of the decrees and laws regarding religions and religious services in the Soviet Union 1918–1929, with the amendments of 1961, 1965 and 1975, see Pospielovsky (1987, 135–146). This legislation was in force until October 1990.

to the Communist Party. His work at the council was shared with assignments for the Regional Executive Committee of the Party – a situation which seems to have been common among heads of regional departments of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults. The council's tasks were simply insufficient for a full-time post. Indeed, in 1952 Grebennikov himself asked to be dismissed because of his light workload. There were then only three registered non-Orthodox congregations in Khabarovsk Krai, two Evangelical and one Jewish (Serdiuk 2011, 96f.).

If possible, security service personnel were recruited to leading positions in the councils for religious affairs. Failing this, experienced Party workers were selected. Grebennikov belonged to the second category, whereas his chief in Moscow, I. V. Polianskii, had a long career within the Soviet security agencies (from 1954 the KGB). In 1921 he had started working for the Cheka and from 1935 he held a leading position in the NKVD in the Leningrad Region, advancing to its central office in Moscow in 1942. Five years later, in 1947, he was installed as chair of the central Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults in the Soviet Union.[5]

Grebennikov's area of responsibility was mainly Khabarovsk Krai (Khabarovsk Territory), the south-eastern region of the Soviet Far East. The territory was vast and sparsely populated: an area roughly the size of Sweden and Finland. The population in the 1959 census was just over one million (1,142,535), the majority of which (74%) was concentrated in urban areas.[6] Although there were very few non-Orthodox *registered* religious associations in the territory in 1952, the area was relatively multi-religious as well as multi-ethnic. Many Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese lived in the southern areas, which had been conquered by tsarist Russia from China as late as the mid-nineteenth century. These groups had, however, been subjected to ethnic cleansing in the 1930s and 1940s and had consequently diminished.[7] Grebennikov was also responsible for the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, which had been established by the Bolsheviks as the Jewish socialist

5 Information on Polianskii's career was obtained from the homepage of the Russian state archives: <http://guides.rusarchives.ru/browse/gbfond.html?bid=407&fund_id=1246204>, accessed on 25th February 2013.

6 See <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus59_reg1.php>, accessed on 5th February 2018. I consider the data from the census of 1959 to be the most relevant for the period described in this article. Besides, the preceding censuses in the Soviet Union were conducted in 1937 and 1939, before the Second World War, and have been criticised for containing several flaws.

7 The forced displacement of Koreans from the Soviet Far East to Soviet Central Asia in the autumn of 1937 is actually one of the first examples of forced population resettlements during Stalin's reign (see Pohl 1999, 9ff.).

homeland in the 1930s (see Åhlander 2010). Among the peoples of European descent there were groups of Orthodox Old Believers, Baptists, and several minor Christian sects. Besides, there were several indigenous peoples inhabiting the area: the Nanai, Negidals, Udege, Oroch, Ulch, Evenki, Eveni, and Nivkhi. Traditionally, these groups subsisted from hunting, fishing, and (in northern areas) reindeer husbandry. These peoples had their own traditional worldviews and ritual practices, collectively labelled 'shamanism' by the Russians. Even if certain varieties were noted by ethnographers specialising in the study of these groups, in the Soviet discourse 'shamanism' was considered more or less uniform among the indigenous peoples of the Soviet North, from the Sami on the Kola Peninsula in the North-West to the Chukchi in the North-East and the Nanai in the South-East.

The concepts 'shaman' and 'shamanism'

It is difficult to conclude what the common denominator among the many different so-called shamans and shamanisms in the Soviet North was, not to mention all the other instances of ritual practitioners and practices worldwide for which these concepts have been used by outside observers.[8] I agree with H. Rydving that the concepts 'shaman' and 'shamanism' are, as a rule, too general in content to be useful as analytical tools and therefore ought to be abandoned in comparative research. By using these vaguely defined concepts in comparisons we create 'an illusion of (regional and global) homogeneity' and risk assuming similarities between different indigenous traditions that are simply not there (Rydving 2011, 27f.). For my purposes it is important to note that, as Rydving (2011, 9) states, '"the shaman" is not a person, but a concept'. As concepts 'shaman' and 'shamanism' are categorisations made by outsiders – in this case mainly Russians – who have used them to classify certain functionaries and cultural expressions among the indigenous peoples of the North. Not least, this is important to remember when dealing with information on the indigenous peoples of Khabarovsk Krai, who (with the exception of the Nivkhi) speak Manchu-Tungus languages. It is from these languages that the term *shaman* was borrowed by Russian and other European languages in the seventeenth century, eventually becoming a virtually universal category in the dictionaries of anthropologists and scholars of religion. The Manchu-Tungus-speaking peoples called some of their ritual specialists – classified as 'shamans' by outsiders – *sama*, *saman*,

8 For a further presentation of my views on the concepts 'shaman' and 'shamanism' in the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts, see Sundström 2012a.

or *šaman*. However, their category and their views on the ritual specialists in question should not be confused with the European-language category 'shaman'. Ideas and expectations of a 'shaman' among proponents of Soviet ideology differed greatly from the ideas and expectations the Nanai, for example, traditionally had of a *sama*. In this article the concepts 'shaman' and 'shamanism' are used in the Soviet-Russian sense.

Grebennikov's confusion

In a letter of May 1949 Grebennikov turned questioningly to his superior in Moscow, Polianskii: 'I haven't fully understood – is shamanism religion or not?' (*Я недостаточно уясним – является шаманство религия или нет?*). The reason he was so puzzled and demanded an answer was that it seemed to him that shamans within his jurisdiction performed rituals quite openly, and that nothing – or at least too little – was being done by the local authorities to stop them. Furthermore, he had come across diametrically opposed reasons for not interrupting shamanic activities. Some officials refrained from taking measures against shamans because they did not consider shamanism to be religion at all. Others thought it impossible to bring action against shamans because the Soviet constitution granted freedom of religion (GAKhK, f. 1359, op. 3, no. 3).

In his letter Grebennikov reports an anecdote to exemplify the situation. A couple of weeks previously he had received an old acquaintance, a Nanai hunter by the name of Gekker, who was visiting the city of Khabarovsk for hospital treatment. Gekker told Grebennikov about the shaman Onenko[9] from the nomad settlement of Tneivakh, who had come to the village of Koiminskii dressed in full shamanic regalia and in broad daylight started 'shamanising' with his drum. A large crowd, including several children, had witnessed the ritual. After drumming and dancing for a while the shaman had turned to the audience and contended that he was possessed by a 'spirit' who spoke through him. If the people did not sacrifice meat, fish, vodka, clothes, or money to the spirit, it would be offended and cause bad luck in hunting and fishing. A police officer was present, and he arrested

9 Only the surname is mentioned in the letter. Onenko is a Nanai family to which many famous shamans have belonged. In relation to this it could be mentioned that the only Nanai shaman who (by archival sources) has been confirmed as executed during the repressions of the 1930s was Bogdan Londonovich Onenko. He was arrested on 12th September 1937, sentenced by a special troika of the NKVD and shot on 22nd November the same year (*Khotelos' by vsekh poimmeno nazvat'* 1999, 176). For further information on and an analysis of B. L. Onenko's destiny, see Bulgakova & Sundström 2017, 249f.

Onenko, despite protests from the other spectators. The next day the police officer brought Onenko to the police station in Bogorodskoie.[10] Once there the arresting officer had been loudly rebuked by the chief of police, who pointed out that 'the constitution permits religion'. The shaman had then been released (GAKhK, f. 1359, op. 3, no. 3).

From one of Grebennikov's earlier (June 1948) quarterly reports 'on the doings of religious cults in Khabarovsk Krai' we learn that when he took up his post as head of the council he had been instructed by Polianskii to investigate and report on the activities of shamans in the territory. Since Grebennikov himself did not have time to travel around the vast area, he had engaged a certain comrade Khodzher, who, besides being an instructor for the territory's executive committee, was himself Nanai and known for having many contacts among the indigenous population. Grebennikov asked Khodzher to gather information on how many shamans were active in the area, how often they performed rituals, the extent to which they had influence over the local population, and what the attitude of the locals was to them. After his trip Khodzher reported that he had identified several shamans, some of whom he had persuaded to give up shamanism and destroy their ritual equipment such as drums, masks, costumes, and bells. These shamans had promised no longer to call on the spirits since, as they themselves put it, 'this is illegal'. Regarding the attitude of the people, Khodzher noted that it was almost only the elderly who consulted shamans, and only when they needed a cure for some disease. When ill the older generation put their trust in these 'charlatans' and 'quacks', but in normal circumstances even the elderly, just like all the others, 'laugh at the shamans and do not put faith in their sorcery [*колдовство*]'. However, Khodzher said, no one actually forbade shamanic rituals, and the general attitude towards shamans was relatively tolerant. It was not until after Khodzher's visits to the villages, where he had arranged meetings and agitated against shamanism, that the locals had started preventing the shamans from performing their profession. Grebennikov concludes his quarterly report by informing his superiors that he had instructed all the local executive committees to prohibit shamanism and impose sanctions on active shamans (GAKhK, f. 1359, op. 3, no. 4).

Although Grebennikov, as head of an authority handling the affairs of *religious* cults, had the surveillance of shamans as one of his tasks, he was still uncertain whether shamanism was to be classified as religion. Yet another

10 Bogorodskoie is the district centre of the Ulchski District in Khabarovsk Krai, situated along the Amur River, some 820 kilometres downstream from Khabarovsk.

reason for his confusion was that shamanism appeared so disorganised and wild to him – or as he wrote to Polianskii:

> […] shamans do not perform any kind of religious rituals, they just jump, dance, beat the drum, roll around, and mumble incomprehensible words, [and] after the dance they throw themselves on the ground, screaming that they are possessed by a 'spirit' that needs meat, vodka, clothes, etc. and if people do not give any gifts to the 'spirit' it can get angry and cause bad hunting and fishing luck or disease. There are still those who believe in such stupidities (GAKhK, f. 1359, op. 3, no. 3).

To get an answer to his question – and thereby be able to determine how to appropriately handle these 'stupidities' – Grebennikov had studied what he understood to be the state-of-the-art research of his time, I. Kuskoie's book *К вопросу о шаманизме* ('On the question of shamanism'), L. Ia. Shternberg's *Первобытная религия* ('Primitive religion'), and J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. However, he had not come closer to an answer to his query through this reading (and he was probably not the first, nor the last, civil servant disappointed by not getting a straightforward and practically applicable answer from scholars). He therefore now wanted an answer from his boss in Moscow.

The question of 'shamanism' as 'religion' in earlier Russian and Soviet debate

Perhaps Grebennikov merely wished to be rid of a task that was difficult to handle – if shamanism was not considered a 'religious cult', cases concerning shamans and shamanism should not end up on his desk. But the question whether shamanism was religion or not had been a subject of discussion earlier in the Soviet Union. By the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s some academics felt it necessary to resolve this question in light of the new political winds.

In pre-revolutionary times many Russian Orthodox missionaries in the northern parts of Russia, Siberia, and the Far East had contended that the indigenous peoples of the North lacked religion. They interpreted the so-called shamanism they observed as either devil-worship or naive, ignorant nonsense. In this discourse shamanism was classified as 'paganism' (*язычество*) or 'superstition' (*суеверие*), something that was the absolute opposite of Christian (Orthodox) 'religion'. If the term *religion* was used for

indigenous worldviews and ritual systems, it was considered 'false religion' (for examples, see Znamenski 1999, 67–81; Znamenski 2003, 43–130). This dichotomy has its roots as far back as in classical antiquity, where Cicero posed the term *religio* in opposition to *superstitio*. *Religio* referred to the correct worship of the Roman gods, whereas *superstitio* denoted the (condemned) cult of foreign gods. Thus, when early Christianity appeared it was first classified as *superstitio* by the Romans. Later, *religio* would be conquered, so to speak, by the Christians, when the Church Father Lactantius defined Christianity as *vera religio*, in contrast to *falsa religio* (see Hellman 2011, 30–3). E. Hellman comments on this classical dichotomy that:

> in both Cicero and Lactantius it is illustrated how *religio*, through the strategies of inclusion and exclusion, establishes and maintains theological and political authority. Constitutive for *religio* was loyalty to an external authority (the Roman state or the Church) […]. Breach of this loyalty was denounced as *superstitio* or *falsa religio* (Hellman 2011, 32f.; my translation).

Lenin and the Bolsheviks opposed religion of any kind. But the Russian Orthodox Church was the religion they combatted above all during and immediately after the Revolution. This church was not merely a close ally of the tsarist regime the communists opposed – tsarism and Orthodoxy were seen as two aspects of the same oppressive system, together comprising worldly and spiritual power.

Shamanism, on the other hand, was not then identified as a religion or as a direct enemy by the revolutionaries. Since the anti-religious measures taken by the communist regime – the closing of churches, the circumscribing of church services, the arrest and even executions of religious leaders – at first targeted the Orthodox Church, and since this church had earlier persecuted so-called shamanism, traditional indigenous practices experienced a resurgence in the 1920s. In short, the practice of shamanism became more common, at least in the open (see Sundström 2007, 118–22; Bulgakova & Sundström 2017, 229–33 with further references). However, the situation changed when the indigenous peoples of the North were also to be integrated in the modern socialist state in the second half of the 1920s. Now, the traditional social structures and hierarchies among the indigenous peoples were to be overthrown. This followed the same pattern as the reshaping of Russian culture. Richer than average reindeer owners on the tundra were defined as 'kulaks', and the traditional spiritual and ritual leaders – the 'shamans' – were classified as the indigenous equivalents of Orthodox priests.

It was not until 1926 that 'shamans' were added to the list of 'servants of religious cults', together with priests, monks, pastors, mullahs, rabbis, etc., in Soviet legislation. Thereby, they also lost their civic rights to vote and be elected to local councils, to own property, and to join the new kolkhozes (Pospielovsky 1987, 137f.; see further Sundström 2007, 127ff.).

This change in the interpretation of shamanism is well illustrated by I. Kosokov, an ethnographer who published an anti-shamanic pamphlet for the League of Militant Atheists (*Союз воинствующих безбожников*), an organisation with close ties to the Communist Party with the mission of eradicating religion from the Soviet Union (see Peris 1998; Sundström 2007, 89f.). Kosokov argued as follows against those who claimed that shamanism was not a religion:

> In our days to deny shamanism the character of religion means denying the necessity of a resolute struggle against shamanism, which serves as a major obstacle to the construction of socialism among the most backward peoples of the Soviet Union, and which serves as a direct instrument for the kulaks in their exploitation of the working masses among the indigenous peoples of Siberia (Kosokov 1930, 6; my translation).

V. G. Bogoraz-Tan, arguably the most prominent Soviet ethnographer of the time, who had extensive field experiences among the peoples of the extreme north-east of Asia, contributed to this debate. He argued that Christianity and shamanism were of the same kind and predicted that 'neither the shaman nor the priest has a place in the socialist society, and they will both perish entirely':

> Icons must constantly be placed on a par with indigenous idols, priestly rituals with shamanic rituals, and Christ himself, his death and resurrection placed on a par with […] the mysteries of the bear cult, which in the same way includes the death and resurrection of the powerful animal – god (Bogoraz-Tan 1932, 157; my translation).

Thus, in Stalin's 'revolution from above' (1928–1932) shamanism was placed in the same category as Christianity – and *vice versa*, of course. This category was a fusion of the earlier categories 'religion' and 'superstition'; and 'religion' (*qua* 'superstition') was the absolute opposite of Marxism-Leninism, the official worldview of the Communist Party ruling the Soviet Union.

Religion as a problem in the Soviet Union

Why then was it so important to combat religion in the Soviet Union? There were two basic reasons for the Marxist-Leninists' resentment of religion. The first could be called ideological – religion disseminated false consciousness and made people conform to destructive social relations. In short, the communists saw religion as untrue and harmful. The other reason was power-political. To implement the transformations of society they sought, the Bolsheviks thought it necessary to impose the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', with the Party in the vanguard. In the totalitarian system established under Stalin there was no room for competing ideologies and organisations disloyal to the communist cause. The Party claimed a monopoly on the beliefs and logic allowed to influence society.

Another question, much more difficult to solve, was how best to overcome religion. Put simply, there were two main strategies, which can be illustrated by Marx's well-known opium metaphor (Marx & Engels 1964, 378) and its two slightly different translations.

In the Soviet understanding comparing religion with opium meant that religion was a sedative, which, it was true, gave people comfort and a certain relief when facing hardship, suffering, and oppression. However, it was a false comfort and a false relief that merely paralysed the believer. Made passive by the comfort of religious beliefs, religious people were unable to see their actual needs and to strive to improve their situation.

The literal translation of Marx's phrase *das Opium des Volks* is 'the opium of the people/people's opium' (or in Russian *опиум народа*). This formulation indicates that religion is interpreted as having evolved among the people (or the individual) because of, and as a compensation for, suffering and want. Thus, if people's material needs were satisfied, and economic, political, and social injustices overcome, religion would wither away, because its cause would cease to exist.

In some Soviet publications, however, we find the translation *опиум для народа*, literally 'opium for the people'. This translation reveals the other Marxist-Leninist understanding of the origin and function of religion: that it is imposed on the people by the exploiting ruling class, and that priests and other 'servants of religious cults' use it as an instrument to keep the toiling class numb and maintain an unjust social order. 'Opium *for* the people' was appropriately counteracted by ousting the exploiters and their priests, who duped the working class with propaganda about a divine order and promises of awards for the sufferer in the afterlife. Only by eradicating religious institutions and their leaders could the people cast off the religious yoke.

Although in his writings Lenin used the first (and literal) translation (*опиум народа*/'opium of the people'),[11] both strategies belonged to his analysis of how best to come to terms with religion (Lenin 1954, 4, 6–9; Lenin 1968, 142f.). Both strategies are also detectable in the concrete religious policy pursued in his name in the Soviet Union.[12]

Concerning the Soviet policy towards the indigenous religions of the North, the two strategies were also discussed. In the article by Bogoraz-Tan cited above the author called for an intensified struggle against the indigenous religions, which he considered to be the strongest impediment to the implementation of socialism among the peoples of the Soviet North. However, he thought it important to distinguish between 'religious organisation' and 'religious ideology'. In the North the religious organisation was constituted, according to Bogoraz-Tan, by 'shamanism' and the religious ideology was 'animism'. The anti-religious work that had been undertaken and proposed by the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s – such as anti-religious propaganda, the expropriation of ritual and sacred objects, the expulsion of shamans from communities, and the prohibition of shamanic activities – had been focused only on shamanism, the religious organisation. However, these measures were ineffective in countering the religious ideology, animism, the very foundation of shamanism, wrote Bogoraz-Tan. The religious ideology was best fought through the total transformation of the traditional economies and social structures (Bogoraz-Tan 1932, 144–57). Bogoraz-Tan finally suggested the industrialisation of Siberia and the Far East, because: 'Factory workers […] are materialists in their relation to production and they cannot accept a naive animism, which is tied to a primitive form of subsistence economy' (Bogoraz-Tan 1932, 150). Emphasising the significance of defining shamanism as a religion and distinguishing between the religious organisation and religious ideology, he concludes:

> if the struggle against the shaman can and should be linked to the struggle against the kulaks, then the struggle against the shamanic religion, i.e. against shamanic animism, needs to be closely linked to the struggle against [Christian] Orthodoxy (Bogoraz-Tan 1932, 157; my translation).

11 In the English translation of Lenin's collected works, published in the Soviet Union, the translation 'opium for the people' has been chosen (Lenin 1965, 83). This has led some prominent British specialists in Marxism to believe that Lenin mistranslated Marx; and from this they have drawn somewhat inaccurate conclusions about Lenin's analysis of religion (see Thrower 1983, 350; McLellan 1987, 105; and my own discussion in Sundström 2007, 68f. footnote 153).
12 For a more exhaustive discussion on Marxist-Leninist theory on religion and Soviet religious policy, see Sundström 2007.

In terms of Marxist-Leninist doctrine one can understand Bogoraz-Tan's 'religious organisation', represented by shamans and priests, as corresponding to the 'opium *for* the people', while the 'religious ideology', animism and Christianity, is the 'opium *of* the people'. They were both undesirable in the socialist society under construction, but they could not be combatted in the same way.

Bogoraz-Tan published his article in 1932. The industrialisation and modernisation he had advocated followed – not because as an ethnographer he had suggested it, however, but because of larger political and economic processes. In the wake of these processes there were fierce campaigns against shamans and shamanism, informed by the general struggle against religion. Many shamans were persecuted one way or another during the 1930s in the somewhat chaotic intensified struggle against shamanism, but it should be mentioned that the evidence for general arrests and executions of shamans in the Far East is quite contradictory and uncertain. The new Soviet constitution of 1936 restored civic rights and rehabilitated shamans, together with all other 'servants of religious cults' (for more detailed investigations and discussions of these processes in the Far East see Bulgakova & Sundström 2017; and Ivashchenko 2017). Although shamans and shamanism became increasingly marginalised in the indigenous communities during the 1930s, shamans were still active at the end of the 1940s, and there is even evidence that shamanism thrived anew to an extent during the Second World War (Smoljak 1998, 227, 251). Grebennikov's reports confirm this observation.

Polianskii's reply

How did his superior in Moscow respond to Grebennikov's inquiry? Was shamanism religion or not? At first the reply was quite clear: 'Yes, it is'; shamanism was religion. Polianskii then explained what religion was, paraphrasing Engels' (for the Soviet context) normative definition of religion: 'every religion is a fantastic reflection [in humans' minds] which controls human beings, i.e. such a reflection in which terrestrial forces assume the shape of supernatural ones' (GAKhK, f. 1359, op.3, no. 3).[13] Religion was thus an illusion, a chimera, and shamanism was no exception according to Polianskii:

13 The original quotation from Engels can be found in Marx & Engels 1962, 294f.

> Like all other religion, the basis of shamanism is found in belief in the supernatural, and in belief in malevolent and benevolent spirits. The only difference between shamanism and other religious cults (Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, etc.) consists in that in [the former] there are remnants of primitive savagery and primitive magic. Shamans drive both themselves and those present to insanity with their acts […] (GAKhK, f. 1359, op.3, no. 3; my translation).[14]

However, although Polianskii clearly saw shamanism as religion, it does not follow that he saw shamanic practices as falling under the freedom of conscience and religion. Without further explanation he declared that the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults could not register groups that practised shamanism. Shamanism was therefore forbidden, on a par with some minor (unregistered) Christian sects.

