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Editorial Note

A favourite quote of Percy Bysshe Shelley's (1792–1822) is 'History is a cyclic poem written by Time upon the memories of man'. Although what he actually wrote was not quite as terse, the sentiment about how history not only repeats itself but is mediated through memory is indeed memorable, and it works well as an introduction to this issue of Temenos. The subheading of Temenos is 'Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion', but its editors have never restricted the term 'comparative religion' to comparative studies alone. Instead, they have used it as a (now admittedly old-fashioned) translation of the German *Religionswissenschaft*. Over the years Temenos has featured articles from all the sub-disciplines of this field, perhaps with a little overemphasis on ethnography. One of the fields that thus finds itself coming back to the fore is that of the history of religions, the focus of this issue.

In our first article Andreas Nordberg challenges the dichotomy proposed by some scholars of pre-Christian Scandinavia between the concepts of *religion* and the Old Norse *siðr*, 'customs'. The concept of *religion* is sometimes argued to be Christocentric, presupposing a churchlike institution and denoting a theological, essentialist monolith separated from other dimensions of society. Nordberg argues that this dichotomy is misleading for two different reasons. First, the separation of popular (religious) *siðr* and formal *religion* presupposes a two-tier model, which does not represent lived religion among either commoners or the elite in Viking and medieval Scandinavia. Second, the conceptualisation of pre-Christian *siðr* and medieval Christian *religion* is anachronistic, since the Scandinavian vernacular words *siðr*, *sedhvenia*, and cognates denoted both popular and formal Christianity in the Catholic Middle Ages. Nordberg proposes as a solution the concept of *lived religion* of Meredith McGuire and others as a more useful and inclusive category.

From pre-Christian Scandinavia we move in our second article to medieval Finland and the skull reliquary of Turku Cathedral. When the reliquary was found in a bricked-up niche inside the sacristy in 1924, it attracted considerable attention. By analysing the bone material and the narrative depiction of martyrdom embroidered on its silk wrapping, Finnish State Archaeologist Juhani Rinne (1932) identified the most important relics as belonging to the patron saint of Finland, St Henry of Uppsala (died c. 1156), who arrived in Finland in the first Swedish 'crusade' and converted the population to Christianity in the 1150s, until being hacked to death by the Finnish farmer Lalli. Some of his relics were known to have been kept in Turku Cathedral, but they were thought to have been taken to St Petersburg (and subsequently

lost) by pillaging Russian troops in 1720. However, Rinne's findings were disputed by Finnish State Archaeologist C. A. Nordman in a later study (1954), in which he instead identified the relics as belonging to St Eric, the patron saint of the Kingdom of Sweden and the leader of the crusade that brought St Henry to Finland. Now, through a careful combination of radiocarbon dates with a macroscopic osteological study, Aki Voitto Arponen, Heli Maijanen, and Visa Immonen can convincingly settle the matter (no, no spoilers here!), but more than this, they also show the complexity of medieval objects of devotion and how an interdisciplinary and detailed study of the materiality of the skull relic reveals a number of other material phenomena relevant for understanding the use of medieval devotional objects as part of the cult of relics.

In our third and final article Tuomas Äystö remains in Finland but takes us home to the 21st century and away from the framework of the history of religions. If Shelley is right in suggesting history is written upon the memories of men, Äystö's use of a discourse analytical framework is very apposite. In his carefully constructed article Äystö examines the cases of religious insult or blasphemy in Finland since 1998, the year the law against 'the breach of the sanctity of religion' (BOSR) came into effect. While the number of guilty verdicts since then (around twenty) has been small, Finland belongs to the most active countries in Europe applying such legislation. Äystö shows that the essentialist language of the BOSR law renders it a crude tool, protecting only 'central features' of 'established religions'. Importantly, Äystö notes how beneficial it is to broaden the scope of analysis in the discursive study of religion with categories empirically connected to it – in this case ethnicity and race – as such connections make the legal instruments intended to cover matters of 'religion' quite complicated. As so many stakeholders and trends coalesce in cases around religious insult and the related debate on freedom of speech, these instances offer many opportunities for studying contemporary societal conflicts.

With only three articles this issue of *Temenos* is smaller than usual. Being accustomed to four or five articles an issue, I must admit that three feels rather spare, but they do say that all good things come in threes. And again, Shelley wrote that history is a cyclic poem. The last time *Temenos* had three articles was in 2011 (issue 47/1), and that was followed by a very rich issue. So it is this time, as we have an exciting and extensive special issue scheduled for issue 55/1. See you there!

Måns Broo

Old Customs – The Vernacular Word *siðr* and Its Cognates in the Study of (Lived) Religion in Viking and Medieval Scandinavia

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Abstract

Although they highlight the Norse (religious) term *siðr* 'custom' and its cognates, some researchers of pre-Christian Scandinavia suggest that the concept of *religion* involves a Christocentric discourse and should be used cautiously, or even only for Christianity. Some scholars therefore recommend a categorical distinction between pre-Christian (religious) *siðr* and Christian *religion*. This paper contributes to this ongoing discussion. I argue that while it is meaningful to highlight the term *siðr* and its cognates, the distinction between pre-Christian *siðr* and medieval Christian *religion* is problematic. 1) While *siðr* had various meanings in vernacular language, the current debate emphasises only its religious aspect, thus turning the indigenous term into an implicit etic concept. 2) The word *siðr* and its cognates were also used in medieval Scandinavian languages as designations for Christianity, and hence, the categorisation of pre-Christian *siðr* and medieval Christian *religion* is misleading. 3) The distinction between popular *siðr* and formal *religion* is fundamentally based on the two-tier model of *popular/folk religion–religion*. 4) The vernacular (religious) word *siðr* in the sense of 'religious customs, the religious aspects of the conventional way of life' and the heuristic category of (*lived*) *religion* are in fact complementary in the study of religion in both Viking and medieval Scandinavia.

Keywords: *Viking and medieval Scandinavia, Old Norse religion, Christianisation, emic–etic, forn siðr (old customs), lived religion.*

During[1] the Viking Age and early Middle Ages, roughly between AD 800 and 1200,[2] Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland (hereinafter referred to collectively as Scandinavia) were transformed into medieval Christian

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2 I use 'Viking Age' for the period spanning the late 8th to the mid-11th century, and the 'Middle Ages' or 'medieval period' for the period from the mid-11th century to the early 16th century.

states. One of the key agents of this change was the Catholic Church, both in building up the organisation of the state and in terms of religion, as Old Norse religion[3] was abandoned and replaced by Roman Catholic Christianity. This is commonly referred to as a shift in religion. But is this concept appropriate? In recent years some researchers of Merovingian and Viking Age Scandinavia have stated that the concept of religion is Christocentric and thus inadequate for studies of pre-Christian Scandinavia. But what does this actually mean? Were the sacrifices to the gods for a good harvest on Viking Age farms and sanctuaries not expressions of religion? Were the Odin-worshipping warriors not religious? Did pre-Christian divination, magic, eschatology, and much else have nothing to do with religion?

This critique of the concept of *religion* is part of a general ongoing international discussion about the possibility of using such Western concepts and categories in the study of non-Western or pre-Christian European societies. In its modern form *religion* is a Western concept that originated from a Christocentric discourse. Thus, some scholars argue, *religion* presupposes, for example, a church-like institution and denotes a theological, essentialistic monolith separated from other dimensions of society (for an overview of this debate see King 1999, McCutcheon 2000, Saler 2000, Jensen 2003, J. Z. Smith 2004, Cox 2007). This has even led some researchers to suggest that *religion* should be abandoned as an academic concept (cf. Fitzgerald 1997).

It is this debate that some researchers have transferred to research into pre-Christian Scandinavia.[4] However, these scholars do not argue that the concept of *religion* should be completely excluded from academic nomenclature, but rather that since *religion* involves a problematic Christocentric discourse, the concept should be used cautiously or even only regarding Christianity. Accordingly, scholars of the latter opinion recommend a categorical distinction between medieval Christian *religion* and pre-Christian *customs* corresponding to the Old Norse (= ON.) term *siðr*, the Old Swedish (= OSw.) *siþer*, 'custom', and their cognates.

3 The concept of *Old Norse religion* was originally based on the linguistic concept of *Old Norse languages*, referring to the Nordic-Germanic languages spoken in Scandinavia during the Viking Age and the early medieval period (evident in Norse literature from Iceland and Norway, and on Viking Age rune stones from Norway, Denmark, and Sweden). *Old Norse religion* thus referred to the pre-Christian religion practised by peoples speaking Old Norse languages during this era (Nordberg 2012: 122–130).

4 See, for example, Bredholt Christensen 1998, Jennbert 2000, Blomkvist 2002, 2009, Svanberg 2003, 143–149, Ersgård 2006, 27–30, Nordanskog 2006, 30f., Andrén & Jennbert & Raudvere 2006, 13f., Callmer 2006, 194, Shaw 2011, 9ff, Nordberg 2012, Price 2012, 15, 2013, 164ff., Gunnell 2013, 153f., Andersson 2015, 103. For a critical review of this discussion cf. Lindberg 2009.

The present paper is primarily a contribution to this ongoing discussion within the research into pre-Christian and medieval Scandinavia. Its main focus is on the academic usage of ON. *siðr*, OSw. *siþer*, and cognates, and the suggested categorical distinction between pre-Christian *siðr/siþer* and medieval Catholic Christian *religion*. However, since the paper indirectly touches on the extensive debate on the concept and category of *religion*, I should clarify that I use *religion* as a heuristic cultural-historical concept (cf. Saler 2000, Jensen 2003, J. Z. Smith 2004, Shilbrach 2010, 2012) and, as the reader will observe, I occasionally also use the variant *lived religion* throughout the paper.

Many students of religion have dealt with the relationship between the forms of religion upheld by official religious institutions such as the church and the day-to-day religion of common people which largely lacked official sanction, or so-called ethnic/vernacular/indigenous religions without explicit religious institutions (cf. Vrijhof & Waardenburg (eds) 1979, Badone (ed.) 1990, Anttonen 1992, 2004, Jolly 1996, Pysiäinen 2004, Rydving 2004). During the second half of the 20th century these forms were usually conceptualised as (*official*) *religion*, and *popular* or *folk religion.* Recognising that there are several problems involved in this dichotomy of *religion* – *popular* or *folk religion*, scholars such as David Hall (1997), Robert Orsi (2002), Meredith McGuire (2008), and others instead used *lived religion* as an inclusive category comprising all the religious aspects of life. Starting from the perspective of the interplay between personal agency and larger common structures, the study of *lived religion* is thus the study of religion both inside and outside formal religious institutions, among lay people and religious experts, in both the private and public spheres. It involves the religious aspects of everyday life and those of formal festivals and special events, and it includes both personal beliefs and official theology, as well as mundane routines and official ceremonial. In my view, therefore, the concept of *lived religion* is very useful even in studies of pre-Christian and medieval Scandinavia.

From Viking Age *siðr* to medieval Christian *religion*?

All the researchers who highlight the vernacular world *siðr* and the problems involved in using *religion* as a heuristic concept in studies of pre-Christian Scandinavia maintain that Christianisation represented the introduction of Catholic Christian religion. Some scholars maintain that it even represented the introduction of religion *per se.* For example, Gunnar Nordanskog argues

that Christianisation should not be regarded as 'a shift in religion' from 'one religion to another', but rather as 'the introduction of a new element in society in the form of an institutionalised religion' (Nordanskog 2006, 30f., my translation). A similar view is held by Lars Ersgård, who states that 'the Christianisation process … can no longer be regarded as a simple shift in religion. Paganism and Christianity are … not equivalent and comparable units.'[5] Neil Price claims that *religion* is 'a concept that no longer seems to work at all for the Viking Age' (Price 2002, 15) and suggests that the modern notion of pre-Christian Scandinavian *religion* may fundamentally be a strategic invention by Christian missionaries, who constructed the idea of a coherent non-Christian 'religion' from diverse vernacular customs (i.e. ON. *siðr*) as a counterpart to the medieval Christian religion (Price 2013, 165). Fredrik Svanberg states that *religion* is unsuitable 'for use as a descriptive or analytical category when trying to understand lifeways in Scandinavia before the introduction of Christianity' (Svanberg 2003, 143f.). And in his series of studies of the Christianisation of the Swedish island of Gotland Torsten Blomkvist applies the concept of *religion* only to 'the period spanning the Christianisation period … and the Middle Ages' (2002, 2009, quotation 2002, 194), since the vernacular languages in pre-Christian Scandinavia lacked a word directly corresponding to *religion*, and Blomkvist considers it 'impossible to have notions specifying a certain concept if the concept does not exist' (2009, 196).

Regarding the latter argument, it is of course true that people in pre-Christian Scandinavia lacked many words and concepts signifying certain phenomena that have only been conceptualised in Western discourses. Even the concepts of *gender*, *economy*, *politics*, and *intersectionality*, for example, are Western constructs, just as *religion* is. As such, however, they refer to phenomena that exist or are supposed to exist in some form. This is what makes the concepts relevant. If applicable, they make the objects of our studies more intelligible (cf. Jensen 2001, Schilbrach 2010). It is, I argue, in this context that the issue of *siðr* and *religion* should be viewed. As mentioned, some scholars who conceptualise medieval Christianity as *religion* also argue that the same concept is problematic or even completely inapplicable in studies of pre-Christian Scandinavia, since the vernacular languages lacked any equivalent word. Nevertheless, if we were to adhere fully to this line of reasoning, we should not even apply the concept of *religion* in studies of medieval Christian Scandinavia, since no such equivalent is found in the vernacular languages of this period either.

5 Ersgård 2006, 29f., from Swedish '*[ett] perspektiv på kristnandeprocessen under vikingatid/tidig medeltid där denna inte längre kan betraktas som ett enkelt skifte av religioner. Hedendom resp. kristendom är i detta perspektiv inte några likvärdiga och jämförbara enheter*'.

The common people in medieval Scandinavia certainly did not use the loan word *religion*. The word *religion*, from the Latin *religio*, originated in Roman culture, where it had several parallel meanings, though it was often associated with ceremonial and cultic activities. From there *religio* was adopted by some early church apologists before it gradually fell out of use.[6] Today's meanings of *religion* in Christian discourse emerged during the 16th century, when the concept was adopted by reformers such as Zwingli and Calvin, with the meanings 'feeling of piety' and '(personal) devotion'. During the 17th century it was also used in the sense of 'a religious system': first among Protestants, above all as philosophically cohesive systems; and later among Catholics as systematised external patterns of religious life (W. C. Smith 1978, 19–50, J. Z. Smith 2004). Thus, although Christianity was gradually introduced to Scandinavia between the 9th and 11th centuries, the term *religion* was not used as a common denotation for Christianity in Latin or in the vernacular languages before the Protestant Reformation.[7] Indeed, the vernacular words used to encompass the Catholic *traditio*, i.e. theology, liturgy, ceremonial, and popular traditions, etc., in medieval Scandinavia were precisely the same as those previously denoting the pre-Christian religious traditions: ON. *siðr*, OSw. *siþer* ('custom'), medieval Swedish (= MSw.) *sedh*, and ON. *siðvenja*, MSw. *sedhvenia* ('ingrained custom').

From pagan to Christian *siðr* in Old Norse literature

Many students of Viking Age Scandinavia stress that people of this period viewed their religious traditions as part of their *siðr*, their 'custom'. Occasionally, some researchers add that *siðr* also denotes Christianity in some Norse sources. In my view this rather parenthetical reference to the latter meaning is somewhat misleading, since the number of references to medieval Catholic traditions is about the same as the number of occurrences of *siðr* referring to pre-Christian religious customs.

6 From the 5th century *religion* was sporadically used to denote the ceremonial way of life in monasteries or ritual and ritualistic behaviour in general. It is in this sense that the word *religion* is used in the Gothic historian Jordanes' description of the way in which the pagan Germanic Goths worshipped Mars (Wotan) in the 41st chapter of *De origine actibusque Getarum*, (or *Getica*), written at some point shortly after AD 551. cf. Jordanes, *Getica* ch. 41, 1997, 48f.

7 Consequently, the word *religion* is not found in *Ordbok over det norrøne* prosasprog ['Dictionary of Old Norse Prose']. The oldest evidence in Swedish sources dates from 1539, cf. *Konung Gustaf den förstes registratur*, 12: 256, '[Att ni] *skole ware wår konungzlige budt hörige och lydoge, både vtij the Werdzlige saker, så och vtij religionen*'. See SAOB entry: 'religion'.

The earliest evidence of *siðr* is found in medieval manuscripts from the 13th century, but it is commonly agreed that these texts are also relevant to our understanding of vernacular language and words in the Viking Age. During this period and in the medieval era *siðr* (or its cognates) was used very broadly to mean a 'way of life, cultural/social/judicial/religious custom', etc. (cf. Sundqvist 2005 for a semantic overview). When the text emphasises the religious aspects of *siðr*, the term is often preceded by a modifier to indicate whether it refers to old pre-Christian or new Christian religious customs. Instances of the former include, for example, *hæiðin sið* (acc. sing. 'pagan custom'), *hæiðinna manna sið* (acc. sing. 'pagan men's custom', *forn siðr* (nom. sing. 'old custom'), *norænvm siþ* (acc. sing. 'Norse custom', *fornvm sidvm* (dat. pl. 'old customs'), *fornra manna sid* (acc. sing. 'ancient men's custom'), etc. Occasionally even the alternative compound *siðvenja* 'ingrained custom' was used in similar contexts (Fritzner 1896 entry '*siðr*', *ONPS* entry '*siðr*', '*siðvenja*').

The earliest evidence of *siðr* signifying 'religion' or 'religious practice' is from the latter part of the 10th century in a *Lausavísa* (no. 10) by skald Hallfrøðr Óttarsson. Here *siðr* refers to Christianity, which had just been introduced (Skj, B1, 159, my translation following Finnur Jónsson):

Sá 's með Sygna ræsi	The current custom [*siðr*] with the ruler
siðr, at blót eru kvíðjuð;	of the Sogn people that sacrifices are
verðum flest at forðask	forbidden, that we must refrain from
fornhaldin skǫp norna;	all the rules of the Norns that we pre-
láta allir ýtar	viously believed in; all people are now
Óðins ætt fyr róða;	abandoning the lineage of Oðinn, even
verðk ok neyddr frá Njarðar	I am forced away from the descendant
niðjum Krist at biðja.	of Njorðr to worship Christ.

There are some additional examples of *siðr* signifying pre-Christian and Christian religion in 12th-century skaldic poetry. For example, in the anonymous Ólafs *drápa Tryggvasonar* (stanza 10), which relates the actions taken by the Norwegian king Ólafr Tryggvason to convert Norway, the skald states (Skj. B1. 569, my translation):

[…]	
lýð gat lofðungr ráða,	Forcefully, the lord ruled over the peo-
landherr frá sið vǫndum	ple, then the entire population turned
þá hvarf allr ok illum,	its back on the terrible custom [*siðr*] and
ólitt, goðum nitti.	renounced the evil gods.

At approximately the same time the skald Einarr Skúlason called Christianity (gen. sing.) *siðar heilags* ('the holy custom'), in stanza 3 of the poem *Geisli* from 1153 (Skj. B1. 427). Similar expressions also appear in some Scandinavian provincial laws. For example, the Norwegian medieval law of the Eidsiva thing (Chapter 24), stipulates: 'No man shall keep in his house an image of a pagan god [*staf*] or an altar [*stalli*], magic or sacrifices [*vit eða blot*], or that which belongs to pagan custom [*til hæiðins siðar*].' (*Eiðsifaþingslǫg: Kristinn réttr hinn forni*, Chapter 24. In *NGL* 1, 383). This law is preserved in manuscripts dating from the early 14th century.

Expressions such as 'new custom' and 'Christian custom' occur in prose manuscripts dating back as far as the early 13th century, while 'old custom', 'pagan custom', etc. first occur in 14th-century manuscripts. The reason for this seemingly reverse order may be that the oldest manuscripts include homilies and other Christian literature. But this may also indicate something about the modifiers assigned to *siðr*. It is plausible that expressions such as *forn siðr* gained extra authority even in pre-Christian times because *forn* referred to the customs of previous generations. However, it is equally possible that modifiers such as 'old' and 'pagan' were first added during the Middle Ages when the need arose to distinguish between the old pagan and new Christian customs.

