



RELIGIOUS STUDIES

a global view

Edited by
Gregory D. Alles

Religious Studies

A Global View

Religious Studies: A Global View is the first book of its kind to survey the field of Religious Studies from a global perspective. In ten chapters focusing on specific geographic regions, a team of international contributors explore the work that is being done in religious studies around the world. They particularly focus on the work done in the last fifty years, and invite readers to rethink their conceptions of what that study involves: its history, structures, leading figures and key issues. Regions discussed include: Western Europe, Eastern Europe, North Africa and West Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Continental East Asia, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands, North America, and Latin America.

Key topics and themes discussed include the emergence of a global community of Religion scholars, the influence of technology, the history and institutionalization of the discipline, objects, methods and theories in the study of religion, and the demarcation of the field.

Religious Studies: A Global View challenges the assumption that serious thinking about religion is solely a Western undertaking and aims to foster global cooperation in the study of religions. It is the ideal resource for students, researchers, lecturers and teachers interested in how the field of Religious Studies is developing in contemporary academia.

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R religious Studies

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A bbreviations

AAR	American Academy of Religion
AASR	African Association for the Study of Religion
AASR	Australian Association for the Study of Religion
ABA	Associação Brasileira de Antropologia
ABHR	Associação Brasileira de História das Religiões
ACSRM	Asociación de Cientistas Sociales de la Religión en el Mercosur
ALER	Asociación Latinamericana para el Estudio de las Religiones
Anpocs	Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASRSA	Association for the Study of Religions in Southern Africa
ATISCA	Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa
ATR	African Traditional Religion
BJP	Bharatya Janata Party
CAEA	Centro Argentino de Etnología Americana
CAPES	Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CEIL	Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Laborales
CER	Centro de Estudos da Religião
CIESAS	Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social
CISR	Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CODEMUJ	Coordinadora Diocesana de Mujeres
COE	Center of Excellence

CONICET	Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas
CPC	Communist Party of China
CSDS	Centre for Developing Societies in Delhi
DICSEP	Dubrovnik International Conference in the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas
DWU	Divine Word University
EASR	Research Network on European History of Religions
ENAH	Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia
EPHE	École Pratique des Hautes Études
FAPESP	Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo
IAHR	International Association for the History of Religions
ICHR	Indian Council for Historical Research
ICSSR	Indian Council for Social Science Research
IISR	International Institute for the Study of Religion
IWR	Institute of World Religions
JARS	Japanese Association for Religious Studies
JASRS	Japanese Association for the Study of Religion and Society
NAWA	North Africa and West Asia
NCERT	National Council for Education Research and Training
NEUR	Research Network on European History of Religions
NIAS	Nordic Institute of Asian Studies
NRM	New Religious Movement
NUS	National University of Singapore
NZASR	New Zealand Association for the Study of Religion
RAHR	Romanian Association for the History of Religions
RIRC	Religious Information Research Center
SISR/ISSR	Société Internationale de Sociologie des Religions
UBA	Universidad de Buenos Aires
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
UNAM	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
USP	University of São Paulo
WCC	World Council of Churches

*I*ntroduction

Gregory D. Alles

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THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS IS A global enterprise. I do not mean what some might mean by that phrase: that scholars of religions have been leaders in globalizing the university curriculum, studying and teaching about all, or at least many different, regions of the globe. In some parts of the world, that may be true. Especially in North America and Europe, scholars of religion, as distinct from theologians (see below), have generally studied the religions of other times and places, and in those contexts, the study of religion may make a real contribution to deparochialization.¹ But what I have in mind is something rather different. Scholars of religions are found throughout the world, on every continent and in every religious tradition. It is not merely the object of study that is global. The scholars who are at work crafting knowledge about religions are spread throughout the globe, too.

But while the study of religions is a global enterprise, it largely lacks a global vision. Conceptions of the discipline or field—I will not commit myself to either term—remain decidedly parochial, both explicitly in theoretical analysis and implicitly in scholarly practice. That is true in North America and Western Europe, where even with the best of intentions scholars may be dismissive of or completely unaware of scholarly work being done elsewhere.² It is also true in other parts of the globe, where scholars, when they look outside of their own regions, generally look to North America and Western Europe for instruction and guidance.³ In this respect, the study of religions is not much different from other humanistic disciplines. The ‘asymmetric ignorance’ that Dipesh Chakrabarty ascribes to history is largely true in the study of religions, too: ‘Third-world historians feel a need to refer to works in European history; historians of Europe do not feel any need to reciprocate’ (Chakrabarty 2000: 28). In the production of knowledge as in many other arenas, globalization too often implies Europeanization or, especially since the end of World War II, Americanization.

There are distinct signs today that a global community of scholars of religions is emerging. Consider just one set of examples. From 2000 to 2006 national associations for the study of religions have affiliated with the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) from Austria (2000), Brazil (2000), Greece (2005), Romania (2005), Slovakia (2000), and Turkey (2005).⁴ So have regional associations from Africa (2000), East Africa (2000), Europe (2000), and South and Southeast Asia (2005). During the same period the IAHR convened international congresses in Durban, South Africa (2000), and Tokyo, Japan (2005). It sponsored special and regional conferences in Cracow, Poland (2000), Cambridge, England (2001), Paris, France (2002), Wellington, New Zealand (2002), Bergen, Norway (2003), Delhi, India (2003 and 2005), Legon, Ghana (2004), Santander, Spain (2004), Yogyakarta, Indonesia (2004), Thessaloniki, Greece (2006), and Bucharest, Romania (2006). In addition, it lent its support to conferences in Tenerife, The Canary Islands

[Spain] (2000), Vienna, Austria (2002), São Paulo, Brazil (2002 and 2006), Lima, Perú (2002), Roehampton, England (2002), Paris, France (2002), Taxco, Mexico (2002), Chester, England (2003), Erfurt, Germany (2003), Turku, Finland (2003 and 2005), Chiapas, Mexico (2004), Havana, Cuba (2004), Tübingen, Germany (2004), Oxford, England (2004), Bayreuth, Germany (2005), Mallorca, Spain (2005), Santiniketan, India (2006), and Toledo, Spain (2006).

Such global opportunities for religious studies arise, of course, as a result of innovations in the technologies of communication and transportation that have produced what theorists of globalization, following David Harvey (1990), are fond of calling time-space compression. Unlike two hundred years ago, when international communication largely depended upon the physical transmission of letters or persons by very slow means, scholars today have virtually immediate access to their counterparts almost everywhere in the world via telephone, email, and videoconferencing. Electronic media have accelerated the speed and volume of the transmission of scholarly work and as a result its availability. In addition, since the introduction of the Boeing 707 in 1958 rapid and relatively inexpensive commercial jet air travel has not only increased the accessibility of fieldwork sites but has also made it possible for scholars from around the world to meet relatively frequently, consult, and collaborate with one another face to face. To be sure, not everyone has equal access to the benefits of these technologies. The structures of the global scholarly community in religious studies, like the structures of other global communities, reflect differences in power and access to economic resources.

This volume does not provide a global vision of religious studies. It only takes a first step. It provides a global view. In successive chapters it maps, in a preliminary fashion, work that is being done around the world.⁵ It does so first of all in order to make scholars more aware of what their counterparts elsewhere have been and are doing. What, one wonders, do scholars in the Americas know about current debates in religious studies in the People's Republic of China? How familiar are African scholars with the work of their South Asian counterparts? More broadly, the volume aims to make serious readers aware that, despite the impression left by many otherwise excellent introductory texts (e.g. Michaels [ed.] 2004; Nye 2003; Pals 2006; Strenski 2006), thinking about religions is not confined to their own or someone else's corner of the globe. One may hope that increased awareness will result in increasingly greater collaboration between scholars in different regions. One may perhaps dream that the volume will help change the way we think about the study of religions, its history, structures, institutions, leading figures, and key issues.

Boundaries

The Afterword considers several topics key to a global vision of religious studies: history, institutionalization, and objects, methods, and theories. But one key issue needs to be addressed at the start, and that is the issue of demarcation. Just what do we include in the study of religions? This is a particularly thorny problem. While few ichthyologists, for example, aspire to being fish, or perhaps better, presumably no fish aspire to being ichthyologists, quite a few religious people are interested in studying religions, precisely because they wish to be better at being religious. Some want to demonstrate that their own religious convictions are the best and perhaps rank other convictions in relation to their own, an approach once called by some the comparative study of religions or comparative religion. Others want to identify and appropriate the truths contained in a variety of religions, the flip side of traditional missiology and apologetics. Still others want somehow to bring all religions together via a universal theology or *philosophia perennis*. All may work with something of a global vision.

One prominent spokesperson for a global vision in religious studies was Wilfred Cantwell Smith. His writing and teaching have inspired much work in global theology, a field to which he himself contributed (Smith 1981). In an early, programmatic essay, Smith wrote:

The traditional form of Western scholarship in the study of men's [*sic*] religion was that of an impersonal presentation of an 'it'. The first great innovation in recent times has been the personalization of the faiths observed, so that one finds a discussion of a 'they'. Presently the observer becomes personally involved, so that the situation is one of a 'we' talking about a 'they'. The next step is a dialogue, where 'we' talk to 'you'. If there is listening and mutuality, this may become that 'we' talk *with* 'you'. The culmination of this progress is when 'we all' are talking *with* each other about 'us'.

(Smith 1959: 34)

So far as it goes, I agree with what Smith has to say. And given the levels of violence sometimes associated with religion, one can hardly decry the efforts made when religious people sit down together and talk with one another about their most cherished convictions. But the passage quoted leaves at least one important question unexamined. In what register are 'we all' talking when we are talking as scholars of religion with each other about us?

Margaret Miles (2000: 472) gave one answer in her address as president of the American Academy of Religion. The terms 'theological studies' and 'the study of religion', she wrote,

are distinctions without a difference. Theological studies, thought of as exploring a religious tradition from within, must also bring critical questions to the tradition studied. And the study of religion, often described as taking an ‘objective’ or disengaged perspective, cannot be studied or taught without understanding the power and beauty, in particular historical situations, of the tradition or the author we study. Nor can religious studies avoid theology—the committed worldviews, beliefs, and practices of believers—by focusing on religious phenomenologies. Both ‘theological studies’ and the ‘study of religion’ must integrate critical and passionately engaged scholarship. I use, then, the providentially ambiguous term ‘religious studies’ to integrate the falsely polarized terms, ‘theological studies’ and ‘the study of religion’.

This statement reflects much actual practice. Little distinction is made at times, and hardly just in North America, between theology (or equivalents; see note 6) and the study of religions, regardless of whether ‘we all’ are talking about us or we are still talking only about them. Nevertheless, Miles’ observations needlessly blur a number of real differences. The most important may be epistemological. While I generally share Peter Ochs’ (2006: 125) sense of tedium at interminable ‘discussions about “religious studies vs. theology”’, experience on four continents—I have no experience in Australia or South America—has taught me that there is a distinction that still needs explicit discussion.⁶ The various contributors to this volume will have their own views on the relationship between religious reflection and the study of religion. The views that follow are mine.

To start with, I find it misleading to distinguish theology and the study of religions in terms of insider and outsider perspectives. The aim of the study of religions is knowledge about religions. The aim of theology is to formulate religious truth. It is true that at times people who are by profession theologians also formulate and transmit knowledge. When they do so, they are engaged in the study of religions. But in the world in which we now live, the most interesting religious claims, those that would seem to be most central to the theological enterprise—to take traditional examples, claims about God and forgiveness or rebirth and release—do not count as knowledge in a strict sense, even if religious people sometimes make equivocal use of the verb ‘to know’. Furthermore, in the world in which we now live it seems like a poor use of time and energy to try to make such claims count as knowledge.⁷ We simply lack the means to demonstrate most religious claims in a manner consistent with criteria that we ordinarily use for knowledge. It is certainly true, as Peter Dear (2006: 14) has recently noted for the natural sciences, that what counts as intelligibility varies with the cultural circumstances of the thinker. (Dear particularly identifies two versions of intelligibility, mechanistic modeling and naturalistic representation.) Furthermore, I take it for granted that the

boundaries of the category ‘knowledge’ are fuzzy. For example, was it knowledge when physicists in the nineteenth century attributed the ability of light to travel through a vacuum to ether? It may even be true that the definition of knowledge is uncertain, as when some philosophers use Gettier examples to raise the possibility that knowledge cannot be defined, even as ‘justified true belief’ (Gettier 1963). But definitional uncertainty and fuzzy boundaries would seem to be general characteristics of almost all human conceptualization (e.g. Laurence and Margolis 1999). They are not reasons to abandon the distinction between knowledge and non-epistemic religious claims. Neither is the truism, which I heartily endorse, that all claims which count as knowledge are context-bound and corrigible.

It seems inevitable that theologians will want to make religious claims that lie unmistakably outside the bounds of knowledge. As soon as they do, they leave the study of religions and engage in religious reflection. That happens, for example, when a systematician moves from explicating the thought of Thomas Aquinas to drawing implications for faith. It also happens when an exegete goes beyond talking about the context-specific meanings of the *Yogasūtras* or about medically demonstrated benefits of certain physical exercises and makes claims that subtle physiological channels not detectable by any normal empirical means really do exist. Such claims simply do not belong within the study of religions. In this sense, the study of religions requires a rigorous restraint, but one that is epistemological, not religious.

My point is not that religious claims are somehow inherently flawed. Through modal logic we can construct worlds in which what appear in our world as religious claims—‘There is a God who forgives sin’, ‘I was a pandit in my previous life, but this will be my last birth’—would count as knowledge, although we might then question whether we would still want to call these claims religious. I also do not mean to say that theology has no place in our world. Religious reflection has an extremely important place within religious communities, nor is it limited to those communities. For a number of practical reasons, I find enterprises such as interreligious dialogue and comparative theology (cf. Clooney 2005) welcome developments. Nevertheless, people are entitled to disregard religious claims and thinking that depends upon them in a manner in which they are not entitled to disregard, for example, the existence of the ground on which they walk or, more abstractly, Newton’s equations defining motion.⁸ Indeed, many people do disregard religious claims, sometimes rather aggressively (Dawkins 2006; Dennett 2006; Harris 2006).

While theology—more broadly, serious religious reflection—has its place, that place is not the study of religions. For example, the study of religions does not aspire to make ‘progress in discovering the truths of religion’, as Thomas Ryba (2004: 109) seems to hope. That is partly because at least for the foreseeable future there seems to be no progress to be made.⁹ Instead, the study of religions aspires to understand and explain human religious thought and

behavior in the same manner that we understand all other forms of human thought and behavior. This orientation does not necessarily make it a secular, anti-religious pursuit,¹⁰ nor does it require scholars of religions to be outsiders, as Miles seems to suggest in the passage quoted. (It may well be, however, that far from having the privileged position often ascribed to them [e.g. Hinnells 2005: 15], insiders have a harder time recognizing the questionability of their religious claims.) I am a scholar of religions by profession; I also happen to be a religious insider, at least in one tradition. I neither know nor care whether the contributors to this volume consider themselves insiders or outsiders. What the study of religions requires is not that those who practice it be outsiders to religion but that they take the most rigorous, critical stance to what counts as knowledge that human beings are capable of taking. What they make of their religious convictions after that is their own business.

The focus of this volume is the study of religions, not theology or its equivalents. That statement necessitates a brief comment about terminology. In composition, the phrase ‘the study of religions’ can be ambiguous. For example, ‘the study of religions in Japan’ can mean either the study of religions by Japanese scholars or the study of Japanese religions by scholars anywhere in the world. In this respect, ‘religious studies in Japan’ works better. It clearly refers to the work of Japanese scholars. As Miles notes in the quote above, however, the phrase ‘religious studies’ has its own ambiguity. (For several meanings, see Wiebe 2005). The adjective may refer to the study of religious objects, but it may also refer to studies that are themselves religious in character. In this volume ‘religious studies’ is generally a synonym for a non-theological study of religions. As several contributors note, however, in some regions of the world the study of religions is not always sharply distinguished from theology or its counterparts.

Organization

The plan of the volume is as follows. It begins with a division of the world into ten regions. This division makes some sense in terms of linguistic, cultural, political, and academic identities. It also responds to pragmatic demands. For example, now that the Cold War is over, it is debatable how distinct Eastern Europe is from Western Europe. Nevertheless, if the two regions did not receive separate treatment, it seems likely that currently prevailing cultural and political weight would result in Eastern European scholars getting less attention than they deserve. But while the division into regions is practical, it is also artificial. What Michael Stausberg pointedly notes for Western Europe is true virtually everywhere. None of the regions is a complete unity. North America may come closest, but to say that runs the risk of overlooking the distinctive characteristics of Anglophone and Francophone Canada. In the preparation of this volume

regional identity sometimes proved so tenuous or politically sensitive that it became impossible to draft the chapter as an undivided whole. As a result, the chapters on continental East Asia, Latin America, and South and Southeast Asia are joint productions, subdivided along geopolitical lines. It is unfortunate that some traditions in the study of religions may not be represented, but that is not for lack of effort.

It seems self-evident that the order of the chapters should avoid the implication that certain regions are inherently more significant in the study of religions than others. Although no one can deny that at any given moment in time scholars in some regions will be more influential than scholars in others, one should also expect that the relative degree of influence will change. One wonders, for example, what effect the apparent emergence today of China and India as economic powers will ultimately have on intellectual activities, including religious studies. At the same time, scholarly aesthetics requires that the chapters appear in some order that is not arbitrary or random. The volume tries to steer a course between these two extremes, randomness on the one hand, and seeing the temporary prominence of certain regions as inevitable and permanent on the other. The chapters begin at the eastern shore of the Atlantic Ocean and move from west to east, against the sun, and from north to south, ending with Latin America.

In preparing their chapters, each contributor was asked to follow a common outline:

- 1 The prehistory of the study of religions
- 2 The emergence of the study of religions
- 3 The development of the study of religions
 - a Major ideas and problems
 - b Key thinkers and texts
 - c Institutionalization
 - d Intraregional divisions and interregional connections
 - e Relations with other fields of study
- 4 Emerging issues.

Each was also given the latitude to modify the outline or abandon it altogether if that seemed desirable. As one would expect, several authors did just that.

In addition, authors were asked to pay special attention to recent work. For many regions, such a focus was inevitable. The study of religions did not begin in full force in these regions until after World War II. At the same time, this request deserves mention, because during the last few decades the unofficial canon that guides historical reflection on the study of religions, at least that which guides such reflection in North America and Europe, has changed relatively little. For example, the new edition of a fine introduction, *Eight Theories of Religion*, written by the US American, Daniel Pals (2006; the earlier

edition is now available in Chinese: Pals 2005) discusses in turn E. B. Tylor and James George Frazer, Sigmund Freud, Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Mircea Eliade, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, and Clifford Geertz—a list that could have been compiled already in the early 1970s. An introduction in German, *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft*, edited by Axel Michaels (2004), discusses a larger number of theorists, but similarly ranges, as the subtitle puts it, from Friedrich Schleiermacher to Mircea Eliade. The unsurprising result is that the manner in which the history of the study of religions is presented has become increasingly antiquated.¹¹ This volume will not define a new canon, but the hope is that it will go some of the way toward bringing reflection on the history of the field and its current state up to date.

As already mentioned, the Afterword makes a step in the direction of constructing a global vision of religious studies. Although it comes at the end of the volume, it is in a very real sense only preliminary. Like a fine Scotch (apologies to those for whom alcohol is forbidden), more mature reflection requires aging.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It remains here to thank the various authors for their contributions. Some of them had very few precedents for giving an account of the study of religion in their regions. That made their work especially arduous, but it also makes it particularly significant. I owe all of the contributors my profound thanks.

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NOTES

- 1 Although Mark Taylor (1998: 12) does not use the terminology of deparochialization, he attributes this benefit quite explicitly to religious studies in the United States. I take it that Jakelić and Starling (2006: 205), for example, have something similar in mind when they refer to ‘global concerns and global perspective in the study of religion’. Mark Juergensmeyer puts such concerns into practice in three fine volumes that he has edited (2003, 2005, 2006). Bryan S. Turner (2004) has, however, something different in mind. He identifies twin tasks for religious

studies in the context of globalization: in his words, it should ‘provide an understanding of human frailty and . . . [an education in] cosmopolitan virtue’ (2004: 104). Valuable as they are, none of these texts especially displays a global vision in the sense in which I am using the term.

In the part of the world that I know best, the United States, there is a large literature on globalizing or deparochializing the curriculum. See, for example, the essays in *Globalizing the Liberal Arts*, vol. 5 of *Liberal Arts: Journal of the Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts at Westmont* (July 2006), and the literature cited there.

- 2 José Ignacio Cabezón (2006) writes: ‘it is hard for us to conceive of the day when a “Theories of Religion” course might be taught with a substantial selection of readings from nonwestern sources . . . something that some of us [would] consider a sign of maturity’ (Cabezón 2006: 31). Would it really be so difficult to include a text such as Alatas 1977 in such a course? Alatas and Sinha 2001 provide a model for internationalizing such a course, even if that course depends heavily upon European and North American theorists. In this volume Ezra Chitando notes that African scholars have made major contributions to method and theory. That includes addressing, as Alatas 1977 does, the term ‘religion’ and such classic issues as the insider/outsider problem.

Not only does Cabezón conceive of the study of religions as a European and North American pursuit (see esp. p. 23, including n. 4), he also seems to imagine that the only people outside of the region with whom it is worth talking seriously about religion are religious people, and it seems that these people will inevitably object to academic analysis (p. 32). One hardly needs to leave the United States or Western Europe to have such discussions. Writing in the same issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Gavin Flood is even blunter: the study of religions involves ‘reasoning within the horizon of the western academy’ (Flood 2006: 50).

- 3 An example from this volume: Chung Chin-hong and Lee Chang-yick note that Korean scholars are actively translating European and North American works into Korean: Friedrich Max Müller, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Mircea Eliade, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Jonathan Z. Smith, William Paden, and Bruce Lincoln. Who, I wonder, is translating the works of Korean scholars into English?
- 4 At the end of 2006 the IAHR had a total of 37 national and 5 regional affiliates.
- 5 Important predecessors include Pye 2004, a selection of articles in Antes, Geertz, and Warne, eds (2004, vol 1: 13–184), and a series of entries in Jones, ed. (2005: 8761–96, 10072–82), for which I served as consultant.
- 6 There is an immense literature on this topic, and I will not try to rehearse it here.

In a classic act of boundary-keeping, R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (1960: 216–18) noted the growing internationalism of the IAHR evident at the Marburg Congress but also a lack of understanding of the boundaries between the study of religion and theology. One must be wary of a latent—or perhaps overt—Orientalism in this regard. As Satoko Fujiwara points out in this volume, the Japanese thought it was the Europeans who were responsible for overstepping this line.

In what follows, I use the term ‘theology’, partly because it is common in my particular linguistic community, and partly because it is a designation that UNESCO officially recognizes. In a global context, however, to speak of theology

is misleading. The word is most at home in Christianity. Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others often do not think of their serious religious reflection as theology (Ford 2005: 73–76). Moreover, in some parts of the world ‘theology’ primarily denotes the activity of people who work in a certain academic context, namely, Christian theologians who teach in universities or other institutions of higher learning. So let me clarify that I am using the word ‘theology’ as a metonym. It stands for any religious claim advanced for serious intellectual consideration, regardless of the religious tradition to which the person making the claim belongs, regardless of whether the person identifies herself as religious or only as ‘spiritual’, and regardless of whether that reflection occurs in the context of a widely recognized religion or a new—or ‘ancient’—practice like neo-shamanism or Wicca.

- 7 Others may differ. For example, like Ian Stevenson (1987, 1997, 2003), they may try to prove the veracity of certain religious claims. Since time and energy are scarce resources, everyone needs to assess the possibility of success in pursuing all sorts of claims; creation science and Holocaust denial are extreme examples. In academics as in other areas of life, where some see an opportunity for entrepreneurship, others see a waste of resources.
- 8 *Pace* Paul Griffiths (2006a, 2006b). Although I find it hard to make any sense of Griffiths’ claim that ‘religion’ is a natural kind—the word certainly does not seem to behave like other natural-kind words—I would agree that the study of religions rests, as does all human knowledge, upon axioms. I doubt, however, that axioms pertaining to, for example, the existence of the planet earth ‘are of the same order of abstraction and disputability as those assumed by (for instance) Catholic systematians’ (2006b: 77). Although I think there are possible worlds in which these axioms might be of the same order, the world in which we live does not seem to be of that sort.
- 9 Ryba cites Newman in accusing those who would exclude theology from institutions of knowledge, such as universities, of intellectual arrogance. Unfortunately, this argument cuts much too wide, for it can be used to argue for the inclusion of astrology in astronomy, yogic subtle channels in medicine, and intelligent design in biology.
- 10 I tend to agree with Strenski (2006), when he argues against McCutcheon (2001) that scholars of religions are to be neither caretakers nor ‘undertakers’ (what McCutcheon calls ‘critics’) of religion. In other words, rather than seeking to foster religion or destroy it, scholars of religions are to remain neutral toward it. In the end, however, even this statement claims too much. As an empirical enterprise, the study of religions should not—and cannot legitimately—determine a priori whether its conclusions benefit religion, work to its detriment, or are inconsequential to religious practice and commitment. That is a result that can be determined only after the fact and on a case by case basis. Similar hesitations can be expressed about the terms ‘methodological agnosticism’ and ‘methodological atheism’. For example, if—*mirabile dictu*—the last judgment as foretold in the Qur’ān began indisputably to occur, it would make little sense for scholars of religions to invoke a principled methodological agnosticism or atheism as justification for refusing to take this event into account.
- 11 For more up to date accounts, see, e.g. Nye 2003; Antes, Geertz, and Warne (eds) 2004; Hinnells (ed.) 2005.

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1

Western Europe

Michael Stausberg

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THE CHAPTERS IN THIS VOLUME REFER TO geographical units. But while Western Europe may appear as a homogeneous unit from an American or Asian perspective, it is in fact rather inhomogeneous. It is divided by linguistic barriers, powerful nation-states, and national cum regional identities.

Linguistically, Western Europe is dominated by Germanic and Romance languages. This division also identifies different intellectual environments. Even in Switzerland and Belgium, where both Romance and Germanic languages enjoy official status, the linguistic areas have different academic traditions. These linguistic–territorial divisions, however, are hardly static. For example, nowadays, few young Scandinavian scholars publish in or read German or French, and many scholars mainly follow international debates only to the extent that they are conducted in English (cf. Antes 2004: 44). American scholars are generally better known and enjoy greater respect than colleagues from neighboring countries.

European countries have extremely different religious cultures and state–church relationships. Compare the separation of church and state effected in France in 1905 and the French ideology of *laïcité* (Baubérot 1998) with the various state and folk churches of Northern Europe or with the separation of church and state in countries such as Germany, Greece, Italy, and Spain, which nevertheless grant the church a special legal and cultural status. All of these different relationships shape the study of religion.

The European Union is currently attempting to internationalize the academic landscape. It is introducing a common grading system, funding the intra-European exchange of students and teaching staff, and making considerable funds available for research. Nevertheless, most research in the humanities is still funded by national research agencies. Furthermore, although there is extensive short-term mobility among students and scholars, recruitment of faculty is almost exclusively done either nationally or occasionally within subcontinental regions.

There is as yet no census of departments and programs in the study of religion similar to that undertaken by the American Academy of Religion or a review of current research similar to the Canadian Corporation for Studies of Religion's *State-of-the-Art Review* series (Warne 2004: 15–23). Peter Antes (2004) is, however, a useful country by country survey. At present the non-confessional study of religion is taught at universities in more than a dozen countries of Western Europe, and the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), founded mainly by European scholars in Amsterdam in 1950, has member-organizations in fifteen Western European nations. (The study of religions is still lacking in Ireland and Portugal.) In 2000 the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) was founded. It sponsors several electronic discussion lists, subdivided by language, and arranges a series of annual conferences jointly with one of its member-associations.

Prehistory of the study of religion

The non-confessional study of religion did not fall from heaven any more than the books of revelation it studies did. Its pundits have devised several competing accounts of its origins.

According to Eric Sharpe (1986: 1), the emergence of ‘comparative religion’ ‘represented the germination of seeds planted and watered over many centuries of Western history’. Sharpe even suggests that ‘the entire history of the study of religion in the Western world . . . [i]s an extended prelude’ to modern comparative religion. While that may seem like an illegitimate teleological reconstruction, Sharpe is probably right when he claims that ‘[t]he antecedents of comparative religion were far more numerous, and far more diverse, than is commonly realized’. At the same time, he attributes the eventual emergence of the academic subject to theories of evolution as the ‘one single guiding principle of method which was at the same time also able to satisfy the demands of history and science’ (Sharpe 1986: 26).

Searching for the roots

Scholars have identified virtually every major epoch of Western history as the ‘real’ origin of the modern field. In a recent book the Swiss historian of ancient religions, Philippe Borgeaud located the roots of the comparative study of religion in antiquity (Borgeaud 2004). He also argued that the modern history of religions required an act of liberation from religion that resulted from adopting an outsider’s perspective (Borgeaud 2004: 207).

In a review of Borgeaud’s book the Israeli Jewish scholar, Guy Stroumsa (2006: 259), claims that contacts between Christians, Muslims, and Jews have contributed to ‘the genesis of our modern categories for understanding religion’. Jonathan Z. Smith (2004: 364) attempts to re-describe ‘our field . . . as a child of the Renaissance’, given that the practice of the history of religions ‘is, by and large, a philological endeavor, chiefly concerned with editing, translating and interpreting texts’.

Together with the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann, Stroumsa (2001: 89) had earlier identified the seventeenth century as laying the foundations for a critical, impartial study of religion. Nevertheless, the study of religion practiced by learned scholars such as John Selden and Samuel Bochart was confessional, often polemical, almost always religiously and apologetically motivated, and deeply immersed in religious worldviews and frames of reference.

The Enlightenment is a more traditional candidate. In his Haskell Lectures the German historian of religions Kurt Rudolph summarily calls the history of religions ‘a child of the Enlightenment’ (cf. Hutter 2003: 3), citing that era’s ‘scientific curiosity and religious tolerance’ (Rudolph 1985: 23). J. Samuel Preus credits David Hume’s *Natural History of Religion* (1757) with the ‘paradigm-

shift from a religious to a naturalistic framework for the study of religion' (Preus 1996: 207; cf. Segal 1994).

Roughly a century, however, separates Hume's *Natural History* from the academic institutionalization of the study of religion. This observation led the German scholar of religion, Hans Kippenberg, to challenge Rudolph's thesis and point to the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment as the birth-era of the study of religion (Kippenberg 1991: 28–31). He credits Friedrich Schleiermacher's speeches *On Religion* (1799) with the decisive change.

Obviously, a substantial gap of three quarters of a century separates Schleiermacher's speeches from the institutionalization of the study of religion. Hence, other relevant developments and stimuli need to be taken into account. These include a further influx of relevant materials inviting scholarly attention and intellectual domestication; political, religious, and cultural developments, such as the increasing separation of state and religion; industrialization and urbanization; missionary activities and colonialism; groundbreaking achievements within the humanities such as the translation of hitherto unintelligible writings, the decipherment of hitherto undecipherable documents, the discovery of the affiliation of families of languages, the archeological and geological unraveling of a vast territory of prehistory beyond the reach of the biblical frame of reference, the rise of a historical-critical approach to the Bible and scripture in general, the advancement of professional historiography, and last but not least the formation of the theory of evolution (cf. Kippenberg 1997: 44–59). To various degrees and at different times these factors were relevant in different countries of Western Europe.

'Religion': a foundational concept

The most obvious, crucial, and lasting impact of Western Europe on the study of religion, however, is the genesis of the very concept 'religion'. Recent decades have witnessed the emergence of a vast body of scholarly literature in Western Europe as elsewhere, most of it written by authors who ignored each other, on the history and implications of 'religion' as a clear and distinct if not altogether autonomous and universal domain of human reality.

The Italian historian of religion Dario Sabbatucci (1923–2002) emphasized that there were no objective criteria for classifying facts as 'religious' in non-Western cultures, as the category of religion was valid and functional only in the Western cultural environment (1988: 46). He also argued that the study of religion led to the dissolution of the religious object (Sabbatucci 1988: 55, 57).

Some years later, and without reference to Sabbatucci, the British-American anthropologist Talal Asad challenged the ways in which dominant theoretical understandings of the category of religion imply its conceptual division 'from the domain of power' (Asad 1993: 29). Without any apparent reference to Asad,

the French anthropologist Daniel Dubuisson argued that the category of religion as referring to a separate domain is a Western construct that has helped shape Western systems of values and representation. He suggested replacing 'religion' with the notion 'cosmographic formations' (Dubuisson 1998: 276).

Neither Asad nor Dubuisson seemed to be aware of the large-scale research project of the German Catholic theologian, Ernst Feil. Feil's (1986, 1997, 2001) detailed reconstruction of the Western history of the concept from early Christianity to the Enlightenment further evidences the important epistemological transformation that occurred in the formation of modernity.

From a postmodern background, Timothy Fitzgerald (2000) has extended the critique of the intercultural usefulness and validity of the category 'religion', especially when applied to India and Japan. In doing so, he explicitly challenged the very basis of religious studies as an academic discipline. Still, one looks in vain for a discussion of the studies mentioned above in Fitzgerald's book.

Although Western European scholars now generally recognize the Eurocentric bias of 'religion', few, if any, seem prepared actually to give it up. Several scholars, however, mainly from Britain, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Denmark, and Italy, are involved in a lively debate on the concept (e.g. Bianchi [ed.] 1994; Platvoet and Molendijk [eds] 1999; Feil [ed.] 2000). Hans-Michael Haussig has published a substantial comparative study on (emic) concepts of religion in Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam (Haussig 1999).

The sacred and the holy

Some founders of the study of religion focused on the concept of 'the sacred', usually in contrast to 'the profane'. In 1906, Henri Hubert (1872–1927) and Marcel Mauss (1872–1950) pointed to the complex nature of the sacred as 'the central phenomenon among all the religious phenomena' (Mauss 1968: 17). The same category also appears in Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), where religion is defined as 'a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, i.e., things set apart and forbidden' (Durkheim 1960: 65). These French scholars had been inspired by Scottish Professor of Arabic William Robertson Smith's *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (1889). While Smith had used the adjective 'sacred' to qualify acts, beliefs, institutions, species, tradition, usages, and so on, he had also put forward the general claim that '[t]he distinction between what is *holy* and what is *common* is one of the most important things in ancient religion' (Smith 1894: 140).

One year after Durkheim's *Elementary Forms*, the Paris-educated Swedish religious historian and theologian, Nathan Söderblom (1866–1931), at that time teaching in Leipzig, asserted, 'Holiness is the great word in religion; it is even more essential than the notion of God'. Whereas he explicitly rejected

Durkheim's notion of the 'sacred', he approvingly referred to Schleiermacher's *On Religion*, which the German theologian Rudolf Otto had re-edited in 1899 (Söderblom 1913: 731–32). Otto himself, in his bestseller *The Idea of the Holy* (1917), an 'almost unclassifiable', 'introverted, fragmentary' text (Raphael 1997: 3, 5), argued that the holy 'is a category of interpretation and valuation peculiar to the sphere of religion' (Otto 1958: 5). In order to get at 'the meaning of "holy" above and beyond the meaning of goodness' (Otto 1958: 6), he coined the term 'numinous' for a specific 'state of mind' which is 'perfectly *sui generis* and irreducible to any other', one that can only be invoked, not taught (Otto 1958: 7). As a result, religious experience became the basic premise and privileged data for the study of religion (Raphael 1997; Alles 2005).

Throughout much of the twentieth century 'the sacred' and 'the holy' remained corner-stones of the vocabulary of religious studies (Colpe [ed.] 1977). Major theoreticians included Roger Caillois (1913–1978), Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), and Julien Ries, who continued the kind of inquiry initiated by Eliade but gave it a historical-comparative turn (Ries 1978–1986, 1985, both accounts culminating in Christianity).

Most scholars nowadays reject the notions of the holy and the sacred as key concepts in the study of religion. Nevertheless, one finds some attempts to rethink them (Colpe 1990; Anttonen 1996; Gantke 1998).

The emergence and institutionalization of the study of religion: the 1870s to the 1990s

By the first half of the nineteenth century, at the latest, religion had become the subject of a wide range of scholarly enterprises in Britain, France, Germany, and some neighboring countries. The increasing influx of empirical data necessitated efforts to classify, categorize, critique, and interpret the 'raw data'. This development is part and parcel of the general process described as the 'scientification' of learning. In the form of methodical and partly mechanical empirical research, scholarship turned into a dynamic and open process focusing on questions rather than on answers (Schnädelbach 1983: 88–117). This also entailed professionalization, specialization, diversification, and the formation of a canon of academic scientific disciplines operating with a specific set of legitimate methods (Schnädelbach 1983: 96–97).

Although this chapter focuses on the study of religion as a specialized, 'compartmentalized', and 'departmentalized' academic subject, the scientific study of religion has also been advanced in a variety of other humanistic and social sciences that were gaining recognition in the nineteenth century, such as theology, philosophy, diverse branches of philology, classical studies,

Oriental and Islamic studies, ethnology, sociology, and psychology. Many scholars from these disciplines made a far more lasting impact on the study of religion than those holding chairs in comparative religion or the history of religions.

Ideally, the history of the study of religion should address this broader field, as two scholars have independently attempted to do for two periods in two separate countries: Michel Despland (1999) for the July Monarchy (1830–1848) in France and Volkhard Krech (2002) for the study of religions in Germany from 1871 to 1933. As Philippe Borgeaud (1999: 75) has pointed out, the establishment of the field in different countries is to a large extent the result of national, or even local, developments.

Dimensions and places of emerging institutionalization

The emerging institutionalization of a separate academic subject involves the establishment of professorships or departments, professional associations, museums, lectures, conferences, reference works, textbooks, introductory books, collections of primary source materials, bibliographies, and journals. Only some of these aspects can be dealt with here.

The first professorships were established in Geneva (1873) (Borgeaud 2005, 2006), Leiden and Amsterdam (1877), and Paris, at the Collège de France (1880) and the newly created Fifth Section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE, 1886). The Fifth Section started with ten chairs, half of them devoted to the study of Christianity and one each to the religions of India, Egypt, Greece/Rome, the Far East, and the Western Semites. In 1888 a chair for the religions of ‘non-civilized peoples’ was added. In 1910 the number of chairs increased to sixteen, in 1940 to nineteen, and in 1960 to twenty-nine (H. Puisseux in Baubérot *et al.* [eds] 1987). Today the Fifth Section of the EPHE remains the largest single academic institution for the study of religion in Europe, with some fifteen research centers and groups and some sixty teaching positions, not all permanent.

Great Britain produced high-caliber advocates of the new science, but it lagged somewhat behind in the creation of chairs and departments. The first chair was only established at Manchester in 1904. But the great public lecture series established by the Hibbert trustees and Lord Gifford from 1878/1888 onwards created unparalleled public forums for the emerging science.

By the turn of the century histories of the study of religion had already begun to appear (Hardy 1901, Jordan 1905, Réville 1909). The most comprehensive survey was the first volume (1922) of *L'étude comparée des religions* by Henry Pinard de la Boullaye (1874–1958), an extensive, 515-page survey of the history of the study of religion in the West from antiquity to the recent past.

Early reference works and textbooks

Most nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reference works were theological in orientation, with some openness to the history of religions. The *Encyclopédie des sciences religieuses* (Lichtenberger 1877–1882; cf. Reymond 1977), a Protestant work which explicitly aimed at going beyond the theological canon of knowledge, is now almost forgotten. But the benchmark-setting *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by the Scottish Free Church Minister James Hastings (1852–1922), was in use throughout the twentieth century. Another important reference work was the German *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* in five volumes, first published from 1909 to 1913 and, unlike Hastings, updated three times (1998–2006).

The Dutch ‘founding fathers’, Cornelis Petrus Tiele (1830–1902) and Pierre-Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye (1848–1920), produced several influential textbooks. The only journal from the early period that has been published continuously up to the present is the *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions* (founded 1880). A Catholic imitation, the *Revue des Religions*, was published 1889–1896 (Cabanel 1994: 69–70). In Germany, the *Zeitschrift für Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft* appeared 1886–1939, the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 1898–1941/42, and the *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 1911–1937. In 1925 Raffaele Pettazzoni (1883–1959) founded *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*, two years after he obtained the new chair in Rome (Carozzi 1979; Piccaluga 1979).

Subsequent institutionalization throughout Europe

Aside from Sharpe (1986: 119–143), the literature on the institutional development of religious studies focuses on single countries (Denmark: Tybjerg 2000; England: Cunningham 1990; Byrne 1998; France: Pulman 1985; Cabanel 1994; Baubérot *et al.* [ed.] 1987, Baubérot 2002; Norway: Ruud 1998; Scotland: Walls 1990; Cox and Sutcliffe 2006; Wales: Williams 1990) or even single departments (Rudolph 1962, 1992: 323–380; Sharpe 1980; Borgeaud 2005, 2006). In the Netherlands the history of the field has in recent years developed into a fruitful branch of scholarship in its own right (Molendijk 2005, Platvoet 2002, Bosch 2002). Aside from van den Bosch (2002), serious biographic research is otherwise rare, the main exceptions being Sharpe (1990) on Söderblom and Gandini (e.g. 2005) on Pettazzoni.

While the study of religion was already established in much of Western Europe by the 1930s, in some countries the process has continued into the present. The first professor at Åbo Akademi, Finland’s Swedish university in Åbo/Turku, was appointed only in 1960 (Anttonen n.d.; Helve 2004), a position held successively by the Swedes Helmer Ringgren and Sven S. Hartman (1917–1988) and the Latvian Haralds Biezais (1909–1995). At the Finnish university in Turku a chair was established in 1963, first held by Lauri Honko

(1932–2002) (Pentikäinen 2005). His disciple Juha Pentikäinen became the first professor of comparative religion at the University of Helsinki in 1970. In 2000, a second chair was created in the Faculty of Arts. Among the latest newcomers to the Western European scene is Spain, where the study of religion has only developed since 1992, in the context of a political transition from dictatorship to democratic constitutional monarchy (1975–1978). It is now taught at several universities (Diez de Velasco 1995; Wiegers 2002).

Fascism and National Socialism

The impact of various fascist ideologies and National Socialism on the study of religion has in recent years attracted scholarly attention. Fresh original research based on primary archival sources undertaken by some American (e.g. Alles 2002) and younger German scholars (e.g. Heinrich 2002; Junginger 1999, in press) has unveiled complex relationships. When assessing the situation, one has to take into account several factors, including different generations of scholars; ideological premises shared by people belonging to entirely different political camps; differences and overlappings between anti-Semitism, nationalism, and National Socialism/Fascism; various strategies of adaptation, assimilation, or distancing and alienation; different forms of commitment; and political, institutional, administrative, religious, and personal dimensions.

In Italy the establishment of Pettazzoni's chair at the University of Rome (1923) followed closely the establishment of Mussolini's rule (1922). While Pettazzoni displayed a certain degree of commitment to the apparatus of the Fascist regime (Stausberg forthcoming), his approach to the study of religion was hardly overwhelmed by the non-rational, irrational, or antirational tendencies common in the study of the religion at that time, especially in Germany.

Carl Clemen (1865–1940) at Bonn was a scholar whose philological and source-critical approach led him to challenge the pseudo-scientific character of the Germanic ideology propagated by the Nazis (Heinrich 2002: 267–268). From early on the Faculty of Theology at Leipzig was disturbed by the German-Christian sympathies of the regional church in Saxony. Walter Baetke (1884–1974), a specialist in German religion committed to the Confessing Church, courageously opposed neo-pagan reconstructions by unmasking the empirical, methodological, and theoretical flaws of Germanizing pseudo-scholarship (Heinrich 2002: 272–287; Vollmer 2001; cf. Rudolph and Heinrich 2001).

Baetke's appointment was opposed by the Tübingen Indologist and religious historian Jakob Hauer (1882–1963), who (rightly) regarded this appointment as part of an ecclesiastical plot against the Third Reich (Heinrich 2002: 274). Hauer himself was actively involved in propagating the German Faith movement as the new religion of the state. He redesigned the study of religion into a *völkisch* subject and was dismissed after the war (Junginger 1999).

Gustav Mensching (1901–1978), who joined the Nazi Party as early as 1934, was appointed as Clemen's successor in Bonn, despite resistance among the Faculty. He had assimilated the study of religion to Nazi ideological premises (Heinrich 2002: 329–337). After the war, he carefully removed Nazi undertones from new editions of his writings (Gantke, Hoheisel, and Schneemelcher [eds] 2003).

Post-World War II developments

The first two international conferences following World War II were clearly influenced by the so-called Uppsala school in the history of religions; the themes were 'The Mythical-Ritual Pattern in Civilization' (Amsterdam 1950) and 'Sacred Kingship' (Rome 1955). Despite the political overtones of both themes, at neither conference was there any public reflection on past events. Several scholars who had been politically involved attended the Rome conference, and even Hauer could present a paper at the Marburg conference in 1960 (Junginger 2000).

Surprisingly, much remained unchanged in the academic scene of post-war Western Germany. One notable exception was the Free University in Berlin, founded in 1948. Upon the initiative of Paul Tillich (1886–1965), a chair and department for the study of religion was established there, apparently because the pseudo-religious elements of National Socialism had convinced Tillich of the need for a critical, non-confessional study of religion (Karl-Heinz Kohl, personal communication, 2006).

Another new development centered on Hans-Joachim Schoeps (1909–1980), 'one of twentieth-century Germany's most provocative and fruitful scholars' (Lease 1997: 655). Schoeps had fled to Sweden to escape Nazism. After his return, he was appointed in 1950, as an act of reparation, to an *ad personam* chair in 'religious and intellectual history' at the University of Erlangen. Meanwhile, the German occupation and the Vichy regime seems to have had a lasting impact in France. French sociologist of religion and scholar of *laïcité* Jean Baubérot argues that these historical experiences destroyed the walls that had hitherto separated the 'two Frances', Catholic and laic (Baubérot 2002: 60–61), creating a new atmosphere for a renewed study of religion. As a result, the Fifth Section of the EPHE expanded greatly.

Scholarly associations and what's in a name

It was only after World War II that the study of religion took shape in the form of an international as well as national professional associations. In 1947, the Nederlands genootschap voor godsdienstwetenschap (Dutch Association for the Study of Religion) was formed on the initiative of Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890–1950) in the run-up to the international conference in Amsterdam in

1950. There, the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) was established, with van der Leeuw as its first president, followed by Pettazzoni after van der Leeuw's untimely death in the same year. The conference led to the founding of several affiliated national organizations: the Deutsche Vereinigung für Religionsgeschichte (founded 1950), the Società Italiana di Storia delle Religioni (1951), and the British Association for the History of Religions (1954). Prior to World War II only France already had a national association, the Société Ernest-Renan: Société Française d'Histoire des Religions, founded in 1919. Its activities were disrupted by the war and resumed in 1952.

All of these associations have the word 'history' in their names. There was a broad consensus that an historical approach to religion was what made the field into a discipline, thereby distinguishing it from other scholarly enterprises studying religion. This consensus weakened in subsequent decades. In the early 1990s an attempt to replace 'history' with 'study' in the name of the international association was rejected. The French and Italian associations have also retained their original names, but in 1989 and 2005, respectively, the British and German associations replaced 'history' with 'study' or 'science', a trend followed by most of the younger associations, including the Swiss, Austrian, and Greek associations (founded 1977, 1996, and 2003, respectively).

The name changes reflect a broader self-understanding on the part of scholars in the field, in particular openness to the social sciences and contemporary issues (cf. Whaling [ed.] 1985, vol. 2.) Today, competency in history and a solid training in dead or non-European languages are no longer generally assumed to be key elements in the formation and competency of scholars. Accordingly, the historical-philological method, which was predominant earlier, is today almost marginalized. Instead, there is an increasing tendency to focus on contemporary religions and religiosities, often of the alternate variety, and on migrant or diaspora groups. It is no exaggeration to say that the study of contemporary Hinduism(s) or Islam(s) in Europe almost surpasses the study of these religions in former periods and in their places of origin. Such developments mirror changing realities in Western Europe.

The decline of institutionalized Christendom and a field on the rise

The 1960s and 1970s were a watershed both for the European religious landscape and the non-confessional study of religion. For example, 'from 1956 all indices of religiosity in Britain start to decline, and from 1963 most enter free fall' (Brown 2001: 188). Similar observations can be made for most European countries, with slightly varying chronologies.

The decline of institutionalized Christendom was not, however, accompanied by a decline in the non-confessional study of religion. Quite to the contrary. In Italy, for instance, '[t]he history of religions as a discipline fully

entered into the academic studies of Italian Universities in the 1960s' (Terrin 1998: 374). For the Netherlands Platvoet points out that the change from orthodox-exclusive to liberal-inclusive Christian theology paved the way for the introduction of a non-confessional, non-apologetic study of religion in several theological institutes during the 1960s (Platvoet 2002: 130). At the beginning of the 1970s there occurred 'a silent and quiet transformation of faculties of theology into faculties for the science of religions' (Wiegers [ed.] 2002: 25). In France a chair of history of religions and religious anthropology was established in 1970 at the Sorbonne's Faculty of Arts in order to bridge the different areas of specialization; subsequently, a department was created (Meslin 2002: 43). At English universities, '[i]n the mid-1950s there were no more than sixteen people teaching religions other than Christianity' (Cunningham 1990: 21). Nowadays, there are at least as many relevant departments, and several departments of theology or divinity have added 'religious studies' to their names (Cunningham 1990: 24). Similar expansions can be noted throughout Europe (cf. Jensen 2002: 183–184).

Religious, academic, and ideological changes aside, the main stimulus for the unprecedented success of religious studies was the Europe-wide transition from elite to mass universities and the corresponding expansion of the university system. This has led to the dramatic increase in the number of students and the establishment of several new chairs or even departments at new universities. In Britain, this process resulted in the introduction of two prominent pioneering departments—at the new University of Lancaster (1967) and the Open University (1971). In Scotland, pioneering efforts to establish Religious Studies outside Schools of Divinity were undertaken during the 1970s and 1980s, but they were reversed by dramatic cuts in university funding during the mid 1980s (Cox and Sutcliffe 2006). In Sweden, the government policy in the 1990s of creating regional colleges, some of which were later granted university status, led to an increase in departments at new colleges and universities (Falun, Gävle, Södertörn University College/Stockholm), while traditional departments suffer from inadequate funding. In Norway, one department (Bergen) was created in the 1960s and two (Tromsø and Trondheim) in the late 1990s.

Changing constituencies

Earlier historians of religion operated in a largely Christian environment and faced opposition from religious quarters. Nowadays, Western European scholars of religion move in public spaces largely devoid of Christian concerns, and students in the field are mostly non-committed to Christianity or even unchurched. Teachers have to address an audience of religious outsiders and analphabets for whom religious experiences, ritual competency, knowledge of dogmas, myths and narratives, and other forms of fluency in religious language-games can no longer be taken for granted. Many departments also attract a

good number of spiritual seekers. Since the late 1980s these factors, together with a growing awareness of the importance of religion for world affairs, have led at many places to a tremendous increase in the number of students.

Not all universities have increased the number of staff in response. In Germany, Switzerland and Austria departments of religious studies rarely have more than one or two full-time positions, resulting in excessive work-loads. At several German universities students in religious studies now outnumber students in theology; theologians on the faculty, however, often outnumber scholars of religion by more than 10 to 1. The allocation of resources for the non-confessional study of religion often reflects theology's struggle for academic survival (Platvoet 1998: 344–345). In Sweden, the financial crisis of Faculties of Theology at Uppsala and Lund resulted in a decrease in professorships in the general study of religion, even though that study had attracted the majority of students to these Faculties. In Germany some theologians have tried to reinvent theology as science of religion. Similar developments have occurred in Great Britain (Cox and Sutcliffe 2006: 25). At many places on the continent where theology is established at state universities the relationship between theology and *Religionswissenschaft* is a standard topic in identificatory scholarly literature (e.g. Edsman 1974; Colpe 1980; Antes 1996; Jensen, Widmann, and Geertz [eds] 1996; Hjelde 1998; Löhr [ed.] 2000; Figl 2003: 51–54; Kippenberg 2003; Cox 2006: 215–218).

At the IAHR conference in Marburg in 1960 the study of religion seems to have emphatically separated itself from religious and theological agendas. In reaction to a keynote lecture by then IAHR general secretary Claas Jouco Bleeker (1960), R. J. Zwi Werblowsky drafted a manifesto defining five '*basic minimum presuppositions* for the pursuit of our studies' (Schimmel 1960: 235). The second begins: '*Religionswissenschaft* understands itself as a branch of the Humanities. It is an anthropological discipline, studying the religious phenomenon as a creation, feature and aspect of human culture' (Schimmel 1960: 236). Although the statement was not included in the official congress report, a number of prominent scholars in the field, including Bianchi, Brandon, Brelich, Eliade, Lanternari, and Simon, allowed their names to be associated with 'the general tenor' of the statement (Schimmel 1960: 235).

Changing religious background of the scholars

Up until the 1970s and 1980s the majority of scholars of religion, even in its non-confessional variety, were committed Christians, even though they sometimes stood outside the religious mainstream. Prominent examples include Otto's liberal mystic religiosity and his *Religiöser Menschheitsbund* (*Religious League of Humanity*) (Alles 1991, Obergethmann 1998) and the ecumenical and religious activities of Friedrich Heiler (1892–1967) (Waardenburg 1992). James Cox has recently reminded us of the African, missionary, and colonial

roots of some of the main protagonists of the post-World War II study of religion in Britain (Cox 2006: 141–159). The Dutch scholar, Jan G. Platvoet, started his career as a Catholic missionary in Ghana (Platvoet 1982: 20–23). According to the testimony of his son, Michael Pye, president of the IAHR 1995–2000, became interested in the religions of Japan as he ran Bible classes while working as an English teacher in Tokyo during the early 1960s. Both his predecessor and successor as president of the IAHR, the Italian Ugo Bianchi and the German Peter Antes, came from Roman-Catholic backgrounds.