One conclusion to be drawn from Polianskii's reply is that the reasons for allowing a religion to be practised were mainly related to power politics. Those religious groups that were permitted (and consequently registered) were organised and institutionalised in a way familiar to the authorities: they resembled the Orthodox Church in their structure. Shamanism was too disorganised and wild – and it could therefore not be properly controlled.

One can discern a legacy from the Russian Orthodox missionaries in both Polianskii's and Grebennikov's attitudes towards shamanism. They saw it as 'primitive savagery' and 'stupidities' leading to 'insanity'. When Polianskii contrasts shamanism with Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity, he seems to repeat the earlier division between 'superstition' and 'religion'.

Grebennikov also wanted to legally restrict shamanism on the grounds of its purported superstitious character – once it had been declared a 'religious cult', but not one that could register or be afforded the protection of the constitutional freedom of religion. In March 1950 he sent a draft of a letter to Polianskii. He intended that the letter be sent to all chairs of executive committees of the Communist Party in the Nanai District of Khabarovsk

14 Polianskii's definition of religion (derived from another text by Engels, obviously inspired by E. B. Tylor; see Sundström 2007, 55–9) as belief in the 'supernatural' and 'spirits' is a type of definition which is still current (see e.g. Jong 2017; Sutherland 2017). The crucial problem with this definition concerns the criteria for something to be classified as 'supernatural' or as 'spirits', and on what grounds such classifications are made. Traditionally, the practitioners of so-called shamanism did not use concepts such as 'religion', the 'supernatural', or 'spirits'. These are the classifications of outside observers. I have earlier discussed this problem (Sundström 2008; Sundström 2012b) and will return to it in a forthcoming publication.

Krai. Grebennikov wrote the draft, but the idea was that the sender should be the chair of the Party's central executive committee in the territory.

In the letter Grebennikov described the increasing activity of shamans in the district and said that they were now openly performing their rituals and attracting large audiences. The rituals were accompanied by drinking bouts for which people slaughtered pigs and chickens (at the expense of the kolkhozes). Four shamans were identified by name, and the villages in which they practised specified. Obviously, representatives of local authorities knew about these shamanic activities, but instead of taking steps to prevent them, they participated themselves in the rituals. Having paraphrased Polianskii's view that shamans drove both themselves and their audiences to insanity and that shamanism was forbidden, Grebennikov summarised the letter in elaborate bureaucratic style:

> The executive committee [of Khabarovsk Krai] recommends you, who receive this letter, to take severe measures, with the help of the police organs and the village councils, in connection with the termination of shamans' activities, [and] on the disclosure of shamanising [*комлений*[15]] taking it as far as to destroy shamanic equipment and prosecute especially harmful shamans both on charges of deceiving the people and for fooling certain superstitious individuals (GAKhK, f. 1359, op. 3, d. 6; my translation).

The letter's conclusion requested the chairs of the executive committees to ensure that local authorities pursue 'undiminished surveillance' of identified shamans and continue to expose those yet to be identified.

In his covering letter to Polianskii Grebennikov stressed that he himself found it necessary to take the 'most severe measures' (*самые жесткие меры*) to end shamanism. To accomplish this one had to start arresting shamans and put them on trial according to paragraph 123 of the penal code (GAKhK, f. 1359, op. 3, d. 6). This paragraph criminalised 'deceitful acts with the purpose of rousing superstition among the masses for one's own benefit'. The penalty for breaking this law was up to one year in a corrective labour camp or a fine of five hundred roubles.

Polianskii may have feared that the proposed letter would instigate a large-scale persecution of shamans, reminiscent of the 'terror' which had characterised the 1930s and which was probably only too familiar to him as a former high-ranking official of the NKVD. Alternatively, he may simply

15 *Комлений* is Grebennikov's (mis)spelling of the common Russian word for 'shamanising' or 'shamanic ritual', *камлание*.

have thought that Grebennikov was wasting his own and the executive committee chairs' time on what from Moscow seemed a rather insignificant problem. In any event Polianskii advised against sending the letter to the executive committees. Instead, he declared that administrative and legal measures should be taken against shamans only when they were caught in the act of clearly breaking the law (GAKhK, f. 1359, op. 3, d. 6).

Concluding remarks

I have sought to illustrate with the above examples of the discussions in the Soviet Union that the question of whether a certain cultural expression is considered religion or not can only with difficulty be answered apart from social and political contexts – and the question is rarely raised outside such contexts. Perhaps one could imagine a completely detached investigation of the concepts of shamanism and religion in academia. However, current socio-political considerations tend to enter even the most secluded rooms of the ivory tower. This is one of the reasons 'religion' (like 'shamanism') is so difficult to handle as a scientific concept in comparative research.

The concept of religion is, and has been, imbued with varying connotations and values in different societies and contexts. Whether one classifies a certain entity as 'religion' depends on whether religion is understood as something positive or negative – edifying or harmless, or detrimental for the individual or society. As a matter of course, it also depends on whether the entity to be classified is understood as something positive or negative. This is hardly news – but it is still topical.

* * *

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The impact of the Reformation on the formation of mentality and the moral landscape in the Nordic countries[1]

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Abstract

Along with the Lutheran world the Nordic countries celebrated the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation on 31st October 2017. In this article I shall examine the impact of Luther's reform on the formation of mentality and the moral landscape in the Nordic countries. Special reference is made to the impact of Lutheranism on the indigenous Sámi culture, a topic which has been explored extensively by Håkan Rydving, the expert in Sámi language and religion.

Keywords: *Reformation, Martin Luther, Nordic countries, national identity, mentality, Sámi, Laestadianism*

The Protestant Reformation has played an extremely important role in the historical development of Europe during the last five hundred years. No other event in European history has received such widespread attention. It took place in the obscure fortress and university town of Wittenberg on 31st October 1517. A single hand-written text containing ninety-five theses against the beliefs and practices of the medieval Catholic Church opened a new era in European history. The well-known story tells us that the Augustinian monk and university professor Martin Luther came to his theological moment by the single act of nailing his ninety-five theses to the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg (Roper 2016). Whether Luther used a nail to pin his theses on the door is a myth which cannot be verified. As Lyndal Roper writes in her biographical study of Martin Luther, the initial intention of the Reformer was not to spark a religious revolution, but to start an academic debate (Roper 2016, 2). Luther did not intend that the theses should be published or read more widely beyond a small circle of scholars

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(Roper 2016, 96).

The Reformation marks the break-up of Europe's religious unity. A common adherence to the Christian faith was a major component in the formation of European identity. The beginning of confessional plurality gave rise to the birth of a modern, literate, and intellectually rational Europe. One of the great thrusts of the Reformation, according to historians and sociologists of religion, has been the impetus towards universal education brought on by a theology which stressed the 'priesthood of all believers' (Hargrove 1971, 157–158). Individual conscience was detached from the institution of the church, which gave direct access to individuals to the sacred scriptures. In emphasising the importance of the individual the ethos of the Reformation paved the way for the emergence of humanism. In addition to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution the Protestant creation of the individual has often been related to the growth of science, education, economic development, and secularisation. Protestantism transformed the religious map of Europe by creating a new fabric of plural religious cultures in relation to the shifting boundaries between the religious and the secular domains of society. The outcome of the Reformation was several entangled religious Europes with differing dialectical relationships between nation states and the churches as well as other religious denominations and faith traditions. While Southern Europe remained Catholic, the three Northern Kingdoms in Scandinavia, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and to a certain extent also Estonia and Latvia in the Baltic, together with Germany and England, received Protestantism and have maintained their reformed religious heritage ever since. The total population of the reformed Nordic-Baltic nations is close to thirty million. The Evangelical Lutheran Churches in the Nordic countries are folk churches, or 'peoples' churches'. Insofar as the Nordic Evangelical Lutheran Churches are constituted by their members, the people, the outcome of the Reformation was in practice the formation of various state churches (Rémond 1999, 19–23).

In as much as Luther's Reformation created a new religious culture the aim of which was to question certain established beliefs and practices of Catholic faith revolving around the notion of grace and salvation, monastic vows, devotion to the saints, and the trade in relics, it was a matter of a more intense engagement with secular politics. During its five-hundred year history, in alliance with the state, the Lutheran Church has exercised more severe ecclesiastical control and discipline over the individual's autonomy in Nordic Lutheran societies than has been the case in Southern European Catholic countries.

The birth of state Lutheranism in Sweden-Finland

Lutheran churches have become inextricably associated with nation-building in the Nordic countries by establishing *the* religious register, intertwined with definitions of citizenship, according to which people have become attached both to the church and the nation. However, the church did not acquire its hegemonic position over folk life in the Nordic societies through the Reformation. The church's influence on the collective social order had already been implanted during the Catholic era. Prior to the Reformation the church exerted total dominance over people's lives in medieval folk culture: their participation in the annual ecclesiastical feast days and life-cycle rituals as well as through its setting of moral standards according to which the common people attuned their behaviour and choices in the diverse situations of everyday life (see Talve 1997, 234). However, the Reformation was an extremely important event in the history of Nordic societies from the perspective of its impact on an individual's mentality and moral landscape. A change in religion is never, however, a linear process, but is 'driven by conflict, tension, and antagonisms between opposing forces' (Goldstein 2009, 158). After King Gustav Vasa (1521/23–1560) launched the Reformation in Sweden-Finland it became a more political than religious process. The Reformation played a key role in the making of the Nordic secular, state-church loyal and obedient citizen. In 2018 between sixty-five and eighty percent of all Nordic citizens belong to national Lutheran churches in all Nordic societies.

By the end of the sixteenth century (formally, 1593) Lutheranism had been integrated into the governing of the state and received a hegemonic status in the kingdom (see Markkola 2015, 4). After the Reformation King Gustav Vasa confiscated the land that had belonged to the Catholic Church and monasteries. He also decided on all clerical appointments and limited the rights of bishops and diocesan chapters (Hiljanen 2017, 195). The Reformation gave the king the opportunity to radically cut funding not only for the bishops but also for other ecclesiastical authorities for the benefit of the crown as well as for his own and the nobility's interests. In its earliest stage the Reformation in Sweden was more a political than a religious process. The loss of property and income entailed great distress for the church, which had earlier played an important role in the care of the poor and sick as well as in supporting talented young men in pursuing higher education. After the confiscations the church was no longer able to take care of these functions as it had previously. With the closing of the monasteries in Sweden, including the Diocese of Turku, which covered the territory of the present

state of Finland, the Reformation meant an end to the monastic schools. The Reformation and the church's diminished income also complicated the activity of the local ecclesiastical schools, because parishes' income declined radically (Salonen 2018, forthcoming).

The transition from Catholicism to Protestantism had a profound effect on education, literacy, and reading skills in the Nordic setting. The Lutheran emphasis on the vernacular also evoked responses in Finland. The vernacular was elevated to the status of a language for religion and school education. In the Middle Ages three written languages were in use in the Eastland of Sweden, later to become Finland: Latin for ecclesiastical matters, Swedish for legal and administrative purposes, and the lingua franca of the Hanseatic League, Middle-Low German, for commercial correspondence. Finnish was not used in written form – or at least no evidence has survived of this apart from single Finnish words, such as place or person names, in documents written in other languages (Salonen 2018, forthcoming).

The Nordic alliance between the Lutheran ethic and social democracy

Robert H. Nelson, the American Professor of Political Economy and an observer of history, culture, and society in the Nordic countries, has argued that there is a historical continuity between a Lutheran ethic and social democracy in the making of the Nordic welfare state. In his book 'Lutheranism and the Nordic Spirit of Social Democracy' (2017) he makes two principal arguments: 1) the majority of the population in the Nordic countries remain Lutheran at their core in contemporary modernity; and 2) social democracy is a secular form of Lutheranism. Despite the challenges posed by Pietist and other new revivalist religious movements and worldwide trends in secularisation, Nelson maintains that the Lutheran ethic has never disappeared. Nelson argues against Max Weber's thesis in 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' that no all-encompassing Protestant ethic exists. The Lutheran ethic does not resonate with capitalism as Calvinism does. Nelson argues that there is a scholarly neglect of the Lutheran ethic in assessing the importance of the Reformation for the shaping and development of the twentieth-century Nordic welfare state into 'a secular salvation of society' (Nelson 2017, 41). A Lutheran ethic provided a powerful normative foundation that underlay the political and economic rise of Nordic social democracy during the twentieth century. The Lutheran ethic was transformed and appropriated by the Nordic welfare states and found its expression in social democracy (Nelson 2017, 12, 37–52).

The conclusions Nelson draws in his reading of the political, economic, and religious history of the Nordic countries are bold, but whether they are historically and methodologically valid is another matter. The ethical values listed in the Finnish Gallup Ecclesiastica 2015 poll as Lutheran – the importance of serving other people, sharing social responsibility, commitment to work and education (see Ketola et al. 2017) – can be read from the political programmes covering the entire political landscape, from left to right. What distinguishes them is the absence of references to God and the meaning of hymns and songs. Methodologically, Nelson's argument is based on the notion of implicit religion (Nelson 2017, 269). Without being explicit concerning the theory of religion Nelson's idea is that any organised activity in a society which implicitly provides a path to salvation in the sense of progress and deliverance from evil and death (as obstacles to life and progress) suffices for a definition of religion, even if the community of practitioners does not constitute a church in the Durkheimian sense. Nelson avers that Marxism, socialism, capitalism, and (Keynesian) economics are religions. Thus, what has taken place in the Nordic countries is a transition from the Lutheran God to the economic God for the benefit of the people, society, and the welfare state (see Nelson 2017, 198, 268–284).

The Lutheran impact on the Nordic moral landscape

What is the value of viewing the impact of the Lutheran religious heritage on the formation of internal political culture in the Nordic countries as religion? Does Nelson's 'economic theology' resonate, for example, in Sweden? In 2006 two Swedish professors of history, Henrik Berggren and Lars Trägårdh, published *Är svensken människa? Gemenskap orch oberoende i det moderna Sverige* (Is the Swede Human? Radical Individualism in the State of Social Solidarity). The authors depart from the view that it is a major error to think that Swedish political culture is unconnected with religious beliefs. In the second edition (2017) they added a new chapter, *En luthersk modernitet* (Lutheran Modernity), to correct their neglect in the 2006 edition. Berggren and Trägårdh show through historical records that, as in Finland, the working class was hostile to Christianity in early twentieth-century Sweden. In the 1919 syllabus reform of the Swedish public school the Social Democrats replaced Christian text books with Värner Rydén's *Citizenship Knowledge* (Medborgarkunskap, 1923) as compulsory reading (Berggren & Trägårdh 2017, 383). Berggren and Trägårdh describe how the class-struggle approach to relations between the state and the Swedish church was superseded in the early 1930s, when there

was again a Social Democrat prime minister. Whereas the former paradigm had been to abolish the state church, it was now planned to create a new alliance between the Lutheran Ungkyrkorörelsen (Young Church Movement) and the Social Democrats under the political construct of the *folkhemmet*, the people's home. This took place long before the notion was incorporated into the Swedish political landscape by the Social Democratic prime ministers Per Albin Hansson and Tage Erlander between 1932 and 1969 (Berggren & Trägårdh 2017, 208–211, 385). The notion of the *folkhemmet* was modelled on the concept of the *folkkyrka*, the folk church, a notion common to all Nordic Lutheran churches, which expresses the transition from the state church to the folk church. The shaping of the *folkhemmet* was a radical effort to reform the Swedish church to make it more attractive to the working class as a social institution. Nathan Söderblom, Professor of the History of Religions and later the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden (*Svenska kyrkan*), was one of the early representatives of the Young Church Movement. Söderblom was an ecumenically minded patriot, whose mission was to steer the ideological content of the movement away from Swedish religious nationalism (*ett Gods folk*) to a universal understanding of Christianity's mission in the world (Berggren & Trägårdh 2017, 384f.).

Berggren and Trägårdh's main postulation is that there is a social contract in Sweden that differs dramatically from those of other modern western democracies. Sweden is exceptional in its stress on the importance of the individual which, however, does not mean individualism in the sense of egoism and selfishness, but 'state individualism', an individual's autonomy in a relationship of dependency with the state. There is an intimate alliance between an individual and the state. The Swedes rely on the welfare state to liberate themselves from dependency on their kin and their own nuclear family. They prioritise their independence from family ties and traditional sources of prestige, because it is the state that provides the basic feeling of security. Sweden differs dramatically in its value profile compared to Germany and the United States. According to the World Values Survey the Swedes top the European table in their acceptance of divorce. Swedes are flexible and feel safe in making changes in their lives: they educate themselves, change their workplace, move, get divorced, and have children without becoming dependent on family, employer, or friends, knowing that there is a fine-tuned social security network to keep them safe (Berggren & Trägårdh 2017, 84).

Although a degree of scepticism concerning national character literature is advisable, notwithstanding the anthropological and mentality-historical

terminology on which it might be based, I shall refer to the comparative ethnological survey *Svensk mentalitet* (Swedish Mentality), conducted by the late Swedish Professor of Ethnology, Åke Daun (1989). According to Daun there is a goal in Sweden which causes people to strive for independence (*självständighet, oberoende*) even if solitude is the ultimate price to pay. The Swedes tend to avoid conflict and seek compromise. They try to hold back aggression in their social interaction. To the question 'Do you lose your temper easily if you don't get what you want' only 19 per cent of Swedish respondents replied 'yes'; in the case of Finnish respondents the figure was 31 per cent. The difference between men and women was even greater. Most Swedes consider lying bad behaviour, the figure being 60 per cent, compared with 13 per cent for the Danes, 22 per cent for the Finns, and 38 per cent for the Norwegians. Swedes regard pleasure as permissible, but 'mainly in forms of short breaks or ways of regaining strength needed for work'. Two major factors are taken to explain the Nordic mindset: climate and the Lutheran mindset. The climate factor concerns the impact of the temperature on people's mood with the shifts between winter and summer, warmth and cold, the bright and dark seasons, sunshine, wind, and rain. Lutheranism is taken to explain the Nordic puritan, obligation-centred worldview and inwardness and inaccessibility as the characteristic personality traits of the population. Lutheran puritanism is given as the main reason for people's feelings of sin and guilt. Too much pleasure gives rise to feelings of guilt. In quantitative surveys Lutheranism is used to explain the high correlation between the Lutheran ethic and an emphasis on hard work, efficiency, and the sense of order (Daun 1987, 56–210).

Nordic immigrants in the United States and Australia, for example, express their national identity both in native/indigenous and Lutheran terms. Wherever the Finns have migrated and settled they have built two things to distinguish themselves from the rest of the local population with their rites of passage: the sauna and the Lutheran church. The American anthropologist Ronald Bordessa has argued that Lutheranism in Finland is a dominant social reality. In Finland the forest is the iconic representation of the Lutheran individual. The iconic self in Finnish Lutheranism finds its expression in designated environments which preserve woodland and rock outcrops, allowing uninhabited nature to articulate God's will directly to each soul, without mediation by the ecclesiastical authorities. Bordessa argues that by turning inward to themselves and their environment the Finns have cultivated a strong sense of national affinity (Bordessa 1991, 90).

The spread of the Reformation to mythical Lapland

The impact of the Reformation on the Sámi population was especially dramatic.[2] Social-historical and ethnographic sources do not paint a very attractive picture of the Lutheran clergy sent by the kings of Denmark-Norway and Sweden-Finland to give pastoral guidance to the Sámi and the common people in the sub-Arctic and Arctic parishes of Fenno-Scandia. Along with the Sámi population there had been fixed Finnish settlements in the Torne River Valley, for example, since the fourteenth century, when the Swedish crown had striven to establish permanent settlements (Lähteenmäki 2006, 63). Under the Danish-Norwegian and Swedish-Finnish kingdoms the Sámi and pioneer settlers were colonised by taxation obligations, law, and religion. Systematic census information on the sub-Arctic and Arctic inhabitants can be obtained from taxation records dating to the middle of the sixteenth century. The state's primary concern was to open access to the Arctic Ocean and take control of the people, iron-ore resources, and trade in the vast northern territory (Rydving 1995, 18–19; Norlin 2017, 40). During the reign of King Charles XI judicial and ecclesiastical administration in Sweden was organised according to a definition of nationhood that grouped people who, despite ethnic diversity, shared the same language, law, and religion. The ideal citizen was a peasant who did not migrate, paid taxes, and generally conformed to social norms. Pioneer settlement was boosted by a 1741 decree which promised settlers freedom from personal taxation for ten years and from taxation on their farms for fifty years. To become a settler, however, one had to show proof of one's blameless reputation and a sufficient knowledge of Christianity (Lähteenmäki 2006, 66). The settlement policy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was closely connected with Lutheran orthodoxy and the view of Lapland 'as a land of wild barbarians who practised witchcraft' (Lähteenmäki 2006, 67).

2 The Sámi (also spelt *Saami* or *Sami*) are an ethnic minority group indigenous to the Arctic and sub-Arctic region in the northern parts of Scandinavia, Finland, and in the Kola Peninsula in the Russian Federation. The Sámi are the only indigenous people in the European Union to have their own language, belonging to the Finno-Ugric language family, and culture based on hunting, fishing, and nomadic reindeer herding. The *Sápmi* settlement area is approximately 300,000 to 400,000 square kilometres. Today, the total population is calculated at between 75,000 and 100,000. The Swedish scholar of the Sámi language and religion, Håkan Rydving, specifies that 'about half of the Sami speak the indigenous language, which is divided into nine or ten main dialects spoken in as many cultural areas. Of these, South, Lule, North, Inari, Skolt and Kildin Sami have written forms, which were created during the 1970s and 1980s and are taught in school, while North Sami, which is used by 85 per cent of Sami speakers, functions as an unofficial standard language' (Rydving 2013, 393).

In his study 'The End of Drum-Time' Håkan Rydving writes that the encounter between the indigenous Sámi religion and Christianity involved a series of confrontations: some missionaries thought that 'a good flogging is the most powerful means of conversion' (Rydving 1995, 54f.). It was believed that punishments would deter people from the customs which missionaries categorised as 'idolatry', 'superstition', and 'sorcery' (Rydving 1995, 54f.). Threats of violence and punishment were characteristic of the Lutheran conversions, although there was no uniform ecclesiastical attitude towards issues concerning indigenous Sámi beliefs and religious practices. The role of the Sámi shaman drum – interpreted as the Bible of the Devil – was central in the confrontation between indigenous Sámi religion and Lutheran Christianity. 'For the Sami, the drum represented their threatened culture, resistance against the Christian claim to exclusiveness, and a striving to preserve traditional values' (Rydving 2010, 40). According to the principles of the Reformation, which developed into pietism and Lutheran orthodoxy at the end of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the task and privilege of the clergy was not to teach but to interrogate (Laine 2007, 138). However, the principal effect of the Reformation was the introduction of the vernacular in transmitting the Word of God (see Norlin 2017, 51ff). The Sámi had absorbed elements of Catholic faith into their indigenous religion and cosmology long before the Reformation. During the early Middle Ages individual Sámis were baptised in the course of establishing trade connections across the Arctic Sea (Kylli 2012, 36).