The use of ON. *siðr* in the sense of 'Christian religion' is extremely well documented in Old Norse texts from the early 13th century to the 14th century. Much evidence has been chronologically compiled in *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* ('Dictionary of Old Norse Prose' = OPNS). Some examples are: *goþa siþo* (acc. pl. 'good customs'); *helgom siþom* (dat. pl. 'holy customs'); *cristins siþar* (gen. sing. 'Christian custom'); *goþom siþom* (dat. pl. 'good customs'); *cristnir siðir* (nom. pl. 'Christian customs'); *sið cristinna manna* (acc. sing. 'Christian men's custom'); *kristni ok ǫllum góþom siþom* (dat. pl. 'all good Christian customs'); *nýian siþ* (acc. sing. 'new custom'); *retta tru ok goða siðu* (acc. pl. 'correct faith and good customs'); *hann var prestr oc fvllcominn i goþvm sidvm* (dat. pl. 'he was a priest and he was impeccable in good customs'); þeim *retta siðu* (acc. pl. 'the correct customs'); *heilog trúa ok réttir siðir* (nom. pl. 'holy faith and correct customs'); *kristni ok réttra siða* (gen. pl. 'Christian and correct customs'); *með nyium sið ok boðorðum* (acc. sing. 'with new custom and new laws'); etc. (*ONPS* entry 'siðr'). Johan Fritzner gives further examples: *einn sið at trúa á guð föður* (acc. sing. 'a custom, to believe in God the Father'); *góðum siðum prestsins* (dat. pl. 'the priest's good customs'); œztu *trúar kristins siðar* (gen. sing. 'the best belief in Christian custom'); *hins nýja siðar, er goðin hafa reiðzt* (gen. sing. 'his new customs,

which has made the gods angry'); *nýjan sið at bjóða mönnum aðra trú* (acc. sing. 'a new custom to impose on people a different faith'); and í *kristnum sið* (dat. sing. 'in Christian custom [in Christendom]' (Fritzner 1896, 229).

The shift in religion as *siðaskipti* a 'shift in custom' in Old Norse literature

The lived religion was spoken of as 'custom' in the Scandinavian vernacular languages both in pre-Christian times and during the Catholic Middle Ages. It is therefore logical that the actual shift in religion was described in Old Norse literature as a shift in custom.

There are many examples: in *Laxdœla saga* Chapter 33 'my mind forebodes me, that by that time a shift in custom [*siðaskipti*] will have come about, and your husband will have adopted this custom [þeim *sið*], that we will think is much more exalted' (ÍF 5, 1984, 90), and in Chapter 40, 'King Óláfr ordered a shift in custom [*bauð siðaskipti*] in Norway' (ÍF 5, 1984, 116); in *Færeyinga saga* Chapter 30 'Then Sigmundr said: "I also want to inform you that I have changed custom [*at ek hefir tekit siðaskipti*] and that I am a Christian man [*maðr kristinn*] and that I have undertaken Oláfr's task and message to convert all the people on the [Faroe] Islands to the true faith [*til réttrar trúar*]"' (ÍF 25, 2006, 71) and Chapter 36 '"You have often brought shame upon me," said Þrandr. "And that you forced me to change custom [*til sidaskiptis*] is what vexes me the most that I allowed myself to be suppressed into doing"' (ÍF 25, 2006, 79); in *Brennu-Njáls saga* Chapter 100, 'It was also said that there had been a shift in custom [*siðaskipti*] in Norway and that they had rejected the former superstition [*forna* átrúnaði], and that the King had converted Vestlandet [south-western Norway], Shetland, Orkney and the Faroe Islands to Christianity' (ÍF 12, 1954, 255); in the sixth chapter of Þorsteins þáttr *uxafóts*, 'You probably must also adopt a shift in custom [*taka sidaskifti*] and that custom [*sá siðr*] is much better for those who adopt it' (ÍF 13, 1991, 354); in Þiðranda þáttr *ok* Þórhalls, 'It seems to me that a shift in custom [*siða skipti*] will come to pass in the future and that a better custom [*siðr betri*] may come to this country' (Þiðranda þáttr *ok* Þórhalls 1961, 149). Additional examples are found in the *ONPS* entry '*siða-skifti*'.

The formula 'good old Christian ingrained customs' in medieval Swedish sources

There is no Swedish equivalent to the rich Old Norse skaldic and saga corpus from Iceland and Norway, but the terms OSw. *siþer*, MSw. *sedh* ('custom'),

and *sedhvenia* ('ingrained custom', hereinafter translated as 'custom') do occur in other types of Swedish document in the sense of 'Christian religion'. As far as I know, the earliest mention is in the provincial law of the island of Gotland, *Gutalagen*, which states that fines are stipulated for a person who is caught making an invocation or sacrifice *sum ai fylgir cristnum siþi*, 'that does not follow Christian custom' (*Gutalagen* I:4, 1852, 14). The *Gutalagen* is thought to have been written down in the early 13th century, although its oldest surviving manuscript dates from the mid-14th century. There are additional Swedish examples in Christian texts from the 15th century, such as *thæssa høghtidhs sidher* 'these holiday customs' in The Old Swedish Legendary (cf. *Fornsvenska legendariet*, #10, 775), and *helga sidher* 'holy customs' in The Legend of St Catherine (cf. *Aff helga fru kadrin sancte birgitte dotter*, #538). Some examples are also found in the Gustav Vasa Bible, such as *theras fädhers sedher, hwilke monga gudhar hadhe* 'their fathers' customs, which had many gods' (Judith 5:8).

Another interesting expression that often occurs in the Swedish corpus is 'good old ingrained customs', which, like the ON. term *siðr*, was used in both secular and religious contexts. (Several examples are given in Pahlmblad 2001, 367ff. and Berntson 2003, 283–9, with notes). For example, a treaty between Sweden and Denmark from 1438 established that 'each kingdom will retain its name, law, rights, privileges, freedom and good old ingrained customs, both spiritual and secular [*godhe gamble sedhwane, badhe andelighe ok werildzlighe*]' (*STFM* 3, 1895, 181). The phrase 'good old ingrained customs' does not in these cases refer to customs and ways in general; instead, it has the fundamental meaning of 'customary law'. The use of *sedhvenia* ('ingrained custom', from now on translated as 'custom') in the sense of 'religion, religious tradition' was salient to the conflict between the Protestant reformers and the representatives of the old order during the first half of the 16th century in Sweden. The expression 'good old customs' comprised church life as a whole, as regulated by both inherited popular customary law and official practice (Pahlmblad 2001, 368f.), and, to further stress this religious aspect, a modifier, 'Christian', as in 'good old Christian customs', could also be added to the phrase (Berntson 2003, 283–9).

There are many examples. In a letter of protest from the mayor and council in the town of Jönköping to the people in Västergötland Province, dated 4 April 1529, King Gustav Vasa was accused of having 'degraded and disrespected the sacraments and the good old Christian customs [*Sacramenthen och then gode gamble cristelige Sedwänie*] that have been used for the benefit of every Christian person and for the blessing of our poor souls'

(*KGR* 2, 1864, 357). To avoid rebellion, King Gustav repeatedly promised to respect the old Christian customs. In a letter replying to the people of Västergötland he assured them 'that all good old Christian customs [*goda gambla cristeliga Seduenior*] will be strengthened and maintained and that no heresy or heretical sermons will penetrate the kingdom' (*KGR* 6, 1875, 83). Gustav wrote to the commoners in Småland Province that he intended to respect the country's 'good old Christian customs' (*gode gamble christelige sedwenior*) and that 'every man may believe and preach what he feels is right and good and that as regards monasteries, monks and nuns, too, all the old customs [*gamle sedwenione*] will be retained which the common man considers good' (*KGR* 4, 1868, 88). Nonetheless, Gustav Vasa implemented the Reformation, but not until he had consulted some Swedish theologians as to 'whether one may disregard those aspects of holy men's teachings and the churches' ways and customs [*kyrkiones brukningar och sidhwenior*] that are not supported by the Word of God' (*OPSS* 1, 1914, 228). While the theologian Peder Galle defended the preservation of the old traditions that had been respected for generations 'and have long been the churches' adequate and godly ways and customs [*och lenge haffuer warit kyrkiones skäliga och gudheliga brukninger och sedhwänior*]'. (*OPSS* 1, 1914, 230), the reformer Olaus Petri claimed that one had to distinguish between the Word of God and 'the external ways and ceremonies of the churches [*kyrkiones vtwartes brukningar eller ceremonier*]' (*OPSS* 1, 1914, 237), and that one should be able to disregard 'the churches' ways and customs that are not supported by the true Word of God [*kyrkiones brukninger eller seduenior som jcke haffuer retzliga gudz ordh for sich*]' (*OPSS* 1, 1914, 230).

Siðr from emic term to etic concept

It is generally acknowledged that the use of emic terms in academic research does not in itself eliminate ethnocentric biases and misunderstandings. The researcher and the people who are the subject of the study usually do not share the same cultural and contextual pre-understanding. The latter do not analyse, systematise, structure, and categorise themselves and the world in which they live as the researcher does. The informants assign different semantic content and values to the terms than the researcher, and while different informants use their terms in various ways, the researcher usually assigns one variant a higher priority than the others. In other words, the researcher is interested in an intercultural understanding, which is why all the terminology he or she uses will be modified to suit this purpose, regardless

of whether the terms have been taken from the native vocabulary or from a Western academic nomenclature (cf. McCutcheon 2000, Paden 2000, Jensen 2001, 2003, 108–12). In his discussion on emic terms and etic concepts Russell T. McCutcheon exemplifies this with the Hindu concepts *bhakti* (approx. 'devotion to one's deity') and *pūjā* (approx. 'daily orthopraxy'):

> Simply put, as soon as bhakti and puja come from our mouths and pens, they become something entirely different than what they once might have been – for they are now part of an analytic, comparative vocabulary – whether used to understand or explain – rather than a way of life. (McCutcheon 2000, 301).

What McCutcheon demonstrates with *bhakti* and *puja* is also relevant to the academic usage of *siðr* and its cognates. Admittedly, most researchers who emphasise *siðr* are not really using the word as an actual academic concept (but see below), but rather as an instrument to problematise – or even as an argument to abandon – the concept of *religion* in studies of pre-Christian Scandinavia. However, in this negative context the word *siðr* is usually stressed only in a very circumscribed sense, which is implicitly adapted to the academic critique of the concept of *religion*.

To clarify this, let me recapitulate. The words ON. *siðr*, *siðvenja*, OSw. *Siþer*, and MSw. *sedh*, *sedhvenia* were used in Scandinavian vernacular languages in both the Viking and Middle Ages. The words had broad and various meanings in both periods. There was no vernacular equivalent to the modern use of the word *religion* in either era. The word *siðr* and its cognates were used partly in the sense of 'ingrained religious behaviour, religious tradition(s), religious custom' in both periods. Hence, sources mention both *forn* or *hæi*ðinn *siðr* ('old, heathen custom') in the Viking Age, and *ný* or *kristinn siðr* ('new, Christian custom') in the medieval Catholic period.

Since the prerequisites are fundamentally the same in both periods, it would be inconsistent to treat the words *siðr* and *religion* differently in studies of the Viking Age and the Middle Ages. However, this is exactly what has often been done. While medieval Catholic Christianity is always conceptualised as *religion*, the word *siðr* is usually emphasised in the very limited sense of pre-Christian ritual and spiritual behaviour (although cf. Blomkvist 2016).

Clearly, the emic-etic problem is relevant here. In a very broad sense the emic terms *siðr* and its cognates encompassed the common ingrained custom, the conventional way of life. Thus, the þing assembly and its judicial activities took place in accordance with the *siðr*. Inheritance and

partition of land were regulated in accordance with the *siðr*, and so on (cf. Sundqvist 2005). Why then are all these dimensions of the pre-Christian *siðr* not juxtaposed with medieval Christian *religion*? Why do pre-Christian myths, conceptions, and depictions of the gods, sacrificial practices, burial customs, and the veneration of the dead represent the particular dimension of the pre-Christian *siðr* that is contrasted with medieval Christian *religion*? The answer, of course, is that this limited selection of comparisons is implicitly justified through analogies and through family resemblance to similar forms of cultural element from other parts of the world, which, from a general religious history perspective are commonly recognised as aspects of religion in the first place.

Popular *siðr* and church *religion* in the Middle Ages?

Of those who have experimented with the possibility of replacing the general concept of *religion* with *siðr*, few have problematised the difficulties that may arise when emic terms are transformed into etic concepts. As far as I know, the only researcher who has discussed this theoretical problem is the historian of religion Torsten Blomkvist (2002, 2009, 2016). In a study on the Christianisation of the Swedish island of Gotland during the Viking and medieval periods Blomkvist initially proposed that the emic term *siðr* could form the basis of a more analytical concept, *ritualised tradition*, the use of which he, for analytical reasons, delimited to the study of pre-Christian times (Blomkvist 2002). In a subsequent study he instead uses the term *siðr* itself as an analytical concept and category, defined as 'ritualised traditions' (Blomkvist 2009).[8] He then contrasts this analytical concept and category of *siðr* 'ritualised traditions' with the concept and category of *religion*, which he defines 'in the usual way as the relation between man and God/gods' (Blomkvist 2009, 196 (quotation), 207, similar 2002, 17, 196). He also suggests that the relationship between man and God/gods must be institutionalised, which he states was not the case on Gotland prior to the introduction of the Christian Church. He therefore only uses *religion* for (institutionalised)

8 Later, Blomkvist (2016, 149–158) instead defines this analytical concept and category of *siðr* as Sw. '*ordningsskapande*', roughly '[way to] create order'. As a means for analysis, he stresses that *siðr* can be applied without 'any claims to cover every way [the word] *siðr* might have been used during the Viking age. The analytical category is, in this sense, separated from an empirical level' (quotation, 152, translated from Swedish: '*Eftersom begreppet används som analytisk kategori gör definitionen inget anspråk på att täcka in alla de sätt siðr kan ha använts under vikingatiden. Den analytiska kategorin är i den meningen åtskild från en empirisk nivå*.'

medieval Christianity (Blomkvist 2002, 16–22, 195f., 2009, 194ff.).[9] However, as this narrow definition of *religion* excludes originally pre-Christian religious customs that lived on in the Middle Ages without being sanctioned and institutionalised by the church, Blomkvist proposes that researchers studying medieval Catholic religious traditions in Scandinavia are in fact analysing both *siðr* and *religion*.[10]

Although Blomkvist generally argues against the use of *religion* as a universal concept, the model that he proposes appears largely to be a contextually formed variant of the old dichotomy of *religion* and *popular* or *folk religion*. In this opposition *religion* usually refers to an officially institutionalised (and often text-based) religious system such as the Christian Church with its theologically established interpretations of correct doctrine and practice, while *popular* or *folk religion* refers to a type of religion that is more practically adapted to the world in which people live. Popular/folk religion in this sense can refer either to what is known as an indigenous religion (such as Old Norse religion) or to a more syncretistic variant comprising both indigenous traditions and localised elements of a dominant religion (such as medieval popular religious traditions not formally sanctioned by the church) (cf. Vrijhof & Waardenburg (eds) 1979, Badone (ed.) 1990, Anttonen 1992, 2004, Jolly 1996). However, as the two analytical opposites *religion* and *popular/folk religion* cannot be separated in practice, this model has rightly been criticised (cf. e.g. Hall 1997, vii–ix, Saler 2000: 33–50, Rydving 2004; McGuire 2008, 45ff.).

The critique of the categorical distinction between religion and popular/folk religion is in my view also relevant to the suggested division between institutionalised medieval *religion* and pre-Christian and popular medieval *siðr*. As Christianity gradually spread across Scandinavia, and its kingdoms successively became parts of the Christian world, indigenous beliefs and practices intermingled with Christian ideas and customs brought to Scandinavia by missionaries, priests, and monks, as well as by travellers, traders, and craftsmen. Parts of this Christian religion subsequently constituted the formal *traditio* of the medieval Catholic Church. Parts found their place in popular Catholic religiosity. For today's researchers all these customs might seem of diverse origin, springing from Christian, Graeco-Roman, Celtic, and Germanic traditions. However, the people of medieval Scandinavia did not recognise them in this way. They probably experienced the complex of

9 This analytical model has been criticised at length by Lindberg (2009).

10 Blomkvist & Sundqvist 2006, 35. I assume that this is Blomkvist's suggestion, since Sundqvist uses *religion* as a general heuristic concept throughout the rest of his research.

Christian ideas and practices holistically, as a naturally integrated part of their world. Regardless of their background, the traditions were conceived of as Christian because they were accompanied by Christian words and ideas that sanctified and validated them (cf. Hultgård 1992, compare Jolly 1996). Accordingly, the formal *traditio* of the church and the popular traditions in people's daily life formed a lived religious continuum, a connected whole, which was designated in medieval Scandinavian vernacular languages as the Catholic Christian *siðr*, *sedh*, or *sedhvenia*. It was not until the 16th century that Lutheran reformers generally introduced the word *religion* into vernacular Scandinavian languages. It was generally held by this first generation of Scandinavian Protestants that many Catholic 'customs' were not proper Christian religion.

The concepts of *siðr* and *religion* as an implicitly two-tier model

Medieval Catholic Christianity was a heterogeneous phenomenon. There were major differences between ethnic groups and geographical regions, between monastic orders, priests, and laypeople, between theology and lived religion, between how Christianity was practised in rural and urban areas, between professions and between livelihoods. At no point during the Middle Ages did Christianity constitute its own sphere separate from other aspects of people's lives, be it in the fields of politics, the military, the economy and trade, farming, health and remedies, rules of life and penance, etc. The institution of the church and its formal Catholic theology, liturgy, ceremonial, and dogma formed an essential part of medieval Catholicism, yet medieval Christianity was much more than this. To most people the popular Catholic customs of everyday life, which had been passed down from one generation to the next, were often no less significant than attending the Latin mass or the religious professionals' theology and ceremonial.

This, then, gives rise to an essential question: who's aspects of medieval religiosity do we allow to represent medieval Catholicism if we conceptually or even categorically separate the medieval institutionalised *religion* of the Catholic church from medieval popular (religious) *siðr*? I have touched on this issue above. A theoretical framework that postulates that the concept of *religion* only comprises a form of institutionalised church organisation, theology, dogma, liturgy, and ceremonial excludes essential parts of medieval popular Catholicism (cf. Vrijhof & Waardenburg 1979, Badone 1990, Dupré & Saliers 2000). As the historian of religion Anders Hultgård puts it, 'popular religion in medieval and later Scandinavia … has the same right

to be called Christianity as the official and normative religion'.[11] Hultgård discusses certain pre-Christian traditions which, through processes of syncretism and acculturation, were adapted by the medieval church and came to constitute essential elements of popular Christianity.

Were these pre-Christian customs not expressions of *religion* until they were assigned a Christian frame of reference? This rhetorical question of course indirectly touches on a famously longstanding problem of principle within the study of religion. For example, as early as the 1920s, Paul Radin (1927) emphasised that Western evolutionist anthropologists used to compare non-comparable groups with each other to demonstrate how allegedly primitive the colonised indigenous peoples were. Colloquial cultural expressions and trains of thought among the indigenous peoples in the colonies were compared to the lifestyles and philosophical discussions of the intellectual elite in the West. The everyday religious expressions of the indigenous peoples were compared to the institutionalised religious practices and theology of the church. Radin quite rightly pointed to the imbalance of such comparisons. First, most religions lacked precisely the degree of institutionalisation and theological canonisation that characterised the Christian church, so naturally the indigenous peoples lost out in such a comparison. Second, it was misleading to compare the theology and ceremonial of the Christian elite with the everyday religious practices of colonised peoples. As Radin observed, the outcome would undoubtedly have been different if the anthropologists had instead either focused on the existential speculations of religious specialists within each community or compared the studied peoples' religions with phenomenologically more equivalent expressions of the European population's everyday religion, of their popular faith, lore, and customs.

That said, I certainly do not imply that scholars who emphasise the vernacular term *siðr* while criticising the use of the concept of *religion* in studies of pre-Christian Scandinavia are biased in evolutionistic terms. However, the basic problem to which Radin pointed is actually similar to the issue discussed here. Apart from the fact that the conceptual distinction between popular *siðr* and institutionalised church *religion* is highly misleading, since the words ON. *siðr*, *siðvenja*, OSw. *Siþer*, and MSw. *sedh*, *sedhvenia* denoted both popular and formal Christianity in vernacular languages in medieval Scandinavia, there is a problematic imbalance involved in the categorical distinction between medieval Christian popular religious *siðr* and formal

11 Hultgård 1992, 76, quotation from Sw. "*Medeltidens och senare perioders folkliga religion i Norden ... har lika stor rätt att kallas kristendom som den officiella och normativa religionen*."

religion, as well as in the chronological juxtaposition of pre-Christian (religious) *siðr* with institutionalised medieval church *religion*. In both cases the divisions are based on an implicitly two-tier model, in which popular lived religion risks being placed on one side of the scale, and the institutionalised religion of the medieval Christian clerical elite on the other.