Such Christian commitment is no longer the rule. In this respect, Western European scholars of religion are not much different from the rest of the population. It may be anecdotal, but I know of very few colleagues born since the 1960s with a clearly recognizable or even public Christian profile. Some colleagues are known to be pagans, witches, shamans, esotericists, or atheists. Others are religiously indifferent or ‘unmusical’; their intellectual curiosity is neither nourished nor paralleled by a personal religious commitment or quest.

Developments in scholarship

Since the non-confessional study of religion as approached in this volume is to a large extent a Western European creation, Western European scholars have an important place in its history. For more extensive information, see Michaels (ed.) (1997), Capps (1995), and Pals (2006).

Post-World War II scholarly journals and reference works

Among the international journals started after World War II the following are to a large extent specifically European: *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* (1948–), *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* (restarted in 1950–), *Temenos: Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* (1965–), and the *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* (1999–). Several journals cater to national readerships or are promoted by national associations. These include the *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* (1980–1999 [from 2000 *Culture and Religion*]), the Danish *Religionsvidenskabeligt tidsskrift* (1982–), the Danish/Norwegian co-production *CHAOS* (1982–), the Swedish *Svensk religionshistorisk årsskrift* (1985–), the German *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* (1993–), and the Spanish ‘*Ilú* (1995–) and *Bandue* (2007–), all published predominantly if not exclusively in the respective national languages (cf. Benavides 2005).

While there is no single specific European reference work in the study of religion, such works have been published at the national level, mostly in the form of one-volume comprehensive ‘dictionaries of religion’. An important example is the Italian (6 vols, 1970–1976). The largest European reference works to date are *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (4th edition, 8 vols,

1998–2005) and the *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (36 vols, 1977–2004). Both, however, are predominantly theological in focus.

Textbooks and historical survey works

The most well-known examples of textbooks along the lines established by Tiele and Chantepie come from two scholars who migrated to the US, Mircea Eliade (1976–1983) and Ninian Smart (1989). Early in her career, Annemarie Schimmel (1951) published a very brief survey. Two well-known Swedish historians of religion, Helmer Ringgren and Åke V. Ström (1909–1994), jointly wrote a survey that ran to nine editions (1957 to 1993). In earlier decades, several other European scholars also published survey works in various languages, mostly for teaching purposes.

In addition to textbooks and surveys produced single-handedly, several collective works have been published, often running into several volumes and through several editions. In Denmark, two early leading Danish historians of religion, Edward Lehmann (1862–1930) and Vilhelm Grønbech (1873–1948), published the first edition of the *Illustreret religionshistorie* (1924). In 1948 Grønbech published a second edition jointly with the Arabist Johannes Pedersen. Twenty years later the Iranologist Jes P. Asmussen and the Assyriologist Jørgen Lassøe published a new version of the work, now in three heavy volumes. In 1971, Carsten Colpe published a slightly revised German version of the third edition under the title *Handbuch der Religionsgeschichte*. Significantly, none of the versions included a chapter on Christianity. While Protestants tended to avoid Christianity, Catholics tended to engage in apologetics. For example, one aim of the three-volume work *Christus und die Religionen der Erde: Handbuch der Religionswissenschaft* (1951) edited by the Orientalist, theologian, and later archbishop Franz König (1905–2004) is to illustrate the unique position of Christianity in the history of religions.

Another handbook, *Historia Religionum* (2 vols, 1969, 1971), was published by the then president and general secretary of the IAHR, Geo Widengren (1907–1996) and Bleeker (1898–1983). The editors attempted to introduce a standard pattern for presenting the single religions in order to facilitate comparability among the different religions, but that attempt clearly failed. The most comprehensive of these surveys is the French *Histoire des religions* (Puech [ed.] 1970–1976). The three volumes cover regional, doctrinal, and organizational varieties and dissonances within an extremely broad spectrum of religious history.

Italy also has a rich tradition of surveys, starting with a work in two massive volumes (1934, 1936) by the Jesuit church historian Pietro Tacchi Venturi (1861–1956). Giuseppe Castellani assumed editorship with the three-volume fifth edition (1962), followed by the sixth edition (1970–1971) in five bulky volumes. In the mid 1990s Giovanni Filoramo edited a successor to this series:

Storia delle religioni (1994–1997), five large volumes, containing chapters written mostly by Italian scholars. In 1998 Filoramo, together with Marcello Massenzio, Massimo Raveri, and Paolo Scarpi, edited a one-volume handbook of religious history. He has also recently published a 400-page overview of the study of religion (Filoramo 2004), discussing the history of the discipline, questions of definition and comparison, social scientific approaches, issues of typology, functions of religion, and religious violence and politics.

Kohlhammer in Germany has published a substantial book series, *Die Religionen der Menschheit* (34 vols to date, 1960–). Most authors are German, but the editors were able to recruit some outstanding specialists from other European countries.

The great age of the phenomenological treatises

In the two decades after World War II many imposing phenomenological handbooks were published, starting with Mircea Eliade (1949) and including books by Gerardus van der Leeuw (1956), Gustav Mensching (1959), and Friedrich Heiler (1961). In 1960, Heiler's younger colleague in Marburg, Kurt Goldammer (1916–1997), published *Formenwelt des Religiösen*, in which he attempted to combine the phenomenological heritage with Joachim Wach's program for a 'systematic study of religion'.

In the Netherlands Bleeker continued the phenomenological tradition in a series of articles, many assembled in Bleeker (1975). His longtime associate, the Swedish scholar Geo Widengren (cf. Ciurtin 2005), also published a massive handbook (1969) on the phenomenology of religion. In this book Widengren attempted to ground phenomenology better with respect to the historical contexts of the phenomena described. The German Orientalist Annemarie Schimmel (1922–2003), who served as IAHR president from 1980 to 1990, partly positioned herself in the phenomenological tradition in her work on Islam (cf. esp. Schimmel 1994).

Leading figures

Some of the towering figures of the post-war period had pupils who filled the chairs created in the course of the field's expansion. Appointments at Swedish universities up to the present can be read as the scholarly legacy of Widengren, who taught in Uppsala for more than three decades (1940–1972). Even in Uppsala, however, the so-called Uppsala School was not unopposed. Carl-Martin Edsman, from 1948 associate professor (from 1959 full professor) of the history of religions in the Faculty of Philosophy, increasingly dissociated himself from Widengren and the assumptions underlying the Uppsala School (Edsman 2001). While the Uppsala School centered on myth-ritual complexes in the Ancient Near East, Edsman dealt with Hellenism, Christianity, and the

religious practices and traditions of the Lapps and the Finns—just a portion of his wide-ranging work. But Edsman founded no school, and he defended theology and religion against a dominant positivism (e.g. Edsman 1974).

In Stockholm anthropological approaches dominated. For almost three decades, from 1958 to 1986, the Stockholm department was headed by Åke Hultkrantz (1920–2006), a renowned scholar of North American Indians and circumpolar religion, who also attempted to establish the field of the ecology of religion (1966, 1987), which has now taken off on an international scale (Tucker and Grim 2005). Hultkrantz (1973) is the only book on methodological approaches in the study of religion by a single author in Europe since Pinard de la Boullaye (1925).

After Raffaele Pettazzoni obtained the newly created chair in Rome (1923), he dominated the non-confessional study of religion in Italy. His main works discussed, in comparative perspective, topics such as concepts of God (1922), the confession of sins (1929–1936), and divine omniscience (1955). He powerfully emphasized the historical formation and genesis of religious phenomena (cf. Pettazzoni 1954).

Pettazzoni himself did not live to see the lasting institutional expansion of the discipline he devoted his life to, but his former pupils were appointed to all the relevant chairs. The so-called School of Rome, above all Angelo Brelich (1913–1977), reinforced Pettazzoni's reservations about the phenomenological approach. Brelich emphasized the plurality of religions and their inseparability from their surrounding cultures. Pettazzoni, Brelich, and Ernesto De Martino (1908–1965) (cf. Angelini 2005), a scholar of magic and South Italian popular religion, had pronounced anti-clerical attitudes and explicit left-wing, even communist, political sympathies, otherwise quite unusual among European scholars of religion. Another member of the School of Rome, the ethnologist Vittorio Lanternari, became known internationally for his (1960) study *The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults*. Studies on the contemporary religious history of Southern Italy and popular religion have also been continued by Alfonso Di Nola (1926–1997) and folklorists as well as sociologists of religion (Cipriani and Mansi 1990; Prandi 2002).

Unlike Pettazzoni and most of his school, Ugo Bianchi was firmly rooted in Catholicism. Somewhat to Pettazzoni's distress, Bianchi developed a methodologically controlled historical typology that aimed at idiographic analysis. Unlike his disciples, such as Sabbatucci, Bianchi always attached great importance to a high level of philological, historiographical, and bibliographical accuracy (Casadio 2002, 2005). According to his student Giovanni Casadio (2005: 864), 'the problem of destiny, evil, salvation—in other words, the problem of humanity's relationship with God, or theodicy' was the main concern of Bianchi's work in the history of religions.

In the UK, Ninian Smart (1927–2001) emerged in the 1960s as the towering figure, especially because he chaired the large Department of Religious Studies

at Lancaster, created in 1967 as the first of its kind in Britain. A highly prolific author, Smart represents a type of scholarship that has no counterpart on the continent. He was a combination of philosopher, public intellectual, educator, popularizer, media consultant, global and comparative theologian, and advocate of the dialogue of religions rather than a scholar of religion in the continental sense. This combination may mirror Smart's own opposition to 'the ghettoization of religious studies' (King 2005: 8444) and his skepticism of "'purists" who, he thought, failed to see the full nature of the object of their studies' (Wiebe 2001: 381). His version of the study of religions was probably more meta-confessional than non-confessional, un-dogmatic but not a-religious. Still, he powerfully proclaimed the principle of methodological agnosticism for the scientific study of religion (Smart 1973). Highly influential in the UK and the US, he has made no real impact on the study of religion on the continent.

Religious education

Among his many concerns, Smart campaigned in the 1960s and early 1970s, largely successfully, for a non-dogmatic type of religious education, aimed at the 'nature of religion' and committed to religious plurality as well as to the neutrality of the state. 'Apart from its influence in schools, [Smart's vision] provided the intellectual foundation for the establishment of departments of religious studies rather than theology in British universities' (Barnes 2001: 317–318; cf. 2000).

Indeed, in Europe generally the non-confessional study of religions flourishes institutionally in countries where religious education is a subject taught in various forms and formats at public schools and where the subject directly contributes to the training of teachers. This is one of the main reasons why the non-confessional study of religion blossomed in the Scandinavian countries and why its institutional penetration remains limited in countries where religion is not taught in public schools at all, such as France, or where the teachers are trained in confessional theology, as in Germany, Italy, and Spain. In France, a debate started in the 1990s about whether religious education should be introduced at public schools (Meslin 2002: 49–53; Boespflug *et al.* [eds] 1996). In some federal states in Germany attempts to introduce an alternative, non-confessional religious education have involved scholars of religion. Apart from Britain, however, religious education and questions of didactics and curriculum are more often than not assigned to practical theology.

The twilight of the phenomenology of religion

Smart was critical of what he considered crypto-theological versions of the phenomenology of religion, as exemplified by Eliade, but he subscribed to

phenomenology 'as the practice of empathy' (Smart 2000: 26). He also advanced a 'dynamic phenomenology', that is, 'a phenomenology without essences' as 'a moving grammar of the human spirit' (Smart 1994: 902). In other respects, however, the 1970s marked the twilight of the phenomenology of religion, the rejection of which has now become the standard prologue to contemporary attempts at self-understanding within the field. Unfortunately, many of these sweeping accusations show little knowledge of either the writings of the phenomenologists or the differences among them. Many an anti-essentialist 'contextualizing' critic of the phenomenology of religion provides an essentialist and de-contextualized reading of phenomenology.

Most scholars appointed to chairs between the late 1960s and the early 1980s did not begin an open campaign against phenomenology. They silently ignored it. Academic legitimacy was no longer achieved by drawing the larger picture but by methodological competence, mostly in philology, and attention to detail and context. A solid training in some branch of ancient or Oriental philology and some interest in religious source materials was, and to some extent still is, a better qualification for positions in the field than more 'superficial' knowledge of wider terrains of religious history and the ability to work comparatively.

This period saw the appearance of several attempts to review the state of the art. The Dutch scholar, Jan de Vries (1890–1964), who lost his position at Leiden because of his commitment to National Socialism, surveyed the main tendencies in the field in 1961. The early 1970s saw the publication of the first edition of Eric Sharpe's history as well as several volumes assembling and reviewing major approaches to the non-confessional study of religion (Waardenburg [ed.] 1973; Lanczkowski [ed.] 1974). Conferences devoted to methodology were held for the first time, at Rome (1969) and Turku (1973), resulting in important publications (Bianchi, Bleeker, and Bausani [eds] 1972; Honko [ed.] 1979). The Turku conference also illustrated the rising 'influence of the social sciences, particularly of cultural anthropology' (King 1984: 132).

Nowhere was the challenge to the phenomenological approach more explicit than in its traditional homeland, the Netherlands. Willem Hofstee (2000, 2001) argues that this was due in part to ideas of cultural relativism imported from American anthropology. Already in the late 1940s van der Leeuw's student, Fokke Sierksma (1917–1977), had 'revolted publicly . . . against the theological inspiration of the phenomenology of religion' (Platvoet 1998: 335). However, the eclipse of the approach is usually ascribed to van der Leeuw's successor in Groningen, Theo van Baaren (1912–1989). Van Baaren questioned the empirical validity of van der Leeuw's work and then set out to challenge its very epistemological foundations, demanding the elimination of all metaphysical presuppositions and a search for explanation by means of the historical and social empirical sciences (Platvoet 1998: 339–342). He received both support and inspiration from the Groningen Working Group for the Study

of Fundamental Problems and Methods of Science of Religion (Drijvers and van Baaren 1973; cf. King 1984: 125–144). Ever since ‘methodological agnosticism’ has been the standard framework for the non-confessional study of religion in the Netherlands (Platvoet 1998: 343, 2002: 134), as elsewhere (on ‘methodological atheism’, see Rudolph 1992: 90, Colpe 1980: 294, Borgeaud 1999: 72). The Utrecht anthropologist Jan van Baal (1909–1992) shared this anti-phenomenological twist and suggested a structuralist-inspired theory of religion ‘based on the view that religion is a system by which humans communicate with their universe’ (Hoftsee 2005: 724) and stressing the non-verifiability of religious ideas (Platvoet 2002: 133). Nevertheless, the program advanced by van Baaren and associates, such as Lammert Leertouwer, has not produced the sort of scholarly output one would have hoped.

Apart from tacit neglect or explicit rejection, reinforced by feminism, post-colonialism, and postmodernism, there have been some attempts to rehabilitate the phenomenology of religion. The most influential is that of Jacques Waardenburg, a student of Bleeker otherwise mainly known for his work on Islam (1969, 2002, 2003). He has tried to redesign phenomenology as the study of religious intentions (1972). However, it is not quite clear in what respect such a study is phenomenological, and in a later textbook Waardenburg (1986) refers to his project as ‘hermeneutical research’.

Some German scholars also propose hermeneutical approaches. The most radical is Wolfgang Gantke’s (1998) project of an ‘open’, non-reductive study of religion. Colpe also attempted to rethink the phenomenological heritage on the basis of a rereading of Edmund Husserl (Colpe 1988). Unfortunately, this essay is not easily accessible to non-initiates. In Italy, theologian and comparative religious historian Aldo Natale Terrin, a prolific writer with wide ranging interests, has tried to defend the epistemological and methodological legacy of the phenomenology of religion by emphasizing the *religious* point of departure in the study of religion (Terrin 1998).

The eclipse of the phenomenology of religion paved the way for the study of religion to enter the broader field of research in the humanities and social sciences. In the course of this development, however, that study has to a large extent lost sight of its comparative perspective and its general, cross-cultural agenda. If such topics are addressed at all, it is done by discussing methodological issues or editing multi-author volumes.

From structuralism to anthropology

After World War II structuralism gained prominence in France, spearheaded by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Georges Dumézil (1898–1986), two extremely prolific writers and brilliant storytellers. Both produced ambitious programs of comparative mythology (e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1964, 1966, 1968, 1971; Dumézil 1968, 1971, 1973) covering wide empirical ground: in the case of Dumézil

Indo-European philology and history, in the case of Lévi-Strauss the indigenous peoples of South and North America. Their grand narratives evoked enthusiastic admiration in some and stern opposition from others, in the case of Dumézil in part because of possible right-wing political sub-texts in his writing. Jean-Pierre Vernant (1914–2007) employed both Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss in his widely acclaimed work on Greek mythology and society (Vernant 1991). As a theoretical approach, however, very few scholars consider structuralism seriously today (but see Kunin 2003). Michel Meslin, who held the Sorbonne chair in the general study of religion, subscribed to neither phenomenology nor structuralism but to an ‘anthropological’ approach centering on the notion of religious experience (Meslin 1973, 1988).

Peter Antes has recently bemoaned the absence of comparative thematic studies in French scholarship (Antes 2004: 48). While this may hold true in general, there is a notable exception, the *Encyclopédie des religions* (Lenoir and Tardan-Masquellier [eds] 1997, 2000). A massive, 2,500-page work, the *Encyclopédie* is divided into two parts of almost equal length: the first volume, *Histoire*, presents a series of short essays on the religious traditions of the world, while the second, *Thèmes*, tackles ten major topics in a comparative manner through some 150 brief essays. The overwhelming majority of the authors are French—Italian scholars constitute the next largest group—and the bibliographies that conclude each section are almost exclusively francophone.

Beyond disciplinary boundaries

In Western Europe as elsewhere, there are no clear-cut boundaries between specialist areas and the general study of religion. Disciplinary boundaries are to some extent illusory. Scholars may have chairs in the science of religion but concentrate in their research and often in their teaching exclusively on a single religion, whereas scholars from neighboring fields may make far more relevant contributions to the general study of religion. Examples of the latter include the seminal work of the classicist Walter Burkert on a biologically and ethnologically informed theory of religion and ritual (Burkert 1996) and the contributions of the Egyptologist Jan Assmann to the study of cultural memory (1992, 2006). The Italian Jewish historian Carlo Ginzburg developed new ways of writing religious history, both with respect to micro-history in his famous early studies (1966, 1976) and with respect to larger morphological and comparative scenarios, as in his ambitious reconstruction of the origins of the early modern Witches’ Sabbath in ancient ecstasy-cults (1989).

Not all vacancies for chairs in comparative religion are filled with candidates trained in the subject. The extraordinary demand for competency in the field of Islam, for instance, easily lends itself to recruitment from Oriental Studies, and a background in Indian, Central Asian, Chinese, or Japanese studies often

qualifies candidates for positions in religious studies. Several notable historians of religions entered the field in this way, among them Ninian Smart, who studied languages and philosophy, Burkhard Gladigow, with a background in classical philology and law, and Fritz Stolz (1942–2001), a professor of Old Testament before receiving the chair in the history of religion in the theology faculty at Zürich.

Gladigow and Stolz share a preoccupation with visual religion and with improving the vocabulary—the meta-language—of the study of religion. Stolz coined some ingenious terms, such as ‘counter-world’ (*Gegenwelt*, processes and phenomena that construct comparable structures of imaginary worlds) and ‘processes of exchange’, which he suggested we use to replace ‘syncretism’ (Stolz 2004). Gladigow was instrumental in launching the *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* (5 vols, 1988–2001), to date the only dictionary within the field devoted to the terminological apparatus used to describe, classify, interpret, and explain religious phenomena.

Gender matters

Every sensitive reader will have noticed the almost complete absence of women from my account thus far. The major exceptions are the Islamicist Annemarie Schimmel, former president of the IAHR, and the anthropologist Mary Douglas. Other important women scholars have included the classicist Jane Harrison (1850–1928) (Beard 2000, Robinson 2001); Lady Ethel Drower (1879–1972), a key figure in the study of the Mandaeans; Mary Boyce (1920–2006), the leading scholarly authority on Zoroastrianism throughout the twentieth century; and Louise Bäckman, professor at Stockholm from 1986 to 1992, a Sami who devoted most of her career to the religious history of her people. A notable figure within religious studies recently has been Ursula King, a truly international scholar who studied in Germany, France, and England, then taught in the UK, India, and the US. From a purist point of view, a great part of her scholarly production belongs to the domain of theology (e.g. King 1996, 1997, 1998). Kim Knott, a student of King and Michael Pye, has written on methodological issues of gender in the study of religion (Knott 1995). Despite these figures, however, the study of religion in Western Europe has traditionally been androcentric.

The only department in Western Europe ever staffed entirely by women was the Department for the History of Religion at the University of Bergen, run in the late 1970s and early 1980s by Ragnhild Finnestad (1940–1999), Ingvild Gilhus, and Lisbeth Mikaelsson. Currently, however, men constitute the majority of the permanent staff. In most countries today at least some chairs are held by women, and some countries, not necessarily those with a reputation for being progressive, are approaching numerical balance or a preponderance of female scholars. Several women have held key positions in the European

Association for the Study of Religion, including the current president, Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, current vice-presidents, Halina Grzymala-Mosciszinska and Helena Helve, and the current general secretary, Kim Knott.

Scholars from Western Europe, especially France, have been instrumental in introducing questions of gender into the humanities, in particular H el ene Cixous, Catherine Cl ement, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Monique Wittig (see Poxon 2005; Joy, Poxon, and O'Grady [eds] 2003). None of these writers, however, is academically grounded in religious studies, and their work is rarely discussed by mainstream Western European historians of religion. In general, feminism has made less of an impact on religious studies in Western Europe than in the US. Queer theory and questions of masculine religion, too, have not yet found grounding in this region.

Emerging issues and perspectives

Western Europe is not a homogeneous academic landscape. Moreover, to a large extent its scholarly agendas are transcontinental. Many current issues and challenges are global, among them: the emergence of New Religious Movements, alternative religions and Pentecostalism/charismatic Christianity since the 1950s; the transcontinental spread of the New Age movement since the late 1970s (Hanegraaff 1996: 10–12); the continuous, multifarious, and ever changing involvement of religion in politics; and the invention of modern mass media including television and the Internet. Some theoretical paradigms are also transcontinental in scope, including feminism, postmodernism, and post-colonialism—although the latter has not been pursued to the extent that one might expect given European history. Cognitive approaches have not found much resonance outside of Denmark and Finland. Cultural studies, largely a British invention, have not had a great effect on the study of religion on the continent. In Germany, there is a growing interest in economic approaches (Gladigow 1995; *Zeitschrift f ur Religionswissenschaft* vol. 8, no. 1 [2000]) as well as in the aesthetics of religion (Cancik and Mohr 1988; Lanwerd 2002, 2003; Mohn 2004). Since the 1980s the geography of religion has been an emerging field of study in France, Germany, and Britain, but mostly outside departments of religious studies (Vincent, Dory, and Verdier [eds] 1995; Bertrand and Muller 1999; Rinschede 1999; Park 1994).

Sociologists of religion have studied the contemporary religious landscapes in various countries (Hervieu-L eger 1992; Davie 2000a, 2000b; Halman and Riis 2003; Friedli and Purdie 2004), and historians are increasingly interested in various aspects of religious history, including that of the contemporary world (e.g. Brown 2001; Lehmann 2004). Disciplines such as folklore studies, art history, musicology, and law also maintain an on-going interest in religion.

In the German-speaking area Burkhard Gladigow's (2005: 289–301) program, launched 1993–1995, for a religious history of Europe, aroused a great deal of interest, especially since it encompassed the entire spectrum of formal and informal (diffuse/invisible) systems of meaning–construction and interpretation. This approach creates links to debates in sociology, e.g. on 'invisible' or 'diffused' religion (Cipriani 1988), or on 'secular' forms of religiosity (Piette 1993), studies of the reception, appropriation and re-creation of 'other' religions in European history (Stausberg 1998), media representation, and migration and diasporas (e.g. Baumann 2003; Jacobsen and Kumar [eds] 2004; Vertovec 2004).

To some extent the study of European religious history intersects with the blossoming study of Western esotericism (von Stuckrad 2005). There are now three chairs (at EPHE, Amsterdam, and Exeter) in the area with related MA-programs, a sub-department at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Amsterdam, a Centre at Exeter, a scholarly journal (*Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*; see Hanegraaff 2001), a massive dictionary (Hanegraaff *et al.* [eds] 2005), and a professional association, the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (founded 2005). Together with Tim Jensen, Olav Hammer, known for his innovative approach to New Age epistemologies (Hammer 2001), has founded a Research Network on European History of Religions (NEUR), effectively combining the study of Western esotericism and the religious history of Europe.

Given the current emphasis on dense contextualization, very few scholars have dared to try their hand at a general or universal history of religions (exceptions: Stolz 2001; Nesti 2005; Diez de Velasco 2006; Antes 2006). While this reluctance is understandable, avoiding a broader or even a global perspective obstructs our view on issues of global importance and possibly relevant macro-perspectives (Krech 2006: 110–113). The history of religions, it seems, has failed to pay attention to recent discussions on universal history (e.g. Fuchs and Stuchtey [eds] 2002, 2003), which contributes to challenging various ethnocentrism. For obvious reasons, the project of reconsidering macro-historical processes will preferably be attempted by groups of scholars rather than lone individuals.

Since the collapse of phenomenology a new reigning paradigm has not arisen. Several attempts were made to rehabilitate the study of religion under other umbrellas, including anthropology, the social sciences, and *Kulturwissenschaft*. In many ways, the diagnosis that Frank Whaling and Ursula King provided roughly a quarter of a century ago still holds true: there is an 'increasing diversification of methodological discussion' (Whaling 1984: 5) and a 'state of criticism and uncertainty' (King 1984: 149)—the latter tendency being intensified by feminism, postmodernism, and post-colonialism.

Philology is not rated highly these days, but it is still the backbone of much, if not most, advanced scholarship in the field throughout Europe. Philologists

who do not hold chairs in religious studies continue to make valuable contributions to the non-confessional study of religion. Theory does not currently receive much explicit attention in most other countries, apart from the sociology of religion and new interest in theoretical matters in Finland (Pyysiänen and Anttonen [eds] 2002) and Denmark (e.g. Jensen and Rothstein [eds] 2000; Jensen 2003), often correlated with cognitive science. In recent decades, there has been an ongoing shift of interest towards contemporary religions and changing religious environments, and religions are increasingly studied with ethnographic methods, sometimes combined with philology. In all likelihood, philological methods will continue to lose ground, simply because training in languages other than English is receding.

Last but not least, political and administrative issues will certainly continue to influence the shape of the academic landscape. Current developments include: the enforced mergers of departments; a focus on larger and interdisciplinary research units at the expense of the classical monograph, built on decades of individual research; operating in research groups for briefer periods of time, e.g. five people working three years on a topic instead of one scholar fifteen years; the politicization of research, with funding agencies favoring politically correct and 'relevant' topics at the expense of the creativity and innovative power of the individual scholar; the blossoming of symposia and conferences, taking much time from extended primary research work and resulting in the channeling of scholarly output away from journals and into conference anthologies; and the increasing quantitative 'measuring' of academic and scholarly output, resulting in a shift to shorter-term activities.

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2

Eastern Europe

Eugen Ciurtin

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DESPITE THE INCLUSION OF Mircea Eliade in major histories of the history of religions (e.g. Michaels [ed.] 1997), and even Eliade's stature as a classical figure in that history, Eastern Europe is perhaps the part of the world that is both most promising and most deceptive for a cultural history of the study of religion. There is no study of Eastern European intellectual history comparable to *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West* (Smart *et al.*, 1985), and there is also virtually no study of religious studies in Eastern Europe comparable to studies of the field in Western Europe, North America, Japan, South Africa, and Australia by prominent scholars of religion aware of and interested in the history of their field. Curiously, many Eastern European scholars interested in the local background of their discipline can recount better the history of the field in Western than in Eastern Europe. The following preliminary sketch, in many respects unprecedented, is of necessity more modest than already classic or recent research, such as Mircea Eliade (1963), Jacques Waardenburg (1974), Eric J. Sharpe (1986), Hans G. Kippenberg (1997/2002), Arie L. Molendijk and Peter Pels, eds (1998), Gregory D. Alles (2005), and Giovanni Casadio (2005). It is, I hope, only a beginning. But it does try to go beyond the contemporary scholarly preoccupation of simply discussing 'The Academic Study of Religion during the Cold War' (Doležalová, Martin, and Papoušek [eds] 2001), followed by an attempt to discern the hottest academic pursuits now that the Berlin wall has fallen and the Iron Curtain has progressively dissolved.

For our purposes, Eastern Europe includes one country that joined the European Union in 1981—Greece—several that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007—Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia—and others that are not EU members—Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and at least a part of Russia. This political multiplicity is mirrored in scholarship. There is virtually no permanent communication between all, or even a significant majority, of scholars in the region. This is perhaps a result of the kaleidoscope of languages, which mixes a large number of Slavic languages together with Modern Greek and Romanian. Another cause is the insufficiently secularized culture of the Orthodox communities that constitute a majority in the region. (This cause is insufficiently studied.) The political history of the region is also a contributing factor. Two and a half—and even one and a half—centuries ago Eastern Europe was dominated by the Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman empires. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries new or reinvigorated nation-states often found in the category 'religion' fuel for identity struggles rather than an invitation to calm, rational, erudite investigation. Historians have repeatedly pointed out that periods of free cultural development have been rare in this region. By contrast, regression and subsequent restratification have recurred vigorously, and it has been common for methods from various scholarly epochs to exist

side by side. That mixture characterizes religious studies in Eastern Europe today. In the very same cultural location, a Frazerian approach might coexist with fashionable, recently imported postmodern methodologies, and academic discourse about religion(s) in one and the same country may simultaneously include both an antiquated 'hierarchy' of religions with false claims to objectivity, mainly within the faculties of Orthodox theology, and positivist scholarship that treats 'religion', as it treats every other epistemological object, very unsystematically. Until now no Central or Eastern European scholar has investigated this diversity, and it is rare to meet in a single publication references to, for example, Czech, Polish, Greek, and Russian research, except for some Eastern European topics, which are in any case rather rarely discussed.

The tragic irony is that the greatest historical 'unity' of Eastern Europe was the coerced and highly artificial unity that resulted from Communist/Soviet domination after World War II. Rather than a Gadamerian 'fusion of horizons'—the object of a patient, still partial recomposition, the task of the historiography of the period 1948–1989 must be to detect and eliminate the shadows of half a century of falsification and suppression (beginnings in Miliband 1995). Prohibited, denounced, studied in order to promote the victory of 'scientific atheism', and 'scientifically' discredited as superstition, 'religion', at all levels, was purged from Communist humanity. 'In the former Eastern Europe—especially East Germany and the Soviet Union—the history of religions allied itself with scientific atheism, an ideological version of the study of religion which played a role in the persecution of the Church', as Geertz and McCutcheon recently wrote. 'After the wall fell our German colleagues were accused for working for Stasi or the KGB and related organizations in Eastern Europe' (2000: 11). The ideological unity imposed by all Communist parties phantasmatically absorbed virtually all difference but also diversified tragedy with perceptions that were hilarious: '[w]hen, at the beginning of the eighties, Mircea Eliade's book *Aspects du mythe* came out from one of the publishing houses in Bucharest, the minister of culture at that time, informed by a well-wisher about the ideological inconformity of the text, asked that the author be immediately brought before him, together with the Party secretary of the institution where he worked' (Pleșu 1991: 66). In fact, Eliade's writings from Chicago reinvigorated the production of private, hand-made/*samizdat* copies.

Instead of homologizing the beginnings of religious studies in Eastern Europe within a larger European (and Eurocentric) scale (*pace* Horyna 2005: 8772), it is more effective to provide a larger, more composite view of historical development that includes episodes of mutual mimesis but also reciprocal polarization, indifference, and exclusion. Within the area there are three main spheres: the Russian sphere, Central Europe, and Romania and the Balkans. In contrast to a holistic, Western-style approach, a Russian, a Czech, or a Romanian scholar will necessarily understand much better the specificity of

religious studies in her or his own cultural history than that of her or his neighbors. One implication of this diversity is that states already integrated within the European Community, such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, all have a slightly different scholarly standard even in a discipline like religious studies, which combines philological and historical expertise with a hermeneutic flavor.

Prehistory of the study of religions

At the end of his life, Max Müller saw but a very little Eastern European interest in the newborn, decidedly comparative and vigorously encyclopedic science of religion, in spite of his Easternmost European connections and enthusiastic readers (van den Bosch 2002 and, on Hasdeu, *infra*). When Henri Hubert added a chapter on the European science of religion to the French translation of Chantepie de la Saussaye's (1904) manual, he included only the chief Western schools. That has continued to be the view from outside the region. Scholars in Eastern Europe are present in encyclopedias, manuals, readers, and global presentations of history of religions and religious studies only with contributions on their own religious culture; the two editions of *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987 and 2005) are no exception, but the situation is far better than in Hastings' century-old encyclopedia.

Historically, outsiders have struggled to conceptualize this region. Buhara, Bucharest, Budapest—for many ancient travelers and scholars these were almost the same name (Culianu 1995; Timuş 2005). Significantly enough, Central Eastern Europe and Central Asia were paralleled as early as eleventh-century Arab historical geography (Göckenjan and Zimonyi 2001). In the eighteenth century '[t]he designation of Scythians was extended . . . to cover all of Eastern Europe, until Herder appropriated another identification from among the barbarians of ancient history, and gave Eastern Europe its modern identity as the domain of the Slavs' (Wolff 1994: 11). When Jeremy Bentham discovered in the Bucharest of 1786 'four or five disciples of Helvetius', that was a rare instance of a shared pan-European culture. More general was the isolation reflected by the eighteenth century Wallachian chronicler, Radu Popescu: 'the new world is unknown to us and our world is unknown to it' (Duţu 1998: 322).

In this environment, Eastern European views on world religions developed comparatively late, were indisputably deficient, and found little resonance with academics elsewhere. Nevertheless, despite the poor circulation of ideas, the region saw some splendid individual achievements prior to the emergence of a study of religion *per se*.

Afanasii Nikitin (d. 1472), a merchant from Tver who joined the embassy sent to Shirwan by Tsar Ivan III, wrote a pioneering memoir of his *Journey*

on *Three Seas*, viz. through the Caucasus, Iran and especially India, written after his trip (1466–1472) (Nikitin 1948) but only rediscovered in the nineteenth century as an important predecessor of Indian and Iranian studies (Barthold 1947). Jan Amos Komenský (Johannes Amos Comenius) (1592–1670), the ‘incomparable Moravian’, wrote a *Dictionary of Tongues and All Sciences* which circulated throughout Eastern Europe and was translated into Russian and even Arabic. The Polish Jesuit Michael Boym (1612–1659) compiled the first dictionary of the Chinese language (published in 1667, with an edition of 1670, cf. Szczésniak 1947; Honey 2001: 7–8). Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723), *Voivode* (prince) of Moldavia, wrote *Kniga sistema*, a celebrated account of mainly Ottoman but also Persian Islam. It ‘circulated in manuscripts and in editions printed in 10 languages, and was quoted in Paris, Berlin, and London; in St Petersburg and Bucharest; and from Mount Athos to Istanbul and Alep in the Near East. Great spirits in European letters—Voltaire in his *Histoire de Charles XII*, Byron in *Don Juan*, and Victor Hugo—praised him’ (Cândea 1999). His most gifted son, Antiokh Cantemir (1708–1744), a friend of Montesquieu and Voltaire, is considered among the first philosophers of the Russian Enlightenment.

In Russia, the German-born Theophilus Siegfried Bayer (1694–1738) displayed a keen interest in early eighteenth-century Eastern European work on Asian religions, from Dimitrie Cantemir’s writings on Ottoman and Persian Islam to the Czech Jesuit Carolus Slavíček’s findings on Chinese and Indian religions (Lozovan 1974; Kolmás 1994; Ciurtin 2003). Bayer himself was Professor of Oriental Antiquities at the Russian Imperial Academy, a position created specially for him. His *Museum Sinicum* (1730) included basic knowledge on Chinese religions combined with materials brought directly through embassies and missionaries from China (Lundbaek 1986: 39–140; Honey 2001: 7–8). Somewhat later, Nikolai I. Novikov (1744–1818), a man of letters and a Rosicrucian, produced the first Russian translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, based on the Wilkins English translation of 1785. Plans for establishing an Asiatic Academy in Saint Petersburg were drafted as early as 1810 by Count Sergei S. Uvarov (1786–1855) (Uvarov 1810/1811). A similar project was proposed for the University of Vilnius, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century was a good centre of erudite learning on extra-European religious worlds. Unfortunately, it met with no success. Elsewhere the Bohemian Jesuit Josef Dobrovský (1753–1829) ‘compared Sanskrit and Avestan with Old Church Slavonic as early as 1806’ (Tremblay and Rastegar 2005). The first encyclopedic lexicon of the Transylvanian Romanians, *Lesicon de conversatie storicesc-religionariu* [Religio-Historical Conversation Lexicon], was published at Buda by Alexandru Gavra in 1847.

In general, the study of religions in Eastern Europe has followed a trajectory seen in many other regions, too. It began within a religious, mainly Christian framework, but it slowly moved in a different direction and acquired

independent status. One aspect that has been particularly important for this shifting frame was the discovery of the religious world of the pre-Christian Mediterranean region, a topic that continues to be important for comparative religious work in the region.

The emergence of the study of religions

During the nineteenth century, the study of regional religious history, that is, of Eastern forms of Christianity, was not the major factor that led to the development of religious studies in Eastern Europe. To the contrary, conflict between the different Christian confessions, Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant, played a major ideological role in defining national or regional identities and thus served to postpone the development of a non-confessional history of religions. But although other religions than Christianity and the classical, humanistic background of Greco-Roman heritage contributed more to the emergence of global worldview of religious history, a few churchmen did contribute to the emergence of the field. Particularly notable was the Russian Orthodox archimandrite, Iakinf Bičurin (1777–1853), who, after spending some twelve years in Beijing as a missionary (Walravens 1988), became a Sinologist and Mongolist, known in Europe with the help of Julius Klaproth (1829–1830). In 1841 he published ‘The Exposition of Buddhist Religion’ (*Russkyi Vestnik*, no. 3).

More consequential were the contributions of Russian philologists to the study of Buddhism. In St Petersburg, the Sinologist and Buddhologist Vasilii P. Vasiliev (1818–1900) wrote a three-volume history of Buddhism (1857, 1860, and 1865), the first volume of which was soon translated into German and French. By 1868 Ivan Pavlovich Minaev (1840–1890), professor of Sanskrit at the University of St Petersburg, had completed a catalogue of Pali manuscripts in the *Bibliothèque nationale* (still unpublished). His Russian Pali grammar, published in 1872, was quickly translated into French (1874) and English (1882), and his research on Buddhism appeared in 1887 (French trans. 1894). Especially significant for his energy in acquiring religious manuscripts was Nikolai F. Petrovsky (1837–1908), the Tsarist consul in Kashgar (Kashi), who brought a wealth of new Buddhist material from Eastern Turkestan for Russian libraries. A valuable Petrovsky collection is now in the St Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies (Dabbs 1963; Tyomkin 1997).

Meanwhile, scholars from elsewhere in Eastern Europe found an academic home in France. The forty-eighters triad at the Collège de France, Jules Michelet (1789–1874), Edgar Quinet (1803–1887) and the Pole Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), played a magnificent role especially for Polish and Romanian émigrés. All three had a strong influence on shaping religion in the public discourse (Breazu 1927; Reychman 1957; Schwab 1984). Particularly notable

among the émigrés was the Polish poet, Aleksander Chodźko (1804–1891). Having spent time in Persia as a Russian envoy, he later assumed Mickiewicz's chair in Slavic Languages and Literatures at the Collège de France (1857–1885), where he wrote extensively on Iran.

Scholars elsewhere were active, too. In India Demetrios Galanos (1760–1833) translated Sanskrit works, such as extracts from the *Mahābhārata* and the *Hitopadeśa*, into good classical Greek. He also translated Canakya's work as *Synopsisin gnomikon kai ethikon* (Athens, 1845). His legacy is seen as crucial for the foundation of South Asian and comparative studies in Greece (Burgi-Kyriazi 1984).

During the late 1800s, the study of religion found particularly enthusiastic reception among Romanians. In 1885, Alexandru Odobescu tried valiantly to organize in Bucharest the International Congress for Archaeology and Anthropology. King Charles I of Romania had a vivid interest in Oriental studies and comparative religion and, as a correspondent and friend of Max Müller, proposed to organize the 11th International Congress of Orientalists at Bucharest. The proposal did not come to fruition, but later, at the 12th International Congress at Rome (1899), dozens of Romanians were in attendance, as noted by the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*: 'The number of members was about six hundred. A notable feature in the geographical distribution of the membership was the attendance of Roumanians, which exceeded in number that of every other country except France, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy' (1900: 181). By comparison, no Central or Eastern European took part in the 4th International Congress for the History of Religions, held in Paris in 1923.

Early Eastern European scholars were not without their peculiarities. More than their Western European colleagues, they failed to observe the limits of scholarly discourse and pretentiously mixed careless hypotheses with curious, non-academic aims. Throughout the nineteenth century, Eastern Europeans sought national identity and self-esteem by means of resurrecting folk monuments according to the cultural desiderata of the moment. Combining Polish Sarmatism and Pan-Slavism, Ignacy Pietraszewski (1797–1869) 'considered "Avestan people" the immediate ancestors of the modern Poles and tried to demonstrate that the language of the Avesta was, in fact, a proto-Slavic one' (Pietraszewski 1858–1862; Krasnowolska 1987: 196–97). Joseph Halévy (1827–1917), who taught in Adrianople and Bucharest before being named professor of Ethiopian languages at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in 1879, vainly tried to prove that Sumerian cuneiform was Semitic, that Avestan 'monotheism' was influenced by the Old Testament, and generally that the Renanian ideas of Indo-European superiority were biased, but he did so at the cost of importing decidedly non-objective, more or less patriotic agendas into the field of Sumerian-Akkadian history (cf. Cooper 1993). Árminius Vámbéry (the Magyarized form of Hermann Wamberger; 1832–1913) travelled in

Central Asia and Iran, searching for the origins of the Magyars, whom he hopelessly considered to be of Turkish origin (Vámbéry 1865). Numerous others, as for instance George Roerich (1902–1960), adopted syncretic forms of theosophy which sometimes biased their scholarly fundamentals (Lopez Jr. 1999: 267).

In any case, the most damaging influence on the study of religion was the Communist ideology that spread throughout Eastern Europe after 1945. Even before then the Soviet linguist Nikolai J. Marr (1865–1934) had embraced Marxist ideology in developing his theory of ‘Japhetology’, central to which was the idea that the languages of the Caucasus region were the original languages of Europe, now found among the oppressed lowest strata of society. The view was condemned by linguists for its abnormal postulates and ideological perversions and later even repudiated by Stalin as ‘non-Marxist’.

Early leading figures

Such idiosyncrasies should not lead us to overlook genuinely towering Eastern European contributors to the study of religions in its early days. A prolific Carmelite from Croatia, Ivan Filip (Philippus) Vezdin (Vesdin) (1746–1804), better known as Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo, travelled in India and stayed, from 1776 to 1789, at the Court of the Maharaja of Travancore. A native of Hof in Lower Austria (now in Croatia), he wrote the first attempt to interpret Brahmanic religion using mainly South Asian autochthonous sources (and J. F. Kleuker’s translation of the Avesta). Despite his knowledge of Croatian and Magyar languages, Paulinus thought of himself as German (from Austria) (Vogel 1996: 12–14 n. 14) and, returning from South India, taught in Italy (Padua, Rome), where he published in Latin and Italian twenty works on things Indian, rapidly translated (into English, French, and German) and circulated in all Europe. All historians of religious studies accept Sir William Jones’ discourse of 1786 on the affinity of Indo-European languages as a milestone, but they seldom recognize the sound criticism launched in 1798 by Paulinus—*nulla suae assertionis produxisset documenta* (‘he provided no evidence for his assertion’; on this phrase cf. Rocher 1961; Jauk-Pinhak 1984: 136)—who contributed the earliest list of lexical correspondences between Sanskrit, Avestan, Latin, and Germanic, in a work entitled *De antiquitate et affinitate linguae Zendicae, Samscrdamicae et Germanicae dissertatio* (about their value, see Van Hal forthcoming). In an appendix he also established that Avestan was not a corrupted form, as Jones had asserted, but a linguistic cognate of Sanskrit. Paulinus was rediscovered by Croatian Indology and comparative religion in the twentieth century, but many of his writings are still unpublished.

The Hungarian Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (Kőrösi Csoma Sándor, 1784?–1842) is arguably the best-known and most-studied Eastern European representative of religious studies in the nineteenth century (cf. Kőrösi Csoma

Sándor 1984; Ligeti 1942–1944, 1984/2000; Csetri 1989; Bethlenfalvy 1989–1990; Le Calloc’h 2000–2006). He concentrated on the Tibetan world, but his entire career was a splendid ideological accident. Informed by a Romantic background, his researches and travel were first and foremost built upon the false supposition that the origins of the Magyars was Hunic or Central Asian or even Tibetan. A successor of Csoma de Kőrös, F. Anton von Schiefner (1817–1879), published in German in the French-titled Russian journal of the St Petersburg Imperial Academy (*inter alia* Schiefner 1851), before translating and commenting upon Tāranātha’s history of Buddhism in India, written in 1608 (Schiefner 1869). He also edited *Nordische Reisen und Forschungen* (St Petersburg, 1853–1862), the posthumous milestone of Finno-Ugrian studies by its founder, the Finn Matthias Alexander Castrén (1813–1852).

The Russian Prince Sergei Nikolaevitch Trubetskoi (1862–1905) and his brother Evgenii Nikolaevitch (1863–1920) were instrumental in introducing an Orthodox Christian-based philosophy of religion. A friend of the Russian philosopher Vladimir Soloviov, who was known for his interests in Indian and Gnostic religions (Kitzel 1996), Sergei Trubetskoi wrote in 1897 an introduction to the then just published Auguste Barth’s *Religions of India* (French edition 1879), thus introducing to the Russian public *Revue de l’histoire des religions* and one of the forgotten syntheses, first published in 1879, of the complex French Indologist Barth (1834–1916). He offered an additional bibliography to the Russian translation of another classic, *Manual of the History of Religions* (2nd German edition of 1897) of Pierre Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye (1848–1920). A generation later, scholars such as Sergei F. Oldenburg (1863–1934) and Otto O. Rozenberg (1888–1919) continued this trend with works of impeccable erudition and insight, of fundamental interest and wide circulation across Europe (Bongard-Levin *et al.* 2002).

The Romanian Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu (1838–1907), who became professor of philology at the University of Bucharest in 1878, did pioneering work in the study of the Romanian language and Romanian history. He was also the first Romanian to write on the biblical apocrypha. Covering a large range of disciplines and combining a variety of comparative methods, from comparative philology to the typology of religious folklore, Hasdeu, a model for the young Eliade, was praised by members of the Romanian Academy such as Max Müller (a member since 1875): ‘I often regret that you should hide your excellent work under the bushel of the Romanian language’; ‘How I wish I could read Roumanian instead of having to guess its meaning!’ (letters from 1880–1881, cf. Hasdeu 1982: 392–94).

The Hungarian scholar Ignác (or Ignaz) Goldziher (1850–1921) was the first Jewish scholar to teach at the University of Budapest. According to Jacques Waardenburg (2005: 3634), he ‘may be said to have laid the foundation of Islamic studies as a scholarly discipline based on the literary and historical study of texts, most of which were at the time available only as manuscripts.

It required great erudition and immense knowledge acquired through the reading of the original sources, and a creative use of the categories of the history of religions, to reconstruct the architecture of the history of Islamic religion as he did.' His influential studies included (in German) *Hebrew Myth and Its Historical Development* (1876), two volumes of *Muslim Studies* (1889–1890), and *Lectures on Islam* (1910). Goldziher's collected papers were posthumously edited by Joseph de Somogyi, one of his Hungarian pupils (1967–1973).

Moses Gaster (1856–1939), a Romanian Jew of Ashkenazi ancestry, studied at the Rabbinic Seminary of Breslau (now Wrocław) and then taught, as a colleague of Hasdeu, Romanian language and literature at the University of Bucharest. Expelled from Romania in 1885, he made his home in England, where he was the first Jew to teach at Oxford (Gaster 1887) and, as *habam* of English Sephards, was active in promoting Zionism. A noted contributor to Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Gaster's scholarship included such topics as the apocrypha, folklore, and magic, primarily in ancient and medieval Judaism (an unique, still valuable collection is Gaster 1925–1928). His son, Theodore Herzl Gaster (1906–1992), who taught in the United States, made a one-volume abridgment of James George Frazer's massive *Golden Bough* and wrote famously on myth, ritual, and drama in ancient West Asia (1950). Both Gaster and Goldziher, combining a strong traditional Jewish background with the finest scholarship of their time, united 'theological' involvement in their communities in Bucharest and Budapest and the finest *Wissenschaft des Judentums* with scholarly objectivity. In this respect they resembled very closely Sylvain Lévi and his *œuvre* as president of *Alliance israélite* up to 1935—a parallel already noted by Eliade in 1936.

Somewhat less well known internationally today than either Goldziher or the Gasters, father and son, was the Hungarian scholar Lajos Ligeti (1902–1987). After being educated in the József Eötvös College in Budapest, he went to Paris (EPHE and Collège de France), where he became a true disciple of Henri Maspéro, Jean Bacot, and Paul Pelliot. Later he pursued his education and research in Mongolia, China, Afghanistan, and Japan. He is revered as the founder of the *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, and edited for many years the international monograph series *Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica*, popularizing the religions of Asia through the Magyar *Csoma de Kőrös Pocket Library*. He was the vice-president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences for two decades. He published mainly in Hungarian (and mainly on philology), but some of his researches in French are very valuable for comparative scholars (cf. especially Ligeti 1942–1944, 1971, 1978, 1981, and 1984).

One of the best scholars of Indian religions was Stanislas Schayer (1899–1941), remembered nowadays especially for his synthesis on axial questions of early Buddhism (for Bengali, Dravidian, and Hindi religious studies in Warsaw, as well as for an exhaustive bibliography of Schayer, see

Balcerowicz and Mejor 2000). Stefan Stasiak (1884–1962), a pupil and colleague of Schayer, published in 1925 his study on the Śataka, which was in fact his *diplôme de l'EPHE* written under the direction of Sylvain Lévi in Paris (Stasiak 1919–1924), where he spent many years before being appointed professor for philology and Indian history at the University Jan Kazimierz of Lvov in 1929. In the 1940s, he returned to Warsaw and afterwards to London, joining the Polish government in exile.

Eastern European concern with Persian and Indian religions, Buddhist, and especially Tibetan studies continued in the next generations with the works of Feodor [Theodore] Stcherbatsk[o]y (1866–1942); Nikolai D. Mironov (1880–1936), one of the first competent scholars of Jainism; Evgheni [Eugene] Obermiller (1901–1935) and George Nicolai Roerich (1902–1960). It culminated in the work of the most important Eastern European scholar of religion, Mircea Eliade (1907–1986). With the exception of some books such as Poul Tuxen's Danish *Yoga* (1911) or Jakob Wilhelm Hauer's monographs of the interwar period, and of minor books, such as J. F. C. Fuller (1925) and Sigurd Lindquist (1935), and articles, such as Jean Filliozat (1931), the first, French edition of Mircea Eliade's *Yoga* (1936) was the best introduction to the topic equally for Indologists and for historians and philosophers of religions. As he himself wrote, 'this essay is addressed less to Indologists than to those with an interest in the history and philosophy of religions' (1936: viii). Eliade's work is too well known to require detailed treatment here. One could argue, however, that a careful examination of the genesis of his ideas as a comparatist and a generalist historian of religions, taking into consideration his entire Romanian production of the 1920s–1930s, still remains to be written (Ciurtin 2004: 363–440).

Peripheral transfers and versatile boundaries

Just as in the nineteenth century many Eastern European scholars worked as emigrés in Paris, so in the twentieth century the domination of Communist governments in Eastern Europe after World War II, and their general antipathy to religion, meant that many prominent Eastern European scholars of religion emigrated to the West, often to the United States. Unfortunately, we do not have at our disposal works entirely devoted to the emigration of scholars from Eastern Europe of the sort that are available on the emigration of scholars from further west (Bentwick 1953; Fermi 1968).

Even more than World War II, the Cold War was responsible for Mircea Eliade's move to the West, a move which could equally be seen as a Western response to the Communist atheistic regime (Moshe Idel, personal communication, February 2006). In the interwar period and afterward, Eliade was admired, including by his master Pettazzoni and his friend Wikander, for his incredible intellectual interests, his capacity for work, and as a comparatist

who started from a specific yet undiscussed Eastern European, sometimes even Orthodox Christian, paradigm. One effect of his emigration is that Romanian is perhaps the only Eastern European language learned by non-Eastern European scholars in order to understand developments in the discipline (e.g. Mac Ricketts, Bryan Rennie, and Natale Spineto).

The Lithuanian background of the prehistoric archeologist and mythologist Marija Gimbutas (1921–1994), born in Vilnius, exerted much influence on her work. Having taken a PhD in Tübingen and not wishing to live in an occupied country, she left for the United States in 1949, where she taught at Harvard and, from 1964, at The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Through numerous publications in English, Gimbutas constructed an image of a Neolithic, agrarian, unified, and highly conservative Eastern European religion, combining through ‘archeomythology’ the relevant matriarchal, ‘Goddess’ evidence with folklore data, especially from the Baltic area (Gimbutas 1982, 1991). Her theory of the *kurgan* (Rus. ‘hillock’) invasion (namely, Indo-European migration) and of the subsistence of the matriarchal religion and culture of ‘Old Europe’ can now be understood as an instance of a common, major flaw in Eastern European approaches to the theme of the religious substratum, shared by many folklorists and mythologists who still see prehistoric deities, symbols, and myths in the slightly Romanticized folk traditions of illiterate societies that were recorded in the nineteenth century. Gimbutas eventually became personally interested in Neopaganism (Iwersen 2005), and much of her scholarly legacy is not accepted nowadays.