The notion of land is key to understanding the confrontation between reformed Christianity and the indigenous religious traditions of the Sámi. Lacking as it does clearly defined geographical borders, the land has been traditionally indivisible for the Sámi: they possess no clearly defined territorial identity. In Sámi culture there is an indigenous spatial logic by which they locate themselves in their domestic territory. Locations of *siida* settlement, routes and paths for hunting, fishing and reindeer herding, and topographically anomalous sites and places along seashores, in mountain regions and forests, which they deem sacred, inextricably belong to their mytho-geographic worldview (on cognitive foundations of territoriality see Anttonen 2000; Anttonen 2013a; 2013b). In their ritual landscape *sieidi*-objects and *saivo* sacrificial sites played an important role. Conspicuous stone formations, erratic boulders, disintegrated rocks or stones, or anthropomorphic stones on the banks of a river or lake functioned as altars on which reindeers, deer, and fish were sacrificed to the Sámi gods, believed to have their abode at these sites. Sámi shamans employed holes and openings in the ground,

cracks between rocks, and caves to exit and then re-enter the *Jabmeaimo*, the invisible underworld of the ancestors (see Rydving 2013, 393).

There is a fundamental distinction between Christian and indigenous notions of land. The categories 'land', 'territory', 'earth', and 'soil' are experientially deep and salient in Christian religion insofar as they have been Christianised. Land becomes good and soil fertile when taken into the possession of a Christian community by a process of sacralisation. The linkage between land and community is metaphoric and metonymic. In the biblical theology of Judaism and Christianity deserts, wildernesses, or other uninhabited terrains are valued as primary fields of divine dominance once they have become sacred battlefields in the Christian conquest. In his article on the Christian penetration of the landscape the Danish medieval historian Kurt Villads Jensen explores Crusade narratives, depicting the cleansing of the land from pagan influences. Jensen writes that '(t)he missionary landscape was developed into the vineyard of the Lord by means of a two-step process. First it was proclaimed to be a desert, void of people, filled with wild animals, and laid bare by invaders and evil spirits. As such, it was only suited for ascetic hermits. […]. The next step in this process was to proclaim it a possibly fertile land, one that could flow milk and honey if only the right persons came and did the necessary job' (Jensen 2013, 229–230). The fundamental distinction between the indigenous and Christian notions of land stems from the otherworldly emphasis on true human existence. As Jensen posits, 'The home here on earth became a place of exile, while the true fatherland, the true patria, became Jerusalem. […] [T]he sacralization of the landscape by turning it into a new Jerusalem meant that Christians became totally liberated from the landscape in which they actually lived' (Jensen 2013, 232).

The American anthropologist Richard Sosis has produced a comparison of differences in land sacralisation between world religions and indigenous religions at three levels: physical qualities, internalisation mechanisms and cultural conceptions. His results can be summarised as follows (Sosis 2011):

- Indigenous populations tend to maintain a connection to their lands via their ancestors, ancestors with whom they are in regular communication.
- Contemporary world religions also assert that their ancestors once roamed their territory, but they are generally not a source of direct worship; they are more likely to be a source of inspiration rather than veneration.
- World religions undoubtedly rely more on theological argument and justification for the sustained holiness of their land than indigenous populations.

- The doctrinal mode of world religions is also more dependent on repetitive ritual than the imagistic mode of religion that characterizes indigenous populations. Reciting the name of a sacred land over 100 times a day, as observant Jews do, is unheard of in traditional populations.
- World religions symbolize their sacred lands to a much greater extent than indigenous religions do, presumably to rally diaspora populations that do not reside within the sacred territory.
- There is less orthodoxy in indigenous populations, which may make it easier to settle territorial disputes among traditional populations.
- These differences between indigenous and world religions suggest that sacralizing land in the modern context may have stronger mechanisms of internalization than in the past.

Despite the threats to the indigenous Sámi religious traditions, there was a rich array of symbols and rituals available for internalising the indigenous religious heritage, such as mythic narratives about great shamans (*noaidi*) as well as the already mentioned forms of symbolisation and ritualisation of land and landscape (see also Kylli 2012, 165). In addition to ethnographic evidence archaeological grave-finds provide valuable sources to support this assumption. The Norwegian archaeologist Asgeir Svestad writes that 'the surrounding environment or mythical sphere (including pre-Christian graves and sacred places) must […] have had a constitutive impact on the Sámi conversion to Christianity, suspending the opposition between confession to Christianity on the one hand, and the relation to Sámi religion, burial customs, and sacred landscape on the other' (Svestad 2013, 131).

Despite differences in land sacralisation between world and indigenous religions, the Christianisation of mythical Lapland is an exception to the general rule. Where the organised Lutheran mission encountered severe obstacles due to social distance between the clergy and the common people the pietistic *Laestadian* movement of the mid-1800s brought the message home. The Finnish social historian Maria Lähteenmäki provides an excellent account of the social cleft between the educated class and the common people in Enontekiö in Finnish Lapland. The doctrine of the Lutheran Church had not been very profoundly assimilated by the common people (Lähteenmäki 2006, 135). *Laurentius Levi Laestadius*, the Swedish-Sámi born botanist and theologian, was able to transcend the social gap between the clergy and people. Because of his cultural heritage – his mother was Sámi – Laestadius rejected the doctrinal mode of pastoral guidance and adopted an imagistic mode in transmitting Christian content to his Sámi and Finnish-speaking

listeners (for a theory on the doctrinal and imagistic modes of religiosity see Whitehouse 2004). As Lars Levi Laestadius had been brought up amidst the fauna and flora of Lapland as well as forms of its visual and cultural representation, he understood the deep meanings of landscape in the Sámi mentality. Lähteenmäki writes that 'noisy trances, the cries, the clapping and the leaps of the members of the congregation had a downright frightening effect on outsider observers, who were warned not to attend the meetings' (2006, 85). Laestadius justified his crude language – the imagistic mode of transmission – as a vehicle to achieve his goal to make people perceive their inner world (Lähteenmäki 2006, 86). Laestadius was described by outsiders as a rude, arrogant, boorish, boastful, and conceited person. Laestadius called those who were Christian by name, not by the Spirit, sober drunks, chaste whores, and honest thieves. While attention to hygiene rules and control of people's eating habits, table manners, sleeping arrangements, conceptions of cleanliness, and social intercourse were an integral part of the clergy's evangelising toolkit, the aim of Laestadius was not to scrub the Sámi and settler populations clean, except where the consumption of alcohol was concerned (Lähteenmäki 2006, 79–94, 134–54).

Laestadius preached in Finnish and Swedish, but although the language used by the church among the Sámi in Sweden had been Finnish until the nineteenth century, Laestadius also preached in Sámi (Lähteenmäki 2006, 88). Laestadius exploited the common people's prejudice against the clergy and authorities. He disapproved of the clergy because local parishioners had never received 'any spiritual benefit from the priests in return for all their great sacrifices' (Lähteenmäki 2006, 135f.). Laestadius succeeded in bringing two distinct conceptual worlds together in his sermons. How distinct the worlds were is well illustrated by stories by Petrus Laestadius, brother of Lars Levi and the Rector of Piteå. One story goes like this: 'A young Sámi man consulted a clergyman and asked to be admitted to confirmation classes so that he could get married. He attended confirmation classes in the rectory and returned to his dwelling in the fells. His folk gathered round him to ask for news, as was the custom. The young man answered in all seriousness that he had heard bad news: Jesus Christ has died. He assured his folks that they could fully rely on the truth of his story because the minister himself had related the matter many times. The family were shocked and began to ponder who might now become Christ. After consideration, the father of the family suggested that the young man himself would be an admirable candidate, because he got so well with the minister. If the young man would not agree, there

was a risk that they would send someone from Umeå to be Christ among them' (cited in Lähteenmäki 2006, 135).[3]

Laestadius was at home in the indigenous landscape of the Sámi: he did not need to search for a new Jerusalem outside his own and his listeners' natural habitat.

Conclusion

An exploration of the impact of the five-hundred year history of the Reformation on the Nordic countries can never give an adequate account of the decisive factors which have shaped the Nordic mindset. From the perspective of the History of Religions and Religious Studies it is important that we pose questions about the history, and assess the possible influences, of religion – however we define and approach this illusive notion. In our efforts to understand and explain religion it is important that we never take the notion at face value. What we construct as 'religion' is always context-dependent. In the scholarly field of Religious Studies we pay attention not only to sources and data, whether literary or oral, historical or ethnographic, tangible or intangible. We also need a theory of religion and methods based on which what we call 'religion' can be deduced from the raw materials at our disposal in reference to our research questions. As the Nordic nation states have changed over the past five centuries, so have Christianity and indigenous religions. What remains constant is the politics by which people act on the issues important for them for survival and identity. Where the Nordic churches are concerned Lutheranism is a historical construct, which means that its 'essence' always depends on how it is essentialised. As social institutions, the churches are never stable in their view of the past and the future. The present-day reconciliation work that the Church of Sweden is doing to apologise for its colonial treatment of the Sámi people

3 Another story, told by Petrus Laestadius, dealt with a certain Sámi woman, who was on her death bed. The local minister tried to comfort her by promising her eternal life and the joys of Heaven. The old woman was silent for a long time listening to the words of the clergyman. Then she suddenly interrupted him and asked whether one could get liquor in Heaven. The priest tried to get her to turn her mind away from worldly concerns, but the old crone just shook her head and asked whether there was fire in Heaven, and was it warm up there? The minister continued his attempt to get her to think of other things, but she flew into a rage and shouted: "What? No fire and liquor? She had frozen and suffered a lot on earth, she said, and she had had enough. If the minister could not definitely promise her that she would not need to feel cold in Heaven, then she would rather go to Hell: there, as she knew, it was warm enough (Lähteenmäki 2006, 134f.).

(see Lindmark & Sundström 2017), for example, reflects the historical presence of the church in its relationship with the state and Swedish citizens. The Sámi population is also working on its history and future. In the Sámi parliament's programme the issues of faith, values, knowledge, skills, and personal living in the Sami culture are inextricably connected with their spatial understanding of what constitutes Sámi identity, society, and history, both in their domestic landscape and in how their understanding intersects and resonates with other nationalities and ethnicities at the Nordic, European, and global levels.

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The religious administration of Constantine

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Abstract
Much of Håkan Rydving's work deals in one way or another with the influence of Christianity on the Saami-peoples. In my paper I explore how Constantine promoted Christianity through his time as emperor in the laws he issued. It is my argument, that Constantine really did nothing - or very little - that was without precedent, but that his careful method and his longevity as ruler was among the reasons for his success in creating the beginnings of a Christian Empire.

Keywords: *Roman Empire, Constantine, religious administration, Christianisation, Codex Theodosianus*

Håkan Rydving published his thesis 'The End of Drum-Time' in 1993. It is sub-titled 'Religious Change among the Lule Saami, 1670s–1740s', and in it he discusses and clarifies the change of religion which took place in a culture confronted by missionaries working to effect as much change as they could. The work of these missionaries was based on the power of the state, and indeed used physical destruction of the primary religious instruments – drums – as a means of conversion, mirroring the great Christian missionaries like Martin of Tours in the fourth century or possibly the ninth-century missionaries to the north like Ansgar. The story of the conversion of large areas of the globe to Christianity is generally one of force and power – the machinery of a central state and sometimes even a hostile foreign power – being used to promote, propagate, or, if possible, simply force a new religion on a people on the periphery. The 'peaceful' conversion of Iceland is often cited as a counter-example, but it is often forgotten that even in this ideal, and possibly very idealised, tale Olaf Tryggvason's threat to execute Icelanders in Norway loomed quite large over the island.

Of course, Martin, Ansgar, and even Olaf Tryggvason as well as von Westen and other missionaries to the Saami areas saw the matter quite differently. They were doing God's work. They were spending resources in an attempt to save as many souls as possible and battle the evil forces of the world. They were bringing light into the darkness; it would be unreasonable

to see their work only as manifestations of power. However, it is undeniable that power plays a large part in missionary work.

It is therefore interesting to ponder the conversion of the Roman Empire, which began this centralised process of Christianisation, because this conversion began without any outside impulse, pressure, or obvious reason. I have given a preliminary overview of the process elsewhere (Warmind 2004), where I argue that the choice of Christianity may have been accidental and based on the inclination of the emperor. Many years ago I argued that Christianity was well-suited as the basis for the continuing emperor-cult (Warmind 1993). In the following I will examine in a little more depth what Constantine actually did in relation to the religion of the Roman Empire.

The religious policies of Constantine

The decision of Constantine to support Christianity is much discussed, and there is certainly no consensus about it. Discussions often focus either on how much of a Christian he was or how much of a shrewd political move he was making. I wish to limit my scope to an examination of his religious policies in general.

In my opinion Constantine's relationship with Christianity has been over-exposed and it is therefore difficult to place in perspective. The sources we have were mostly written by and for Christians, and even our legal texts were collected under the auspices of a Christian emperor in the following century. This makes it difficult to say anything about what Constantine may have done that was uninteresting (or embarrassing) to Christians.

The public religion of Constantine

There is a continuing academic debate concerning the vexed question of how Christian Constantine was and when he converted. Was his father a Christian? Was his mother? Did he convert after seeing a vision of the *labarum*? Was it all a sham for political reasons? There may be an answer to some of these questions, but we can never know, of course, if Constantine was really a Christian and nor can we ever agree on exactly what this would have meant or entailed.

This is the chief reason this paper will not deal with motivations, but with whatever legal actions Constantine took in religious policy, as far as they can be ascertained.

The rule of Constantine can be divided into roughly three periods. The first was when he was emperor of the areas controlled by his father from

306, when the troops proclaimed him Augustus in York, until he defeated Maxentius in the famous battle for Rome at the Milvian Bridge and became master of the western half of the empire. The second lasted from 312 until 325, when he defeated Licinius and became sole emperor. The third, when he ruled as sole emperor or with his sons, lasted until his death at sixty-five in 337. His long reign and the fact that his sons, who continued his policies, succeeded him made him immensely influential, which also made it possible for him to initiate a radical change of religion in the empire. The change was not brought to anything like fruition until the beginning of the fifth century, but Constantine certainly took many important steps.

The various measures he took regarding religious life in the empire are known chiefly from his biographer *Eusebius of Caesarea*, who quotes some of his letters, speeches, and laws in full, although translated into Greek. Other sources, most notably *Lactantius*, who was the teacher of Constantine's son Crispus, and an anonymous text called the *Origo Constantini*, also provide information based on first-hand knowledge.

As Barnes has emphasised (2011, 97), Christians as a movement had enjoyed legal protection and the right to own property since the Edict of Gallienus in 259, so when Galerius ended the persecution of Diocletian in April 311 they should have been able to reclaim these rights, and probably did so, in the West, both in the areas ruled by Constantine and by Maxentius. Part of the arrangement made by Constantine and Licinius in Milan in 313 (known as the Edict of Milan) was that these rights should also be extended to Christians in the East, and that confiscated property should be returned. The wording in Latin seems to have been preserved by Lactantius (*De mortibus persecutorum* 48):

> When I, Constantine Augustus and I, Licinius Augustus, had come together at Milan, and conferred together about all things concerning public benefit and security, it seemed to Us that, amongst those things that are profitable to mankind in general, the reverence paid to the Divinity merited Our first and chief attention, so that We would give both the Christians and all others liberty to follow that worship which each of them would like; so that whatever Divinity there is in the Heavenly abode, might be benign and propitious to Us, and to every one under Our government. And therefore We judged it a salutary measure, and one highly consonant to right reason, that no man should be denied leave of attaching himself either to the rites of the Christians, or to whatever other religion his mind directed him, which he sensed was most suitable for himself, so that the supreme Divinity, to

whose worship We freely devote Ourselves, might continue to vouchsafe His favour and beneficence to Us in all things. (…).[1]

The same text is found in Eusebius's Church History (10,5,19).[2] The small variances that do exist may be the result of his translation of the text into Greek. It would seem the decree's purpose was to confirm the rights of Christians in the empire and to restore religious freedom. The text takes for granted that there is a celestial *divinitas*, whose favour is necessary. We encounter this divinity again in the arch the Senate presented to Constantine when he visited Rome for his *decennalia* (tenth anniversary) in 315. The arch

1 *Cum feliciter tam ego [quam] Constantinus Augustus quam etiam ego Licinius Augustus apud Mediolanum convenissemus atque universa quae ad commoda et securitatem publicam pertinerent, in tractatu haberemus, haec inter cetera quae videbamus pluribus hominibus profutura, vel in primis ordinanda esse credidimus, quibus divinitatis reverentia continebatur, ut daremus et Christianis et omnibus liberam potestatem sequendi religionem quam quisque voluisset, quod quicquid <est> divinitatis in sede caelesti, Nobis atque omnibus qui sub potestate nostra sunt constituti, placatum ac propitium possit existere. Itaque hoc consilium salubri ac reticissima ratione ineundum esse credidimus, ut nulli omnino facultatem abnegendam putaremus, qui vel observationi Christianorum vel ei religioni mentem suam dederet quam ipse sibi aptissimam esse sentiret, ut possit Nobis summa divinitas, cuius religioni liberis mentibus obsequimur, in omnibus solitum favorem suum benivolentiamque praestare (…).*

2 ὁπότε εὐτυχῶς ἐγὼ Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ Αὔγουστος κἀγὼ Λικίννιος ὁ Αὔγουστος ἐν τῇ Μεδιολάνῳ ἐληλύθειμεν καὶ πάντα ὅσα πρὸς τὸ λυσιτελὲς καὶ τὸ χρήσιμον τῷ κοινῷ διέφερεν, ἐν ζητήσει ἔσχομεν, ταῦτα μεταξὺ τῶν λοιπῶν ἅτινα ἐδόκει ἐν πολλοῖς ἅπασιν ἐπωφελῆ εἶναι, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐν πρώτοις διατάξαι ἐδογματίσαμεν, οἷς ἡ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον αἰδώς τε καὶ τὸ σέβας ἐνείχετο, τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν, ὅπως δῶμεν καὶ τοῖς Χριστιανοῖς καὶ πᾶσιν ἐλευθέραν αἵρεσιν τοῦ ἀκολουθεῖν τῇ θρησκείᾳ ᾗ δ᾽ ἂν βουληθῶσιν, ὅπως ὅ τί ποτέ ἐστιν θειότητος καὶ οὐρανίου πράγματος, ἡμῖν καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ὑπὸ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἐξουσίαν διάγουσιν εὐμενὲς εἶναι δυνηθῇ. τοίνυν ταύτην τὴν [ἡμετέραν] βούλησιν ὑγιεινῷ καὶ ὀρθοτάτῳ λογισμῷ ἐδογματίσαμεν, ὅπως μηδενὶ παντελῶς ἐξουσία ἀρνητέα ᾖ τοῦ ἀκολουθεῖν καὶ αἱρεῖσθαι τὴν τῶν Χριστιανῶν παραφύλαξιν ἢ θρησκείαν ἑκάστῳ τε ἐξουσία δοθείη τοῦ διδόναι ἑαυτοῦ τὴν διάνοιαν ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ θρησκείᾳ, ἣν αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ ἁρμόζειν νομίζει, ὅπως ἡμῖν δυνηθῇ τὸ θεῖον ἐν πᾶσι τὴν ἔθιμον σπουδὴν καὶ καλοκἀγαθίαν παρέχειν·(…)

When I, Constantine Augustus, and I, Licinius Augustus, came under favourable auspices to Milan and took under consideration everything which pertained to the common weal and prosperity, we resolved among other things, or rather first of all, to make such decrees as seemed in many respects for the benefit of everyone; namely, such as should preserve reverence and piety toward the deity. We resolved, that is, to grant both to the Christians and to all men freedom to follow the worship which they choose, so that whatever heavenly divinity exists may be propitious to us and to all that live under our government.
We have, therefore, determined, with sound and upright purpose, that liberty is to be denied to no one to choose and to follow the religious observances of the Christians, but that to each one freedom is to be given to devote his mind to that religion which he may think adapted to himself, in order that the Deity may exhibit to us in all things his accustomed care and favour. (…).

was almost totally constructed from pieces from other buildings in the city, and it is thus in some ways a rather shabby gift. The inscription on both sides proclaims:

> The Roman Senate and People dedicated this arch, decorated with triumphs, to the Emperor Caesar Flavius Constantine the Greatest, Pius, Happy, Augustus, because at the prompting of the divinity, by the greatness of his mind, he with his army at one moment by a just victory avenged the Republic as well on the tyrant as on all his faction.[3]

The Senate and the people acknowledged in this monument that the divinity worshipped by Constantine should remain anonymous. Reliefs on the arch show sacrifices to Diana, Hercules, and Apollo – clearly from a Hadrianic monument, but slightly modified to give the impression of the present emperor – or possibly his father. In 315 this was obviously not a problem for Constantine.

A note on the Codex Theodosianus

Our main source for the laws and decrees of Constantine is the Codex Theodosianus, which grew out of a desire of Theodosius II to obtain an overview of the various decrees and responses ('oracles' as these are poignantly called) of the various Christian emperors. This means that the starting point for the collection was Constantine. Nine men were commissioned to create this edited collection of decrees, both the valid ones and the important ones, which had been recalled or were obsolete. It was an editing process, but the commission in the text we have declares that it has striven to preserve the wording as precisely as possible (CT 1, 1, 5). The work was supposed to have led to the weeding out of all contradictions, but thankfully this never happened: this means that many outdated laws were preserved. The main difficulty is that the work was still selective with an obvious Christian bias. Very few laws, for example, of the apostate Julian are preserved, but some that recall them are. Constantine certainly, and possibly also Constantius or even Valentinian, may have issued laws pertaining to practices which

3 *IMP[eratori] · CAES[ari] · FL[avio] · CONSTANTINO · MAXIMO · P[io] · F[elici] · AVGUSTO · S[enatus] · P[opulus] · Q[ue] · R[omanus] · QVOD · INSTINCTV · DIVINITATIS · MENTIS · MAGNITVDINE · CVM · EXERCITV · SVO · TAM · DE · TYRANNO · QVAM · DE · OMNI · EIVS · FACTIONE · VNO · TEMPORE · IVSTIS · REMPVBLICAM · VLTVS · EST · ARMIS · ARCVM · TRIVMPHIS · INSIGNEM · DICAVIT*

the committee of Theodosius II found inappropriate. A second difficulty which, though general, is also important, is that we depend of course on a manuscript tradition which is in some places most certainly corrupt. This brief note summarises Curran (2000, 161-169). The language in the decrees is difficult and obscure, and for this reason I quote the translations of Clyde Pharr (1952) in the following.