Siðr as lived religion

In conclusion, let me briefly return to my introduction. As mentioned, some researchers of pre-Christian Scandinavia are of the opinion that the general concept of *religion* is problematic – allegedly unlike the 'emic' concept of (religious) *siðr*, which is almost never problematised – because it implies some sort of institutionalised Christocentric monolith. This principal difference between *siðr* and *religion* has been even further emphasised by those who suggest a categorical distinction between pre-Christian (religious) *siðr* and medieval Christian *religion*. However, I argue above that this dichotomy between *siðr* and *religion* is fundamentally misleading for two reasons. First, the separation of popular (religious) *siðr* and formal *religion* presupposes an implicitly or explicitly two-tier model which does not represent the lived religion among commoners or the elite in Viking and medieval Scandinavia. Second, the conceptualisation of pre-Christian (religious) *siðr* and medieval Christian *religion* is highly asynchronistic, since the Scandinavian vernacular words *siðr*, *sedhvenia*, and their cognates denoted both popular and formal Christianity in the Catholic Middle Ages.

As also stated in the introduction, I use (*lived*) *religion* throughout the paper heuristically as an inclusive cultural-historical concept comprising all the religious aspects of life. To use the words of my introduction, the study of lived religion is the study of religion both inside and outside the formal religious institutions, among lay people and religious experts, in both the private and public spheres. It involves the religious aspects of everyday life and those of formal festivals and special events, and it includes both personal beliefs and official theology, as well as mundane routines and official ceremonial.

The open and inclusive concept and category of *lived religion* thus comprises everything that can be construed as the religious aspects of ON. *siðr*, OSw. *si*þ*er*, and MSw. *sedh*, *sedvenia* in both Viking and medieval Scandinavia. For most people pre-Christian indigenous religion, as well as medieval popular and official Christianity, constituted natural, ingrained elements of traditional life, passed down through generations. The vernacular words

siðr, *sedhvenia*, and their cognates are linguistic manifestations of this. In my view, therefore, the heuristic concept of (*lived*) *religion* and the vernacular term *siðr* and its cognates are best used complementarily in the study of both Viking and medieval Scandinavia.

* * *

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From Bones to Sacred Artefact – The Late Medieval Skull Relic of Turku Cathedral, Finland[1]

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Abstract

The cult of saints and the subsequent interest in relics constituted one of the essential characteristics of medieval Western Christianity. In particular, relics and reliquaries are prime examples of the importance of materiality in devotion. In the present article we analyse one of the medieval skull relics of Turku Cathedral and its material characteristics in detail. Previous examinations undertaken in the 1920s and 1940s produced two theories of its origins and identification. By analysing the bone material and the narrative depiction of martyrdom embroidered on the silk wrapping, State Archaeologist Juhani Rinne connected the relic to St Henry, the patron saint of Finland and the cathedral, while State Archaeologist Carl Axel Nordman identified it as belonging to St Eric, the patron saint of the Kingdom of Sweden. By re-examining the central element of the skull relic, the bones, with osteological analysis and radiocarbon dating, we show both theories to be highly problematic. Our analysis reveals the complex material features of the skull relic and the medieval cult of relics.

Keywords: *skull relic, Middle Ages, Turku Cathedral, Christian relic cult, osteological analysis, interdisciplinary*

The late medieval relics and reliquaries of Western Christianity are prime examples of the importance of materiality in devotion (Bynum 2011). Some reliquaries are simple products, consisting of a bone fragment placed inside folded sheets of lead, while others are highly complex objects incorporat-

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ing numerous human remains and other artefacts covered with layers of textiles and precious metals. However, to speak of their materiality refers not only to the characteristics of individual bone fragments and other sacred pieces and the concrete materials and tools used in production, but also the production techniques, the organisation of labour, the provenance of various materials, devotional practices, and even more abstract conceptions of the presence of the sacred in the matter (Bagnoli et al. 2011; Robinson et al. 2014). An analysis of the intricate material nature and construction of relics and reliquaries is therefore pivotal for an understanding of the character of devotional objects and the medieval cult of relics.

The study of the materiality of relics is especially important in cases where only scant or no written evidence on the objects survives. A case in point is the skull relic at Turku Cathedral (Fig. 1), which has no textual information on its identity, origins, or age. Until the 1920s the skull relic was kept in a wooden construction called the shrine of Blessed Hemming, and the skull was therefore considered to belong to Bishop Hemming (c. 1290–1366; Lindman 1869, 28). He was the Bishop of Turku between 1338 and 1366 and was beatified in Turku Cathedral in 1514.

The object had already attracted a scientific study in the 1920s, when the earliest scholarly examination of the cathedral's relic collection took place. The pioneering work was done by State Archaeologist Juhani Rinne (1872–1950), who presented the first interpretation of the identity and history of the skull relic (Rinne 1932). In the 1950s State Archaeologist Carl Axel Nordman (1892–1972) introduced another interpretation (Nordman 1954). The conflicting theories formed the background for a new research of the skull relic in 2011. This was part of the research project on the relics and reliquaries of Turku Cathedral Professor Emeritus Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen has directed since 2007 (Taavitsainen 2011).

Already in the early stages of dismantling the object and receiving the first results of the scientific analyses, the skull relic proved a considerably more intricate object than Rinne and Nordman had imagined. This raises a series of questions. What is the importance of natural scientific methods in approaching devotional objects, and has their application changed our understanding of the cult of relics during the 20th and 21st centuries? How can their results be combined with the humanities approach? In the present article we seek answers to these questions, first, by sketching an outline of the cult of relics. We then describe the construction of the skull relic of Turku, starting with textiles used in the skull relic, their scientific dates, and techniques of production; we proceed to an osteological analysis of the

bones. The development of new scientific methods has radically modified and complicated the interpretation of the skull relic in Turku. The variety of scientific analyses of the sacred artefact has revealed medieval attitudes towards relics and devotional objects.

The emergence of the medieval cult of relics

The centrality of relics is not unique to Catholic Christianity. Indeed, albeit to differing degrees of importance, many major world religions – including Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam – have traditions of venerating the earthly remains of holy persons or objects that have been in contact with them (Strong 2007; Meri 2010; Aymard 2014; Hooper 2014). However, since the 1980s the cult of saints has come to be seen as one of the most characteristic aspects of medieval Western Christianity (Bynum & Gerson 1997, 3f.). Relics and reliquaries were at the core of medieval piety, and the cult of saints spread throughout society (George 2013).

Caroline Walker Bynum (1995; 2002) points out the gradually increasing interest in body parts as objects of veneration during the Middle Ages. The cult was based on the bible. Luke writes of those strong in faith: 'Not a hair of your head shall perish' (Luke 21:18). According to the Pauline view all Christians are 'saints', because they have entered more fully into the life of Christ by death (Ward 2010, 275). The physical remains of certain Christians who had shown special signs of the Holy Spirit in life and death were held in unique honour. Based on the creation of the whole person in the image of God, there was no reason to think their flesh was less holy after death.

In the fourth century Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 313–386) taught in his catechetical lectures that 'there reposes in that body a power greater than that of the soul itself, the grace of the Holy Spirit' (Ward 2010, 275). Due to the dramatic expansion of the church in Late Antiquity, most new Christians lived far away from the graves of the early martyrs. Subsequently, the bones of martyrs began to be transported to urban basilicas. They were placed under the altars so the mysteries were always celebrated in the presence of the saints (Angenendt 2007, 167–72). An increasing number of holy bodies were broken up and the pieces sent to new Christian groups.

As the size of relics decreased, their mobility increased. They could be carried around in processions and moved between places and churches, and some relics entered private possession (Bartlett 2013, 275). Relics also moved people, because the devotee needed physical contact with the most important remains of holy persons (Geary 1986, 179; Ward 2010, 277). This

was the motivation for medieval pilgrimages, the cities of Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago de Compostela being the most famous destinations, although there were hundreds of pilgrim sites to visit across Europe. Relics, especially famous ones, enhanced the spiritual capital of churches and brought them visitors, donations, and financial benefits.

The ongoing fragmentation of relics was a concern, and Theodoret of Cyrus (393–c. 458/466) stated that 'when the body is divided, the grace remains undivided' (Miller 2009, 199). In other words, even the tiniest piece of a holy person had the saint's miraculous presence in full. The theme of relics' miniscule and nondescript actuality, however, remained a cause of anxiety, and in the 12th century the Benedictine abbot Peter the Venerable (1092–1156) argued that the relics of the saints were already their resurrected bodies (Bynum 2002, 15). Accordingly, one should not feel contempt for the bones of the present martyrs, but honour them as now full of life, as if they were in their future incorruptible state.

The authentication of a body part as a holy relic was an issue that frequently preoccupied medieval clergy and laymen. Patrick Geary (1986, 175f.) identifies three interrelated beliefs required for the communal acceptance of relics. First, during the saint's life and after her or his death the individual had to have a special connection with God manifested through her or his actions. Second, the church had to officially authenticate the corpse or its part as belonging to a particular saint. Third, the remains of such a person were to be prized and treated in a special way.

The recognition of a relic involved a formal ceremony called an *inventio*. It was carried out by assessing the relic candidate and evaluating whether it met the extrinsic and intrinsic standards for a true relic (Geary 1986, 176). The extrinsic criteria entailed the formal processes of investigating the tomb or reliquary and an examination of *authenticae* documents. These are slips of parchment attached to the relics with inscriptions indicating their identities. Internal criteria denoted the miracles the saint performed after their death. The saint usually indicated where the body parts were to be found, and during the authentication process the holy person showed through supernatural intervention that the remains were indeed genuine. If its results were affirmative, the relic was presented for public veneration in a ritual known as an *elevatio*, and when the relic was moved from one location to another, a *translatio* took place involving a series of formal ceremonies and possibly a procession (Angenendt 2007, 172–75).

By the late Middle Ages it had become church law that relics must be used in the consecration of a church and placed permanently beneath its

altars. The law emphasised that 'the relic should be of a size sufficient for them to be recognized as parts of human bodies; very small relics may not be used' (Nafte 2015, 212). Because of their relatively wide availability and the possibility of creating new relics by dividing older ones, churches gathered dozens if not hundreds of relics, including the relics of the saint to which the building was consecrated. In 1215, alongside their vital presence in churches, the Fourth Lateran Council decreed that relics were not to be displayed outside their containers (Montgomery 2010, 60; Bartlett 2013, 305). In effect reliquaries were like an epidermal layer over the saint's actual body and kept the precious small pieces together and safe.

The dynamics of relics and reliquaries

The distinction between relics and reliquaries seems unequivocal. However, in the Middle Ages their relationship was complex in terms of both theology and material culture. As Cynthia Hahn (2017) points out, a reliquary is akin to a gift box. As it performs its function of presentation, the reliquary is erased in the presence of the relic. Precisely as the medieval reliquary is materiality glorified, sparkling silver, gold, and gems, it simultaneously denies its own existence, standing only as a setting or context for the staging of the relic. If a relic were an object that prompted an intense human response, the function of its reliquary was to open a space for the imagination to be filled with devotion.

A preference for certain parts of the body is visible in the surviving 'speaking reliquaries' (Bynum & Gerson 1997). These are metal containers which express the body part underneath. The most popular were heads and arms, the most expressive and communicative parts of human bodies. However, many of the body-part reliquaries did not actually contain the body part they seemed to imitate, but they could instead house the relics of several saints. Consequently, the shape of body-part reliquaries depended more on the referentiality of body parts and the function of the reliquary than on its contents.

Not all reliquaries were shaped like body parts (Braun 1940). The largest were caskets which look like miniature versions of buildings. Another common type of reliquary borrowed its shape and ornamentation from liturgical vessels like chalices and monstrances. Altar and processional crosses mounted with relics were also typical reliquaries, but even ecclesiastical objects like wooden sculptures could have relics incorporated into them. Small reliquary crosses and other reliquary pendants could also be privately owned and worn as dress accessories.

The complex relationship between relics and reliquaries is manifested in the many material layers surrounding medieval relics. There was rarely only one relic, a piece of bone, inside one container: usually, there were a number of reliquaries inside each other. In some sense the church building as such was a reliquary protecting the relics it housed. Many smaller reliquaries were shaped like ecclesiastical buildings, repeating the architecture which contained them. Inside a church reliquaries were stored and displayed in a particular architectural setting such as a dedicated chapel or a niche in the wall. The altar functioned as a reliquary for the relics it contained.

Even genuine medieval reliquaries have several layers before the actual relic is reached. For example, a head reliquary might have an outer surface moulded in gilded silver and placed on a wooden core. This core in turn had a small cavity containing the relic. A relic, whether a fragment of bone, textile, or other material, was often protected by a linen cloth and wrapped in a piece of sumptuous fabric. The package was then furnished with an authentication slip. In addition to reliquaries placed inside one another, in some cases the reliquary concretely structured its relics into a recognisable entity. This is most evident with some skull reliquaries.

Three skull relics at Turku Cathedral

Skull relics were a popular item in the medieval cult of relics. They consist of a human cranium wrapped in textiles or placed in containers of wood or precious metal. Occasionally, skull reliquaries do not include an entire skull but a scattered group of bones that may originate from one or several human crania. The collection of medieval relics at Turku Cathedral includes three skull reliquaries. Unfortunately, they all lack *authenticae* and thus cannot be directly associated with any known saint or cult. All information has to be extracted from the objects themselves with the assistance of art history and the sciences.

In the 1920s Rinne examined all the relic material at Turku Cathedral. He was a pioneer in combining scientific analyses with medieval hagiographical evidence, church history, and the architectural history of the cathedral. The two scientific methods Rinne applied were radiography and anatomical examination. The latter analysis was conducted by the professor of anatomy Yrjö Kajava (1884–1929) of the University of Helsinki. Since none of the reliquaries were opened, he could do a hands-on examination only of individual, unwrapped bones in the collection. Kajava's analysis of the bones inside reliquaries was therefore based solely on radiographs.

When Rinne (1932) presented his identification of the three skull relics, he emphasised first, the particular features of their textile wrappings, and second, the location in which they were kept after the Reformation. The pool Rinne considered as possibly connected with the skull relics was limited to Nordic saints. However, in addition to the Nordic alternatives a number of other saints with altars at the cathedral could have been considered.

The first of the skull relics of Turku Cathedral was found in a bricked-up niche inside the sacristy in 1924. In addition to a cranium the niche revealed two arm bones which are currently missing and silk covers for both the cranium and arm bones. Rinne suggests that these bones belong to the patron saint of Finland, St Henry of Uppsala (died c. 1156), because they were kept safe inside the wall. St Henry was the Bishop of Uppsala, who arrived in Finland in a crusade and converted the population to Christianity in the 1150s (Heikkilä 2005). He was then murdered by the Finnish farmer Lalli (Taavitsainen, Oinonen, & Possnert 2015).

The two other skull relics were deposited in a medieval wooden casket known as the shrine of Blessed Hemming. The first of the skull relics is wrapped in a hemispheric textile cover. This reliquary contains small pieces of bone placed in linen packages attached to a large piece of cloth. The reliquary has a cross-shaped motif on its top, based on which Rinne interpreted the object as the cap of St Bridget of Sweden (1303–1373; Karttila 2014). In addition to the purported cap of St Bridget the shrine of Blessed Hemming included another skull relic, which is the focus of this paper (Arponen 2015).

Kajava's examination of the skull relic wrapped in red silk damask

The skull relic wrapped in red silk damask is similar in size to an average adult cranium. It is 19.2 cm long, 14.1 cm wide, and 12 cm high. The object can be divided in two: a textile reliquary and an artificial skull structure. The textile reliquary consists of three layers of fabric. The innermost layer is made of linen, whereas the two outer layers are of silk. On the surface of the topmost silk, a red damask cloth, a pictorial motif of a martyrdom has been embroidered with silk and metal threads.

The skull structure consists of bones deposited in linen packages which have been sewn together with a thread of linen (Fig. 2). The largest bones are placed in roughly the same locations as they would be in a real human cranium. In front of the skull structure there is a large hole which approximately corresponds to the area in the human face between the mandible and

frontal bone. The structure is so densely packed that no additional material support was needed.

In his anatomical report Kajava notes that even by looking at the skull relic it was clear it could not contain an actual cranium. He could tell that the relic consisted of multiple separate bones by feeling it through the fabric. The mandible was easily identified through the textile, and he could make observations on the cranial bone on the top of the relic through a hole in the fabric. The rest of his observations were based on radiographs. Kajava (1932, 340, 344) states that other bones were included in the relic in addition to the cranial bones, some of which may have been animal bones.

Kajava (1932, 340) describes the mandible as gracile with a narrow but protruding chin. He notes a fracture on the left side of the mandible, which had probably occurred after the relic had been assembled. The measurements of the mandible suggest that it was of the same size as the cranium found in the sacristy of Turku Cathedral (Kajava 1932, 345). The mandible had sockets for all the teeth, but the third molars had not formed at all. The radiographs showed that there were some tooth roots present in their sockets, including the left second premolar and right first molar. The rest of the teeth had probably fallen out or been removed after death. The relic also had a tooth in a separate package that was placed where the maxillary teeth would have been. Based on the shape of the tooth, Kajava (1932, 342) suggests that it was probably a lower second premolar. An opening in the fabric wrapping exposed a hole in the right parietal. Kajava (1932, 337) notes that there were carving marks on one of the margins of the hole. The depression next to the hole seems to have been the result of some kind of pressing force. He presents no interpretation of the purpose or the timing of the perforation.

From the radiographs Kajava identifies occipital and parietal bones, which form the top and the back of the cranium. The fact that the suture between the parietal bones was partly open indicated that the deceased was under forty years old (Kajava 1932, 344). This relatively young age was supported by the fact that the individual had lost no teeth. Hence, Kajava concludes, the relic cannot belong to Bishop Hemming, as he was seventy-six at the time of his death in 1366.

Rinne's interpretation

Rinne constructed his identification of the skull relic on the depiction of a martyrdom embroidered on the surface of the reliquary (Fig. 3). It represents

a man in knight's armour with a raised sword. A headless man wearing a long vestment is kneeling and holding his hands in prayer. His severed head lies on the ground between the two men. Rinne (1932, 347f.) dated the knight's surcoat to the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries by comparing the scene with, for example, a depiction on Birger Persson's sepulchral monument from the 1310s at Uppsala Cathedral. Rinne also considers the shape of the knight's sword to date it to the beginning of the 14th century. This early dating and the fact that Bishop Hemming was not a martyr leads Rinne to abandon the idea that the skull relic belonged to him.

As with Kajava's observation that the dimensions of the mandible in the skull relic fitted those of the cranium found in the sacristy niche, Rinne associated them with each other. Moreover, he assumed that the cranium and the arm bones in the niche were St Henry's. It was therefore logical to identify the mandible as belonging to the patron saint of Finland. Since Rinne (1932, 354) considered the mandible to form the core of the skull relic, he did not hesitate to attribute the entire skull relic to St Henry.

Rinne's attempt to support his identification through embroidery analysis is unconvincing. The only element which ties the scene of the martyrdom to St Henry are the martyr's shoes. Rinne suggests, on very shaky grounds, that they were episcopal sandals. A more serious problem with Rinne's argumentation is the apparent disparity between the weapon used to decapitate the martyr on the embroidery, a sword, and the weapon mentioned in St Henry's hagiography, an axe. Rinne explains this discrepancy by suggesting the embroidery was a representation of St Henry's martyrdom based on an older tradition in which the weapon of slaughter was a sword. Rinne even tries to support this idea by pointing to a 16th-century Italian drawing of St Henry's murder. It was drawn by the Italian Niccolò Circignani (born c. 1517/1524, died after 1596) and published as gravures in Bartholomeus Grassi's *Ecclesiae anglicanae trophæa* (1584). However, in Circignani's drawing St Henry is not murdered with a sword but with a dagger.

Nordman's new attribution

Another important saint for the Diocese of Turku in addition to St Henry of Uppsala was King Eric IX of Sweden, who accompanied St Henry to Finland. The patron saint of Sweden was martyred in 1160, and his remains were deposited in a reliquary at Uppsala Cathedral. The contents of the reliquary were examined in the 1940s, and this gave Carl Axel Nordman a basis for a new interpretation of the skull relic in Turku.