Other emigré scholars may be mentioned as well. Kamil Vaclav Zvelebil (b. 1927), a native of Prague, became in 1952 a fellow in Tamil and Dravidian linguistics and literature at the Oriental Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. Forced to leave in 1968 by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, he taught at many universities in Europe, North America, Japan, and India. Especially important are his studies of tribal languages and cultures of South Asia, Sanskrit ritual texts, and Tamil language, literature, and religious history. The Estonian scholar Jaan Puhvel (b. 1932), a student of Dumézil and Wikander and author of *Comparative Mythology* (1987), became a professor of classical linguistics and Indo-European studies at UCLA. Slightly younger than the other scholars mentioned in this section, after the fall of Communism he returned to spend part of his time teaching at the university of Tartu. The much younger Romanian scholar, Ioan Petru Culianu (1950–1991), met with an unfortunate fate, but one that has been fortunately rare among Eastern European scholars in exile. Having gone into exile in 1972, he was murdered while teaching at the University of Chicago.

In some ways the careers of emigrés like Eliade epitomize the modern instabilities and versatile transfers of the entire region, characteristics that came into being long before the twentieth century. It is fascinating to see how the best Eastern European scholars of religions were engaged during their lives

with different academic milieux, from the late colonial to the early global, and as a result how fragmented their legacies are. Integrated within broader scholarly communities, they were nevertheless isolated in their own cultures. This sharp disparity combined a local lack of continuity with the necessity of emigration and adoption of other cultural styles.

For an impression of this diversity, consider just a few scholars and writers. Pettazzoni invited the Polish scholar Aleksander Brückner (1856–1939) to translate his work on Slavic and Polish mythology (Brückner 1918/1980) into Italian, in his ‘Biblioteca di storia delle religioni’ (Bologna, 1923), a valuable enterprise considered for many years by Eliade an example to emulate. Martin Buber (1878–1965), born and educated in Vienna, cannot be understood as a scholar of religion apart from the Hasidic ambience of Eastern Europe, which was at the origin of many of his meditative and scholarly works. Angelo Brelich (1917–1973), the successor of Pettazzoni in the Rome chair for the history of religions (1958) was born in Hungary and educated in Budapest. The Pole Constantin Regamey (1907–1982), was born in Kiev into a bourgeois family from Lausanne that had moved to imperial Russia and was educated in Warsaw. He became a scholar of Slavic and Buddhist studies, as well as a gifted musician and pianist. In 1945 he became professor at the University of Lausanne, reorganizing the Faculty of Oriental Studies. Other notable Polish scholars include Jean Przyluski (1885–1945) in Paris, Helena Willman-Grabowska in Paris, and Maryla Falk in Italy and India. Ludwik Sternbach (1909–1981), who was born in Krakow and died in Paris, was after World War II a researcher and later director of the Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad at Lucknow, India.

The influx of scholars from Western Europe to the region also contributed to the porosity of its boundaries and the diversity of its academic styles. An example of the latter is Franz Babinger (1891–1967), who held the chair in Turkish studies at the University of Munich. Invited to Romania by the famous historian Nicolae Iorga, he spent almost ten years there, first within the Institute for South-Eastern European Studies (1934–1939) at the University of Bucharest, then at the University of Jassy, where he directed the newly founded Institute for Turkish studies and implemented Islamic studies until political circumstances forced him to leave in 1943.

Major ideas and problems

As elsewhere, in Eastern Europe disciplinary terminology is a matter of discussion and disagreement. The Romanian expression, *Istoria religiilor*, is a direct and accurate translation of ‘history of religions’. Conceptually, it expresses a global sense, as it also does in the name of the IAHR, as illustrated by the late Ugo Bianchi. But other terms are also found in Eastern Europe,

with parallels to ‘the study of religions’ (as in the name of the European Association for the Study of Religions), *sciences religieuses* (as in the name of the advanced-studies faculty at the École Pratique des Hautes Études), and the common designation in German, *Religionswissenschaft*. These differences are apparent in the names of the various other national societies (English translations are those which the societies themselves use): in the Czech Republic ‘the study of religion’ (*studium náboženství*), in Greece ‘the study of culture and religion’, in Hungary, ‘the academic study of religion’ (*vallástudomány*), in Poland ‘the science of religion’ (*Religioznawstwo*), in Russia ‘the history of world religion’, ‘history of religions’ (*Istorija religij*) or ‘religious studies’ (*religiovedenie*), in Slovakia ‘the study of religions’ (*stúdium náboženstiev*), and in Ukraine ‘religious studies’ (*religijeznavstvo*—taken not from the name of the Ukrainian Association but from the title of the its journal *Ukrayins’ke religijeznavstvo*).

Furthermore, different parts of Eastern Europe concentrate on the religions of different areas. One major concern has been the religions of Eastern Europe itself, with a specific focus on one’s own particular location. Mircea Eliade (e.g. 1970) collected and interpreted much of the material relevant to studying Eastern European religions. Contemporary Russian historians have worked on the Slav (‘heathen’) religion and (comparative) mythology. Meanwhile, Bulgarian scholars such as G. I. Kazarow, Vladimir Georgiev, and Zlatozara Gočeva, have studied Thracian religion. Baltic scholars have predominated in the study of Baltic religion (bibliography in Biezais 1954). Vaira Viķe-Freiberga (1997–2002; cf. Viķe-Freiberga and Freibergs 1988) collected and interpreted over 4,000 Latvian *dainas* (lyrical folk-songs) pertaining to the archaic Latvian sun cult in their mythological, chronological and meteorological aspects, before she became the president of the Republic of Latvia in 1999. Eurasian shamanism has also been a major theme, as in the work of M. A. Czaplicka (1914) or, nowadays, Mihály Hoppál, director of the European Folklore Institute.

Within Central Europe there has been a special interest in the religions of Central Asia. During the nineteenth century German-speaking academics in Budapest, Vienna, Prague, and sometimes St Petersburg, such as Julius Klaproth, Csoma, Schiefner, the brothers Schlagintweit, and Heinrich August Jäschke (1817–1883) established a special tradition in the study of Tibetan religions. For more than a century, the study of the Tibetan language outside of Tibet was based upon the two dictionaries masterly compiled by two Eastern Europeans traveling extensively in the Himalayan region, the first by Kőrösi Csoma (1834), published in Calcutta, the other by Jäschke (1883). Early Tibetologists like Csoma and Isaac Jakob Schmidt (1779–1847), associated with the Russian Academy in St Petersburg, were much more careful than their Western counterparts, who were rapidly spreading the often deprecatory category ‘Lamaism’. With direct expertise of the Buddhist Kalmyks, Schmidt had perceptively commented already in 1836:

even now there are many people, otherwise quite well-informed, who imagine that there is an essential difference between Buddhism and Lamaism. The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate the non-existence of this imagined difference and to show at the same time the extent to which the religion of the Tibetans and Mongols represents a particular manifestation in the history of Buddhism. It seems hardly necessary to remark that the term *Lamaism* is a purely European invention and not known in Asia.

(translation of Schmidt 1836: 13–14, in Lopez Jr. 1999: 24; also pp. 218–19 and 228)

And despite English and French interpretations of Kālacakra Buddhism, for example, by Wilson and Rémusat respectively, scholars such as Kőrösi Csoma and Schmidt first studied this form of Buddhism correctly. The editions, translations, and commentaries in the series ‘Bibliotheca Buddhica’ (30 vols, 1897–1937), issued by the Imperial Academy in St Petersburg, are still of great help, especially for students of Mahāyāna.

It would generally be a mistake, of course, to envision the scholarly work done in any particular country as limited to just one topic. To take the area I know best, Romanian scholars—from Alexandru Odobescu, Grigore Tocilescu, and Nicolae Densusianu in the second half of the nineteenth century, to Vasile Pârvan (1882–1927) and especially Dionisie M. Pippidi (1905–1993) (see Odobescu 1877/1961; Pippidi 1969, 1988)—have taken a special interest in Greek, Roman and Thraco-Dacian religion, although only rarely within an institutionalized and comparative framework. Continuing the pioneering efforts of Hasdeu and Gaster, they have studied Biblical apocrypha and pseudepigrapha (Demostene Russo [1869–1938], Nicolae Cartoian [1883–1944], and Émile Turdeanu [1911–2001]). They have also studied Romanian religious folklore (Simeon Florea Marian [1847–1907], Tudor Pamfile [1883–1921], Artur Gorovei [1864–1951] and I.-Aurel Candrea); Near Eastern Religions (Constantin Daniel); sociology of religion (Dimitrie Gusti [1880–1955] and H. H. Stahl [1901–1991]), ethnology (Petru Caraman [1898–1980], cf. Datcu 1999) and ethnosociology (Paul H. Stahl [b. 1925]); and comparative mythology (Romulus Vulcănescu [1912–2000], cf. Ricketts 2002; Ciurtin 2000, 2003). Finally, continuing and developing the results of Eliade, Romanian scholars of religion have studied Indian religions (Arion Roșu [b. 1924], to a lesser degree, Sergiu Al-George [1922–1981]), while others studied Turkic and Ottoman Islam, at least indirectly (Mihail Guboglu [1911–1989], Aurel Decei [1905–1976]).

Eastern Europeans have also made some ventures into more general methodological reflections. The most notable was perhaps a statement issued by Polish scholars and noted international guests in conjunction with an IAHR conference held in 1989 that attempted to integrate the history of religions within the social sciences (see Tyloch 1990).

Institutionalization

With the end of Communist rule, Eastern Europeans have moved relatively quickly not only to study religion but also to institutionalize that study. As one might expect, many of these activities concerned the establishment of the study of religion in universities or within national academies. For example, in Ukraine a Department of Religious Studies was established within the National Academy of Science in 1991 (Filipovych and Kolodny 2004: 84 ff.), while a Centre for the History of Religions was established at the University of Bucharest in 2003 and a Religious Studies Program at Central European University in Budapest in 2005. Other programs in religious studies include the Department for the Study of Religions at Masaryk University in Brno, the Czech Republic; the Institute of Religious Studies at Jagellonian University in Krakow, Poland; the Department of the Philosophy of Religion and Religious Studies in State St Petersburg University in Russia; and the Department of Religious Studies in Bratislava, Slovakia. Scholars of religions do not, however, always work in departments of religious studies. For example, religious studies are mostly represented at the University of Tartu within the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, which was re-established in 1993.

Perhaps more significant in the region, as bringing together scholars interested in the study of religion, regardless of institutional placement, have been the national scholarly associations. National associations from the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine are affiliated with the IAHR, and several of these have sponsored conferences within the last ten years. The most recent was the the 6th Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religion, held in Bucharest September 18–23, 2006, with some 200 participants from about thirty countries, ten keynote lectures and ten different panels integrating many scholars from throughout the region. At this conference moves were made to establish an Estonian Association for the Study of Religion.

Continuing the interwar tradition, when in the field of Graeco-Roman religions alone the *Année philologique* regularly mentioned some thirty periodicals, Eastern Europe is also home to a rich number of journals, as the following selective list makes clear: in Bulgaria *Balgarsko Iztokoznanie* (Acta Orientalia Bulgarica, founded 1990); in the Czech Republic *Religio. Revue pro Religionistiku* (founded 1993); in Estonia *Studies in Folklore and Popular Religion* (founded 1996); in Poland *Przegląd Religioznawcy* (founded 1957), *Folia Orientalia* (founded 1959), and *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* (founded 1924); in Romania *Archaeus: Studies in the History of Religions* (founded 1997), *Studia Asiatica: International Journal for Asian Studies* (founded 2000) and *Chora: Revue d'études anciennes et médiévales. Philosophie, théologie, sciences* (founded 2003); in Slovakia *Hieron* (founded 1996); in Ukraine *Ukrayins'ke religijeznavstvo* (founded 1999).

In 2005 the University of Szeged in Hungary, together with West Virginia University, launched the electronic journal *Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe* (<http://rs.as.wvu.edu>). In Budapest Mihály Hoppál and Ádám Molnár edit *Shaman*, the official organ of the International Society for Shamanistic Research, founded in 1993. Another noteworthy institutional step was the establishment of the Culianu Lectures on Religion, established at the Central European University in Budapest in 2005. The first lectures were delivered by Moshe Idel from Hebrew University of Jerusalem (born 1947 in Moldavia). Presidents of some scholarly organizations in the region are reputed, versatile scholars and essayists, such as Bretislav Horyna (b. 1959) or Andrei Oișteanu (b. 1948) (Oișteanu 1999). Finally, that indispensable sign of a sense of national identity has begun to appear, the national history, namely, *A History of Religion of Ukraine*, a ten-volume collective enterprise begun in 1996 (Filipovych and Kolodny 2004: 91).

Emerging issues

Perhaps the largest issue facing religious studies in Eastern Europe at the moment is simply to further the work of building that has been underway since the end of the Soviet era. There are large differences among the countries of Eastern Europe in terms of religious identity and expectations for the social role of the Church(es). For example, in Romania 74.7 percent of the people identify with the Churches, as compared with only 36.4 percent in the Czech Republic (large-scale European Values Study of 1999, cf. Bogomilova Todorova 2003/2004). Nevertheless, these differences are *not* reflected in the scholarly commitments of various cultures, a fact that attests the almost complete post-Communist emancipation of religious studies from the old, religiously dominated framework (see also Messner 2002, only for Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and Turkey).

The end of the Soviet era brought freer connections with scholars from outside the region. (Interaction between Eastern European scholars from different countries was less frequent.) Reputed scholars from abroad delivered lectures in Bucharest, for example, and Kraków. In return, a panel on 'Religion in Socialist Countries' was organized by Jan Szmyd for the 17th Congress of the IAHR held in Mexico City in 1995.

The task of building religious studies has benefited from philanthropic activity. George Soros and his Open Society Foundation were instrumental in reinvigorating religious studies in countries such as Estonia, Hungary, and Romania. In 2001, the Austrian Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft founded, within the framework of the New Europe Foundation in Bucharest, a new institute that 'focuses on the extremely sensitive issue of religions related problems in the Balkans (and beyond) from the viewpoint of the EU

integration'. In January 2006 the Andrew Mellon Foundation, in conjunction with the Institute for Advanced Studies at New Europe College, sponsored a workshop entitled 'Repositioning of a Discipline: Religious Studies East and West', which dealt with regional cooperation in repositioning religious studies between Eastern and Western Europe. Similar Mellon regional initiatives took place in 2006 in Budapest, dealing with sociology, and Sofia, dealing with anthropology.

Throughout the region organizational activity is proceeding at a remarkable rate. For example, Dubrovnik, Croatia, now hosts a prolific international centre of Purāṇic studies (Brockington and Schreiner 1999). The triennial Dubrovnik International Conference in the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas (DICSEP), founded in 1997 by Mislav Jezic (b. 1952), professor at the University of Zagreb, has involved internationally noted scholars such as John Brockington and Peter Schreiner, as well as scholars from twelve Eastern European countries. In 2004 Bethlenfalvy Géza (b. 1936) started a Budapest-based collection of 'Treasures of Mongolian Culture and Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism', a joint project of the State Central Library of Mongolia and the Research Group for Altaic Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

These initiatives support a wide range of energetic work, of which I can only give a small sampling here. In Prague, noted historians of South Asian religions, such as Jaroslav Vacek, Jan Dvořák, Hana Preinhaelterová, Martin Prochazka, Dušan Zbavitel, and Kamil V. Zvelebil, produced an original survey of Indian literatures (1996) and an edited volume on trends in Indian studies, including religious studies, with the contribution of Western but also Bulgarian, Polish, and Hungarian scholars. Radoslav Katicic, who founded Indological studies at the University of Zagreb, has written a history of Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit literatures. Other active Croatian scholars include Klara Gönc-Moacanin, Milka Jauk-Pinhak, Cedomil Veljacic, Rada Ivekovic (who now teaches in Paris), and Zdravka Maticic (Brockington and Schreiner 1999; Dejenne 2002: 277–278). One of the best known Estonian scholars is Linnart Mäll (b. 1938), head of the Center for Oriental Studies at the University of Tartu, who publishes mainly in the field of Buddhist/Mahāyāna studies. In Russia, Igor Mikhailovich Diakonov (1915–1999) wrote many controversial contributions on the original home of the speakers of Indo-European (cf. Polomé [ed.] 1984). Tatiana Elizarenkova, at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, and Margareta I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaia are well-known scholars of Vedic and Buddhist studies, respectively, the latter working mainly on hitherto unedited texts. The Romanian scholar Rodica Pop, a specialist in Mongolian religions, has, together with Marie-Dominique Even, completed Paul Pelliot's French translation of the thirteenth-century *Histoire secrète des Mongols* (Even and Pop 1994). Finally, the Bulgarian-born Yuri Stoyanov (b. 1961) has continued the scholarship of Obolensky and Culianu, working mainly on medieval Islam

and Christianity in the Balkans and Anatolia, with a focus on apocalyptic traditions and apocryphal themes in Eastern Christianity.

It was once common for scholars outside of Eastern Europe to note ‘a glaring lack of information about the study of religion in socialist and communist lands’ (Whaling 1995 [1984]: 233). After 1989 that has changed, and quite drastically. ‘A growing self-consciousness among scholars of religion outside Europe and North America [is leading] them to explore their own traditions of knowledge about religions’ (Alles 2005: 8767). The key issue is, again and as elsewhere, especially in Western Europe (Kippenberg 2002: 190–95), the manifold dimensions of cultural modernity and modernization.

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The present chapter represents an initial attempt to address the study of religion in eastern Europe. I hope eventually to return to this topic in greater detail.

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3

North Africa and West Asia

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ANY DISCUSSION OF THE ACADEMIC STUDY of religions in North Africa and West Asia confronts two fundamental issues: the name of the region and the intricate ways in which it is linked to the so-called 'West'.¹ The first issue will be discussed immediately below. The second will emerge in various sections of this chapter, which follows a stipulated order in the interests of giving coherence to this book, whose impetus stems from a particular Western academic moment of concern for matters of globalization and its effects on the academic discipline of the study of religions. This point of departure is linked to contemporary geopolitical realities that link the West to North Africa and West Asia in particular ways that affect how this chapter can be written and with what degree of historical consciousness, for the very development of an academic study of religions would not have been possible without two developments: the development of academic institutions called universities and of a positivistic scientific discourse within that of modernity. While the first owes much to Islamic history in North Africa and West Asia, the second owes little at all. Yet both are today intertwined symbiotically to such a degree that a chapter on the topic of the academic study of religions in North Africa and West Asia necessitates raising this central point from the beginning. In fact, I would suggest that this interconnection between the history and politics of the on-going growth of universities and the presence of positivistic discourses both within and without, on the one hand, Western and, on the other, Islamic, Jewish, or Christian institutions of higher learning probably represents one of North Africa and West Asia's distinguishing particularities in comparison to the other regions of the world.

Geographical parameters

The definitions for this region in existence today often reflect ideological dimensions embedded in the processes of constructing nomenclature. These choices, in turn, may reify assumptions that are part of the challenges faced by contemporary scholars who seek to develop language and categories of interpretation that are less ideologically based. Such efforts are particularly important in a book focused on mapping the development of the study of religions worldwide, in light of the hegemony of the English language and neo-liberal values that so often accompany the current processes of globalization. Hidden in these processes is the very use of the word 'religion', and thus 'study of religions', as well as the title that was originally proposed for this chapter: 'North Africa and the Middle East'.

The term 'North Africa' causes little debate as far as the region from Morocco to Libya is concerned, at least in the present context. Many scholars also include Egypt, a country that is more often included in the term 'Middle

East'. The English language term 'Middle East' has its origins in the British colonial period. It emerged as a geographical category between World War I and World War II to distinguish between the older English concept of the 'Near East', which referred to the lands of the Balkans, Anatolia, and the regions bordering the eastern part of the Mediterranean, and the 'Far East', which referred to the lands from Burma to Japan. After World War II, the term 'Middle East' gradually came to replace 'Near East', especially in international political circles, to include the lands between Egypt and Afghanistan. The use of the term 'Middle East' in American foreign policy over the last half century has gradually made it ubiquitous in the international community dominated by the English language, especially since the end of the Cold War in 1989. This weight is reinforced today by its use in many international circles, such as the International Air Transport Association, which includes in its definition the following countries: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories (West Bank and Gaza strip), Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Many other organizations also add Turkey and Somalia to this list. There are thus narrower and broader definitions of the term 'Middle East'.

Both 'Near East' and 'Middle East' have literal equivalents in French, German, Russian, and other European languages. 'Near East' is still found as a category of academic studies, especially in German and Russian universities. In most other Western countries, the term 'Middle East' is the normative terminology. However, the more recent official designation of this region by the United Nations is 'Southwest Asia'. In June 2006, a large number of scholars of the International Association for Middle Eastern Studies, gathered in Amman, Jordan, discussed the use of the broader term 'West Asia', part of which was named 'Southwest Asia' to designate the region of the Arabian Peninsula and the Sinai in particular.

In this chapter I therefore speak of 'North Africa and West Asia', NAWA in short, because I agree with a growing scholarly recognition that using continental nouns (e.g. Africa and Asia) with directional adjectives (e.g. North and West) is a less ideological choice for the building of nomenclatures. This approach avoids using terminology that reflects only one particular geographical perspective—'East' from the perspective of Western Europeans, whether 'Near', 'Middle', or 'Far'—that is itself the heritage of a colonial history which contemporary scholarly categories need not reinforce.

This chapter is therefore intended to cover the geographical spread of countries from Morocco to Afghanistan, including Turkey to the north and Somalia to the south. I will not attempt to provide a complete description of the historical development of the study of religions in all of these different countries. In addition, the present state of affairs in NAWA, as in all parts of the world, is changing rapidly under new technological conditions and growth

in civil society and private enterprise, both of which often meet around new initiatives for higher educational institutions, most often called universities. This chapter makes no claim to survey exhaustively all of these new developments, some of which may not yet have reached the stage of literary accessibility, whether through database electronic research tools or cyberspace web search engines, by the time of writing. Its principal aim is not to describe comprehensively but rather to identify trends and raise important theoretical questions about the historical growth of the modern academic study of religions in this region of the world, within a broader contemporary globalizing framework. I carry on this task from the limited lens of my North American scholarly training as well as past and on-going research on North African and Western Asian developments in the academic study of religions.

Pre-modern history of the study of religions

In this region of the world, ‘prehistory’ often implies the period of human existence that precedes the invention of writing. Therefore, in presenting and analyzing the early growth of the study of religions in this region, I use the heading ‘Pre-modern history of the study of religions’. ‘Pre-modern’ refers to the period prior to the European colonial presence, which started with Napoleon’s brief military occupation of parts of Egypt between 1798 and 1801.

The pre-modern history of the study of religions in NAWA would require us, first, to translate the word ‘religion’ into the many languages found in this broad geographical area, and second, to delimit the scope of the historical research on phenomena related to these various linguistic equivalents of our modern Western concept of ‘religion’, with its own myriad of definitions. On the first point, there are several language groups related to this area, from Tamazight and Semitic to Persian and Turkic, to mention but the principal ones. Each of these groups includes several languages, with cognate words for concepts that approximate ‘religion’ as broadly understood in modern Western languages. For example, in Semitic languages, the concept of *dīn* is often translated as ‘religion’, with meanings related to ‘debt, conformity, piety’. It is closely related to *dat* in Hebrew. In Turkic and Persian languages, the influence of Arabic has left its mark: *din* (plural, *dinler*) in Turkish and *dīn* or *madhab* (*adyān* in the plural) in Persian. A thorough study of the pre-modern history of the study of religions in NAWA would also need to look at these language groups prior to their various degrees of Arabization as well as at other languages now extinct.

On the second point, a pre-modern history of the study of religions in the sense of what approximates today’s broad Western understanding of religion requires a historical study of how these cognate terms within their respective

language groups have developed etymologically over time. Their meanings have probably changed as a result of both internal and external developments, however one defines the boundary delineating ‘internal’ from ‘external’. In other words, the fluid nature of the meaning of *dīn* over long periods of time, for example, needs to be understood in terms of its relationship to other words in Arabic as well as to other Semitic and non-Semitic terms with which Arabic speakers came into contact over centuries. In addition to this oral process of change must be added another layer of complexity with the introduction of a literate Arabic culture, especially with the emergence of the Qur’ān as a stable and referential text that helped create centuries later an impression of hermeneutic immobility in Qur’ānic terminology, including the word *dīn*. The same can be said of the long process of change from oral to literate cultures through which other language groups also passed, though not all at the same time and in the same way. Persianate and Hebraic cultures, with later Aramaic and Syriac developments, began their literatures much earlier than the Arabic speaking world, while Turkic literatures developed much later. A thorough history of the pre-modern study of religions would need to take all of these historical developments into account.

Finally, many of these words are still in common use today, although their meanings have often been affected by modern influences stemming from European colonial languages. These changes also affect how one writes today about this history, especially in a language other than those still actively alive in the production of knowledge in NAWA. This chapter is one such case, using English concepts to describe and analyze what stems from very different language groups, whose key words relating to the modern study of religions have definitely been affected by the influence of English words. The writing of this chapter therefore cannot avoid taking place within this power dynamic, linked to the use of the English language as part of the empire-building process some call *pax Americana* which lies at the heart of a neo-liberal discourse that currently propels a particular kind of globalization. This kind of globalization, in turn, causes many reactions central to our topic today. In other words, we can only write about the past in the present. I write this chapter in English, within all the present power dynamics we know, to describe both a NAWA present in which I do not live as well as a distant past stemming from a complex set of linguistic interactions that were themselves part of power dynamics unique to their periods, only fragments of which have survived in the form of manuscripts useful for our present analytical purposes.

The best example of these complex power dynamics related to the pre-modern study of religions for the region of NAWA—and beyond—is what European Orientalists have called ‘heresiographical literature’, better named ‘literature on religious others’ (Brodeur 1999, esp. intro. and ch. 1). It developed and flourished from the second to the seventh centuries of Islamic history (8th to

13th centuries CE), most of it written by Muslims, although examples exist of Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian, and Manichaean writings of this kind. These writings can be classified as theological writings on religious others, with different degrees of openness to understanding religious others on their own terms. In the case of Muslims writing on religious others, these ‘others’ are found both within a broadly defined Islamic community, that is, different Islamic schools of thought (*madhāhib*), as well as beyond it, that is, religions other than Islam, almost always starting with the people of the book (Jews, Christians, and in some cases, Zoroastrians and Manichaeans) and then moving on to other people. Most writings on religious others are written from the center to the periphery, where the center is the author’s particular interpretation of Islam and the rest depends on this center as well as the understanding, implicit more often than explicit, of where the boundary between Islam and non-Islam lies.

Muslim writings on religious others do not all come in the form of one clear genre. There existed a broader classification of writings on religious others, summarized in the following chart:

Islamic Centuries (AH) Common Era (CE)	II 8	III 9	IV 10	V 11	VI–IX 12–15	X–XIII 16–19	Total
1. Refutations	11	31	3	5	7	2	59
2. Descriptions	7	7	3	7	3	2	29
3. General heresiographies or literature on religious others		5	6	6	8	2	27
Miscellaneous (histories, encyclopedias, etc.)		6	1				7
TOTAL	18	49	13	18	18	6	122

This chart seeks to include all known pre-modern Muslim writings on non-Muslim religious others. It is based on Monnot’s initial chart covering thirteen Islamic centuries of literature on non-Biblical others (Monnot 1985: 44). In order to be inclusive of all non-Muslim religious others, I added Anawati’s (1969: 375–451) list of pre-modern Muslim writings on Christianity as well as Adang’s (1996) surveys of major Muslim Arabic writings on Jews and Judaism up to the middle of the eleventh century CE (see also Lazarus-Yafeh 1992: 19–49, and for Jewish views pp. 143–160).

This chart is useful for two reasons. First, it provides an overview of the production of Arabic writings on religious others over the entire span of pre-modern Islamic history produced in the geographical areas mostly included in NAWA. Second, it contrasts three clear genres, and one miscellaneous category,

of writings whose interrelationship is significant for understanding the production of each text and the cumulative development of a rich Muslim literature on religious others, only part of which falls within what I defined above as the pre-modern study of religions. My amplification of the chart does not significantly alter Monnot's conclusions. He argued (Monnot 1985: 44–46) that the second Islamic century witnessed the confrontation of two primary literary currents: on the one hand, polemical writings where the Mu'tazilīs attacked the old pre-Islamic religions and, on the other, books written by Muslims out of curiosity for non-Islamic worldviews. These two categories correspond respectively to 'refutations', a polemical form of negative prescription, and 'descriptions', an inquisitive form of writing that seeks to describe more than to judge. In the third Islamic century, the growth in polemical refutations and descriptions led to the development of what Monnot called 'general heresiographies', which I prefer to call 'literature on religious others'. This last genre is the only one containing works that can be included in a pre-modern study of religions.

Monnot explained this generic consolidation between refutations and descriptions by noticing the transition from polemical writings (*kutub al-radd*) to the progressively more systematized treatises (*al-maḳālāt*), within which category the general heresiographies fall. This consolidation occurred between the second and fourth Islamic centuries, a time when a variety of religious others were found in the early Islamic Arabic literature, as well as in non-Islamic Arabic and non-Arabic literatures. A combination of other pre-conditions was required for this new literature on religious others to develop: *literati* with some degree of individual expression and certain intellectual tools, centralization of literary production in urban centers, use-value of texts linked to political struggles, sponsorship by powerful political agents, and the need for justifying an ultimate 'Truth'. All of these elements were present in the context of the early Abbasid Caliphate (8th and 9th centuries CE), when fierce competition over ultimate meaning fueled the rise in refutations of both non-Muslim religions and various Islamic tendencies. Surprisingly, in the fourth Islamic century, the number of new refutations dropped drastically, in no small part due to the decline of Mu'tazilī prominence in intellectual circles and the overall victory of Islam over the Manichaeans, whose headquarters moved from Baghdad to Samarqand. In the next century, the production numbers remained similar, although the authors were by then Iranian Muslims writing on religious others in Arabic, with one exception written in Persian. Monnot concluded that, by the sixth Islamic century (12th century CE):

The danger for Islam has passed. The controversy, mutated into heresiography for more than two centuries, transforms itself imperceptibly into a history of religions, and becomes as such the context for works and investigations with objective tendencies which used to appear till then

in specialized works. (. . .) [B]y this evolutionary end, the two opposing currents that we noted at the beginning of the second century (refutation and description) are now both transmuted into the third genre.

(Monnot 1985: 46 [my translation])

This literature on religious others, which reflects the emergence of a pre-modern study of religions in Islamic history, is not widespread, as the numbers in the chart above indicate. Yet in terms relative to the production of knowledge during that pre-modern period of history, it represents more than isolated cases. The content of this literature and especially its methodologies in terms of the pre-modern study of religions point towards a cultural milieu that produced a strong basis for what I prefer to call a ‘proto-scientific study of religions’. So how did it all begin?

At the turn of the ninth century CE, a competition arose in the form of the *shu‘ūbīyah* movement between mostly Iranian converts to Islam, who sought to reclaim different aspects of their pre-Islamic Sassanian heritage, and Arab Muslims who emphasized elements of their pre-Islamic Arab heritage (Hodgson 1974: 461). This context throws light on the works of Ibn al-Kalbī (d. ca. 820) who both boasted of Arab ancestry with solid Islamic credentials and rejected any of the idolatrous practices of this Arabic heritage. He was probably the first Mu‘tazilī to talk about ‘concepts’ (*al-ma‘ānī*) (Nader 1984: 36), and that may have allowed him to produce the most ancient general treatise in Arabic on religious others: *Kitāb yaḥṭawī ‘alā ‘asharat kutub fī al-radd ‘alā ahl al-milāl* (Book composed of ten books of refutation against people of different nations) (Monnot 1985: 52). However, for the later Muslim scholar and scientist al-Bīrūnī (973–after 1050 CE), the only ‘objective’ author was al-Irānshahrī (10th century CE?), who towards the last quarter of the third Islamic century (ca. 900 CE) wrote two books no longer extant, entitled *Kitāb al-athīr* (Book of heights) and *Kitāb al-dalīl* ([or *jalīl*?]) (Book of lowliness [or glories?]) (Monnot 1985: 56). Other works were written in a composite style reflecting a natural propensity for fluid generic boundaries. The unknown author of *Akhhbār al-sīnd wa-al-hīnd* (Annals of China and India) compiled his travelogue work around 851 CE. Ibn Qutaybah (d. 889 CE) wrote his *‘Uyūn al-akhhbār* (Choice narratives) as a large work on *adab* (culture or manners) in which countless details about religious others can also be found.

The fourth and fifth Islamic centuries marked the peak of the development of a proto-scientific study of religions in Muslim writings, not so much in terms of numbers—they were in fact smaller than in the second and third Islamic centuries—but in terms of quality, which reflected the beginning of a methodological self-reflexivity. This period was also a golden age in Arabic literature in general, made possible by a concentration of economic and political power accumulated in various cities vying to control the vast Islamic empire or large segments of it (Hodgson 1974: 495). This competition produced

rivalries between courts, many of which sought knowledge to gain and secure political power. Many fields benefited from this surplus of patronage, allowing many Muslims to devote their time fully to research and writing, including on religious others. Some leaders benefited from understanding better the variety of religious others they had to govern. This interdependence between various fields of literary production and political needs marks the context within which the following examples of proto-scientific study of religions writings must be understood.

In the fourth and fifth Islamic centuries, roughly from 900 to 1111 CE, the nomenclature changed. It is contained in, but not synonymous with, the use of the word *maqālāt*, as first noticed by Monnot. Not all books on religious others were necessarily about religions other than Islam. The first book of this period, *al-Maqālāt wa-al-firaq* (Treatises and sects) of al-Ash‘arī al-Qummī (d. 914 CE), focused on the different Muslim Shi‘ite sects, as did one of the many books written by al-Nawbakhtī (d. between 912 and 922 CE) entitled *Firaq al-shī‘ah* (Shi‘ite sects). Both books were written in the polemical style of refutations. Al-Nawbakhtī also wrote an important refutation of the dualists at about the same time that al-Misma‘ī (d. ca. 900 CE) wrote his. Both refutations became the primary references for the classic work written three-quarters of a century later over a period of twenty years (970–990 CE) by the last major Mu‘tazilī theologian, ‘Abd al-Jabbār (ca. 932–1025 CE): *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawhīd wa-al-‘adl* (Complete reference on unicity and justice). This twenty-volume work, of which fourteen volumes are still extant, is best described as an encyclopedia. In its fifth volume, ‘Abd al-Jabbār refuted not only the dualists but also the Zoroastrians, the Christians, the Sabians, and the idolaters of the pre-Islamic Arabs (Monnot 1985: 65–66). His approach was closer to that of a treatise in format yet still refutational in style, while the overall presentation marked it as encyclopedic.

This work was by no means the only such complex work. The *Kitāb al-aghānī* (Book of songs) of Abū al-Farāj al-Isfahānī (897–967 CE) is a multi-volume work full of stories and anecdotes, many of which refer to religious others. Al-Mas‘ūdī’s (d. 956 CE) famous *Murawwij al-dhahab wa-ma‘ādin al-jawhar* (Promoter of golden [knowledge] and means of jewels) is another multi-volume work of *adab* in which much information on religious others is integrated in a way similar to that employed by ‘Abd al-Jabbār. Al-Mas‘ūdī also wrote profusely on religious others in works the genre of which fall more immediately within the formative generic system on religious others (Shboul 1979). Such production ‘makes him one of the most notable authors of *maqālāt*’ (Monnot 1985: 62). Finally, the *summum* of literary production on literature in general is the unique encyclopedia *al-Fihrist* composed in 987 CE by Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca. 990 CE). This work not only takes the *maqālāt* form, but also contains a series of *maqālāt*. It reflects the human need for integration of ever expanding parts into a newer whole. Yet strangely enough,

although it contains much valuable information on biblical and many non-biblical religious others, there is no mention of pre-Islamic Arab practices nor of Mazdaism (Monnot 1985: 64).

The desire for ever greater systematic integration characterizes the best production of the next century. *Al-Farq bayn al-firaq wa-bayān al-firqah al-nājiyah minhum* (Difference between sects and demonstration of the saved one among them) of the famous Ash'arite theologian al-Baghdādī is one of the most systematic classifications of sects both within and without Islam (Monnot 1985: 66; see also Laoust 1961). His contemporary al-Bīrūnī (973–after 1050 CE), probably the greatest medieval Muslim scientist, composed a number of works touching on religious others (Monnot 1985: 67). Two stand out. *Al-Athār al-bāqiyah 'an al-qurūn al-khāliyah* (Remaining works of past centuries), composed around 1000 CE, provided the most complete history of the world available in the Islamic world up to that time. *Tahqīq mā li-l-hind* (Achievements of India), composed after 1030 CE, covered mostly new grounds for Muslims who had never before had such first-hand exposure to the various religious systems of the Indian subcontinent. Al-Bīrūnī conducted his research for this second work under the patronage of Maḥmūd of Ghazna, who was at the height of his military and political power in the then eastern-most region of the Islamic world, South Asia. While the first work provided a great systematization of previous knowledge in history, the second brought a whole new level of understanding about Indian religions into the purview of Islam through a work written in a genre which was so descriptive as to reach levels often referred to as 'scientific objectivity' by readers today (cf. Courtoir and Ishaque [eds] 1951; also Lawrence 1976: 13–32, Embree [ed.] 1988, vol. 1: 437–446).

Apart from these great classics of systematization, the fifth century also saw the production of works on more focused topics, often with greater depth than previously. Al-Tha'ālibī (961–1038 CE) wrote *Ghurar akhbār mulūk al-fars wa-siyaribim* (Highlights of the great kings of Persia and their manners) on the history of ancient Persia, preserving valuable documents that might otherwise have been lost. In the same historical vein, al-Maqdisī wrote in 966 CE *al-Bad' wa-al-tārik* (The beginning and the history) with three separate sections on religious others that together form a short history of religions (Monnot 1985: 78). Sa'īd ibn Aḥmad al-Andalūsī (1029–1070 CE) wrote his short *Tabaqāt al-umam* (Hierarchies of the nations) on the history of sciences in the great civilizations of the ancient world.

The fifth Islamic century came to a close with the production of the first work on religious others composed in the Persian language, *Bayān al-adyān* (Explanation on religions), written in 1092 CE by Abū al-Ma'ālī al-'Alavī. It reflected a period when Persian had become an acceptable language of Islamic writing in various fields. The role of Persians in the overall production of works on religious others up to that time and into the next period is an important

factor which has often been noticed but rarely understood. It may have been due to Persians often growing up bilingual, if not multilingual, with strong ties to a culture whose roots were clearly linked to pre-Islamic religions. Moreover, writing on religious others may have been for Persian Muslims part of a process, most likely unconscious, of identifying with the other on the basis of one's own otherness given the power dynamics of Arab identity within the Islamic world. Al-Shahrastānī (1076–1153 CE), who technically belongs to the early part of the sixth Islamic century, culminated the trend set in the fifth. His famous work *Kitāb al-milal wa-al-niḥal* (Book of religious communities and systems of thought) was acclaimed by both Muslims of the next generations and by twentieth-century Western historians of religions. It is not surprising that his work is often referred to as the 'first history of religions'.

The next period from the sixth to the twelfth Islamic centuries (12th to 18th centuries CE) is marked by a radical shift: the production of great systematic works is replaced by an almost complete cessation of new production and the perpetuation of already existing writings on religious others. It is surprising that this genre did not altogether die out, given the paucity of its apparent use in official curricula. Nevertheless, this period is marked by small changes that are worth noticing. For example, Nashwān al-Himyārī (d. 1178 CE), in *al-Hūr al-'īn* (The heavenly women), surveys Islamic religious others along *maqālāt* lines, but in a style that follows after the section on *uṣūl al-fiqh* (foundation of jurisprudence). As for Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (ca. 1149–1209 CE), his *I'tiqādāt firaq al-muslimīn wa-al-mushrikīn* (Beliefs of Muslim and polytheistic sects) is written in the polemical style of refutations, but from a Sunni Ash'arite perspective. With the decline and disappearance of the Mu'tazilīs, the Ash'arites seem to have taken over the task of defending Islam from divisions both within and without. Ibn Ḥazm's perspective also had its follower in Ibn al-Jawzī (1116–1200), a well-known polemical Hanbalite, who wrote *Talbīs iblīs* (Deception of Iblis [Satan]) that contains a short *maqālāt* on religious others.

Writings in the proto-scientific study of religions may have ceased, but the refutations did not. Of the four authors writing in the eighth Islamic century, two wrote works from a strongly polemical Hanbalite perspective. Ibn Taymīyah (1263–1328 CE) composed four books touching on religious others, of which two have revealing titles: *Bughyat al-murtadd* (Rebellion of the apostate) and *Radd al-jahmīyah wa-al-zanādiqah* (Refutation of Jahmiya and Zanadiqa). Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah (1292–1350 CE) followed in the same line as his teacher, Ibn Taymīyah. The unknown author who wrote in Persian *Haftād-u se mellat* (or *I'tiqādāt-e madhāhib*) (Seventy-three nations – Beliefs of religions) exhibited a tendency that could only follow a period of classics: the production of concise summaries of previous masterworks. This short book contains brief passages on each of the seventy-three sects of Islam, the number of sects specified in a famous *ḥadīth* (Monnot 1985: 73).

The influence of this *ḥadīth* also appears in the famous *kalām* work *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* (Explanation of key points) of al-Jurjānī (1339–1413 CE). This *ḥadīth* on religious others is also found in a larger work, a phenomenon that paralleled a number of examples mentioned earlier, especially in historical, encyclopedic, and *adab* genres. (On *adab*, see Khalidi 1994, ch. 3; Bonebakker 1990, esp. pp. 27–30.) Within history, the more geographically circumscribed history of Egypt by al-Maqrizī (1364–1442 CE) continued the tradition of including religious others in bits and pieces. Al-Qalqashandī (1355–1418 CE) produced a famous *adab* work in which much information about religious others can be found piecemeal. But the preeminent figure of this ninth Islamic century is the Zaydī Imām, Ibn Murtaḍā who wrote two large works that include sections entitled *al-Milal wa-al-niḥal* (Monnot 1985: 74–75). The influence of al-Shahrestānī probably explains the relatively more frequent use of this expression as a generic category after the sixth Islamic century.

From the tenth to the end of the eleventh Islamic centuries, production of these kinds of works was very sparse. Al-Maḡbīlī (1631–1696 CE) wrote *al-Manār al-mukhtār min jawāhir al-baḥr al-zakḥkhār* (The chosen lighthouse for the bountiful ocean of jewels), a commentary on Ibn Murtaḍā's great work. Two books continued the refutation genre against the *zanādiqah*, one of which was Ibn Kamāl Bāsha's (d. 1533 CE) *Risālat taṣḥīḥ lafẓ al-zindīq* (Writing on the correction of the words of the polytheist). The reason for the on-going use of refutation may be linked to the more fluid nature and the changing definition of the term *zindīq*, an identity which was often attributed from outside in the form of an accusation rather than an identity with which members of a group identified themselves. This particular focus does not seem to have been used by the two Persian authors who wrote on religious others in the Persian language in these later centuries. Towards 1650 CE, Muḥsin-i Kashmīrī produced a unique *Dabestān al-madhābib* (Introduction to religions), itself the reflection of a 'school of religions' which is believed to have developed out of the syncretistic court of the emperor Akbar (1542–1605 CE). The famous Shi'ite author al-Majlisī (d. 1700 CE) wrote *Biḥār al-anwār* (Ocean of lights) in Arabic and two relevant books in Persian: *Tarjumi-ye towḥīdī-ye muḥaṣṣal* (Translation of the complete unicity) and *Tadhkirat al-a'immaḥ* (Permissions of leaders). This production was indeed very limited and did not include examples of the most central genres on religious others such as refutation or *maqālāt*. The few new works were, however, more than simple reproductions of earlier works.

For all practical purposes, by the end of the eleventh Islamic century or turn of the twelfth (*ca* 1700 CE), the production of literature on religious others had stopped. The one exception linking this perpetuation period to the modern period probably dates from the third quarter of the nineteenth century CE: the Persian work, *Tabaqāt al-mu'illīn, musbtamel bar avvalīn ashkhās-i ke be durugh iddi'ā-ye payghambarī nemudand va mahdavīyat-rā nīz modda'i*

shodand (Hierarchies of self-inflated people, including the first people who falsely claim to be prophets and also the messiah), by I'tihād al-Saltānī (1818–1880 CE) (Monnot 1985: 76–77). For our purposes, it is enough to say that this work ensured a modicum of continuity, despite the empty eighteenth century, between a vital formative generic system on religious others developed over several centuries and what was to become a revival of yet unknown magnitude in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries CE.

Some contemporary scholars point to these works in the proto-scientific study of religions, especially those produced between the fourth and the early sixth Islamic centuries, as the origins of the scientific or modern academic study of religions or *Religionswissenschaft*. They served the needs of a particular audience whose numbers must have remained small not only because of the low levels of literacy but also because of the nature of the subject. Yet in addition to serving the needs of certain political elites, they also provided a collective Muslim identity insofar as a few of these books became classics, thereby solidifying the boundaries of Muslim identity over and against a set of distinguishable others that had clearly been subjected by then to political domination. Those classics ratified the boundaries of Islamic normativity and served to crystallize a normative Muslim religious identity. It is therefore not surprising that as those boundaries solidified and Muslim power and prestige remained effectively unchallenged in most of the Islamic world until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the production of writings on religious others decreased and a period of reproduction settled in for the next six centuries. It was not until the advent of European colonialism (19th and 20th centuries CE) and the subsequent post-colonial period (20th and 21st centuries CE) that a new, modern academic study of religions developed in NAWA.

The emergence of the modern academic study of religions

In order to understand the emergence of the modern academic study of religions, two analytical dimensions need to be distinguished: the discursive lens through which this particular academic discipline was rationalized, and the institutional structures within which it was put into practice. Let me examine both in turn before turning to specific examples.

It is not appropriate to define the modern academic study of religions by *via negativa* as simply a non-confessional or non-theological approach to the study of religions. Nor is it satisfactory to use the term 'academic' for everything this discipline has come to include in the last century and a half. This dichotomy results in the simplistic image of a spectrum from theological or confessional approaches to those ambiguously included in the word 'academic'. For lack of a better alternative, I continue to use the term 'academic' in the rest of this chapter, but not without first problematizing it briefly.

The historical development of this academic discipline, on both discursive and institutional levels, is completely intertwined with the development of various initially European modernities, later exported to most regions of the world. At the heart of these modernities lay the powerful positivistic scientific discourse out of which emerged a 'science of religions' (*Religionswissenschaft*) or 'sciences of religions', in opposition to the pre-modern medieval theological discourses, mostly in their European Catholic and Protestant Christian expressions. From this struggle, mirrored in the large battles to define non-religious political mechanisms to supplant the powerful place of Christian religious institutions, emerged a unique tension within the early academic study of religions, epitomized by the simple question: Is there a place for theology in the scientific study of religions? The answers continue to polarize many scholars of religions in a way that the recent resurgence of religious and spiritual identities and practices is only exacerbating worldwide.

These discursive and ideological debates often take for granted the democratic space necessary for their existence, a pre-condition to the academic study of religions which is far from being a given in most NAWA countries. In addition, they often take for granted the economic underpinnings behind institutions that produce knowledge and know-how. Behind the word 'academia' or its adjective 'academic' lives a complexity of different institutional structures funded by a variety of sources. Their respective interests in the promotion, management, stifling or even repression of a religion or a religious ethos or religious power in one form or another, including in the public or private spheres, compete through the use of such powerful institutional markers as 'academic' or 'university'.

As was the case over a hundred years ago in Europe and North America, today, the modern academy, whether in Europe and North America (and to a much lesser degree Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand) or in NAWA, is made up of a variety of coexisting higher education institutions that span the whole spectrum from religiously to anti-religiously motivated, from spiritually grounded to not at all, from exclusively to inclusively focused in its own legitimization, and from openly pluralist to sectarian in its justifications to the outside world. These four vectors represent only a few of the possible ways we can begin to map out the variety of universities and research centers that claim to be part of the 'academy' today. The battle to define 'who is in and who is not' remains tense because disciplinary approaches are still mostly the result of rationalization processes that link them to one form of identity or another, with great competition and zeal for conversion to one's own version of the 'Truth'. The space for such debates often requires more than what a university provides; it requires a degree of freedom of expression within a given society. Indeed, it seems that there is a direct link between the emergence of a modern academic study of religions and democratic nation-state building.

The problem is particularly acute because this dichotomy blinds most scholars, whether self-defined as ‘theologians’, ‘scientists of religions’, or a combination of both, to the subjective discourse of a modern rationality that often underpins most theological and academic discourses in regard to religions. Indeed, most production of knowledge related to religion today is conceived within very specific institutional practices that would rather not question the *a priori* of the modern, such as the major influence of reductive positivist analyses of religions, whether they come from modern or post-modern academic theories applied to religious phenomena or from modern theological approaches often popularized as ‘fundamentalist’. The boundary between what is theological and what is non-theological in the study of religion is highly dependent on a person’s definition of these terms. The same goes for any other approach. The place of belief systems in the subjectivity of every human being is central to any rational process, however sophisticated it may be.

When these key terms in the study of religions are compared to other terminologies from different cultural and religious worldviews, certain dimensions are highlighted in a way that questions the definitional boundaries as well as the premises of the enterprise of both Christian theology and the academic study of religions as developed mostly in Europe and North America. This point was demonstrated in the above analysis of the proto-modern scientific study of religions in NAWA prior to the rise of the modern West. It will only be reinforced in the following analysis which raises the question as to why so few NAWA countries have any program in the modern academic study of religions and, when they do, why they often developed into hybrid forms somewhere between pre-modern and modern confessional approaches and modern and post-modern scientific approaches.

It will become apparent in the next paragraphs that the particular discipline under examination worldwide in this book is therefore linked to a definition that privileges its own historical emergence out of the conditions of a modern secular outlook that provides certain kinds of intellectual freedoms that are possible because of democratic practices. These conditions for a particular way of rationalizing what has been broadly defined as ‘religion’ have been often hidden behind the objectivist discourse of analysis found at the heart of how the modern academic study of religions came to develop, although many of the postmodern theoretical currents now question those assumptions as I do. Indeed, under the impact of the linguistic turn in all of the humanities and the social sciences, this particular approach to making sense of reality is not objective as such, but simply a different configuration of subjectivities with equal amounts of faith in the hidden system that has provided its logical structural framework. That particular kind of subjectivity is being challenged by all kinds of contemporary modernist and postmodernist forms of religious subjectivities. It is important to see the interdependence between all of them,

because it helps explain what is happening in North American institutions of higher learning as well as in the NAWA ones to which I will soon turn.

A final point remains to be made to complete the problematizing of this dichotomous spectrum between confessional/theological and modern academic study of religions. The emergence of the modern academic study of religions in NAWA is linked to Europe and North America because of their colonial and post-colonial history in the region. If we call this study of religions 'academic', then it assumes an 'academic' framework within which it operates. This framework is that of university institutions or research centers. How this particular form of academic institution came to develop in NAWA is not only a question of relatively recent colonial history; it is also a question of how post-colonial treatment of higher education took shape in newly independent nation-states whose imagined pre-modern traditions were integrated differently from institution to institution and from country to country. The result is a coexistence, within sometimes the same university walls, of widely different hermeneutical frameworks for interpreting religions, not to mention the degree of openness or not to using other disciplines in the search to understand religions better.

The development of the modern academic study of religions

The development of the modern academic study of religions in NAWA is linked to two aspects within the broader transformations taking place within modern education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: (a) the variety of institutions, and (b) the specific question of the relationship between theology (or *sharī'ah* in Islam and *halakhah* in Judaism) and the academic study of religions that grew mostly outside and in opposition to European and North American Christian religious institutions of higher learning.

There are four different kinds of institutions in NAWA, each with its unique historical genealogy: (1) transformed pre-modern educational institutions; (2) universities that grew from missionary institutions; (3) national universities within newly independent nation-states; and (4) private institutions of higher learning that have multiplied tremendously in the last decade or so. In most NAWA countries, a mix of these four kinds of institutions exists. I will provide a few examples of each in order to reflect not only the complexity but also the interdependence between these four kinds of genealogies in educational institutions of higher learning.

Transformed pre-modern educational institutions

The most famous example of a transformed pre-modern educational institution is Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. Founded in 970 CE, this institution has

gone through multiple transformations. Throughout the course of the twentieth century, several reforms and decisions transformed Al-Azhar from a pre-modern institution of learning into a modern university. Today, while there are courses in comparative religions and basic introductions to a few religions, primarily Abrahamic, the program remains focused on Islamic studies, parallel to what can be found in many seminaries and theology departments in universities of majority Christian countries. The same is true of the Ezzitouna University in Tunis with its Center for Islamic Studies in Kairouan, Tunisia.

Universities with roots in missionary institutions

The European Catholic promotion of educational institutions in the majority Muslim countries of NAWA goes back many centuries, especially in the case of Mount Lebanon. But few contemporary universities trace their history that far. In the second half of the nineteenth century, various Protestant missions began to establish general Liberal Arts institutions. These institutions were often doing much more than training their respective future religious leaders. Some of them were nationalized upon independence, others remained private or semi-private. In all cases, they benefited greatly from international ties and funding, making them often decades later the strongest universities in their areas. Yet their respective histories regarding the study of religions points to important dynamics and sensitivities possibly unique to NAWA, as exemplified in the following three cases in Turkey, Lebanon, and Egypt.

In Turkey, American Protestants founded Robert College in Istanbul in 1863. Initially they shied away from politics. But over time much of the intellectual elite of Turkey was trained at Robert College, especially prior to and during the early years of the Republic of Turkey. Given the increasing alliance with the United States after World War II, fluency in English only accentuated the value of a Robert College education. In 1971, however, the Turkish government took over the college at the invitation of its last independent Board of Trustees and renamed it Boğaziçi Üniversitesi (Bogazici University). By then, with the increased secularization of Turkish political and intellectual life in the early years of the modern republic, the initial missionary vocation of the school had long disappeared. Still today the university has no department for the study of religions, nor any for the closely related field of anthropology.