Laws and decrees of Constantine

> He enacted many laws, some were good and equitable, more superfluous, and several severe, and he was the first to attempt to raise the town bearing his name to such dignity, that he could make it a likeness of Rome (Eutropius: *Breviarium ab urbe condita*, 10,8).[4]

Thus, Eutropius, a non-Christian historian writing in the latter half of the fourth century, sums up the policies of Constantine without mentioning the conversion of the empire or the personal religion of the emperor himself. There are two ways to understand the silence: either the historian was trying to write in the style of the great classical historians, who did not mention religious preferences, or he did not think that Constantine's religious preferences were particularly important. I lean towards the second option, for it is most likely that most inhabitants of the empire regarded Christianity as a matter for the imperial house, and not as something terribly important for them. It was not until about fifty years after the death of Constantine that the situation changed drastically when a new ruling dynasty took the unprecedented step of continuing to support the religion of the House of Constantine and began to make all other religious expressions directly illegal.

If we examine the laws in the Codex Theodosianus the following picture emerges. Of Constantine's laws none is preserved in the Codex predating the Edict of Milan in 313. In October of the same year Constantine made it clear that Christian clergy were to have extensive privileges. They were not to be elected to official and burdensome public posts – specifically, they should not be chosen as tax collectors (CT 16.2.1). A decree dated 319 (CT 16.2.2) and addressed to the governor of Lucania and Bruttium (modern Calabria) is very clear (here and in the following I cite only excerpts of the law's text):

4 *Multas leges rogavit, quasdam ex bono et aequo, plerasque superfluas, nonnullas severas, primusque urbem nominis sui ad tantum fastigium evehere molitus est, ut Romae aemulam faceret.*

> Those persons who devote the services of religion to divine worship, that is, those who are called clerics (*clerici*), shall be exempt from all compulsory public services whatever, lest, through the sacrilegious malice of certain persons, they should be called away from divine services.[5]

We may note that even at this time the position of the cleric requires an explanation to make it precise, and the deity remains nameless. Furthermore, Constantine seems to have formed the impression that certain persons were out to bother or irritate the Christian clergy. Such privilege the church could now enjoy must have been very attractive to certain people. In 320 Constantine refers to an older non-extant decree, which apparently had stated that

> no *decurion* or descendant of a *decurion* or even any person provided with adequate resources and suitable to undertake compulsory public services shall take refuge in the name and the service of the clergy, but that in the place of deceased clerics thereafter only those persons shall be chosen as substitutes who have slender fortunes and who are not held bound to such compulsory municipal services (CT 16.2.3).[6]

In this context *decurion* is not a military title but the word used for a hereditary class of prominent men in the provincial administrations, who, because of their fortunes, served the community in several different capacities, least popularly as the tax collectors mentioned already. Since the *decurion*-class comprised the wealthiest men below the class of nobles, Constantine had created a vexing problem for many local communities if *decurions* became clergy in great numbers: hence the prohibition against their joining the clergy, and the admonition to the church about appointing only poorer people as clergy. The opportunity to use this privilege and to boost the institution's public face as well as infuse capital must have been too great for the church to resist, for we find that the instruction is repeated. Another law from 326 (CT 16.2.6), that is after Nicaea, gives a glimpse of what was

5 *Imp. Constantinus a. Octaviano correctori Lucaniae et Brittiorum. Qui divino cultui ministeria religionis impendunt, id est hi, qui clerici appellantur, ab omnibus omnino muneribus excusentur, ne sacrilego livore quorundam a divinis obsequiis avocentur. Dat. XII. kal. nov. Constantino a. v. et Licinio c. coss.*

6 *(...)nullum (...) decurionem vel ex decurione progenitum vel etiam instructum idoneis facultatibus adque obeundis publicis muneribus opportunum ad clericorum nomen obsequiumque confugere, sed eos de cetero in defunctorum dumtaxat clericorum loca subrogari, qui fortuna tenues neque muneribus civilibus teneantur obstricti, (...).*

happening among the Christian clergy now that Constantine had become sole ruler:

> Exemption from compulsory public services shall not be granted by popular consent, nor shall it be granted indiscriminately to all who petition under the pretext of being clerics, nor shall great numbers be added to the clergy rashly and beyond measure, but rather, when a cleric dies, another shall be selected to replace the deceased, one who has no kinship with a *decurion* family and who has not the wealth of resources whereby he may very easily support the compulsory public services. Thus, if there should be a dispute about the name of any person between a municipality and the clergy, if equity claims him for public service and if he is adjudged suitable for membership in the municipal council through either lineage or wealth, he shall be removed from the clergy and shall be delivered to the municipality. For the wealthy must assume secular obligations, and the poor must be supported by the wealth of the churches.[7]

It seems that *decuriones* in significant numbers sought to be members of the clergy, and hence exempt from their municipal obligations, and it is implied that the church was making this possible. With this law Constantine was correcting the wholesale set of privileges he had given the church, and he was (re-)empowering the municipality in its relationship with the church. The emperor was even adopting a high moral stance: each party had their obligations to the community.

It can be clearly seen that a religious movement supported and privileged by the emperor could suddenly attract the participation of men from the higher echelons of society. The suddenness can be surmised by the reaction of the emperor himself, who seems not to have expected this result of his benevolence. We may infer from this that *decuriones* were probably only rarely attracted to Christianity before it was imperially supported, and certainly not as clergy. This is an evidence-based corrective of Stark (1996, 29–47), who

7 *(…) Neque vulgari consensu neque quibuslibet petentibus sub specie clericorum a muneribus publicis vacatio deferatur, nec temere et citra modum populi clericis conectantur, sed cum defunctus fuerit clericus, ad vicem defuncti alius allegetur, cui nulla ex municipibus prosapia fuerit neque ea est opulentia facultatum, quae publicas functiones facillime queat tolerare, ita ut, si inter civitatem et clericos super alicuius nomine dubitetur, si eum aequitas ad publica trahat obsequia et progenie municeps vel patrimonio idoneus dinoscetur, exemptus clericis civitati tradatur. Opulentos enim saeculi subire necessitates oportet, pauperes ecclesiarum divitiis sustentari. Proposita kal. iun. Constantino a. VII et Constantio caes. conss. (326 iun. 1).*

argues that Christianity, as a cult-movement, was a movement of persons of more privileged backgrounds (47). I do not argue that Christians were a proletarian or social movement, but it seems the class of wealthy people came late to it. It can be assumed that similar situations had arisen at previous times in the empire whenever an emperor lent his financial support to one or other religious organisation and privileged its priesthood. This can be inferred from the elite's criticisms concerning unworthy people being raised to high power under Heliogabalus (reigned 218–222) for example, whose monotheistic emperor-centred project in some respects resembled that of Constantine (Warmind 1993, 215f.). However, whereas Heliogabalus was too immature, too unambitious, and much too extreme to succeed and we therefore have no reliable records of what happened with members of his priesthoods during his reign, in the case of the Christians the sources have been preserved. It must be remembered that although the *decuriones* were wealthy, they were not noble, and indeed they were generally looked down on by the nobility, who are also our main source of information about Heliogabalus. As Salzmann (2002) has shown, members of the noble class, with a few exceptions, did not become Christian until the 370s.

Constantine also took quite drastic steps to greatly enhance the bishops' authority. In his plan to build up the bishops as general authority figures, in 316 Constantine allowed slaves to be *manumitted* (freed) in a church no less legally than in a normal courtroom if it took place before a bishop (CJ 1.13.1.).

In 318 he even issued a declaration that the episcopal courts were to take precedence over the normal ones, and that anyone could freely transfer his case 'to the jurisdiction of the Christian law' (CT 1.27.1). This would have set Christians apart from the rest of the population, furthering their status as special citizens, and it was certainly an advance for the status of bishops, who were now on a par with judges.

In 321 Constantine declared that Sundays should be considered holidays and that no legal business or preferably any work should be undertaken on these days (only preserved in the Codex Justinianus 3. 12. 7). This is one of the few extant laws of Constantine interfering with business as usual in the empire as such. It was, however, not necessarily an innovation for an emperor to declare a new set of holidays, so the populace probably understood the act in this light. Later that year he again strengthened the bishops' general authority by declaring that any slave freed under the auspices of a bishop would immediately become a Roman citizen (CT 4.7.1). Interestingly, these two initiatives of 321 seem to have been at cross-purposes, as it was necessary to issue a decree (CT 2.8.1) making it legal to free slaves

on Sundays, even though legal acts were otherwise forbidden. The direct route to citizenship as an incentive to use the church as an instrument for *manumission* seems, in my opinion, to indicate that people perhaps preferred the well-known courts for such traditional business, for they would not otherwise have needed such additional benefits.

The Jews

Other religious laws of Constantine deal with the status of the Jews. In a law of 315 the Jews were forbidden to stone Jewish converts to Christianity, something Constantine had apparently heard was happening. In a law dated 330, but which should probably be dated 317, it was affirmed that Jewish clergy had privileges much like those of Christians: they were exempt from the responsibilities of the *decuriones* (CT 16.8.2). In 321 Constantine had changed his mind on this point and decreed that Jews could be nominated for seats on municipal councils (CT 16.8.3), but the text of the law added: '…in order that something of the former rule may be left them as a solace, We extend to two or three persons from each group the perpetual privilege of not being disturbed by any nominations'.[8] The last law of Constantine pertaining to Jews (CT 16.8.5 of 336) simply reiterates that Jews were not allowed to do anything harmful to a Jew who converted to Christianity.

It is interesting that Constantine treated the Jews very much like second-rate Christians; the only exception concerns Jewish reactions to Jews tempted to convert to Christianity, as many others must have been at this time. Successive generations of emperors would reduce the freedom of Jews as the fourth century ran its course.

The pagans

A series of Constantine's laws dealt with pagan practices. In 317 a law (CT 9.16.3) was given to the effect that magic performed to harm others should be punished most severely: 'But remedies sought for human bodies shall not be involved in criminal accusation, nor the assistance that is innocently employed in rural districts in order that rains may not be feared for the ripe

8 *(…) Verum ut aliquid ipsis ad solacium pristinae observationis relinquatur, binos vel ternos privilegio perpeti patimur nullis nominationibus occupari (…).*

grape harvests…'.[9] This is a strongly pragmatic attitude towards popular custom, which makes one wonder what laws of a similarly tolerant nature may be missing. Two laws (CT 9.16.1 and CT 9.16.2) from 319 concern *haruspices* and are much less accommodating: they might well belong to the 'severe' laws mentioned by Eutropius. The oldest decree prohibited *haruspices* from ever entering a private home for any reason – even friendship with the owner. Any *haruspex* who entered a private home must be burned and those associating with them must be exiled to an island. The second law from the same year reiterated the prohibition, but then declared: 'But you who think that this art is advantageous to you, go to the public altars and shrines and celebrate the rites of your custom; for We do not prohibit the ceremonies of a bygone perversion to be conducted openly'.[10]

The word Pharr chooses to translate as 'perversion' is *usurpatio*, which might more neutrally be translated as 'usage' – a translation I consider much more preferable.

With these harsh decrees against *haruspices* in mind it is surprising to read the following decree from 320, which was received on 8th March the following year (CT 16.10.1):

> Emperor Constantine Augustus to Maximus.
> If it should appear that any part of Our palace or any other public work has been struck by lightning, the observance of the ancient custom shall be retained, and inquiry shall be made of the soothsayers as to the portent thereof. Written records thereof shall be very carefully collected and referred to Our Wisdom. Permission shall be granted to all other persons also to appropriate this custom to themselves, provided only that they abstain from domestic sacrifices, which are specifically prohibited.[11]

It appears there were things *haruspices* could be used for after all, that they had not all been consigned to the flames, and that they could now enter private homes again. The wording of the laws from the previous year begs the question whether they were to be taken seriously at all. They would

9 *(...) Nullis vero criminationibus implicanda sunt remedia humanis quaesita corporibus aut in agrestibus locis, ne maturis vindemiis metuerentur imbres (...)*

10 *Qui vero id vobis existimatis conducere, adite aras publicas adque delubra et consuetudinis vestrae celebrate sollemnia: nec enim prohibemus praeteritae usurpationis officia libera luce tractari.*

11 *Imp. Constantinus augustus ad Maximum. Si quid de palatio nostro aut ceteris operibus publicis degustatum fulgore esse constiterit, retento more veteris observantiae quid portendat, ab haruspicibus requiratur et diligentissime scriptura collecta ad nostram scientiam referatur, ceteris etiam usurpandae huius consuetudinis licentia tribuenda, dummodo sacrificiis domesticis abstineant, quae specialiter prohibita sunt.*

probably have been almost impossible to enforce and they should possibly be seen as symbolic. It is perhaps also possible that the decrees may have been a legal tool to undertake spurious persecutions of *haruspices* if an occasion should arise.

To my knowledge this decree, demanding a full official imperial report on portents interpreted by pagan experts and issued in the same year Sundays were declared holidays, has attracted little attention in the scholarship on this period. Its main interest lies in the fact that it is an example of Constantine being explicitly traditional. This lends strong support to the pagan authors at the end of the fourth century – notably Symmachus and Libanius (Or. 30.6) – who invoked Constantine and even Constantius as emperors who gave due respect to the ancient traditions and changed very little when faced with the momentous changes of Gratian and Theodosius.

It is clear Constantius, in making his famous visit to Rome, appointed nobles to the traditional priesthoods: Symmachus mentions this in his *Relatio* concerning the statue of Victory in the Senate (3,7). Obviously, Constantine must have done the same routinely, and he probably also issued decrees about it, as must have all emperors at least until Gratian (reigned 367-383). Two extant laws of Constantine are salient reminders that the emperor was also concerned with priesthoods he personally may have regarded as frivolous. It is important to note that he demonstrated this concern late in life, as it is often argued that his stance against the old cults became firmer as he grew older (Curran 1996, 77). Apparently, some *decuriones* in the province of Africa complained that after occupying the priesthoods of *flamen* or of *sacerdos* they were forced to become provosts of public post stations, which was obviously beneath their dignity. Constantine agreed with them and prohibited this practice.

As late as 337 he stressed the prohibition against forcing men of these same offices to take on similar jobs, and for the same reason (CT 12.1.21 and 12.5.2).[12]

It therefore appears from much circumstantial evidence that things went on almost as usual in the Roman Empire under Constantine. It is therefore

12 CT 12.1.21: *Idem a. ad Felicem praefectum praetorio. Quoniam afri curiales conquesti sunt quosdam in suo corpore post flamonii honorem et sacerdotii vel magistratus decursa insignia praepositos compelli fieri mansionum, quod in singulis curiis sequentis meriti et gradus homines implere consuerunt, iubemus nullum praedictis honoribus splendentem ad memoratum cogi obsequium, ne nostro fieri iudicio iniuria videatur.*
CT 12.5.2: *(...) Sacerdotales et flamines perpetuos atque etiam duumvirales ab annonarum praesituris inferioribusque muneribus inmunes esse praecipimus (...).*

problematic that Eusebius writes in his Church History that Constantine decreed that all sacrifices should end. This would indeed have been a major change, but it seems far from certain that it ever happened. Indeed, it is contradicted by the law allowing the public use of *haruspices*, and possibly also by the law concerning the priesthoods. The uncertainty concerning the *flamines* and *sacerdotes* of Africa arises from the claim of some researchers, notably Cameron (2011, 132), that these priesthoods at this time were not tied to sacrifices or indeed anything especially religious, but were merely titles of distinction – a claim it is impossible to disprove. There is another somewhat later source which claims that Constantine issued a law prohibiting sacrifices. This source is none other than a decree by Constantine's own son, Constantius, who in 341 declared in a tone of desperation:

> Superstition shall cease; the madness of sacrifices shall be abolished. For if any man in violation of the law of the sainted Emperor, Our father, and in violation of this command of Our Clemency, should dare to perform sacrifices, he shall suffer the infliction of a suitable punishment and the effect of an immediate sentence.[13]

It is possible, as Barnes (2014, 109ff.) argues very strongly, that Constantine did at some point decree that blood-sacrifices should cease. In his Life of Constantine (2, 45) Eusebius says so expressly. He refers to two laws, vaguely dated as 'about that time', one of which he quotes in full, though not the one which supposedly prohibited oracles and sacrifice. It is strange that such a hugely important decree should have been so completely lost and gone unmentioned by any other contemporary source (I follow Edwards (2015, 308) in his rejection of the poet Palladas as a witness). More importantly, the decree of Constantius shows clearly that this law of Constantine, if it was more than a claim which Constantius based on reading Eusebius, had had absolutely no effect. Why else reiterate it so forcefully? And it is a remarkable contradiction that Constantine himself refers to public altars and shrines in the decree on the legal use of *haruspices*, who needed to kill animals if they still consulted livers.

I would therefore rather follow Curran (1996 and 2000, 169-181), who distinguishes carefully between the personal religious preferences and behaviour of Constantine and his treatment of public religion. Curran reminds us that the laws against *haruspices* find precedents in previous emperors,

13 *Cesset superstitio, sacrificiorum aboleatur insania. Nam quicumque contra legem divi principis parentis nostri et hanc nostrae mansuetudinis iussionem ausus fuerit sacrificia celebrare, competens in eum vindicta et praesens sententia exeratur.*

who also prohibited private investigations of the future, and he mentions that simply the fact that the emperor himself did not sacrifice – as Eusebius declares – does not mean there were no sacrifices. Curran concludes that Constantine '…did not proscribe paganism by banning all sacrifice, nor did he order the closure of the temples' (2000, 181). There is little doubt that Constantine had treasures removed from many temples and that he used these treasures to decorate Constantinople, as Eusebius tells us (see Curran 1996, 75 for a discussion). However, even if this was seen by Christians at the time as a despoiling and possibly a closure of temples, it was really nothing new, at least from a local perspective. Constantine's scope may have been wider than usual, but the practice of Roman emperors moving treasure and sculptures from local temples to Rome or any Roman public building was ancient. People may not have seen it as a religious assault.

Conclusion

Religious or cultural change in general is difficult to deal with. It is probably continuous and most often imperceptible. Only when major changes are the effect of some sort of force, whether internal or external, do they become apparent and require explanation. In trying to analyse such changes one must look at the push and pull factors. Why change, and why in this direction? When such a change is set in motion the perspective becomes one of stick and carrot. It seems obvious that Constantine was mostly using the carrot. Except for his introduction of Sundays as a new set of holidays and his not unprecedented injunctions against private *haruspicy*, there appears to be no extant contemporary documentation that he used much force to achieve the formidable religious change which was the result of his actions. The carrot is much more obvious: monetary rewards for the clergy and the elevated judicial status for bishops can be shown to have made people of means flock to the emperor's religion in numbers greater than he himself had foreseen. I would claim that Constantine was doing nothing new with these policies, because previous emperors had given extraordinary privileges to priesthoods of the various cults they supported. Perhaps this is part of the reason for his success, coupled with his longevity and the fact that his sons succeeded him.

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Revivals of ancient religious traditions in modern India: Sāṃkhyayoga and Buddhism

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Abstract

The article compares the early stages of the revivals of Sāṃkhyayoga and Buddhism in modern India. A similarity of Sāṃkhyayoga and Buddhism was that both had disappeared from India and were revived in the modern period, partly based on Orientalist discoveries and writings and on the availability of printed books and publishers. Printed books provided knowledge of ancient traditions and made re-establishment possible and printed books provided a vehicle for promoting the new teachings. The article argues that absence of communities in India identified with these traditions at the time meant that these traditions were available as identities to be claimed.

Keywords: *Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Hariharānanda Āraṇya, Navayana Buddhism, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar*

In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries both Sāṃkhyayoga and Indian Buddhism were revived in India. In this paper I compare and contrast these revivals, and suggest why they happened. Sāṃkhyayoga and Buddhism had mainly disappeared as living traditions from the central parts of India before the modern period and their absence opened them to the claims of various groups.

The only living Sāṃkhyayoga monastic tradition in India based on the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, the Kāpil Maṭh tradition founded by Hariharānanda Āraṇya (1869–1947), was a late nineteenth-century re-establishment (Jacobsen 2018). There were no monastic institutions of Sāṃkhyayoga *saṃnyāsin*s based on the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* in India in 1892, when Āraṇya became a *saṃnyāsin,* and his encounter with the teaching of Sāmkhyayoga was primarily through a textual tradition (Jacobsen 2018). He never received instructions from another Sāṃkhyayoga guru or Sāṃkhyayoga *saṃnyāsin*. The Kāpil Maṭh, unlike Bengali Hindu movements such as Brāhmo Samāj, Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission, and Bhārat Sevāśram Saṅgha, was not a reform movement but a re-establishment of a perceived Sāṃkhyayoga orthodoxy. It

promoted Sāṃkhyayoga as found in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* and criticised both the contemporary yogī phenomenon and those yoga reform movements emphasising the improvement of the world, without naming any group. Re-establishments of ancient religious traditions have not been unusual in modern India. However, academic research has often been more interested in searching for and 'discovering' continuities of traditions than in re-establishments and new beginnings.[1] The quest for and construction of unbroken continuities with ancient yoga traditions is a well-known process in Indian religious culture. Where the phenomenon of yoga is concerned, Hindu yogīs living in the Himalayas have been seen as sources of 'authenticity', representing an unbroken continuity with past traditions and a lack of contamination by modernity. As Joseph Alter writes:

> The sage lost to the world in the Himalayas is an extremely powerful reference point in the search for authentic Yoga, and it is a reference point that has played an important role in the development of modern Yoga (Alter 2004, 17).