As part of the 1940s examination the mandible of the skull relic was taken to Uppsala for anatomical analyses. It was also fitted to the supposed cranium of St Eric. Nordman (1954) refutes Rinne's assumption of the link between the skull relic and St Henry. First, according to Nordman, the footwear of the martyr depicted on the embroidery was not proof of his status. Nothing in the martyr's dress suggests that he was a bishop. Indeed, in religious art between the 13th and 16th centuries both the Apostles and holy kings wear similar robes reaching to the ground. Second, Nordman rejects Rinne's theory of a nobleman killing St Henry with a sword. Nordman points out that the legend of St Henry, the later folklore, and the tradition passed on by the modern historians give no indication of the weapon being a sword. Third, Nordman argues that the early modern draft by Circignani is much too late to provide evidence of earlier conventions of art (Nordman 1954, 308, 311). In medieval art St Henry's martyrdom was always staged with an axe.

Nordman presents an alternative interpretation of the skull relic's identity. He bases it on the hypothesis that the martyr represented on the reliquary is either a layperson or a clergyman. This involves dozens of decapitated medieval saints, and Nordman thus limits the number of potential candidates by assuming that the skull relic was so valuable that the saint must have been relatively highly respected at Turku Cathedral. Nordman could think of no other holy man except St Eric as the saint represented in the embroidered scene. He admits, however, that there are some iconographic differences between the martyr on the embroidery and the medieval sculptures of St Eric. Nevertheless, of all the saints murdered with a sword St Eric was the only one whose feast was ranked at the highest level, *totum duplex*, in the calendars of saints of the Diocese of Turku. Nordman suggests another possibility for identification as well – St Paul – but he rejects this interpretation for an obscure reason: St Paul and St Peter shared the same feast day. Moreover, St Eric was already one of the patron saints of Turku Cathedral by 1400, supporting the attribution of the sumptuous reliquary to him. Nordman (1954, 311) concludes by identifying the skull relic as St Eric's and suggests that it was made in Uppsala.

Nordman attempts to support his theory with the anatomical analyses conducted by Dr Bo E. Ingelmark in the 1940s. He compares the mandible of the skull relic with the cranium found in the sacristy niche. Ingelmark concludes that the cranium and the mandible do not belong to the same person because the tooth sockets in the maxilla show pathological changes which are not observed in the mandible. Since Nordman (1954, 309ff.) as-

sumes that the cranium was St Henry's, the anatomical analysis proves that the mandible and, consequently, the skull relic as a whole could not be linked to him. Unfortunately, the maxilla of the cranium is now missing, preventing any comprehensive re-examination.

Based on similar dimensions the mandible of the skull relic in Turku was fitted to the cranium in the reliquary of St Eric at Uppsala Cathedral. After closer examination Ingelmark writes that the cranium was bigger than the mandible, and concludes that the cranium was masculine, whereas the mandible was gracile. Hence, it was likely that the bones were not from the same individual (Ingelmark 1954, 254–255). To explain the unfavourable results of the anatomical examination, Nordman claims that by the time the skull relic of Turku was assembled the mandible was interpreted as belonging to St Eric, despite its possible female origin (Nordman 1954, 313, 317).

In addition to his observations on the cranium Ingelmark (1954, 254) reports that the tooth Kajava had identified as a lower second premolar is actually a deciduous canine tooth. Moreover, Ingelmark observes a loose tooth root near the fracture site. It is probably the root of the left second premolar that Kajava had seen in the X-ray of the mandible. Ingelmark (1954, 254) interprets the fracture as having occurred around or after the time of death.

Nordman's dating of the skull relic differs considerably from Rinne's, because he emphasises the difference between the dating of the embroidery on the silk and the actual assembling of the skull relic. Nordman suggests that the depiction was embroidered in Uppsala around 1300 or slightly earlier, and the silk was then used as a wrapping for one of the relics of St Eric. Around 1400 the silk was re-used as a cover for the newly constructed skull relic, which was soon given to Turku Cathedral where a new altar had been founded and dedicated to Saints Eric and Henry (Nordman 1954, 317f.). Nordman's theory of St Eric's skull relic has been repeated in several subsequent publications (e.g. Pylkkänen 1976, no. 29; Riska 1987, 252f.; Gardberg et al. 2000, 276).

New discoveries

The skull relic was disassembled in 2010–2011. On the one hand this was the only way to document the artefact in detail and obtain the necessary samples for scientific analyses. On the other the condition of the skull relic was deteriorating because it had been tampered with several times. In the first photographs taken of the skull relic before Rinne's examinations the

textile covers of the upper part of the skull relic were opened, revealing the bones of the vertex. There was also a long tear on the left side of the skull relic, indicating a violent opening of the textile covers.

In the 1920s the skull relic was conserved for the first time. A piece of cardboard was placed on the reliquary's base. It formed a platform for iron wires which were used to reinforce the skull construction inside. Even some plastic materials were added to support the textile covers. In the 1940s the skull relic was opened, and the mandible was taken out for examination. On this occasion the supporting structure was destroyed by cutting the iron wires. However, while the skull relic was eventually closed and the dismantled stitches replaced with new ones, the damaged supporting structure of iron wires was left in place. This incomplete conservation work meant that the structure of the skull relic started to deteriorate, wrinkles emerged in the textile covers, and the lowest part of the embroidery was bent under the base of the reliquary. To improve the disposition of the skull relic, a complete re-conservation was required. This would include the removal of the remains of the iron wires and other modern materials, and creating a new support inside the skull relic.

Since the opening of a skull relic is an extremely rare event, every effort was taken to carry out the process carefully and document any and all steps. Several samples were extracted to obtain reliable results for the dating and identification of the origins of the materials. All the bones were also osteologically analysed. The materials and the weave or twist of most of the fabrics and threads in the skull relic were examined. Samples for dye analysis from two of the three coloured textiles were also taken and analysed at the textile laboratory of the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) in Brussels (Vanden Berghe 2016). By March 2017 forty-six radiocarbon-dating results had been obtained: fifteen were from bones and thirty from fabrics and threads. The dating results include one sample from a grain found between the layers of cloth in the skull relic.

The date of construction

Rinne and Nordman had no access to natural scientific means to date the skull relic. However, textile research and iconographic analysis provided them with clues to the age of the materials. By comparing stylistic details, Rinne dated the embroidered scene of the martyrdom to the beginning of the 14th century, and his conclusions still seem valid. The style of the knight's long and loose surcoat was not favoured after the mid-14th cen-

tury (Fig. 4; e.g. Houston 1996; Newton 2002; Scott 2007). The radiocarbon dating result of a thread in the embroidery supports Rinne's iconographic interpretation. With a probability of 70.5% the thread is from the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries (Ua-53815, 691±29BP, 1260-1320 and 1350–1390 calAD, probability 95.4%).

In the 1950s Agnes Geijer (1954, 296; 1994, 141) dated the topmost silk cover of the skull relic to the end of the 13th century. She analysed the weaving technique and the style of the depiction of mythological characters in the Chinese damask. Again, the radiocarbon dating result of the silk was in harmony with Geijer's conclusions: with a probability of 82.3% the dating covers the period 1220–1310 calAD (Ua-39385, 712±34BP, 1220–1310 and 1360–1390 calAD, probability 95.4%).

Based on textile research and iconographic analysis, the skull relic should be dated to the end of the 13th century or the first half of the 14th century. With the aid of radiocarbon dating the age estimations can be refined. There are some materials in the skull relic which are younger than the silk in the Chinese damask. These include linen in the two pieces of cloth between the skull structure and the fabric covers. The dating of the linen is 1290–1410 calAD (Ua-42604, 604±30BP; Ua-55438, 609±26 BP; probability 95.4%). Another young material is the linen in the thread closing one of the bone packages (1290–1410 calAD; Ua-42105, 595±30BP, probability 95.4%). As the textiles and the thread are inside the reliquary, the skull relic could not have existed before 1290. The assembling of the skull relic probably took place around the middle of the 14th century, which is also indicated by the radiocarbon dating of the silk threads used in closing the silk covers. The dates for both, 1280–1330 and 1340–1400 calAD, lend a slight emphasis to the younger time span (a white silk thread for the red silk cover: Ua-54642, 640±29BP; a beige silk thread for the beige silk cover: Ua-54643, 648±29BP; probability for both 95.4%).

The age estimation for the skull assemblage is complicated by the radiocarbon dating of other textiles. Green silk braid has been applied to the front and sides of the skull relic, most of which is hidden by the textile covers (Fig. 5). Samples from two different locations of the braid were extracted for radiocarbon dating. According to the first sample, taken in 2011, the silk was dated to 1310–1350 and 1390–1450 calAD with an emphasis on the more recent period (Ua-42095, 527±30BP; probability 95.4%). However, the result makes the silk in the braid distinctly younger than any other material in the skull relic, although there are no visible traces of the braid being added later to the artefact. To explore this discrepancy further, another

sample of the braid was taken and analysed in 2017. The result, 1290–1400 calAD, corresponds with the dating of the youngest materials in the skull relic (Ua-55436, 614±26BP, probability 95.4%). It is difficult to explain the difference in the two dating results, but at least the case proves the benefits of resampling. Ultimately, however, there is no reason to doubt the date of the assembling of the skull relic. It took place around the mid-14th century.

The bones of the skull structure

There were nineteen linen pouches with bones in the skull construction and a few pieces of linen cloth, which were probably the remains of emptied bone packages. Most packages contained only one bone or a fragment, while five had several fragments. For example, one package (#7) contained over forty small pieces of bone (the bone fragments and their details are presented in Table 1).

A macroscopic osteological analysis of the bones was undertaken in 2016. The goals of the analysis were to identify the bones, determine whether they were human or non-human, estimate the sex and age of individuals represented in the relic, and identify whether the bone fragments could be associated with each other. Potential modifications, pathological changes, and taphonomic damage were also documented.

Bone fragments were divided into three groups: cranial bones; post-cranial bones; and unidentified bones. The post-cranial bones include all the identified bones that were not from a cranium or mandible, while unidentified bones include all the fragments that could not be identified as human or non-human bone, or as a specific bone.

Cranial bones

Six of the packages include a cranial bone or fragments of cranial bones. One package comprised a tooth (Table 1). The major bones consist of a mandible (#2), two parietal bones (#6, 9), and an occipital bone (#8). These bones also form the frame of the entire relic, and they were placed in their correct anatomical positions. Two cranial fragments (#10, 15) were also identified, but no further identifications are possible.

The mandible is complete and well preserved. Kajava reports a postmortem fracture between the second premolar and first molar on the left in the radiograph. This fracture is still visible, although it is now adhered. This adhering may have been done in the 1940s when the mandible was taken to

Uppsala for examination. No teeth are present except for two broken tooth roots. The right first molar root is still in its socket but the other, possibly the left second premolar root, is loose and cannot be refitted in its socket, possibly because of the reconstructive adhering. All the teeth except the third molars were probably present at the time of death, since no healing is observed in the alveolar bone. Based on Kajava's (1932, 342) report on the radiographs, the third molars had never formed.

There are no macroscopic methods that can estimate the age at death from a mandible lacking teeth. However, there are some indicators of relative age. For example, all the teeth except the third molars were present at the time of death, and mandibular condyles show no pathological changes in the joint surface. These observations may indicate that the deceased was young or middle-aged, but not elderly.

Sex can be estimated from the mandible using several traits. The most commonly used trait is the shape of the mental eminence (chin) which, in general, is broader and more protruding in males (Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994). Another characteristic used is the gonial angle, which is the angle between the mandibular body and ramus. The angle tends to be more acute in males than in females (Krogman & Iscan 1986, 192; Williams & Rogers 2006, 731). In the mandible of the skull relic the mental eminence area is quite small, but slightly protruding. This may therefore indicate a female. Furthermore, the angle is neither clearly masculine nor feminine. Because of these ambiguous characteristics two additional mandibular traits were scored, even though their reliability has been debated in previous research (Hill 2000; Kemkes-Grottenthaler et al. 2002). In the relic mandible the ramus is straight, exhibiting no flexure at the level of the occlusal surface of the molars. This generally indicates a female (Loth & Henneberg 1996; Kemkes-Grottenthaler et al. 2002). The mandible shows a slight eversion of the gonial angle, which may be considered a neutral trait, since it is more common for males to exhibit eversion, whereas in females this trait can be anything from slight eversion to inversion (Kemkes-Grottenthaler et al. 2002; Oettlé et al. 2009). The mandible in the skull relic seems to exhibit ambiguous characteristics, but based on these traits it is classified as a possible female (Fig. 6). However, a future DNA analysis may provide more conclusive results.

The two parietal bones, right and left, belong to the same individual. There is a cranial suture between these bones, and the suture lines match perfectly, but the suture is closed from the anterior part and the bones have been broken in two before being placed in separate packages. Kajava (1932)

estimates the age of the individual based on the suture closure. However, suture closures are not used as often in age estimation as it used to be because of findings that have shown wide variation in closure times (Hershkovitz et al. 1997), and we can thus conclude that the individual in question was an adult and more likely to be young or middle-aged than elderly.

Another large bone fragment is the squamous part of the occipital bone. The bone is more weathered than the other cranial bones, although it is the youngest one dated in the relic. A morphological trait commonly used in sex estimation, the nuchal crest, is present on the occipital bone. The crest is an attachment site for muscles and is generally larger in males than in females. In the present bone the crest area is not pronounced and may thus indicate a female, but it is difficult to estimate sex on the grounds of only one trait.

One of the packages contains a small tooth (#18), the size of which suggests it is deciduous, but its root morphology more resembles a permanent tooth. Kajava (1932, 342) identifies the tooth from the radiographs as a permanent premolar, while Ingelmark (1954, 254) reports it as a deciduous canine. The morphology suggests it is indeed a canine, but it is smaller than a normal canine. The tooth is also worn to the degree that the dentin is exposed.

Post-cranial and unidentified bones

Four packages contain a fragment of a post-cranial bone. Three are from the pelvis, specifically from the ilium (#4, 12, 17). One package includes a rib fragment from the left side (#16). Their size suggests these fragments are probably from an adult. The ilium fragment (#17) also exhibits a fused iliac crest, indicating an adult.

Eight packages (#1, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 14, 19) include a fragment or several fragments that are unidentifiable. Most are small fragments of compact bone or lack identifiable characteristics in general. A non-human origin of these fragments cannot be excluded based on the macroscopic examination.

Modifications of bone

Most of the bones in the skull relic are fragmentary with broken edges. The bones may have been accidentally or deliberately broken. Many of the edges are rounded, which may suggest they have been constantly handled for quite a long period before being deposited in the reliquary. Most of the

edges are slightly lighter in colour than the surrounding bone, which usually indicates that the breakage happened after death (Galloway et al. 2014, 50).

Two bones exhibit clear tool marks. A fragment of an ilium from package no. 4 has three shallow incision marks on the medial side of the bone. They range from 2 to 25 mm in length. There is no clear indication what the incisions are for, but they are probably related to the preparation of the relic.

The right parietal from package no. 6 has an almost circular perforation through the bone (Fig. 7). The maximum diameter of the perforation is about 13 mm. No signs of healing can be seen on the bone, and the margins are slightly lighter in colour than the surrounding bone. A larger area of breakage is observed on the interior surface of the bone, indicating that the hole was made from the outside. No radiating or other fractures associated with the defect is detectable. The walls of the perforation are vertical but rugged. The outer surface around the perforation displays some slightly polished areas which may indicate the use of a metal tool or wear (Murphy 2003, 213). A round depression has been made next to the perforation. This may be a false start for another perforation.

The timing of the defect can be estimated based on its macroscopic characteristics. However, identifying when the injury or damage occurred can sometimes be difficult or even impossible (Maples 1986; Loe 2009; Galloway et al. 2014). In this case the lack of healing of the margins indicates the perforation was probably done at the time of death (perimortem) or after death (postmortem). The colour of the margins of the perforation and the area around it differ from the colour of the surrounding bone. This colour difference usually indicates postmortem breakage (Galloway et al. 2014, 50). Other characteristics consistent with postmortem breakage are rough and uneven margins of the perforation and the absence of other fractures. Yet the bone has not shattered in any of the ways commonly observed in postmortem fractures (Galloway et al. 2014, 50). Based on these traits, and without further details on the taphonomic processes involved, the perforation seems more similar to a postmortem defect than a perimortem one.

Several methods have been suggested in the literature for making perforations in the cranial bones. These commonly involve the trepanation of living individuals. These methods include scraping, grooving, drilling or boring, chiselling, and sawing (Lisowski 1967, 661; Kirkup 2003, 290ff.). The right parietal in the skull relic shows no sign of scraping, grooving, or cutting, and the shape of the hole and the margins do not indicate drilling. The margins of the perforation are uneven and may evince some sort of gouging. There is a small polished area around the hole that may reflect

the use of a metal tool such as a gouge (Murphy 2003, 213). However, the depression next to the perforation does not appear to have been made by gouging, but rather by the force of pressure.

Several interpretations of the perforation in the right parietal can be posited. It may be a perimortem trepanation done as a surgical treatment which the patient did not survive. However, considering the characteristics of the perforation, it is more likely to be a postmortem defect made for religious or ritual purposes (Lisowski 1967, 659; Murphy 2003), or to hang or attach the bone to a surface for other reasons. Both healed and unhealed trepanations in archaeological materials are commonly seen on the left parietal or frontal (Lisowski 1967, 659; Roberts & Manchester 2005, 126). In this case the perforation is on the right parietal, which, with the lack of traumatic lesions on the parietals, may thus support the idea of a postmortem defect.

Associations between the bones

It is important to evaluate whether these bones come from the same individual or if multiple individuals are involved. Only two of the bones (#6, 9) can be refitted together and thus can be said to originate from the same individual. Other associations between the bone fragments are best addressed with radiocarbon dating, but in future DNA analysis may help to establish further associations between fragments as well. By April 2017 bones in fifteen of the nineteen packages had been dated (Table 1). The calibrated dates range from 550 BC to 1220 AD, but there are clearly seven clusters with similar dates: 550–50 BC, 180–1 BC, 50 BC–90 AD, 50–240, 240–430, 660–900 and 1040–1220. In the case of three packages (#7, 5, 13), which include several bone fragments, the sample for scientific dating was extracted from only one fragment, and it thus remains unknown whether all the pieces in the packages are contemporary. Nor can it be concluded based on the macroscopic examination if the contemporaneous bones belonged to the same individual.

The oldest dates are mostly from unidentified fragments (#1, 5, 7, 10, 13, 14), except one ilium fragment (#12) that coincides with the cluster dated to 50 BC–90 AD and a rib fragment (#16) in the cluster dated to 50–240. The mandible (#2) has been dated to 250–300 or 320–430. These dates coincide with the dates from package nos. 4 and 3. The parietals (#6, 9) belong to the same date cluster (660–900), with one unidentified cranial fragment (#15). The occipital bone (#8) is the youngest fragment, dating to 1040–1220, and it remains the only one dated to the period when Saints Eric and Henry lived.

The material complexity of medieval relics

The re-examination of the skull relic at Turku Cathedral reveals what intricate objects medieval reliquaries and relics are. The study of this complicated item not only refutes and revises old interpretations, it also raises new issues and points of interest for further scholarship on medieval relics and their position in the cult. An unavoidable realisation is that the understanding of relics should not focus solely on the moment when they were acquired and deposited in reliquaries. Instead, an investigation must consider the long history of material changes that the objects have experienced. A holistic approach to the materiality of the skull relic of Turku requires the integration of different strains of information. It involves the re-evaluation of previous iconographical and historical reasoning, as well as the acquisition of new scientific data on the age of different elements, a macroscopic osteological analyses of the bones, and the documentation of the physical construction of the reliquary.

The question of the authenticity of medieval relics, or rather their correct identification, was a driving force in Rinne's and Nordman's work, but had a particularly modern emphasis. This was manifested in Rinne's pioneering application of scientific methods of anatomical examination to the bones. However, the development of the methodology and the introduction of other scientific methods like radiocarbon dating also undermine his and Nordman's assumptions and conclusions. Their interpretations rested on historical and iconographic analyses and were supported by anatomical inferences. They assumed that the skull relic of Turku must be a pivotal saint for the cathedral and the history of the diocese. The holy man had to be one of the two major saints associated with the history of Finland, St Henry or St Eric. However, the new scientific data supports neither Rinne's nor Nordman's identifications.