In Lebanon, a parallel history unfolded in the case of the American University of Beirut, founded in 1866 as the Syrian Protestant College and developed on the model of an American Liberal Arts institution. It claimed to welcome ‘all conditions and classes of men without regard to color, nationality, race or religion’ but also promised to inform its students about ‘what we believe to be the truth and our reasons for that belief’. After the name was changed to the American University of Beirut in 1920, several factors transformed this early ethos, including the influence of positivism in scientific discourse, especially

during the French mandate between World Wars I and II, and American secular influences in the latter part of the twentieth century. As a result, this otherwise first rate university never developed the academic study of religions nor any form of confessional teaching (theology or *shari'ah*), with the exception of two courses on religion and society, one in the department of social and behavioral sciences and one in the department of Arab culture and society. However, the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies does offer many closely related courses.

In Egypt, the historical trajectory of the American University in Cairo, founded in 1919, was similar to those of Robert College–Boğaziçi Üniversitesi and the Syrian Protestant College–American University of Beirut in matters pertaining to the teaching of religions—that is, until recently. In 2003, in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, a program arose around the newly established Abdulhadi H. Taher Chair in Comparative Religion. The following description is worth quoting at some length because it reveals both a particular academic approach to the study of religions and a preventive strategy to avoid misunderstandings:

Courses in the comparative study of religion aim at fostering students' cross-cultural understanding by increasing their knowledge about both their own religious traditions, such as Islam and Christianity, and other ones from around the world, such as Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and more localized religions. . . . The academic study of religion does not make value judgments; it is not interested in promoting or demoting any particular religion or religions, but is interested rather in understanding—in their own terms as much as possible—religions that grow out of cultures different from one's own.

The website also describes how courses on religion can be found in many other departments, such as anthropology, Arabic studies, art, Egyptology, history, Middle East studies, philosophy, political science, and sociology. The shift from religious origins to the total lack of instruction in or about religion in two of these three cases deserves further analysis, given the complexity of each local history.

National universities within newly independent nation-states

The situation of the academic study of religions is better in the third kind of institution of higher learning in NAWA, national universities. With political independence following the first and second decades after World War II, the development of national university systems went, for almost all NAWA countries, hand-in-hand with the consolidation of the nation-state. How and which religions were to be studied varied greatly with the ideology of each

nascent state. Here I can only provide a few examples. They reflect the same wide spectrum: from those where the academic study of religions has not emerged so far, to those where a hybrid curriculum exists, to those where the full spectrum is found, from theological/confessional approaches to those of the modern academic study of religions.

In *Morocco*, a course on ‘Schools of Beliefs and Thoughts and the History of Religions’ is offered in the final year of the undergraduate program in Islamic studies at the Université Hassan II in Casablanca. It is not clear whether any courses that could be considered as belonging to the academic study of religions are offered in the programs in Islamic studies found at the University of Mohammad V in Rabat, founded in 1957, the University of Cadi Ayyad in Marrakech and the University of Mohammed I in Oudja, both founded in 1978. Only this last university offers an undergraduate degree in history and civilization besides its program in Islamic studies.

In *Syria*, too, there is no program in the modern academic study of religions, but for a radically different reason. While Morocco preserved a pre-modern Islamic Studies program, Syria has undergone a process of secularization dating back to the new, modernized and westernized elites who gradually took power in various sectors during and after the French mandate period (1920–1946). By the end of the 1950s, the socialist ideology of the Baathist party had become dominant, and it increasingly secularized national institutions, including universities. This process did not eliminate the more traditional field of Islamic Studies. Instead, European-style faculties of law were created and promoted, to the extent that for the last few decades no judge has been able to work in the Syrian judicial system without a secular law degree, although a person may have both Islamic and secular legal training. At the University of Damascus the more historic faculty of Islamic law offers one of its four programs on ‘Beliefs and Religions’, although I have been unable to ascertain its content.

In *Iran*, the situation is different still. There is a vibrant Institute for Inter-religious Dialogue in Tehran, which makes an effort at a modern academic study of religions within its educational activities and courses. In addition, according to Mahdi Hasanzadeh of the University of Mashad (personal communication to Gregory Alles), the academic study of religions is pursued at the state-funded universities of Mashad, Tehran, Kashan, and Tabriz, and in a newly founded program (2007) in Qum.

In the *Palestinian Occupied Territories*, two universities are worth mentioning. The Al-Quds University established a Faculty of Qur’ān and Islamic Studies in 1996 with two departments: the department of Da’wa and the principles of religion (*usūl al-dīn*)—the Arabic term *da’wah*, for which the normal English translation, ‘mission’, is too narrow, is not translated on the English website of the University—and the department of Qur’ān and Islamic studies. According to its English online description:

The objective of the Faculty of Quran and Islamic Studies is to produce graduates with wide-ranging knowledge and deepened religious awareness who, as teachers or as court counselors, are capable of contributing to, and strengthening Arabic society and its cultural and religious bonds.

This statement reminds us of the two central principles of Islamic education developed in the medieval period (Affes 2000: 40–41) and demonstrates that these principles are still alive.

Bethlehem University, a Christian institution, offers within its Faculty of Arts a bachelor degree in religious studies ‘that concentrates on the study of Christianity from a Catholic and ecumenical point of view’. As at other NAWA institutions, this degree combines confessional and non-confessional approaches. It is different in that it requires all fourth-year students to take the course ‘Cultural Religious Studies’, an introduction and comparison of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam that also discusses their role in contemporary society. The department also offers optional courses on Islam (2 levels), Judaism, philosophy, and political science.

The situation in *Jordan* is very different. First, the population is relatively small. Only one university offers courses which resemble the modern academic study of religions: the Shari‘ah College at the University of Jordan. Its undergraduate program in the foundations of religion (*usūl al-dīn*) mostly covers Islam, but it includes a course on ‘Beliefs, Comparative Religions, and Mission’, another on ‘Contemporary Schools of Thought’, and a third on ‘Comparative Religions’. The last course includes the study of two monotheistic religions (Judaism and Christianity) and two ‘natural religions’ (Hinduism and Buddhism). The aim is to ensure that students will be able to situate themselves as Muslims vis-à-vis these four major religions. In the late 1980s I attended the course on comparative religions. While I cannot generalize on the basis of my limited experience, I did come to understand the limits of assessing the spread or depth of the modern academic study of religions solely on the basis of course titles or descriptions.

A very different institution, also based in Amman, is the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies founded in 1994. Its research, publications, and activities reflect the best academic standards and would normally be found within a university structure. However, its private character and intimate size allow a degree of freedom of thought and organization that rarely exists within much larger institutions that may be prey to less academically oriented societal and political influences. This research institute offers two programs: one in Arabic ‘on the study and documentation of all subjects pertaining to Christianity and Muslim-Christian relations’, and one in English on ‘questions relating to religious and cultural diversity in the world at large’. The Institute also publishes two journals, *Al-Nashra*, an Arabic quarterly, and the biannual *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies (BRIIFS)*, refereed by internationally

known scholars. The academic research carried out in this institute definitely falls within the modern academic study of religions. Its focus on topics that relate to local realities and regional political dynamics also brings an insight into how to make the modern academic study of religions more relevant to the primary context within which scholars practice their intellectual trade.

In *Lebanon* most of the spectrum between theology (or its equivalent) and the modern academic study of religions can be found. Most universities offer theological or *sharī'ah* studies programs that are strictly confessional. The Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, a Roman Catholic university in Beirut, has a program similar to the one found at Sharī'ah College in Jordan: the theological program includes courses in psychology, sociology, and 'the interreligious context of the Middle East', exposing theology students to various approaches in the social sciences and the humanities. These courses may or may not expose students to the modern academic study of religions. Further from the theological end is the Faculty of Religious Sciences (*Faculté des sciences religieuses*) that opened in 2001 at the Université St Joseph in Beirut. It brought together three older institutions, each keeping its original objectives: the Higher Institute of Religious Sciences (Institut Supérieur de Sciences Religieuses), the Institute of Islamo-Christian Studies (Institut d'Études Islamo-Chrétiennes), and the Arab Christian Documentation and Research Center (Centre de Documentation et de Recherches Arabes Chrétiennes). All three directly reflect Christian sensitivities and needs.

Around this synergy of expertise and resources, the Faculty was able to create a Science of Religions department. It is interesting to note that the word 'science' remains in the singular in the name of this department as well as in the degrees granted, when the word is used in the plural in the name of the Faculty. This small point requires further investigation because it may point to a subtle confessional adaptation of the terminology linked to the modern academic study of religions within the larger scientific discourse in existence within the normative university format in contemporary higher education. The department's mission statement demonstrates the self-conscious desire of this university to work within and contribute towards a unique Lebanese pluralism. It also argues for the place of religious dimensions in the culture of modern societies in a way that prepares for a middle ground approach to the often dichotomous language of religion and secularism, a position shared by many Islamic institutions throughout NAWA. The department also sees itself as promoting 'the unique role of Lebanon in the dialogue of cultures and religions in a post-modern context marked by globalization'. This vision is epitomized by the creation in 2002 of a UNESCO Chair in the Comparative Study and Dialogue of Religions in this Faculty. It is a member of UNITWIN, a network that promotes interregional linkages in higher education.

Turkey presents a unique hybrid case between theology and the modern academic study of religions, reflecting both its geographical position and its

twentieth-century history. After nationalizing and secularizing all education from 1924 onwards, the founder of the modern Republic of Turkey, Atatürk, secularized and expanded higher education. Without entering into the details of the subsequent history, in the 1990s changes in attitude towards religion in general and Islam in particular brought about a rapid growth in new departments or faculties of theology (*ilahiyat fakültesi*). Today, there are at least twenty-three. The faculty of divinity at Istanbul University was founded in 1996, although its history goes back to 1870—or allegedly even to the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmet the Conqueror in 1453. Its English homepage presents its aims while revealing the context within which these aims have been carved in the late twentieth century:

The aim of the Faculty of Divinity is to get students to understand Islam better and to be able to make comparisons between it and other religions. The main principle of the Faculty is to train individuals who are tolerant, respectful of humans, and devoted to universal values and the principles and reforms of Atatürk. Nevertheless, we also aim to train our students to think on the Coran, to unify Islam with science, and to present Islamic culture to them in its purified form, devoid of superstitions.

Dokuz Eylül University in Izmir was founded in 1982 as a consortium of several older institutions. Like the faculty at Istanbul, its faculty of theology offers fundamental Islamic sciences (*temel islam belimleri*), philosophical and religious sciences (*felsefe ve din bilimleri*), and the history and arts of Islam (*islam tarihi ve sanatları*). (Istanbul also offers world religious cultures [*dünya dinleri kültürü*].) The department of philosophy and religious sciences at Dokuz Eylül has distinct programs in the philosophy, sociology, psychology, and history of religion, as well as in religious education, the philosophy of Islam, logic, and the history of philosophy. The first six programs fall within the academic study of religions. A very similar configuration of programs also exists at the University of Harran, founded in 1987, which started its own faculty of theology in 1992 at the same time as that of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. Ankara University combines what is available at Istanbul University with the same six programs as the universities at Izmir, Harran, and Çanakkale.

The composition of the faculty at these universities is telling. Of the twenty-eight members of the faculty of theology with doctorates at Harran, only five are trained outside of Turkey (La Sorbonne, France; St Andrews, Scotland; University of Texas, USA; and two at Manchester University, England). The composition of the faculty thus points to a near self-sufficiency in the production of doctorates in the modern academic study of religions in Turkey. This relatively new development coincides with the rapid growth in the number of universities, which is itself a response to an ever-increasing demand due to an earlier demographic explosion that has now come of university age.

In *Israel*, as in Turkey, it is possible to find examples from the whole spectrum of religion and theology among the many universities. Bar-Ilan University was founded in 1955 in the city of Ramat Gan, within the district of Tel Aviv. It reflects a dream 'to create an institution of higher learning in the newly-established Jewish republic in which Jewish learning and the Torah of Israel would be studied together with all the latest findings in the fields of human research'. The vision of integrating Jewish traditional religious learning with all forms of modern sciences unfolded in the development of this university, but not so obviously in its Faculty of Judaism, which lacks a variety of courses on religions other than Judaism. The only program at Bar-Ilan that comes close to transcending an intrareligious focus is the program of Sephardic and Oriental Judaic Studies, which does offer a course on Islam. Bar-Ilan may, then, reflect another possibility not yet encountered in NAWA institutions: a modern academic study of religions approach used almost entirely on one religion, in this case Judaism. Ben Gurion University of the Negev is similar. Separate departments of Jewish History, Jewish Thought, and General History exist side by side there, but no attention is given to the modern academic study of religions in general. It would be necessary to examine syllabi carefully to determine whether what these two universities are doing falls within the purview of the modern academic study of religions.

Hebrew University of Jerusalem boasts the oldest and strongest department of comparative religion in Israel, dating back to 1956 when it was first designed as a graduate department in the faculty of the humanities. As it describes itself:

its aim has been to provide graduate students with knowledge of the major questions, concepts, methods, and texts related to various religious systems, as well as to equip them with rigorous academic and philosophical methodologies for researching the historical and comparative aspects of religions.

The curriculum within the department contains courses in the general study of religion, religious phenomenology, and hermeneutics, with particular emphasis on the in-depth reading of texts in their original languages. In order to promote an interdisciplinary approach to the study of religion, the students are encouraged to explore the philosophical, sociological, anthropological and psychological aspects of religion by linking with relevant departments at the university. The list of related institutes and departments is particularly rich: archaeology, Asian and African studies, Armenian studies, cognitive science, East Asian studies, contemporary Jewry, Jewish studies, and Islamic and Middle Eastern studies, among others. Faculty in the department of comparative religion have focused their research on early Christianity and its relationship to Judaism, Gnosticism and Manichaeism, the religious tradition

of Armenia, the phenomenology and structural analysis of religion, and the religions of Asia, particularly of India and Iran. Recently the department has also included within its research and teaching the study of Islam, in particular Islamic mysticism.

The Open University of Israel, founded in 1974, does not have a department focused on the academic study of religions. However, it has a department of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies, in which can also be found programs on the history of Islam and its culture (note the singular), the land of Israel and its cultures (note the plural), the Middle East, the classical world, the Jewish people, and the Western world, as well as topics in philosophy and Judaic studies. Common to all the courses in this department is the focus on primary sources.

Similarly, the Tel Aviv University, founded in 1953, does not have a department for the modern academic study of religions. Instead, courses on various religions, though mostly Judaism and to a lesser degree Islam, can be found in various other programs and departments, such as archeology, history of the Middle East and Africa, history of the Jewish people, *miqra*, Jewish philosophy, *kabbalah* and Hasidism, Asian studies, Arabic and Islamic studies, classical studies, literature, philosophy, and several language and linguistic programs. Just as at the Open University the emphasis in programmatic nomenclature is on history, so the emphasis at Tel Aviv University is on languages. Finally, the University of Haifa seems to reflect a mixture of both history and language, with no academic program in the modern academic study of religions.

Private institutions of higher learning

The explosion of private institutions of higher learning since roughly 1990 in most NAWA countries has resulted from several interrelated factors: new democratic and economic freedoms in a post-Cold War context; new technologies; and increased demand from local populations. This last factor is due in part to the demographic explosion in most NAWA countries, the lack of means to study abroad, and the increased political difficulties of obtaining visas to study especially in Western universities. Some of these institutions carry the name of ‘university’ while being very small and limited in focus. Others prefer to be called an ‘institute’ or ‘research center’, while still providing an important complement to major universities. The result has been increased competition but also increased access by students to a much wider variety of fields in higher education. There is no space in this chapter to examine the trend beyond what has already been said about the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies in Jordan.

Emerging issues

The most important emerging issues are similar to those in Europe and North America. The tensions between secular versus religiously based approaches to the modern academic study of religions reflects a variety of commitments among scholars of religion. These are in turn found in the variety of academic programs and in the production of writings on religions. If by 'academic' one means 'non-confessional' or 'non-theological', then the percentage of academic production versus non-academic production on topics related to religions is small indeed. What remains more important, though, is how the various genres in writings on religions in NAWA interrelate with each other today, as they certainly did in the first few centuries of Islamic history. To what extent is there a symbiosis between these various perspectives that sometimes seem so contradictory? Are they more complementary than can be discovered at first glance? This inter-relationship between the variety of hermeneutical approaches in the current study of religions, whether academic or not, modern or not, is one of the emerging issues that needs further examination.

Another emerging issue is the need to study how the Western modern academic study of religions is linked to the emergence of Western secular and democratic states. The development of the modern academic study of religions in NAWA clearly tends in this direction. Wherever there is a higher degree of democracy and important pockets of secular discourses within a country, there is a possibility of encountering there a modern academic study of religions. Is this also the case in other parts of the world?

A third emerging issue is the institutionalization of the modern academic study of religions, which represents a central marker of how this particular academic field of study has developed over the last century in this region of the world. It is the best indicator by which the growth of the modern academic study of religions can be measured, albeit still imprecisely.

Finally, I would maintain that the modern academic study of religions, in the balance, benefits from a plurality of institutional genealogies and current programmatic practices. Yet for most countries in NAWA the link between institutions of higher learning and new investment in education during the colonial period as well as intellectual training outside the region at the present time, points toward a dependence, especially on Europe and North America, which has not yet turned into inter-dependence. This is particularly the case for the modern academic study of religions. Just what happened in the initial encounter with colonialism and modernity that the vitality of the medieval proto-scientific study of religions could not be sustained? Why did this study not lead to an internal revival similar to what happened in the field of Arabic literature? The answer may not lie simply with the anti-religious or a-religious stance of Western modernity, found within the normative positivist scientific

discourse that was on the rise during the colonial period both among the colonialists and the rising local elites. It may also be due to the internalizing of positivist thinking in all scientific spheres as well as in the popular apologetic stance of newly urbanized and recently modernized religious people. This double resistance to the modern academic study of religions has slowed down its emergence and growth in NAWA, albeit with often very different stories depending on each country's pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial history.

NOTE

- 1 Useful volumes for considering the general topic of this chapter include Gibb (ed.) 1954, Huff 1993/2003, Makdisi 1981, Kitagawa (ed.) 1992, Norris 1990, Tibawi 1979, Vajda 1938, and Waadenburg 1966. For the situation in Turkey, Adanali n.d. and Dobers *et al.* (eds) 1987 have also been consulted.

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4

Sub-Saharan Africa

Ezra Chitando

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THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS, ALSO REFERRED TO AS religious studies in this chapter, has emerged as an important academic discipline in sub-Saharan Africa. This is a region where religion continues to be vibrant. Numerous religions of the world are found in sub-Saharan Africa, leading Jan G. Platvoet (1996: 7) to refer to “a rainbow of religions.” A number of scholars have adopted an academic and non-confessional approach to religious studies in the region. They have made distinctive contributions to the discipline, especially to the study of African Traditional Religions (ATRs, also referred to in this chapter as indigenous religions), to method and theory in the study of religion, and to describing the various religions found in the region (Chitando 2005b). While the development of religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa has been closely related to trends in Europe and North America, it has its own distinctive characteristics.

Due to the fact that sub-Saharan Africa is a vast territory, this chapter can do no more than tease out trends in religious studies in the region. Generalizations are often difficult, as there are regional variations in the development of the discipline. Indeed, variations are sometimes found in the growth of religious studies within a particular country. It is crucial to examine religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa as the region is often marginalized in surveys of the discipline, including those that purport to adopt a “global” perspective. Usually, an impression is created that there is no religious studies in Africa. Furthermore, some surveys of scholars who have mastered the craft of religious studies (Stone 1998) do not include any African scholars. This is unfortunate, as a number of African scholars have made useful contributions to the study of religions. At any rate, some European scholars who had their formative years in religious studies in Africa have proceeded to occupy strategic positions in the discipline. Rosalind I. J. Hackett, who taught in Nigeria, was elected President of the International Association of the History of Religions (IAHR) for the period 2005–2010. The IAHR is the leading association in the discipline. The neglect of developments in religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa is also surprising, given that key European writers such as F. Max Muller (1823–1900) and James G. Frazer (1854–1941) made references to African religions in their works (Berner 2004).

The identity of religious studies in Africa remains heavily contested and controversial. Although many African scholars are aware of the sharp distinction between religious studies and theology that has been promoted by some European and North American scholars, most tend to adopt the convergence thesis (Olupona 1996a: 186). In this scheme, religious studies and theology are not viewed as antagonistic and mutually exclusive fields of study. However, in some countries such as Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, the tension between religious studies and theology has been high. In this chapter, I shall maintain the position that seeks a firm demarcation between the two areas. Consequently, I will concentrate on those scholars whose work is located

more firmly within the academic study of religions. However, I will draw attention to the stance by many African scholars that the tension between the two disciplines should not be imported to the region. According to James L. Cox (1994), perhaps the conflict between religious studies and theology is not as pronounced in Africa because African scholars who undertake the study of religions are themselves religious.

Although the study of religions in Africa is also undertaken at theological training institutions, Islamic centers, and Faculties of Divinity at church-related universities, departments of religious studies (and alternative labels) in state-sponsored universities constitute the central focus of this chapter. The review is also tilted toward the study of religions in Anglophone countries. The discipline is not well developed in French and Portuguese speaking areas of the region.

Prehistory of the study of religions

It has often been assumed that education, and consequently the study of religion in sub-Saharan Africa, is tied to the arrival of European settlers. Such a view might be informed by age-old prejudices against Africa, its people, and its institutions. It might also be a result of placing too much emphasis on literacy as opposed to oral traditions. Richard King (1999: 62) rightly notes that ‘the vast majority of religious expression throughout history has been of a non-literate nature, taking the form of speech, performance, or iconography’. Like all other people in the world, the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa have traditions of imparting knowledge and values. They have also been reflecting on the meaning of life since ancient times. An analysis of indigenous approaches to religion will enable us to appreciate how they might have facilitated the general acceptance of religious studies when it was introduced as an academic discipline in the twentieth century.

There was, and has remained, scope for the critique of religion in African societies. Although ideology creates the impression that religious beliefs and practices that have been handed down from one generation to another are immutable, there is considerable openness in ATRs. Pre-colonial African education played an important role in empowering members of society to appreciate the fact that reality is complicated. Proverbs enabled learners to adopt a critical stance towards inherited wisdom. African proverbs are open to a multiplicity of interpretations, including contradictory ones. While some proverbs would promote communalism, others would highlight its potentially oppressive dimensions. This emphasis on a critical approach to life is also discernible in how members of the community were encouraged to utilize their own intellectual resources. For example, among the Shona people of Zimbabwe a person seeking advice from others, including those in the realm

of the spirits, was encouraged to have his or her own independent assessment of the issues at hand. Thus, *zano tsvaka uine rako* ('seek advice while having your own stance').

Pre-colonial African education, though non-formal, served as a precursor to religious studies by promoting a non-fundamentalist approach to religion. Individuals were encouraged to adopt a critical stance towards religious beliefs and practices. Oracles from the divinities and ancestors could be questioned if it was felt that they were going against the communal good. African communities had been characterized by openness towards religious change, even before the arrival of missionary religions. A good example is how the practice of killing twins had been challenged by some individuals in the Shona religion in Zimbabwe. Sages could step back and provide critical commentary on religious beliefs. They played an important role in African communities (Oruka 1991). Pre-colonial traditions of dealing intellectually with religion existed in Africa. There were individuals such as poets who could comment cynically on the religious beliefs and practices of their own communities. Atheists and agnostics would also criticize some dimensions of ATRs. However, there is need for further research into this area. The major stumbling block has been the insistence by most African scholars that in traditional society "everyone" was religious.

The emergence of the study of religion

Before the emergence of religious studies as an academic discipline in sub-Saharan Africa, various groups of writers provided information on the indigenous beliefs and practices. Prior to the writings by Europeans, Arab traders active between the eighth and fifteenth centuries had described ATRs. However, many of their accounts were colored by prejudice (Kalu 1991: 94). Later, accounts by European travelers, missionaries, amateur anthropologists, and other writers sought to acquaint readers with data on indigenous religions. Although most of these accounts were distorted, they provided a useful basis for the emergence of religious studies. Dutch mercantile publications on African societies and religions that appeared between 1594 and 1872 are good examples (Platvoet 2004: 75).

In the twentieth century, European academic anthropologists and colonial administrators began to adopt scholarly perspectives on African institutions. Although some African scholars such as Okot p'Bitek (1931–1982) have argued that such researchers were an integral part of the colonial enterprise (p'Bitek 1971), African scholars of religion have still been able to utilize these writings. Some "non-indigenous" authors have produced valuable descriptions of indigenous religions. They have also offered significant reflections on method and theory in the study of religions.

The emergence of religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa is directly related to the interaction between the region and European expansionist policies. Of particular significance is the role of Christian missionaries in setting up educational institutions in the region. As was the case in Europe, religious studies emerged out of the matrix of theology. Most educational institutions in sub-Saharan Africa that emerged during the colonial period were established by missionaries.

Following the partitioning of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, colonialists did not place emphasis on the educational advancement of Africans. Rather, it was missionaries who regarded literacy as a part of Christian identity. Consequently, missionaries established schools where Africans could access education. The mission school became an agent for social change and attracted young people in Africa (Isichei 1995: 237). Both Catholic and Protestant missionaries regarded the mission school as a strategic resource for evangelization.

After around 1920, following World War I, colonial governments in Africa began to make significant investments in African education. However, it is crucial to observe that the emergence of religious studies in particular African countries depended on the policy of the colonial power towards religion. As a result, religious studies tended to thrive in British colonies. On the other hand, French colonies did not develop religious studies as the separation between church and state in France was quite acute. In addition, while the British sought to promote religious training and moral instruction, at least in theory, the French policy of assimilation was designed to establish French culture in Africa (Ter Haar 1990: 36–37). This has resulted in Anglophone and Francophone regions having different patterns in the field of religious studies. Former Portuguese and Belgian colonies also did not develop religious studies.

It is also important to bear in mind that Islamic education has influenced the character of religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, 'Islamic schools and universities flourished centuries before the arrival of Christianity and Western education' (Ter Haar 1990: 24). Islam has a long history in West Africa, resulting in the development of African Islam. It has formed the basis of the education system of some of the countries in this part of the continent. The academic study of religion in sub-Saharan Africa has therefore been influenced by Islamic education.

Religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa is linked to the emergence of universities in the region. Most of the universities were founded after World War II. However, Fourah Bay College 'was founded in 1827 by CMS (Church Missionary Society), and affiliated to Durham University in 1876, reconstituted in 1926 and incorporated into the University of Sierra Leone in 1960' (Platvoet 1989: 107). Fourah Bay was meant to produce an educated Christian ministry, attracting students from Anglophone West Africa (Walls 2004: 209). The

experiences that it had are useful as other African institutions that were established later had similar experiences.

In Uganda, Makerere College began as a Technical College in 1922 and became a University College affiliated to the University of London in 1949. In 1970 it attained university status (Platvoet 1989: 109). Fourah Bay and Makerere were to play significant roles in the growth of religious studies in the region. The emergence of religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa is noteworthy in that it had implications for the discipline in Britain. Following the destruction of Fourah Bay during World War II, the Colonial Office in Britain planned to have more tertiary institutions in Africa. This resulted in the setting up of universities at Legon in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and at Ibadan in Nigeria. Consequently, the department of religious studies was inaugurated at the University College of Ibadan in 1949 by J. W. Welch and Geoffrey Parrinder (Hackett 1988: 37).

The setting up of the department of religious studies at Ibadan was a milestone as Parrinder introduced African Traditional Religion (in the singular) as an academic discipline. Other departments of religious studies were to emerge in Nigerian universities, including at Nsukka, Jos, Lagos, Calabar, Ilorin, Ife, Port Harcourt, and other centers. Writing in the 1990s, Jacob Olupona (1996a: 187) noted that of some thirty-five universities in Nigeria, departments of religious studies existed in about twenty-five of them. The study of ATRs is popular in most of these universities.

By the 1960s, with the wave of decolonization sweeping across Africa, many African states had established national universities. These were meant to assist in the project of national identity formation. It was envisaged that they would help undo the colonial mentality that had promoted an inferiority complex in many Africans. Departments of theology were renamed 'departments of religious studies' to reflect the reality of religious pluralism in African countries. In Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, the national leader, influenced the adoption of the name, 'department for the Study of Religions' (Walls 2004: 211). This name sounds better, as 'religious studies' remains closely linked to theology.

Anglophone West Africa emerged as a strategic region in the study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa. As other reviews of religious studies in West Africa have noted (Olupona 1996b; Adogame 2004), the discipline enjoys a satisfactory profile. Nigeria, with its numerous universities, merits a more detailed analysis than can be provided in this chapter (Hackett 1988; Olupona 1996a). Writing in the late 1980s, Peter McKenzie (1989: 101) noted that the greatest development within the history of religions, not only in West Africa but in Africa as a whole, was taking place in Nigeria. This most populous black African country has produced some of the leading scholars in religious studies in Africa. Although some of the scholars have moved to Europe and North America, Nigeria continues to take the study of religions seriously. Furthermore, some of the scholars who are still based in Nigeria have periodic

attachments at universities abroad. The capacity of Nigerian scholars to network has enabled them to remain abreast of developments in the field.

Although religious studies does not feature in those Nigerian universities that concentrate on Arabic and Islamic studies (McKenzie 1989: 101; Walls 2004: 212), the study of Islam is part of religious studies programs at many universities. Olupona (1996a: 188–189) observes that in the far Northern States where Islam is dominant, Christianity rarely features in university programs. In the Middle Belt States such as Jos, Islam and Christianity are covered. However, proponents of a more detailed study of Islam contend that the religious studies approach to Islam in Nigeria is ‘superficial and does not lead to the mastery of the subject’ (Abubakre 1996: 265; see also Hackett 1988: 41). Effectively therefore, Islam and Christianity have tended to be studied within a confessional paradigm. However, religious studies is gradually emerging in these areas as more scholars are adopting a multifaith approach.

Alongside Nigeria, Ghana has a sound tradition in religious studies. The department for the Study of Religions at the University of Ghana, Legon, and the department of religious studies at Cape Coast have promoted a non-confessional approach to the study of religions. However, other West African countries, including Cameroon, The Gambia, Ivory Coast, and others have not developed departments of religious studies. As noted earlier, Francophone countries have not placed emphasis on the study of religions as a distinct discipline.

In East Africa, religious studies has been popular in Uganda and Kenya. I have already drawn attention to the pioneering role of Makerere in the emergence of the discipline in sub-Saharan Africa. Kenya has active departments of religious studies. However, as was the case elsewhere in Africa, in the early period of the discipline there was emphasis on Bible knowledge. Thus, ‘well into the 1970s, the study of religion could hardly be distinguished from religious indoctrination and religious instruction’ (Hinga 1996: 221). Despite the challenges faced by scholars in religious studies in Kenya (Wamue 2004: 368–370), the discipline continues to attract many students. Due to the earlier socialist policies, Tanzania did not develop a department of religious studies.

Southern Africa has witnessed some interesting developments in the field of religious studies. Alongside Nigeria, South Africa has offered useful perspectives on the academic study of religions. However, most of the contributors have been white male scholars. Due to the legacy of apartheid, very few black scholars have specialized in religious studies. They tend to be concentrated in fields such as theology, church history, missiology, and others. In his review of South Africa’s contribution to religious studies, Martin Prozesky (1996: 230–233) observed that South African scholars had offered reflections on method and theory in the study of religions. However, by the end of 2003, the restructuring of tertiary education had resulted in mergers of some departments of religious studies (Clasquin 2005: 18).

Zimbabwe has a strong tradition in religious studies (Chitando 2002). McKenzie (1989: 104) maintains that Zimbabwe 'has a good claim to a degree of pre-eminence in the whole continent for its attention to the study of religion and its branch disciplines as understood by the IAHR'. However, with the political and economic crisis facing the country after 2000, maintaining these standards has become a major challenge. Other countries in the region, including Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland have also promoted religious studies. Namibia has endeavored to emancipate religious studies from theology (Lombard 1995). In Malawi, the department of theology and religious studies has been active in the areas of research and publication. Zambia has not seen the emergence of a department of religious studies, although religious education is offered in the Faculty of Education at the University of Zambia.

The development of the study of religions

Major ideas and problems

In addition to providing data on the religions found within the region, scholars in religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa have made significant contributions to method and theory (Platvoet 1993). For the purposes of this survey, I have selected three main themes for analysis. These are: the study of ATRs, efforts to clarify the meaning of religion, and adoption of multi-disciplinary approaches to the study of religion. Other areas of emphasis that may be pursued include the study of African Christianity and other religions of the world found in Africa, religion and ecology, religion and healing, and New Religious Movements.

Major ideas. One of the major ideas emerging from religious studies in Africa is the contention that African indigenous religions are an integral part of human religious history. Generations of European writers had dismissed ATRs as superstition, magic, idolatry, and a host of other condescending labels. African scholars have re-positioned the study of ATRs as a viable academic undertaking. While European scholars such as Parrinder laid the foundation in the 1950s, it was Africans such as John Mbiti and E. Bolaji Idowu who proceeded to formulate principles for the study of ATRs. They provided a more balanced perspective and illustrated the centrality of religion to African life.

In their reflections on the study of ATRs, African scholars have made valuable contributions to methodology in the study of religion in general (Uka 1991). While religious studies in Europe and North America has been predominantly the study of written texts, African scholars have drawn attention to the need to examine oral texts. The focus on sacred writings by scholars based in Europe and North America has textualized religious studies. The result has been a concentration on the religion of the text, rather than the lived

religion that is found in the villages and cities of the world today. There is now a growing realization that the study of religions needs to take fieldwork seriously (Spickard, Landres and McGuire 2002). African scholars were forced to embark on fieldwork by the very nature of the main religion in their area, namely, ATRs. In most departments of religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa, dissertations and theses include an aspect of fieldwork. It is unfortunate that most of these valuable studies by students do not get published, as they are often of very high quality.

Within the context of studying ATRs, African scholars have made useful reflections on the insider/outsider problem in the study of religion. Surprisingly, overviews of this theme tend to focus exclusively on reflections by European and North American scholars (McCutcheon 1999). African scholars have maintained that 'insiders', that is those who share the African worldview, have a greater chance of understanding African indigenous religions than 'outsiders', that is researchers from Europe and North America. The reflexivity of African scholars has been visible in the willingness to ask whether African scholars who have converted to Christianity and Islam should be classified as 'insiders'. Furthermore, the status of African scholars who are now based abroad has also come under scrutiny. Women African scholars have illustrated the complexity of the insider/outsider problem by showing how male African researchers are 'outsiders' in relation to aspects of African women's experiences. Indeed, religious studies in Africa has provided some of the most heated debates on the intriguing question of who is best placed to study religion (Chitando 2001).

A second major idea emerging from religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa is that religion is an integral part of African life. Like their counterparts in other parts of the world, African scholars have grappled with the primary question, what is religion? Without engaging the problematic of the origin of religion, scholars such as Mbiti and Idowu have maintained that, at least in Africa, *homo Africanus* is *homo religiosus*. Other African scholars have reiterated that religion permeates all aspects of African life, including morality, economics, and politics, among others. This challenges the dominant approach to religion in the West that tends to regard religion as a separate and distinct entity. Although this notion of religion has come under severe criticism by some Western scholars, it has continued to enjoy considerable currency. African scholars have insisted that religion is not a disembodied phenomenon. For them, it is built into the various aspects of life. Publications on religion by most African scholars make the all-pervasive nature of religion a basic assumption. Although this stance is problematic, especially in its logical inconsistency whereby 'everything is religious', it runs through most reflections on religion by African scholars.

There have been efforts by some scholars in Africa to identify the 'core concern' of religion. According to the phenomenology of religion, or at least

its essentialist 'voice' (Twiss and Conser 1992), it is possible for a researcher to establish the central thrust or heart of religion. Writing from South Africa, Prozesky (1984) maintains that "health and well-being" is the major focus of religion. He reaches this conclusion after an overview of the central beliefs of the numerous religions of the world. A Tanzanian theologian, Laurenti Magesa (1997), identifies the quest for abundant life as the core concern of African Religion (his preferred term for ATRs). Such exercises in the phenomenological ideal of performing the eidetic intuition are often marginalized in theoretical formulations about religion in Europe and North America.

A major idea emerging from religious studies in Africa is that the study of religion necessarily requires a multidisciplinary approach. Although the phenomenological approach has been popular, especially in the study of ATRs (Chitando 2005a), African scholars have utilized various approaches. The study of religions has embraced historical, sociological, psychological, and other approaches. Scholars such as Olupona, Prozesky, and others have refrained from imposing one specific approach. This is due to the contention that religion is a complex phenomenon. Consequently, no single approach will do justice to it. Where religious studies abroad has witnessed boundary wars, in Africa the tendency has been to acknowledge that certain aspects of religion call for specific approaches. The diverse approaches to the study of religion have been regarded as complementary rather than antagonistic.

I should emphasize that although African scholars have come up with some creative methodological proposals, very few African scholars have built careers around methodological reflection. The abundance of religious material in Africa has meant that more time is spent actually studying religion than proposing how religion should be studied. This is not to imply that methodological reflections in religious studies are of little value. It is only to indicate that methodological reflections have been subordinated to fieldwork. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that methodological problems continue to dog the study of ATRs (Adogbo 2005).

The study of religions in Africa has not been limited to ATRs. African scholars have provided valuable material on the various religions that are found on the continent. Such studies include overviews of the religions found in particular countries, such as Peter Kasenene's (1993) description of religion in Swaziland. Scholars of religion in South Africa have also offered detailed accounts of the religious situation in that country (Prozesky and De Gruchy 1995). Studies such as these have shown that the religious scene in sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by radical pluralism. Other immigrant religions found in sub-Saharan Africa include Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, the Parsee religion, Jainism, Chinese religion, Buddhism, the new esoteric religions, the Baha'i religion and African American religions (Platvoet 1996:50). However, there are very few studies that actually focus on these immigrant religions in sub-Saharan Africa.

While scholars of religion have endeavored to cover the various religions found in sub-Saharan Africa, the study of Christianity and Islam in Africa has been dominated by theologians. In most departments, Christianity and Islam tend to be treated differently from other religions. There are specific courses on Christianity and Islam in Africa, while there are very few courses on the other immigrant religions in Africa. More often than not, specialists on Christianity and Islam in Africa tend to fall outside religious studies when narrowly defined. Nonetheless, there is constant interaction between scholars in religious studies and those in fields that are closely related to it.

Major problems. While there have been significant developments in religious studies in Africa, there are a number of problems. I shall divide the problems into two broad categories, namely, theoretical and economic. I shall begin by examining the theoretical challenges that bedevil religious studies in Africa. The major one relates to the very identity of the discipline itself. For many religious studies scholars in the region, the distinction between theology and religious studies is an invention that is difficult to sustain. While religious studies in Europe and North America continues to wage boundary wars with theology, with emancipation from theology being regarded as a key step towards acceptance in the academy, in Africa the tension is not as pronounced. Only a few scholars have remained 'uninfected' by theology. Many African scholars freely move between the two disciplines. For example, some scholars who have been trained and have published in religious studies, such as Isabel Phiri of Malawi and South Africa, are also leading African Christian theologians. James Amanze (2000) of Malawi and Botswana has produced valuable material on Islam in Botswana, but he has also published articles on African Christian theology. As I outlined in the historical section, religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa was introduced within the context of Christian mission; theology continues to dominate in departments of religious studies, despite the effort to adopt an interfaith approach after the attainment of independence.

A second problem relates to the tendency to seek approval from scholars abroad. A colonial mentality continues to haunt religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite efforts at decolonization, African scholars continue to look up to European and North American scholars for recognition and acceptance. Religious studies in Africa has been patterned on religious studies abroad. While African scholars have been militant in challenging theories and methods that are developed elsewhere, they still seek endorsement from abroad. Western themes and concerns are often taken up in religious studies in Africa. There is need for scholars to grapple with local issues (Clasquin 2005: 9).

A third problem in the study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa is the failure to tackle the theme of gender and religion seriously. While African women theologians have been highly productive in examining this theme, scholars in religious studies have not been visible. As I shall indicate, perhaps the patriarchal nature of religious studies in Africa militates against the application

of tools of gender analysis. Whereas the theme of gender and religion has received a lot of scholarly attention elsewhere, religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa has yet to take it seriously.

Alongside the theoretical challenges outlined above, religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa faces serious economic problems. These are obviously tied to the economic problems that the region experiences. Whereas some countries such as Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa have relatively stable economies, most countries in the region have experienced serious socio-economic difficulties. Massive cuts in government spending have not spared most departments of religious studies. Low salaries, difficult working conditions, oppressive regimes, and a host of other difficulties have meant that many scholars spend their time worrying about basic survival. As a result, there has been a massive brain drain as some of the most gifted scholars have relocated to Europe and North America. Others abandon the area of religious studies to take up positions in church and government as well as Non-Governmental Organizations.

The economic problems that characterize higher education in sub-Saharan Africa also translate into the lack of access to the latest publications in the academy. Most scholars of religion are caught up in this unfortunate situation. As a result, they find it difficult to get their articles published in scholarly journals in religious studies. A perusal of the leading journals in the discipline, such as *Numen*, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, *Religion*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, and others testifies to the absence of African voices in global religious studies. Referees operating from relatively comfortable environments in Europe and North America are quick to dismiss articles from African scholars who would have battled against formidable odds to put their ideas together. How does one write a brilliant article when one has not been paid for three months? One is here not engaging in special pleading. The situation in most departments of religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa is indeed heart-rending.

Key thinkers and texts

Before examining key thinkers and texts in religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa, it is necessary to point out that many “non-African” scholars have contributed to the shape of the discipline. I have drawn attention to the pioneering role of Parrinder and others in laying the foundation of the discipline in the region. This was at a time when no departments of religious studies existed in some countries abroad, for example, in Britain. Other notable personalities have also helped to frame the major debates in religious studies in the region. It is not possible to review their work in this chapter. Scholars such as Harold Turner, Peter McKenzie, and James L. Cox have argued that the phenomenological method offers sound principles for the study of religions

in Africa (Chitando 2005a). Jan G. Platvoet, Gerrie Ter Haar, David Westerlund, and Rosalind Hackett have reflected on method and theory in the study of religions in the region. In addition, these scholars have published on various aspects of religion in sub-Saharan Africa. They have covered various themes, including New Religious Movements, Pentecostalism, post-colonial theory and religion, rites of passage, healing, the role of women in indigenous religions, and religion and migration.

It should be noted that most 'non-African' scholars who have published in the area of religions in Africa have held positions in departments of religious studies at some point in their career. Between the 1960s and 1990s, some departments of religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa had personnel from Europe and North America within their ranks. However, as economic and political instability threatened the region, many of these scholars left their posts. Many of them have continued to be actively involved in religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa. They have assisted some African scholars with short-term appointments abroad. They have also published on various aspects of religions in Africa. However, this chapter will highlight the contributions of black African scholars to the study of religions.

In terms of shaping the character of religious studies in Africa, John S. Mbiti, an African theologian from Kenya, stands out. His book, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Mbiti 1969), has become a classic in the field. It is not surprising that it was a male African theologian who offered one of the most detailed publications on indigenous religions. As I illustrated in the historical section, religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa developed within the context of Christian expansion. African males tended to have access to education earlier than their female counterparts.

African Religions and Philosophy seeks to provide a comprehensive description of African religious beliefs and practices. Mbiti challenges the notion that indigenous religions are haphazard by locating an underlying logic. As a 'cultural insider', he adopts a phenomenological and comparative perspective (Mbiti 1969: 1). Where some European travelers had casually dismissed ATRs, Mbiti presents them as religions worthy of human allegiance. According to him, earlier writers used the wrong terminology. In chapter two, he examines the various terms that have been applied to the indigenous religions of Africa. Among them are magic, dynamism, totemism, fetishism, and naturism. He observes, 'One needs only to look at the earlier titles and accounts to see the derogatory language used, prejudiced descriptions given and false judgments passed upon these religions' (Mbiti 1969: 10).

As he was to elaborate in his *Concepts of God in Africa* (Mbiti 1970), Mbiti contends that belief in God is central to the identity of ATRs. His central methodological conviction is that there is a logic behind these religions. The belief in God unites the various indigenous religions, Mbiti argues. Although writing as a theologian, he is highly sympathetic to ATRs. He traverses sub-

Saharan Africa to underscore what he considers an all-pervasive religiosity. The following passage has been widely cited as it captures his interpretation of religion in Africa. He writes:

Wherever the African is, there is his [*sic*] religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the University; if he is a politician, he takes it to the House of Parliament.
(Mbiti 1969: 2)

Although his work has been sharply criticized for its theological slant, hasty generalizations, and ideological convictions, Mbiti has emerged as a leading voice in the study of ATRs. He has numerous publications to his name, covering diverse fields (Olupona and Nyang 1993). His reflections on the study of indigenous religions, their encounter with Christianity, and other themes are quite useful, even for religious studies. At any rate, one can separate Mbiti's expressly theological works from those of a descriptive nature, such as *African Religions and Philosophy*.

E. Bolaji Idowu, another theologian from Nigeria, is a prominent name in religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa. A student of Parrinder, Idowu sought to provide methodological guidelines for the study of religion in general and ATRs in particular. Formulating general principles for the study of religion, Idowu placed emphasis on avoiding biased comparison and the need to select the right person to execute the study. His *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (Idowu 1973) is a key text in the field. He developed a 'highway code' in which he called for caution, openness, sympathy, and reverence. Idowu was unrelenting in his criticism of the inappropriate terminology that has been applied to ATRs. He contended that terms such as 'primitive', 'savage', and 'native' did not do justice to the complexity of ATRs (Idowu 1973: 108).

Idowu's contribution to the study of ATRs is quite significant. From early on, he detected the challenges that confront African scholars of religion. He maintained that a lack of financial resources reduced the African academic to 'a beggar' (Idowu 1973: 99). He also called upon African researchers to avoid adopting defensive and ultimately distorting postures. He attacked casual observers who proceeded to give inaccurate descriptions of ATRs and religion in general. Although he went on to publish in the area of African theology, his reflections on the study of ATRs and religion provide valuable insights. His earlier work, *Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief* (Idowu 1962), had drawn attention to the importance of the Supreme Being in a particular African indigenous religion.

The theological framework that informed the contributions by Mbiti and Idowu was sharply criticized by Okot p'Bitek, an anthropologist and creative

writer from Uganda (Rinsum 2004). P'Bitek's devastating attack on theological approaches to the study of ATRs remains one of the most incisive to date. For him, 'the study of the African religions should be to understand the religious beliefs and practices of African peoples, rather than to discover the Christian God in Africa' (p'Bitek 1971: 110). His voice is critical in understanding the resistance to theological reductionism in religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa. His work, *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (p'Bitek 1971) is a major text in the study of ATRs. Operating from anthropology, p'Bitek provided an alternative reading of the study of religions in Africa.

According to p'Bitek, African scholars have the obligation to refute negative ideas about African peoples and cultures that have been perpetuated by Western scholarship. They also have the task of presenting African institutions as they really are (p'Bitek 1971: 7). His major criticism is that African scholars have been too keen to regard ATRs as being similar to Christianity in all respects. He protested, charging that African scholars were camouflaging African deities in awkward, Hellenic garments. For him, both Western scholars and African researchers were responsible for distorting ATRs. As a solution, he recommended that African scholars of religion should conduct fieldwork in order to come up with accurate descriptions. Furthermore, he contended that departments of religious studies should concentrate more on the beliefs of African peoples and should not continue 'to be a monastery for training priests of foreign religions' (p'Bitek 1971: 7). Despite p'Bitek's criticism of African Christian scholars, their publications remain a valuable resource for understanding the study of ATRs (Chitando 2000).

Mbiti, Idowu, p'Bitek and others were influential in framing methodological debates in the study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa in the late 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s, other voices emerged. The most influential figure has been Jacob Kehinde Olupona. Olupona has been president of the African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) and has emerged as a leading figure in the study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa. He adopts a social-scientific perspective in addition to the phenomenological approach (Olupona 1991). Olupona has paid attention to methodological reflections, alongside identifying new areas of research in the area of indigenous religions across the continents (see, for example, Olupona [ed.] 2004a)

Olupona has avoided theological reductionism in his work. He has illustrated the benefit of adopting multidisciplinary approaches to the study of religions. Where some scholars have regarded religious studies and the social studies as fierce rivals, he has seen the fields as complementary. He has coordinated projects that highlight the role of religion in the struggle for peace in a country like Nigeria. He has also drawn attention to the role of ATRs in contemporary society (Olupona 1991). This has been an important intervention, as there is a tendency to regard indigenous religions as relics from the remote past. Olupona's training in the history and sociology of religion has equipped him

to appreciate ATRs as living phenomena. His focus on African spirituality (Olupona [ed.] 2003) is also motivated by the need to place it at par with spirituality located in other traditions across the world. Olupona has been keen to remove indigenous religions from the periphery, suggesting that some of these religions could be regarded as ‘world religions’ (Olupona [ed.] 2004b).

Alongside the key thinkers described above, there have been a number of significant scholars in the study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa. It is not possible to review their contributions in the context of this chapter. In South Africa, scholars such as John Cumpsty, David Chidester, Martin Prozesky, Patrick Maxwell, and others have produced useful texts on methodology in the study of religions (Prozesky 1996: 234–235). Chidester (1996) has proceeded to examine the contestation around the primary concept in the field. His examination of the application of the term ‘religion’ in colonial discourses in Southern Africa is incisive. His work, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Chidester 1996) charges that the study of religions is heavily implicated in colonial discourses. He writes:

The history of comparative religion emerged, therefore, not only out of the Enlightenment heritage but out of a violent history of conquest and domination. Accordingly, the history of comparative religion is a story not only about knowledge but also about power.

(Chidester 1996: xiii)

Since the 1990s, a new generation of African scholars of religions has emerged. Among others, these include two scholars from Nigeria, Afe Adogame, who has published on African Pentecostalism, and Umar H. Danfulani, whose writings focus on divination from Nigeria, Grace Wamue from Kenya, who writes on gender in indigenous religions, and Ezra Chitando from Zimbabwe, who concentrates on method and theory in the study of ATRs. Abdulkader Tayob has provided sound reflections on Islam in South Africa and Africa more widely. Like Olupona, these scholars have tended to locate themselves within the study of religions rather than theology.

Institutionalization

The study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa tends to be concentrated in departments of religious studies. As noted above (‘The Emergence of the Study of Religion’), the emergence of such departments was closely tied to colonial and Christian expansion. In most instances, such departments are located in faculties of Arts or Humanities. Many countries in sub-Saharan Africa do have courses on aspects of religion in their public universities. In countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Zimbabwe, private, often church-funded universities have also emerged. They, too, offer courses on religions.

It should be admitted that due to historical reasons, courses related to Christianity tend to dominate the curricula of most institutions of higher learning in sub-Saharan Africa. To this day, 'scripture' is exclusively associated with Christian sacred texts. Bible knowledge and religious education are taught at primary and secondary levels. While there have been efforts to develop and instill multifaith approaches, Christianity continues to enjoy wider coverage. Writing about Southern Africa in general, Clasquin (2005: 16) notes, 'The need for qualified educators to teach a multi-faith curriculum created the need for universities in these countries to present religious studies at tertiary levels.'

Religious studies tends to be a popular subject at tertiary institutions in some countries because most students would have been introduced to religious education earlier on in their studies. This is reflected in countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Some teacher-training institutions also offer religious studies as a major. Alongside graduates from universities, qualified teachers have played a major role in introducing the subjects to students. As a result, in some countries pupils are introduced to religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and others at an early stage. Zimbabwe provides a good example of a country that has sought to adopt a multifaith approach to the study of religions at the primary level (Nondo 1991). The spirit of decolonization also inspired some African educationists to agitate for the implementation of multifaith approaches.

Aspects of religious studies are also found in Islamic learning centers and theological training institutions. In the case of the latter, some of the programs are quite competitive. In Nigeria, Islamic centers do provide high level instruction on the religion. In some countries, theological training institutions offer programs at diploma level. This is the case in Malawi and Zimbabwe. Candidates who do well in these programs proceed to do degrees in religious studies. Other countries, such as Nigeria and South Africa, have competitive doctoral programs. Although African institutions continue to send their graduates for higher degrees outside the continent, in some countries there is enough personnel to supervise such students. In Kenya, some departments of religious studies supervise doctoral students.

Intraregional divisions and interregional connections

As indicated in 'The Emergence of the Study of Religion', there are salient intraregional divisions in sub-Saharan Africa. West Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa have all developed distinctive traditions in the study of religions. Having a significant Muslim population, West Africa has tended to include Islam in its programs in a more systematic manner. In East Africa, ATRs have received greater attention. Southern Africa experienced colonial domination for a much longer period than the other two regions. Furthermore,

settler colonialism in Zimbabwe and Namibia and apartheid in South Africa facilitated the entrenchment of European traditions in the study of religions.

Despite the intraregional divisions, there are common threads that unite the study of religions in the region. Of particular importance have been professional associations. Until the 1990s, when it began to experience financial difficulties, the World Council of Churches (WCC) used to support regional and intraregional bodies that brought together departments of religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa. Organizations such as the Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa (ATISCA) facilitated the interaction of scholars of religions from different institutions.

The Association for the Study of Religions in Southern Africa (ASRSA) that was established in 1979 and is an affiliate of the IAHR has also provided a platform for scholars to interact outside their national borders. Although it is dominated by South African scholars, ASRSA has attracted some members from Southern Africa. Since the demise of apartheid in 1994, Namibia and Botswana have had opportunities to host ASRSA conferences.

One professional organization that has actively promoted scholarly exchanges on the study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa is the African Association for the Study of Religion (AASR). Established in Zimbabwe in 1992 and affiliated to the IAHR, the AASR has been experiencing notable growth. It has held regional conferences in the different zones, as well as establishing chapters in Europe and North America. It has members with diverse research interests, but actively promotes the study of religions as an academic discipline. It enables African scholars to interact with scholars from other parts of the world. The AASR has endeavored to promote interaction with scholars from Europe and North America. It also disseminates information relating to scholarships and conferences outside Africa through its newsletter and website.