Alter explains that this is not because the yogī isolated in the Himalayas has been found, but because countless yogīs and scholars have gone in search of this yogī (Alter 2004, 17). In a fictional autobiography, published under the pseudonym Śivadhyān Brahmacārī in 1907, the Sāṃkhyayogin Hariharānanda Āraṇya, having dismissed the contemporary yogī phenomenon as composed of 'idle, addicted, good for nothing fellows' who 'were after alms only' but whom society nevertheless treated as 'holy men' (Āraṇya 2001: 10), stated that 'there must be some truly religious and divine personalities living in this world. It is by posing after them that cheats are able to make their living' (Āraṇya 2001, 12). Āraṇya showed with his own life that there were indeed truly religious personalities living in this world. Perhaps to prove this point, he spent the last twenty years of his life (from 1926 to 1947) locked in a building with no entry or exit, a building the Kāpil Maṭh tradition refers to as a cave (*guphā*). In the fictional autobiography Śivadhyān Brahmacārī found religious truth not in a text but in a temple of Sāṃkhyayoga meditation in the Himalayas built in ancient times by the fictional saint, Aśvajit:

> He had gained mastery of his senses and the gross elemental principles through practice of Yoga and built this temple to cleanse the earth of the

1 See Jacobsen 2018 for a discussion of some examples of such assumed 'discoveries' of Sāṃkhyayoga continuities.

> prevailing superstitions, ignorance, wrong ideas, sins, sorrows and oppressions (Āraṇya 2001, 44).

This description of the motivation of Aśvajit is probably also a commentary on contemporary Indian society. Śivadhyān Brahmacārī gained access to the ancient Sāṃkhyayoga tradition in the ancient temple of meditation.

In Śivadhyān Brahmacārī's fictional autobiography a magical meditation temple in the Himalayas was the source of entry into the Sāṃkhyayoga tradition, but in real life the source of Āraṇya's Sāṃkhyayoga was his access to publications of ancient Sāṃkhyayoga texts. Āraṇya's Sāṃkhyayoga is very much a product of the growing number of printers and printed books, and collections of these books in Oriental libraries, which exerted enormous influence on Hinduism and which probably also made possible the idea of Hinduism as one religion. The view of Kāpil Maṭh on the origin of Āraṇya's Sāṃkhyayoga is that expressed by Adinath Chatterjee, an old disciple of the Maṭh. He noted in the Preface to the *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali and the Bhāsvati* how this encounter took place: 'It is difficult to explain the phenomenon that was Swāmī Hariharānanda Āraṇya. He met his Guru only briefly and after his initiation as a Saṃnyāsin he chanced upon an old text of Sāṃkhyayoga in a library' (Chatterjee 2000, xviii). Chatterjee does not mention which book or library this was, but it is the unanimous view of the Kāpil Maṭh tradition that the Sāṃkhyayoga teaching of Āraṇya can be traced to texts. After Āraṇya saw the text in the library he received his own copy, which he took with him to the caves in the Barabar Hills in Bihar, where he stayed from 1892 to 1898, and he kept it for the rest of his life. Hariharānanda Āraṇya's copy of this book is still in Kāpil Maṭh in Madhupur in Jharkhand, in the cave (*guphā*) where he stayed from 1926 to 1947. The current guru of Kāpil Maṭh, Swāmī Bhāskara Āraṇya, still resides (2018) in the cave. The text is a Sanskrit book printed in Devanāgarī script entitled *Yogadarśanam* and containing four texts: the *Yogasūtra* and the three commentaries *Yogabhāṣya*, *Tattvavaiśāradīi*, and Udāsina Bālarāma's *Ṭippaṇa*.[2]

2 The full title of the book is: *Yogadarśanam: Bhagavanmahāmunipatañjalipraṇitam; Nikhilatantrāparatantrapratibha; Vācaspatimiśraviracitatattvavaiśāradyākhyavyākhyābhūṣita- maharṣikṛṣṇadvaipāyanapraṇītabhāsyā 'laṅkrtam; Srīmadudāsinasvāmibālarāmeṇa viṣamasthalaṭippaṇanirmāṇapurahṣaraṃ susaṃskrtam.* Kalikātā: Vyāptiṣṭamisanayantra, 1891. This was probably a well-known book among Orientalists, and it is the same book that John Haughton Woods used for his famous translation of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* with the *Tattvavaiśāradī*, published in 1914 (Woods 1914, xi).

Udāsina Bālarāma was also the book's editor.[3] *Tattvavaiśāradī* is considered the most important philosophical commentary on the *Yogabhāṣya. Yogabhāṣya* can be considered the most important Sāṃkhyayoga text. Sāṃkhyayoga is a name of the Yoga teaching of the *Yogasūtra* and the *Yogabhāṣya,* also called the *Vyāsabhāṣhya*, the earliest commentary on the *Yogasūtra*, written around 325–425 CE. The *Yogabhāṣya* was probably written by the same author as the *Yogasūtra*, who called himself Patañjali. *Pātañjalayogaśāstra sāṃkhyapravacana* is the full title of the combined *Yogasūtra* and *Yogabhāṣya* given in the colophon in the manuscripts (Maas 2013). *Pātañjalayogaśāstra sāṃkhyapravacana* can be translated as 'the exposition of yoga of Patañjali, the doctrine of Sāṃkhya'. This title indicates that the author understood his text to represent the doctrine of Sāṃkhya philosophy. In the modern history of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* the *sūtrapāṭha* came to be treated as an independent text, and the *Yogasūtra* became the common title of the text, without reference to the *Sāṃkhyapravacana*. *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* is a text of Sāṃkhya philosophy and provided Sāṃkhya with a meditation philosophy. Its teaching differed from *Sāṃkhyakārikā,* which was the foundation text of the Sāṃkhya system of philosophy in that much of the vocabulary of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* was absent in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. The vocabulary was perhaps borrowed from the Buddhist traditions of meditation such as those found in the *Abhidharmakośa*. The *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* probably blended the Sāṃkhya philosophy with the Buddhist teachings of meditation and thus provided Hinduism with a meditation philosophy. Many centuries later *Yogasūtra* came to be considered the foundation text of a separate system of philosophy called Yoga, Pātañjala Yoga, or Sāṃkhyayoga (Bronkhorst 1985). The Kāpil Maṭh tradition considers Sāṃkhya the theory part and Yoga the practice part of a single philosophical system, Sāṃkhyayoga. In the century before the origin of the Kāpil Maṭh tradition Sāṃkhya and Sāṃkhyayoga were not living monastic traditions. There were then probably no Sāṃkhyayogins in Bengal or probably the whole of India. Orientalists, both Western and Indian, were unable to find specialists in the Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems to assist them with translations of the Sanskrit texts. J. N. Farquhar reported in 1920 that he had met only one Sāṃkhya *saṃnyāsin* in India, but not a single *saṃnyāsin* of Yoga. This Sāṃkhya *saṃnyāsin* was Hariharānanda Āraṇya (Farquhar 1920, 289).

The person who initiated Hariharānanda Āraṇya into the institution of *saṃnyāsa*, and who is sometimes referred to as Āraṇya's guru (Chatterjee

3 Udāsina Bālarāma was born in 1855 and was a Vedāntin. His commentary summarised Vācaspatimiśra's *Tattvavaiśāradī* (Larson & Bhattacharya 2008, 366).

2000: xviii), is remembered by the Kāpil Maṭh tradition as Trilokī Āraṇya. However, Trilokī did not teach Sāṃkhyayoga to Hariharānanda and is not the source of Āraṇya's Sāṃkhyayoga teaching: according to this tradition Trilokī Āraṇya had taken a vow of silence and accordingly not a single word was exchanged between the two. The Kāpil Maṭh tradition is unanimous on this. The meeting between Hāriharānanda and Trilokī lasted only a few hours. Hardly anything is known about Trilokī Āraṇya.[4] The narrative about Hāriharānanda Āraṇya's initiation into *saṃnyāsa* confirms the view that his encounters with the Sāṃkhyayoga teaching seem to have been through books and university (see Jacobsen 2018).

Nineteenth-century India saw an increasing interest in Buddhism, with the foundation of the first Buddhist associations in the 1890s. It is therefore interesting that Sāṃkhyayoga was not alone in being revived in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries: around the same time the ancient religious tradition of Indian Buddhism and Sāṃkhyayoga were revived. A striking similarity of Sāṃkhyayoga and Buddhism is that they had both disappeared from India before and were revived in the modern period, partly based on Orientalist discoveries and writings about their supposed former dominance.[5] Āraṇya believed Sāṃkhya and Buddhism belonged to the same tradition and that the Buddha depended on the teaching of Kapila, the founder of Sāṃkhya. According to Āraṇya *Yogasūtra* preceded Buddhism, but Āraṇya argued that Buddhism and Sāṃkhya belonged to the same tradition, called *ārṣa dharma* (Āraṇya 1988, 0.14). Buddhism was a sect within *ārṣaism*. It was Kapila who first conceived and elaborated the theory of the self and *nivṛtti dharma* (the path of renunciation, and Buddha was a

4 It seems the only mention of Trilokī by Āraṇya is in a (fictional) poem. For a discussion of this poem and Trilokī Āraṇya see Jacobsen 2018, 72–73, 82. The poem is not included in the collection of *stotra*s recited by the followers of Kāpil Maṭh, and there is no iconographic representation of him. His only function seems to have been to initiate Āraṇya into *saṃnyāsa*.

5 Buddhism's revival required that it first be created as an object. See Philip C. Almond, *The British discovery of Buddhism*, for this creation of Buddhism 'as an entity that "exists" over against the various cultures which can now be perceived as instancing it, manifesting it' (Almond 1980, 12). Almond writes that the creation of Buddhism took place in two phases, the first in the first half of the nineteenth century as something out there in the Orient, 'in a spatial location geographically, culturally, and therefore imaginatively *other*' (Almond 1980, 12). In the second half of the nineteenth century 'Buddhism came to be determined as an object the primarily location of which was the West, through the progressive collection, translation, and publication of its textual *past*' (Almond 1980, 13). The essence of Buddhism came to be identified as its textual past, and this opened the way for revivals based on these texts.

follower of this teaching of Kapila, according to Āraṇya.[6] Āraṇya defined the practice of Sāṃkhyayoga as 'what Buddha did' (Āraṇya 1981, xxiv). Āraṇya published a Sanskrit translation of the *Dhammapāda* (Āraṇya 1988) and a Bengali translation of the *Bodhicāryavatāra* of Śāntideva.

The absence of Sāṃkhyayogīs and Buddhists in India made it possible for various groups to claim these traditions,[7] but the revivals in India of Sāṃkhyayoga and Buddhism differed markedly. Buddhism had spread to large parts of Asia before it disappeared from India and it continued to flourish with great cultural and scholastic variety. Some of this plurality of Buddhist traditions and cultural forms returned to India in the twentieth century. Tibetan Buddhism arrived in the 1950s with the Dalai Lama and thousands of his followers from Tibet in 1959. A Buddhist meditation tradition arrived in 1969, when S. N. Goenka moved from Burma to India and started teaching *vipassanā* meditation. However, the most significant revival of Buddhism in India in terms of converts was a new Indian interpretation of Buddhism by Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the greatest leader of the Dalits (formerly untouchables) and the architect of the Indian constitution. Ambedkar formulated what he believed was the original teaching of the Buddha and revived Buddhism in India. Ambedkar converted with several hundred thousand people of his own Mahar caste at a great ceremony in Nagpur in October 1956. Before Ambedkar there had already been several attempts to revive Buddhism in India, but none had been as successful. The identification of the archaeological remains of ancient Buddhism by British archaeologists and Orientalists in the nineteenth century encouraged this revival. In 1891 the Sinhalese Buddhist revivalist Anagārika Dharmapāla had founded the Mahabodhi society in Colombo with the goal of gaining Buddhist control of the ancient Indian Buddhist monuments. A year later an office in Kolkata was opened. Kripāśaraṇ Mahāsthavir (1865–1926), a Barua Buddhist from Chittagong (in today's Bangladesh), had founded Bauddha Dhramankur Sabha in Kolkata in 1892 'to revive the lost glory of Buddhism and to place it on its glorious status' (Chowdhury 1993, 5).

The identification of ancient Buddhist archaeological remains in India combined with the absence of Buddhist communities there and the view,

6 The relationship between Kapila, the founder of Sāṃkhya and the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, has been much discussed and will not be dealt with in this paper. For a discussion see Jacobsen 2018, 36–51 and Jacobsen 2017.

7 The presence of Buddhism in Ladakh and among the Baruas in Chittagong was too peripheral to have much impact. The absence of the Buddhist sangha meant that there was no Buddhist group to claim the orthodoxy of certain ideas, practices, and texts.

promoted by Western scholars, that the essence of Buddhism was available only in the texts of early Buddhism and was a rational philosophy different from its contemporary cultural forms, inspired the revival. Oppressed groups in India saw Buddhism as a possible ideology for liberation from the caste system. In Tamil Nadu Pandit Iyothee Thass (1845–1914) had by 1890 'become convinced, through studies of his own of the truth and significance of Buddhism' (Omvedt 2003, 237), and in 1898 he converted to Buddhism, was initiated by the Sinhalese Buddhist monk Bikkhu Sumangala Nayake, and established the Sakya Buddhist Society (the Indian Buddhist Association) in Madras. Thass had introduced the idea that the Dalits (the most oppressed groups in Indian society, regarded as untouchables in the caste ideology) were the original Buddhists of India. He argued that Buddhism was the original religion of those belonging to the untouchable Paraiyar caste of Tamil Nadu, that the Aryan invaders had taken the land from them, and that they should now convert to Buddhism, their original religion (see Bergunder 2004).

Ambedkar's Navayana ('new vehicle') Buddhism built on these precursors, especially the discovery of Buddhist monuments and India's ancient Buddhist past, the idea that the essence of Buddhism was a textual reality distinct from its cultural forms, and the interpretation of Buddhism as primarily a tradition of rational thinking. Since there were no Buddhist communities in India to claim the tradition and no Indian Buddhist cultural forms at the time, he could claim the Buddhist religion for the Dalits. Ambedkar's interpretations were shaped by the new interest in Buddhism in India and by the Western Orientalists' creation of a homogeneous Buddhism found in texts. As a young man, in 1908, Ambedkar was given a copy of K. A. Keluskar's *Buddha Caritra* ('Life of Buddha') in Marathi. He was later much influenced by P. Lakshmi Narasu's book *The Essence of Buddhism* (originally published in 1907),[8] which he republished with a new preface in 1948, and which gave him an interpretative key for reviving Buddhism.[9] In the preface Ambedkar recommended the book as 'the best book on Buddhism that has appeared so far'. Narasu was involved in the South Indian Buddhist Association. Narasu defined true Buddhism as that which was in accordance with reason. Narasu argued that

8 P. Lakshmi Narasu (also spelled Laxmi Narasu) was 'a writer and missionary in the cause of Buddhism' and D. L. Ramteke considered him 'the most conspicuous figure' in the revival of Buddhism in South India (Ramteke 1983, 57).

9 Gail Omvedt notes 'Ambedkar's choice of Buddhism and his positing it as an alternative to Brahmanism had its basis in Indian history, but his understanding of Buddhism and his reinterpretation of it owed much to Iyothee Thass and to Laxmi Narasu, another leader of this Sakya Buddhism of the early twentieth century'(Omvedt 2003, 2).

> the dictum accepted in all schools of Buddhism as the sole regulative principle is that nothing can be the teaching of the Master, which is not in strict accord with reason, or with what is known to be true (Narasu 1907, vii).

Narasu refers to Buddhism's great number of schools and cultural forms, asking how one identify true Buddhism among them and answering that true Buddhism is only that which conforms 'to reason and experience' (Narasu 1907: 25). According to Narasu this was also the dictum in early Buddhism, when at the meeting in Vaisali the monks had to determine the true teaching of the Buddha from different views.

> The most striking feature of Buddhism is that it eschews all hypotheses regarding the unknown, and concerns itself wholly with the facts of life in the present work-a-day world (Narasu 1907, 21).

> It is the only religion which is a priori not in contradiction with the discoveries of science. No divorce between science and religion will ever be possible in Buddhism as in other religions. Though the Buddha had not the same detail of scientific information at his disposal as we possess today, he was still familiar with the essential problems of psychology, philosophy and religion. He saw in broad outline the correct solution of the problem of religion. He taught a religion based upon facts to replace a religion based upon the assumptions of dogmatic belief (Narasu 1907, 24).

Narasu frequently mentions the 'principle of the brotherhood of man', which also became key in Ambedkar's interpretation of Buddhism.[10] Narasu wrote:

> Buddhism put reason in the place of authority; it discarded metaphysical speculation to make room for the practical realities of life; it raised the self-perfected sage to the position of the gods of theology; it set up a spiritual brotherhood in place of hereditary priesthood; it replaced scholasticism by a popular doctrine of righteousness; it introduced a communal life in the place of isolated anchoret life; it infused a cosmopolitan spirit against national exclusiveness (Narasu 1907, 37).

10 Ambedkar writes in *The Buddha and His Dhamma*: 'What is fraternity? It is nothing but another name for brotherhood of men which is another name for morality' (Ambedkar 1992, 325).

Among the religions only Buddhism 'teaches that there is hope for man only in man' (Narasu 1907, 38). An entire chapter of the book was devoted to 'Buddhism and caste'(70–88). Narasu writes that 'Whatever may be the origin of the system of caste, there can be no doubt that its development is largely due to the ambition and selfishness of those who profited by it' (Narasu 1907, 78). Furthermore:

> A Brahman's sense of pleasure and pain is not different from that of a Chandala. Both are born in the same way, both sustain life in the same manner, and both suffer death from the same causes. They differ neither in intellectual faculties nor in their actions, nor in the aims they pursue, nor in their subjection to fear and hope. Accordingly the talk of four castes is fatuous. All men are of one caste (Narasu 1907, 82).

Narasu considered that 'Buddha broke down the barriers of caste and preached the equality of all mankind' (Narasu 1907, 84). He predicted that low and high castes might conceivably change places in the social hierarchy in the future:

> In the 'lower' form the tendency is to rise to this typical form. Hence it would seem possible that the descendants of those who are now thought low and base might, if time and opportunity are given them, rise to the typical form of the species, and even go beyond it, while it is not impossible that the successors of those who are now regarded as representing a higher type might revert to the typical form of the species, and even degenerate to a lower condition. Of this history furnishes ample proof (Narasu 1907, 87).

Ambedkar argued that Navayana Buddhism followed the principles of early Buddhism. Buddha's teaching was defined as rational and logical, and what was not rational and logical could not be the teaching of the Buddha (Omvedt 2003, 7). This principle provided a method for determining Buddha's original teaching, to be found in the texts. Ambedkar argued that his Navayana represented a recovery of original Buddhism and he understood the difference between historical Buddhism, the contemporary forms of Buddhism, and the Buddhism to which he himself had converted. However, while the term for the kind of Buddhism he founded was 'new vehicle' (Nayayana), he understood this to be a return to the real teaching of early Buddhism. It was conceived of as a revival in India of the ancient tradition.

Ambedkar saw Buddha as a social reformer and rationalist philosopher. For Ambedkar Buddhism was fundamentally oriented around building a just and happy society.[11] Suffering was caused by poverty and caste, not ignorance, and the message of the Buddha concerned the eradication of poverty, caste, and the injustice done to the marginalised. The supernatural attributes of the Buddha, meditation, ideas of karma, and rebirth, were not part of Ambedkar's Buddhism. Ambedkar maintained that the ritualism of Buddhism's contemporary cultural forms was not real Buddhism (Ambedkar 1957). Ambedkar claimed a number of unusual interpretations of the teaching of the Buddha. He claimed that the notion of rebirth did not entail reincarnation but transformation. He denied that the four noble truths belonged to Buddhism. Far from arguing that suffering was inherent to worldly existence, the Buddha's point was that it was possible to create a world free from suffering. The message was that humans were able to create a society based on righteousness through their own effort. He did not accept the common interpretation of karma and rebirth, since it seemed to be based on an idea of the self. The idea of karma was contradicted by the doctrine of *anattā* (non-self, Sanskrit: *anātman*) and it seemed also to legitimate untouchability. The cause of the Buddha's renunciation was not the sight of the sick, the elderly, or the dead, but a clash between the Sakyas and the Koliyas. Ambedkar seems to have excluded those parts of Buddhism that did not support his own egalitarian social democratic philosophy: in his interpretations Buddhism became a political philosophy focusing on a critique of the Indian caste system. Ambedkar argued that Buddhism was the religion of the ancestors of today's Dalits. It was Brāhmanism that transformed these Buddhists into untouchables, argued Ambedkar. Untouchability was a punishment for not becoming Hindu. Ambedkar wrote that when the Hindus came to power, those Buddhists who were unwilling to convert were segregated and had to live in separate quarters outside the villages, becoming untouchables (Ambedkar 1990 [1948]). That the Dalits were the original Buddhists, as Ambedkar argued, meant that when the Dalits converted to Buddhism they were not really converting, but returning to their original religion. 'The function of religion,' wrote Ambedkar, 'is to reconstruct the world and to make it happy and not to explain its origin and end' (Ambedkar 1945, 7).[12] Ambedkar understood the Buddha as a

11 Some of the interpretations of this paragraph have previously been presented in Jacobsen 2010.

12 This statement is obviously inspired by Karl Marx and his well known thesis (in *Theses on Feuerbach*) that the point of philosophy is not to interpret the world but to change it.

social reformer and the teaching of the Buddha to be about the necessity of transforming society. 'Dhamma is not concerned with life after death, nor with rituals and ceremonies; but its centre is man and relation of man to man,' wrote Ambedkar in *The Buddha and His Dhamma* (Ambedkar 1957, 83). The salvific goal of Buddhism, *nirvāṇa*, was reinterpreted to mean a just society. Ambedkar considered Buddhism a religion in the Durkheimian sense, with a focus on the sacred as a binding force for social relationships (Omvedt 2003). 'Religion,' wrote Ambedkar, 'means the rules imposed for the maintenance of society' (Ambedkar 2004, 12). Without sacredness there would be no morality. Buddha, argued Ambedkar, taught that 'Dhamma is morality and as Dhamma is sacred so is morality' (Ambedkar, quoted in Omvedt 2003, 260). Ambedkar's understanding of Buddhism was quite different from most other non-Indian interpretations.