Rinne and Nordman considered the mandible the core of the skull relic. The assumption functioned well as the basis for their subsequent theories, since the mandible was lacking both from the presumed skull of St Henry at Turku Cathedral and the skull of St Eric at Uppsala Cathedral. This assumption, however, must be questioned, because the mandible is a loose bone and as such inferior to cranial bones sheltering the brain, which, beside the heart, was considered the most vital organ in late medieval thought (Cohen 2013, 68-71). There are mandible relics (for example, that of St Anthony of Padua in Italy), but skull relics constructed on a mandible were not known to the authors.

Ingelmark determined the mandible to be female and the new osteological analysis supports his view. Nordman sought to avoid the problem

posed by the wrong sex by explaining that the mandible was considered St Eric's relic when the skull relic was compiled. The radiocarbon dating result, however, has revealed that the mandible was already about 800 years old when it was added as part of the skull relic. It is unlikely that such a mandible was available in Uppsala. Altogether, the age of the mandible refutes assumptions of its belonging either to St Eric or St Henry.

The two parietal bones from the same skull form the core of the skull relic. Of the other two central bones, the occipital and the frontal, the latter is missing. If the crania in Turku and Uppsala Cathedrals belong to St Henry and St Eric, none of these bones belong to them, because the skulls are – apart from the mandibles – complete. Hence, there is no physical connection between the skull relic at Turku Cathedral and the two Nordic saints.

In the medieval cult of relics skull relics had a particularly strong link with St Ursula and the 11,000 virgins. The most abundant concentration of skull relics is at the centre of the cult, the Basilica of St Ursula in Cologne. When a Roman cemetery, providing masses of ancient human remains, was discovered there in 1106, the cult spread quickly across Europe (Montgomery 2016, 19, 24f.). By the end of the Middle Ages relics of the 11,000 virgins were found not only in Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands (e.g. Van Strydonck et al. 2006; Sorber et al. 2010; de Kruijf 2011; Becker-Huberti & Beikircher 2012), but they found their way further north and east to Denmark (e.g. the Cistercian Abbey of Esrom and Lund Cathedral; Montgomery 2010, 29; Karlsson 2015, 482ff.) and Poland (e.g. the Cistercian Abbey of Ląd; Mrozowski & Nowiński 2015, 64–87; Nowiński 2016, 208–57). They are also mentioned in the inventory of relics in the main cathedral of the archdiocese of Sweden, Uppsala, around 1344 (SDHK 4953).

St Ursula and the 11,000 virgins were also important in the medieval diocese of Turku, in whose calendar of saints their feast day appeared early. The significance was emphasised particularly at the beginning of the 15th century, when the day was raised to the highest rank of ecclesiastical feast, *totum duplex* (Malin 1925, 86, 168f.). A chapel and associated altar for the 11,000 virgins were founded in Turku Cathedral in 1455 (Rinne 1948, 82).

Although the interpretation of the skull relic as St Ursula's or one of the 11,000 virgins seems attractive, it has significant problems. The altar for the 11,000 virgins at Turku Cathedral was founded in 1455, but the skull relic had already been assembled a hundred years earlier, approximately in the second quarter of the 14th century. Additionally, there are two other relics in the relic assemblage of Turku Cathedral, which, because of their dating

and the other preserved authentica (St Benedicta), are probably related to the founding of the altar.

Most skull relics related to the cult of the 11,000 virgins are complete crania with a silk wrapping. Occasionally, the pieces of broken crania have been adhered to each other, but constructions with separate linen pouches containing bones and sewn together are rare. An example of a construction similar to the skull relic at Turku Cathedral is among the skull relics in the altar complex of the 11,000 virgins at Ląd Abbey, Poland. It is probable that other similar constructions exist, but they are visible only if the wrapping is missing or partly dismantled. Such a time-consuming solution was probably used only if the bones originated from different skulls and there was no other way to join them together.

In almost all the skull relics of the 11,000 virgins part of the frontal bone remains exposed. In the skull relic at Turku Cathedral, however, there is no frontal bone, and it is possible to see inside the construction. Like part of the silk wrapping, the frontal bone was probably taken as a memento. Indeed, the empty linen packages in front of the skull relic point to souvenir hunting. The example in Ląd Abbey points to the possibility that unwrapped pieces of bone were attached to linen pouches by drilling the bones and binding them to the fabric with a thread.

Perforations are a relatively common feature of the skull relics related to the cult of the 11,000 virgins. At St Quinten Cathedral in Hasselt in Belgium there is a postmortem perforation on the right parietal of a skull relic (Fanny van Cleven, KIK-IRPA, pers. comm.; inv. no. 39; http://balat.kikirpa.be/object/62284). Further examples of perforations are in the skull relics of the Basilica of St Ursula in Cologne and the Abbey Church of Ląd in Poland. The perforations were probably considered proof of martyrdom and thus exposing them was appropriate. In the skull relic at Turku Cathedral the two innermost wrappings reveal the hole in the parietal bone, but the outermost silk fabric covers it. Was this an attempt to hide the contradiction between the perforation, which may have been thought to be the result of a fatal strike, and the embroidery depicting a decapitation? However it may be, perforations are not an exclusive feature of the skull relics of the 11,000 virgins. For example, there is the skull of a count of Toulouse with two perforations found in a sarcophagus outside Toulouse Cathedral (Crubézy & Murail 1996, 78).

As far as the wrapping is concerned, thin metal plates or parchment flowers may be sewn on the medieval silk wrappings of the skull relics associated with the cult of the 11,000 virgins. Occasionally, there are also embroideries

in the skull relics of the 11,000 virgins, but such narrative representations as the one on the skull relic at Turku Cathedral seem to be lacking.

In sum, the skull relic at Turku Cathedral includes features in common with the skull relics related to the cult of the 11,000 virgins, but there are also significant differences. They may be explained by the adaptation of the cult's skull relic tradition to local circumstances. However, the most important problem is the date of some bones in the skull relic. According to the radiocarbon dating they are older than the Roman graveyards in Cologne. Furthermore, most of the first Roman burials were cremations (Euskirchen 2014, 29), and there are no scorch marks on the bones of the skull relic. Keeping this in mind, the skull relic at Turku Cathedral may represent some other medieval cult involving the wrapping of skull relics in textiles (cf. Van Strydonck et al. 2006, 152; Stracke-Sporbeck 2016, 103f.).

The osteological analysis of the skull relic shows that not all the bones in the assemblage are cranial, a feature also encountered in other reliquaries shaped like a body part (Bynum & Gerson 1997). In the skull relic the major cranial bones, including the parietals, the occipital, and the mandible, give shape to the skull, and they are in their correct anatomical locations. Three fragments from the pelvis are used, probably because they are flat bones similar to the cranial bones. The rest of the bone packages mostly fill the empty spaces of the actual skull structure. The major bones are human, but the non-human origin of the small fragments cannot be excluded based on the macroscopic examination.

The radiocarbon dates of the individual elements in the reliquary, including bones, textiles, and threads, testify to a wide chronological range. The dates of the bones range from 550 BC to 1220 AD with seven clusters. While the oldest bones may be as old as the 6th century BC, the dates of the textiles and threads reveal that the skull relic was assembled around the mid-14th century.

The structural study of the skull relic of Turku exposes how intricate the relationship between relics and reliquaries was. The bone fragments were wrapped in linen pouches stitched with thread, and then these small pouches were deposited inside layers of cloth. It is apparent that the function of a reliquary was more than just to protect the bones: it organised the holy remains in a form recognisable as a human skull.

This new study of the skull relic in Turku reveals the complexity of medieval objects of devotion and the power of scientific analysis to access their material history. The combination of radiocarbon dating with a macroscopic osteological study has revealed that both Rinne and Nordman were incor-

rect in their identifications of the skull relic as St Henry or St Eric. Although the identity of the relic's saint remains elusive, the interdisciplinary and detailed study of the materiality of the skull relic discloses a number of other material phenomena relevant for understanding the use of medieval devotional objects as part of the cult of relics.

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Appendix

Fig. 1. The anonymous skull relic of Turku Cathedral before the scientific examination in 2011. The length of the object is 19.2 cm. Photo: Aki Arponen.

Fig. 2. The structure inside the textile reliquary. The photo was taken during the scientific examination in 2011. Photo: Aki Arponen.

Fig. 3. The depiction of a martyrdom embroidered on the silk wrapping. Photo: Aki Arponen.

Fig. 4. The knight with a surcote which went out of fashion after the mid-14th century. Photo: Aki Arponen.

Fig. 5. The green silk braid is visible due to the collectors of mementos who have cut off pieces of the Chinese silk damask. Photo: Aki Arponen.

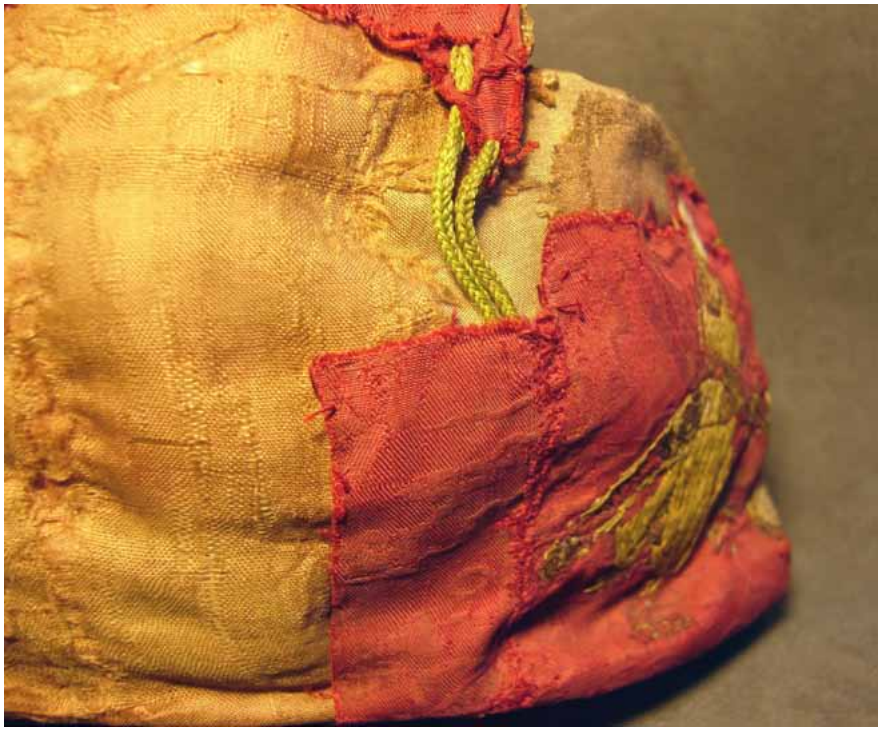

Fig. 6. The mandible in the skull relic (package 2). Photo: Aki Arponen.

Fig 7. The right parietal (package 6) with a perforation c. 13 mm in diameter and a round depression. Photo: Aki Arponen.

Table 1. Bone packages inside the Turku Cathedral skull relic, their identification, and the radiocarbon dates of the bones. In the table, 'texture' refers to the major bone type (outer compact, cortical, bone or inner spongy, trabecular, bone) present in the fragments, while 'preservation' is evaluated if bones are more complete (from partial to complete). The radiocarbon datings were done in Ångström Laboratory at Uppsala University. The marine reservoir effect on the radiocarbon dating results of the relic bones in the Turku Cathedral relic assemblage has been discussed in Taavitsainen, Oinonen & Possnert 2015 (NB. In the article in question, the radiocarbon dating result of the bone in the package 8 is incorrect).

Package	Identification of the bone	Number of bones/ fragments in the package	Maximum size in mm	Texture/ Preservation	Colour	Laboratory number for the radiocarbon dating	Radiocarbon dating result of the bone (BP)	Calibrated radiocarbon datings of the bone (probability 95.4%)
1	Unidentified fragments	3	20.3	Mainly trabecular	Yellowish brown	Ua-53812	2073±29	180–1 calBC
2	Mandible	1	–	Complete	Light brown	Ua-44315	1675±30	250–300 and 320–430 calAD
3	Unidentified fragment	1	22.8	Mainly cortical	Yellowish	Ua-42098	1692±30	250–420 calAD
4	Ilium fragment	1	59.0	Cortical/trabecular	Yellowish	Ua-42100	1717±30	240–400 calAD
5	Unidentified fragments	Over 30	33.9	Mainly cortical	Yellowish brown	Ua-42101	1973±33	50 calBC–90 calAD[1]
6	Right parietal	1	132.5	Almost complete	Yellowish brown	Ua-44318	1268±30	660–820 calAD[2]
7	Unidentified fragments	43	22.9	Cortical	Brownish grey	Ua-50738	2264±83	550–50 calBC
8	Occipital	Over 8	97.5	Partial	Yellowish	Ua-42102	883±31	1040–1220 calAD
9	Left parietal	1	122.0	Almost complete	Yellowish brown	Ua-50739	1314±30	650–780 calAD
10	Unidentified cranial fragment	1	21.5	Cortical/diploë	Yellowish brown	Ua-50740	1885±31	50–220 calAD
11	Unidentified tubular bone fragment	1	29.6	Cortical	Light yellow	not dated		
12	Ilium fragment	1	25.9	Cortical/trabecular	Yellowish	Ua-50741	1980±30	50 calBC–80 calAD
13	Unidentified fragments	Over 5	24.9	Mostly cortical	Brownish	Ua-42103	1990±31	50 calBC–80 calAD
14	Unidentified fragment	1	40.3	Cortical/trabecular	Brownish grey	Ua-42104	1896±30	50–220 calAD[3]
15	Unidentified cranial fragment	1	27.0	Cortical/diploë	Brownish	Ua-42107	1189±30	760–900 calAD[4]
16	Rib fragment	1	30.1	Cortical/trabecular	Yellowish	Ua-50742	1851±30	80–240 calAD
17	Ilium fragment	1	58.4	Cortical/trabecular	Yellowish	not dated		
18	Tooth	1	16.3	Complete	–	not dated		
19	Unidentified fragment	1	14.2	Mainly cortical	Yellowish brown	not dated		

[1] Probability 94.1%.
[2] Probability 93.7%.
[3] Probability 94.4%.
[4] Probability 88.6%.

Religion, Ethnicity, and Race in Finnish Legal Cases on Insults against Religion

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Abstract

This article examines religious insults and related legal practice in Finland during the 21st century. It investigates how the Office of the Prosecutor General, the courts, and defendants construct the category of religion – which is the object of special protection – and how discourses on ethnicity and race play a role in this process. It is found that the language of both officials and defendants is affected by the lay discourse in Finnish society. This includes the decline of the importance of the formal category of religion found in the letter of the law and the increasing importance of the popular category. It is also argued that while being part of the established religion discourse improves the chances of benefiting from religious insult legislation, the said law is found to be a relatively ineffective avenue for groups seeking justice in the context of speech or actions considered religiously offensive. More generally, the article demonstrates that the discursive study of religion can benefit from a perspective in which categories such as ethnicity and race, which often intersect with the category of religion in social practice, are incorporated into the analysis.

Keywords: *religion, ethnicity, race, Finland, religious insult, blasphemy, Islam*

The idea that 'Islam is not a race' is frequently heard. It has been invoked in Finland by the journalist Tuomas Enbuske (2015), the anti-immigration politician Jussi Halla-aho (2010), and in the international arena by Richard Dawkins (2015) and Ayaan Hirsi Ali (Brockes 2010). It usually seeks to challenge the equation of anti-Islamic ideas or criticism of Islam with racism by demarcating Islam within the sphere of 'religion' rather than 'race'. This well exemplifies first, the importance of classification and second, that race and religion appear in some way connected in contemporary Western thinking. However, this article's goal is neither to argue that Islam is in fact a 'race' nor to define these terms somehow differently, but to examine how various ways of constructing, distinguishing, and conflating such categories are used by Finnish officials and defendants in certain criminal cases, and to what ends.

The law on which this article focuses, the breach of the sanctity of religion (henceforward the BOSR), states that a person who 'for the purpose of offending, publicly defames or desecrates what is otherwise held to be sacred by a church or religious community, as referred to in the Act on the Freedom of Religion […] shall be sentenced for a breach of the sanctity of religion to a fine or to imprisonment for at most six months'.[1] This formulation came into effect in 1998, and there have since been about twenty guilty verdicts. This is a small number compared to many other crimes, but Finland, with Germany, Poland, Greece, and Italy, is among the most active in Europe in applying religious insult or blasphemy legislation (Koltay & Temperman 2017). The law and its application have also attracted relatively significant media and popular attention in Finland.

Most previous research on religious insult and blasphemy in Finland has been historical (Olli 2008; Arminen 1999; Ketola 1995) or legal (Henttonen et al. 2015; Neuvonen 2012; Saarela 2011; Gozdecka 2009)[2] in its orientation. In the field of the study of religion Äystö (2017a; 2017b; 2017c) has previously analysed some of the Finnish religious insult cases and the political discussion from which it originates. The Finnish religion discourse has previously been examined especially by Teemu Taira (2010; 2015), Titus Hjelm (2014), and Marcus Moberg et al. (2015). Ethnicity and race as socially constructed phenomena have received especial attention from sociologists and scholars of gender studies in Finland (see Keskinen 2013; 2014; Lepola 2000; Seikkula 2015; Toivanen 2014).

This article examines how, in the case of religious insults, Finnish officials and defendants construct 'religion' and, in connection with it, 'race' or 'ethnicity', and act on these constructions. These themes are significant because the category of religion is a central tool in the organisation of a modern Western society (Beckford 2003, 193–198; Taira 2016, 125f.), officials wield considerable power in this process, and religious insult in particular (often paired with freedom of speech questions) is one of the recurring themes of the current Finnish – and European – public discussions on the 'multi-religious' or 'secular' society (Koltay & Temperman 2017, 1–9). Discourses on ethnicity and race were incorporated into the analysis for empirical reasons:

1 The section also states that a person who 'publicly blasphemes against God […] by making noise, acting threateningly or otherwise, disturbs worship, ecclesiastical proceedings, other similar religious proceedings or a funeral' is convicted of the same crime. (See Criminal Code of Finland, Section 10 of Chapter 17.) However, since all known BOSR cases utilise only the part of the section quoted in the body text above, this article will also focus on that part.

2 However, the BOSR is not the main focus of the cited legal scholars, but is assessed alongside questions of the freedom of religion or ethnic agitation.

they were so abundant in the data that it was necessary to consider them to grasp the functioning of the category of religion – the focus of this article.

The article's main contribution to the study of religion is to offer an empirical account of contemporary religious insult law in Finland. The law crucially involves the category of religion and thus well exemplifies how the official language usage affecting society works with and uses the category of religion. The text also contains relevant points for those interested in hate speech, racism, and related discourses in Finland, because defendants' language is also examined. More generally, the article supports the idea that the discursive study of religion benefits from the study of categories close to 'religion' in the data, here meaning 'ethnicity' and 'race'. It is also an example of a non-legal and non-theological study of blasphemy law – a type of law surprisingly active (still applied in several countries) in today's Europe – representing a less explored avenue in which societal contexts, interests, and power relationships are emphasised instead of the more common normative questions (that is, whether blasphemy should be criminalised).

In investigating the cases, the article argues that the formal category of religion defined in the BOSR section is partly replaced by the category of religion originating from the lay religion discourse in Finnish society. Officials draw from established and popular ways of constructing religion in favour of their institutional discourse, essentialising and reifying religions in the process. This mirrors, it is argued, the ways in which defendants approach religion: in a general sense and rarely with specific registered communities in mind. This discursive practice results in the BOSR, as a legal instrument, appearing mainly to grant protection to well-known and established groups. However, since the law is relatively unpopular in the legal community and applied relatively infrequently, it is not a very effective avenue for those seeking justice, even for such groups. When crimes themselves are examined, it becomes clear that discourses on religion, ethnicity, and race are entangled. Defendants often succeed in attacking ethnic groups by criticising religion. This is connected with the ways in which 'Muslim', for example, is a racialising term in Finnish, associated primarily with non-white immigrants. The article continues with an examination of the ways in which officials tackle this categorical entanglement. In many cases another section of the criminal code – that dealing with ethnic agitation – appears to cover the primary crime, and the BOSR (less popular in the legal community and less supported by international law) may also be applied. Although there is an overlap between these two sections, the key

difference is that the ethnic agitation section is used to protect 'groups of people', while the BOSR mainly concerns the protection of the 'religious sacred'. The category of 'sacred', then, emerges as the key distinguishing feature of the BOSR.