Relations with other fields of study

The study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa has benefited from, and contributed to, other fields of study. Indeed, the region offers a good case study on interdisciplinary approaches to the study of religions. Anthropologists have played an important role in the study of African religions (Bourdillon 1996). They have provided valuable descriptions of the religious beliefs and practices of African communities, and scholars of religions have utilized these studies in their work. In turn, anthropologists have appropriated insights from scholars of religions.

The study of ATRs has been hampered by lack of historical approaches. Researchers in the area of history have clarified aspects of the historical development of ATRs. On their part, scholars of religions have appropriated insights from history to illustrate the borrowing that has occurred between

indigenous religions and Christianity and Islam. Although in many cases scholars in departments of religious studies and those in departments of history have not interacted closely, there have been positive developments in some countries.

An unlikely resource for scholars of religions has emerged in the form of African creative writers. They have been actively involved in documenting the interaction between ATRs and the missionary religions. Across sub-Saharan Africa, creative writers have described the impact of missionary religions on local cultures. They have drawn attention to the role of women in indigenous religions, the social disruption following conversion to missionary religions, and other themes. Celebrated African writers such as Chinua Achebe (1958) from Nigeria provide detailed descriptions of African beliefs and practices. Achebe and other African writers highlight the extent to which missionary religions such as Christianity have been responsible for undermining ATRs. Some creative writers from West Africa also illustrate the interaction between Islam and ATRs. In turn, African creative writers have sometimes relied on scholars of religions for historical details relating to ATRs and other religions.

The study of religions in Africa has also interacted with various other fields. These include African languages and linguistics. The study of sacred oral texts in ATRs depends heavily on understanding African languages. Wande Abimbola (1977) from Nigeria has shown how language is an integral part of the religion. In his work on Ifa divination poetry, Abimbola has demonstrated the close relationship that exists between religion and language. There is mutual dependence between the study of religions and linguistics in Africa. Other fields such as economics, political science, and environmental studies have utilized the works of African scholars of religions. In turn, scholars of religions have benefited from these disciplines. A good example is how some studies on Pentecostalism in Africa relate its success to the economic and social crises that gripped the region in the 1990s. An emerging scholar from Nigeria, Asonzeh F. K. Ukah (2005) has drawn attention to the close connection between Pentecostalism and the prevailing socio-economic challenges. On the other hand, findings from environmental studies have guided scholars of religions to identify dimensions of environmental conservation in ATRs (e.g. Taringa 2006).

Overall, one may argue that scholars of religions in sub-Saharan Africa have interacted with researchers from diverse fields of study. They have accepted the reality that religions are complex phenomena that require different approaches.

Emerging issues

There are a number of issues that have come to the fore since the 1990s in the study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa. One of the most prominent issues

relates to the presence and full participation of women in the discipline. As already noted, men have dominated the study of religions in the region since the inception of the discipline. Indeed, one could maintain that in many countries there was a transfer of power from European males to African males in departments of religious studies. Very few African women have been able to penetrate this predominantly masculine undertaking. Isabel Phiri of Malawi and Grace Wamue of Kenya represent the few women who have published in the area of the academic study of religion. While African women theologians asserted themselves in the 1990s, only a few women have taken up the study of religions as an autonomous discipline. The need to train more African women in the academic study of religions is a major issue. Unfortunately, the availability of scholarships in the field of theology has attracted many promising African women scholars of religions to theology. Phiri and Wamue, like many other African scholars of religions, have published theological material.

The role of the study of religions in meeting the challenges of HIV and AIDS has emerged as another major issue. African theologians, with the backing of the WCC, have been formulating methods of integrating HIV and AIDS into the curricula of theological training institutions and departments of religious studies in sub-Saharan Africa (Dube 2003). The challenge facing scholars of religions is whether such an 'engaged' approach is acceptable in their discipline. They are beginning to reflect on ways of integrating HIV and AIDS in their teaching and research. In their courses, they illustrate how specific beliefs and practices have a bearing on HIV and AIDS. For example, they interrogate how the concept of witchcraft has been used to explain HIV infection. In these exercises, they seek to highlight the role of religion in mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.

Perhaps reflecting the utilitarian approach to the study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa, there is a growing emphasis on the role of religions in peace-building, environmental conservation, and other practical concerns. In countries like Nigeria where tension between Christians and Muslims is high, scholars in religious studies have expended considerable energy in drawing attention to the theme of peace within the religions. The theme of religion and environmental conservation has also been emphasized in Southern Africa. Some researchers have been keen to illustrate how religious beliefs and practices can lead to environmental conservation in a region that is vulnerable to ecological disasters. As governments continue to cut down on funding for public universities in most parts of the region, departments of religious studies have had to demonstrate their relevance by undertaking research that is tied to 'development'. There is a conviction that the study of religions should lead to some tangible results. Proponents of this school of thought charge that 'knowledge for its own sake' is a luxury that most countries in sub-Saharan Africa cannot afford.

Conclusion

The study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa continues to be competitive, despite the tendency by most scholars to overlook this particular part of the globe in their reviews. Scholars based in this region have made valuable contributions to the discipline. They have proffered some creative reflection on method and theory in the study of religions, and they have described the various religions of Africa. Although the struggle for emancipation from theology is far from being over, African scholars of religions have sought to clarify the religions from their own contexts. Battling against formidable odds, they have ensured that for those who are willing to listen, African voices are becoming audible in global discourses on religion.

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South and Southeast Asia

Rowena Robinson and Vineeta Sinha*

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South Asia

Introduction

AT THE OUTSET IT MUST BE RECOGNIZED that 'religious studies' per se is hard to find as a separate discipline in south Asian countries in general. While there may be Islamic studies or theological studies in some of these countries and the odd department or centre of world religions (as in Dhaka University, for instance), for the most part 'religion' has been studied in South Asia by historians, anthropologists and sociologists and, in its manifestation as an ethnic identity, by political scientists as well. It is, in the main, their work that I shall review in this section.

Much of south Asia, or the subcontinent of India as it was often referred to, was united under the British Empire and so there are common roots to the modern study of religion in this region. As I have described elsewhere (Robinson 2003), the work of an entire body of Indological scholars and administrators came together during the colonial period in the construction of a particular understanding of the pan-Indian civilization, which elevated the study of Hinduism, especially Brahmanical Hinduism. While Jainism and Buddhism could perhaps find some place in a study of religion and civilization that was dependent on the use of Sanskrit textual material, other religious traditions were clearly marginalized.

The idea of 'Hindu India'

Once formulated, the idea that Hinduism synthesized India and constituted its essence remained firmly in place. A 'Hindu' India was distinguished by caste, its most important social and cultural marker (Inden 1990; Robinson 2003). Thus, other religions, especially those such as Islam or Christianity, which came to the subcontinent through diverse routes, were obviously less worthy of attention. Post-Independence studies initially did little to dismantle this overarching framework. In India, village and caste studies took centrality in the period just after Independence. The structural-functional approach and the folk-civilization continuum model, products of British and American anthropological traditions respectively, dominated the work of scholars of religion. Most of these studies emerged from departments of sociology and social anthropology in different parts of the country, but some doctoral research was written abroad and funded by the host institutions.

For anthropology, fieldwork, deriving from the school of Malinowski and inspired by the work generated in Africa, was the basis of the discipline. Studies

of tribal and village community had their separate and merged, complicated and intricate intellectual trajectories in African village studies, legal and Indological discourses on India, and Marxist writings of a very long period. The 'text', that constant of Indological knowledge was eschewed in favor of the 'context', the field. Nevertheless, one may discern in these early approaches the merging of anthropological and Indological traditions. They linked the empirical field-based data with the textual tradition. Thus, one had the 'great' and the 'little' traditions, the 'civilizational' and the 'folk', the 'universal' and the 'parochial' and, the 'text' and 'context'.

The overarching frame appears to have been provided by the search for the principle by which the entire civilization was structured. Indology had provided that principle in the pairing of caste and Hinduism. Caste became the major link binding the field studies with the textual models. Even the centrality that the village community got in the studies of the 1950s usually linked the village to the 'great' Sanskrit tradition, though this does not mean that studies produced on popular Hindu deities, rituals and festivals as a result were not useful (Pillay 1953; S. C. Dube 1955; Ghurye 1960; Fuller 1992).

For the most part, though, India was Hindu and Hinduism was caste. Shades of the conflation of India with Hinduism emerge in the work of a range of scholars, including Karve (1961), Ghurye (1969) and Srinivas (1952, 1969 [1955]). Imtiaz Ahmad (1972) suggests that the use of the idea of the 'Great Tradition' and 'Little Tradition' precludes the analysis of Muslim culture and religion. It is difficult to understand Christianity or Islam with this model. Where is the great 'Indian' tradition to which these could be linked?

Alternative histories of religion

A separate and parallel trend in the study of religion came from a few Marxist scholars. Notably, D. D. Kosambi (1962) and Bipan Chandra (1984), both Marxist historians, and A. R. Desai (1963), the Marxist sociologist, were the most prominent figures of this school. The subaltern historians of a later period derived their name from an essay by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Broadly speaking, the term 'subaltern' applied to any group or person of inferior rank or station, whatever the basis of that inferiority. The Subaltern Studies Group arose in the 1980s in an effort to articulate a new understanding of the histories of south Asian societies. They are, in some sense of the word, on the left; however, they are very critical of the conventional Marxist reading of Indian history. There has been a deep influence of post-colonial studies, cultural studies, and anthropology on their work.

The early volumes of the Subaltern Studies Group saw little on the subject of religion, apart from the odd piece on communalism (Chatterjee 1982; Pandey 1983, 1989). It is only with the seventh volume published in 1993 that

studies on religion come into much clearer focus. From then onwards, religious cults (Chatterjee 1993), religious symbolism and new religious movements (S. Dube 1993), Partition violence (Mayaram 1996), Dalit consciousness and identity (Illaih 1996), and Hindu–Muslim riots (Pandey 1997), among other themes, have appeared in the pages of the volumes. Contributors include persons across a range of disciplines, including history, anthropology, sociology, and political science. The authors are not all located in south Asia; some are based in universities in the United States or elsewhere.

The influence and critique of Dumontian Structuralism

From the fieldwork and context-centered tradition established in the 1950s in sociology and anthropology, the major shift came with the highly influential work of sociologist Louis Dumont and D. F. Pocock (1957; Dumont 1970). Dumont undoubtedly saw the study of India as lying at the confluence of Indology and sociology and returned to the text as the source of indigenous categories of meaning. His ideas were available early on through the pages of the *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, though his magnum opus, *Homo Hierarchicus* (1970), came out somewhat later. The notion of subjective meanings and of cosmologies had entered the field.

Veena Das' *Structure and Cognition* (1977), Jain's *Text and Context* (1976), Khare's *Hindu Hearth and Home* (1976), Madan's *Non-Renunciation* (1996), and other works all chart the course of this opening up. Hindu cosmic thought and structure came to lie at the center of studies in the sociology and anthropology of religion. This was particularly so in foreign scholarship, but also among Indians. Madan (1992, 2004) brought together some of the voices in the sociology of religion in India, as did Robinson (2004). Dumont's writings undoubtedly had enormous influence on Indian scholarship on caste and religion, though authors were not slow to critique several aspects of his work (Das and Uberoi 1971; Madan 1971; Bêteille 1979). Clearly, there has been some healthy cross-cultural debate.

The Dumontian perspective which dominated the study of Hinduism by Indian scholars as well as others for so long again gave centrality to an upper-caste, essentialized version of Hinduism and treated it as synonymous with India. The study of India was therefore and has been, for a long time, the study of Hindu India. This notion has led both to the reification of Hinduism and the marginalization of groups and communities which were not Hindu. In fact, the way in which communities other than Hindu were brought within the boundaries of study was by viewing them through the aperture of caste, that essence of Indian social structure.

There have been almost no studies by scholars of Indian origin of modern religion or religious movements outside India. Giri (1994), Fazal (1999) and

Sinha (2003) are possibly among the few recent exceptions. Giri analyzes religious resurgence in contemporary United States, while Fazal's interest lies closer to home, in the place of religion and language in the politics of Bangladesh and Pakistan. Diaspora studies have provided the terrain for explorations in contemporary religion and culture across the globe by scholars of Indian origin (e.g. Jain 1993, Shukla 2003).

Appadurai (1997) with his work on cultural globalization and Robinson (2001) through the analysis of Internet sites on Hinduism provide other points of view for the play of religious identities on a global scale. Ashis Nandy's abiding interest in contemporary ethnic and religious conflict has led him to collaborate on work on several countries in South and Southeast Asia (Pfaff-Czarnecka *et al.* 1999). Akbar Ahmed, the Pakistani scholar, has also focused attention on religion and the state in the region, and his work will be analyzed further on. It is true for a bulk of the work, but certainly not in every case, that specific religions have been studied by those belonging to the particular faith. We have also seen that in the South Asian region, we have to proceed by examining some of the major countries separately, because most studies tend to be country-specific.

Whatever perspective they may emerge from, for Hinduism, then, we have a range of studies on various aspects including the idea of purity and impurity (V. Das 1977; Srinivas 1952, 1969 [1955]), temple organization, festivals, sacrifice and pilgrimages (Appadurai 1981; Appadurai and Breckenridge 1976; Bharati 1963; Selvam 1996, 1997; Shankari 1982, 1984; Kapur 1985; Das 1983), popular religion at the village level (Ghurye 1960; Chauhan 1967) and religious movements, gurus, cults and goddess traditions (Dandekar 1988; Gupta 1973; Dube 2001; Kakar 1983; Ram 1991; Mines and Gourishankar 1990).

There has been interest in the historical understanding of religious change (Thapar 1993, 1997, 2000). Historians who have employed a gender perspective to understand ancient Hinduism as well as changes brought about in Hinduism under colonialism include Chakravarti (1989, 2004), Sarkar (1998, 2001) and Roy (1995). Sarkar, in particular, has traced the connections between women, domesticity, and a particular understanding of community and nation, a trajectory that has ominous implications for an understanding of the contemporary politics of religion. Ramaswamy (1996, 1997) has explored the worlds of women saints of the Virashaivite tradition in medieval south India.

From the discipline of English Literature have emerged several scholars with an interest in themes related to religion. Sangari and Vaid (1989) have assembled together a number of scholars interested in discovering anew the relations between gender, culture and religion in a historical perspective. Again, from literature and philosophy, Ramanujan (1973) and Radhakrishnan (1927) have had a great influence on the study of Hinduism. Indologist

P. V. Kane's monumental work in five volumes, *History of Dharmasāstra*, forms the background for any discussion of classical Hindu law (1968–77 [1930–1962]).

Contributions to Indian Sociology has been a major site for debates and new perspectives on religion. It was in its pages that Dumont and Pocock (1957) first set out their programmatic vision for the understanding of Indian civilization in terms of the higher Sanskritic values and of caste, which gave rise to enormous discussion among scholars in India and abroad. Over the years, the journal of international repute has seen the publication of numerous articles on various aspects of religion. The *Indian Economic and Social History Review* and the *Economic and Political Weekly* have also offered their pages for discussion and publication of original research on themes related to religious practice in a contextual framework and in a historical perspective, religious movements, cults and conflicts, fundamentalism, communal violence and the like.

As said earlier, most of the research on religion has emerged out of university departments of sociology, anthropology and history. Many notable contributions, several of which have been mentioned in the text at various places, have been by scholars at the universities of Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta or Lucknow among others, as well as at Jawaharlal Nehru University and Jamia Millia Islamia. Mention may also be made of the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR) and the Indian Council for Historical Research (ICHR), two institutions established by the Government of India in 1969 and 1972 to promote and fund research in the social sciences and history, respectively.

While the ICSSR has had a relatively uneventful life and has brought out periodically surveys of research in sociology and social anthropology, which include surveys of religion, the ICHR has had a more controversial history. In particular, during the recent rule of the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) and its allies at the Centre, government interference in the work of the ICHR increased manifold. This is probably due to the specific interest of right-wing parties in constructing and disseminating a particular version of Indian history as 'Hindu' history, punctuated periodically by violence and destruction wrought by 'Muslim' invaders. Central to this construction is the stress on the idea of Muslims and Christians as 'outsiders' to the nation.

While, during Congress rule, the ICHR tended to be dominated largely by Marxist or liberal historians with some measure of proven scholarship among their peers, the BJP's tenure saw several mediocre historians, clearly espousing right-wing ideas of Indian history, catapulted to the forefront of the organization. An exercise was also conducted to re-write school textbooks for history under the National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) with the same fundamental ideological imperatives. Such exercises have currently begun to see revision under the new political dispensation.

In recent years, the Indic Studies Project, located at the Centre for Developing Societies in Delhi (CSDS), has been launched by the well-known Indian feminist and writer Madhu Kishwar along with others in collaboration with Infinity Foundation (New Jersey, USA). The first international conference on religions and cultures in the Indic civilization was hosted jointly by CSDS and the International Association for the History of Religions in 2003. It was significantly supported by Infinity Foundation, which hosted the second conference in 2005. Several speakers and participants at these two conferences openly and clearly espoused Hindu right-wing ideologies.

The Infinity Foundation is closely linked with the Hindu American Foundation, which was recently at the forefront of the Californian textbook battle, attempting to revise sixth grade textbooks seen to be making biased remarks against Hinduism. Several Dalit and secular organizations, together with South Asian scholars from different universities, opposed the revision move. The case finally went to Court, which ruled in favor of retaining the original texts. Many scholars were deeply troubled by the attempt of Hindu groups to write out protest, resistance and uncomfortable truths from Hinduism's past. As we have seen, scholarship in India, particularly in history, has been fraught by somewhat similar battles in recent times.

Studies of other religious communities

As mentioned earlier, as a result of established paradigms, non-Hindu communities have often tended to be viewed in the first instance through the categories employed for the study of Hinduism. Thus, in the initial stages of research into Muslim and other communities, one of the first questions to be raised was: is there caste in non-Hindu communities? (Ahmad [ed.] 1973). Ahmad pioneered studies into the world of Muslim communities, and enunciated his ideas in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (1972), where he stated that greater attention must be paid to non-Hindu communities to build a comprehensive sociology of India.

Despite this initiative, the paradigms of debate did not at first alter radically. Certain forms of ritual such as life-crisis rituals came in for a good deal of attention (Ahmad [ed.] 1978), perhaps because they could be more easily captured by the conceptual category of 'syncretism'. This perspective allowed for the idea that Islam (or Christianity) in India was somehow not quite authentic. It appeared that the most important feature of these religions was their syncretic character, marked in the first instance by the 'adoption' of caste.

It is interesting, though perhaps not inexplicable, that interest in Muslims, Christians or Sikhs has often developed in relation to their importance vis-à-vis Hindu society, usually due to conflict. Hence, studies of Muslims, especially among historians, figured for a long while in the area of the politics of

separatism, Partition, and the history of Hindu–Muslim communalism (Pandey 1983, 1990; Chandra 1984; Mushirul Hasan 1997, 2004). Studies on Sikhism (Oberoi 1994) emerged prominently in the context of the politics of identity in Punjab. Christianity has been viewed through the lens of conversion (*from* Hinduism), as Sikhism and Islam were through the lens of communalism or fundamentalism (*in opposition to* Hinduism). Interest in conversion has risen sharply in recent decades, possibly in relation to the heightening politics of identity in the region as a whole.

Whether spurred directly by contemporary political strife or engendered by a variety of different forces, it is true that religious conversion, the politics of religious identity, and religious conflict have taken center-stage in studies in several South Asian countries (see V. Das 1990). More and more, the relationship between the ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ religions and the state is coming into focus from different angles (Z. Hasan 1994; Chandhoke 1999; Rajan 2002; Pfaff-Czarnecka *et al.* 1999). In India the question of secularism has come in for a good deal of attention. Several scholars, mainly sociologists and political theorists, have participated in the debates. These include Bhargava (1998; cf. Bhargava [ed.] 1998), Bharucha (1998), K. Basu and Subrahmanyam (1996), Vanaik (1997), Madan (1997; 1998), Sheth and Mahajan (1999), and Nandy (1985; 1990).

Madan and Nandy put forward a fervent critique of secularism on the grounds that it does not take religions seriously and is of limited value in South Asia, where religion shapes identities to a great extent. Secularism tries to push religion to the private sphere, but in South Asian societies it is precisely this forcible retreat that has led to the resurgence of religion in a more aggressive form. On the other side of the debate, Bhargava, Bharucha, and Vanaik, among others, justify the idea of the secular. They are largely agreed that secularism must remain the foundational principle of the Indian polity.

Debates on secularism and discussions about fundamentalism have proceeded simultaneously. A good deal of attention has focused on majority fundamentalism, not only by scholars from India, where the discussions have been dominated by historians (T. Sarkar and Butalia 1995; T. Basu *et al.* 1993; S. Sarkar 2002; Pandey 1993; Panikkar 1999) but also by those from other South Asian countries (Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka *et al.* 1999; V. Das 1990; M. Ahmad 1991; Tambiah 1986, 1992; A. Ahmed 1992).

Religious or communal violence and its implications for state and politics, for individual survivors and for communities and their relations with each other has for obvious reasons been of central concern to many scholars of South Asia (Engineer 1984; Varshney 2002; Kanapathipillai 1990; Robinson 2005; Kakar 1995). An important aspect of recent studies, that arose in part out of the critique of Dumont but is also crucially linked with trying to understand the reworking of Hinduism under the influence of fundamentalist and nationalist ideas, has been an interest in looking at the modern ‘representation’

or construction of Hinduism, including of Hindu deities and the idea of caste (e.g. Dalmia 1995, 1997; T. Basu *et al.* 1993; Kapur 1993).

In recent years, studies of Muslims and Christians in particular have begun to increase. Jews have received some attention (Abraham 1994, 1995). Though these studies constitute but a drop in the ocean, they have challenged several received notions in the study of religion in South Asia. In particular, terms such as 'syncretism' and 'composite culture', which have been freely employed have been shown to have their limitations. They view the interaction between different religious traditions as an essentially harmonic one. Ram (1991) has argued that while most Christian communities live in worlds permeated with 'Hindu' ideas, it is facile to view the retention of Hindu elements among Christian groups as a sign of the lack of authenticity of their faith or to assume that converts always have a harmonious ('syncretic') relationship with all strands of Hinduism.

Questions of caste and identity remain crucial (Kaur 1986; Jayaram 1992; Bhatta 1996; Tharamangalam 1996), while other concerns have also come to the foreground. These include the relationship between text and practice, the cult of saints and the play of gender, belief and ritual (Visvanathan 1993; Ghadially 2003, 2005; Mehta 1997; Fazalbhoy 2000; Pinto 1995; Saiyed 1995), the rise and implications of minority fundamentalism (Sikand 2002), the idea of conversion and the modes of transaction, translation and interaction between communities (Sikand 2003). In particular, the theme of conversion has seen some novel interventions. Viswanathan (1998) has explored conversion as a subversion of state power even as she pursues the mapping of identities by the state on the colonial convert.

Rodrigues' (2002) study of Ambedkar's philosophy also attempts to relate notions of conversion with political imaginings, while Uberoi uses the semiological method to weave a narrative linking Sikh and Gandhian philosophy through an understanding of the ways in which these reconcile the oppositions of state and power and the individual and the collective (1996). Robinson and Clarke (2003) argue that conversion has been treated as a taken-for-granted term, a term transparent, when its *whys* and *hows* differ fundamentally by social and political context. They challenge the 'coercive' model and the models of 'assimilation' and 'sanskritization' that have been used extensively to understand conversion on the subcontinent.

A range of new themes have now entered the field: the dynamics of interaction between converters and social groups in different regions, the forms this interplay of cultures and discourses takes, the modes through which converts often challenge and contest elite or priestly authority and the negotiation (and sometimes clash) of new faiths and creeds with prevailing patterns of kinship, marriage and inheritance as well as with food conventions and sartorial codes (Robinson 2003). Conversion to Christianity has particularly benefited from this opening up. S Dube (1992, 1995, 1999)

ruptures the linear narrative of conversion that assumes a known or 'familiar' ending and looks critically at the complex relationship between evangelical discourses and the culture of colonialism and the ways in which converts might subvert missionary agendas.

Mayaram's work on Muslims (1997), especially the Meos, has problematized several taken-for-granted understandings about Muslim identity and relationship to the state. Working from a subaltern perspective, she engages with the oral traditions of the Meos of northwest India as these evoke a particular self-construction of identity which has, historically, been at threat by a series of oppressive regimes. Categories of cultural memory, identity and tradition are treated in a historical perspective and one that is by no means secure against conflict and control. The transgressive culture of the Meos survives, but increasingly precariously, on liminal terrain neither absolutely Hindu nor wholly Islamic.

Buddhism and religious strife in Sri Lanka¹

Scholarly work on religion in Sri Lanka has been mostly undertaken by Sri Lankan social anthropologists who are resident in the United States and Western Europe, with a few exceptions. Local scholarship is hard to find, partly because funding is scarce for social research outside the field of development; obviously, the study of religion would have low priority. As a result, most serious studies have been funded by American or European funding agencies. Social histories and practices within specific religious traditions have been the focus. As with Hinduism in India, in Sri Lanka Buddhism, the 'majority' religion, has been the subject of most studies, whereas Islam has been almost completely ignored. Both Hinduism and Christianity have received only passing attention, often not by Sri Lankans or South Asians themselves (see Stirrat 1992; Tanaka 1997).

The person perhaps most closely associated with the study of religion in Sri Lanka has been Gananath Obeyesekere. His writing has shown the influence of Durkheimian categories of thought, while later works have been informed by Freudian psychoanalytic understandings. His most interesting works are *Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience* (1981) and *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini* (1984). The first was funded by the University of California San Diego Academic Senate, the Social Science Research Council, and the National Institute of Mental Health, while the second received assistance from Wenner Gren, the University of California San Diego Academic Senate, and the Committee on Research in Humanities and Social Sciences at Princeton University. Together with Richard Gombrich, Obeyesekere brought out *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (1988). Sasanka Perera (personal communication) points out that this

work was significant for two reasons: first, its emphasis on urban religion, and second, its view of religious tradition in a historical framework.

In Seneviratne (1997) the accent is on identity politics in India and Sri Lanka, where religion along with caste are taken into account. Seneviratne's *The Work of Kings* (1999) looks at the emergence and consolidation of political Buddhism in Sri Lankan politics. As with political Islam and Hinduism in pre-Partition India, this process began to take place before Independence and has continued to date. Tambiah's *Buddhism Betrayed* (1992) similarly traces the origins and development of Buddhism's participation in ethnic militancy and violence.

Perera's work (1995; 1999) is perhaps singular both in its focus by a South Asian scholar on new Christian movements in the region as well as for the comparative perspective that brings together Nepal and Sri Lanka and to some extent India. Perera looks at the activities of evangelical groups in the region and concludes that these have the potential for producing conflict and even violence. Works published in English appear to have less real impact on local university-based knowledge production in Sri Lanka. Books published by Sri Lankans overseas may not be widely available and may therefore not form a key part of undergraduate teaching. However, they are definitely part of the work that scholars and researchers in Sri Lanka must and do take note of and are therefore documented here. Along with these, works like that by Nalin Swaris, published locally, may be read both by scholars and students as well as have a wider reach among the general educated reader. Swaris' (1999) *The Buddha's Way to Human Liberation* is an interesting inquiry into the social and historical contexts of the Buddha's teachings. He elucidates the key concepts of early Buddhist thought by drawing on categories from Western philosophers including Marx, Francis Bacon, and Freud.

Bangladesh, Pakistan, and comparative studies²

While Pakistan and Bangladesh do not provide a great deal by way of secular studies on religion, some writings are of interest. Perhaps the relationship between state and religion in these countries has made this a difficult theme for scholars, though one to which several studies consciously turn. A lot of the work on religion, particularly Islam, tends towards textual interpretations and conventional theological approaches. Of course, one has the names of Maulana Mawdudi, the founder of the Jama'at-i-Islami, and Fazlur Rahman, whose scholarship on the theological and historical aspects of Islam is well known. Rahman was, for a time, Director General of the Central Institute of Islamic Research in Pakistan, which was given the mandate of reviving Pakistan's national spirit through political and legal reform within an Islamic framework.

Among other institutions, the Islamic International University, Islamabad, Al-Mawrid in Lahore and the International Policy Institute, Islamabad, have

been places which have produced some studies on religion. Dhaka University has a department of world religions, but in general studies of Hinduism, Christianity, or other faiths are marginalized; Islam is the main focus of analysis. Kazi Nurul Islam, the head of the Dhaka University department, is President of the Bangladeshi chapter of the International Association for Religious Freedom and has been a critic of the tendency of Muslim scholars to ignore the study of other religious traditions. A critique of Western approaches and concepts emerges in some of the writings, but this does not necessarily give rise to independent methodologies. Rather, often what comes through is a defensive and apologist stance. Social analysis in Pakistan for instance, whether of religion or other issues, has often employed the technique of absolving the country of its problems by pointing to those of other neighboring countries such as India. Even Akbar Ahmed (1997) is not innocent of this approach.

Aziz (2001) has written on the *pir-murid* tradition in Pakistan, looking at the subject from the perspectives of history, sociology, religion, politics, and the economy. Jamal Malik (1996) has looked at the social basis of Islamization. He tries to capture the state's policy towards traditional religious structures including endowments (*waqf*), religious alms (*zakat*) and religious schools (*dini-madaris*). Razia Akter Banu's study on Islam and social change in Bangladesh is framed by Weberian understandings of religion (1992). Contemporary urban and village Islam come within its compass. Also studied is the impact of Islamic religious beliefs on contemporary Bangladesh's socio-economic development and political culture.

Tazeen Murshid (1995) examines the tension between religious and secular perceptions among the Bengali intelligentsia in matters relating to their social, cultural, and political lives. Murshid also examines the relationship of Islam, women and the state in Bangladesh, a theme which appears as well in Kabeer (Kabeer 1989; Murshid n. d.) (see <http://www.swadhinata.org.uk/misc/WomenBdeshTazeen.pdf>). Asma Barlas (2002) has explored with respect to Pakistan, how religious knowledge, especially patriarchal exegeses of the Qur'ān, come to be produced by Muslims.

Akbar Ahmed has outlined the contours of what would constitute an Islamic anthropology. Contemporary Muslim realities may be juxtaposed to but not confused with an understanding of the 'Islamic ideal' (Ahmed 1988). Ahmed uses a sociological and historical perspective to understand various aspects of Muslim culture and society in Pakistan (1986). Ba-Yunus has also worked on the implications and dimensions of an Islamic sociology and has pursued the study of Muslims in North America (Ba-Yunus and Ahmad 1985, Ba-Yunus and Kone 2005).

The Pakistan-born scholar Ziauddin Sardar has written extensively on aspects of postmodernism, Islam and globalization (e.g. Sardar 2004, 2006; cf. Inayatullah and Boxwell 2003). Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr (1994) examines

the origins, historical development, and political strategies of the Jama'at-i-Islami of Pakistan. He looks at the tension between the movement's idealized understanding of the nation as a holy community founded on Islamic law and its political agenda of socio-economic transformation for Pakistani society. Tariq Modood has focused largely on the study of Asian Muslims in Britain, the politics of being Muslim in Europe and the West, and the relation of these issues to the theory and politics of secular multiculturalism (e.g. Modood *et al.* 2005). Javaid Saeed (1994) makes an important comparative study of Islam and modernization across three countries, Pakistan, Egypt, and Turkey.

Comparative studies across two or more Muslim societies (sometimes Pakistan and Bangladesh) emerge in the work of these and other scholars, either for historical or religious reasons. Samad (1996a, 1996b, 1998) has worked on issues related to Islam and nationalism in Pakistan as well as Islamic identity among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in the diaspora. Jawed (1999) has examined the political dimensions of Islam in pre-divided Pakistan. He studied two influential social groups, the *ulama* and modern professionals, as well as the writings of Muslim intellectuals in order to uncover the major Islamic positions on critical issues concerning national identity, the purpose of the state and the form of government. Clearly, Islam's relationship with the state and with politics and the law is of central importance in all of these studies (see also I. Ahmed 1987; Bindra 1990; Jalalzai 1993; Mehdi 1994).

Hinduism and Buddhism in Nepal³

Nepal offers a considerable degree of writing on Hinduism and Buddhism, especially within anthropology. For the most part, this scholarship has emerged from the West and has been dominated by Western ways of understanding South Asian culture and society. Nepal has often been placed together with India, especially in discussions on caste and Hinduism. Buddhism too has been studied, though Islam, Christianity and other religions have by and large been disregarded. As in most of South Asia, there are no courses on religious studies per se in Nepal, though the Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu offers a postgraduate level course in Buddhist Studies. Most of the literature on religion from the region has come from scholars of diverse backgrounds.

Such studies include ethnographies and histories of both Buddhism and Hinduism and analyses of ritual patterns and divine hierarchies (Pal and Bhattacharyya 1969; Nepali 1965; Pradhan 1986; P. R. Sharma 1978; Vaidya 1986; Regmi 1989). *Contributions to Nepali Studies*, published from Tribhuvan University since 1973, has offered a space to writers on religion, among other themes. At the present time, while the universities contribute to some of the research, several persons are writing in their capacity as individual scholars or affiliates of research institutes and organizations. Some important scholars

include sociologists Sudhindra Sharma (2002, 2003) and K. B. Bhattachan (2000), the historian Prayag Raj Sharma (1978, 1989, 1997), and Rajendra Pradhan, an anthropologist (1986, 2002).

While academic background clearly influences the modes of writing, there is increasingly an interest across the board in the relationship between state and religion and the implications of this relationship for secularism, pluralism and other democratic values. One of the vibrant debates revolves around the identification of the state with Hinduism. Sharma (2002, 2003) has tried to explore indigenous discourses on religion, the role of a Hindu monarch and the Hindu Dharmashastras and the implications of these discourses for constitutional monarchy and democracy in Nepal. Academics have also tried to raise the issue of the 'ethnicization' of religion and have employed the framework of political sociology to the study of religion (e.g. Bhattachan 1995, 2000).

Conclusion

In brief, what we find in this region is that 'religious studies' per se is hard to locate and studies of various aspects of religion are available under sociology, anthropology, history, and related disciplines. Studies for the most part tend to be country-specific, with some interesting exceptions. There is the tendency to concentrate on the religion dominant in a particular country, but this is now changing. Little attention has been paid by scholars to the study of religions outside South Asia. Finally, the ethnicization of religion, religious fundamentalism and conflict and the relation between religion, state, and democracy has come center-stage in the work of many scholars across the region as a whole.

Southeast Asia

Introduction

The historical development and contemporary status of religious studies in Southeast Asia is a challenging topic for a number of reasons, both intellectual and practical. A primary challenge rested on the very conceptualization of the description 'religious studies'. In the available literature this is broadly understood as the academic study of religions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, historical, philosophical, psychological, literary,

sociological and anthropological. We know by now that 'religious studies' as a category is a construction emanating from realities of North American and European experiences of having founded departments and programs for the academic study of religion in tertiary institutions. As such, it stands for a scholarly, intellectual discipline and is contrasted with theological studies that focus on detailed studies of particular religious traditions from *within* the community. However, the two approaches are by no means mutually exclusive.

At the outset, I wondered if such classical, traditional frames of reference would be appropriate for mapping the field of 'religious studies' in Southeast Asia, or if such a starting point would be limiting in scrutinizing the Southeast Asian material. As it turned out, although I located some evidence of the 'religious studies' component within Southeast Asia, these were few and far between. Furthermore, restricting my observations to an elaboration of these cases alone might convey an erroneous impression about the state of intellectual and scholarly interest in, and accounts of, religion in Southeast Asia in general. As a result, I have included some discussion of how religion is taught and researched in the Southeast Asian context from the perspective of the various social science disciplines outside (and in the absence) of formal departments and programs of 'religious studies'. The other issue was one of locations. Institutionally, where in society would one find evidence for the academic, scholarly, secular study of religion? Historical and comparative, cross-cultural research (primarily from North America and Europe) reveals that the discipline has been enshrined in faculties of humanities and social sciences in universities, a traditional locale where scholarly and intellectual accounts of religious traditions have flourished. Would this be borne out by investigations of the Southeast Asian field?

Methodological routes

What constitutes Southeast Asia as a region and whether this signifies a distinct territorial and cultural space have been debated by scholars for at least half a century. It is not possible within the ambit of this paper to go into the nuanced debates that have been subsequently generated in this context. Suffice it to say that there is some consensus that this is a constructed regional entity and is defined by ethno-religious pluralism and socio-political and cultural diversity. Recent political discourses and events have also led to some rethinking of the region's boundaries. For the sake of comprehensive coverage, I have followed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) geographical sweep. The ten countries of Southeast Asia included in this survey are Myanmar, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. My aim was to map a discursive field vis-à-vis the field of religious studies in Southeast Asia. What was the evidence for the presence of such a field and

how could this be accessed? A primary methodological challenge was thus securing resources and indeed institutional locales where one would find the study of religion, either as part of the religious studies component, or from social science and historical disciplinary perspectives.

Universities and tertiary institutions constituted a natural point of entry but my investigations also highlighted in some contexts the significance of religious and theological institutions as locales where the academic study of religions (both within and outside the religious community in question) was given some importance, particularly in posing the question of comparative religion and the need to understand this. Some data were also obtained from primary conversations with Southeast Asian colleagues who teach and research religion and related themes and problematics, while drawing upon my own first-hand experience of teaching and researching religious phenomena at the National University of Singapore. Given the timing of this research at the turn of the twenty-first century and the geographical spread of the survey, the Internet was a crucial research tool and source for accessing data. I trawled the Internet and visited websites of universities and theological and religious institutions, in addition to securing brochures and other publicity material from the same. But this approach is also limited in that, in comparison to those in the North American and European settings, not all universities in the region have the technological and financial resources to mount comprehensive websites. Apart from data from the Internet, I also had access to some printed material from universities, such as brochures of program and curricula descriptions.

In all I looked at data from fifty universities in the region and a handful of theological schools, from the Islamic, Christian, Catholic, Hindu, and Buddhist religious traditions. This review does not profess to be all-inclusive and exhaustive. Instead, its reach is necessarily selective and its parameters have been determined primarily by access to the relevant material. I have, however, made an attempt to include the major tertiary institutions and some theological institutes in the region to document scholarly accounts of religion in the region. As far as I could ascertain, no previous reviews of the field in question seem to have been undertaken. In the absence of secondary published material on this subject, my own study is based entirely on combing through available primary material.

Mapping the field: religious studies in Southeast Asia

This investigation vis-à-vis the state of religious studies in Southeast Asia has led me to make observations which are not entirely unexpected or surprising. Of the 50 universities I looked at, only four formally offer the subject 'religious studies', either in a program or a department of study. Within this very small cluster, autonomous and independent programs or departments of religious

studies find a place in only two of the tertiary institutions. These four are: University of Cambodia, Assumption University and Mahidol University (both in Thailand), and the National University of Singapore. I detail these programs briefly.

The Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies located in the University of Cambodia is notable for institutionalizing the academic study of religion. The logic of the program is articulated thus in the department's website (www.uc.edu.kh/colleges/philosophy_&_religious_studies.html):

The Philosophy and Religious Studies Program at the University of Cambodia offers students an opportunity to acquire a fuller understanding and appreciation of some of the most fundamental aspects of human thought and behaviour. It challenges students to think rigorously about some of the most profound questions people have been asking for thousands of years and which continue to be urgent in today's world. Likewise, students develop a critical understanding of the complexity of the religions and their importance in human life.

The department has a well-developed undergraduate program which has devised a joint program in Philosophy and Religious Studies, offering them as a major or a minor, as well as the option of specializing in either of the two disciplines. In addition to completing the required basic courses, students can choose from a variety of courses (either in Philosophy or Religious Studies) to pursue the chosen concentration. The offering of modules is comprehensive, straddling fields of study in Eastern and Western philosophies and religions, with specific focus on Buddhist and Islamic religious traditions and philosophies, and with both a historical and contemporary focus. The number of courses on offer is itself impressive, giving students tremendous choice outside the eight required courses. In all, I counted nineteen specialized modules (at different 200, 300, and 400 levels, of which students choose fourteen) in the Philosophy section and twenty specialized modules (of which students choose fourteen) in the Religious Studies cluster. Some examples of the latter include 'Religions of China', 'Approaching Religion', 'Religion and Politics in the Middle East', 'Religion and Psychology', 'Third World Liberation Theology', and 'Zen Buddhism'.

Thailand has the distinction of having two tertiary institutions where the academic study of religion has been formalized: Assumption University and Mahidol University. The beginnings of Assumption University can be traced to the year 1969, when a Catholic religious congregation, the Brothers of St Gabriel, founded the Assumption Business Administration College. This group, which prioritizes educational and philanthropic work, was led at the time by Rev. Br. Bernard Mary. He is acknowledged as the founder of the college, which was granted the status of a tertiary institution in 1975. The university,

located in Hua Mak with a new campus in Bang Na, started master's degree courses in philosophy and religious studies in June 1993. Starting with a Christian outlook, the university's Graduate School of Philosophy and Religion, 'strives to form graduates trained in philosophy and religion, with high intellectual, moral and human values, who can be a beacon of light in their own communities' (www.philo-religion.au.edu/). The postgraduate program in the school is defined by inter-disciplinarity and pluralism, grounded in the 'harmony between Eastern and Western thought in philosophy, religion and science' (ibid.). It offers both masters and doctoral degrees in Philosophy and Religious Studies. All classes are conducted in English, and the school boasts an international student body. In addition to holding regular lecture series, conferences, and workshops, the school is unique in having founded a journal, *Prajna Vihara* (from the Sanskrit meaning 'temple of wisdom'). This biannual publication is defined as a 'multicultural, pluralistic journal of philosophy and religious studies dedicated to the promotion of mutual understanding among the peoples of the world', in addition to being 'a forum for frank but responsible discussion of issues in philosophy and religion' (ibid.). Here, too, the listed modules of study encompass a huge range of philosophies and religious traditions. The sheer number of courses on offer is staggering: 105 at both at the MA and PhD levels.

The following illustrative selective listing by no means does justice to what is offered: 'Methodology for Research in Philosophy and Religion', 'Seminar in Process Studies', 'Phenomenology', 'Seminar in Psychology of Religion', 'Interfaith Dialogue', 'Zen and Comparative Studies', 'Tripitika Studies', 'Feminism and Religion', 'Liberation Theology', 'Buddhist Ethics', 'The Koran Studies', and 'Religion and Science'. In my assessment, in the Southeast Asian region, this graduate program comes closest to classical formulations of the field of 'Religious Studies' in encapsulating this sweep of disciplines (history, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and anthropology) and religious traditions (Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, Hinduism, Taoism, etc.) in the spirit of mutual appreciation and inter-religious dialogue.

The second of the Thai tertiary institutions, Mahidol University, is also something of a pioneering entity, having spearheaded the institutionalization of the academic study of religion. The university has deep historical roots, going back to 1889 in the founding of Siriraj Hospital, the first medical school in the country. The full-fledged 'Mahidol University' was established in 1969 and has expanded to a full tertiary institution. The Department of Humanities in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities offers a comprehensive MA in comparative religion. The objectives of this program are cogently expressed in the department website and worth citing in full:

The Program marks a significant step in the University's effort to implement a program of research and teaching which cover [*sic*] the whole range of

fundamental human problems and possibilities. It is the introduction of the scientific study of religion into the system of higher education in Thailand, and is based on the belief that religion, like other human experiences, can be studied, analyzed and criticized. The program is intended to serve two important factors. In the first place, it would help encourage and promote greater interest in the discipline of religious studies that has the same relation to religion as sociology has to the structure and dynamics of social life. Secondly, it would serve to acquaint students who are preparing for particular professions such as law, teaching and medicine with the insights and resources of the great religious traditions. The contents [*sic*] of the courses are intended to enrich and broaden the students' knowledge concerning both their own beliefs and the faiths of the others. It is also hoped that these contents [*sic*] would be of great value to the students as they struggle to find the kind of purposes [*sic*] and meanings in life and enable them to use their technical knowledge and teaching in more creative & socially productive ways.

(www.sh.mahidol.ac.th/humanities/page5.htm)

This could well serve as a model persuasive argument for initiating and establishing religious studies programs in other universities in the region. The medium of instruction here is both Thai and English; the maximum time for completion of the degree is five years, which requires a defense of the thesis together with thirty modular credits from course work. A total of thirty-six courses, both required and elective, have been formulated. Some examples include 'Comparative Religion 1', 'History of Religion 2', 'Psychology of Buddhism', 'Christian Theology', 'Islamic Theology and Philosophy', 'Tibetan Buddhism', 'Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism', and 'Islamic Mysticism: Sufism'.

Finally, there is the National University of Singapore (NUS), which introduced a minor in Religious Studies only in July 2005. At present, this new program consists of six modules, is multidisciplinary in approach, studies critically an important human phenomenon, and brings together scholars in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences interested in the academic study of religion. The formalization of this field is embedded in the recognition that 'religious studies' constitutes a legitimate and independent sphere of study in leading universities around the world. As of now, students have to take only two essential modules, 'Introduction to World Religions' and 'Approaches to the Study of Religion', together with four others from a cluster of religion-related modules taught in departments and programs across the faculty. The purpose of the religious studies minor is phrased thus:

The Religious Studies minor prepares students to better understand the role of religion in the world and to understand the similarities and

differences between various religious traditions. It offers numerous courses focusing specifically on the role of religion in South and Southeast Asian societies.

(www.fas.nus.edu.sg/oop/undergrad6_5.htm)

The program and its reach are detailed as follows:

Religious Studies at NUS will involve the scholarly exploration both of the phenomenon of religion and different specific religious traditions. Religious Studies, as a scholarly and intellectual discipline, transcends individual disciplines to consider beliefs, practices, texts, history and social functions of religion from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. This program will train students to discuss – with respect and grace – some of the most volatile issues of our time.

(http://fas.nus.edu.sg/oop/undergrad6_1.htm)

Since its inception, the popularity of the religious studies minor is evident in the large numbers of students who have enrolled in the program, something that will no doubt inspire the development of the minor in more comprehensive and creative modes. At the moment, however, the religious studies minor leans heavily on support from colleagues in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, where the study of religion has been institutionalized for a considerable period of time.

In the same vein, and speaking more generally, the same can be said of the wider region where the academic study of religion and its teaching in departments of social sciences and humanities have had a sustained and vigorous presence. For decades, scholars based in Southeast Asian universities have researched a variety of religious traditions and its intersections with social, economic, and political forces, culminating in nuanced accounts of the field in question. Research on Chinese religion, Buddhism, and Taoism is associated with such names as Leon Comber, Cheu Hock Tong, John Clammer and Vivienne Wee, whose scholarship has enriched social science theorizing about the practice of these religious traditions in Singapore and Malaysia. Others, such as Syed Hussein Alatas and Geoffrey Benjamin, have asked questions about how ‘religion’ and ‘religiosity’ should be conceptualized. The body of work referred to is not only ethnographically rich but also engages important theoretical questions, starting with the very critique of the category ‘religion’. The latter was developed in the pioneering work of prominent Malaysian sociologist, Syed Hussein Alatas, then at the University of Singapore. Already in 1977 he was asking, ‘What is meant by religion?’ and highlighting the problems entailed in its definition, highlighting its Judeo-Christian roots and arguing that this conception of religion is inappropriate for theorizing non-Western, non-Jewish and non-Christian traditions.

The concern with problematizing this category continues to engage Singapore-based social scientists, as seen in the work of Geoffrey Benjamin (Benjamin 1987) and more recently Syed Farid Alatas (unpublished) and the Malaysian social thinker Syed Naquib Al-Attas (Al-Attas 1992). Scholars based at the National University of Singapore (NUS) have also explored the complex and multifaceted relations between religion and the nation-state (Kong 1993; Sinha 1999; Tong 1992, Wee 1989). Studies of popular religion also abound here as seen in the works of Pattana Kitiarsa for Thai Buddhism (Kitiarsa 2005) and Vineeta Sinha for Hinduism in Singapore (Sinha 2005). Working in varied religious traditions, these works attend to the following themes: the location of religion in a secular, urban context, the attendant tensions between proponents of 'official religion' and 'popular religion' and the impact of modernizing and rationalizing forces on religious consciousness. It is striking that even within the highly urbanized context of cities in Southeast Asia, such as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok, religious communities are able to secure spaces that facilitate the persistence of particular religious styles, including the popular and folk variety. Sociologists and geographers of religion have highlighted how pockets of urban space have been colonized by religious groups with a fair degree of success. The fact of an educated, literate population in places like Singapore has also meant shifts in religious consciousness, seen in the attraction to imported forms of Christianity and a movement away from religions such as Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism, which are defined as 'traditional', judged negatively, and thus rejected as being out of touch with a modern context. In universities across Southeast Asia, religion is a popular field of research and study both amongst faculty and graduate students. Most recently, religion has a core presence in the form of the 'religion and globalization' cluster at the Asia Research Institute newly established at the NUS. This research initiative is led by sociologist Bryan Turner, prioritizing the global dimension of religious phenomena and drawing scholars working on a variety of Asian religious traditions in a comparative, historical perspective. Interest in globalization and religiosity is certainly not new to the region. It was conspicuous already in the work of Malaysian sociologist, Raymond Lee, who has been writing about this since the early 1990s (Lee 1993) in his study of Hinduism in West Malaysia.

Studies of specific religious traditions have also found favour in the different Southeast Asian countries. For instance, in the Philippines the historical relationship of Christianity to the experience of Spanish colonialism has attracted scholars over the decades (Rafael 1988, Sitooy Jr. 1985). In Malaysia, studies of Islam, in particular its location in a multi-ethnic, religiously plural context of the nation-state, inspire much scholarly commentary (Noor 2002, 2004; Shamsul 1997). Despite being a minority religion in the region, Hinduism—both of the traditional orthodox variety and 'new religious movements' (Lee 1982; Sinha 1985)—has attracted a good deal of sociological

and anthropological interest from researchers in Singapore (Nilavu Mohd. Ali 1985; Sinha 1993) and Malaysia (Lee 1989; Lee & Rajoo 1987; Yeoh 2001). Religious rituals amongst the Chinese and especially conversions from Buddhism and Taoism to Christianity have been addressed by NUS-based anthropologists (Tong 1988, 1989; Wee 1978). I have cited these selective examples to make the important point that despite the absence of separate, formally recognized 'religious studies' programs in Southeast Asia, there is no vacuum in the field of academic studies of religion, which is by all accounts a vibrant and dynamic scene.

Concluding thoughts

As I have highlighted, if one looks beyond and outside the model of 'religious studies' as a separate, self-contained discipline, there is strong evidence for the academic study of religion in universities across Southeast Asia. In fact, in some discussions with those colleagues from Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines, who research the category 'religion' and teach related courses, I have heard the view expressed that to some extent 'religious studies' as a separate component may not really be necessary but would only serve to duplicate or add on to the intellectual work on religion already being done in various social science and humanities departments. The logic is that analyses of religious phenomena are not alien but rather have a sustained and vigorous presence in Southeast Asia, having been institutionalized within universities in the region for some time.

The crucial difference in establishing a 'religious studies' department or program, these scholars argue, would be a structural shift in bringing together a variety of disciplinary perspectives under one roof, all dedicated to the informed, intellectual study of religion and religions from a secular perspective. Others agreed that there were important gaps in the existing curricula vis-à-vis the teaching of religion, for instance, the de-emphasis on methods and methodologies for the study of religion, comparative religion or world religions, but argued that these could be plugged without creating a 'religious studies' component.

The institutional and organizational framework vis-à-vis the field of religious studies in the ten Southeast Asian countries is clearly under-developed. A comparison with universities, both secular and theological, in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand is indeed revealing. In Southeast Asia, the academic study of religion from a multidisciplinary, pluralistic perspective encapsulating a variety of religious traditions does not seem to have been formalized as an independent element in universities in the region. The data compel one to say that in Southeast Asia an independent field of 'religious studies' is perhaps in its embryonic stages in the few institutional locations

where it does exist as an autonomous field of study; it is a historically recent phenomenon.

How does one theorize this vacuum? Why is it that, up to now, academic accounts of religion have not been prioritized in universities in the Southeast Asian region? What structural, intellectual, and politico-economic factors can be invoked to explain such a gap in the field? Is this a structural accident? Or are there deeper underlying factors at work? These are compelling questions which must be addressed. Far from offering simplistic responses, I add to the list a few of my own queries. If, in the near future, universities in the region begin to prioritize the academic study of religion and initiate programs and departments of religious studies—and there is some growing evidence of this—what would this be attributed to? While mindful of being reductionist, but also bearing in mind the mood of the times since September 11, the prevailing discourse on religion, not just in Southeast Asia but also elsewhere, has already propelled into sharper consciousness the need to understand and appreciate, especially ‘other religions’, a realization that one has encountered within university corridors in the days since 9/11. In my experience in universities across Southeast Asia, ‘religion modules’ across departments of sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, literature, area studies, and other academic units have witnessed tremendously enlarged student enrollments; new modules related to religion have been designed and offered on department curricula; and the number of conferences and workshops on any aspect of religion have seen an unprecedented rise.

It is not that religion is a new topic for academic reflection in Southeast Asian universities, but the widespread view is that it is currently a ‘hot’ topic. I wonder if such a mood would persuade university administrators that the academic study of religion ought to be given a bigger profile and a distinct institutional location, that is, a ‘religious studies’ program or department. I also wonder, if this did happen, how it would reshape scholarly modes of approaching religiosity in Southeast Asia, a field that already has well-defined parameters and theoretical agendas.

NOTES

- 1 The information and insights of the following paragraphs have been largely provided to me by Sasanka Perera in a personal communication. I am very grateful for his assistance and observations.
- 2 Much of the information in the following paragraphs I owe to Maleeha Aslam, doctoral researcher at Cambridge, who answered many of my questions by personal communication through e-mail.
- 3 I learnt from Dr Sudhindra Sharma, who was generous enough to respond to my queries by e-mail, much of the information about Nepal that is contained in the next few paragraphs.