Āraṇya and Ambedkar are undoubtedly contrasting figures in the revival of ancient religious tradition in modern India. However, it is remarkable that both discovered and learned many of the details of the religious traditions they revived from printed books. Both also attempted to summarise their religious traditions in a single volume. Āraṇya learned many of the details of Sāṃkhyayoga from the Sanskrit Sāṃkhyayoga texts collected in the book *Yogadarśanam*; Ambedkar's understanding of Buddhism was much influenced by texts such as K. A. Keluskar's *Buddha Charitra* and Narasu's book *The Essence of Buddhism*. Āraṇya summarised his Sāṃkhyayoga teaching in *The Sāṃkhya Catechism*, Ambedkar in *The Buddha and His Dhamma*. Ambedkar's *The Buddha and His Dhamma* was an attempt to create for Buddhism a single volume, giving people easy access to the teaching. *The Sāṃkhya Catechism* was a book of Sāṃkhyayoga, perhaps modelled on the *Buddhist Catechism* to present the Sāṃkhyayoga tradition in an accessible one-volume book. Both claimed to go back to the original teaching, which was only available in texts and which was different from the tradition's contemporary cultural forms. Printed books made the re-establishment of the traditions possible and printed books provided a vehicle for promoting the new teachings. One was a *bhadralok* (educated upper class and caste) from Kolkata who revived the Yoga of the *Yogasūtra* as the real Yoga in contrast to the yoga of the contemporary yogīs of India. The other was a Dalit from Maharashtra and a Western-educated politician who revived Buddhism as the original religion of the Dalits, distinct from Buddhism's contemporary cultural forms. They both claimed to revive ancient traditions in their true form. Both revivals were helped by Orientalist discoveries and interpretations. Āraṇya decided that the guru should live permanently enclosed in a

cave. There was no tradition of this in classical Sāṃkhyayoga. The purpose may have been to illustrate Sāṃkhyayoga's teaching of the goal of isolation of the self from materiality and other selves. It might also be a statement of perceived orthodoxy of real yogīs living isolated in caves. For Ambedkar Buddha was a politician who provided models for his own political visions. One major difference between Āraṇya's Sāṃkhyayoga and Ambedkar's Buddhism is that Ambedkar did not attempt to appear orthodox. He called his revival Navayana, the new vehicle, to indicate this. He nevertheless claimed that his Buddhism was in fact identical to the original teaching of the Buddha.

For Āraṇya the Buddha had been a follower of Sāṃkhyayoga, and he understood himself as the follower of both the teaching of Kapila and the Buddha. Their teaching was about *duḥkha* (pain and sorrow) as the main characteristic of existence, and the possibility of attaining *kaivalya*, which entailed the isolation of *puruṣa* from matter and other *puruṣa*s and the end of rebirth. Ambedkar understood Buddhism to be about creating a just society free from suffering. Their lifestyles and teachings illustrate two strikingly different revivals of ancient traditions of asceticism in modern India.

In the nineteenth century, when European and Indian Indologists were looking for Sāṃkhyayogins to help them with detecting the meaning of the texts of the *Yoga darśana*, Sāṃkhyayoga, they could find no one. The situation for those looking for assistance with Sāṃkhya texts was reported to be much the same. They found no *saṃnyāsin*s or *paṇḍit*s who specialised in the texts. Buddhism had also disappeared from most of India during the medieval period, and when the British discovered the monuments of ancient Buddhism, there were no living Buddhist communities in India apart from some remote parts of the Indian Himalayas and in Chittagong in East Bengal. The absence of communities and persons identified with Sāṃkhyayoga as well as with Buddhism meant that these traditions were available as identities to be claimed. This was one reason Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar could claim Buddhism as the religious identity of the Dalit communities of India, and Āraṇya could select Sāṃkhyayoga as a proper yoga identity for *bhadralok*s in Bengal. Of course, there was one major difference. Buddhist traditions had spread early outside India and had become a world religion. Yoga was yet to gain a worldwide presence; when it did in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it was not as Sāṃkhyayoga.

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Sheepskins, hair shirts and tunics of palm leaves: Charismatic authority and monastic clothing in Egypt in Late Antiquity

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Abstract

The theme is how authority is expressed in monastic clothes in late antiquity. The hypothesis is that different types of monastic garments speak to different types of authority, and that garments especially associated with charismatic authority came under scrutiny and criticism. The point of departure is Claudia Rapp's tripartite explanatory model, which she uses to discuss the changing dynamics of authority in relation to Christian bishops. The focus in the present article is how monastic texts present charismatic authority by means of clothes. While a *melote*, sheepskin, tends to express a colonization of ascetic and charismatic authority, other items of clothing reflect charismatic authority more directly and untamed, such as the hair-shirt and the tunic of palm leaves.

Keywords: *types of authority, monastic clothes, asceticism, charisma, hair shirt*

The theme of this paper in honour of Håkan Rydving is religious authority in Egypt in Late Antiquity, and the expression of authority in monastic clothing. A brief examination of the religious landscape of Egypt suggests that there was a general rise in religious authority in the years when monasticism was institutionalised. Authority had been local, relatively independent, and allowed for diversity, but attempts at doctrinal and ecclesiastical control were increasingly made. Parallel with this process went an institutionalisation of monasticism.[1] This was reflected in the creation of monastic rules, which included a standardisation of the monastic habit.

1 Adrea Sterk points out that it is puzzling that 'such a class of seemingly isolated, world-renouncing, and often recalcitrant monastics should have become an increasingly normative model for leadership and eventually an institution within the hierarchy of the post-Constantinian church in the East' (Sterk 2009, 5), and he stresses that there is simultaneously 'a process of asceticization of an institution, the episcopate, and the near institutionalization of asceticism in the ascendance of the monk-Bishop' (Sterk 2009, 7).

The habit is an instrument for making authority present in monastic life, and the hypothesis of this paper is that different monastic garments speak to different types of authority, and that garments especially associated with charismatic authority came under scrutiny and criticism in Late Antiquity.

The monastic literature presents historical characters, though frequently through anecdotes and miracle stories serving a religious agenda.[2] Similarly, clothes described in texts are constructions intended to make a point. They refer to garments that were in use among Egyptian monastics, but do not necessarily correspond exactly with their actual use. It is also sometimes difficult to identify which kind of garment is referred to (cf. Boud'hors 2009).

Recent studies of Christian clothes in Antiquity include the aspect of authority. Kristin Upson-Saia comments on authority connected to hierarchy and gender in her book *Early Christian Dress: Gender, Virtue, and Authority* (2012). Rebbecca Krawiec stresses the combination of authority and humility expressed in monastic life and dress (2009; 2014).[3] In her recent book, *Gifts of Clothing in Late Antique Literature* (2016), N. K. Rollason comments on 'the literary use of clothing gifts for conveying ideas of authority' and on the transfer of authority through vesture between Bishop Athanasius and the ascetic Antony – and especially on the tension between different types of authority (Rollason 2016, 153, 149–56). These authors' arguments have been useful, and I will discuss some of them below, but I emphasise more than previously the charismatic and subversive value of specific items of clothing.

The main sources consulted were largely written between 360 and 420 AD.[4] They are the *Life of Antony* by Athanasius, *Paul the First Hermit* by Jerome, the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* by an anonymous author, and the *Historia Lausiaca* by Palladius. The first two are biographies; the others are travelogues written by people who had visited monks and monasteries in Egypt (Frank 2000; Cain 2016). The *Apophthegmata Patrum*, the 'Saying of the Fathers' – amorphous collections of texts from the fifth century and later but with roots in the fourth century – are referred to, as well as *Praktikos* by Evagrius (345–399), *Institutes* by John Cassian (360–435), and Pachomian *Rules* and literature.

2 There is a tendency in the research on Christian monastic and ascetic literature to read the hagiographic accounts as historical reports (cf. Cameron 1999).

3 According to Rebecca Krawiec: 'Monastic dress – like the monastic body itself – brings to the fore the paradox between transcendent perfection and material imperfection in the monastic life' (Krawiec 2009, 126). She stresses that monastic clothing 'for both male and female monks, indicates paradoxically both the monks' humility and their religious authority' (Krawiec 2009, 131, cf. 133).

4 The texts and translation used are listed in the bibliography at the end of this article.

In this paper monastic vesture is seen as a medium by which the world is conceived, objects to which things happen, and signs which are interpreted. What types of authority were embodied, experienced, enacted, and expressed by means of monastic garments in Egypt in Late Antiquity as they are described in monastic literature? What type of clothes are carriers of charismatic authority? The paper includes four parts: 1) types of authority; 2) incorporating and expressing authority; 3) transfer of authority; 4) clothes and charisma.

Types of authority

Authority has been a hot topic in the research on ancient Christianity, especially in connection with the so-called 'holy man', who was placed on the agenda in 1971 by Peter Brown's article 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man', and his charismatic power was seen as an alternative to the power of the church and the bishops (cf. Cameron 1999).

In her book *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (2005) Claudia Rapp discusses the changing dynamics of authority in Late Antiquity in relation to Christian bishops (cf. Demacopoulos 2007; Leyser 2000; Sterk 2009). Rapp offers an explanatory model, which she adapts to early Christianity. It is built on Max Weber's model of charismatic, traditional, and legal-rational authority,[5] but Rapp amends this to spiritual, ascetic, and pragmatic authority.

According to Rapp spiritual authority stems from a source outside the individual: 'It is given by God as a gift' (Rapp 2005, 16). It is a personal form of authority, which is self-sufficient and 'can exist in the individual independent of its recognition by others' (Rapp 2005, 16; 56–99). Spiritual authority is especially connected to teaching and miracles.

The source of ascetic authority is *askesis*, 'practice'. It is based on the individual's personal efforts in subduing the body and living a virtuous life. Ascetic authority is earned through works. It is visible in appearance and lifestyle and dependent on recognition by others (Rapp 2005, 17, 100–152).

Pragmatic authority is directed towards others and towards the administration of religious institutions. It is not, like ascetic authority, directed towards the disciplining of the self. Pragmatic authority is public and dependent on social position and wealth (Rapp 2005, 17, 23–55).

In Rapp's tripartite model ascetic authority plays a prominent role: 'The usefulness of this tripartite scheme lies in the fact that it accords a special

5 'Authority' is a translation of the German *Herrschaft*.

place of relevance to ascetic authority as the vital link to the other two' (Rapp 2005, 17, cf. 16–18, 101–5). On the one hand ascetic authority prepares an individual for receiving spiritual authority; on the other it motivates and legitimates pragmatic authority. Rapp does not make the same contrast as Weber does between charismatic and institutional authority, and she downplays the opposition between ascetics and bishops (Rapp 2005, 17, 137): 'Weber's notion of charismatic authority functions in specific contradistinction to institutionalized authority, a dichotomization that this study hopes to transcend by introducing a model that embraces three types of authority: spiritual, ascetic and pragmatic' (Rapp 2005, 17). Rapp shows convincingly that the pragmatic authority of a bishop might include ascetic and spiritual authority (cf. Sterk 2009, 7).

Rapp's model is dynamic and fruitful in a study of the relationship between different forms of institutional power in Christianity in Late Antiquity. Two of the categories are immediately attractive: the ascetic and the pragmatic, both built on types of practice. The problematic category is the spiritual, because it is an emic category, constructed with little distance from the users, seen, for example, in this statement: 'Spiritual authority is the authority that comes from the possession of the Holy Spirit' (Rapp 2005, 56, cf. also the quotation above). The use of a terminology which is more general and omits the supernatural makes the model more neutral and apt for comparative studies. Although Weber's use of the term 'charismatic' is ultimately derived from Christianity via the church historian Rudolf Sohm (cf. Riesebrodt 1999, 5–8), the term is universalised and well established. In this paper Rapp's categories of pragmatic and ascetic are combined with the third form of authority, which is here labelled 'charismatic' and understood in line with Weber's original meaning:[6]

> The term 'charisma' will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a 'leader'. (Weber 1968, 241.)

6 Martin Riesebrodt has pointed out that Weber developed charisma in two different contexts, both as a sociological concept for a specific type of authority and as a central concept of his sociology of religion. In the first case it is built on R. Sohm's concept; in the second it is a much looser concept, more in line with the then popular concepts of *mana* and *orenda* (Riesebrodt 1999).

Charismatic authority is characterised by extraordinary personal qualities in individuals, but Weber stresses: 'What is alone important is how the individual is actually regarded by those subject to charismatic authority, by his "followers" or "disciples"' (Weber 1968, 242). Charisma is in other words not based primarily on self-understanding but on the understanding of followers (cf. Riesebrodt 1999, 10). The charismatic authority may continue to inspire people after its holder's death, as seen when the monastic literature describes eminent ascetics, shows preference for the charismatics among them, and promotes their authority.

The charismatic authority's independence of office and its potential survival in tradition after the death of the charismatic make it a type of authority that flourishes in anecdotic texts. If a holder of charismatic authority has caused frictions in life and challenged other types of authority, when his or her story is adapted and incorporated in a text it works as a general inspiration to lead Christian and ascetic lives and functions as a supplement to ascetic and pragmatic authority. One of the ways to express charismatic authority is through descriptions of the garments the ascetics and monastics wore. Before we focus on clothes and charisma we will ask more generally about how monastic garments incorporate and express different types of authority.

Incorporating and expressing authority

The monastic habit coded to a special type of life and the monastic was expected to live up to the ideal incarnated in his/her habit. This is reflected in the literature, for example, in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* (S 4. 68, 4; 5. 4, 12; 10. 192, 3; N 55; N 373b). Even if the garments constituting the monastic habit changed over the centuries and differed from place to place, and monastics may have used worn work-clothes in their everyday life and restricted the wearing of the habit to more solemn occasions (cf. Mossakowska-Gaubert 2005), some items of clothing were given a special significance.

According to Rollason some clothes 'have greater symbolic capital, and this appears to stem from their associations with spiritual authority' (Rollason 2016, 151). This is an apt observation, but it should be added that greater symbolic capital is also due to the clothes' dependency on other types of authority, for example, the pragmatic authority incorporated in monastic rules. Clothes' capacity to mould the body and thus form the experience of monastics must also be considered. Both social expectations and physical moulding belong to the habit. More generally, a literary example suggests

what sort of moulding clothes can effectuate. In Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* the hero lives through transformations and disguises through centuries and experiences. Having slept for days, he wakes as a woman and comments on the effect of wearing women's clothes:

> Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us. … Thus, there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them; we may make them take to mould of arm or breast, but they mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking. (Woolf 1977, 144.)

This insight in how clothing works is also found in recent research, for example, in Daniel Miller's analysis of the Indian sari and how it forms the women who wear it (Miller 2010, 23). Monastics are under a rule, and the habit is an expression of, but also a medium for, that rule, which shapes each monk. In other words, clothes are not only signs but instruments of authority, because they form their wearers. How do monastic clothes affect their wearers? A brief examination of descriptions of monastic garments shows both their capacity to mould the body and make it bend to authority and their symbolic values, including their capacity to reflect, express, and transfer authority.

What purports to be the first description of monastic dress is found in the story about Patermuthius in the *Historia Monachorum*. He was 'the first to devise the monastic habit (*monadikon endyma*)' (10: 3). Here Pathermuthius, a charismatic ascetic, dresses a young man in a habit, which includes four garments: 'A certain young man went to him, wishing to become his disciple. He dressed him at once in a sleeveless tunic (*lebiton*) and having put a hood (*koukoulion*) on his head, a sheepskin cloak (*melote*) on his shoulders, and a linen cloth round his waist, he introduced him to the ascetic life' (*Historia Monachorum* 10, 9). These items of clothing – a tunic (*lebíton*), a hood (*koukoulion*), a sheep skin (*melote*), and a linen cloth – form a shortened version of a standard monastic outfit.[7] What are these items? How do they work and what do they mean?

7 In the *Rules of Pachomius,* translated by Jerome into Latin ca. 400, there is a standardisation of monastic dress, which means that it has become uniform (cf. Krawiec 2014, 53 and Krawiec 2009). It includes more items of clothing than the short list of *Historia Monachorum*, but it does not alter the impression of what constitute the basic garments in the monastic wardrobe. 'This is their equipment (*armatura*): two linen tunics (*lebitonarium*) plus the one already worn, a long scarf (*sabanum*) for the neck and shoulders, a small skin (*pellicula*) hanging from the shoulder, shoes (*gallicula*), two hoods (*cucullus*), a belt (*zona*) and a staff (*bacillus*). If you find anything more than this, you shall take it away without contradiction' (*Praecepta* 81).

A *lebíton*, a sleeveless tunic and a garment of a simpler order, was an ordinary item of clothing used by labourers. It signalled simplicity and moderation, in line with the ideal monastic life. The term is especially found in texts about Egyptian monks in the fourth and fifth centuries (Mossakowska-Gaubert 2017, 330–31).

The hood or cowl (*koukoullion*) was made of a rectangular piece of fabric, folded and sewn together. It was one of the signature items of the monastic habit, and its importance is confirmed by documentary sources (cf. Giordo 2011). It was originally a garment for children and carried associations of innocence and childhood. The anonymous author of the *Historia Monachorum* says of the Pachomian monks that 'they wear sheepskin cloaks (*melotas*), with their faces veiled (*kekalumenno prosopo*) and their heads bowed so that no one should see his neighbour' (III: 1). The author means that wearers' hoods were pulled down so low that they hid their faces. Palladius makes a similar point: 'Let them cover their heads with their cowls (*koukoulus)* when they are eating so no one brother can see another chewing. They are not to speak while eating or let their eyes wander anywhere beyond their plate or their table' (HL 32, 6). The design of the hood limited the outlook of its wearer. It was a garment which contributed to the moulding of the monastic's perception.

Melote (from *melon*, sheep) is a rare Greek word indicating an unshorn sheepskin. In the Septuagint it is found in the story of Elijah, who was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire and left his sheepskin/cloak (*melote*) behind for Elisha to pick up (2 Kings 2: 13–14).[8] These characters were important models for the ascetic life in the desert and for monastic succession. In general, in referring to biblical narratives and *topoi*, the literature presents monastics as imitators of the biblical world and as mediators of this world to their audience. Elijah's sheepskin/mantle, inherited by Elisha, embodied a charismatic prophetic authority which spilled over to monastic garments (cf. Upson-Saia 2012). What then was a *melote* and what did it look like?

The identity of this garment is sometimes difficult to determine. In the sources *melote* seems to mean a sheepskin thrown over the shoulder and used as a mantle or cloak, but it might also refer to a goatskin. In later centuries it refers to a leather apron (Boud'hors 2009). In short, *melote* seems to have been a label for different items of clothing, where the name connects it to the prophetic models of the biblical past. According to Palladius it was not part of the female monastic dress (HL 33, 1), which means that it appeared

8 According to Rollason 'Jerome positions Antony in the role of Elisha to Paul's Elijah' (Rollason 2016, 156).

in the context of monastic maleness and succession and signalled that males were higher than females in the monastic authoritative hierarchy.

In addition to referring to prophetic models and monastic succession the *melote* affected, and was an extension of, the body. One of its functions was to keep the monastic warm, but when, in the *Lausiac History*, the monk Piôr comes out of the great desert 'just at the sixth hour, in the burning heat, an old man wearing his sheepskin cloak (*melote*)' (HL 39, 4), the reader is given the impression that the sheepskin might affect the wearer in a troublesome way and remind him acutely of his status as a monk. There is sometimes a glimpse of how the *melote* functioned as an extension of the wearer's body. In the *Historia Lausiaca* a monk strikes a man on the back with his *melote* in an attempt to drive out a demon (22, 11). The *melote* was further used to carry and contain things (cf. Pachomian *Praecepta*, 38). In the epilogue of the *Historia Lausiaca*, when Palladius speaks about 'the brother who has been my companion from my youth until today', probably referring to himself (71, 1), he writes that one day 'when he was in the remotest desert and did not even have a crumb, he found three warm loaves in his sheepskin. Another time too he found wine and loaves' (71, 3). In this case the text makes the sheepskin function as a medium for miracles.

The last item of clothing in the description is the linen cloth around the young man's waist. Cassian introduces his *Institutes* with a whole chapter about the girdle, this time, however, made from skin not linen. Cassian says that its function is to ensure 'he may always go without being hindered by the dress' (*Institutes* 1, 11), which is a comment on the direct and physical function of a belt.[9] The belt is a sign of being in control. It has both a physical aspect, which is to keep the dress in place, but also symbolises being more generally in control of events (cf. Maguire 2003).

Authority was built into the monastic habit. By means of physical constraints and symbolic power the habit made monastics conform to the rules and objects of the pragmatic authority of the institution to which they belonged. The habit witnessed to the ascetic life and reflected the wearer's ascetic authority to the surrounding world. In the detailed allegorical interpretations of the various items of the habit made by Evagrius and his pupil, John Cassian, these items refer to biblical tradition, recalling the lineage of monastic society, and are sites of social remembrance (Cassian, *Institutes* and Evagrius, *Praktikos*, Prologue 8; cf. Krawiec 2009, 134–135 and Krawiec 2014).

9 Cassian also refers to the models of Elijah, Elisha, and John, saying that the girdle indicates the mortification of lust, signalling chastity and continence, and makes the monk a 'soldier of Christ' (*Institutes* 1, 1).

The fact that the interpretations of Evagrius and Cassian differ illustrates that the meanings of these garments were not fixed but changed with the agendas of authors and with social and cultural contexts.

Of the four items mentioned above the *melote* is the most obvious example of a garment referring to charismatic authority, including the prophetic models of Elisha and Elijah. The *melote* is a kind of signature garment for the monastic life – at least when it appears in texts. However, while the *melote* incorporates ascetic and pragmatic authority, it does not necessarily transfer charismatic authority to the one who wears it. In the story above Patermuthius is the one with the charismatic authority, not the nameless youth who is the first to be clothed in monastic vesture and a *melote*. It would have been another matter, however, if the youth had inherited Patermuthius's own *melote*. This item of clothing would then have participated in the charismatic authority of its original wearer (see below). What does it take for a garment to incorporate and transfer charismatic authority? How do different types of garment relate to different types of authority?

Transfer of authority

Two stories about the deaths of illustrious ascetics describe intimate connections between garments and types of authority. The first is part of Bishop Athanasius's biography of the ascetic Antony, *Vita Antonii*, composed ca. 360, while the other is found in Jerome's biography of the hermit Paul from ca. 375. Antony was a real person whom Athanasius moulded as he saw fit. Paul was probably invented by Jerome to compete with Athanasius's hero Antony, who was the first ascetic to live in the desert. Despite Jerome's effort to promote Paul, *Vita Antonii* became 'the definitive hagiographical model' (Brennan 1985, 2009).

The role clothes play in these two stories has been a topic of interest in recent research (Dihle 1979; Brennan 1985; Brakke 1998, 246–47; Krawiec 2009, 135–36), and has most recently been discussed by N. K. Rollason (2016, 149–56). A key point is that these stories describe a transfer of authority by means of clothes (Brakke 1998, 246–247; Rollason 2016, 130). The focus has been on the *melote* of Antony and the mantle of Athanasius/Antony/Paul, while two other garments appearing in these stories, Antony's hair shirt and Paul's tunic of palm leaves, have received less attention.