This article is organised as follows. Its methodology and data are described in the next section, followed by a section introducing the examined legal cases more thoroughly. The first analytical section then generally addresses officials' language in the category of religion: how it conforms to the lay religion discourse; how it relies on essentialism; and what these details entail. The second section addresses defendants' language concerning religion, race, and ethnicity: how it relates to broader societal discourses; and how this connects to the actions of officials. The third section returns to officials, considering how they construct the differences between religion, race, and ethnicity and what this means for legal practice. The findings are summarised in the concluding chapter, alongside a brief consideration of the article's broader implications.

Methodology and data

The data for this study consists of eleven cases handled by the Office of the Prosecutor General (henceforth the OPG) and ten cases decided by the Finnish courts between 1999 and 2017. The documents, twenty-six in total, were obtained directly from officials. The data does not contain all the Finnish BOSR cases from the period. This stems primarily from the practical difficulties in obtaining documents from officials and general transparency issues with the Finnish legal system.[3] Thus, the article works with merely a sample of legal practice and the examined cases are described below. However, the sample is not random: the data contains all the well-known cases (to the general public and to the legal community) and several less well-known ones as supporting material. This is sufficient for the purposes of discourse analysis, which aims to examine officials' and defendants' language use in relation to the prevailing societal discourses. The aim is not to offer a comprehensive survey of case law.

The article uses a constructionist approach (Burr 2003, 1–9). It examines discourses – 'ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice' (Hall 1997, 3) – on religion, ethnicity, and race in the material. Instead of viewing legal documents as data reflecting reality, it

3 Difficulties in legally obtaining public documents are well documented with Finnish officials in general (Koski 2011) and legal officials in particular (Sutela 2016, 59; Kainulainen 2015).

analyses how a version of reality is constructed, what is done on that basis, and what these constructions entail (Conley & O'Barr 2005, 6–9).

The core of the methodology stems from the discursive study of religion (see Stuckrad & Wijsen 2016; Moberg 2013; Wijsen 2013). More specifically, the approach resembles that applied by Taira (2013; 2016) and Owen and Taira (2015), who have highlighted the methodological focus on the category of religion as an item of discourse and an emphasis on context-weighted analyses instead of nuanced linguistics. Here, discourse analysis is best conceived as a methodological framework. Rather than assuming what constitutes religion beforehand (i.e. an analytical definition of religion), the study concerns how the category of religion is constructed in the data. One can then begin to analyse which interests are advanced via particular uses of the category of religion, the kind of power relationships they reflect, and their ramifications.

Interpretations in the analysis unavoidably depend on the sociocultural knowledge (for example, viewing a certain expression as a racial slur; see Jokinen et al. 2016, 39) of the researcher, who, in this instance, analyses material from his home country written in his first language. In other words, discourse analysis is not about isolated texts but texts read in a cultural and societal context, which requires knowledge of that context. The researcher identifies and names discourses, but the core methodological claim is that there are patterns in constructing certain categories which are often referenced using terms like 'religion', and the analysis seeks to show how they function in the data and how they relate to broader societal practices.

Of course, the understanding of 'religious insult' depends on the definition of 'religion'. Beckford states that the notion of religion is 'constructed and used for all kinds of purposes by […] institutions of law, the State, the mass media, school education, health authorities and so on' (Beckford 2003, 18), and that disputes concerning what counts as 'religion' have recently increased (Beckford 2003, 1). Hughes (2017, 309) argues that in liberal democracies it is specifically the courts that increasingly determine what is to be considered 'religious' – referring to various legal rulings and norms that regulate matters connected with 'religion'. It is generally well established that judges and other officials are often influenced by prevailing societal (Richardson 2000, 124–5; Ruuskanen 2006, 47–53) as well as their institutional discourses, but this needs to be treated as a possibility, not an assumption, in research.

The examination of the category of religion in this study is also supplemented by analyses of the discursive construction of 'race' and 'ethnicity'.

According to Nye (2018) both religion and race are key categories for organising and governing differences in contemporary Western society. In the Finnish context the most cited examples of racialising speech about religion concern Islam and Muslims in the context of gender. For example, Islam is often described as a force oppressing Muslim women or Islamic veils are associated with radicalism and archaic values (Seikkula 2015, 27), and these themes are often associated specifically with non-white people. According to Seikkula (2015) this phenomenon is connected with the maintenance of a racialised boundary between the 'equal Finnish society' and 'others' that is bound by dated gender norms.

The cases

By law, the OPG handles cases related to the freedom of speech (Act on the Exercise of Freedom of Expression in Mass Media, para. 24), because they are seen as having a broad societal significance (VKSV:2015:4, p.1).[4] Many, if not most, BOSR cases thus fall under their authority. However, if the case in question concerns, for example, a disturbance of religious ritual or actions other than language use, it can be handled by a district prosecutor (Kolehmainen 2009, 90; see Äystö 2017b). The OPG can also order a district prosecutor to present a case related to the freedom of speech in court (VKSV:2015:4). It is worth studying the decisions of the OPG, because the office is a central gatekeeper institution, wielding substantial legal power in deciding which cases move forward.

The letter of the law and the dominant interpretation do not require anyone actually to be offended, but actions committed need to be shown to be religiously offensive in a way even outsiders might grasp (HE 6/1997; see Henttonen et al. 2015, 78f.). However, there were other reasons for dropping these charges: the conclusion that the actions in question fell within the limits of the freedom of speech (Cases II and IV) or within the freedom of religion (Cases II and V); that the intention to offend, as required by the BOSR section, could not be demonstrated (Cases I, III, IV, and V); or that the actions in question targeted a person, not a religion *per se* (Case VI). The arguments are somewhat technical, but the legal criteria also require interpretations concerning the category of religion, basic and human rights (freedom of speech and freedom of religion), or the legal requirement involving the intention to offend.

4 See also <http://vksv.fi/fi/index/valtakunnansyyttajanvirasto/virastossakasiteltavatasiat.html>, accessed...

The arguments in the prosecuted cases are quite concise. The prosecutor stated in all cases that the acts were committed publicly with a clear intention to offend, and that the actions defamed or desecrated something considered sacred by a religion. In the most recent cases, those of Halla-aho and Tynkkynen, the prosecutor also remarked on the societal repercussions: the statements would endanger the 'sanctity of religion in society' (Case X) and would not 'advance the discussion' on important issues, but rather were 'bound to increase intolerance and prejudice' (Case XI).

Where the courts are concerned, it should be noted that District Courts initially handle criminal cases. Usually, any party may appeal against their decisions in the Court of Appeals, which may then grant a new hearing. Cases may also advance to the Supreme Court, which is the highest national stage, establishing judicial precedents. At the time of writing there were twenty-seven District Courts and five Courts of Appeal. Formally, all courts function relatively autonomously, bound only by the law.

Äystö (2017b) has previously examined Case XII in detail. From the perspective of the category of religion the case is interesting, since it confirms the letter of the law according to which the BOSR applies only to officially registered religious communities: the Court of Appeals dropped the BOSR charge in the final hearing because of this shortcoming. However, during the earlier stages of the process the police, the District Prosecutor, and the District Court considered Islam self-evidently a religion, so they decided to sidestep this formal detail and agreed that the actions constituted a BOSR. Äystö has argued that this, in addition to the language used by officials in general, demonstrated how their work was also influenced by the lay religion discourse, despite their formal reliance on the institutional discourse.

In the cases prosecuted by the OPG (all but two cases in Table 4) the courts agreed with the prosecutor's main arguments. This underlines the importance of the OPG's decisions. The basic facts are usually undisputed in BOSR cases (because the person did something on social media, and there is thus clear evidence). It is interesting that while one might assume that questions such as 'What is offensive?' or 'What is considered sacred by religion X?' should require some reflection, this is not usually evident in the documents. The main tone of the prosecutions and court convictions is thus strongly descriptive instead of analytical. For the most part they simply state, based on legal sources, that the perpetrator had publicly done something with the clear intention to offend, and that their actions were definitely insulting to the members of a religion.

The category of religion: formal background, conventional application

As mentioned in the BOSR section, the law technically applies to a 'church or religious community, as referred to in the Act on the Freedom of Religion', which means it can apply to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Orthodox Church of Finland, and registered religious communities. Formal positions are thus important in the letter of the law. The churches mentioned are special cases with their own legislation stemming from Finland's history, whereas the registered religious community is a more recent legal category tailored for other groups that have successfully applied for it. Previously, Taira (2010) and Äystö (2017b) have examined the societal and legal meaning of this formal category in case studies.

As can be seen from Tables 1–4, all the cases concerned defamation against groups generally associated with Islam, Christianity, or Judaism, the best known 'religions' in Finland.[5] According to the dominant legal interpretation (HE 6/1997, see Henttonen 2015, 79f.) the law formally applies to any registered religious community, of which there are currently 129, most identifying as Christian or Islamic, but including groups identifying as Buddhist, Hindu, pagan, Mandaean, or Sikh.[6] However, the emphasis on Islam in BOSR cases is clear. Of the sixteen cases examined eight were connected with Islam. Of the cases that went to court six out of ten were connected with Islam. The most publicly known BOSR cases (X, XII, and recently XI) also concerned Islam, as did the only case (X) considered by the Supreme Court. Äystö (2017b, 283–5; 2017c, 201) has previously argued that Islam's generally high visibility and the strongly politicised nature of the topic of immigration are key factors in Islam's prominence in hate speech cases. The Jyllands-Posten cartoon controversy in 2005 and 2006 is a probable factor in this prominence since the mid-2000s: the massive publicity activated both defamers, often invoking freedom of speech, and the officials who were supposed to combat them. The occasionally circulated idea that the BOSR is solely dedicated to the protection of Islam – or that Christianity is fair game – is, however, inaccurate.

It is worth examining official religion discourse – the language *officials* use about religion – in light of lay religion discourse – the language *society*

5 A well-known but problematic way of grouping these three is to talk of 'monotheistic', 'Semitic', or 'Abrahamic' religions. These concepts are known in Finland, particularly in the context of religious education, but they are not very commonly used in other public spheres.

6 Data on registered associations, including registered religious communities, is available at the Yhdistysnetti service, hosted by the Patent and Registration Office: <http://yhdistysrekisteri.prh.fi>, accessed 1 January 2018. Further information on various groups is gathered by the Church Research Institute for the Religions in Finland service: <uskonnot.fi>, accessed 1 January 2018.

uses about religion.[7] Moberg et al. (2015, 59–62) state that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is the 'backdrop' and the 'blueprint' for the Finnish discourse on religion, reflecting the hegemonic status of institutional Christianity. They suggest the 'language available for religious and spiritual discourse in general still remains deeply connected to and influenced by Christian conceptual repertoires' (Moberg et al. 2015, 62). Taira (2006, 102f.) has noted that there is substantial overlap between the Lutheran conception of religion and the general Finnish public religion discourse. However, the current media discourse on religion emphasises Christianity (especially Lutheranism) and Islam (Hokka et al. 2013; Niemelä & Christensen 2013). Religion is therefore commonly associated with familiar features resembling Lutheranism or with familiar and visible 'world religions' like Islam.

Despite the formal emphasis on the official legal category of religion already mentioned, the question of whether the examined insults concerned a particular registered religious community rarely arises in BOSR cases.[8] With the exception of four cases (I, II, XII, XVI) the case documents do not even mention a complainant (plaintiff): there is usually no actual church or registered religious community present as the concrete injured party. Although the dominant legal source states that the 'sacred is defined by the religious communities themselves, not by outsiders' (HE 6/1997; Henttonen et al. 2015, 78), the law does not require that anybody is actually offended at any point. Instead, officials examine the question of religious insults more generally: what is offensive in Islam, Christianity, or Judaism? They may use academic experts in some cases (III, V, VII, IX), but officials usually consider these questions by themselves.

The category of religion and its perceived subcategories (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) are constructed in an essentialist manner by officials.[9] For example, there are currently forty-six registered religious communities

7 The focus in this section is on the relationship between the lay religion discourse and the official religion discourse. The cases also occasionally feature discourses by academic religion experts such as Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila. However, they were not very prominent and were thus omitted from the analysis because of space constraints.

8 The only example where the registration status of a community was directly legally relevant was Case XII.

9 Essentialism is here understood following the description by philosophers Teresa Robertson and Philip Atkins (2018): 'Essentialism in general may be characterized as the doctrine that (at least some) objects have (at least some) essential properties.' In case of religion and law, as T. Jeremy Gunn (2003, 194) writes, 'whenever a legal definition is essentialist, it assumes that religion has one or more elements in common with all other religions' – that is, essentialism identifies the necessary elements for something to be X. By extension essentialism would also refer to a position according to which e.g. Christianity is constituted by certain essential properties, such as particular doctrines and practices. (For further discussion on essentialism and definitions of religion in law see Blevis 2016).

identifying as Islamic.[10] Empirically, these communities have diverse backgrounds and differing approaches to Islam (Martikainen 2008, 71–6; Pauha et al. 2017). In the studied legal practice, however, these differences are not meaningful, as Islam is mostly described as a single entity in the world with certain sacred things and values. This is often evident in the ways in which the courts assess the defamatory nature of actions:

> The District Court considers the examined images to be very insulting because the prophet Muhammad is considered sacred according to the prevailing understanding in the Islamic religion. The statement by the professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, strongly supports this interpretation. […] They [the defendants] must have understood that the pictures they published were likely to insult and defame things considered sacred by Muslims (Case IX, R 07/3284). [11]

Reflecting the same essentialism, 'Islam' as such is often likened to a 'religious community', the formal category described in law: instead of talking of distinguishable communities properly registered as the letter of the law requires, officials often simply talk of 'Islam' as a distinguishable 'religious community' as meant by the law. The prosecutor argued as follows:

According to the Freedom of Religion Act a religious community refers to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Orthodox Church, and to the registered religious communities registered as described in Chapter 2 of the said Act. The Finnish Patent and Registration Office handles decisions on registrations and maintains the Register of Associations. Several Islamic communities are listed on the register of the said office. It is therefore clear that Islam is a religious community as referred to in the [BOSR] *corpus delicti* (Case III, R 06/11).

In another case the court described Judaism – or 'the religion of the Jews', as they called it – as a single and unitary entity:

> The defendant defames the religion of the Jews in many ways. He describes the Talmud, which contains the extensive rabbinic tradition, as considering only Jews to be human and commanding Christians and other non-Jews to

10 Data from the Yhdistysnetti service <http://yhdistysrekisteri.prh.fi>, accessed 1 January 2018. The criterion for this identification is that registered religious communities have 'Islam' or 'Muslim' in their name, or explain their identification on their website. However, there are also more than 120 groups that have 'Islam' or 'Muslim' in their association's name, but are registered as regular associations (Pauha et al. 2017, 105).

11 All citations from the data, unless otherwise stated, are translated by the author.

> be killed. […] Based on them [the statements], 'A' clearly intended to cause similar resentment of the Jews among his readership as he himself has. This also constitutes a defamation of the religion of the Jews with the intention to offend (Case VII, R 03/1129).

More generally, official language relies strongly on the Finnish lay understanding of religion (Moberg et al. 2015, 59–62; Taira 2006, 102f.; see also Smith 2004, 377). The characteristics of 'religion' in the examined material appear to be holy books, certain core practices and dogma, sacred figures such as a prophet or a God, sacred buildings as the sites of practice, a substantial number of followers, and organisation into communities, and involve especially sensitive sentiments (or at least more sensitive than political sentiments, for example). These findings fit the previous descriptions of the Finnish public religion discourse quite well (Moberg et al. 2015, 59–62).

Although the official institutional discourse provides a technical way to define religion (properly registered communities and the two state churches), the lay discourse trumps it as the key ingredient for constructing religion. In the studied material 'religions' refers primarily to the best known family of religions: Christianity (especially the Lutheran and other major established churches), Judaism, and Islam. They are reified (made into things found in the world) and essentialised: they are assumed to have a unified set of core dogmas, practice, and sacred things.

As the religion discourse used is essentialist in its nature, the BOSR becomes a relatively crude instrument, because it focuses largely on the 'central features' of 'established religions'. If the aim of the law is to protect the sacred things of registered groups effectively, it is likely that they should be viewed in a more nuanced way. Furthermore, as is the case with all discursive constructions, this essentialism offers a partial and selective view and knowledge of the object at hand ('religions'). As has been established, officials draw from the lay religion discourse. The prevailing public language concerning religions is largely moulded by the majority, and it thus also reflects the power relationship between majority and minority groups.

An important factor in this reliance on the lay discourse is that the examined offenders usually do not target particular religious communities either, but also speak about Christianity, Islam, or Judaism in a general sense. It is therefore challenging for officials to identify a single victim. Moreover, as has been mentioned, the letter of the law and its prevailing interpretation do not require that anybody is actually offended: the actions committed simply need to be demonstrated to be religiously offensive in a manner

even outsiders can grasp (HE 6/1997; see Henttonen et al. 2015, 78f.). There appears in this sense to be a discontinuity between the definition of religion in the letter of the law and how it is described in actual legal practice. The created legal devices emphasising the formal category of religion and association-based identification fade into the background when the offences against religion investigated largely do not follow the same structure but speak of Christianity, Islam, or Judaism a great deal more generally.[12] Thus, officials also resort to the same widely shared religion discourse as defendants, albeit using it for a very different purpose. The nature of the offences themselves (the fact that they do not usually target particular communities or churches, but Islam or Christianity in general, for example, instead), and the influence of the lay religion discourse, means that the formal category of religion becomes relatively insignificant in BOSR cases.

These observations raise questions about the consistency of the legal practice. In Case XII the defendants spattered animal blood on a mosque used by a certain community. The BOSR charge was dropped because the community in question was not registered as the law formally required (see Äystö 2017b). If one assumes the essentialist understanding of Islam that prominent in other court cases concerning it, is attacking a mosque[13] with blood as generally offensive as attacks against the prophet Muhammad? There is a potential imbalance in the law: in cases where a link to a particular community is obvious (Cases I, II, XII, XVI) the requirement of registered status can be applied straightforwardly – and here unregistered status can be a concrete disadvantage (as Case XII shows) – but officials rarely pay such nuanced attention to religious associations in BOSR cases, because religions are discussed more generally.

As the category of religion and the related discourse used by officials so closely follows the dominant societal classifications, the obvious question is: who is omitted? As this is the reality of the 'religious landscape' constructed in the discourse, there is another imbalance: it is likely that lesser known groups that perhaps correspond less with these prototypical features of religion will need to play a considerably more proactive role if they feel targeted by an illegal insult. As Taira (2010) has shown, for example, features understood as unconventional may already be a disadvantage

12 However, the institutional religion discourse with its formal criteria is also influenced by the societally dominant discourse, as previously argued by Taira (2010) and Äystö (2017b).

13 As was the case here, most mosques in Finland are not purpose-built, but are regular apartments or similar spaces often unrecognisable as mosques to the average passer-by.

when an association is processing its registration (see also Doe 2011, 112f.; Hjelm et al. 2018).

However, returning to the question of consistency, the legal scholar Jyrki Virolainen, commenting on Cases III and X in his personal blog,[14] criticised the prosecutor's failure to establish why Halla-aho's verbal attack on the prophet Muhammad was prosecuted, while the republication of the Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoons was not. More generally, since the lay religion discourse is concerned mostly with Lutheranism and Islam, and there is a large range of discussions concerning them, an abundance of obviously hostile and potentially offensive statements circulates online. However, convictions in BOSR cases remain rare, and it is not always clear why one case is proceeded and another is not. A general assessment is therefore that the legal arena and the BOSR section, considered as it is to be a relatively obscure law, offer an ineffective route for anybody seeking to advance their interests amid hostile speech or actions, although belonging to the established religion discourse improves the odds. There is also something to be said about the roles of discourses on ethnicity and race, and about their relationship with the category of religion. These are tackled in the remaining sections.

Religion, ethnicity, and race in the language of the perpetrators

In most studied cases ethnic agitation was also considered alongside the BOSR, as can be seen from Tables 1–4. Ethnic agitation is described in Section 10 of Chapter 11 of the criminal code (concerning war crimes and crimes against humanity): 'A person who makes available to the public or otherwise spreads among the public or keeps available for the public information, an expression of opinion or another message where a certain group is threatened, defamed or insulted on the basis of its race, skin colour, birth status, national or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation or disability or a comparable basis, shall be sentenced for ethnic agitation to a fine or to imprisonment for at most two years.'[15] This crime is viewed as more severe than the BOSR, having a harsher maximum

14 <http://jyrkivirolainen.blogspot.fi/2009/04/halla-ahon-syyte.html>, accessed 29 January 2018.