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Continental East Asia

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China

The prehistory, emergence, and disappearance of religious studies in China

PREHISTORY. THE CHINESE WORD FOR ‘religion’ is made from two characters, *zong* (宗) and *jiao* (教). *Zong* refers to ‘(reverence for) ancestry(’s temple)’ in Confucianism and ‘sect’ in Buddhism, while *jiao* means ‘superior conduct and inferior imitation’, hence ‘teaching’. Although the two Chinese characters have long been used as two different words, they were not combined to form the new word, *zongjiao*, ‘religion’, until the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the Japanese adopted the two characters in combination to translate the Western term ‘religion’. So, before the importation of the new word from Japan at that time, the Chinese did not have a term such as ‘religion’.

The Chinese did, however, have a concept which was similar to ‘religion’, and that is the common expression *san-jiao*, ‘three teachings’ or ‘three religions’, denoting Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism.¹ Pursuits analogous to religious studies in ancient or pre-modern China can be classified into three types:

- a. interpretations and commentaries on the classic teachings or theories of one of the three religions;
- b. critiques of or attacks upon a religion, e.g. Buddhism in the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE) and Christianity in the Qing Dynasty (1616–1911 CE) from the position of one of the three;
- c. synthetic study of the three from the point of view of one of them.

As all the three types displayed neither signs of a descriptive methodology nor interest in a value-free approach, they cannot be counted as religious studies in the sense that the word has had since Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900). It follows that religious studies in China did not arise until the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when some Chinese scholars began to apply Western academic methodologies in their own study of religions.

Emergence. The Western invasion in the second half of the nineteenth century brought two changes to China: the brook of Enlightenment thought which sprang from thinkers such as Huang Zongxi (1610–1695) and Gu Yanwu (1613–1682) and was drained from time to time, suddenly became a great river; and the side door to Western learning which was opened by Jesuits such as Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) and J. A. Schall von Bell (1591–1666) and was closed from time to time surprisingly became a noisy entrance hall.

The trend of Enlightenment thought, strengthened by its Western counterpart and by modern science, helped generate skeptical and critical attitudes towards all traditional religions among intellectuals and educated young people. So in the early twentieth century, most of the discourses on religion among Chinese scholars and intellectuals adopted a rational or objective mood to some extent, if not a radical one that rejected religion altogether (e.g. Zou 1903; Zhang T. 1985; Cai 1998). Although such a mood was to be responsible for the lingering confusion of religion with superstition, it made possible the rise of religious studies, which eliminated the apologetic stance of Confucianism, Buddhism, or Daoism. This helped to provide a characteristic of the newly born discipline, that is a critical motif, at the same time as it gave the discipline its presupposition, namely, a rational attitude.

The spread of Western learning, widened by the introduction of the humanities and social sciences, brought to scholars some entirely new ideas, theories, and methodologies. For example, Hu Shi, one of the most influential scholars in modern China, introduced to Chinese academia and adopted in his own studies empirical methodologies in general and in particular the pragmatic ideas and theories of John Dewey. As a result, from the beginning of the twentieth century, Liang Qichao (1873–1929), Hu Shi (1891–1962), Chen Yinque (1890–1969), Chen Yuan (1880–1971), and other outstanding scholars were able to study religions on a level that transcended traditional horizons, applying some modern methods of Western learning to their studies. Their attention to the achievements of archaeology was quite new. This Western discipline was unknown to traditional Chinese historians.

Another characteristic of this first stage of religious studies arose from the far-reaching influence of traditions of historical and textual research, that is the major achievements centered on the field of the history of religion. We may mention, among others, Liang Qichao (2005), Hu Shi's study of early Zen, Chen Yin-que's studies of Buddhist Scriptures and of Daoism, and Chen Yuan's studies of histories of Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Islam, Buddhism, Daoism and Catholicism in ancient China.

Yet a third characteristic of the newly emerged religious studies in China was the important role played by scholars within religious circles. As many Western Christian scholars contributed significantly to the formation of the scientific study of religion, many Chinese Christian scholars and other religion-affiliated scholars contributed a great deal to the rise of the discipline in China, honestly and positively reacting to and reflecting on the criticism of their religions. In fact, some learned religious scholars, including church people and missionaries, were themselves initial proponents of Western learning and modern ideas, theories and methodologies. Buddhists, including monks, established many modernized academic institutions for the study of Buddhism, among them Yang Wen-hui (1837–1911), Yue Xia (1858–1917), Master Tai Xu (1889–1947), Han Qing-jing (1884–1949), and Ouyang Jian (1871–1943).

Christian scholars such as Wu Lei-chuan (1870–1944), Xu Bao-qian (1892–1944), Liu Ting-fang (1892–1947), Xie Fu-ya (1892–1991), Zhao Zi-Cheng (1888–1979), Wei Zuo-min (1888–1976), and Wang Zhi-xin (1881–1953) did much work in the comparative study of Confucianism and Christianity. Many missionary societies published numerous books, newspapers and journals in promotion of the religious studies and also trained some scholars in the field.

In short, from the turn of the century until the Communists took over China in 1949, religious studies in China followed a pattern quite similar to its Western counterparts, producing many talented scholars and important works in a difficult situation of revolutions and wars.

Disappearance. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, all academic activities, like all other cultural and social activities, were subordinated to Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, and all academic institutions were transformed into enterprises of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Every branch of literature, art and culture, every branch of the humanities, social sciences, and academia was admonished to 'have partisanship'. Religious studies, too, was transformed into an instrument of the Party's policy.

During the 1950s and 1960s the CPC brought into the 'United Front' religious people who advocated on the one hand the Party's leadership, and on the other pushed atheist propaganda and confined religious activity and expression within religious sites or churches.

Through a series of successive 'political campaigns' instituted from above, the ideological criticism of all non-Marxist-Leninist ideas eventually developed into the institutional abolition of all teaching and research in many disciplines which were dismissed as 'bourgeois pseudo-sciences', such as sociology and demography. These campaigns degraded the material and social situations of scholarly institutions along with the conditions of everyday life for scholars and support staff, and it became extremely difficult, in some cases impossible, to pursue research in private.

Such a policy led to the disappearance of any serious study of religion by academics and of any courses in religious studies from universities. At that time, articles and publications in the field were very few and filled with severe attacks and jeering comments on all religions, dismissing them as superstitious and counter-revolutionary. Apart from a very few exceptions, such as several Buddhist scholars who were to contribute to a Buddhist encyclopedia edited in Sri Lanka, religious studies no longer existed in China.

In 1963 Chairman Mao Zedong summoned Prof. Ren Ji-yu and praised his articles as a Marxist study of Buddhism. In the interview with Ren, Mao said that one cannot write well on the histories of philosophy, literature, and the world without a 'criticism of theology'. Owing to these words, the first institution for the study of religion was set up in 1964, the Institute of World

Religions (IWR) in Beijing, which many years later became the largest center for religious studies. But in the 1960s and 1970s, the word ‘criticism’ was understood only in terms of absolute negation, severe attack, complete suppression, and an utter clearing away.

Two years later even ‘criticism’ became unnecessary and impossible for academic institutions, because with the outbreak of the ‘Cultural Revolution’ (1966–1976), every sign of any religion was swept away from Chinese society and everyone associated with the Institute of World Religions, as well as with every other academic institution, was sent out to the countryside to do manual labor. During this ‘revolution’, launched by the highest political authority, an attempt was made to destroy all forms of traditional culture, including all religions, and every order of social life was disrupted. So the fall of religious studies was just like the fall of a leaf on a tree trembling in the winter wind.

The revival of religious studies

With the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the culture-destroying ‘Cultural Revolution’ came to an end. After a two-year struggle against Mao’s interim successor, Hua Guofeng, who clung to the old ways, Deng Xiaoping’s new policy of ‘reform and opening’ was established at the end of 1978. This really was a springtime that brought a revival of social life to China.

The new policy led to the lifting of the prohibition on religious activities and a cessation of the persecution of religious people, at least for members of selected religions who cooperated with the government. The next decade witnessed a rapid revival of religions. Due to the long suppression by force, the serious chaos in values, the disturbances of the past (particularly during the ‘Cultural Revolution’), the spiritual crisis, and disillusion with the revolution, all religions, especially Protestant Christianity and Buddhism, grew with a speed which surprised the whole world. Such a growth and its effects could not escape the attention of intellectuals as well as of some officials. Many intellectuals were undergoing a reorientation of values, and it was natural for some of them to turn to the study of religions, which they supposed might provide something to meet the spiritual demands of the people. After a few years, some became professional scholars.

At the same time, with the gradual loosening and opening up of conditions for academic research, professional scholars of religions began to confront their objects of study and to ‘have the courage to use their reason’ (*sapere aude*) in thinking and judging. Such an attitude helped to bring about some liberation of thinking. Many scholars considered religions in accordance with the evidence rather than the rigid, dogmatic interpretation of the Marxist theory of religion. All of this created subjective conditions for the revival of religious studies in the 1980s and its development in the 1990s and beyond.

In 1978, with the restoration of colleges, universities and other academic institutions, the Institute of World Religions, which was put under the newly founded Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), began once again to take up its research project, fourteen years after its founding. The major results were *Zongjiao Cidian* (A Dictionary of Religions, Ren [ed.] 1981b) as well as the commencement of a multi-volumed *Zhongguo Fojiao Shi* (History of Chinese Buddhism, Ren [ed.] 1981a). More than twenty graduates from various specialities entered the Graduate School of CASS and the Institute for Religious Studies of Nanjing University, majoring in studies of religions, including Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Daoism, Confucianism, and even atheism. That was the first time such education had been pursued since 1949. In 1979 the first academic association in this field, the Chinese Association of Religious Studies, was founded in Kunming, offering some opportunities for academic networking among professional and amateur scholars in various institutions and universities throughout the country. In addition, the two institutes in Beijing and Nanjing initiated three journals or magazines: *Shijie Zongjiao Yanjiu* (Studies in world religions), *Shijie Zongjiao Ziliao* (Information on world religions, now *Shijie Zongjiao Wenhua*, Religious cultures in the world) and *Zongjiao* (Religion).

All three events—the education of young researchers, the organization of academic associations, and the setting up of journals—are obvious marks of the revival of religious studies in China. Although various social causes conspired to keep enrollments in graduate programs, the activities of the professional associations, and the founding of additional publications relatively low, courses in religious studies were added to the curriculum of the Department of Philosophy at Peking University with the help of the Institute of World Religions. By the mid 1980s two more academic institutions in this field, along with their journals, had been founded: the Institute for Religious Studies at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, with its journal *Contemporary Study of Religions*, and the Institute for the Study of Daoism and Traditional Culture at Sichuan University, with *Research in Religious Studies*.

The development of the study of religions

From the debate on ‘religion as opium’ to the idea of ‘religion as culture’. As mentioned above, the revival and development of religious studies in China required subjective conditions, such as the liberation of thinking, along with objective ones, namely, a reformed and open society. If the latter was formed decisively by the politicians in power, the former was to be realized basically by the scholars working in the field. There were two landmarks in the liberation of thinking for scholars of religions: the debate on ‘religion as opium’ and the idea of ‘religion as culture’.

In the early 1980s, the primary obstacle in the way of religious studies was the general, absolutely negative attitude towards religion which derived from one-sided and dogmatic interpretations of the famous remark by Karl Marx, 'Religion is the opium of the people'. Marx had an unarguably authoritative position in China. Encouraged by Deng Xiaoping's call for 'wholly and fully' understanding Marxism, some leading scholars, mainly from Nanjing and Shanghai or in the Protestant Church, such as Zheng Jian-ye and Zhao Fu-san, proposed that the remark could be understood neither as the leitmotif of Marx's idea of religion nor as an absolutely negative judgment. Regarding religion only as 'opium' or an illegal drug would lead to dismissing believers as 'opium eaters' or drug addicts and to judging religious leaders as drug dealers. That would justify the repression of all religions that had occurred during the past twenty years. But other remarks in the same essay and elsewhere showed that Marx had sympathy for religious people. Furthermore, the metaphor of 'opium' had something more than just a negative sense, as many churchmen had used the same metaphor before Marx in Europe, where people knew opium as an effective painkiller. This meaning contrasted with that familiar to Chinese people, for whom opium was only a notorious illegal drug and a reminder of the disgrace of the Anglo-Chinese 'Opium War' (1839–1842).

Other leading scholars, mainly from the Institute of World Religions, such as Lu Da-ji and Ren Ji-yu, held that the idea of religion as opium could be seen as a cornerstone of Marxist theories of religion. Indeed, opium is an effective painkiller, but it is so just because it has some anaesthetic or narcotic function. Such a function gave religion a reactionary role in relation to oppressed people in the class struggle. Of course, this function also had a positive character when people needed it in a pain-making society. In any case, spiritual opium was different from material opium and was not to be destroyed like the latter. According to these scholars, the extreme 'leftist' attitude of the past toward religion had complex causes and was not to be understood only as the result of Marx's remark.

The North–South 'Opium War', as many people called it, had a very positive influence on religious studies in the mid 1980s. Although the two sides emphasized different aspects in their understanding of Marx's remark, they agreed in opposing the 'extreme leftist' interpretation and in advocating every side's right to hold its opinion and to argue on an equal footing. After the debate, more and more scholars threw away the dogmatic interpretation of the Marxist theory of religion, took a more open attitude towards religions, and maintained wider horizons in their research.

From the mid 1980s on, partly as the result of the open attitude and partly as the outcome of the influence of the 'studies of cultures' current in Chinese intellectual circles, a relatively new idea appeared and spread swiftly in religious studies, the idea of 'religion as culture'. It was given precise expression in such propositions as the following: 'Religion is a universal social and cultural

phenomenon in history' (Lu 1989), 'Religious phenomena are closely connected with the cultural phenomena of mankind' (Fang 1988), and 'Civilisations in the world can be divided into three levels: material productions, institutional organizations, and ideological systems. The first interacts with religion, the second interacts and overlaps with religion, and the third interacts with, overlaps with, and centers on religion' (He 2003: 241). But the idea was often simplified to 'religion is a culture' or 'a nation's religion is an important component of its culture'.

Although the idea is really not new and its simplified expression may have been theoretically confusing and misleading, it played a very large role in the political and social context of China in the late 1980s. It did so particularly in broadening perspectives and opening up new regions for religious studies, because it made for a break with the earlier stereotype of thinking of religion only in terms of ideology and politics. As more and more people accepted the idea of 'religion as culture', spurred on in part by Zhao Pu-chu (1907–2002), President of the Buddhist Association of China, and other religious leaders, the influence of the idea of 'religion as opium' gradually diminished.

Many famous scholars, as well as some religious leaders used the new idea to stress the importance of religious studies in understanding any cultural phenomenon. As a result, the position of this discipline was advanced in academic circles and in the government. The idea also greatly widened the horizons for study. Since it was realized that culture in the broad sense included not only literature, art, music, philosophy, and science, but also morality, politics, the economy, law, and other areas, not only immeasurably rich in content, but also with innumerable strata (for example, in the case of art, theories or ideas of art, the actions of artists, institutions for arts production, and art works themselves), the study of religion as culture and the study of the relationships between religion and culture became immensely richer.

From the late 1980s to the 1990s, there appeared a great flowing tide of scholarly studies, translations, and popular books on various religions and their relations to various forms of culture. Journals and anthologies such as *Christian Culture Review* (edited by Liu Xiaofeng and He Guanghu), *The Buddhist Culture* (edited by He Yun), and *Religion and Culture* (edited by Chen Cunfu) appeared, and the old periodical published by IWR changed its title from *Information on World Religions* (edited by Feng Jiafang) to *The Religious Cultures of the World* (initially edited by Gao Shining, now by Huang Xianian). Thus, many scholars would agree with Lu Da-ji's observation:

Looking back at the road that religious studies has travelled since 1949, we can say that no other theory or idea restrained the thinking of scholars of religion so severely as the idea of religion as 'reactionary politics' [derived from the idea of "religion as opium"], and no other theory or idea played as great a liberating role as the idea of 'religion as culture'.

Of course, some scholars disagreed with statements such as ‘religion is culture’, maintaining that a religion constitutes the spirit of a culture in the perspective of the invisible (He 1997; cf. He 1999: 18–19, 2003: 462–63); nevertheless, many recognized quite well the significant role that the spread of this idea played in improving the development of religious studies in contemporary China.

The growth of religious studies and the ‘cultural religions’. From the late 1980s to the 1990s, nine institutes for the study of religions were set up by provincial Academies of Social Sciences: in Xinjiang, Gansu, Ningxia, Yunnan, Shanxi, Tianjin, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet. Even more institutes or centers for religious studies appeared on the campuses of various universities, and Peking University, Renmin University of China, and Wuhan University established departments of religious studies. Even the State Bureau for Religious Affairs and the High Party School of the Central Committee of the CPC set up institutions for the study of religion under their direct leadership. In addition, some government-sanctioned religious associations also began to pay attention to and allocate resources for the study of religion, as well as to the education of their own professionals. Hence, the number of professional researchers increased greatly, and they trained many more students, although unlike graduate students, who could be associated with the institutes, undergraduates could enroll in programs only at the three departments of religious studies.

During this period, Chinese scholars extended their research from the history of Buddhism and Daoism into many new areas and achieved notable results. Research was conducted in the areas of the history and thought of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Daoism, Confucianism as a religion, Tibetan Buddhism, primitive and folk beliefs in China, Hinduism, Judaism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, Manicheism, the Sikh faith, shamanism, and new religious movements, as well as in the study of the philosophy, anthropology and sociology of religion, and in multidisciplinary studies of the relationships of religion to various forms of culture. In these areas, a remarkably large number of articles, papers, reports, translations, treatises, and monographs appeared. From 1978 to 1997, the IWR alone produced nearly 1,000 scholarly articles, 180 monographs, 70 translations of books, 15 dictionaries, and 132 issues of periodicals, besides scores of popular publications, investigative reports, and compilations of scriptures and other materials.²

From 1949 to 1966, nearly all publications in religious studies in China were on Buddhism, but their total number was no greater than in the single year 1992, that is 1,125. By contrast, each year from 1996 to 1998 about 300 books and scores of magazines or anthologies were published on religious studies in China. Furthermore, this period witnessed the publication of a series of encyclopedias, dictionaries, more popular reading material, and even cartoons, which offered Chinese readers knowledge about religions which was much more objective and balanced than previously.

Of course, these publications included many hasty and crude works, and sometimes authors simply copied from one another. Nevertheless, taken together, these works and achievements demonstrate that, as a whole, Chinese academics in the field had progressed from a one-sided, antagonistic viewpoint to a relatively objective and balanced attitude towards religion. Of course, some scholars still held negative and hostile views towards religion, while others were positive and sympathetic. But generally speaking, the trend was from the former to the latter. It is worth noting that the turn was, to a great degree, an outcome of increasing exchange of scholars and ideas between China and the West during the period, through international visits and conferences, and Chinese translations of important Western works in the field by authors such as Peter Berger (1991), Christopher Dawson (1989), John Hick (1988), Paul Tillich (1999), Arnold Toynbee (1990), Hans Küng, F. Max Müller, Rudolf Otto, Ninian Smart, W. C. Smith, Rodney Stark, as well as of works in the anthropology, phenomenology, philosophy, psychology, and sociology of religion.

Some scholars who were sympathetic to or interested in Christian religion but were not members of any Church contributed so much to the public understanding of Christianity through their writing, translating, editing and other cultural activities, that by the mid 1990s they began to be called 'cultural Christians' (*Wenhua Jidutu*). Recently a similar name, 'cultural Buddhists' (*Wenhua Fojiatou*), has begun to be applied to scholars with similar standing and contributions in regard to Buddhism. The appearance of such terms was a striking sign that the spread of some religions was not the result of the efforts of the clergy and sangha so much as of the cultural activities of scholars. As a result of such efforts, 'religious culture fever' (a term with which some scholars described the rapid increase in the popular interest in religious books, images, doctrines and practices in the 1990s) even appeared at this time.

However, as most Christians would decline to call a person who has not been baptized a 'Christian', and as many Buddhists would refuse to apply the title 'Buddhist' to those who observe none of the five precepts (*pañcasīla*) or are not vegetarians, I prefer to use the phrase, 'Cultural Religions' (*Wenhua Zongjiao*), in describing such a phenomenon. This term refers to many religious phenomena which are the result of all kinds of cultural activities or are expressed in various cultural ways. For example, a large part of the urban membership, especially among the young, of the new church, including the so-called 'underground church', 'house church', or 'meeting point', developed an interest in Christianity through reading Chinese books about it. In the circumstances of contemporary China, many religious developments are indeed brought into being by or through cultural activities, among which the study of religions plays the leading role.

Major ideas and problems, thinkers and texts. (a) Phrases such as 'cultural Christians/Buddhists' and 'cultural religions' and the common expression

'religious culture' (*Zongjiao Wenhua*), appearing in places ranging from academic monographs to advertising posters, demonstrate how widely the idea of 'religion as culture' is accepted and how large its influence is. Although there is in this usage some confusion of religion itself with the ways it is expressed, it is true that nearly all the contemporary Chinese scholars of religion, consciously or not, agree with the idea to varying degrees. Among them Lu Da-ji (1932–) may be a representative thinker who made efforts to provide a clearer and more detailed account of the idea than other scholars in this field. Lu defines religion as a kind of (human-made) social and cultural system, and argues that religion interacts with other forms of social culture (Lu 2002: 745). But he rejects the idea that religion is the substance in culture (Tillich 1999: 412) as well as the idea that religion is the basis of the values which form the core of culture (Toynbee 1990: 99). The latter ideas are spreading slowly but steadily in China through the influence of Chinese translations of the works of Paul Tillich and Christopher Dawson, among others. However, very few Chinese scholars argue for such ideas today. One of the few is He Guanghu (1999: 18–19, 2003: 462–464), who argues that culture is caused by the transcending of nature and the self on the part of the human spirit, a transcending that points to the subject object of religion at its height and is expressed in religion at its best. He holds that such transcendent spirituality is the source of the river of culture, and that religiosity is the root of the tree of culture. In addition, He advanced the idea that religion is a special kind of symbol system, hence a cultural system from the perspective of the visible, but at the same time, from the perspective of the invisible religion represents the original spirit of culture and hence its motivational power. This idea is in line not only with Paul Tillich, Christopher Dawson, Arnold Toynbee and numerous other Western thinkers, but also with He Ling (1995), Liang Shuming (1987), and other representative thinkers of modern China.

(b) A very long and heated debate among Chinese academics has concerned whether Confucianism is a religion. Starting in the early seventeenth century, Western missionaries such as Matteo Ricci and other Jesuits argued that Confucianism was not a religion. In that way they were able to justify their position in the so-called 'Chinese Rites Controversy', a position that favored the adaptation of Christians in China to Confucian rituals (Mungello [ed.] 1994). Starting in the early twentieth century, most Chinese intellectuals, especially those who defended Confucianism and mainstream traditional Chinese culture, also rejected the idea that Confucianism was a religion, because they worried, consciously or not, that its classification as a religion would result in the negation of Confucianism, inasmuch as since the 1920s, and especially since the 1950s, religion of every kind was being rejected, as mentioned above. The defenders of Confucianism argued that it was just a variety of philosophy, ethics or social doctrine, or a system of the three and more, but not at all a religion.

A few scholars, however, have held that Confucianism is a religion, or at least has been a religion since the time of the Han Emperor Wu Di (140–87 BCE) or else the Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE). The two best known advocates of this position are Ren Jiyu (2000) and Li Shen (1999, 2000, 2004). (Their attitude toward Confucianism as a religion is more negative than positive.) But in recent years, more and more scholars have come to recognize the religiousness of Confucianism, and many of these scholars are Confucians or so-called Contemporary Neo-Confucians and are sympathetic to religion (in Ren 2000). In some ways this is to be seen as a result of the development of religious studies in China, which greatly improved the understanding of religion, especially among scholars in the humanities.

A third position besides the mere opposition between the views that Confucianism either is or is not a religion has also appeared. That is the present author's position (He 1999: 4–17, 18–39; 2003: 75–77, 465–67). He points out that before we ask the question, 'Is Confucianism a religion?' we should ask three logically more fundamental questions:

- Was there any great religion in the history of China other than Buddhism and Daoism?
- If yes, did it have any relationship to Confucianism? and
- If yes, is the relationship comprehensive and exclusive enough to provide a sufficient reason for denoting Confucianism the Confucian Religion or *Rujiao*?

On the ground of historical facts He argues that the answer to the first question is 'yes'. The other religion in Chinese history is the worship of Tian (Heaven or the God of Heaven) and the practice of sacrifice to ancestry, with its accompanying religious feelings and ideas, ritual activity, and institutional organization. As an established, state religion, this religion lasted for more than 2000 years until the breakdown of the Qing dynasty in 1911. To some degree it is alive in the unconsciousness of many Chinese people today. He also answered the second question affirmatively. The above-mentioned religion found its expression in Confucian scriptures, its clergymen were called *Ru* (Confucians) even before Confucius's time (so that 'Confucians' and 'Confucianism' are not good translations of *Ru* and *Rujiao*); its preservation was the main concern of Confucius himself as well as of all Confucians, its theoretical explanations were given by Confucians, and its institutional organization was precisely the patriarchal clan system that was also the Confucian social institution. Therefore, the answer to the third question is that the Chinese religion can be called Confucian religion or *Rujiao*, although Confucianism itself cannot be called a religion simply in regard to its humanist ethics, social theory and life philosophy (Ren 2000).

(c) A quite controversial idea has recently emerged in the study of religions in China, namely, the so-called *hanyu shenxue*, literally, 'theology in the Han

language', sometimes loosely translated 'theology in Chinese'. This idea is only discussed by academics who are interested or engaged in Christian studies. However, unlike the idea of cultural religions, which may have had significance only for academics in mainland China, and unlike the debate over whether Confucianism is a religion, which may be interesting only to the same academics in mainland China as well as a few academics overseas, such as Tu Weiming at Harvard and Liu Shushien in Taiwan, the idea of 'theology in Chinese' has provoked debate among nearly all Chinese scholars of Christian studies in mainland China and overseas. That has been true especially in Hong Kong, which was for decades the theological enclave in the Chinese world and has become a bridge between academics within Christian studies in the mainland and abroad. In recent years, as exchanges and contacts between these groups have become much more frequent and much closer, interest in and debate about *hanyu shenxue* has taken place mainly among academics in mainland China and Hong Kong.

In a strict sense, the term *hanyu shenxue* only denotes the linguistic character of the theology, a theology in the Han language. *Hanyu* is the language of Han people, who make up 96 percent of the population in China, while the rest of the population, called minor nationalities, have more than fifty different languages, from Tibetan in the southwest to Korean in the northeast. The term *hanyu shenxue* is not only different from the term *zhongwen* (or *huawen* or *huayu*) *shenxue* (theology in Chinese or Chinese theology), which removes the Han chauvinism of *hanyu shenxue*, but also from the term *zhongguo shenxue* (Chinese theology or theology in China), in avoiding the geographical and political meaning, focusing just on linguistic aspects.

Although the term is not a recent invention, it did not begin to become popular, especially in mainland China, or to arouse much interest or debate until it appeared as a keyword in the title of a newly republished periodical in Hong Kong, *Tao Fong: Hanyu Shenxue Xuekan* (Logos and Pneuma: Chinese journal of theology, 1994–). The idea was put forward by Liu Xiaofeng, a scholar from the mainland, who then worked in collaboration with Daniel Yeung, the former Vice President of Tao Fong Shan Christian Center, as dual heads of the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies in Hong Kong, sponsored by Areopagus, a Norwegian-based missionary organization.

Although the term can and should be understood in a broad sense as any theology expressed in the Han language (Lai 2000), a quite popular understanding or misunderstanding of it also became widespread, that is, as a special kind of Chinese theology, represented by Liu Xiaofeng, He Guanghu, and other so-called cultural Christians, who stood within the humanities and social sciences and expressed their individual religious faith, which thus differed not only from other Chinese theologies but also from any church dogmatics or 'seminary theologies'. Such a narrow understanding can be grounded in Liu's own writings, as he stressed the individual as opposed to the ecclesiastic nature

of faith and theology (Lai 2000, Liu 1995). Many scholars from the mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and even the US took part in the controversy about this idea (Yeung 2000), and some of them are still very critical of it.

The present author is considered one of the representatives of *hanyu shenxue*, but in fact his idea is quite different from that of Liu (He 1996a, 1996b). For reasons mentioned above, He supports the idea, but unlike Liu, he does not make any dualist division between the theologies of seminary and university, of clergy and academia, of individual and Church, and so on. He defines *hanyu shenxue* simply as one of the ‘mother-tongue theologies’, which takes the theologian’s mother-tongue as its vehicle, makes the existential experience and cultural resources expressed in the language its material, and serves the users of the language. He also put forward his proposal for the development of *hanyu shenxue*, including its methodological principles and special approaches, as a result of a critical evaluation of the historical theology in the Han language, as well as from observing the specific social and cultural characteristics of China today (He 1996a, 1996b).

(d) The sociology of religion in China began with the Chinese translation of Western works such as Peter Berger’s (1991) *The Sacred Canopy* in the early 1990s. In recent years, some Chinese scholars have been conducting fieldwork and publishing their results (Gao 2005; Liang L. 2004; Chen 2005; Li 2005; Ng *et al.* 2005; Wu 2001; Kang forthcoming). Worth noting is the fieldwork directed by Yang Fenggang. Yang was trained in sociology of religion in the US and is familiar with the theories of Rodney Stark and others. He has been able to apply sociological methodology and theory to his fieldwork. This is just what the sociology of religion in China needs.

(e) The psychology and anthropology of religion have not yet gone beyond the stage of translating or introducing Western works and theories. Recently a few scholars have made their own ventures within these areas, but their work can also be classified as sociology of religion. Examples include the works of Gao, Liang, and Wu mentioned above.

(f) The philosophy of religion in the modern sense also began in China with the translation of Western works, such as John Hick (1988) and Paul Tillich (1999). Books by Chinese scholars include Zhao (1994), Fang (2000), and Lu Guolong (1997). Zhang Zhigang’s (2003) *Study of Philosophy of Religion* is a general introduction to and criticism of modern Western philosophy of religion. He Guanghu’s (1991) *Pluralized Ideas of God* gives a survey of Western religious thought during the twentieth century, employing a common working framework that He proposed for the discipline. He has also attempted to put forward a global religious philosophy as the common ground for inter-religious dialogue, especially based upon his study of the compatibility of Judeo-Christian and Chinese religions. Wang Zhicheng (2005) is another scholar who pays much attention to the relationship of inter-religious dialogue to the philosophy of religion.

(g) Last but not least is the development of the history of religion in China. In comparison with all of the other disciplines in the study of religions, the works in this field are the most numerous. They focus on the histories of various religions, especially Chinese Buddhism and Daoism. Unfortunately, very few of these studies have any originality or novelty. The multi-volumed *History of Chinese Buddhism* (Ren [ed.] 1981a) and *Outline of the History of Daoist Thought* (Qing 1980) may be worth noting.

In recent years, as more and more scholars in philosophical circles and literary studies began to discuss the thought of such postmodern thinkers as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, a few scholars of religious studies also began to pay attention to the relationship of modern and postmodern hermeneutics to Christian studies. Yang Huilin and Zeng Qingbao are representatives among them.

As for two recent, important topics in the field, feminist theory of religion (or feminist theology) and ecological theory of religion (or ecological theology), there have appeared a few doctoral theses discussing some Western thinkers' theories, for example Zhou Hui's dissertation on feminist Biblical hermeneutics (unpublished), supervised by Yang Huilin, and Cao Jing's comparative study of the ecological theologies of J. Cobb Jr and J. Moltmann (unpublished), supervised by He Guanghu. Gao Shining, a woman scholar in mainland China, and Huang Yiqiu, a woman scholar in Taiwan, have also written papers on feminist theology (Lo [ed.] 2003).

Prospects

Influences on society. The phrase 'cultural religions' can be used to summarize the different ways religious studies influences society. Besides religious activities within legal religious organizations, the academic study of religion is the only activity relating to religions which is sanctioned by the government. Since academic studies have to some extent a fair, honest, and objective character, they have gained the confidence of the public. Therefore, the results of religious studies have had and will continue to have remarkable influence upon society. More and more students, teachers, journalists, officials, writers, and ordinary people have abandoned a bias against religions and have, and will continue to have, a relatively fair and even sympathetic understanding of religion. I have written 'will continue to have', because the greatest influence is exercised not through lectures but by means of books. Many books have been printed several times and still have good prospects for reprints.

The influence of these publications can be seen in various areas of social life. Even in the mass media that are under the most severe constraint, such as television, cinema, and broadcasting, a limited number of casual appearances and planned programs concerning religion (e.g. the film *Master Hongyi*, the videos *Ten Commandments* and *Ben Hur*) may be only the tip of a very large

iceberg of demand for such projects. From the 1980s on, more and more young people have become so interested in observing Christmas and in sending Christmas gifts that if foreigners visited a supermarket or department store during that time they might think they were in a Christian country. Furthermore, one can attend seminars, lectures, or conferences dealing with religion on the campuses of scores of universities.

The influence of religious studies has reached even into religious circles. As more and more young believers have widened and deepened their understanding of their own faiths through reading the publications in the field, some religious leaders have developed a high appreciation for the work of scholars and for its contribution to their efforts to improve the quality of belief. In short, since the government-sanctioned religious organizations and so-called underground churches are quite limited in spreading their influence, it is natural and necessary for the religious influence upon society to come mostly from religious studies and its results. This influence may not be immediate or apparent, but I believe that it will certainly be far-reaching in the development of Chinese society.

Problems along the way. Just as the revival and development of religions in contemporary China can be considered a miracle, the revival and achievements of religious studies in China can be seen in the same way. But we should not ignore the many problems confronting religious studies in China at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

(a) Owing to the effects of past experiences, many people still see religious studies as a 'subtle' or sensitive field. Many scholars think that the study of antiquity is safer than the study of the contemporary world, and that the study of history is safer than the study of theory. Therefore, the development of religious studies lacks balance. It places too much stress on the history of religion, too little stress on more modern and theoretical studies, and even less on the studies of contemporary religious situations. Some branch disciplines, such as psychology of religion and phenomenology of religion, are still waiting for a mere beginning.

(b) The quality of academic work, as a whole, needs to be improved. Even in the history of religions, which makes up the most fruitful field, a lot of publications content themselves with summarizing source materials and telling stories. Some authors just copy from one another, although others share new findings and understanding.

(c) There is a serious lack of young researchers. This results from the limited enrollment of students, owing to the national education systems, and the even smaller number of graduates who can find jobs in research institutions, owing to limitations in the development of the faculties concerned. To add to the difficulty with regard to personnel, financial support does not meet the research demand, and this in turn exacerbates the lack of resources. So the prospects for the further growth of religious studies in China would seem to be quite poor.

No one aware of the disasters of the past will expect that religious studies will continue to prosper without a struggle. The most important lesson from the past century is that the flourishing of learning, including that of religious studies, needs open, tolerant, and pluralist political and social circumstances. A closed, suppressive, and monolithic society necessarily leads to the fall and end of religious studies and of any form of learning. Therefore, scholars responsible for learning ought to do their best to help establish a context in which everyone has the right to publish his or her views. In the final analysis, the formation of the circumstances that learning requires depends upon the ideas and actions of the people as a whole, including scholars. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we can conclude that a bright future is waiting for religious studies and true religion in China, if only scholars, as well as religious and irreligious people, have the courage to use their own reason and act accordingly.

Korea

The strangeness of 'religion'

Until the late nineteenth century, there was no word for 'religion' (*jongkyo*, 宗教) in Korean. What 'religion' implied was so strange that a new word had to be invented. The only option available was to use the 'new word' from Western culture. It was translated from Japanese and imported during the period of 'modernization' (Chung 2006: 387–392).

That does not mean, however, that Koreans did not have any experience of transcendence, the sacred, absoluteness, or mysteriousness—experiences that were later included in 'religion'. Seeking an 'exit' from existential situations, Koreans devised various terms which implied the above concepts. They also had a word for deity, conceived of as an omnipresent and omnipotent creator (e.g. in general, *Ha-neul-nim*). Specific functional powers were also treated as divine beings: nature gods, house gods, and so on. Ways of living had been organized according to the norms governing relations between human beings and deities. The 'answer' that people sought was described as releasing, rescuing, unburdening, and overcoming (*Pul-lim*) (Chung 2003b: 169–173). Koreans lived lives conscious of punishment and forgiveness, and they wanted to obtain support and compassion from divine beings. However, no 'system' was formulated for these experiences. They constituted a life style or way of living (Chung 1997: 23–32).

There were also 'religions' in Korea before there was the word 'religion'. From the third century CE the Korean peninsula was pervaded by Con-

fucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Confucianism was a code of morality, an ideology, and a 'religion'. Daoism also had a strong influence upon the people. Its naturalism and the practice of mystic discipline was a 'way of becoming the other being' for the people. Buddhism displayed another possible 'answer'; teaching 'the awakening and the practice of benevolence'. It, too, was a 'religion'.

It must be noticed, however, that those phenomena were neither conceptualized as nor named 'religion' (*jongkyo*). Rather, they were called 'proper teachings', 'techniques of practicing wisdom', 'attitude insured by orderly behaviors', 'learning', 'principles that must be followed', 'laws', and so on. In traditional Korean no word encompassed such phenomena totally (Jang Suk-man 1992: 32–37).

The traditional terms inevitably got pulled down by the raging wave of modernity. The strange and new word 'religion' and its conceptual implications became an epistemological apparatus for judging traditional Korean experiences. Christianity provided a point of reference for these judgments. According to those criteria, the traditional 'culture of answers' was classified as shamanism or primitive folk belief, and even Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism were regarded as non-justifiable religions (Jang S. 1992: 113–122).

Consider for a moment the history of Korean dynasties. In general, the myths of the founding fathers of dynasties centered on heaven. Sovereignty was an embodiment of heaven. However, since historic times, each dynasty selectively enforced a particular 'culture of answers' as its political ideology. Buddhism was the ruling ideology of the Silla dynasty (57 BCE–935 CE), and it continued to be so during the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392 CE). The ideology of the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910 CE), however, was Confucianism.

The Joseon dynasty developed to a remarkable extent arguments against 'different systems of answers'. Early in the Joseon era, the precept and practice of Buddhism was harshly criticized as an absurd teaching by Confucian scholars. The traditional Buddhist 'exit' was cursed simply as foolishness (Korea Institute 1998). In the late eighteenth century, there were serious polemics between Confucianism and Catholicism (Keum 1987: 172–181). However, it must be noticed that there was a considerable 'critical cognition and assessment of the others' in the arguments of that period.

What I have mentioned suggests two things. The first is that Koreans have had their own 'experiences of seeking and finding answers' within their existential and communal situation as a culture, experiences that, in modern terms, might be called 'religion'. Perhaps it would be better, however, to call it a 'soteriological experience' or 'the culture of soteriology and its history', in order to differentiate it from 'religion'.

The second thing that the preceding suggests is that there were many arguments about soteriology among learned Koreans in the pre-modern era (Korea Institute 1998), as much literature, public and private, proves. It

is impossible to deny that these writings were published in order not so much to recognize others as to justify oneself. Their political intentions were generally obvious. Nevertheless, in these works, we can find not only confessional statements but also indications of scholarly work that included a recognition of others. It is clear, then, that there had been in Korean history scholarly responses toward the ‘discovery and recognition of other soteriologies (religions)’ and the ‘cultural conflict among them (religions)’. It is problematic whether such activity can be considered an initial stage of ‘the study of religions’ in the modern sense of the term. However, it is certain that, in Korea, scholarly concern with religion and its culture was not simply motivated by the Western influences of modernity but was also inherited from traditional scholarship. Thus, it is possible to say that religious studies in Korea has its own autogenous tradition.

In such a context we confront the problem of the suitability of the word ‘religion’ and the concept to which it points. Sometimes, it is unavoidable to use subtle expressions such as the ‘religion before religion’ (before the word *jongkyo*) and the ‘religion after religion’ (after the word *jongkyo*). Nevertheless, it is also impossible to discard the word ‘religion’. It has become a common word and has become a tool for describing and understanding particular phenomena and experiences. At the same time, it is also impossible to regard the concept ‘religion’ as a proper designation for Korean experiences without any modification or limitation. If it is permissible to use ‘soteriology’ for our ‘religion before religion’, the following questions arise: Is it proper that we Koreans should study our traditional soteriology in the context of studying religions? If so, why and how? The opposite question also arises: Is it proper that we should study religion in the context of studying our traditional soteriology? Why and how? To these, we may add a final question: Is there any alternative?

The proliferation of ‘religion’

Toward the end of the Joseon dynasty, the government maintained the policy of isolation in the midst of conflict and turmoil with foreign countries. However, from 1832 on, it had to undergo harsh pressure from England, France, Russia, Germany, America, and Japan to open the country. Finally, in 1876 the government opened a port and renounced the policy of isolation, concluding the treaty with Japan (*Ganghwado joyak*).

During these times, with the acceptance of so-called modern civilization from foreign countries, Korea had to adopt new words such as ‘religion’, ‘politics’, ‘science’, and ‘arts’. As already noted, we never lacked the experiences to which the vocabularies pointed, although they might not fully correspond to these concepts.

However, the strange words and concepts became the categories and concepts which functioned as criteria for the cognition of things. The power of foreign countries and the new trend of modernization had been so forceful that Koreans had no other choice but to accept the changes as an unavoidable necessity.

Some eagerly welcomed the changes as something positive. That was especially true among the progressive intellectuals and political groups, such as the Reformist Cabinet of *Gapsinjeongbyeon* (Radical reformation movement) in 1884 and the Dongnip hyeophoe (Independence association, 1896–1898), who had tried to overturn the closed traditional society. The strange words gave them ‘a perspective of modernity’ and influenced them to form a new worldview.

But before such a new cultural self-consciousness could be demonstrated, Korea was colonized by Japan (1910–1945). Koreans were not able to do autonomous, independent scholarly work, and academia was controlled to serve the colonial policy of Japan. In spite of this situation, the Japanese regime made a significant mark on religious studies in Korea. Gyeongseong Imperial University, established in Seoul in 1927, established courses for the study of religions in its Department of Philosophy, among them courses entitled ‘Introduction to the Study of Religions’, ‘Introduction to Buddhism’, ‘Introduction to the History of Religion’, and ‘Seminar on Specific Themes in the Study of Religions’ (Kang 1995). Most of all, the Japanese government sponsored field research on the traditional beliefs of the Korean people, in the name of ‘folk belief’ or ‘folk religion’. One of the results was *A Study of Korean Shamanism* (1937–1938) by Akamatsu Chijou (1886–1960) and Akiba Takasi (1888–1954), who conducted fieldwork from 1930 to 1933 under the auspices of The Japanese Imperial Academy of Sciences (Institute of Religious Studies 1999: 115–179). They used the concept of ‘religion’ practically, and so their study was an offshoot of the study of religions in the modern sense.

At the same time an academic interest arose in traditional culture in general. For example, the study of the origin myth of the Korean nation and people, the re-evaluation of Korean folk belief, and the re-description of each religion were undertaken with the new descriptive categories and concepts associated with ‘religion’. In other words, the diverse theories of history, philology, and folklore produced by modernity in Western culture were utilized in the study. Two prominent scholars were Lee Neung-hwa (1869–1943) and Choi Nam-sun (1890–1957). The former left massive publications on Korean history and culture: *A General History of Korean Buddhism* (1918), *A History of Gisaeng* (Courtesan) in Korea (1927), *A Study of Korean Shamanism* (1927), *A Study of Korean Feminine Customs* (1927), *A History of Korean Christianity and Korean Diplomacy* (1928), and *A History of Korean Taoism* (1929), and so on (Lee Jin-gu 2000: 287). The latter concentrated more on the national history and myth: *A History of Our Country* (1925), and ‘Korean Mythology and

Japanese Mythology' (1930) were representative (Jang Suk-man 2004). He also tried to clarify the origin of Korean 'religion' from philological and religio-anthropological perspectives in his 'A Study of *Bulham* (Korea, Manchuria, and Japan) Culture' (1925) (Jang Suk-man 2005).

Until this time there were no generally accepted descriptive categories and concepts for religion, even if the word was commonly used. However, it was a very significant change that allowed Koreans to review their traditional religious culture from a novel perspective. Nevertheless, Koreans had to wait until they were liberated from Japan in 1945 before religious studies could begin in earnest.

The development of a study of religion

Confusion. With liberation in 1945, Korea was divided into North and South, supported by the Soviet Union and the United States, respectively. In 1950, war broke out between the two sides, and tension has continued up to the present, despite an official ceasefire. North Korea has tolerated no religion, and religion was taught within the limits of Marxism-Leninism, although an appeasement policy now seems to be underway.

In South Korea, one of the most notable phenomena was a rapid expansion of Christianity, which had come to Korea at the end of the Joseon dynasty (Korea Institute 1998: 404–409). Simultaneously, in the course of modernization, traditional Buddhism, Confucianism, and folk belief were criticized as parts of an out-dated culture that hindered modernization. In the years immediately following liberation, the only university to have a department of religious studies was Seoul National University (SNU, formerly Gyeongseong Imperial University). However, the curriculum of the department was largely defined in terms of Christian theology (Lee J. 2000: 288).

Developments. In the mid 1950s the situation began to change. Lectures on Buddhism, Confucianism, and folk belief appeared in the curriculum of the SNU Department of Religious Studies. Various theories of the study of religions were also introduced. Gradually, the study of religions acquired a place in the academic world. In the middle of this change was Chang Byeongkil (1919–2005), appointed a professor at Seoul National University in 1957. In his *A Study of Korean Indigenous Beliefs* (1970), Chang arduously labored to describe the religious phenomenon not only through factual description but also through the semantics implied in it. In 1975 he wrote *An Introduction to the Study of Religion*, which has since become a foundation for the study of religions in Korea. The work was well organized and inclusive enough to cover the basic concepts and theories related to the study of religions in general. Topics included theories of the origin of religion, a sociological approach to religion, a history of the world's religions, the religious institution, and a short history of the study of religions in the West.

In the 1960s, many publications appeared which engaged in apologetics for each religion using more elaborate modern terms related to the concept of 'religion'. During this time the history of each religion was also rewritten from newly developed perspectives, which analyzed in more detail the structure of the religion and its history, compared with the simple recitation of facts and self-centered interpretations that were common earlier. At the same time comparative studies between various religions began (Institute of Religious Studies 1999). In those days, not only the Christian seminaries but also the Buddhist College of Dongguk University and the Confucian College of Sungkyunkwan University actively developed their academic work, abandoning the naive exegesis that prevailed earlier.

However, the establishment of the study of religions as an academic discipline still had to wait until Korean scholars of religions could constitute an association. On March 2, 1970, the Korea Association for Studies of Religion (*Hanguk Jongkyo Hakhoe*) was founded. But it was dissolved a few years later, after publishing only one issue of *Journal of the Studies of Religion* (*Hanguk Jongkyohak*, 1972). Its recorded public activities ceased after the 14th Monthly Scholarly Presentation on July 7, in 1973. The Scholarly Presentations were reopened once a year in 1982 and 1983, and biannual congresses have been held since 1984. The Association was revived as the Korean Association for the History of Religions (*Hanguk Jongkyo Hakhoe*). The Association has published its journal *Studies in Religion* (*Jongkyo Yeongu*) annually, or biannually since 1986, and quarterly at present.

New paradigms. Throughout the 1970s, the works of Mircea Eliade were a focal point of discussion. His first book to be translated was *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, released in 1976 in a translation by Chung Chin-hong. In general Eliade's works were accepted as an indication that Koreans could recover the 'experiences' which they had lost because of 'religion'. Through Eliade's influence, it was hoped, the study of religions would get a new vision that would establish it as sound scholarship different from a self-confined description of each religion. At the same time, there was also considerable criticism of Eliade. The largest objection was to his so-called a-historicism.

With the opening of the department of religious studies of Sogang University (1981), Wilfred Cantwell Smith was widely discussed. Gil Heesung (1986), a specialist on Indian philosophy and Buddhism, and Kim Sunghae, a specialist on Confucianism, took the lead in these discussions. As a result, Korea enjoyed a proliferation of theories and methods in the study of religions overall (Chung 1996).

In the meantime some scholars oriented to the study of religions attempted a new approach to the Confucian tradition. For example, they emphasized ritual rather than text and tried to bring to light its 'religiosity', which had been overlooked by orthodox Confucian scholars. In studying the texts, they assumed that confessional components were implicit in the speculative logical

discourse. The historical study of the conflict between Confucianism and Catholicism also expanded its concerns to include cross-cultural issues between different religious traditions (Keum 1982).

Direct engagement with concrete issues helped refine the identity and methods of the study of religions. One example is in the writing of the history of Korean religion. No one denied that such a history needed to be more than a recounting of each religion's history. In a religious culture individual religions and their complicated ethos overlap. Therefore, the history of religions should not only recount the facts in detail but also interpret those phenomena. The integration of historical and phenomenological approaches became inevitable. It was natural, therefore, that serious efforts were made to seek an alternative. One leading scholar, Yoon Yee-heum called his position a 'middle range perspective' that aimed to overcome 'theoretical provincialism' (Yoon Y. 1986).

With this movement the problem of the identity of the study of religions emerged once again. Some scholars disagreed with the insistence that the study of religions should be a discipline that had a single method. They maintained that the study of religions should be a field which utilized various methods selectively. They argued that the identity of the study of religions should never be determined by a specific methodology. Rather, the method should be determined by the subject that the researcher has selected. Therefore, methodology related not only to 'how to?' but also to 'why?' However, they also maintained that the study of religions should not be a 'theology' in terms of confessional statements originating from devotion.

The issue of the 'why, what, and how' of the study of religions in the late 1970s and its discussion throughout the 1980s was related to an increasing concern for religion and religious culture in the other related academic fields. Most of all, political science, sociology, and anthropology took a keen interest in religion in the rapidly changing Korean society. There were arguments about reductionism. The study of religions tried to establish its own specific identity, insisting on anti-reductionism as well as anti-dogmatism. However, those arguments have diminished in recent times, and scholars have come to acknowledge that, as far as reduction is not ontological but descriptive, it has to be recognized as one possible perspective.

The establishment of departments of religious studies and research institutes in universities was another reason for the rise of issues of identity. In addition to Seoul National University and its Institute of Religious Studies (1989), there appeared, among others: Sogang University (1981) and its Institute of Religious Studies (1998, formerly the Institute of Religion and Theology, founded in 1984), the Academy of Korean Studies (1984), Hanshin University (1993) and a section for the study of religious culture in its Humanities Research Center (1999), and Catholic University (1994) and its Institute for the Study of Humanities (1998, formerly the Research Institute of Religious Education, founded in 1978). Each research institute publishes periodicals as follows:

Religion and Culture (Institute of Religious Studies, SNU), *Journal of Korean Religions* (Institute of Religious Studies, Sogang University), *Journal of Religion and Culture* (Hanshin Institute of Humanities, Hanshin University), and *Human Research* (Humanities Research Center, Catholic University).

In accordance with the increase in the number of departments of religious studies, lectures on religion were added to the curricula of many universities and colleges as a subject of humanities and general education under various names, such as ‘Religion and Human Being’, ‘A History of Religion’, ‘World Religions’, and ‘Religion and Culture’, as well as introductions to individual religions. The Korean Association for the History of Religions (*Hanguk Jongkyo Hakhoe*), a representative society of the study of religions, has developed as an umbrella organization that includes not only the history, phenomenology, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and psychology of religion but also even the ‘theology’ of each religion.

Meanwhile, Korean scholars also organized several associations which published journals, including the Korean Association for the History of Religions (*Hanguk Jongkyo sahakhoe*, 1972, *Journal of the History of Korean Religions*)—the Hanguk Jongkyo Sahakhoe had the same name in English as the Hanguk Jongkyo Hakhoe; its journals (*Jongkyosa Yeongu*) were published three times until 1973; publication resumed in 1996 under the title *Hanguk Jongkyosa Yeongu*—the Korean Association for the Study of Religious Education (1995, *Korean Journal of Religious Education*), the Association for Korean New Religions (1999, *Studies in New Religion*), the Association for Korean Shamanistic Studies (1998, *Korean Shamanism*), and the Korean Society for Literature and Religion (1992, *Literature and Religion*). Independent research institutes not attached to universities or colleges were also founded, such as the Korea Institute for Religion and Culture (2001, formerly the Korea Society for the Study of Religion [1987]), which publishes *The Critical Review of Religion and Culture* as well as a series of monographs and books.

Since the 1970s translations of the classics in the study of religions by Friedrich Max Müller, Gerardus van der Leeuw, and others have continuously appeared, including more recent authors such as Mircea Eliade, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, and currently Jonathan Z. Smith. Today no country is an island. Sharing agonies and accomplishments, we participate in the global work of the study of religions.

Affirmation and re-formation. Since the 1980s the study of religions has matured significantly. Most of all, the late 1980s saw the demise of the first generation scholars. The following generation concentrated on more concrete studies rather than on issues of identity or method. The period can be described as a time of affirmation of self-identity and re-formation of concerns.

In affirming the self-identity of the study of religions, Korean scholars have preferred the term ‘religious culture’ (*Jongkyo Munhwa*) to ‘religion’. This

terminological shift implies above all that each religion and its 'theology' are nothing more than data that should be scrutinized as cultural phenomena. It means that the study of religions is affirmed as 'the study of religions in cultural studies'.

The subjects included within the study of religions expanded to a wide range of cultural topics. The relation of religion and science was discussed from various perspectives (Chung *et al.* 2000). Traditional concerns for myth and mythology expanded to include issues related to current political discourse (Special Issue 2002), the visual media (Cho 2003a; Lee C. 2002; Shin 2002), and the internet (Special Issue 2004). Scholars interested in ritual examined sports and mass behavior (Cho 2003b; Lee C. 2004; Lim 2003). A conspicuous topic was the body. Scholars compared the pre-modern concept of the body, disease, and healing with corresponding postmodern concepts. In this comparison it was assumed that each concept, pre-modern and postmodern, had its own 'particular religiosity' (Park S. 2003). Issues of gender, the environment, and social minorities, among others, were also seriously raised as central topics within the study of religions (Kim Y. 2002; Woo 2002; Yoo 2004).