According to the *Life of Antony* Antony always wore 'a garment of hair (*trichinon*) on the inside, while the outside was skin, which he kept until his end' (47:2). Athanasius mentions that no one ever saw Antony naked before

he was dead (47:2). He describes the condition of the dead body of Antony and says that he wore the same clothes in old age despite his weakness. The text conveys the impression that the dress was all but part of him. When Antony is dying Athanasius has him say: 'Divide my clothes (*endymata*). Give to bishop Athanasius one of my sheepskins (*melote*) and the cloak (*himation*) I rest on. He gave it to me new, and it has aged with me. Give the other sheepskin (*melote*) to bishop Serapion, and keep the hair shirt (*to tríchinon endyma*) yourselves' (91: 8–9). The hair shirt, which is present at Antony's death, is probably intended to be the hair shirt previously mentioned in the text, but it receives less attention than the other items of clothing.

According to the *Life of Antony*: 'Both those who received the sheep skin and the cloak (*himation*) worn by him kept them as a treasure. To look at them is like seeing Antonius, and he who is clothed in them seems to bear his admonitions with joy' (92: 3). The first quotation includes three garments: the cloak (*himation/pallium)*; the sheepskin (*melote*); and the hair shirt (*trichinas*), but unlike the cloak and the sheepskin there is no comment on the hair shirt, which is the only garment connected to Antony in the earlier part of the text.[10]

Like the sheepskin, the mantle came to be invested with great symbolic capital. It pointed to the authority of a bishop, while the sheepskin (*melote*) was part of the monastic habit and pointed to the authority of an ascetic (Rollason 2016, 130).[11] The return of the mantle to Athanasius and the gift of the sheepskin to him represent a transfer of ascetic and charismatic power from the desert ascetic Antony to the bishop. By the gift of the bishop's *himation* Athanasius brings his ascetic hero safely under the mantle of orthodoxy (Rollason 2016, 150 ff.). When Bishop Serapion receives only a sheepskin it signals that Athanasius alone receives the special mixture of ascetic and clerical power which the *himation/pallium* and the *melote* together represent (Rollason 2016, 154). The hair shirt is not part of the transfer of authority between the bishop and the ascetic, but it is handed over to Antony's two anonymous disciples and disappears from the story.

10 Brennan says: 'The monks inherit Antony's "hairy garment", a piece of clothing possibly associated with the garment worn by Elijah in 2 *Kings* 1.8, but this "hairy garment" does not have the qualities attributed in Chapter 92 to Antony's sheepskins and *himation*' (Brennan 1985, 223). Scholars tend to comment very little on the hair shirt.

11 According to N. K. Rollason this perhaps implied 'the superiority of the clergy in religious authority over monks, for while the latter may have colonised the *melote* and its associations with the charismatic power of the Old and New Testament prophets, the clergy were distinguished by the garment favoured by Christ and Peter' (Rollason 2016, 145, cf. 222).

In Jerome's *Life of Paul, the First Hermit* the story about the mantle of Antony/Athanasius differs significantly in crucial areas. When Paul is about to die he asks Antony, who has come to visit him, to '"go and fetch the mantle (*pallium*) Bishop Athanasius gave you, to wrap my poor body in." The blessed Paul asked this favour not because he cared much whether his corpse when it decayed were clothed or naked (why should he indeed, when he had so long worn a garment (*tunica*) of palm-leaves stitched together?); but that he might soften his friends' regret for his death' (12).

Antony leaves for his cell, fetches the mantle (13), and returns to Paul's cave. Before he reaches it, however, 'he saw Paul in robes of snowy white ascending on high among the bands of angels, and the choirs of prophets and apostles' (14). It comes as no surprise to the reader that Antony finds Paul dead when he comes to the cave. Here Antony 'took for himself the tunic (*tunica*) which after the manner of wicker-work the saint had woven out of palm leaves' (16), and 'on the feast-days of Easter and Pentecost he (that is Antonius) always wore Paul's tunic (*tunica*)' (16). The wearing of this tunic only at the feasts of the Resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit shows that this garment was considered to have a unique quality and holy status, but also that it was not regarded as fit for daily wear. This might be because of its state of preservation, but it is more likely the garment did not conform with Jerome's construction of Antony in relation to Paul. Paul was a full-time and exceptional charismatic, while Antony was second to him.

In the case of Paul there is a rapid change of dress from the tunic of palm leaves, which he wears when he is alive, to the heavenly robes of snowy white in which he is seen in Antony's vision of him, and to the cloak of Bishop Athanasius in which he is buried. A *melote* is not mentioned. In the last part of the *Vita* Jerome makes a crass contrast between Paul's garment of Christ and the dead who are clothed in silk and shrouded in vestments of gold (17). As a final touch 'the sinner Jerome' states that he 'would much rather choose the tunic of Paul with his merits than the purple of kings with their kingdoms' (18).

In Jerome's biography of Paul Athanasius gives his mantle to Antony in a similar fashion, but in this text Antony passes it on to Paul, with whom the mantle is buried. This implies that it is impossible for Antony to return the mantle to Athanasius. The narrative also casts Antony as Paul's successor by letting him take over his palm tunic (Rollason 2016, 156). In Rollason's well-argued interpretation Antony 'is functioning to legitimate Jerome's claim that Paul was the founder of eremitical monasticism' (Rollason 2016, 155) and 'the pallium becomes a visual symbol of this attempt to appropri-

ate Antony's fame for a western saint' (Rollason 2016, 155). She describes how 'important qualities of the holy man were imbibed by his clothing' (Rollason 2016, 136, cf. 154) and points out that the garment contributed to transforming the monk who was given it and involved him in participating in the original owner's qualities. Rollason stresses the competing authority of charismatic saints versus bishops and points out that the clothing gift of the *pallium* is refashioned 'to suit the literary agendas of authors' (Rollason 2016, 149).

Four garments stand out in the two stories. They embody and express different types of authority. The cloak (*himation*/*pallium*) expresses the authority of the clergy and especially the bishop, that is, the pragmatic/ecclesiastical authority; the sheepskin (*meloté*) expresses the authority of the ascetics; the hair shirt (*trichinas*) as well as the tunic of palm leaves express charismatic authority. The last type of authority is not as easily accommodated and institutionalised. There are both the heavenly garment of snowy white and the rich golden and purple vestments of damnation. It can also be added that before Antony dies he speaks about Egyptian burial customs, where the saintly dead are dressed in white and kept in houses for veneration. He disapproves of the last part but says nothing about the first, so dressing the dead in white was probably something of which Athanasius/Antony approved.[12]

Taken together, the two stories make clothes participate in a double spatial movement: the vertical movements of salvation (white linen clothes) and damnation (rich fabrics in gold and purple); and the horizontal movement, which extends from strict asceticism and charisma in the furthest desert (hair shirt and tunic of palm leaves), via the asceticism of structured monastic life (*melote*), to the ecclesiastical authority of bishops and clergy (*himation*/*pallium*).

The *Life of Antony* stresses the transition between ascetic and pragmatic authority connected to the ascetic and the bishop. This transfer of authority speaks to the parallel institutionalisation of the church and monasticism which took place in Late Antiquity.[13] In the *Life of Paul* it is an infusion of

12 According to Jonathan L. Zecher: 'Athanasius' Antony polemicizes as much against burial practices as against Arians and Melitians, effectively numbering mortuary religion among the famous heresies that preoccupied the bishop for so much of his career' (Zecher 2014, 172). Lynda L. Coon points out that 'the predominant fabric of the gospels is linen, which symbolizes Christ's resurrection', and stresses that 'it represents bodily purity, righteousness, and resurrection' (Coon 1997, 56).

13 Claudia Rapp focuses especially on the transition between ascetic and pragmatic authority and the relationship between monks and bishops (Rapp 2005).

the stronger charismatic authority of Paul into the ascetic/charismatic authority of Antony and accordingly an exchange between charismatic and ascetic authority. It is also partly a routinisation of Paul's charisma, seen in Antony's regular use of his tunic of palm leaves on the most important religious and church feast days, but Jerome does not go so far as to allow Antony to use this garment all the time.

Clothes and charisma

In the words of Brian Brennan '*Vita Antonii* reflects, on a literary level the process by which Athanasius routinized Antony's potentially dangerous charisma' (Brennan 1985, 211). This interpretation, shared by other interpreters of the text, accords with Rapp's model and her description of the authority of Christian bishops. However, the charisma of Antony and Paul was not completely routinised. Did the hair shirt and tunic of palm leaves escape, at least partly, institutionalisation and the routinisation of charisma?

In the *Life of Antony* the garment of hair is given to Antony's two anonymous disciples and nothing more is said about it. Garments of hair did not belong to the standard ascetic or monastic vesture even if some of the monastic heroes wore them, as Athanasius tells us Antony did. In one of the stories of *Apophthegmata Patrum* Abba Daniel inherits the clothes of Abba Arsenius: 'He left me his leather tunic, his white hair-shirt and his palm-leaf sandals. Although unworthy, I wear them, in order to gain his blessing' (A, Arsenius 42). Pachomius, the father of coenobitic monasticism, used a hair shirt both day and night before he became leader of the monastery, but only at night afterwards (*The First Sahidic Life of Pachomius*, in Lefort 1965, 102). The hair shirt does not belong to the list in the Pachomian Rules of the items of the monastic habit, and according to these Rules superfluous garments should be removed (*Praecepta* 81, cf. note 6). Pachom's biography, however, makes a sort of compromise between monastic norms and charismatic exceptions by making Pachomius wear the hair shirt only at night (*The First Sahidic Life of Pachomius*, in Lefort 1965, 102). Pachomius thus conforms to the Rules while still showing his extraordinary status and holiness with his hair shirt. Wearers of hair shirts must be worthy to do so. In the case of Abba Arsenius it is said, among other things, that his appearance was angelic and that he had wept so much that his eyelashes had fallen out (A, Arsenius 42). Nobody can doubt Arsenius's status of holiness and his being worthy of wearing a hair shirt.

In a biblical context the hair shirt might refer to the clothing of John the Baptist. Matthew 3:4a says that John the Baptist wore 'clothing of camel's hair', and Mark 1:6a that John 'was clothed with camel's hair'. The Baptist's clothing also recalls and refers to Elijah's *melote* (2 Kings 1: 8). Has the prophetic and charismatic model based on Elijah/Elisha and John the Baptist been divided into the sheepskin of the monastic habit and the coarse hair clothing of individual charismatic heroes? Both these garments have charismatic references, but the *melote* has to a higher degree than the hair shirt been colonised and become part of the standard monastic outfit.

Garments like but not identical to hair shirts are found in the monastic sources. In the *Apophthegmata Patrum* there is a story about a monk who heals a rich man possessed by a demon. By way of thanks he is offered a basket filled with gold. The monk does not accept the gold, but he takes the basket and makes a tunic of it: 'it was hairy and hard (*trichinon kai skleron*) and he walks with it a long time so that it could wear out his body' (N 662). In the last case the tunic made of the basket seems to fulfil similar functions to the hair shirt: it is specifically said to be 'hairy' and to affect the body in a transformative way.

Charismatic authority is a difficult entity, frequently surrounded by ambiguity, which also implies that a charismatic ran the risk of being branded a heretic. In line with this ambiguity the hair shirt was a controversial garment. In *Paralipomena*, one of the Pachomian texts, there is a story about two men who boast of being especially gifted and able to walk on water (*Paralipomena* 33, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, 2, 56–57). They confront Pachomius and challenge him to do the same. These men are labelled heretics and the text states specifically that they are clad in hair shirts. The text's message is that they want to show their charisma with their hair shirts, but these garments reflect only their *hybris* and heresy. Palladius tells us that a spinster who wears sackcloth (*sakkophoréo*) for six years and pretended that she wears it for spiritual discipline and a godly purpose in reality does it for pride. She meets with a fall when she takes a lover (HL 28). If its wearer does not possess the necessary spiritual qualifications, the hair shirt or sackcloth may reflect the opposite of true charisma, which is pride and heresy.

In addition to the symbolic connotations of the hair shirt another aspect adds to its controversy. John Cassian, who took Egyptian monasticism to the West, condemns from his residence in Marseilles the use of hair shirts (*cilicium*) among monks.[14] He claims that the fathers of the monastic move-

14 The *cilicium* came originally from Cilicium and was made of goat's hair.

ment disapproved of it because it ministered to vanity and pride and adds, interestingly, that it obstructed work (Cassian *Institutes* 2, cf. also Krawiec 2014, 61–65). The last suggestion stresses that this garment affected the body in a way that distracted its wearer. While all garments interacted with the body, some did so more aggressively. Pachom wore his hair shirt 'bound around his loins so that the ashes ate away at him, and he was in pain' (*The First Sahidic Life of Pachomius*, in Lefort 1965: 102). If the wearer's main occupation was to chastise his/her body, the hair shirt might be an appropriate garment, but if ascetic life was combined with earning a living, as it was for Cassian and Egyptian monastics, a hair shirt was distracting.[15] Conrad Leyser writes of Cassian's construction of the monastic life that the 'very purpose of casting asceticism as a technique and a tradition was to safeguard against the possibility of aberrant charismatic leadership, which had dogged the ascetic movement in Gaul' (Leyser 2000, 55), and Philip Rousseau points out that with Cassian there is a 'decline of the charismatic master' (Rousseau 2010, 189 f.). In line with his critical view of charismatic authority Cassian approves of neither hair shirts nor traditional Egyptian monastic garments such as the hood and the *melote* (*Institutes* 1, 10). Although he writes eloquently about the spiritual meaning of these garments, their Egyptian background, and prophetic models, they simply do not belong in Gaul.

The tunic of palm leaves is less controversial than the hair shirt. Paul's tunic is first mentioned in Jerome's description of Paul, when we hear that in his youth Paul made his abode in a cave in a rocky mountain. It had no roof, but it was shaded by 'the spreading branches of an ancient palm' (5): 'The palm tree supplied his few needs of food and clothing' (6). Paul seems almost – but not quite – to have returned to a prelapsarian state in which he does not need to toil for his food and clothes: Paul's tunic of palm leaves was based on some sort of wickerwork, so it was not completely without toil, and the first humans hid themselves with fig leaves only after the Fall.

Palms leaves are simple and inexpensive compared to other materials such as linen and wool. In one of the *Apophthegmata* a monk says that 'our fathers and Abba Pambo were wearing old, patched clothes made of palm leaves' as opposed to his audience, who wore expensive clothes (S 6, 9, A (Isaac from Kellis 8)). Here, 'old', 'patched', and 'palm fibres' signify three qualities signifying low economic value but which, for this reason, are of great symbolic value in relation to the heavenly economy. Palladius says

15 Peter Brown has compared the monks of Egypt with the monks of Syria and the Manichaean elect and shown that labour was part of the monks' duties in Egypt, unlike the two other groups (Brown 2016).

of Isidore, presbyter of Scete, that until 'his death, Isidore never wore linen other than a headdress, never took a bath, and did not partake of meat' (HL 1, 2). Abba Helle, who gets wild animals to obey his orders, is ferried across the river by a crocodile, and is generally characterised by his humility and poverty, is dressed in a rag with many patches. He is praised by a priest in a manner which demonstrates the inverse relationship between the heavenly and earthly economies: 'You have a most beautiful mantle (*himátion*) for your soul (*psyché*), brother' (*Historia Monachorum* 12, 7).[16]

Cheapness is common to several of the garments that reflect charismatic authority. Economy is an important issue in the monastic literature, for example, when its great hero, Antony, went into the desert and in imitation of biblical models gave up all his money (Brennan 1985, 215 f.). The connection between charisma and economy was also central for Max Weber. According to Weber 'charisma quite deliberately shuns the possession of money and of pecuniary income per se, as did Saint Francis and many of his like; but this is of course not the rule' (2007, 247). However, Weber adds: 'But charisma, and this is decisive, always rejects as undignified any pecuniary gain that is methodical and rational. In general, charisma rejects all rational economic conduct' (Weber 2007, 247). This means describing clothes as especially poor is one way to contrast charismatic authority with other types of authority.

In a few cases monastic authors allow women to wear clothes that stress their charismatic authority. Melania the Younger, a high-status Christian woman and a darling of monastic literature, had, according to Krawiec 'the ability to use her clothing as a male monk might, but only because she took on male clothing and, by extension, its divine authority' (Krawiec 2009: 138). Her authority is reflected, for example, in Palladius's mentioning that it was she who re-dressed Evagrius in monastic clothes (HL 38, 9). Although Melania did not wear the sheepskin mantle (Krawiec 2009, 138), even that garment is bestowed on her in Palladius's history of monastics (though it is not explicitly mentioned that she wears it): Macarius of Alexandria healed a young hyena cub of its blindness, and its mother 'brought the fleece of a large sheep to the holy one' (HL 18, 28). Palladius tells us that Melania had told him that she received the fleece as a token of Macarius's friendship (HL 18, 28). The case of Melania, however, is unusual. Even if, as a woman, she comes low down in the ancient hierarchy of gender, she scores highly in hierarchies relating to status, wealth, kin, and in incarnating all the Christian ascetic virtues. We note in passing that the story about the fleece also

16 Stranger things like curves and mats could also be used as material for clothes, at least for rhetorical effect, as when one monk was dressed in a mat (A Ammonas 4).

illustrates that a charismatic holy man might receive an item of clothing in a miraculous way – in this case by it being donated to him by a grateful hyena.

The high-status woman Melania is at one end of the spectrum of charismatic monastic females. At the other is a nameless woman Palladius describes. She pretends to be insane, works in the kitchen of her monastery, and is loathed by everyone (HL 34,1): 'She had bound a rag round her head (all the others were shorn and wore hoods), and that was how she served' (HL 34, 1). However, the holy man Pieroum has an epiphany by an angel, who reveals to him the woman's holiness. Pieroum travels to the monastery, sees the woman with the rag, falls at her feet and says, '"this one is our *amma*"' – and Palladius comments, 'that is what they call spiritual women (*pneumatikás*)' (HL 34, 6). In Palladius's version, in contrast to the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, the woman is nameless (cf. A Psys 18, 24 and Daniel of Scete 07). Palladius uses her to shame and blame those who bullied her, and through them female monastics in general. Palladius/Pieroum characterises her rag as a diadem. The women fall at Pieroum's (!) feet, repent, and start to treat the one they had loathed with great respect, but she flees from the monastery and vanishes into the desert because she cannot tolerate the new esteem. In this story the rag functions as a charismatic item of clothing through which the spiritual status of its wearer is expressed. But a female charismatic of lowly origin is obviously too difficult to accommodate after she and her unorthodox headwear have made their point, and she vanishes from the text and the monastery and is engulfed by the desert.

The hair shirt, the tunic of palm leaves, and garments such as patched cloaks and headgear made of rags are exclusive pieces of clothing that do not easily fit into the Late Antiquity process whereby ascetic authority and episcopal power are institutionalised and sometimes met and fused. These items of clothing retained their charismatic power, were not colonised by institutional power in the same way as the *melote*, and were reserved for the select few – the charismatic super-achievers.

Averil Cameron raises an interesting question concerning the extent to which 'the asceticism we see in the texts of late antiquity really did operate in society at large. Might it not be primarily a textual matter, internal to writings?' (Cameron 1999, 41). When monasticism was increasingly institutionalised charismatic authority became more problematic. It also ran the risk of being made heretical. According to Guy Stroumsa in 'Weberian sociology, then, there are two main kinds of religious authority: that stemming from charismatic prophecy, and that embedded in the routine of ecclesiastical hierarchy. The tension between prophets and bishops soon becomes

an opposition between orthodox rulers and heretical leaders' (Stroumsa 2016, 173). At the same time legitimate charismatic authority flourished in hagiographical texts, which serve 'the apologetic purpose of presenting a whitewashed version of the life of a controversial figure' (Rapp 2005, 295) and 'filtering the received tradition through the newly defined categories of orthodoxy and heterodoxy' (Goehring 1999, 218). Rules are normative texts that teach the reader what to do (and in this case what to wear), while the anecdotic literature creates identity (Assmann 2006, 38).

Conclusion

Monasticism was a literary culture in which a Christian *paideia* was developed through reading and writing (Rubenson 2013, 89–90; Lundhaug & Jenott 2015). Ascetic 'practice and the making of texts were parallel enterprises. Both involved the manipulation of raw material to produce holy identities' (Krueger 2004, 195). It is tempting to include the making of ascetic garments as a third, parallel practice, which 'involved the manipulation of raw material to produce holy identities'. This manipulation took place in the production of textiles and clothes in the monasteries and among ascetics, but also in how ascetic and monastic garments were included in texts and adapted to the purpose of the author.

In Egypt in the late fourth and early fifth centuries the legal-rational authority of monastic rules was supplied by identity-making stories about charismatic desert heroes whose authority was idealised in the *Apophthegmata* and *Vitae* (cf. Horsfield 2015, 288).[17] There is a routinisation of charisma in the construction of monasticism, and simultaneously a domestication of charisma through textualisation. Recent research has shown the diversity of emergent monasticism, especially in Egypt, and 'parallel models of ascetic authority' (Choat 2013, 63). The intersection, overlapping, and competition between different types of authority (cf. Rapp 2005, 73) are played out in various ways in Christianity in Late Antiquity, including in monastic clothing. Claudia Rapp has convincingly shown that ascetic authority becomes a key category that mediates between the pragmatic authority of the bishop and the spiritual authority of desert dwellers. In this paper the focus has been

17 Guy Stroumsa has recently aptly observed that 'scriptural authority too can be either charismatic and routinized' (2016, 173). Charismatic interpreters are either heralds or contenders of routinized scriptural authority. The 'Scriptural Movement' 'represents the systematic construction of new interpretative layers over existing scriptures' (Stroumsa 2016, 172).

on how monastic texts present charismatic authority by means of clothing. While a *melote*, sheepskin, tends to express a colonisation of ascetic and charismatic authority, other items of clothing, such as the hair shirt and the palm-leaf tunic, reflect a more direct and untamed charismatic authority. These garments were not colonised – at least to the same degree – and they remained ambiguous.

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Abbreviations:
Apophthegmata Patrum:
A: Alphabetical Collection
N: Anonymous Collection
S: Systematic Collection
Historia Lausiaca: HL

Ancient Sources

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Book Reviews

Aaron W. Hughes: *Islam and the Tyranny of Authenticity: An Inquiry into Disciplinary Apologetics and Self-Deception*. Sheffield: Equinox, 2015, 143 pp.

Islam and the Tyranny of Authenticity: An Inquiry into Disciplinary Apologetics and Self-Deception is one of several studies in which Aaron W. Hughes points out the flaws and weaknesses in the contemporary study of Islam, especially in a North American context. Anyone who has read his earlier studies on this topic will not be surprised that he does so in the present case as well. Hughes's way of putting an argument is familiar, and those he criticises are generally the usual suspects, namely scholars such as Omid Safi, Amina Wadud, and Kecia A. Ali.