15 The law is also known as 'incitement to hatred', and this is its current formulation. There were slight modifications to the law in 1995 and 2011: for example, it has been widened to encompass other types of hate crimes besides racist ones, and an aggravated version of the crime was introduced (Henttonen et al. 2015, 39–41). The citation is from the Ministry of Justice's unofficial translation of the criminal code: http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1889/en18890039.pdf (accessed 29 January 2018).

punishment, and it is also applied more often (Henttonen et al. 2015, 39–60; see Illman 2005, 215–89).

In several cases concerning conviction for both ethnic agitation and the BOSR the committed actions reveal that the categories of religion, ethnicity, and race are often entangled for the perpetrators. For example, in Case XIII, the defendant wrote online:

> [A Finnish derogatory term for Middle Eastern people] view women of the wrong faith as dogs. This is determined by their religion and by their genetic heritage. People of the wrong faith have no value in the eyes of [n-word], as they are only objects of sexual satisfaction (R 13/6335).

Likewise, in Case XIV the defendant had written:

> These uncivilised animals should be sent back to their barbaric country, or preferably shot on sight. […] Put them into aeroplanes without explanation, complaint, bureaucracy, and other bullshit, and make the next stop in some shitty country in Africa or the Middle East. […] Why are people who have no cultural qualifications to adapt to a Western society willingly brought here just to live like parasites off the tax of decent people? Why must Swedish children, too, fear the barbarians who speak a foreign language, practise a foreign religion, have foreign customs, and hurt them (R 16/1796)?

In a third example (Case XI) the politician Sebastian Tynkkynen had written as follows (note, for example, that by 'Islam' he referred exclusively to recent immigrants from Africa and the Middle East, not to white converts or to the older Tatar population):[16]

> Islam needs to be removed from Finland. A way of thinking cannot be banned, and this should never be done in a Western state like Finland that respects the freedom of speech. However, we can start to return those who have no reason to stay in our country at full speed. For example, the determined security status of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia has changed, and we must strive to get people from these honour cultures back to their peers. […] Of course, not all Muslims follow the dogmas of their prophet. However, social peace was destroyed by only a few strikes against the infidels, inspired by Muhammad. […] The fewer Muslims we have, the safer we are (R 16/700).

16 A Tatar Muslim community of approximately a thousand people has been present in Finland since the late 19th century.

Here, religion discourse mostly functions as a reference to unwanted people with an immigrant background. Terms considered racial or ethnic (racial slurs, references to African or Middle Eastern background) and terms considered religious (Muslim) in the examples are tightly connected and used to refer to the same group: non-white Muslim immigrants – an overlap of categorisations that might be called an 'intersection', as described by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991).

Äystö (2017c) has previously examined the politician Jussi Halla-aho's well-known court case (Case X), in which the defendant claimed that the prophet Muhammad was a paedophile and Islam was therefore a paedophile religion, and also stated in the same text, that '[t]he robbing of people on the street and living off tax funds is a national, perhaps a genetic feature of the Somalis', one of the most visible Muslim groups in Finland. Halla-aho was convicted of both the breach of the sanctity of religion and ethnic agitation. Äystö (2017c) argued that since the category 'Muslim' is racialising in Finnish – it tends to communicate that the person in question is non-white – attacking Islam enabled Halla-aho to communicate more than one message, advancing his anti-immigration politics and criticising the official multicultural consensus. He was also able to provoke the reaction he desired from the officials, for which he had a pre-prepared political interpretative framework.[17] His simultaneous attack on a specific group (Somalis), also composed mainly of Muslims, again highlighted the overlap of the Finnish discourses on religion, ethnicity, and race.

Similar observations concerning the intertwining of religion, ethnicity, and race can be made in Cases IX and X. It should be noted, however, that the above quotations were used by the courts to pass a verdict on ethnic agitation, not the BOSR. Although the discourses on ethnicity, race, and religion were clearly connected in the original statements, the officials distinguished the two crimes, one involving a crime against a 'group of people' and the other against 'religious sentiments' (see the next section).

In the three quotations above we can also identify several familiar discourses often utilised in either specifically anti-Islamic or anti-immigrant contexts (Keskinen 2012), or even in the standard Finnish media portrayals of Islam and Muslim immigrants (see Taira 2015, 161–83; Hokka et al. 2013). Among these are the discourses of the West and the rest (Hall 1992), civilisation versus barbarism (Hall 1992), securitisation (Kaya 2009; Marti-

17 As Halla-aho spells out in his personal blog, he intended to bait the officials into convicting him of the BOSR, thus, he maintains, demonstrating that officials pamper and protect Muslims in particular. The desired reaction was the conviction itself.

kainen 2013a), and violence and excessive sexuality (Miles & Brown 2003, 26–30). Gender and its link to racialised boundaries is a significant theme, as Muslim immigrants are here exclusively thought of as males posing a threat of sexual violence to Finnish women (see Keskinen 2013; Nagel 2003). At the same time Finland emerges as a religious, cultural, and racial formation – defined by Western civilisation, non-Islamic religion (Finnish Lutheranism specifically), certain customs, and whiteness – presented as fundamentally opposed to that of the Muslim immigrants. These details accord well with previous findings on Finnish nationalism and religion (Martikainen 2008, 66ff.; see Anttonen 2010, 146–59; Taira 2015, 181ff.), and especially on Finnishness and whiteness (Lepola 2000, 368–71; Keskinen et al. 2015; Seikkula 2015; Toivanen 2014).

In sum, speech about religion of course functions for defendants as a way to criticise a religion, but also often as a way to say hostile things about groups of a particular national or ethnic background or skin colour. This is closely connected with nation construction. Here, Finland is conceived of as a Lutheran country, and ideas of whiteness and particular cultural customs are also connected with it. The BOSR section, dedicated as it is to protecting religions from insults, therefore finds itself in a much more complex environment than lawmakers probably initially envisaged. The law stems from the more conventional modern Western discourse in which religion is often portrayed as a distinct and separate societal realm, and later also as a matter of choice.[18] However, attacking Islam and Muslims enables attacks on broader groups in the discursive context. Critics may strategically claim, in referencing the modern notion about religion being a separate entity, that 'Islam is not a race', but separating discourses on religion, ethnicity, and race is complicated in many cases. How officials, nevertheless, pursue this challenge, is addressed next.

18 For the Western religion discourse and religion as a separate realm see Nongbri 2013, 7. José Casanova (1994, 213) has argued that there is a longer trend in which religion loses its compulsory institutional character and becomes voluntary, and once freedom of religion is established, all churches and religions become denominations – that is, choices. For the parliamentary background of the current BOSR law see Äystö 2017a. When the law was being formulated, many MPs considered religious emotions as requiring special protection (i.e. they were distinct from e.g. political emotions), while some argued that Christian vocabulary such as 'God' was best kept away from parliamentary politics and law (i.e. religious vocabulary should be kept separate from other realms). In turn, the constitutional law committee stated that the purpose of the BOSR was to protect public order and the freedom of religion (PeVL 23/1997).

Religion, ethnicity, and race in official language

As 'religion' is also mentioned as a criterion for a group in the ethnic agitation section, it is important to note the legal differences between it and the BOSR section. The legal scholars Henttonen et al. (2015, 74) state that the ethnic agitation section seeks to protect *people* who might have religious convictions, not 'religions, religious customs or institutions' *per se*. However, the BOSR has a similar purpose: it is thought to protect the 'religious sentiments of people' and the 'sanctity of religion (or "peace concerning religion") in society', and 'not religion as such' (Henttonen 2015, 76; HE 6/1997). It is therefore admitted that these laws have some overlap in their interest in protection (Henttonen et al. 2015, 75–87).[19]

Concerning the definition of religion, an important difference between the ethnic agitation and BOSR sections is that while the BOSR works as a formal criterion for religious groups, the ethnic agitation section does not. Legal literature (that is, an unofficial but widely used legal source) only offers a very broad characterisation in the context of ethnic agitation: 'a religious group is basically composed of any group of people with the same religion, such as the Jews'. In turn, ethnic groups are described as 'groups of people with shared customs independent from nationality' or 'for example, the Roma people'. The term 'race' is considered problematic from the scientific perspective, but it is said to be maintained in the letter of the law because of its established meaning in everyday speech. It is noted that 'in practice, racial groups are composed of national and ethnic groups' (Henttonen et al. 2015, 51). It is quite clear that the legal understanding also draws from the lay discourse in this instance.

A partial explanation of the frequent co-occurrence of the ethnic agitation section alongside the BOSR in legal practice is that Finnish lawyers do not consider the BOSR itself to be very important. The legal trade magazine *Juristikirje* conducted a poll in June 2012 on which laws the Finnish jurists would most willingly abolish. The most popular answers were the unlawful use of narcotics and the breach of the sanctity of religion. Moreover, several legal scholars have argued that the BOSR section should be dropped and that religious groups could be protected like ethnic groups (see Saarela 2011; Nuotio 2009). In contrast, legal experts generally consider the ethnic agitation section significant and well supported by international law (see

19 A relevant examination, though one beyond the scope of this article, would be to address the cases in which the ethnic agitation section is used to protect a group considered 'religious' without invoking the BOSR (see Henttonen et al. 2015, 70ff.).

Saarela 2011; Nuotio 2009). We may therefore assume that officials more readily advance cases in which there are reasons to suspect ethnic agitation, and that if the BOSR section can also be applied, this may be considered.

It is fitting that all the 'religions' included in the data – Christianity, Judaism, and Islam – have strongly ethnic or racial connotations in the lay religion discourse.[20] In Christianity, and Nordic Lutheranism in particular, this is connected with white Finnishness.[21] As the court phrased it in a previously quoted passage, Judaism can be referred to as the 'religion of the Jews', an expression that emphasises the idea of Judaism as a religion of a particular ethnic or racial group. Islam, on the other hand, is often considered a religion of non-white immigrants. Working in such a discursive environment, officials are dealing with complex intertwinings of religion, ethnicity, and race from the outset. It is therefore to be expected that sections referencing 'religion', 'skin colour', and 'ethnicity' appear together frequently. The fact that the guilty verdicts concerning ethnic agitation examined here have involved either Islam or Judaism reflects both the discursive phenomenon in which 'the majority' (white Lutheran Finns) is not racialised or usually thought of as an ethnically similar group, and the legal aim to especially protect 'minorities' through such legislation (see Henttonen 2015, 50).[22] Of course, it is also important to note that Jews and later Muslims, among other groups, have historically been targets of Finnish racism (see Puuronen 2011).

In a case the prosecutor decided to drop he evaluated Christianity-related cartoons as follows:

> One can infer from pictures that the preliminary investigation was concerned that they communicated a message about Christianity and related doctrine. One cannot, however, infer that the pictures aim to incite hatred towards a group of people composed of members of the Christian churches (Case IV, R 07/2).

In another case the court decided that the defendant had attacked various groups:

20 Of course, similar observations can be made from other 'world religions' and their historical connection with certain populations. The abovementioned ones are relevant in the current Finnish religion discourse.

21 This is the case despite the fact that there is an increasing number of non-white Christians in Finland: for example, people with an Asian or African background. (Martikainen 2013b, 1–17.)

22 The quotation marks here aim to reflect that although the terms 'majority' and 'minority' sound like neutral demographic classifications, they nonetheless employ some constructed criteria by which they are recognised.

> A has made messages available to the public that defame and insult Muslims and people with African backgrounds and dark skin, which also threaten Muslims (Case XIII, R 13/6335).

These quotations capture the variation quite well. In all cases studied where both BOSR and ethnic agitation convictions were passed the 'group' under attack referred to skin colour (non-white), place of origin (African or Middle Eastern), or religion (Islam or Judaism).

From officials' perspective the legal distinction between crimes against 'religious sentiments' and 'societal peace concerning religion' (the BOSR) and crimes against a 'group' (ethnic agitation) is perhaps not especially difficult to make. An attack against the religious sacred is the key to the BOSR as it is applied today. 'The sacred' is the section's key distinguishing feature. The BOSR is exclusively invoked in cases where a 'sacred thing' (generally known and easily recognisable) of a 'religion' (one that is well known and already established as such) is attacked. Because of the current discursive connections or intersections it happens that such attacks on 'religious sentiments' often also employ discourses associated with 'race' and 'ethnicity', thus triggering the ethnic agitation section. This is similar to a case where lay religion discourse defendants employed guided officials to use the same discourse. Both officials and defendants share the basic sociocultural knowledge[23] concerning the expressions considered offensive or racist, and both expressions are therefore legally controlled and politically useful, and thus often invoked.

To be clear, there is no direct equivalent in Finland of the racial and ethnic self-identification categories used, for example, by the US Census Bureau, by which the population is demographically and officially divided into races and ethnicities. Finnish official discourses on race and ethnicity are much subtler. Officials' main aim here is to combat racism against minorities, but they do this without established formal criteria for such groups: while there is an official list for registered religious communities, there is no such list for different ethnic groups. Thus, as was the case with the category of religion, officials perform their legal obligations by utilising the societally prevailing discourses on ethnicity and race, or more specifically, how these groupings are understood in everyday Finnish.

23 One should also note that all officials and defendants examined here were white Finns.

Conclusion

It was argued above that there is a tension between the institutional religion discourse and the lay religion discourse prevailing in society in general. Formally, 'religion' is supposed to refer to registered religious communities and the Lutheran and Orthodox churches. However, an examination of the cases shows that since perpetrators utilise the lay religion discourse (in a hostile way), officials respond by mostly adopting the same religion discourse to combat actions deemed criminal. In brief, the formal category of religion has little significance in BOSR legal practice, because defendants construct religions in a more essentialist and general manner, and officials thus do so as well. The essentialist language renders the BOSR a crude tool that mainly enables the protection of the 'central features' of 'established religions'.[24] As has been described, these details are also problematic from the perspective of legal consistency, since a community's registered status may not always be relevant in certain cases. As a general conclusion, while it was noted that being a well-known and established 'religion' improves the odds, the BOSR is not a very effective route for any group seeking justice in the context of speech or actions considered hostile or offensive.[25]

Continuing with the language of perpetrators, the article argued that discourses on religion, ethnicity, and race were tightly connected. The defendants often used terms like Muslim or racial slurs to refer effectively to the same group. Thus, speech perceived or claimed to be about religion can be racialising and serve broader agendas in the sociolinguistic context. In the examples the perpetrators' aim was to oppose non-white Muslim immigration. Defendants used discourses often associated with Islam in the West, including discourses of securitisation, violence, and excessive sexuality. As the BOSR relies on a more conventionally modern category of religion – religion as a separate realm in society – its application becomes complicated because defendants often mix language on religion, race, and ethnicity.

It is observed that the BOSR and ethnic agitation laws frequently co-occur, and this is primarily because of the entanglement of key categories

24 In other words, since officials apply essentialist language drawing on the lay religion discourse, the most well-known religions and features considered 'central' to them are most likely to be protected.

25 Expressed differently, since the total number of prosecutions and guilty verdicts is so low while hostilities towards religious groups are commonplace, the law is ineffective in delivering results from the perspective of religious communities. Furthermore, since the law has only managed to deliver results for Christian, Islamic, or Jewish groups, groups otherwise identifying or identified have an even lower chance of benefiting from the BOSR law.

(religions, ethnicity, and race) and the secondary nature of the BOSR (it is applied alongside the more common ethnic agitation section if possible). Unlike perpetrators, officials aim to clearly distinguish crimes against religious sentiments (the BOSR) and groups of people (ethnic agitation), and the main element triggering the BOSR is an offence against a well-known 'religious sacred' thing. The 'sacred' is found to be the central defining element of the BOSR law as it is applied in legal practice and the key element by which it is distinguished from ethnic agitation.

Generally, this study shows that it can be beneficial to broaden the scope of analysis in the discursive study of religion with categories empirically connected with it. In this case the data directed the focus to the relationships between religion, ethnicity, and race. It was demonstrated that the category of religion often intersected with the categories of ethnicity and race. Religious insults and the related debate on freedom of speech generally present a good opportunity to examine contemporary societal conflicts. In studying these matters, a focus on the societal contexts and interests of the various stakeholders and the potential consequences of categorisations and other choices made is beneficial.

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Book Reviews

James R. Lewis: *Falun Gong: Spiritual Warfare and Martyrdom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018; paperback; pp. iv, 118.

> You must not talk with ordinary people about the high-level things I have taught you. Instead, only talk about our being persecuted, about our being good people and being wrongly persecuted, about our freedom of belief being violated, about our human rights being violated. They can accept all those things, and they will immediately support you and express their sympathy. … Knowing those facts, the people of the world will say that Falun Gong is being persecuted and that the persecutors are so evil. They'll say those things, and isn't that enough?
>
> – Li Hongzhi 2003 (Quoted in the Introduction to Lewis 2018, p. 1)

As this passage indicates, Li Hongzhi (LHZ) – Falun Gong's (FLG's) founder-leader – cautions practitioners to refrain from sharing his more esoteric teachings with outsiders. Instead, LHZ's followers are told to present 'ordinary people' (meaning all non-practitioners) with a black-and-while narrative regarding how their 'peaceful' spiritual group is being repressed by the sinister People's Republic of China (PRC). This strategy has been remarkably successful in shaping the opinions of non-Chinese observers.

James R. Lewis's *Falun Gong: Spiritual Warfare and Martyrdom*, the subject of the current review, provides an overview of this movement. However, unlike other treatments, Lewis focuses much of his attention on Li Hongzhi's more controversial (and less publicised) teachings. These esoteric teachings reveal a less savoury side of FLG – an aspect that prompts followers to actively seek out brutalisation at the hands of law enforcement authorities, and even martyrdom in the name of their founder. More generally, the earth is a battleground on which practitioners are subjected to ongoing assault by demons (who can disguise themselves as human beings) which, according to LHZ, 'should be killed' (quoted in Lewis, p. 5).

Following a brief introductory chapter which sets the stage for the balance of the monograph, the second chapter presents a short sketch of Falun Gong, which incorporates an overview of the conflict between FLG and the PRC. Much of the relevant literature produced by both sides adheres to a pattern Lewis refers to as 'duelling atrocity tales'.

The third chapter covers Falun Gong's founder-leader, Li Hongzhi. In addition to providing the basics of his biography Lewis draws attention to LHZ's gradually expanding sense of his self-importance. At the outset Li Hongzhi presented himself as an exalted master of qigong. However, as FLG grew into an increasingly successful mass movement, the

master began to portray himself as a Buddha, eventually revealing to followers that he was a god.

The fourth chapter covers Li Hongzhi's doctrine, with a special focus on his teachings about the upcoming end of the world, on the war with demons, on Falun Gong's idiosyncratic understanding of karma, and on what Lewis describes as 'spiritual warfare'. Li Hongzhi overtly instructs practitioners on how to kill demonic entities as well as how to spiritually assault perceived enemies of the movement.

One of the most dramatic events in the ongoing conflict between Falun Gong and the People's Republic of China was the self-immolation of five practitioners on 23 January 2001 (subsequently referred to as the '1.23 Incident'). While FLG responded by asserting that the PRC had staged the self-immolations (Falun Gong even created a video, *False Fire*, that claimed to prove this accusation), it is clear that these were devoted followers who interpreted some of LHZ's teachings as encouraging martyrdom in his name.

Falun Gong has been a notable exception where the negative treatment most new religions receive in the media is concerned. In Chapter 6 Lewis analyses the factors that combine to make Falun Gong this exception. He also calls attention to FLG's pattern of attacking critics, a response attributable to LHZ's direction to followers to 'clarify the truth'.

Referring back to his analysis of Falun Gong in the preceding chapters, Lewis discusses his approach to Falun Gong in an afterword. A significant part of this discussion utilises David Ownby's study of FLG – as presented in the latter's monograph, *Falun Gong and the Future of China* (2008) – as a foil for his own perspective. Finally, in his exhaustive bibliography Lewis states that he 'tried to bring together as many English-language academic sources on Falun Gong' (p. 99) as possible.

Lewis's monograph is a welcome addition to the scholarly literature on Falun Gong. Excluding pro-FLG apologetic works and explicitly anti-FLG volumes, the principal books on this topic are: David A. Palmer's *Qigong Fever: Body, Science, and Utopia in China* (Columbia University Press, 2007); James W. Tong's *Revenge of the Forbidden City: The Suppression of the Falungong in China, 1999–2005* (Oxford University Press, 2009); Maria Hsia Chang's *Falun Gong: The End of Days* (Yale University Press, 2012); Benjamin Penny's *The Religion of Falun Gong* (University of Chicago Press, 2012); Juha A. Vuori's *Critical Security and Chinese Politics: The Anti-Falun Gong Campaign* (Routledge, 2014); and David Ownby's *Falun Gong and the Future of China* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

Ownby's volume has been the most influential of these half-dozen titles. His strength is his positive approach to ground-level practitioners. But this is also part of his weakness, as he tends to downplay or to skip over the less pleasant aspects of FLG. Lewis's study thus makes an important contribution as a corrective to Ownby by highlighting these

aspects without degenerating into an anti-cult diatribe.