Studies also focused on specific themes, such as a rite to pray for rain from the Joseon dynasty (Choi 2002), the calendar of the pre- and post-modern eras (Cho 1999; Lee Chang-yick 2005; Lim 2006), shamanism studied from the client's rather than the practitioner's perspective (Cha 1997), the Korean view of death studied holistically (Chung 2003a; Song 2006), regional religious culture (Korea Institute 1997), and foreigners' views of Korean religions from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries (Cho 2002; Kim Chong-suh 2006). Two observations may be made about the new generation's work. First, it does not apply the concept of 'religion' unconditionally either to 'religion before religion' or to 'religion after religion'. So far it has reached a consensus about 'religion' by using a semantic approach which interprets the meaning of 'religion' in the context of historical situations (Ha 2003; Jang S. 1992; Kang 1992; Ko 2002; Yi 2001; Yoon S. 1997). Second, the new generation has made a clean cut between the critical recognition of religious phenomena and the self-interpretation of individual religions. The study of religions is no longer confused with 'theological work' (Kim Y. 2003; Lee J. 1996; Lee W. 2000; Lee Y. 1999; Shin 1996).

The new generation has attempted a 'new description' of world religions (Korea Institute 1991), characterized by trying to establish the subject of description in a manner that is not biased by the Western perspective. Work on the history of Korean religion is no exception (Hwang 1985, Ro 2001). Method is emphasized more than subject. Therefore, their work is more a pursuit of a stream of 'religiosity' than a chronological description of religion. Traditional folk belief and newly arisen religions are also dealt with not as peripheral but as central phenomena.

Regional research is also expanding. Interest in Japanese and Chinese religions is increasing (Lim 2002; Park K. 2005; Park M. 1997). A careful study of religious culture in North Korea is underway (Ryu 2003, 2006). Narrative introductions to religious cultures for the general public have appeared (Korea Institute 1999; Park K. *et al.* 1999). Finally, one of the significant accomplishments of this generation has been the writing of the history of the study of religions in Korea carried out by the Korean Association for the History of Religions, the Institute of Religious Studies of Seogang University, and the National Academy of Sciences (Institute of Religious Studies 1999; Korean Association 1997; National Academy 2000).

Emerging issues. In the world of Korean academics, the study of religions is still on the periphery, but the situation is changing rapidly with a rise in the religious population, the politicization of religious power, religious conflict, and the problem of religious education in public and private schools. Issues surrounding gender, the environment, human rights, biotechnology, and the Internet are not overlooked. In an open, pluralistic society with an expectation of prosperity but facing an uncertain future with regard to unification, religious value, the *raison d'être* of religion in society, cannot be averted. Religion comes to the fore as a subject of cultural discourse. In this situation, the study of religions has encountered several issues that are not new but should be addressed with new approaches.

First, the concept of 'religion' is being revisited with the question of whether it is valid even in the Western sphere. It would be impetuous to expect an alternative term for religion, but it is time to reflect not only on the category of religion but also on its conceptual clarity—or lack thereof.

Second, one of the urgent issues is how to describe a history of religion or a history of religious culture. Figuratively speaking, the history of religion that has been written was a topography. It was an accumulation of facts arranged chronologically and in terms of causal interpretation. But such a history cannot fulfill the desire to understand the religious ethos. Even though the ethos is variable, it constantly affects the climate above the stable earth. It is not only topographical but also meteorological. Thus, a history of religion should not be written simply as a topography but also as a meteorology. That is no easy task, because it requires new categories and concepts and a new logic of interpretation. More than that, it requires a new identity for the historian of religion.

Third, and finally, the study of religions should do cultural criticism. A preference for the term 'religious culture' rather than 'religion' not only extends the concerns of the study of religions but also gives it a new responsibility. In a sense, such work can be a translation of non-religious language into religious language and vice versa. Today religious studies in Korea is trying to establish its own creative cultural criticism, which is consequently preparing a new

epistemology of religion sublating pre-modernity, modernity, and postmodernity all at once.

NOTES

- 1 Some modern scholars understand *san-jiao* as ‘three religions’, but the majority view is that it simply means ‘three teachings’ or ‘three ways of cultivation’ (because they argue that Confucianism is not a religion). I actually favor the former understanding (He 1999, 4–6, 20–22).
- 2 The following incomplete statistics give some impression of the speed of growth:

Year	1985	1991	1996
Articles Published	1,103	2,024	3,000

Cf. *Index of Religious Articles in Mainland China*, vol. 1, ed. Wang Lei-quan, Taipei, 1985 and the 1996 *Annual of Religious Studies in China*, ed. Cao Zhongjian, Beijing, 1998.

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Japan

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THE TASK OF TELLING THE HISTORY of religious studies in Japan to international readers requires that I first explain the country's general religious background.¹ Whereas Japan has a variety of religious traditions, a large number of Japanese people identify themselves as 'non-religious'. Opinion polls show that no more than 30 percent of respondents have particular religious faiths, which is low compared with other nations. Whether it is appropriate to say in an academic context that Japanese are a-religious is itself a highly debated question. Many of them do not deny the existence of gods and are at times engaged in religious practices, such as visiting temples.² Some scholars, such as Toshimaro Ami (1996), therefore argue that Japanese are religious in their own way, and that they appear a-religious only when the Western concept of 'religion' is applied to them.

Yet, it is safe at least to say that many Japanese feel distant from religion as an organization, that is, religion as a group with a leader and indoctrination. They call those who voluntarily belong to certain religious organizations 'religious', *shūkyō*, while describing themselves as 'non-religious', *mushūkyō*, even if they visit shrines on New Year's Day every year. They profess little interest in religion in that sense, and sometimes show fear by associating it with fanaticism. Even in the pre-war period, when more Japanese perhaps recognized themselves as religious, skepticism about existing religions as organizations was clearly discernible, particularly among intellectuals.³

Considering such general disinterest in religion, it must be a puzzling fact that Japanese started modern religious studies quite early in comparative terms. The first department of religious studies at a nonconfessional university was established in 1905, and the first academy of religion in 1930. Moreover, the 9th World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions took place in Japan in 1958, which was the first Congress held outside Western countries.

Broadly speaking, religious studies in this 'non-religious' country had three main motivations: apologetic, rationalistic, and a concern with understanding.⁴ First, scholars with religious affiliations, who were, therefore, social minorities, attempted to defend religion against ongoing modernization by claiming that religion was worthy of serious academic investigation. Second, rationalist scholars took interest not in religion as religion but as traditional philosophy—that is to say, not as Buddhist thought but as 'Indian philosophy', or not as Confucian or Daoist thought but as 'Chinese philosophy'—from which to learn about their cultural heritage. Third, some secular-minded scholars felt it necessary to investigate religious people in a manner of intercultural studies because they were cultural 'others' both to themselves and to the non-religious public, which was prejudiced against religion—'others' whose values and views they sought to understand from within. A variation on this approach was to help members of the public realize that they were in fact 'religious' in some way or other and that they were not much different

from the religious ‘others’. Whereas for Western scholars of the third type such ‘others’ have been religious people in the non-West, for Japanese counterparts, particularly in the post-war period, these ‘others’ have often been members of new religious groups within Japan. (New religious movements rapidly developed in the post-war period, which is another puzzling fact about this ‘non-religious’ country.)

By contrast, Western scholars have tended to represent Japanese people, including academics, as ‘mystical others’, which has at times frustrated Japanese scholars. To take an instance, the 9th IAHR Congress in Japan made a strong impression on its Western participants, which was summarized in a report informed by the Orientalistic dichotomy of ‘irrational (intuitive, religious)’ and ‘rational (inductive, scientific)’:

On the one hand the oriental student is inclined to contend that the very heart of religion can best be reached by intuition and that the ultimate result of the study of religious phenomena must be a deeper insight in [*sic*] the actual value of religion. On the other hand the western student of the history of religions is convinced that his sole task consists of a painstaking study of greater or minor segments of a certain religion in order to understand their religious meaning in a tentative way and that he has to refrain from pronouncing any kind of value judgments.

(Bleeker 1960: 226)

This report seems to have shocked a number of the Japanese scholars who had organized the Congress. They believed that they had learned and were using inductive methods just as Western scholars did. Some of them even regarded religious studies in Japan as more scientific and neutral than in the West due to the lack of the influence of Christian theology.⁵ Although they did not refute the report at the time of its release, two of the Japanese organizers later analyzed how the impression resulted from an Orientalistic imagination, without, however, using Said’s term (Gotō and Tamaru 1980: 26–27).

This article is an attempt to fill in the gap between the self-understanding of religious studies in Japan and its Western representation. In the process I will employ the above-mentioned classification of three approaches, apologetic, rationalistic and those approaches oriented to understanding. Although the three approaches, especially the first and the third, are in reality blended at times, the classification will be useful in analyzing the history of religious studies in Japan.

Prehistory

It is commonly accepted that modern religious studies, *shūkyōgaku*, started in the Meiji era (1868–1912), after Japan opened its doors to the Western world.

The Japanese word for ‘religion’, *shūkyō*, was also coined at the beginning of the era as a translation of the Western term. This does not mean that there were neither precursors of *shūkyōgaku* nor concepts similar to ‘religion’ before Japan became fully exposed to Western culture. Examples of such precursors are Kūkai (774–835), Fucan Fabian (1583–1607), and Nakamoto Tominaga (1715–1746). They are known as having launched the earliest enterprises of comparative religion when other thinkers were occupied with sectarian studies.⁶

The founder of the Shingon Buddhist sect, Kūkai, wrote *Sangōshūiki* (A Treatise on Three Teachings) in 797, in which he insightfully compared and contrasted the teachings of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, though from a normative perspective of Buddhism. His work is evidence that the teachings of what would later be called ‘religions’ were grouped together, long before the import of the Western concept ‘religion’.⁷

Fabian was a Japanese Jesuit who wrote *Myōtai Mondō* (Dialogue between two nuns) in 1605, reputed to be the first Japanese work of Christian apologetic that refuted the teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintō. He later apostatized and then authored the entirely anti-Christian *Ha Deus* (*Deus* destroyed) in 1620 (1973).

While both Kūkai and Fabian were thus apologetic, it was Tominaga who developed not only a comparative but also a critical, that is, a detached or objective, approach to religions. In *Emerging from Meditation* (1745/1990), he disclosed the historically conditioned nature of Buddhist texts. His approach therefore came close to the higher criticism of the Bible, without Western influences.⁸ His rationalist thinking derived from Confucian education, which was being promoted by the Tokugawa government (1603–1868). However, rather than being defensive of Confucianism, he compared it with Buddhism, Daoism and Shintō from a pluralistic viewpoint in *Writings of an Old Man*. He eventually placed a higher ideal, *makotono michi* (the way of living in sincerity), above the existing individual religions (Wakimoto 1983: 10–13; Suzuki 1979: 6–7; Tamaru 1994: 757).

By the time of Tominaga, it had become a common practice among Japanese scholars to consider Shintō, Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism as parallel with one another.⁹ However, there was no single fixed word like the later *shūkyō* (religion) to place them in a single category. Sometimes people called them *kyō* (teaching), in order to emphasize their doctrinal aspect; at other times they used a word with more practical connotations, *dō* (*dao*, way) (Shimazono 2004).

This terminological ambiguity indicates that a generic category of religion was not yet needed. Japanese scholars in those days did not ask the question that was central to the Enlightenment and gave rise to modern religious studies in the West: What is the essence of religion? Nor was there any further

development in methodology, in contrast to the West, where the methodologies of the humanities and social sciences were polished through imitating and challenging the methods of the rapidly progressing natural sciences. Although Japanese people could access the abundant data about various religions within their religiously pluralistic country, they did not embark on the systematic study of comparative religion by themselves.¹⁰

Emergence

A drastic change in this situation came about at the outset of the Meiji era. 'Religion' was introduced as a formal concept, initially to serve political and juridical needs. In order to integrate the country as a nation-state, the Meiji government adopted an imperial system and chose Shintō as its moral guideline. The government then defamed Buddhism, which was once amalgamated with Shintō, while reaffirming the long-standing ban on Christianity. At the same time, however, the government strove to modernize Japan by following Western systems, and in doing so it soon realized that religious freedom was regarded as one of the requirements of a modern society. The government was pressed to permit the freedom of religion yet sought to maintain the special status of Shintō. It managed to extricate itself from this double-bind by making rhetorical use of the concept of religion. The concept, which was an import from the West, was modeled after Christianity, in particular after a Protestantism centered in beliefs and doctrines. In light of this definition of religion, Shintō, which mostly consisted of ritual practices, was termed 'non-religious' (*bishūkyō*). The government declared that Shintō was not a religion but a system of state rituals superior to individual religions. 'Non-religious' was promoted as a positive virtue rather than implying something less than a religion. This was the rhetoric used to legitimize what later was called State Shintō. The government insisted that it was different from state religion and thus compatible with the freedom of religion. Not all Japanese were convinced by this reasoning, and a heated dispute arose when the *Kyōiku chokugo* (Imperial Rescript on Education) was enacted in an effort to infuse all schoolchildren with national morality shaped by Shintō ideas.

Opinions vary as to what other effects were caused by the conceptualization of religion in the Meiji society. All agree that practice-based (but, unlike State Shintō, unauthorized) folk religions were suppressed, being categorized as superstitions. Established religions such as Buddhism eagerly imitated the modern features of religion epitomized in Protestantism for the sake of survival. In addition, Japan was different from most non-Western countries encountering the West in the failure of Christian missionaries to spread Christianity in the country, which was supposed to be perfectly

‘religious’, according to the newly adopted concept of religion. It was under these circumstances that religious studies gradually took its form in Japan.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, universities modeled after Western, particularly German, institutions were created. While there were a number of private universities,¹¹ some of which had denominational backgrounds, either Buddhist or Christian, a few national universities were given a leading position in research and teaching. Thus, in 1890 Tetsujirō Inoue (1855–1944) delivered a lecture on ‘Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy’ at the first national university, Tokyo Imperial University. Then in 1905 Masaharu Anesaki (1873–1949) was appointed to the first professorship in this field at the same university and thereby the first department of religious studies was established.¹² Other national universities followed suit. These universities were independent of any religious organization, and the early scholars of religion emphasized the importance of free inquiry and a comparative approach.¹³ Table 1 shows the earliest curricula of Religious Studies at Tokyo Imperial University. In addition, Table 2, a list of the discussion themes of Anesaki’s study group that lasted from 1896 to 1899, gives an idea as to what the scholars of comparative religion were interested in at that time.

Developments until 1945

Major ideas and problems

In addition to the scientific ideal of objectivity, the research of the scholars just mentioned was guided by significant practical concerns. The fundamental question about the nature of religion had arisen in the debate on the legitimacy of State Shintō. The public came to expect scholars of religions not only to offer a professional definition of religion but also to present a blueprint for religion’s future. Their recommendations varied. Inoue supported the Imperial Rescript on Education. His final goal was to replace all religions with national morality and rational philosophy. He believed that existing religions would become outdated in the process of modernization.

While rationalist scholars such as Inoue thought that society would ultimately be able to dispense with religion, most scholars of religion, including Anesaki, hoped to secure the role of religion in contemporary and future society. Thus, they defended religion against modern secularism and at the same time sought to protect individual faiths against state power. Still, it was self-evident to almost all of them that religion could serve to consolidate and expand their new nation-state, and in that aspect of national loyalty they were not much different from right-wing nationalists who promoted the Imperial Rescript on Education.

Table 1 The curricula of the religious studies at the University of Tokyo in 1904

Required Courses	No. of credits ^a
Religious Studies and History of Religion	3
Indian Philosophy	1
Psychology	1
Logic and Epistemology	1
Elective Required Courses	
<i>either</i> Sociology <i>or</i> Philosophy	1
<i>either</i> Introduction to Philosophy, History of Western Philosophy, <i>or</i> History of Eastern Philosophy	1
<i>either</i> Ethics <i>or</i> Sanskrit Studies	1

Source: Fujii 1982: 34.

^a1 credit=3 hours a class, per week, for one year

Table 2 Discussion themes, Society for Comparative Religion

1	Dragons and Serpents	10	February, March Religious Matters
2	Homa (goma)	11	April, May Religious Matters
3	(Sacred) Numbers	12	Death Time of Buddha, Christ and Muhammad (Mahomet)
4	Sexual Rituals and Customs	13	June, July Religious Matters
5	Ritual Prohibitions	14	August, September, October Religious Matters
6	Gods and Animals	15	November, December Religious Matters
7	Offerings	16	Japanese Gods
8	Festivals and Ceremonies	17	Summer Trip Reports
9	January Religious Matters	18	Sorcery

Source: Suzuki 1979: 265–67.

Note: The society, which was more like a study group of several scholars of religion, led by Masaharu Anesaki and Nobuta Kishimoto, held 22 meetings within a three-year period.

In these discussions, the Japanese scholars of religion characterized ‘religion’ in contrast to other categories such as education and morality, and, in the process, came to presuppose the *sui generis* quality of religion. Scholars respectively presented universal definitions of religion, which were also assumed to be its origin. Their views on religion can be described, overall, as psycho-

centered, that is, oriented to subjective experience.¹⁴ For example, in ‘The Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion’, an essay in English distributed to attendees at the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, Manshi Kiyozawa (1863–1903), a philosopher of religion with a Jōdo Buddhist background, defined religion in English as ‘a mental faculty or disposition which . . . enables man to apprehend the Infinite’ (Kiyozawa 2002: 143). Furthermore, many of the Japanese scholars, even those with religious affiliations, regarded the divine being as a projection of human feelings, desires, or life forces. Interestingly, they did not think that such views would undermine religion. They were in fact optimistic about religion, believing in its evolution. Although these tendencies were distinct, it is difficult to discern how many of them were derived from contemporary Western thought and how many from the indigenous tradition of meditative Buddhism or animistic Shintō. Suffice it to say that the psycho-centered, de-politicized view of religion does not solely derive from Protestant legacies or modern Western liberalism, as recent critics of the concept of religion often assume, and further comparative work is needed regarding this point.¹⁵

Following the question of the essence and origin of religion, scholars of religion also pondered what qualifies a scholar to study religion, for example, whether or not a scholar of religion must personally have a religious experience in order to understand religion properly. While such basic questions were widely shared, the interests of early scholars of religion were so diverse that they eventually focused upon particular religious traditions individually. That is to say, although, as shown in Table 1, there were courses in the sociology and in the psychology of religion, none of the first generation of scholars, including Anesaki, identified himself as a sociologist or a psychologist of religion. While keeping comparative interests, they became scholars of Buddhism, of Christianity, and so on, and their choice of traditions was often affected by their own personal religious backgrounds. From around the 1920s the sociology and the psychology of religion became far more popular, but scholars were mostly engaged in translating and introducing major Western works in those fields, such as the works of Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and William James.¹⁶

The early development of religious studies in Japan coincided with the time of Japanese imperialism. Japan began to expand its colonies from Korea to other parts of Asia. In a parallel to Western scholarship, Japanese scholars started ethnographic studies based on fieldwork in the new colonies in Asia (e.g. Uno 1942), aware that studying the religions of diverse ethnic groups would serve Japan’s colonial policy (Takenaka 1983: 30). That was the first clear case of the ‘understanding others’ type of approach to religion.¹⁷

In the years leading up to World War II, many scholars of religion found their freedom of research being increasingly restricted. It is often pointed out that the Kyoto School, the well-known group of religious philosophers from

Kyoto Imperial University, justified Japanese imperialism with their ideas of Buddhism as postmodern, post-Western wisdom. Scholars of religion who supported Japanese imperialism ideologically were not limited to the Kyoto School, however. Recent research (cf. Suzuki 2005) has revealed that even scholars of Christianity at Christian colleges shared the ethnic supremacism. This demonstrates a danger found in discourse attacking Western hegemony and modernity, namely, that it can invite a different form of oppression.

Key thinkers and texts

The leading scholars of the first generation were Masaharu Anesaki, Tetsujirō Inoue, Nobuta Kishimoto (1866–1928), Genchi Katō (1873–1965), Kitarō Nishida (1870–1945), and Seiichi Hatano (1877–1950). Anesaki, who is credited with being the founder of modern religious studies in Japan, published *Shūkyōgaku gairon* (Introduction to the study of religion) in 1900, which was comprised of four chapters, ‘Psychology of Religion’, ‘Ethics of Religion’, ‘Sociology of Religion’ and ‘Pathology of Religion’. Then, after studying in Germany and other European countries, he wrote *Fukkatsu no shokō* (The Aurora of revival) in 1904. In striking contrast to the scientific tone of the previous work, *Fukkatsu no shokō*, which was entitled after Jakob Böhme’s *Aurora*, was full of spiritual visions and critical of modern rationalization. Having a Buddhist background, Anesaki also published a number of books on Buddhist thought and history, some of them in English (Anesaki [1930] 1995). Along with him, Nobuta Kishimoto, a Unitarian who had studied at Harvard, played a role in laying the cornerstone of religious studies.

On the other hand, Katō initiated new Shintō studies from the perspective of comparative religion (Katō [1926] 1971). He opposed the government’s definition of Shintō as ‘non-religious’ and claimed that it was a religion comparable with other religions in the world. His opinion, however, served an apologetic rather than critical purpose. He believed that if one did not recognize the religious nature of Shintō, one failed to grasp its essence, which forms the Japanese spirit (Asoya 2005: 154). As a result, he never questioned the divine origin of the imperial family. It was left to the historian, Sōkichi Tsuda (1873–1961), to approach Japanese myths from a scientific standpoint, and in response he was accused of defaming the Emperor.

Both Nishida and Hatano were philosophers of religion at Kyoto Imperial University. Nishida, the author of *A Study of Good* (1911), established the Kyoto School by developing the philosophy of absolute nothingness out of Zen Buddhism and Western philosophy. He was on close terms with Daisetz T. Suzuki (1870–1966), the most well-known Japanese Zen Buddhist philosopher in Western countries, who pioneered in spreading Buddhism abroad. In contrast, Hatano was affiliated with Protestantism and was scarcely concerned with Eastern philosophy.

Nishida's philosophy was a part of modern Buddhist studies, which began during the Meiji era. Its mainstream was textual studies, initiated by Bunyū Nanjō (Nanjio Bunyiu, 1849–1927), who studied under Max Müller at Oxford and introduced Western-style philology and the study of Sanskrit to Buddhist studies in Japan, which was dominated at the time by dogmatics. Keiki Yabuki (1879–1939) is another noteworthy Buddhist scholar who introduced religious studies into Buddhist studies under Anesaki's influence.

The second generation of scholars of religion was led by two sociologists and ethnologists of religion, Enkū Uno (1885–1949) and Chijō Akamatsu (1886–1960), along with a historian of religion specializing in the Old Testament, Chishin Ishibashi (1886–1947), whose idea of 'Heil-seeking', that is, seeking salvation and well-being (from German *Heil*), as the essence of religion was sharply criticized by Uno. These scholars were then followed by a folklorist, Toshiaki Harada (1893–1983) (1942), a sociologist and ethnologist of religion, Kiyoto Furuno (1899–1979), a philosopher of religion, Teruji Ishizu (1903–1972), and a Kyoto school philosopher of religion, Keiji Nishitani (1900–1990) (1982).

Institutionalization

In 1930 the Japanese Association for Religious Studies was founded, the first nationwide academic organization in the field. At that time there were strong anti-religious movements inspired by Marxism, which was one of the social causes that led scholars of religion to unite to defend religion. Its committee was formed by members from eighteen universities with either departments or programs of religion, most of which have remained central to religious studies in Japan until today. Five of them were national universities, while seven out of the thirteen private universities were Buddhist and two Christian. The first meeting was held at Tokyo Imperial University in order to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of religious studies in Japan. The second meeting, which became the first substantial conference in size and in style, took place at Taishō University, a Buddhist liberal arts college, in 1932.

Among the thirteen private universities, Taishō University provides a good example of the manner in which religious universities embraced religious studies. In 1896 Anesaki delivered a lecture at this university, then called Jōdoshū Kōtōgakuin, on 'Religious Studies (*shūkyōgaku*)',¹⁸ two years before he offered a lecture with the same title at Tokyo Imperial University. Developing from traditional Buddhist seminaries, Taishō University was formally established in 1926 by uniting four different Buddhist sectarian institutions. This origin reflects a Buddhist ecumenical movement which emerged during the Taishō era (1912–1926), called the period of the free spirit of democracy. At the university the Department of Religious Studies was set up independently of that of Buddhist Studies. It advanced the study of Buddhism in the manner of Anesaki,

while the Department of Buddhist Studies focused on Buddhist textual studies and dogmatics.¹⁹ A similar division of academic labor characterized many other Buddhist universities: scholars of religious studies attempted a comprehensive understanding of actual Buddhism by shedding light on various aspects neglected by scholars of Buddhist Studies.

In addition to universities, various research institutes of Asian studies, including Islamic studies, founded in the process of Japanese colonization are noteworthy. They recruited scholars from departments of religion and history. At one such institute, Shūmei Ōkawa (1886–1957), a graduate from Religious Studies at Tokyo Imperial University, specialized in Islamic studies. He is known to have later become a proponent of Japanese fascism and to have been convicted as the only civilian A-class war criminal.

Intraregional divisions and interregional connections

Regional styles of religious studies did not develop in Japan. Rather, scholarship in the field varied from institution to institution. That is, scholars of Kyoto Imperial University put weight on the philosophy of religion, whereas those of other national universities often conducted empirical religious studies. Many of the staff members of Religious Studies at Buddhist universities were Buddhist priests, who, as mentioned, differentiated their studies from doctrinal studies. In contrast, Christian scholars at Christian universities mostly pursued theological studies under Western influence (Tsuchiya 2005).

As for international relations, many of the scholars named above spent more or fewer years studying in Western countries, particularly Germany. They established personal connections with Western scholars and brought Western academic methods home. For instance, Hatano studied under Adolf von Harnack at Berlin University and Wilhelm Windelband at Heidelberg University. He was also influenced by the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*. T. Inoue introduced German Idealism to Japan and shaped the philosophical orientation of its Imperial Universities. On the other hand, Uno studied under Marcel Mauss and brought sociological and anthropological methods back.

At the same time, some of them, such as Anesaki, grew disillusioned while traveling and became critical of Western civilization. To put it another way, they became ‘irrational’ after having firsthand contacts with the West. In addition, the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, in which several Japanese religious leaders and scholars participated, is said to have affected, though only indirectly, the development of religious studies in Japan by emphasizing the importance of interreligious cooperation (Suzuki 1979: 228).

Relations with other fields of study

From the beginning religious studies in Japan was related to fields such as Indian and Western philosophy and historical studies, but active collaboration with

neighboring fields began only after World War II. The related field most worth mentioning here is Japanese folklore studies, founded by Kunio Yanagita (1875–1962). He worked mostly outside the establishment, and in extensive works he salvaged folk beliefs and practices in the provinces throughout Japan that were marginalized and fading in the face of modernization. He inspired a scholar of Japanese literature, Shinobu Origuchi (1887–1953), who also became a central figure of folklore studies at a Shintō university, Kokugakuin. Kumagusu Minakata (1867–1941), another friend of Yanagita, is a unique scholar with abundant experiences of studying abroad, who combined folklore studies with natural history and other natural scientific studies.

Developments since 1945

Major ideas and problems

With the end of World War II, it was publicly admitted that State Shintō was, indeed, a ‘religion’. The Shintō Directive, which specified the occupation policy on religion, was issued in 1945 to abolish the entire system of State Shintō. At the same time, the divine root of the imperial family was demythologized to allow a democracy to be established. In the post-war period the influence of the United States became immense, both politically and culturally. It was ironic, therefore, that many Japanese remained skeptical of religion throughout the Cold War, despite their living on the other side of the Communist bloc. Traumatic memories of religious totalitarianism influenced the Japanese to separate religion rigidly from politics, to an extent that they often feel uncomfortable about the religious aspect of US politics, often called the civil religion of America.

Under these circumstances, the scholars of religion in post-war Japan became more careful to maintain scientific neutrality than had been the pre-war scholars, who were socially engaged in defending religion. This neutral attitude culminated in the work of Hideo Kishimoto (1903–1964), a leading post-war scholar who sharply contrasted religious studies as a purely empirical science both with theology and the philosophy of religion. Yet it does not mean that the post-war study of religion had no meta-empirical perspectives. Many scholars took an interest in minor, or what are called ‘little’, religious traditions, the religions of the populace, whereas pre-war scholars more often investigated religious elites. This tendency reflected the politically liberal atmosphere that spread through humanities and social sciences in the 1950s. It was also a result of differentiating the study of religion itself from studies of Buddhist, Shintō, or Christian religions that focused on textual studies and elitist traditions. It may also be true that cross-religious categories such as folk religion were more suited to comprehending the syncretic pluralism of Japanese religions. Further-

more, shortly after the war, new religious movements started developing out of drastic social changes in Japan. Although numerous new groups were born at that time, a time named ‘the rush hour of gods’ by H. Neill McFarland, they remained socially marginal and were viewed with antipathy by the majority of non-religious Japanese. For scientifically trained scholars of religion, the members of such new religious groups became ‘others’ to understand in two senses: they were ‘religious’; and they generally belonged to the lower classes.²⁰

In these respects, Japanese religious studies has many things in common with ‘the history of religions’, a term often used to describe a humanistic tradition within religious studies in the West. Nonetheless, most Japanese scholars have never identified themselves as historians of religions in this sense. The reason for this may be largely institutional. Religious studies has never been a large field at Japanese universities, and because of its small size, it has never become too compartmentalized. Those researching new religious movements, for example, worked closely with folklorists and anthropologists of religion. Also, students belonging to the departments of religious studies had opportunities to take fieldwork courses on village festivals or new religious groups even if they were going to major in the ancient history of religion. In addition, Japanese scholars in other departments, such as sociology, used to pay little attention to religion, due to the pervasive indifference to religion in Japan. Rivalry with those scholars also helped to unite the field.

Because of these factors, Japanese religious studies developed by embracing psychology, sociology, anthropology, and other approaches to religion. In the process, Japanese scholars readily adopted Western theories such as functionalism and structuralism, but they also found Christian influences in the Western study of religion and elaborated original theories of religion from their point of view. For example, whereas the Western study of religion used to emphasize the mind or the mind–body dichotomy in religion, Kishimoto rehabilitated the aspect of the body in religion as seen in ascetic practices, and Keiichi Yanagawa (1926–1990), another leading post-war scholar of religion, presented a definition of religion in terms of human relationships, in sharp contrast to the monotheistic idea of religion. In addition, a group of sociologists of religion criticized the traditional Western dichotomy between magic and religion, after observing that magical practices performed by Japanese new religious groups did not hinder but rather enabled ethical innovations as a condition for modernization (Tsushima *et al.* 1979). Likewise, against the concept of the sacred and the profane, Tokutarō Sakurai (b. 1917) and others advocated applying a trichotomy of *hare* (extraordinariness or the sacred), *ke* (ordinariness or life power), and *kegare* (pollution) to Japanese folk religions instead.

There are other aspects in which Japanese religious studies differs from its Western counterpart. Although post-war Japanese scholars have accepted much from Anglo-American scholarship, their study of religion has acquired

different characteristics. First, the Japanese scholarly view of religion tends to center on ritual rather than myths.²¹ Studying myth is relatively unpopular partly because of the sensitive nature of Japanese mythology, which was once believed to be the historical truth about the origin of the imperial family, and partly because of the lack of a strong tradition of Greco-Roman classical studies. Instead, the study of rituals such as festivals, ancestor worship, and shamanic practices is prevalent.

Second, the philosophy of religion in Japan has always been much more existentialistic, as represented by the Kyoto School, than Anglo-American. Closely related to this is the teaching style of undergraduate/graduate classes. It is common that students read a classic work page by page under the guidance of their teacher. Such intensive reading is especially popular in philosophy of religion classes, but it is not confined to them. It is not unusual to spend a whole semester reading *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* or *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Some say that the style is modeled after German pedagogy; others say that it derived from premodern Confucian studies; still others that it is widely shared in Asia, where master–disciple relationships have been common.

Third, religious studies in Japan used to concentrate more on modernization than secularization. Although secularization did become a central theme in the sociology of religion, it was the problem of modernization that evoked lively cross-disciplinary discussions in post-war Japan. Scholars first ascribed the problems of the pre-war political system to the immaturity of Japan as a modern society. Long discussion followed as to whether Japan had remained half feudalistic or had achieved modernization in its own unique way. In this context, Robert Bellah's *Tokugawa Religion* (1957), which analyzed the relationships between Japanese religious ethics and industrialization, attracted special attention.

The debate on modernization was, in a sense, a question of Japanese identity. The post-war quest for national identity was satisfied on a popular level by Japanese studies (*nihonjinron*, *nihonbunkaron*), which overly emphasized the uniqueness of Japanese culture, including religion, based on the stereotypical contrast of the Orient and the Occident. As a result, in Japan the homogenizing power of the category 'Japanese (culture)', which assumes that Japanese are all alike, is more problematic than that of the universal category of 'religion'. On a more academic level, Japanese folklore studies, a neighboring field to religious studies, has most often been charged with ethnocentrism. It is considered to have originated in the *Kokugaku* (National Learning) movement, a nativistic movement based on the philological study of Norinaga Motoori (1730–1801), an apologist for Shintō. At the same time, the work of Kunio Yanagita (e.g., 1975), the founder and private scholar of Japanese folklore, was re-evaluated in the context of the counterculture movements in the late 1960s and 1970s as an alternative to the established modern sciences of universities.

The counterculture movements led to postmodernism in the 1980s. The trend was best embodied in Shinichi Nakazawa (b. 1950), a scholar of religion who had a Carlos Castaneda-like experience with a guru in Tibet and later wrote books that combined his experiences with poststructuralist thought like that of Julia Kristeva. Whereas the Western postmodern study of religion tended to be critical of religion from a Freudian or a Marxist perspective, its Japanese equivalent tended to slide into Buddhist supremacism. This echo of wartime ideology resurrected a tough question as to whether the idea of the triumph of Eastern thought over Western thought was a mere reversal of Orientalism or whether it had a certain validity.

It was no accident, therefore, that the new religion Aum Shinrikyō grew during the decade. Aum's release of sarin gas in Tokyo subway stations in 1995 profoundly shocked Japanese scholars of religion. The incident forced them seriously to reconsider what the public role of religious studies should be. Scholars of religion had been treating Japanese new religions the same as Western historians of religions had been treating indigenous religions, re-evaluating them on their own merits instead of dismissing them as primitive. Accordingly, after Aum's gas attack, they faced criticism for having stood on the side of new religions.²²

The post-colonial critique also raised questions about the social role of religious studies. Scholars started looking closely at diversity within minor religious traditions, particularly in terms of gender and ethnicity, and problematizing the long neglect of the oppressed minorities by both society and the academy. The Japanese feminist and gender-based studies of religion derive from the second wave of Japanese feminism in the 1970s. Interest in these studies has been increasing despite the twin difficulties of male domination of Japanese religious traditions and the lack of interest in religion within Japanese feminist movements.

Key thinkers and texts

Hideo Kishimoto was a son of Nobuta Kishimoto, who studied at Harvard as well and chaired the Department of Religious Studies at Tokyo University. Absorbing American pragmatism, behavioral sciences, and psychology of religion, he defined religion as a cultural phenomenon based on the human endeavor to cope with ultimate problems of life (Kishimoto 1961a). Following Anesaki, he attempted to secure the position of religious studies as an independent field in *Shūkyōgaku* (Religious Studies) (1961b), and also empirically investigated mysticism in *Shūkyō shinpishugi* (Religious Mysticism) (1958). Under Kishimoto, religious studies at Tokyo University became more and more empirical. Even those who were interested in philosophy sought for approaches different from the Kyoto School, whose tradition was handed down to Shizuteru Ueda (b. 1926) and Shōtō Hase (b. 1937) (e.g., Ueda 1965). To

take an instance, Noriyoshi Tamaru (b. 1931) proposed ‘the philosophy of religious studies’, which meant critical reflections upon the presuppositions of the theories of religious studies (Tamaru 1977).

On the other hand, some scholars took an interest in the phenomenology of religion and even called their approaches phenomenological, for example, Tsuneya Wakimoto (b. 1921), Kiyoshi Ōhata (1904–1983), Masahiro Kusunoki (b. 1921), Toshimaro Hanazono (b. 1936), Minoru Sonoda (b. 1936), and Shinji Kanai (b. 1942), but most of them have never been opposed to the Kishimotoian empirical approach. In other words, there has never been anything comparable to the Western contention between ‘*sui generis* religionists’ and ‘reductionists’. Along with phenomenologists, sociologists of religion have adopted an approach geared to ‘understanding’. Moreover, what was meant by the term ‘phenomenology’ (*genshōgaku*) varied from scholar to scholar, encompassing such diverse enterprises as typology, cross-cultural comparison, a synthetic approach, an interpretive approach, and Husserlian philosophy. The Eliadean history of religions was introduced in the 1960s and was expanded by Michio Araki (b. 1938), a graduate of the University of Chicago.

Among the empirical studies of religion, the psychology of religion was initially most popular, but it was soon replaced by the sociology of religion. Fujio Ikado (b. 1924) specialized in North American religions and introduced secularization theory, developing his own theory of secularization from a comparative perspective. The study of new religious groups was promoted by Shigeyoshi Murakami (1928–1991), Yoshio Yasumaru (b. 1934) (1979), Hiroshi Kozawa (b. 1937) and others, and was then advanced remarkably by Shigeru Nishiyama (b. 1942), Susumu Shimazono (b. 1948), Nobutaka Inoue (b. 1948), Michihito Tsushima (b. 1949), and many more. The study of the relationships between religion and politics, including the scientific analysis of the pre-war State Shintō system, was pursued by Shigeyoshi Murakami (1980), Yoshiya Abe (1937–2003), Koremaru Sakamoto (b. 1950), Tsuyoshi Nakano (b. 1947), and others.

The post-war ethnologists and folklorists of religion are represented by Ichirō Hori (1910–1974), the author of *Folk Religion in Japan: Continuity and Change* (1968), Hitoshi Miyake (b. 1933), a specialist in *shugendō* (mountain religions) (Miyake 2001), Tokutarō Sakurai (1970 [1991]) and Kōkan Sasaki (b. 1930), specialists in shamanism, Shinjō Takenaka (1913–1992) and Masao Fujii (b. 1934), specialists in Buddhist rituals. More sociologically trained were Keiichi Yanagawa (1976, 1991) and one of his students, Minoru Sonoda (1975), both of whom worked on *matsuri*, mainly Shintō festivals. Yanagawa was an influential scholar with wide interests at the Department of Religious Studies of Tokyo University. Hirochika Nakamaki (b. 1947) is an anthropologist of religion who has been working on Japanese religion in Latin America and ‘company religion’ in contemporary Japan (Nakamaki 2003).

Meanwhile, the first comprehensive dictionary with a focus on theories and technical terms of religious studies, *Shūkyōgaku jiten* (Dictionary of Religious Studies), was published in 1973, whose chief editors were Ichi Oguchi (1910–1986) and Ichirō Hori. Oguchi was another leading sociologist of religion at Tokyo University.

The scholars listed above are, however, not known much outside Japan. Scholars who are famous abroad often worked outside the mainstream of Japanese scholarship, partly because their works were free from over-specialization and partly because they were steeped in Oriental spirituality. Among such scholars are Hajime Nakamura (1912–1999), a Buddhist scholar of comparative philosophy, Toshihiko Izutsu (1914–1993), a scholar of Muslim²³ and Asian religious thought, and Yasuo Yuasa (b. 1925), the author of *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind–Body Theory* (1987). Susumu Shimazono has called Yuasa, along with Shinichi Nakazawa and other scholars, a ‘spiritual intellectual’ (*reiseiteki chisikijin*), meaning that he has attracted public attention via the New Age and postmodern movements.

The feminist or gender-based study of religion was pioneered by Kyōko Nakamura (1932–2001), followed by Aiko Ōgoshi (b. 1946), Midori Igeta (b. 1946), Fumiko Nomura (b. 1945), Junko Minamoto (b. 1947), and more recently by Noriko Kawahashi (b. 1960) and others. Their accomplishments are introduced in English in Kawahashi and Kuroki 2003.

Institutionalization

The most noteworthy organization founded in the post-war period is perhaps the Society for the Sociology of Religion (*Shūkyō shakaigaku kenkyūkai*), which lasted from 1975 to 1990. It consisted of a number of sociologists and anthropologists of religion, many of whom are specialists in new religious movements, including scholars mentioned above. By working together, they became the most outstanding and active figures in religious studies in Japan since the 1970s. They subsequently played a central role in establishing a new, larger organization, The Japanese Association for the Study of Religion and Society (JASRS), in 1993. In addition, the International Institute for the Study of Religion (IISR), originally set up in 1953, was reorganized in 1993, along with the Religious Information Research Center (RIRC), in order to study the ongoing interactions between contemporary societies and religions more thoroughly.

Meanwhile, the members of new religious groups, particularly their second and third generations, started participating in religious studies instead of merely being its objects. Above all, Tenri University and its library, sponsored by Tenrikyō, a new group categorized as Sect (*kyōha*) Shinto that emerged in the mid nineteenth century, have significantly contributed to the academy.

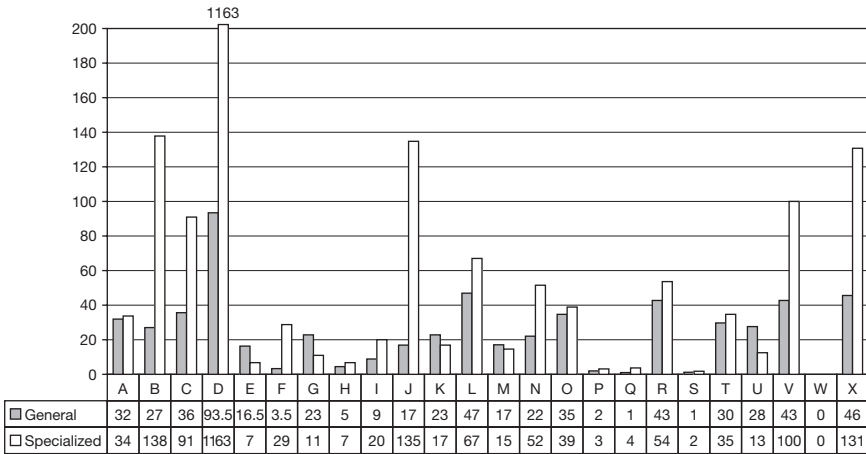
Another major institution is Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, which publishes the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, the most reputable English journal in the field. The institute is attached to Nanzan University, a Catholic university that promotes interreligious dialogue. The journal is not specifically focused upon interreligious dialogue, but it attempts to advance interreligious understanding.

The Japanese Association for Religious Studies (JARS) now has over 2,100 members. The number does not indicate, however, that religious studies has truly gained substantial ground in Japan. Those who clearly identify with religious studies in a narrow sense, that is, neutral study including both historical and social scientific studies, form only a part of the membership.²⁴ Others are Christian theologians, Buddhist priests engaged in textual studies, philosophers with particular religious commitments, and the like. In the mid 1970s, Michael Pye surveyed the members of the academy and observed that many of them studied religions out of a religious motivation (Pye 1975). The situation has not changed much since then.

This can also be demonstrated by the fact that fewer than ten universities currently have departments of religious studies, a number that has not increased much since the pre-war period, out of around 700 four-year universities in Japan. Moreover, programs in religious studies, when they are not independent, usually belong to departments of philosophy, which implies methodological limitations.

The graph in Figure 1 shows the classification of courses in religion among thirty-three four-year colleges emphasizing religious studies, by twenty-four categories of religious traditions and topics. It is taken from a survey, 'Religious Studies in Japanese Undergraduate Curricula', which I conducted based upon the data of 2002.²⁵ Three of the thirty-three colleges are Christian colleges with a department or program of Christian theology, eight are Buddhist colleges and two are Shintō colleges with similar departments devoted to Buddhism and Shintō, respectively.²⁶ It is striking that, despite the strong presence of the sociologists of religion in the academy, there are fewer courses in social scientific studies of religion (Q, S, T, U) than courses in religion with traditional humanistic approaches, such as philosophy (N), history (A, C, etc.), arts and literature (V) or than courses in theology and sectarian studies (B, D, J). This tendency becomes more obvious among colleges with no stress on religious studies, where far fewer teachers who are identified as scholars of religion give classes.

The position of Shintō in higher education needs additional attention. Although Shintō shrines outnumber the temples or churches of any other religion in Japan, there are only two Shintō colleges. The census given by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2002 indicates that 46.7 percent of all religious institutions are Shintō shrines, 42.5 percent are Buddhist temples, while 2.4 percent are Christian churches. In contrast to this, there are twenty-



KEY: Classification of courses in religion by 24 categories of religious traditions and topics

- A Christianity, Historical
- B Christianity, Theological
- C Buddhism, Historical
- D Buddhism, Theological
- E Confucianism/Taoism
- F Hinduism
- G Islam
- H Judaism
- I Shinto, Historical
- J Shinto, Theological
- K Comparative Religion
- L Japanese Studies/Ethnology
- M Area Studies
- N Ethics/Philosophy of Religion
- O Bio/Environmental Ethics from Religious Perspectives
- P Gender and Religion
- Q New Religious Movements
- R Introduction to the Study of Religion
- S Psychology or Religion
- T Sociology of Religion
- U Anthropology of Religion
- V Arts, Literature and Religion
- W Interreligious Conflicts/Dialogue
- X Other Courses in Religion

Figure 1 Classification of courses in religion among 33 colleges emphasizing religious studies

1=1 regular course (=2 credits, approx. 22.5 hours classes)

nine Buddhist and seventy-seven Christian four-year colleges, according to my survey.²⁷ The same holds true with schools. Around two-thirds of religious schools are Christian, only five are Shintō schools.

There are two major reasons for this strange fact. The first reason is that Shintō does not propagate itself. There is no ‘Shintō mission school’. The second reason derives from the pre-war State Shintō system. One may assume that there had been many Shintō schools and colleges until Japan was defeated and the system was abolished in 1945. However, this was not the case. Rather than encouraging people to establish Shintō private schools, the government promulgated the Imperial Rescript on Education, a list of virtues to become the emperor’s loyal subjects, to all schools, public and private alike. All schools were thus transformed into ‘State Shintō schools’, although they were not

designated as such. The two explicitly designated ‘Shintō colleges’, Kokugakuin and Kōgakukan, were exceptional, because they offered ministry programs for Shintō priests. With the end of the war, ‘State Shintō schools’ were reformed to be regular public schools. Only Kokugakuin and Kōgakukan were left as ‘Shintō colleges’, which have been training Shintō priests up to the present.²⁸

The negative legacy of State Shintō has also affected the number of Shintō classes among colleges in the post-war period. All of the Shintō courses (i.e. courses with such titles as ‘Shintō Studies’ and ‘The History of Shintō’) in Figure 1 (= I, J) are given by the two Shintō colleges and one Shintō-based new religious college. Colleges that are unaffiliated with Shintō rarely offer such courses because establishing courses in Shintō could have been taken as reactionary.²⁹ Furthermore, there has been a problem of the lack of teachers. After the war, in order to sever the liaison between State Shintō and education, departments of Shintō were closed in all universities except in Kokugakuin and Kōgakukan.³⁰ Consequently, it became difficult to produce scholars specializing in Shintō studies.

Intraregional divisions and interregional connections

A new national university, Tsukuba University, established in 1973, soon became another center of religious studies, led by Michio Araki, who had studied under Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa at Chicago. The phenomenology of religion, though of a different kind, is also popular at Tohoku University, also a national university. While Buddhist studies, normally under the name of Indian philosophy or studies, is usually strong at national universities with religious studies departments or programs, at Hokkaido University Christian studies stands out, reflecting the tradition of vigorous Christian missions in Hokkaido prefecture.

International relationships are represented by the 9th and the 19th World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions in Japan in 1958 and in 2005. Japanese scholars also began to participate in the meetings of the *Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse* (now SISR) in the 1970s. The Tokyo meeting of CISR was held in 1978. In addition, it has become easier for students to study abroad, above all in the United States, owing to the Fulbright Program and other exchange programs. It is also noteworthy that the first meeting of the World Conference of Religions for Peace was held in Kyoto in 1970. Furthermore, whereas Japanese scholars have long been oriented to Western scholarship, they are currently eager to cooperate with Asian scholars as well, in particular with East Asian scholars. For example, Japanese scholars of religion held a special exchange forum with Chinese scholars, mainly those from the People’s Republic, at the end of the 19th World Congress of the IAHR in Tokyo. Half a year later, they also dedicated the main symposium of the annual meeting of the JARS to exchanges with South Korean scholars.

In spite of such growing internationalization, it is also true that foreign scholars who become famous in Japan are usually those whose works happen to be translated into Japanese. Such scholars are not always chosen by their reputations overseas, but at times by the translators' personal preferences or some other reasons. This problem has lasted since the pre-war period.

Relations with other fields of study

In 1948 the JARS joined a domestic association of six academic societies, for anthropology, sociology, ethnology, folklore, linguistics and musicology. Through participating in interdisciplinary research in particular areas together with the members of the other societies, scholars of religion became more accustomed to fieldwork. These fields, in particular anthropology, sociology, ethnology, and folklore, have been close to religious studies, apart from Buddhist studies, Christian studies, philosophy, and history. In contrast, literature and fine arts are relatively remote fields although, as seen in Figure 1, a considerable number of college courses are offered under the topic of religion and literature or religion and the arts (V).

The relationships between religious studies and those other fields are probably not at all unique to Japan. Whereas scholars in these various fields benefit from collaboration, scholars in religious studies also tend to be charged with imprecise and insufficient treatment of data, while they tend to see work by scholars in other fields as overly specialized and unexciting.

Emerging issues

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, popular issues in the mainstream of Japanese religious studies include religion in practice (*seikatsu no shūkyō*), globalization/localization and religion, religion and violence, and the concept of religion in Japanese and Western contexts. New impulses are also emerging from the question of whether religious studies should be more socially engaged. The responses to this question range from critical approaches following Michel Foucault's and Edward Said's reflections about knowledge and power to religious approaches following Nakazawa's attempt to guide the individual's spiritual quest.

Last but not least, all Japanese universities have recently been asked to reform themselves structurally to become more globally competitive. This movement is represented by the 21st Century Center of Excellence (COE) program, a funding system that rewards selected universities and research institutions. The program is administered by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science with the support of the Japanese government. Because it encourages research that will directly contribute to society, it has promoted the idea of applied

science even among traditional humanistic disciplines. The study of bioethics is one example within the field of religious studies. With this new focus, religious studies is once again facing a challenge to serve public and national interests without losing its critical stance.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

- 1 For earlier attempts to survey the field, see, among other works, Japanese Association for Religious Studies 1959 and Pye 2003.
- 2 For example, according to the 2000 World Values Survey, 23.1 percent of Japanese respondents say that they are faithful. (The choices were 'faithful', 'not faithful', 'atheist', 'have no idea', 'no answer'). This is the second lowest among the 60 countries surveyed. The same survey indicates that 12.0 percent of Japanese respondents are atheists. On the other hand, only 8.4 percent say that they have not been to any church, temple, or shrine at all lately (Dentsū 2004: 192–94).
- 3 According to polls held shortly after World War II, more than 50 percent of respondents said that they had faiths (Ishii 1997: 4). It can be assumed, therefore, that a larger number of Japanese regarded themselves as faithful before then, but there is no record. Skeptical intellectuals were, among all, rationalists who thought religion was unnecessary in modernizing Japan. Even those who were affiliated with Christianity were often either liberal Christian, such as Unitarians, or 'non-church Christians' (*mukyōkaiba*) (Tsuchiya 2005: 52–60).
- 4 It may be more natural in the West to call the third approach 'interpretive' or 'hermeneutical', but I intentionally use the word, 'understanding', since, as I will argue below, the approach is adopted by both phenomenologists and sociologists of religion.
- 5 Japanese scholars of religion have had this idea since their earliest days. Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the beginning of modern religious studies in Japan, they said, whereas 'religious studies in advanced countries has generally been confined to historical studies and is still bearing theological overtones, or even remaining to be a mere branch of theology', '[our] religious studies has been independent institutionally, advocating the critical and scientific study of religions from the beginning' (Kinenkai 1931: 311).
- 6 Such sectarian studies include: traditional Buddhist studies that originated in the sixth century, when Buddhism was introduced to Japan; Confucian studies (*jūgaku*) as the study of the Chinese classics that flourished during the Edo period (1603–1868); and National Learning (*kokugaku*) in the same period, a nativistic philological study of ancient texts, which influenced the formation of State Shintō. Besides the individuals mentioned in the text, *hajagaku* and *kyōshōhanjaku*

- traditions within Buddhist studies can also be called premodern comparative religion, which can be described as either an inclusivist or an exclusivist theory of religious pluralism for Buddhist apologetic purposes.
- 7 The grouping of the three 'religions' was already customary in China, as He Guanghu points out in this volume.
 - 8 He developed his approach apart from Western influence in the sense that he could not access Western literature because it was a period of national isolation. To take a broad view, it was in part contact with Western countries from the sixteenth to the early seventeenth century that weakened the authority of Buddhist schools and made it easier for later scholars like Tominaga to critique Buddhist scriptures objectively.
 - 9 Nevertheless, just as Confucianism is not necessarily included in the category of 'religion' today, these '-isms' were not always conceived of as the same in kind back then. Confucian scholars, who promoted rational thinking, grouped Buddhism and Christianity together, arguing that both of them presented illusory worldviews, which functioned to govern the uneducated populace (Shimazono 1998: 72). If they had known modern Western terminology, they would have said that Buddhism and Christianity were irrational religions, while Confucianism was a secular philosophy or science.
 - 10 With regard to this, Tsuneya Wakimoto (1983: 16–17) examines the differences between Japanese pluralism and Western tolerance and dialogue. Japanese pluralism is based on the idea of the common root of all religions, while Western tolerance or interreligious dialogue often presupposes fundamental differences of religions. According to him, many Japanese scholars of religion used to share the idea. In addition, Susumu Shimazono (1982) argues that pluralism in Japan helped scholars to relativize individual religions, which was a condition for the development of *Religionswissenschaft*.
 - 11 Officially they were not called 'universities' but were denoted by names such as *senmon gakko* (professional school) and *juku* (private school).
 - 12 Strictly speaking, Anesaki became a professor in the field of religious studies in 1904. At the same time, an independent program of religious studies was set up. What was created in the following year was a formal 'chair' (*kōza*) of religious studies. It can be said that the department of religious studies had virtually existed for a year, but it is conventional to regard 1905 as the startup year of modern religious studies in Japan (Fujii 1982: 22–23).
 - 13 At the same time, many of them were affiliated with one religion or another. It is also true that they were inclined to specialize in religions of their own faiths.
 - 14 Later scholars of religion referred to this trait as the 'psychologism' of the Japanese tradition of religious studies (Oguchi 1956).
 - 15 Fujiwara (1998) compares the study of religious experience of an early Japanese scholar with that of Rudolf Otto. On the other hand, Isomae (2003) criticizes the de-politicized view of religion among Japanese scholars of religion.
 - 16 While these thinkers' works remain classics today, there are thinkers who were popular at that time but are no longer, such as G. Stanley Hall and James H. Leuba (Oguchi 1956: 8).
 - 17 To be precise, Japanese regarded those colonized Asians at once as 'others' in other cultures and as 'family members' in the same Asia, to be protected from the West by the power of the Japanese emperor as their 'father'. The latter rhetoric justified Japanese colonization.