The book under review includes an introduction, five chapters and a concluding discussion that ties the study together. According to Hughes the problem with normativity in the North American context and the general tendency to shy away from critical questions (especially regarding the formative history of Islam and the redaction of the Koran) is related on the one hand to Edward Said's critique of Orientalism (that is, the study of Oriental languages, cultures, and religions) and on the other to the impact of 9/11. According to Said Oriental Studies were primarily a tool in the hands of the colonial powers that supported Western hegemony. Because of these associations, Hughes maintains, 'Oriental Studies' (especially historical and textual studies) has become a pejorative term. However, contemporary questions have also placed a new demand on scholars who work on Middle Eastern and Islamic topics. For example, in the wake of the terror attacks on the US in September 2001 many scholars felt a need to defend Islam against both internal attacks (by those who promoted the use of violence in the name of Islam) and external attacks (by those who treated Islam as a *sui generis* concept responsible for them). However, normative claims and hypersensitivity acting as a barrier to discussion, according to Hughes, may also be related to the rise of identity politics. Thus, instead of engaging in critical studies of sources that include analyses of power, authority, and legitimacy, some of the scholars named above feel it necessary to defend Islam and to promote interpretations that are appropriate to an open democratic society. Although it is admirable that scholars of Islam wish to present interpretations of the religion that offer new lines of reasoning, doing so does not necessarily constitute a scientific enterprise paying serious attention to the sources dealing with Islam and Muslims. Instead of dismissing sources that do not live up to present-day standards (democracy, human rights, and equality, regardless of gender

or sexual preference), academics should examine the internal conflicts and contrasting positions related to power struggles, questions of legitimacy, and the various political and social contexts that have influenced interpretations of the religion and its history.

I agree with Hughes's analysis and his way of describing the problems in the North American context. The claim to speak for a so-called authentic or genuine Islam can only be a theological and normative enterprise that has little to do with the academic study of religions. An example is studies that can be tested empirically and that examine claims about superhuman agents as arguments going beyond scientific reasoning. However, although I share most of the concerns Hughes addresses, I am not sure that the situation he describes applies to northern Europe. Normative or speculative Islamic theology is not usually part of the agenda dominating departments of religious studies or the history of religions in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, or Finland. That said, it is clear some of the concerns Hughes expresses are more pressing when it comes to the study of Christianity, and some theologians in the Nordic countries have problems in differentiating between personal opinions and scientific reasoning. Furthermore, the scholars whom Hughes discusses in this book are also read, for example, in Swedish universities, but they are usually used as empirical data to illustrate Muslim positions, not as independent and testable scientific studies of the history of Islam and Muslims.

Besides this appraisal of Hughes's work, I think that Hughes misses an important point in his analysis. The worlds of higher education and research have always been battlegrounds, and scholars have constantly tried to promote their agendas and convince the general public, students, and university boards alike that their approach is the most valid. Instead of complaining about this situation it is more fruitful to discuss different views of science – to put it differently, what is science, how do we attain scientific proof, and what is academia's role and function? Both universities and university publishing houses have always provided space for normativity and ethical and even theological speculations about God. This is, of course, something one can have strong opinions about, but instead of saying that this is good or bad science we should critically consider the outcomes of our research activities. What does it imply if one scholar argues that his goal is to 'save ourselves and the vibrancy of Islamic traditions', as Safi claims, and what does he mean when he speaks about a 'humanity of Muslims' (both quotations are from Hughes p. 32)? In analysing these and similar statements it is also important to remember that while the North American liberal arts tradition often, if not always, promotes an education intended to mould good and decent citizens (i.e.

it is a kind of citizens' education), this is not automatically the agenda of most European universities, which are less inclined to engage in these questions. Although I do not have any empirical basis for this conclusion, I do believe that this is an important reason the North American context differs so markedly from most European contexts. However, before I pat my own back and jump to the conclusion that everything is perfect in Europe, a warning is necessary. What we are seeing in the US may also become the future of the European study of Islam and religious studies more generally. If identity politics and various forms of theological thinking remotely resembling what is outlined in *Islam and the Tyranny of Authenticity* gain a stronghold within European academia, we will probably face similar problems to those Hughes describes.

However, as the observant reader will note, this conclusion indicates first, that I support Hughes's critical gaze, and second, that my view leads me to stress that personal opinions, or even worse, wishful thinking (whether positive or negative towards religion as a social phenomenon) should be left outside the university. An appropriate conclusion to this review is therefore the following normative statement: the scientific study of religions (including Islam) should be based on open questions, empirical studies, and inter-subjectively testable hypotheses, not on normative or wishful thinking about something we call religion. If these criteria are abandoned or compromised, the academic study of religion will have ceased to exist, and it will be time to look for other activities.

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Tommy Kuusela: *"Hallen var lyst i helig frid." Krig mellan gudar och jättar i en fornnordisk hallmiljö*. Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2017, 270 pp.

Whenever Nordic iron-age culture or mythology is represented one of the most striking images is that of the hall, where important meetings take place between chieftains and their guests, or gods and giants. The theme of the hall in mythology is the central theme of Tommy Kuusela's doctoral dissertation in the history of religion at the University of Stockholm (2017). The title translates roughly as '*Sacred Peace Reigned in the Hall': Strife and Peace between Gods and Giants in Ancient Norse Hall Milieus*.

Kuusela's dissertation sees the hall milieus presented in pre-Christian Nordic myths as a reflection of the hall culture of the time, meaning both that understanding the hall culture can function as a key to understanding and interpreting myths and that the mythic narratives in hall milieus can expand our view on the hall-culture of the iron age.

The work is not overly heavy on the theoretical side, focusing instead on an in-depth survey of the material. Research history on relevant terms and concepts is introduced as they are presented. Kuusela does not limit himself to studies of Norse mythology and poetry, but utilises historical and archaeological knowledge to present a broader knowledge base of hall culture.

Based on his understanding of hall culture Kuusela constructs his own methodological tool, the *hall model*. The method is based on analysing mythic narratives in hall milieus against known norms of hall culture, such as maintaining peace in the hall, the hospitality and generosity of the host, and ritual drinking in the hall.

According to the hall model the behaviour of the different gods and giants in hall milieus is measured against the norms and structures of hall etiquette. This brings out characteristics of the gods, or rather underlines what is already known: Odin visits giants' halls alone and in disguise, using deception and cunning to obtain his goals, whereas Thor usually visits halls openly, in the company of other gods, and is faced with tests of strength and might.

Kuusela leads us through several myths set in hall milieus. In most the protagonist is a god who is visiting the hall of a giant: Odin in the halls of Vaftrudner and Suttung, and Thor in the halls of Hymer, Geirröd, Trym, and Utgårdaloke. A few mythic narratives also play out in the gods' halls: the giant Hrungner in Odin's hall and Loke in Ägir's hall.

Perhaps the most central theme emerging from this study is the etiquette of non-violence, or *grið*, which was enforced in hall milieus. The host of a hall was expected to be courteous and hospitable to his guests and a guest in turn to behave respectfully, even if the host and guest were rivals. Yet this peace was often broken, both in myth and real

life, as archaeological evidence testifies. Interest in the myths focuses on how and under what circumstances the *grið* is broken.

An interesting result of the hall-model method is that in many cases the gods are portrayed as rather ill-behaved guests, especially Thor, who often breaks the *grið*, whereas the giants are often portrayed as generous and well-behaved, albeit challenging, hosts. According to Kuusela the gods are not to be seen as 'ideal' or the giants as 'monstrous' characters: rather, both gods and giants are seen as peers, forming complex relationships with each other – much like the hall owners of real life.

The title of the dissertation refers to the sacred aspect of the *grið*. It is a shame the study fails to encompass an analysis of how hall culture and especially *grið* relate to the concept of the sacred, especially as this is a study in the history of religion. This might have contributed new insights into the ways in which sacrality was integral to different areas of pre-Christian culture in the North.

In many ways Kuusela's description of hall etiquette and the institution of the hall as a ritualised representative space for meetings prompts questions about similarities between the iron-age halls and the *sal*, the representative room of Nordic farmhouses in later centuries. It especially recalls the Finnish literary classic *Alastalon salissa* by Volter Kilpi (1933). *Alastalon salissa* is an intrinsically detailed description of how a *sal* room in the late nineteenth century is used for a meeting between farm owners, where the patron tries in highly ritualised ways to impress his visitors and coerce them to support him in the enterprise of building a barque. Among the guests are rivals known to the patron, and much of the book focuses on how the tension and enmity between them plays out when bound by the ritualised vernacular etiquette of the *sal* milieu. In light of this it would be interesting to read a history of representational rooms in Nordic vernacular culture.

Nevertheless, the main strength of Kuusela's work is the way in which he anchors myth to practical culture, seeing their co-dependency, instead of studying mythological narratives as if they existed in an independent realm. The halls of the gods and giants reflect the real hall culture, which in turn was given increased meaning by myths. Through mythic poems chieftains could liken themselves to the gods reigning in their halls and rival chieftains as giants.

Another strong feature is the way the study draws out a central theme which has perhaps remained unnoticed because it has been hidden in plain sight. The centrality of the hall motif in eddic poetry had at least never struck me before I acquainted myself with this study.

Kuusela's (Swedish) language is very clear and his style of writing easy to follow. He presents terms and poems in such a manner that very little previous knowledge of prehistoric Nordic culture is re-

quired to understand the content. The main points are repeated quite frequently throughout the dissertation, making it easy to maintain the big picture. This will make Kuusela's book accessible to the lay reader and its interesting and fresh perspective on reading and interpreting the eddic poems should make it appealing even to enthusiasts outside the academic world. An English translation of the full work would certainly be appreciated by a wider international audience.

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Lena Gemzöe, Marja-Liisa Keinänen and Avril Maddrell (eds): *Contemporary Encounters in Gender and Religion: European Perspectives*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 364 pp.

When one encounters well-known feminist scholars writing on religion and chapters on gender in traditional works on the history of religion, one senses the impaired vision afflicting both the field of gender studies and the area of religion research – preventing the two from seeing each other properly – may have been cured. It would be about time. However, the occasional encounter naturally does not always give one the whole picture, and unfortunately the double blindness identified by Ursula King still often rings true. This in turn highlights the continuing need for volumes such as *Contemporary Encounters in Gender and Religion: European Perspectives*.

In their introduction to the volume Lena Gemzöe and Marja-Liisa Keinänen present a form of reckoning pointing to both the developments made and the blindness that remains. They also point to the challenge of this blindness, a challenge connected to both the complexity of religion and the multifaceted aspect of gender. As post-colonial theorists, among others, have highlighted, comparing aspects of gender and religion is not straightforward. Far too often a Euro-American framework is set as the norm, leading to misunderstanding and simplification. Nevertheless, this volume as a whole testifies to the many ways gender and religion research can learn from each other.

As *Contemporary Encounters in Gender and Religion* focuses on Europe, some topics are of more interest than others. One such topic is secularisation. Many of the book's chapters relate to this theoretical perspective and, in line with previous research, challenge a simplistic understanding of a secularised Europe, highlighting today's diverse religious landscape. However, as called for by the editors, many of the chapters also avoid making religion simply a case of identity politics, instead incorporating the social, spatial, and historical aspects of contemporary European religious life.

The volume's construction is not particularly novel. *Contemporary Encounters in Gender and Religion* includes a section on feminist perspectives on male religious worlds, a section on gender, sexuality, and religious diversity, a section on alternative spirituality, a section on body, space, and movement, and, finally, a section on feminist theology. This amply covers the main areas of the current European research field and as such is not particularly thought-provoking. Throughout the volume, however, there are chapters that stand out and present novel perspectives and alternatives for future research.

Jill Dubisch's chapter in the first short section on studying gender and religion is an example of a scholarly work taking a step further and

allowing new perspectives. Dubisch poses the question of whether there can be religion without gender. How one answers this question goes back to how one understands religion, among other things. Dubisch does not wish to deny the possibility of an understanding of religion that goes beyond gender yet highlights that from today's perspective religion without gender is hard, if not impossible, to imagine.

If there is a double blindness in the study of religion and gender, Marja-Liisa Keinänen in her chapter on feminist perspectives on the masculinisation of religion in turn points to a possible triple blindness. Keinänen's chapter is a critical reckoning of some current trends in religion and masculinity studies, where a lot of the headway of previous gender and gender and religion research seems to have been ignored, with the risk of a re-hegemonisation of the study of religion. In the worst case – a scenario that according to Keinänen's reading is not far off in some current projects – we will end up with gender and male studies of religion as two separate fields.

Muslim women are a recurring topic in European studies of religion and gender, as *Contemporary Encounters in Gender and Religion* highlights. There is a tendency to place Muslim women in the position of 'Other' and different, but in her chapter on sharing experiences Lyn Thomas presents the results of a project that highlights connections rather than differences. The focus is still on the other, but the project she presents illustrates how women of different so-called 'suspect communities' can come together. In this case the focus is on Irish Catholic and Muslim women, but the chapter inspires thoughts of other possible connections.

Studies of alternative spiritualties have brought important insights to questions of power relations, agency, and identity, and the field has challenged scholars to understand the role of religion in people's personal lives in new ways. Terhi Utrianen's chapter explores contemporary angel practices in Finland. She points to how these practices, compared to many well-known feminist stands on religion, may seem somewhat unpolitical and not particularly serious. In a Finnish context, where religion is often seen as something private and subdued, women who openly express their claim to enchanted lives with invisible others can, however, at least to some extent, present a challenge in the social and public arena.

Space is currently on the agenda in many types of project, and Avril Maddrell's chapter in *Contemporary Encounters in Gender and Religion* highlights how a spatial perspective can bring something to the study of religion and gender, but also how gender can open new insights in the study of space. The focus is on a Marian shrine in Malta and the complex authorities present in and around this space. Some clear hierarchies, but also a challenge of dichotomies and an assumed understanding of

power relations, are recognised.

In the section on feminist theology Elina Vuola presents yet another area of blindness in religion and gender research, namely, a form of blindness to theology, but also a blindness in feminist theology to the theological thinking of ordinary women – a group otherwise paid a great deal of attention in gender and religion research. Once again the challenge is to take research a step further and truly try to learn from each other and see what each perspective can bring to the other. Theology needs empirical research but the study of the empirical also needs the understanding of the conceptual offered by theology.

Contemporary Encounters in Gender and Religion is summarised by Linda Woodhead. Woodhead both looks back over what has been and to the future to what can be. The potential for further growth is there, but there are also challenges. There is a need to avoid turning away from the difficult questions and Woodhead points to several fields where there is still scope for learning. One such field concerns the balance between qualitative and quantitative research. The research in *Contemporary Encounters in Gender and Religion* is largely qualitative, and this with good reason – quantitative research needs to be developed and consider the perspectives presented in volumes such as *Contemporary Encounters in Gender and Religion*. However, researchers also need to acknowledge the usefulness of a quantitative approach.

As can be expected, *Contemporary Encounters in Gender and Religion* does not give the final word on gender and religion in a European setting. If there is something missing in the volume, it is perhaps a more honest and clear acknowledgement of the problem of trying to present European perspectives, since – despite some common themes – the field is broad and varied. However, with both its contributions and its gaps this volume inspires further research. The many interesting case studies presented highlight important perspectives, but also the need to keep pushing ahead and moving forward.

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Julie K. Allen: *Danish but Not Lutheran: The Impact of Mormonism on Danish Cultural Identity, 1850–1920*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2017, 288pp.

Scandinavians are still overwhelmingly Lutheran, though religiosity has tended to give way to 'believing in belonging' over the centuries. Their national churches are still seen as custodians of culturally significant rites of passage bringing people together at life's critical junctures. As Professor Julie Allen explains in her study of Mormonism's impact on Danish culture and identity, Denmark was the first Nordic nation to officially decouple citizenship from Lutheranism. Being a Dane had meant being Lutheran, but the new 1849 constitution separated the two identities by legalising the activity of new religious movements while retaining the privileged position of the state church. This leap in religious freedom was preceded, for example, by Baptist activity in the kingdom.

Denmark was Mormonism's point of entry into Scandinavia, which became one of the faith's nineteenth-century strongholds. The constitution allowed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon mainstream) to enter legally 'through the front door' in 1850. Nevertheless, such access did not save Mormons from opposition even in the form of early violence, in addition to more commonplace theological criticism. Danish cultural identity rested on shared elements such as language, customs, history, and, not least, religion, causing the advent of new Anglo-American religious movements to be perceived as a threat to national integrity and social order.

To a non-American scholar Allen's work is especially welcome, because it does not focus on the well-rehearsed narrative of Mormon emigration and the converts' new lives in Utah, as many studies of early Mormonism in non-American locales tend to. Instead, the story centres on the host nation, probing its relationship with Mormonism from multiple perspectives as a new cultural element. For example, how did the Danish elite react to its arrival? How is Mormonism's impact seen in sources such as newspapers, books, and films? How did conversion affect the identity of Danish Mormons? To answer these questions, the author offers four chapters with chronologically and thematically diverse snapshots or case studies that emerge from a plethora of Danish Mormon and non-Mormon materials. The case studies are illustrated with relevant paintings, photographs, or silent-film stills. Given the frequent references to various localities, a map would have been helpful for the book's non-Danish readers.

A major case study concerns the brothers Søren and Peter Kierkegaard. Whereas the philosopher Søren protested against the Lutheran church because he felt it prevented a person developing into a real Christian, he did not publish anything directly about the

Mormons. In contrast, clergyman Peter confronted two inexperienced Mormon missionaries during their preaching meeting, eventually producing an 1855 treatise about what he saw as a perversion of Christianity. He also retaliated against Mormon emigration with its promises concerning health, wealth, and salvation in Utah, thus providing a variation on a prominent theme of the 1910s, when the issue of female 'white slavery' was connected to the Mormons in politics, the press, and film.

Another snapshot portrays Baroness Elise Stampe as an early observer who took the Mormons seriously, apparently in an attempt to understand a friend's conversion. A disciple of Grundtvig, Stampe wrote a long unpublished manuscript in which she analysed Mormon history and doctrine, finding fault with some parts and giving credit where she felt it was due. In particular, and in a comparatively rare display of cool-headedness for the time, she pointed out the hypocrisy and ignorance among those who condemned a new faith without really knowing anything about it.

Mormon polygyny was a topic of constant concern in Denmark, although it was not practised there. It conjured up images of the exploitation of women, the forcing of female converts to go to Utah to join polygamous harems, and the deceptive use of sacred doctrine as a foil for immorality. Thus, street ballads and later films depicted the plight of the Mormon emigrant woman and the intrigues of a Mormon 'priest' trying to capture gullible women. Indeed, Mormonism became so synonymous with polygyny that it could be used 'as a shorthand explanation for polygamous relationships', for example, in the silent films that Allen covers (p. 177).

In addition to such reactions by non-Mormons Allen provides snapshots into identity development and negotiation among Danish Mormon converts. The focus is on converts who emigrated to Utah, which involved major changes in family relationships and feelings of cultural belonging. As Allen demonstrates through their letters, these emigrants still felt themselves to be Danes and continued mingling with other Danes in Utah. Her examples are a reminder that despite church policy aiming at rapid assimilation, many first-generation Scandinavian Mormons in Utah clung to their native language and customs for decades.

While it may reflect the difficulty of finding good primary sources, I find it unfortunate that the book fails to analyse the lives and identity negotiations of the Danish Mormons who stayed in Denmark, that is, those who continued building and leading their church in the homeland. The lives of such non-emigrants would provide an even greater depth of understanding regarding what it meant to remain 'Danish but not Lutheran'. The sole partial exception in Allen's discussion is the well-documented case of Frederik Ferdinand Samuelsen,

but even he emigrated to Utah in 1919. As the first non-American Mormon parliamentary member in the world, Samuelsen's religion was seen as odd but was tolerated by his compatriots, in part because of his significant contributions to society.

As one who appreciates statistical rigor, I was disturbed by a seemingly cavalier attitude to numbers. According to earlier work by William Mulder in *Homeward to Zion* approximately 23,500 individuals converted to Mormonism in Denmark between 1850 and 1905. About a third of these became disaffected, whereas about 12,700 emigrated to the United States. Based on Andrew Jenson's *History of the Scandinavian Mission*, fewer than 2,000 additional Danes became Mormons between 1906 and 1920. Allen's work cites both Mulder and Jenson, but still erroneously claims that approximately or more than 17,000 (p. 1, p. 8, and p. 186) or more than 18,000 (dust jacket) Danish Mormons emigrated during those years. An emigration rate of about 50%, while high, thus does not reflect their 'almost universal propensity' (p. 18) to do so.

The disaffected third is forgotten when the inaccurate claim is made that roughly 23,000 nineteenth-century converts 'remained committed to [Mormonism] for the rest of their lives' (p. 186). And while the total number of converts is reported accurately at one point (p. 67), it is also variously expressed as 'approximately 30,000' between 1915 and 1920 (p. 1, with 1915 probably being an editorial oversight), nearly 30,000 between 1850 and 1900 (dust jacket), or 'tens of thousands' 'over the next decade' after 1850 (p. 15, should probably read 'decades'). However, the suggestion that F. F. Samuelsen would have 'seen thousands of missionaries come and go' (p. 240) during his Mormon years in Denmark (1892–1919) is unnecessary hyperbole.

A more important issue with numbers concerns the scale of Danish Mormon membership and missionary effort during the period of study. Although the waxing and waning of the Mormon presence is discussed generally and some early numbers for Baptist membership are provided for comparison (p. 41), the reader does not get a solid comparative grasp of the various non-Lutheran movements operating in Denmark. Coupled with the practical disappearance of the other movements from the book's later discussion, the central argument about the significance of the Mormon effect on developing Danish conceptions of identity is thus not supported to the fullest extent. Statistics and comments on the development of other movements would have been useful in further bolstering the case.

Nevertheless, these are minor quibbles of a fine work of scholarship by Julie Allen. Her book exhibits the kind of sociocultural analysis to which the study of Mormonism and Mormon history can aspire. Analysing new religious movements as elements of their various host cultures in this manner offers

an abundance of uncharted avenues for study and new understanding. For Mormon studies especially it affords an almost untapped cornucopia that brings the field into increasingly productive discussion with the study of religion and culture more generally. Allen's work is recommended as a model for such research, especially when societal dynamics related to Mormonism are of interest, and Allen is to be commended for painstakingly 'walking the walk' by learning and working with a foreign language and culture.

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