I did, however, question the appropriateness of the extended treatment of Li Hongzhi's self-aggrandising assertions in the latter part of Chapter 2. While a certain amount of this kind of material is essential, I did not feel that such a detailed examination of LHZ's god complex contributed meaningfully to an analysis of Falun Gong's violent side (the volume's stated focus).

I also found myself wishing Lewis had included more theory. The one place in the text where he engages in theoretical analysis is in the latter part of his media chapter (Chapter 6). However, perhaps I am asking too much of such a concise book, which is, after all, intended to be a short introduction to the topic.

My complaints are, however, relatively minor. In general, this is a fine monograph that illuminates a mostly hidden side of this controversial movement. It may even be that *Falun Gong: Spiritual Warfare and Martyrdom* will eventually influence the debate about Falun Gong; hopefully, it will change at least some observers' perceptions of the group as a 'peaceful' group being unfairly persecuted in the People's Republic of China.

Falun Gong: Spiritual Warfare and Martyrdom will be of interest to scholars of religion, particularly sinologists and new religious movements specialists. It will also be attractive to a general readership curious about this group and why it was banned in China.

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Donald L. Boisvert and Carly Daniel-Hughes (eds): *The Bloomsbury Reader in Religion, Sexuality and Gender*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017, 271 pp.

In recent years increasing research has been done on religion, sexuality, and gender in the field of religious studies. Some of it is presented in readers like this one. However, *The Bloomsbury Reader in Religion, Sexuality and Gender* introduces this theme for undergraduate students and provides teachers with a guidebook for seminars, and this has not previously been done. The reader is divided into three main themes: 'Bodies', 'Desires', and 'Performances'. Each section starts with an introduction, follows with readings, and closes with discussion questions which can be used either individually by students or to lead group discussions. The readings in every section are kept short and do not include any footnotes or endnotes, which is done deliberately to have the authors' main argument as the focus of the students' attention.

The editors believe that this book will be used mainly in North American and Western European contexts, and the readings are chosen to be familiar to students or related to their cultural histories. This means most of the readings are situated in a Western context. Some diversity is provided, mostly in a religious context, as with a reading on *niddah* by Chava Weissler, a reading on masculinity, sex, and the body in Indian Buddhism by John Powers, and a reading on sexuality and religiosity in Colonial Mexico by Zeb Tortoici. Nevertheless, to use this reader as an introductory book on this theme, it would have been essential for the editors to have strived for more diversity, not only in religious contexts, but also in different cultural settings for the sake of including different perspectives on gender and sexuality. For example, the introduction on feminist studies only has a short paragraph on criticism from feminists of colour. The concept of intersectionality is never mentioned, not even in the glossary, and key turning points such as the speech by Sojourner Truth, 'Ain't I a Woman', are omitted. Furthermore, the reader would have been more diverse and less white if, in addition to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michel Foucault, and Judith Butler, critical thinkers like Patricia Hill Collins, Angela Y. Davis, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, or Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyèwùmí had been included.

However, despite these problems, the reader does give space to the historical context by starting with a reading on 'Stereotypes, False Images, Terrorism: The White Assault upon Black Sexuality' by Kelly Brown Douglas. Douglas writes on the influence of slavery on black female and male bodies and the black church and community in the United States. Using a theological framework, she describes stereotypes born out of slavery that continue to influence black women's and men's daily lives and religiosities today. It is great that the reader

starts with a well-known theologian who criticises white patriarchal hegemony, but it is a missed opportunity to omit the academic historical background of black feminism and postcolonial studies.

The section on 'Bodies' continues with a focus on how the body is represented and interpreted in religious traditions. Embodiment is a key aspect of this section, which returns, for example, in the reading on sin, weight loss, and sexual reorientation by Lynne Gerber. Various theoretical approaches are used in the readings; however, most take a theological approach and examine religious texts, laws, or scriptures. For students or courses in related fields more readings with methods such as interviews or participant observation would have been interesting, especially in relation to embodiment and sensitive topics such as the body.

Part Two of the reader continues with the theme 'Desires'. It focuses on the 'connections between religious life, practices and the erotic'. Topics discussed in this section are, among others: homosexuality, heterosexuality, heteronormativity, and sexual activity. As stated in the introduction of the book, several theoretical approaches are highlighted in the reader: feminist; gender critical; and queer. Several readings in 'Desires' especially focus on queer theory, and the reader broadens the scope to religion, gender, and sexuality. The section starts with a chapter by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick discussing the limitations of concepts such as homo- and heterosexuality and reframing questions from what certain concepts mean to how certain categorisations work, how they are performed, and how they relate to each other. This is a well-chosen introductory chapter to critical thinking and queer theory. What follows is a short excerpt from Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1978), which starts to relate religion to sexuality and discourses of power. 'Desires' closes with two readings which focus on queer theory in different ways. Mark. D. Joan examines how religious desire is framed and intersects with sexuality and same-sex sexuality in a Christian context, and Zeb Tortorici finishes 'Desires' with a reading on sexuality and religiosity in colonial Mexico. Besides its various theoretical approaches 'Desires' is quite diverse concerning different religious contexts and practices: it includes discussions on Japanese Buddhism, the Talmud, and Pentecostalism in the United States.

The third and last section of the book is 'Performances'. This part highlights the intersections between gender and sexuality and the ways in which religion can enable people to transgress normative views. It starts with a chapter by Judith Butler from her book *Gender Trouble* (1990) and continues with several readings exemplifying the different forms sexuality and gender can take in relation to religion. The discussion of the binary divisions of female/male, feminine/masculine, and heterosexual/homosexual is

also scrutinised. A concept missing from the introduction of this section is agency, whereas most of its readings highlight how certain religious practices can provide agency. For example, the reading by Karen McCarthy Brown on Haitian Vodou in North America, where women can rely on intimate bonds with spirits, and the reading by Gayatri Reddy on the Indian hijra community both touch on this topic. Once again, this is a missed opportunity to bring in some key concepts from the field of gender studies.

To conclude, this reader provides a short and concise introduction in 271 pages to the theme of religion, gender, and sexuality for undergraduate students. Some theoretical and critical texts, such as the reading by Foucault or Butler, are abridged in a way that makes them feasible for students who have never heard of their work. Additionally, the discussion questions at the end of each section emphasise some key issues in the field. However, it must be said that although the readings discuss different religious traditions, there could have been more diversity, especially with an emphasis on the discussion of gender and sexuality and its historical academic background in areas such as black feminism and postcolonial studies. Most of the readings also provide theological arguments and approaches, and for courses and students in related study fields this may prove limited. That said, it is great to finally have a reader on this theme for students to start with.

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Peik Ingman, Terhi Utriainen, Tuija Hovi, and Måns Broo (eds): *The Relational Dynamics of Enchantment and Sacralization: Changing the Terms of the Religion Versus Secularity Debate***.** Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2016, 281pp.

This anthology is the result of the research project *Post-secular culture and a changing religious landscape* at Åbo Akademi University, Finland, and part of the series *The Study of Religion in a Global Context*, published in association with the International Association for the History of Religions.

The modern self-image, based on ideas from the Enlightenment and Weber's '*Entzauberung der Welt*', is an illusion, argues the French sociologist Bruno Latour. Contradictions between religion and rationality, magic and reason, are only constructions expected to separate the modern from the pre-modern. However, we have never been modern in Latour's view. We still live in an enchanted world, and the aim of this anthology is to reflect on *The Relational Dynamics of Enchantment and Sacralization: Changing the Terms of the Religion Versus Secularity Debate*. Using Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) as their main theoretical premise, and with an interdisciplinary focus on Finland and the Nordic countries, the researchers seek to reflect on how to study 'things that look, sound or feel like religion from one angle or for a moment but that from another perspective and in another setting and moment do not' (2016, 2).

What then is religious, and what is secular: when and where, to whom and why? What can the ANT help us to see when secularisation seems taken for granted? Through the ANT the researchers seek to show how the interactions between humans and non-humans, ideas and processes, are situated in time and space. Both humans and non-humans are regarded as equally capable and active agents in these networks – networks that must be produced and reproduced to survive. To be enchanted is therefore defined in the anthology as a state and an event. The individual is enchanted by something. Sacralisation, on the other hand, is about participating and doing something in a special and structured situation (2016, 11).

It is interesting to note that the examples presented in the first and second part of the book, *Revisiting Enchantment and Animism* and *Political Concerns*, illuminate how women use a mix of what may be regarded as enchantment, animism, and religion to empower themselves individually and collectively. Institutional religion is challenged by newly invented rituals built on old traditions. Drums and cedar twigs become, for example, active and purifying objects or 'speaking persons' in a new eastern Canadian godparent ritual (Hornborg, Chapter 2). A statue of the Virgin is cared for like a human being – she *becomes* human – as four chosen *camaristas* bathe and dress her every day (Whitehead, Chapter 3). Women who believe in

angels are challenging to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The church regards belief in angels as a childish and sentimental belief in magic by otherwise modern and self-conscious women (Utriainen, Chapter 7). Another example (Broo & Köningstedt, Chapter 4) discusses Western forms of yoga as a personalised idea, method, and active object transcending the actual practice of yoga.

As Meredith McGuire shows in her previous research (in *Lived Religion* (2008), for example), women – more than men – tend to draw on the boundaries between institutional and non-institutional religion, blending elements from different religions and spiritual traditions into a daily meaning-making resource. Women empower themselves, transcending everyday life through different rituals, practices, and material objects for personal and social agency. However, despite the positive possibilities for self-reflection, self-development, self-knowledge, and self-improvement, in my opinion there may also be a potential risk of self-control and self-surveillance in relation to religious ideas and objects that may have an adverse effect on women's ability to act.

New and traditional gender roles exist in parallel. Traditionally, women have primarily been expected to care for others, like the *camaristas* caring for the statue of the Virgin. At the same time, because we live in a health and wellbeing culture, it is legitimate for women to take care of themselves. Women may then become both empowered subjects and less powerful objects in relation to the human as well as the non-human actors in a network, as when the dancers in Chapter 11 (Fujda) cover the mirrors in the rehearsal room because the mirrors have turned into living observers with – according to the dancers – intentions that are not only good.

In the third and final part of the book, *Academic Concerns*, I would have liked the authors to elaborate further on gender issues in relation to enchantment, magic, and religion, as well as on the floating and individual subject-object positioning in which the power and agency the individual attributes to herself encounters the power and agency she attributes to other humans and non-humans. As human beings, according to the ANT, we are constantly acting together with everything that surrounds us. What has been criticised, however, concerns, for example, the idea that there is no difference between human agency and the agency of material artefacts, animals, sacred places, and so on to interact and create a network which probably contains both consistencies and inconsistencies. The idea of there being equal conditions between humans and non-humans in terms of representing and actively expressing norms, morality, and ethics has also been criticised – a criticism that is considered in the anthology.

We live in a changing religious landscape in which there is a new visibility of religion in the public

sphere – not least through the many media platforms, the individualisation and commercialisation of religion, and previous and new waves of migration. The state and former state churches are challenged by the many other voices wishing to define what religion is or is not. Choosing a theoretical perspective is therefore always to opt out of other possible perspectives and ways of analysing the results of a study. In this anthology the authors have been consistent in using the ANT to test phenomena from the Nordic countries and different parts of the world. This is enriching for the reader and an opportunity to learn more about the ANT, and how it can be used in an interdisciplinary setting through largely ethnographic methods. Using the ANT also challenges the idea of a human dominance over non-humans. The new materialism examined through the ANT seems, however, apt at a time when questions about sustainability and the environment colour the general debate about the human impact and use of nature and material objects in an everyday and broader global perspective, not to mention a conceivable sacralisation of nature.

So does this anthology discussing the relational dynamics of enchantment and sacralisation change the terms of the religion versus secularity debate? It is not that concepts like enchantment and sacralisation are more neutral than religion and secularity, as the anthology itself states, but the authors show the complexity, possibilities, and limitations of using these concepts as analytical tools with the ANT. The anthology convincingly shows that the tension between religion and secularity is a modern construction – a contradiction that seems out of fashion.

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Andrej Kotljarchuk and Olle Sundström (eds): *Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Stalin's Soviet Union: New Dimensions of Research*. Huddinge: Södertörns Academic Studies 72, 2017

Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Stalin's Soviet Union is the result of international collaboration between scholars from history, cultural studies, ethnology, and anthropology. The book's interdisciplinary and theme-centred (as opposed to project-centred) composition brings advantages, such as a broader scope of topics, a multidimensionality of research questions, and a variety of chosen approaches. The book consists of an introduction and ten chapters, divided into three parts. The first unites three chapters under the title 'National Operations of the NKVD. A General Approach'. The other parts present case studies on 'Ethnic Minorities in the Great Terror' (three chapters) and 'Religious Minorities under Soviet Repression' (four chapters). A comparison of the book's name with the titles of its parts suggests that the former is considerably wider than its contents. The book focuses on the repressions (mostly of the 1920s and 1930s) and the Great Terror, with a special interest in ethnic groups. Religious groups (or minorities) receive somewhat less attention, although the third part of the book, which focuses on religious minorities, is the longest.

At the beginning of the introduction the editors step into the debate about the Great Terror and critique its depiction by Robert Conquest (*The Great Terror: A Reassessment*, 1971[1968]), arguing that it misses both ethnic and religious dimensions. Both Andrej Kotljarchuk and Olle Sundström are historians interested in ethnic and religious minorities in the Soviet Union, and in this volume they particularly focus on the repressions. More specifically, Sundström has been studying shamanism, and contributes a chapter on 'Repression of Shamans and Shamanism in Khabarovsk Krai: 1920s to the early 1950s', co-authored with Tatiana Bulgakova. Kotljarchuk, in turn, has analysed the role of state propaganda in the 'national operations' of the Great Terror.

Although the book's title is somewhat misleading, it does shed light on the repressions under Stalin, viewed through the prisms of ethnicity, nationality, and religiosity, but it does not cover other aspects of minorities in the Stalin era. Thanks to the great number of previous studies the international scientific community is already familiar with the book's topics. To name a few: Valery Tishkov's study on ethnic and nationalist conflicts in Soviet times (*Essays on the Theory and Policy of Ethnicity in Russia*, 1997); Terry Martin's thorough analyses of the ethnic cleansings (or purges) ('The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing', 1998) and Soviet 'primordial ethnicity' ('Modernization or Neotraditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism', 2000); Wendy Goodman's depiction of the

political manipulations under Stalin used to justify mass repressions (*Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression*, 2007); and Oleg Khlevnyuk's investigations of Stalin's dictatorship and the Great Terror (*Politbiuro: Mekhanizmy politicheskoi vlasti v 1930-e gody*, 1996; *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator*, 2015). Alongside this volume's contributions, the studies mentioned use archive materials released in the nineties and provide valuable background for further research. Unfortunately, however, these works are largely ignored by the authors of *Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Stalin's Soviet Union*.

What then are the new dimensions *Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Stalin's Soviet Union* offers to the broad scope of research on the Great Terror, Stalin's governmentality, and the issues of ethnic/religious groups in the USSR? In the first part Hiroaki Kuromiya addresses two under studied issues, which he finds relevant and inadequately presented by other historians of the Great Terror: international espionage and counter-espionage; and political provocation by the Soviet authorities. Kuromiya suggests the Great Terror was a means of 'total counter-espionage', and enemies (of the people) were artificially created by means of political provocation. It is unclear who the historians with whom Kuromiya is arguing are, but his message is directed at 'Russian historians' who 'seek to justify the Great Terror by attacking foreign intelligence services'. In the second chapter Andrey Savin questions the ethnification of Stalinism and tests a hypothesis arguing for the prioritisation of biological and racial over social aspects in Stalinist policy. The conclusions sound vague, because the ethnification trend is 'extremely inconsistent' and mixed with victimisation on other bases (social, class, political, etc.). The author acknowledges the need to distinguish between repressions for ethnic and other reasons but does not suggest how to do this or whether it is even possible. Terry Martin's study 'The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing' (1998), for example, demonstrates that this is unlikely, because 'not everyone arrested in the Polish operation was a Pole, nor were all arrested Poles included in the Polish operation' (Martin 1998, 856). Moreover, Martin mentions the case of the Kharbintsy, which is not a national group, but has been included in the national operations of the NKVD in 1938 to show that the boundaries of ethnic/national identities were blurred. Savin, in turn, excludes the case of the Kharbintsy (which he spells 'Harbinites'), perhaps to escape this ambiguity. The third chapter, by Victor Doenninghaus, describes the national operations against 'nations of Western "bourgeois-fascist" states' in numbers and concludes that nationality was not the main criterion for repression, but rather such factors as birth, living abroad, or having any other ties with foreign countries seen as hostile. This chapter confirms the impossibility of a clear division be-

tween reasons for victimisation and the complexity of the very notion of ethnicity in the context of the study.

Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Stalin's Soviet Union claims to take a micro-historical approach, and the three chapters of its second part implement this. This section is opened by Kotljarchuk's investigation of 'the local press in the Swedish and Finnish minority areas' and aims to show how state propaganda worked. Kotljarchuk concludes with the intriguing thesis that the Soviet propaganda campaign was an early example of fake news, 'creating reality out of nothing'. The next chapter explains the complex relationships between different nationalities in Soviet Georgia during the Terror. Using a vast quantity of statistics, Marc Junge and Daniel Mueller question the explanations for repressions via the 'ethnification of perception' or xenophobia, instead arguing for a 'combination of feared, potential or real political, social and territorial competition inside Georgia'. In other words, they again prove the impossibility of considering national operations as pure genocide. In the sixth chapter Eva Toulouze examines 'the systematic attacks against ethnicity' that preceded the Great Terror in the Volga Region. The chapter discusses 'the fate' of several ethnic groups, paying particular attention to Finno-Ugric intellectuals. This is a good illustrative study of non-exceptional cases, but the conclusions drawn sound too strong. Toulouze ends by blaming Great Russian chauvinism for the oppressions of other ethnicities, which (in the view of the Bolsheviks) should always be subordinate to and controlled by Russians.

Finally, the third part of the book deals with religious groups. Oksana Beznosova traces the oppression of Evangelicals in Soviet Ukraine between 1928 and 1939. Religious groups like this are rarely contextualised within the Soviet anti-religious policy and are not specifically discussed. However, the study reconstructs the situation around one religious minority in detail. The next chapter, co-authored by Eva Toulouze, Laur Vallikivi, and Art Leete, on the Sovietisation of the indigenous people of the North, is somehow out of place. Among the social, cultural, economic, and political aspects of the tensions between the enforced Soviet regime and local cultures it fails to properly discuss religion, which is confusing. The last two chapters are devoted to Shamanism. First, Tatiana Bulgakova and Olle Sundström explain how Shamans became the target of repression and how this was enacted during the extended period between the 1920s and 1950s. The chapter is based on empirical data, archive material, and a great deal of previous research. Various types of repressive actions against Shamans are raised, both direct, such as arrests and legislation marginalising Shamans, and more importantly, indirect, such as anti-Shamanic propaganda, modern medicine, and education. This study paints a full picture of how the Soviet authorities dealt with otherness

incarnated, for example, in Shamanism. In this sense this is not a story about a religious minority as such, but about the elimination of features alien to the general ideology of communism. Yana Ivashchenko continues with the question 'Where Have the Amur Region's Shamans Gone?'. Field study materials from 2000 to 2012 are used, but ultimately the author presents a rather narrow investigation, based mainly on one interview. Briefly answering the research questions set at the beginning, she concludes that Shamanism has vanished not because of direct repressive actions but because it has become unpopular and lacking in prestige. Nevertheless, there is evidence that Shamanism remains a cultural constant for indigenous people. The Soviet state and authorities are notably absent from the chapter's narrative, which, with other studies of the people of the North (see, for example, Ssorin-Chaikov's work 'The Social Life of the State in Subarctic Siberia', 2003 and 'Soviet Debris: Failure and the Poetics of Unfinished Construction in Northern Siberia', 2016) outlines the fact that even under Stalin distant non-urban areas and their inhabitants may have remained almost untouched by his governmentality.

Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Stalin's Soviet Union is hardly conceived as a concordant joint work, but each contribution makes the somewhat broadly studied phenomenon of the Great Terror a little more interesting for scholars in research fields other than Soviet history. The book also contains some good illustrations – some of them quite rare.

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