- 18 The first lecture titled ‘Religious Studies (*shūkyōgaku*)’ was offered by a Buddhist philosopher Enryō Inoue (1858–1919) at a private institute, Tetsugakukan, later Tōyō University, as early as 1887.
- 19 Ekai Kawaguchi (1866–1945), a Buddhist scholar and the first Japanese who entered Tibet and wrote about his experience in *Three Years in Tibet* (1909, in English), taught at this university.
- 20 New religious groups had once boomed in mid-nineteenth-century Japan. Pre-war scholars also took a certain interest in them, but they never investigated them substantially.
- 21 Related to this point is the fact that present Japanese, especially young people, are likely to assume myths to have nothing to do with ‘religion’. While being daily exposed to animation, video games, and other media which are often rich in mythical motifs, they are cautious about the word ‘religion’.
- 22 A similar debate arose among American scholars of religions when the Branch Davidian tragedy took place in Waco, Texas, in 1993.
- 23 Scholars of Islam who stand closer to the mainstream of religious studies are Kōjirō Nakamura (b. 1936), a former chair of the program of Islamic studies in the Department of Religious Studies at Tokyo University, Shigeru Kamata (b. 1951) at the Institute of Oriental Culture in Tokyo University, and Yoshiko Oda (b. 1948), who studied at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, to name a few.
- 24 Japanese does have different words for religious studies in the narrow sense and in a wider sense. Those with strong identity comparable to ‘Historian of Religions’ or ‘*Religionswissenschaftler*’ in the West call themselves *shūkyōgakusha*; others are called *shūkyō kenkyūsha*. Likewise, religious studies is *shūkyōgaku* and, more broadly, *shūkyōkenkyū*.
- 25 Results reported in Fujiwara 2005. In this survey a ‘course in religion’ means a course whose major theme is related to religion. I picked every course which discusses religion in some way or other for at least one-third of the entire course.
- 26 In addition, one Buddhism-based new religious college and one Shintō-based new religious college are included.
- 27 In 2002 the number of all four-year colleges in Japan was 698. Among them, 584 were non-religious, 77 were Christian, 29 Buddhist, 4 Confucian, 2 Shintō, and 2 associated with new religions.
- 28 Kōgakukan University was closed in 1946 and re-established in 1962.
- 29 This does not mean that Shintō is never mentioned in college classes. It is often treated substantially in ‘Japanese studies/ethnology’ (L) courses, which are quite popular both at religious and non-religious colleges. The problem with such courses is discussed in Fujiwara 2007.
- 30 To be precise, Tokyo Imperial University had an ‘office’ of ‘Shintō studies’ (*Shintō Kenkyūshitsu*) while other universities had its equivalent under different names.

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Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands

Majella Franzmann

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Prehistory of the study of religions

THE PREHISTORY OF STUDIES IN religion in Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands begins as far in the past as human beings possessed the ability to communicate, and wanted to communicate with others, by whatever means, about abstract matters including ideas about extramundane realities or religion.¹ Speaking to others outside of one's immediate socio-cultural group demands a framework for understanding oneself. In our own times, we know that sacred stories differ among Australian Aboriginal people, for example, or among the people of the New Guinea Highlands. How did members of different groups speak to others of these differences in the past? And when outsiders such as the Macassan fishermen and traders came to Aboriginal camps, say in the Northern Territory of Australia, did they talk about religious matters and tell their stories one to another, whether out of curiosity or to better understand those with whom they were trading?

Storytelling might not be judged as attaining the same level of sophistication as formal academic enquiry. However, to choose a story and then to tell it in a fashion so that another person from a different tribe or cultural group understands it, using whatever extra props might be appropriate to draw out the meaning more clearly for those unaccustomed both to the story itself and to conventions of storytelling readily understood in the originating group, demands a sophisticated level of analysis of the problems in communicating the story and subsequent problem-solving in order to tell it effectively. Here the lines are somewhat porous between what one might identify as studies in religion or religious studies and theology.

All three 'sections' of the geographical location under consideration here have a similar relatively recent history of major European incursion into indigenous territory. Major incursions came in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with the focus on trade, political gain, or missionary effort. Not all of the locations were of equal importance. The simple fact of the vast number of islands and their languages made this a pragmatic choice. Breward (2001: vii) gives the following figures for population and language varieties for this region: 'Populations vary from 2,000 in Niue to 4,000,000 in Papua New Guinea, with substantial populations also in Fiji (775,000), Solomon islands (368,000), the two Samoas (223,000), French Polynesia (218,000), and Vanuatu (164,000) . . . The indigenous peoples of the region had *c.* 1,500 languages. . . .' Garry Trompf (Swain and Trompf 1995: 166) comments: 'In each great island complex, interchange with outsiders was typically concentrated on recognized ports-of-call, and various outliers tended to go unnoticed, until missionaries were ready to show an interest in reaching new enclaves of lost souls.'

When incursions came to these areas from European explorers, colonizers and missionaries, the indigenous people were interrogated and observed

concerning their religious customs and activities. Of necessity, they needed to decide what to speak of and what to keep secret, and they needed to decide how to make sense of what they spoke within what frameworks, whether aware or not of how this process of constructing some kind of focus or priority or framework for explanation might change their own perception of what they did and what they thought or believed. There are those who suspect, for example, that categories used by the Australian Aboriginals, such as the 'All-Father' or Mother Earth, are constructions that either enabled conversation with missionaries or were influenced by this contact (Swain 1992). Moreover, having to explain oneself and one's beliefs to occupying colonizers does not generally produce a conducive atmosphere to discussion and explanation.

Not all outsiders were sympathetic or open to what they heard or saw. As Breward (2001: 4) writes of Australia: 'There convict beginning and British cultural blindness made mutual religious learning between Aborigines and invaders all but impossible'. However, missionaries' reports and diaries often speak of savages while at the same time giving excellent detail on daily activities and paraphernalia related to religion and religious observance. Thus in 1927, for example, Father Siméon Delmas was able to put together a scholarly overview of the religion of the Marquis islands from diaries and reports from the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary of Picpus, Belgium, who were missionaries to the islands from 1886.

Both government officials and missionaries left a legacy of reports and diaries that provided information. Captain James Cook (1728–1779) wrote on the meaning of *tabu* from his observations in Tahiti and Hawai'i, and George Grey (1812–1898), a Governor of New Zealand, wrote in 1855, *Polynesian Mythology and Ancient Traditional History of the Maori as Told by Their Priests and Chiefs* (Swain and Trompf 1995: 10–11). Early government officials often collected items and people and sent them back to Europe; there some of the items found their way into museums, where they were exhibited for their religious or cultural significance.

The informal study of religion continued throughout the early colonizing period. Those who colonized came with a variety of European religious traditions and in some sense were like the tribes they colonized, needing to speak to one another at times and try to make sense of each other's beliefs so that the new colonies could form some cohesive society, although older rivalries that led to division in Europe, such as between Catholic and Protestant, carried over into places such as Australia by those who settled there or were transported there as convicts (Breward 2001: 18–20). There was, of course, interest in the study of one's own religion, more formally in training Christian ministers, with the establishment eventually of theological colleges.

When universities were first established in Australia in Sydney (1852) and Melbourne (1853), and in New Zealand in Dunedin (1869), Christchurch

(1873), Auckland (1883), and Wellington (1899), sectarian tensions meant that they were secular institutions that did not include in their structure separate Schools of Religion nor of Theology (Barnes 1998: 231), although some religion and theology was taught indirectly within fields such as philosophy or anthropology.

The formal study of theology was carried out in denominational colleges associated with the universities, such as St John's College in Auckland (1843), Christ's College at Christchurch (1855), and the Theological Hall at Otago (1877; later housed within Knox College when it opened in 1909), the Australian College of Theology (1891) and the Melbourne College of Divinity (1910). Many of the theological colleges were eventually granted permission to offer degrees. The University of Otago offered degrees in Divinity from 1946 through Knox Theological Hall. At the University of Melbourne and the University of Sydney the colleges were permitted to admit Divinity students eligible for matriculation (Breward 2001: 139). Later, degrees in Divinity became more formally tied to the universities. At Sydney, a Board of Studies was established in 1936 to oversee a Bachelor of Divinity (Barnes 1998: 231), and on the University of Queensland campus, the same degree was administered through the Department of English, with one full-time lecturer and several part-time lecturers.

The study of religion in a more global sense was a much smaller enterprise outside of the universities. One of the most active groups engaged in the study was the Theosophical Society. As early as 1881 it had study groups in Brisbane who dealt with various aspects of religion and religions (Roe 1986: 3).

The emergence of the study of religions

First to engage in religious studies as a formal area of university study was New Zealand, at the University of Canterbury, where the discipline of philosophy introduced the subject area of religious studies in 1962 with an emphasis on religious thought. A year later, the Dean of the Theology Faculty at the University of Otago recommended the introduction of Phenomenology of Religion, and in 1966 Albert Moore was appointed the first lecturer for the history and phenomenology of religion (Rae 1991: xix). Religious Studies followed at Massey University in 1970 with the appointment of Brian Colless, an expert in patristics and the religions of the ancient Near East. The following year, Lloyd Geering was appointed as the first chair of Religious Studies in the region at Victoria University, Wellington (Barrowman 1999: 269–271).

At the University of Queensland and University of Sydney, the programs for studies in religion grew out of the earlier divinity programs. In 1974, the University of Queensland established a Department of Studies in Religion,

although it was not until 1981 that the biblical scholar Francis Andersen was appointed as the first Chair. The Board of Divinity was dismantled in 1975, and the divinity students were phased out over the next nine years. The University of Sydney established a Department of Studies in Religion in 1977, with Eric Sharpe (1933–2000) as the first chair.

In Victoria at La Trobe University, Religious Studies was offered from the early 1970s with subjects offered by lecturers of different disciplines, with Paul Rule as an appointment in History and at the same time Chairman of Religious Studies. The year 1975 saw the first appointment of a senior lecturer in phenomenology of religion and the development of religious studies as a major subject for undergraduates. In the Australian Capital Territory, a Chair in Religious Studies was advertised at the Australian National University in the early 1970s but not filled.

Colleges of advanced education, an alternative to universities in offering tertiary awards especially in professional areas like teaching, also introduced specific programs for studies in religion. These colleges were later absorbed into the university system, where the programs continued. The trend was particularly strong in South Australia, usually with one lecturer appointed to develop and administer the program: in 1974, at the Adelaide College of Advanced Education (later University of Adelaide); in 1975, at Murray Park College of Advanced Education and Salisbury College of Advanced Education (both later University of South Australia); and at Sturt College of Advanced Education (later Flinders University).

In Western Australia, Claremont Teachers College introduced a Graduate Diploma in Religious Studies in 1977–1978 (later Edith Cowan University). In Tasmania at the same time, the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education (later University of Tasmania), offered a major program with some comparative religion, although with a heavy emphasis on Christianity. In New South Wales, Riverina College of Advanced Education (later Charles Sturt University) offered Religion Studies from 1974. Within the Religious Education and Theology courses, Catholic College of Education in Sydney (later Australian Catholic University) offered a unit in World Religions from 1976.

Within the larger area of the Pacific Islands, two Australian lecturers in religious studies (the subject to be included under the discipline of history), Garry Trompf and Carl Loeliger, were appointed at the University of Papua New Guinea from 1972. Trompf moved to the University of Sydney in 1978, but went back to the University of Papua New Guinea as Professor of History from 1983 to 1985. In the intervening years he continued his support of indigenous PNG students and scholars. His edited volume (Trompf 1987) from a 1981 Brisbane conference, *The Gospel is not Western*, comprises a compilation of many contributions from indigenous communities, including from graduates of the University of Papua New Guinea.

The development of the study of religions

Major ideas and problems

As the programs in studies in religion developed, the need to define the area of study more precisely was identified, in particular how the area was different from those disciplines in the departments from which it emerged, especially philosophy and theology or divinity studies. At this stage, teaching staff in many departments around Australia and New Zealand debated the difference or similarity between theology and studies in religion, as they were faced with the necessity of clearly articulating their aims as they developed new syllabi and promotional material for cohorts of new students. In Australia, in most cases, new subjects of study were included to incorporate the focus of comparative religion more into the programs, even though many of the early staff came directly from divinity programs or theological colleges without a great deal of expertise in such teaching areas. As more staff became available, the University of Queensland, for example, introduced Buddhism and meditation studies, Victoria University offered eastern religions and primal religions, and the University of Otago offered study in Indian and Chinese philosophy and Maori mythology and religion.

In 1978, Eric Osborn (1978: 12) wrote of the rapid expansion of programs of studies in religion over the previous decade, although he noted that both teaching and scholarly publications had mostly come from outside the universities in the theological colleges. While he hoped for further development of studies in religion, he showed his bias in the statement: 'However, the independent theological faculties and colleges, now that they have joined together and no longer require scholars to teach outside their speciality, will probably continue to provide the bulk of the published scholarly work'. He also suggested that it was difficult to identify tendencies in the work of scholars in the area, noting the part played by greater isolation in this region than in Europe or America (*ibid*).

While it was true that departments remained small and isolated, nevertheless they covered a broad range of interests in comparative religion and methodologies, and world-class figures emerged that quickly outshone their colleagues in the theological colleges. It was not uncommon to find a small department in which staff covered a range of general studies in world religions and methodology as well as offering specialized study in their own particular area of expertise. In Australia and New Zealand a number of very small departments covered areas as broad as each of the five major world religions, method and theory in the study of religion, philosophy and psychology of religion, the history of ideas, sociology and anthropology of religion, biblical studies, patristics, church history, ancient Near Eastern religions, Greco-Roman religions, new religious movements, religion and science, meditation studies,

Chinese and Indian religions, African religion, and the indigenous religions of Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands.

One major development, especially at the time of the centenary celebrations in Australia in 1988, was a concern to define more clearly the national identity of the country, including the religious aspect of that identity. Ian Gillman's book, *Many Faiths One Nation* (1988), was one response to this concern, and was partly funded by the Australian Bicentennial Authority. Of interest to many readers of that book was the emergence of new statistics concerning the growth of non-traditional religions or of Eastern religions such as Buddhism, currently the fastest growing religion in Australia. In New Zealand, too, there was much interest in the religions of the country. While many of the works were written by historians and sociologists, staff in Studies in Religion also published important contributions, such as Christopher Nichol and James Veitch's (1980) edition of *Religion in New Zealand*, and Peter Donovan's (1985) directory of *Beliefs and Practices in New Zealand*.

Of particular interest to New Zealand (although it also exercised sociologists of religion in Australia) was the issue of secularization. While the large surveys of New Zealanders' values and beliefs in 1985 and 1989 were carried out by other discipline areas (notably Alan Webster [Education] and Paul Perry [Sociology]), conferences and seminars with scholars from Religious Studies were held on the subject, one of the most significant being the final seminar in the series 'The Future of Religion in New Zealand' held at Victoria University in 1976, entitled *Secularisation of Religion in New Zealand*, and introduced by Lloyd Geering. A few years later, the 1983 International Religious Studies conference in New Zealand used the theme 'Religious Dimensions of Secularization'.

Key thinkers and texts

The issue of the identity of departments of studies in religion led logically enough to a concern to define the critical methods of the discipline. In Australia the discussion on method and theory in the study of religion, and the history of religions especially within Western European intellectual history, was taken up by Eric Sharpe, Philip Almond and Garry Trompf. In particular, Almond's work (1988, 1989) on Western interpretations and inventions of Buddhism and Islam is noteworthy.

Within the interest in secularization, Lloyd Geering's place is significant. Even without the 'notoriety' of his heresy trial before the Presbyterian Assembly in 1967 (Veitch 1983), he would be the most significant scholar in the history of religious studies in New Zealand. His publications focus on the role and challenge for Christianity in a secular and technological world, and his multitude of smaller popular works (with St Andrew's Trust Publications)—on topics as various as human destiny, evil, Jesus, New Zealand's future, science

religion and technology, machines computers and people, time, on becoming human, sacrifice in a secular world, images of the city—made him a household name in New Zealand. Trompf (2004: 147) describes him as ‘the only memorable “classic-looking” theologian born and bred in the whole South Pacific region’. Geering’s legacy at Victoria University is carried on by Paul Morris, James Veitch, and Marion Maddox, who have all made significant contributions to the area of religion, society and politics.

Apart from the broader issues of method and secular context, there are numerous individual scholars who excelled and became international figures in particular areas of expertise. Many of these were the first single staff appointments to fledgling studies in religion departments, and it is all the more noteworthy that they were able to excel in research while at the same time developing programs and administering these departments single-handedly. As an example, one only need note some of the first appointments in South Australia for an ‘honor roll’: Norman Habel (b. 1932) at the Adelaide College of Advanced Education in 1975, who has written on the Book of Job and more recently has initiated the Earth Bible Project (2000–2002); Philip Almond at Murray Park College of Advanced Education in 1975; and Robert Crotty at the Salisbury College of Advanced Education in 1975, who has written extensively on the early Christian movement. Further afield, one must note, for example, Paul Rule and Chinese religion in Melbourne; Michael Lattke (b.1942) and the Odes of Solomon and Frank Andersen and Old Testament work in Brisbane; Garry Trompf and Tony Swain for indigenous religions in Sydney; Iain Gardner, formerly in Perth and now in Sydney, for the Coptic documents from Roman Kellis; Elizabeth Isichei and African religions at Otago University; Paul Morris for Jewish studies and religious poetry at Victoria University; and Brian Colless for ancient near eastern religions at Massey University, to name just a few.

In Australia, the caliber of some contemporary key scholars within Departments of Studies in Religion has been recognized by their election to the Fellowship of the Australian Academy of the Humanities—Philip Almond, Majella Franzmann, Iain Gardner, Michael Lattke, and Garry Trompf.

Institutionalization

Departments of studies in religion grew from the first major development phase in the 1970s, although the discipline group remained relatively small overall. Departments or small discipline groups were introduced gradually in other places. The University of Waikato introduced Religious Studies in 1988 with Douglas Pratt, with an emphasis on world religions and interfaith dialogue. The University of New England introduced Studies in Religion in 1992, and from 1994 for almost a decade, Majella Franzmann developed a course in world religions as the sole full-time member of staff.

Victoria University is typical of the early development in the 1970s. It introduced a stage one course on world religions in 1972, a major sequence of study from 1974, and an Honours course from 1978, dependent on staff from different departments to help with the teaching load. With two more lecturers added to cover Indian religious thought, primal religions, and religion in the Pacific and New Zealand, in 1982 it became a separate department. With the retirement of Lloyd Geering in 1984 the Chair became vacant and remained so until taken up by Paul Morris in 1994. Unlike other departments in New Zealand, however, Victoria University has continued to grow and add to its staff and areas of expertise, especially in the area of religion and politics, and religion and contemporary culture. While the University of Otago established a chair in 1992 with the Africanist Elizabeth Isichei moving from Victoria University, and seemed poised for development into a larger enterprise, it appears currently to be losing ground to the neo-orthodox evangelical theology of the School of Theology and Religious Studies. Departments at other New Zealand universities still retain only few staff.

The Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland remains the largest in Australia, with well-established fields of study in Buddhism, biblical studies and early Christianity, psychology of religion, philosophy of religion, new religions, and more recently, offerings in Arabic language and Islamic Studies. The department at the University of Sydney also flourished, especially from 1992–1993 when the university combined the department with the postgraduate offerings of the School of Divinity after the dismantling of the Board of Divinity in 1991.

From their very beginnings, because of their small size, many programs in religious studies were dependent on staff from other disciplines to assist in teaching and postgraduate supervision. Thus at La Trobe University in the late 1980s the Division of Religious Studies had four full-time staff members and two with joint appointments (Paul Rule with History, and Chris Bartley with Philosophy). At the University of New England, Studies in Religion began as a section within the Department of Philosophy and relied on staff from that department in particular to assist in the early years, and later on staff from history, ancient history, and classics after the discipline moved to form the School of Classics, History and Religion. Studies in religion would not have survived as a program in some places without this assistance, and yet it is also true that such a situation can also be weakening for the discipline area if it is construed that such assistance is sufficient and there is little need for an increase in staffing positions within the discipline area itself.

While Trompf and Loeliger introduced Studies in Religion at the University of Papua New Guinea in the 1970s, the subject area has not continued within history. The university currently lists a School of Humanities and Social Sciences with a program in history, gender and religious studies, yet there are no visible units in religious studies in the curriculum and the named program

title appears to be an outdated version of what should be read as courses in history, gender and philosophy (www.upng.ac.pg/ accessed Jan. 2006). The more recent Divine Word University (DWU) (formerly Divine Word Institute) introduced a Diploma in Religious Studies in 1983. Trompf noted (1991: 182), however, that the Department of Religious Studies at DWU is really focused on preparing students for pastoral work in Papua New Guinea rather than offering a religious studies tertiary program.

There have been small additions and some small growth in the discipline area, but there have also been losses, sometimes as a result of restructuring of university departments and sometimes as a result of the increasing financial difficulties of universities, a trend both in Australia and in New Zealand. In Australia, La Trobe University downgraded its Division of Religious Studies to a program in the 1990s, and dispersed the existing staff into separate departments in history, Asian languages, philosophy, and Hellenic studies, but continued to teach the full range of religious studies subjects. Both Edith Cowan University and Deakin University repositioned their religious studies programs into larger schools or departments with a subsequent loss of visibility and viability for the subject area. The Australian Catholic University, founded in 1991 by an amalgamation of various Catholic colleges and institutes of the eastern states, introduced a School of Religion and Philosophy, which was transformed in 1994 into a Sub-Faculty of Philosophy and Theology within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Here the change was not so much a result of financial difficulty as a change to a more religiously conservative curriculum. There are, however, new indications that the discipline is once again growing in Australia, although not in a highly visible way. The Australian National University, for example, has recently begun to offer a major in religious studies within the undergraduate program.

With the institutionalization of the discipline area, a consensus has emerged about what constitutes the study of religions and how it should be presented within the university and to the public at large. Home webpages of the major departments summarize in a similar fashion the major points: a critical and open attitude to the material being studied; a breadth of methods drawn from history, philosophy, psychology, phenomenology, sociology, political theory, and literary theory; a concern with both traditional and contemporary expressions of religion; and a focus on the part religions play within social and political life.

Much of what is done both in teaching and in research in New Zealand in religious studies departments or programs has been and continues to be coloured by Christian theology. Just tracing the influence on the growth of the discipline by Knox Theological Hall alone is sufficient to understand why this is so. The Dean of the Theology Faculty at the University of Otago, who was instrumental in the introduction of Phenomenology of Religion, was previously a lecturer at Knox Theological Hall. The first lecturer appointed at Otago in 1966 was Albert

Moore, who had completed his Bachelor of Divinity at Otago in 1949–1951 while a student at Knox Theological Hall (Rae 1991: xix). The first chair of religious studies in New Zealand at Victoria University was taken by Lloyd Geering, who was the former principal and Professor of Old Testament studies at Knox Theological Hall (Barrowman 1999: 269–271). Other factors, too, were at play in the early years. The annual religious studies symposia from 1974 to 1984 were organized and hosted by the Auckland University chaplains. Staff appointments even at a later stage often involved people with a background in theology. Douglas Pratt's appointment at Waikato University in 1988, for example, followed on from his work as ecumenical chaplain to that university.

In more recent times, James Veitch has understood the steady focus on theology and the Judaeo-Christian tradition in New Zealand departments to be the result in part of church influence and the smallness of the discipline group and financial cuts, so that there have been 'few opportunities for the development of a curriculum for the multi-disciplinary study of world religions' (1991: 34). Veitch's answer to the problem—to 'spur reform for the teaching of Christian theology as an independent university discipline' and to 'encourage a more rigorous use of the historical principle in the study of Christianity as a world religion in the arts faculty'—is also focused on a concern for Christianity, rather than world religions *per se*. Paul Harrison (1992) criticizes Elizabeth Isichei for much the same reason, although she is more polemical, and suggests Colin Brown as 'an excellent counter-example' (1992: 23), because he has dealt with Christianity in a thoroughly academic way. However, the argument still places Christianity as the central focus. Harrison's second example of good practice is Peter Donovan (1992: 24) but again the example is, as Harrison puts it, 'perhaps regrettably' from 'Judaeo-Christian territory'. Maurice Andrew's (1990) book on reforming religion in New Zealand is also similarly completely focused on Christianity.

In both Australia and New Zealand national associations of scholars in the discipline area as well as those from associated disciplines provide a forum for networking as well as a visibility for the discipline among scholarly societies in general. New Zealand staff in departments of Religious Studies and Theology met annually from 1970 and held their first conference at Knox College in 1971. It was at the 1978 conference in Wellington that the New Zealand Association for the Study of Religions (NZASR) was established. The Australian Association for the Study of Religion (AASR) was founded at the Adelaide College of Advanced Education (later part of the University of Adelaide) in 1975 with the first national conference in 1976. Both associations were also supported in their conferences by the Charles Strong Trust of Australia, which sponsored keynote lectures at many of the annual conferences, most often in conjunction with the AASR meetings.

In both countries the associations were strong from the beginning. Victor Hayes drew up the first constitution of the AASR, but interestingly the NZASR

has never had a constitution nor a formal list of members. Both associations established a journal or newsletter. The AASR has published *The Australian Religion Studies Review* since 1988, although published proceedings of conferences date from the first conference in 1977 (Hayes 1977). The NZASR continues to publish *The Yana* (Sanskrit for 'vehicle') as their newsletter, first edited by Lloyd Geering in 1971, as well as publishing proceedings of the annual conferences. In New Zealand, as well as providing opportunities for giving research papers, the conferences offer a greater concentration on general matters to do with teaching; departmental staff review their curricula, give notice of changes, and discuss cross-credit arrangements. The women's caucus of the AASR, which meets at the association's annual conference, is a small but strong group, launched initially by Penny McKibbin (later Magee) to support women in studies in religion and promote women's studies within the area of religion. The annual lecture held in memory of Penny Magee at the AASR conference since 1999 has continued to highlight feminist issues and research on women and religion.

Both the AASR and the NZASR sought affiliation with the larger body of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR). The AASR joined in 1982, and in 1985, on its tenth anniversary, the AASR hosted the Congress of the IAHR in Sydney. Members of the NZASR decided not to join the IAHR in that same year, but the association encouraged its members to join the AASR to attain affiliation with the IAHR. The AASR affiliation with the IAHR lapsed after 1988, with the result that the NZASR began discussions and finally affiliated with the world body in 1995. The IAHR held its first regional conference in New Zealand in 2002. Paul Morris of Victoria University was the first New Zealander on the International Executive Committee of the IAHR, acting as a member without portfolio (2000–2005). Some links continue between the AASR and the IAHR, but unofficially. Thus, for example, Morny Joy of the University of Calgary, who served as President (1994–1996) and Vice-President (1996–1998) of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion and is also a member of the IAHR executive (2005–2010), is a member of the AASR and its women's caucus, and gave the inaugural Penny Magee lecture at the annual AASR conference in 1999.

The scholarly standing of departments and their networking and communication with international colleagues have been increased over the years through the appointment of some new staff from overseas rather than locally, through local staff taking up temporary positions as visiting researchers at overseas universities during sabbaticals, and by postgraduate and postdoctoral students taking up scholarships and fellowships for further study at overseas locations. As well, both the AASR and the NZASR have been assiduous in inviting international scholars to their conferences. The annual NZASR conference in Hamilton in 1989 is a good example of this practice. The guest speakers were Paul Morris from Lancaster University and Giora Shoham from Tel Aviv

University, and there were papers from scholars from New York and Claremont (California), Yaoundé (Cameroun), Tel Aviv and Bar-Ilan University, and Thailand.

The concern of departments to have an international reputation often leads to an inward-looking focus on the process of national and international peer review that does not move beyond the realms of the academy. Another sign entirely of the institutionalization of studies in religion can be found in the way in which the print and electronic media recognize the discipline area when looking for expert comment on current issues. A good example is the recent flurry of interest and comment within New Zealand and Australian newspapers with the appearance of Marion Maddox's book, *God under Howard* (2005). Studies in religion scholars in Australia, too, help to support the media, especially the many national radio programs of the Australian Broadcasting Commission: *Encounter*, *The Ark*, *The Religion Report*, and *The Spirit of Things*.

Intraregional divisions and interregional connections

Although staff from departments of studies in religion in Australia have met together at annual conferences of the AASR (although attendance has dropped dramatically in recent years) and elsewhere since the development of the discipline in the 1970s, Australian departments are currently not as cohesive in their approach as those in New Zealand. The relatively smaller distances in New Zealand and the concerted efforts of all departments to attend at least the annual meetings has resulted over the years in a more cohesive and consistent approach to some issues including the very practical concerns of rationalizing teaching and external examination.

Australia and New Zealand have enjoyed good working relations in the discipline area. A joint AASR and NZASR religious studies conference was held in July 1996 at Lincoln University, hosted by the University of Canterbury. Some New Zealanders are members of the AASR, and both countries have members in the American Academy of Religion, the Society of Biblical Literature, and *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, as well as in the local Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools and smaller groups such as the Australian Association for Byzantine Studies. The Auckland Religious Studies colloquium in 1982 brought Charles Birch from Sydney as keynote speaker, and another Sydney scholar, Eric Sharpe, gave a keynote address to the 1983 International Religious Studies Conference at Victoria University, hosted by the Centre for Continuing Education. The two countries are also linked by mutual connection to several key scholars, most notably Ninian Smart (1927–2001), whose former students Philip Almond, Paul Morris, and James Veitch have all left their mark on the discipline. Smart also took the position of De Carle Lecturer in the Arts Faculty at the University of Otago

for the winter term of 1971 and attended the first conference of the NZASR that year.

Links between Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands and Australian universities have been particularly strong. Garry Trompf from the University of Sydney continued his early connection with the area and has encouraged the work of indigenous writers in the field of religion. Neil Gunson of the Australian National University has supervised many postgraduate students from the Pacific Islands and their work on religion in the 2005 collection edited by Phyllis Herda, Michael Reilly and David Hilliard is testament to his encouragement of their studies.

Relations with other fields of study

The establishment of departments of studies in religion in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s did not herald the beginning of teaching studies in religion. As Victor Hayes pointed out in his 1976 Guide, by April of that year he had produced a list of some 530 units on offer in fifty-nine institutions in Australia, and these programs pre-date the establishment of the more formal arrangements for teaching this subject in departments.

As Hayes wrote then (1976: v), in some surprise at what he had found through his search of tertiary institution handbooks:

Religion, it appears, is being considered by any number of ‘non-religion’ departments – departments of Art, History, English, Literature, Philosophy, Sociology, Anthropology, Asian Studies, Middle Eastern and Semitic and Malaysian and Indonesian Studies, Aboriginal and Indian and Cultural Studies, and so on. Australia’s new Religion Studies Departments are appearing alongside this already existing pattern of activity.

Hayes (1976: vi) outlined a mix of structures under which studies in religion was being offered: departments of studies in religion that were just beginning to appear; interdepartmental programs or seminars at places such as Macquarie University, La Trobe University, and the University of Melbourne; programs in Catholic teachers’ colleges such as the Victorian Institute of Catholic Education; programs in ‘non-religion studies’ departments such as Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Melbourne and the Faculty of Asian Studies at the Australian National University; and piecemeal offerings where there are offerings but not coordinated or integrated. The same mix of structures could also be identified in New Zealand, and remain much the same in both countries. The first two elements are often strongly linked. Thus, at the AASR conference at the University of New England in 2000, Benjamin Penny from the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University, where there has been historically a strong group of experts

in Asian and East Asian religions, gave the keynote Charles Strong Trust lecture on his research into Falun Gong. Both the AASR and NZASR remain groups where studies in religion and other disciplines find a forum for discussion and the sharing of new methods and ideas. In the AASR, for example, while sociologists (e.g. Alan Black, Philip Hughes, and Tricia Blombery) have always been a strong group in an association founded and directed for many years by staff in studies in religion departments, in the last few years they have become even more dominant, although most of these scholars do not teach in studies in religion departments. At the same time the more traditional membership from teaching staff in studies in religion departments has decreased. The recent book on new age spiritualities by Adam Possamai (Possamai 2005), immediate past president of the AASR and sociologist at the University of Western Sydney, is a good example of the strength of research in religion carried out beyond studies in religion departments.

Studies in religion finds itself combined with various other discipline areas in Australian and New Zealand universities. At the University of Sydney, Studies in Religion is situated within the School of English, Art History, Film and Media administered by the Faculty of Arts; at the University of Queensland it is located in the School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics; and at the University of New England it is included within the School of Classics, History and Religion. Massey University's program is located in the School of History, Philosophy and Politics; at the University of Canterbury it is teamed with Philosophy, while at the University of Otago it sits with Theology; and at Victoria University it is situated in the School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies. The first and primary relations, therefore, are generally made with the disciplines within these schools. Depending on the area of research, studies in religion staff often build relations with colleagues at other universities in a variety of teaching areas when applying for national and international grants. A good example is the team of Majella Franzmann (Studies in Religion, University of New England), Iain Gardner (Studies in Religion, University of Sydney) and Sam Lieu (Ancient History, Macquarie University), who have successfully applied for grants to study the Church of the East and Manichaeism in China (Gardner, Lieu and Parry 2005).

Studies in religion per se does not exist as a discipline area within tertiary study in the Pacific Islands except for the Divine Word University, as noted above. However, religion is an area of study especially for historians, anthropologists, and sociologists. Increasingly, younger indigenous people from the Pacific Islands are studying religion in the context of their own home islands, informed in many cases by the particular Christian denomination that missionized that island. Many are reinterpreting Christianity through their own indigenous religion. A fine example is the Masters thesis from Ilaitia Tuwera (2002), now teaching in the School of Theology at the University of Auckland, who uses the Fijian concept or symbol of land (*vanua*). What is lacking,

however, is a concern for the broader field of religion in the islands, such as Islam in Fiji or Baha'i in Samoa.

In New Zealand and Australia, there is a strong association between studies in religion and Christian theology. We have noted above the historical links for New Zealand, and there are also current initiatives, not always focused on theological colleges. Religious Studies at Victoria University, for example, has made a formal arrangement with three Wellington church groups—St John's in the City (Presbyterian), St Peter's Willis Street (Anglican), and the Trinity Newman Trust (Ecumenical), to support a lecturer and library resources for teaching new courses in Christianity and involvement in an Honours course. Within the last twenty years in the Australian tertiary sector, Colleges of Theology or Divinity have begun to form ties with universities for the purpose of offering undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Colleges of Theology in Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane have been affiliated with Murdoch University, Flinders University and Griffith University respectively. St Mark's National Theological Centre in Canberra has been affiliated with the School of Theology at Charles Sturt University, and the Melbourne College of Divinity has forged links with the University of Melbourne and Monash University. These ties are sometimes between studies in religion departments or programs and sometimes ventures in their own right to introduce theology into the universities. Other shared ventures involve symposia attended by staff teaching studies in religion as well as theologians, for example with the Women Scholars of Religion and Theology group. There has also been a trend for postgraduate students who might normally have been expected to undertake their study in theological colleges to apply to studies in religion departments for doctoral candidature. Students, for example, from the communities of the Seventh Day Adventists and the Assemblies of God churches have shown that they can succeed at academic critical work in studies in religion while still remaining committed to their own traditions, and they prize the qualification that proves their ability in the secular tertiary arena. While there were major discussions about the difference between old programs in divinity or theology and the new programs of comparative religion as studies in religion departments were developed in Australia, there has not been discussion to the same extent with the reintroduction of theology into the universities, although Majella Franzmann has twice broached the subject in her recent presidential addresses to the AASR (Franzmann 2002, 2004).

Christian theology is strongly supported both by theological colleges and within the university sector in the Pacific Islands, but there is little to link it with studies in religion (Afeaki *et al.* 1989). The major university for the Pacific Islands, the University of the South Pacific, founded in 1968, has no studies in religion program, although in 1987 Peter Donovan reported to the NZASR conference on the inception of religious studies there. Within the university, the Institute of Pacific Studies has supported and fostered many initiatives

among the indigenous peoples of the Pacific to study their own particular religions and to publish from that study within the field of anthropology and sociology. This support is clearest in its links to the Pacific Theological College, founded in 1961 in Samoa. For example, three theses written by students of the Pacific Theological College were published as *Island Churches: Challenge and Change* by the Institute. It also has sponsored much research and publication in the area of indigenous religion.

Emerging issues

The major emerging issue for most departments of studies in religion in Australia and New Zealand concerns their actual survival. Most of the departments and programs are small, almost all of them having endured a number of restructuring rounds, aimed at reducing small organizational units by incorporating them into larger schools, with the end result that they have had to fight for visibility and for recognition as a group with a viable critical mass of staff. Much of this process has been driven by government funding cuts. As Barnes commented almost ten years ago, '[T]he institutional basis of religious studies in most universities is weak, especially at a time when university funding is declining overall' (1998: 234). With the cuts to government support of universities, departments of studies in religion continue to struggle to find external sources of funding, whether from fee-paying students, consulting, or entrepreneurial activity of some kind. Coupled with the larger issue of funding and the small size of departments, are the more practical logistical issues, as Paul Morris points out for New Zealand: when the various regional programs meet there is discussion about student referrals, thesis examining, joint research projects and individual and collective support for the development of religious studies in New Zealand (Morris 2004: iii).

On the other hand, at least in Australia, there is enormous growth and interest in the subject of religious studies within the secondary school sector. In New South Wales, for example, there has been a rise in popularity for Studies in Religion as a Higher School Certificate subject. First examined in 1993 with 2,618 students, in 2005 12,160 students sat for the Certificate. University staff are involved in this area by their presence on Higher School Certificate Boards of Studies Syllabus and Examination committees. As these students move from secondary school to university studies, part of the challenge for departments of studies in religion is the need to review and revitalize the curriculum. Many departments have been teaching the same kinds of subjects for the last thirty or forty years, with only minimal change. While there are basic subjects that remain essential to a good grounding in the study of religion(s), it became apparent after 11th September 2001 that many departments of studies in religion were simply not making provision for major global trends in the area

of religion, and were not in a position after the events of that day to provide expert assistance to a public needing critical information on Islam and its major text, the Qur'ān. It was only in subsequent years that the largest department of studies in religion in Australia at the University of Queensland advertised a new position for teaching advanced units of study in Islam.

A second emerging issue concerns a more mature and critical approach to indigenous religion. In Australia, Tony Swain (University of Sydney) produced key studies on aboriginal religion (1985, 1993). Garry Trompf has recently identified major challenges and issues that have emerged for studies in religion in this area, including the attitudes of anthropologists to religious change; the narrow focus on cargo cults to the exclusion of considering other types of new religious movements in Melanesia (see also Trompf's 1991 chapter 'The interpretation of cargo cults', pp. 188–211); a too narrow focus on mission history; little indigenous reflection on religion; a lack of real knowledge of Melanesian religion within the area of comparative religion; and a sufficiently broad approach to Melanesian religion in all its aspects by indigenous people (2004: 165). In New Zealand, Bronwyn Elsmore (1991, 1998, 1999, 2000) at Massey University has published research which critically engages Maori religious traditions, though much of the work has a Christian focus. More importantly, the views of those who were earlier missionized are now beginning to be heard, as with the work of Michael Shirres (1997), whose book, *Te Tangata. The Human Person*, provides a comprehensive study of Maori theology rather than Maori Christian theology, although such work is made difficult by questions about how to identify earlier levels of indigenous tradition prior to European contact, as noted in the first section above.

There are also examples of indigenous critical work on long-held assumptions within studies in religion. Christine Morris, who completed postgraduate work in Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland, has critiqued the notion, held especially strongly among biblical scholars, that the written text is the natural and logical end-point of the evolution of religious stories. Morris (1996) writes from the perspective of an indigenous woman for whom tradition continues in oral story form, linked to specific geographical areas where the stories should be told. However, research by indigenous scholars throughout the region continues more in the area of theology than in studies in religion. It may be that perhaps indigenous scholars feel that theology provides a more sympathetic context for studying their religion, or it may be that they feel the lack of indigenous staff as teachers within studies in religion departments. In Australia at least, staff in studies in religion departments remain, with few exceptions, of white Australian, European, or North American background.

A third emerging issue concerns new social, cultural and environmental contexts for both established and new religions, leading to fresh topics for research and the investigation of appropriate methods to study them. While many in studies in religion continue with traditional areas of enquiry, in New

Zealand James Veitch has contributed to the debate on religion and the environment with his 1996 edited volume, and has more recently turned his interest to the topic of religion and terrorism (e.g. Veitch 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). Michael Carden, a former doctoral student at the University of Queensland, has taken the lead in applying queer theory to biblical studies (Carden 2004). He is one of a growing number of scholars who belong to the Bible and Critical Theory group led by Roland Boer (Monash University), a group which launched its own journal, *The Bible & Critical Theory*, in 2004, taking over the niche formerly occupied by the cutting-edge journal *Semeia*, which finished production in 2002. Much work has been done on feminist issues by women of the AASR caucus over the last twenty years. Most of these scholars do not belong to studies in religion departments, but Majella Franzmann at the University of New England published a major work, *Women and Religion*, in 2000, and Toni Tidswell (2001, 2006), also at the University of New England, and Roxanne Marcotte (2005a, 2005b) at the University of Queensland are publishing in the area of women and Islam. Lynn Hume, also at the University of Queensland, published a major study of witchcraft and paganism within Australia in 1997.

A fourth emerging issue is the current political instability in the Pacific region. Trompf (2004: 167) notes the lack of stability and the subsequent weakening of the indigenous academic engagement in the area of studies in religion. There are also other implications for the study of religion in some of the politically contested areas. We began this essay with reflection on the results of European incursions into the three major geographical areas of Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands. The area of West Papua/Irian—an area which would previously have counted in our study of the Pacific Islands—was annexed in 1969 by the foreign government of Indonesia. Subsequently long years of Indonesia's transmigration program of importing Muslim immigrants from Java and Sumatra to build a Muslim-majority population there have completely overwhelmed the previously mostly Catholic, Protestant and tribal religions, so that West Papuans now have a completely changed religious landscape of which to make sense. As much as the changed global landscape in the last five years, there are also such local critical and significant changes that must challenge the methods and presentation of studies in religion programs in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

NOTE

- 1 In addition to works cited in the text, readers may also usefully consult the following for the study of religion in Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands: Brown 1970; Cody 2004; Crocombe 1981; Davidson 1991; Église

Évangélique de Polynésie Française 1997; Foliaki and Hannan 1989; Forman 1986; Hayes 1983; Loeliger and Trompf 1985; Moore 1985; Moore and Andrew (eds) 1980; Pratt 1992, 2003; Sharpe 1975, 1983; Trompf 1984, 2005; Trompf (ed.) 1990; Tuwera 1989; Uriam 2005; Webster 2001; Webster and Perry 1989, 1992.

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North America

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Reflexivity or reflex?

WHEN IN 1963 MIRCEA ELIADE published ‘The History of Religions in Retrospect: 1912 and After’, a survey of the European and North American historiography of religion of the previous fifty years, he mentioned several anthropologists who worked in the United States—among them Paul Radin, Robert Lowie, Franz Boas, Alfred Kroeber, Clyde Kluckhohn and Ruth Benedict—along with two sociologists—Talcott Parsons and Milton Yinger—and a *Religionswissenschaftler* who had written on the sociology of religion, Joachim Wach. But among those who could be classified as historians of religion the only North American scholars named by Eliade were William F. Albright, Erwin Goodenough, and Theodore Gaster. It is not the case, to be sure, that Albright, Goodenough, and Gaster were the only historians dealing with religious materials between 1912 and 1962 in the United States. Among the names that come to mind one may mention the Indologist W. Norman Brown, the Sinologists Herrlee Creel and Holmes Welch, or the scholar of Iranian religions A. V. Williams Jackson. Had Eliade been writing now, the number of anthropologists and sociologists of religion would have multiplied, and the number of historians who dealt with religion, as well as of ‘historians-of-religion’, would have reached such a proportion that an overview such as the present one could have degenerated into a mere listing of names and publications. Moreover, when facing now the task of surveying the state of the study of religion in North America one must deal with approaches to religion unknown to Eliade and his contemporaries—cognitive science, ethology, and economics, among others—as it is increasingly clear that it is only with the help of these disciplines that one can expect to do a measure of justice to the cluster of phenomena generally labeled ‘religion’. Another issue to be considered in an essay such as the present one is that of boundaries—not just the uncertain boundaries among and within traditions, but also disciplinary ones. Regarding the former, one must be mindful that terms taken for granted just a scholarly generation ago—for example, ‘Hinduism’ or ‘Gnosticism’—are now being questioned; or that it is no longer uncommon to find references to ‘Christianities’ rather than to just ‘Christianity’. Indeed, disciplinary reflexivity—some of it, alas, reflex-like—has led to the term ‘religion’ itself being regarded with suspicion, thus contradicting James Beckford’s claim that ‘specialists in comparative religion, history of religions and theology may take it for granted that religions constitute discrete objects sharing generic properties’ (*Social Theory and Religion*, 2003: 19). At a more practical level, that of the authors to be mentioned, the issue of boundaries is equally relevant, as scholars move between continents and in some cases between—or even among—languages. Be that as it may, for the purposes of this essay we will be concerned with scholars who, regardless of their place of birth, work in North America, and write mainly in English and French.

If we begin by considering the term 'religion', we find that, unlike the situation that prevailed not too long ago, when it was a matter of choosing among the multiple definitions available or of coming up with a new one, now the very validity of the concept of 'religion' is being questioned. It is claimed, in some cases, that, despite its pre-Christian Latin source, *religio*, 'religion' is a Western, indeed a Christian, invention, and that therefore 'religion' cannot be found beyond the confines of Christendom. Having been formulated for the most part by scholars working in Europe—Timothy Fitzgerald, Daniel Dubuisson, and the late Dario Sabbatucci—these views fall beyond the scope of this essay. In the United States and Canada, the unease or outright rejection of 'religion' as a category prevails mainly among academics influenced by Jonathan Smith, some of whose essays, collected in *Map is not Territory* (1978), *Imagining Religion* (1992) and *Relating Religion* (2004), have had a remarkable impact. Some of that impact has been salutary, some of it less so. Insofar as Smith has demanded that the student of religion be 'relentlessly self-conscious', he has contributed to the questioning of the assumptions, many of them of a theological nature, that pervade and in some ways constitute the field. But while, regardless of their ultimate cogency—why should relentless self-consciousness be demanded only of scholars of 'religion'? How is 'religion' different from 'art', 'history' or 'sexuality'? How does one know that one is a scholar of 'religion' in the first place?—Smith's theoretical and metatheoretical positions have been advanced in a manner that not infrequently combines insightfulness, erudition and wit, such qualities are seldom found among Smith's progeny. In many cases, in fact, attempts to argue along Smith's lines tend to consist of predictable variations upon a theme—the theme being Smith's notorious, italicized, claim that '*there is no data for religion*', as well as the two no less notorious dicta that follow it: 'Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study', and, 'Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy'. One of the most deplorable consequences of these statements is that some of Smith's admirers seem to have taken his words as a prohibition against studying anything that may appear as being 'religious' in its own terms; that is, against occupying themselves with any event, person, utterance or object that may appear as not depending upon the scholar's sovereign agency in order to be considered 'religious'. The no less unfortunate result of this lack of concern with 'religions'—however, 'imagined', 'invented', 'constructed', or 'manufactured' these may be—is that some academics have ended up occupying themselves in a single-minded manner with the denunciation of the past and present ideologically cum theologically motivated misdeeds of scholars of 'religion' as well as of the organizations that comprise them—the latter being, for all practical purposes, the American Academy of Religion. An exception to this trend is found in Benson Saler's *Conceptualizing Religion* (1993/1999), an insightful attempt to approach the definition of 'religion' from the perspective of prototype theory.

It may be pointed out in this context, that acquaintance with scholarly work produced in languages other than English has all but disappeared among a sizable number of North American academics in the field of religion. This is particularly troubling in the case of theory and meta-theory, as some of the most important work in these areas is carried out in languages other than English, especially in German. One can attend interminable debates about the ideological functions of religion as well as about the need for scholars of religion to engage in 'scientific', that is, non-theologically colored work not only without ever hearing even a single reference to the stuff that constitutes 'religion' but also without anyone ever mentioning Hans Albert's lucid work or Ernst Topitsch's exercise in ideology-critique, *Vom Ursprung und Ende der Metaphysik*, a book published almost fifty years ago (1958). In order to be reminded that books and articles are published outside the English-speaking world—in order, indeed, to be reminded that other languages do exist—one needs to have access at the very least to reviews of books written in a number of languages. While US based journals such as *Religious Studies Review* and *History of Religions* regularly publish such reviews, the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, the most widely read journal among North American scholars of religion, no longer considers it necessary to acquaint its readers with the multitude of books published in foreign languages. In addition to contributing to the parochialism of some of the scholarship produced in the United States, this deplorable policy constitutes a step back, as the journal that eventually became the *JAAR*, namely, the *Journal of the National Association of Biblical Instructors*, known later as the *Journal of Bible and Religion*, regularly published reviews of such books, including, in 1952, a couple in Russian and Swedish. This salutary practice continued when the *JAAR* came into existence in 1967; in fact, reviews of Japanese books appeared in 1968 and 1969, with a good number of foreign language books having been reviewed between 1975 and 1983. Thereafter the number decreased sharply, until after 1996 reviews of books written in languages other than English ceased altogether.

The monolingualism that characterizes some of the theorizing and meta-theorizing prevalent in the United States belies the current academic infatuation with 'diversity' and 'the Other'. Even though most US American academics claim to reject the US government's contempt for world opinion, their ignorance of work produced outside the English-speaking world (unless it happens to be available in English translation) mirrors the who-cares-about-the-world attitude of their government. This situation should not, in principle, surprise anyone, as scholarship is very much part of the society in which it is practiced. An extreme example of this embedding is provided, precisely, by theory, that is, by that component of the academic enterprise that would appear to have freed itself from the constraints that apply to less exalted academic pursuits. One sees this in the fact that dealing with theory and meta-theory corresponds in

an uncanny way to the trafficking with money that prevails at the most rarefied—and profitable—levels of the financial markets. Just as successful dealing with hedge funds produces money and nothing else, so does trading in theory tend to produce yet more theory and, at most, fleeting academic prestige: like hedge funds, theories are a volatile business, as shown by the once-fashionable terms that now litter publications just a few years old. In theory, as in stocks, timing is everything, as it is crucial to start employing fashionable terms when they are not yet common property, and even more crucial to drop them just before they lose their market value—that is to say, before non-theorists and, even worse, theologians start using them.

The concern with the exploration and display of one's subjectivity that characterizes contemporary American culture makes its presence felt in academic and quasi-academic works by demanding that those works assume a confessional character. It is not surprising, therefore, that in this age of the *memoir*, one finds authors becoming protagonists of their studies, a state of affairs that would have been unthinkable at the time when authors refused, at least consciously, to become characters in their texts. This blurring of the academic and the personal can be seen in works as different as Karen Brown's *Mama Lola* (1991/2001) and Elaine Pagels' book on the Gospel of Thomas, *Beyond Belief* (2003); the former being devoted as much to a narrative of the author's travails as to a voodoo priestess in Brooklyn, the latter dealing with Pagel's personal losses as well as a late first-century text. The cult of celebrities, another way in which popular culture makes itself present in the academic world, is related to the concern with individual agency—or, indeed, with superhuman agency, one of the key components of religion—as it is the display of the academic celebrity's supreme theoretical agency that the academic rank and file wishes to celebrate. An extreme, but not unique, example of this cult took place at the 2002 meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, during which three sessions, under the general heading 'Reading a Page of Scripture (with a Little Help from Derrida)', were devoted to the embodiment of so-called postmodernism. Anyone who has witnessed the serial infatuations of theologians and theorists with existentialism, Marxism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, to mention but a few intellectual trends, cannot be surprised by the current infatuation with deconstruction/postmodernism, nor can that hypothetical observer be faulted for wondering about the identity of the—preferably French, but if need be German or Italian—European intellectual or quasi-intellectual figures who will lend theologians and theorists a helping hand in the not too distant future.

Far less amusing, but not unrelated to the current vogue of cultural relativism, nor to the embrace of turgid 'postmodern' speculations about pure difference, contingency, undecidability, and the like, on the part of some theologians, is the resurgence of confessional influence on the study of religion. Such resurgence is made intellectually, or at least academically, respectable

by the commonly held assumption that one can be judged only by oneself, any other 'gaze' constituting an intolerable violation of one's quality as a hermetically sealed, yet vulnerable, 'Other'. (The parallel claim that this 'Otherness' is socially constructed constitutes one of the many contradictions afoot in the academic world). The practical consequences of these views is that, because of their 'difference', confessional bodies can reject any questioning of their practices, such questioning being dismissed as a survival of the much-maligned eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Besides being made intellectually respectable, this proliferation of orthodoxies can thrive because of the power exercised by religious groups through their donations, which in some cases result in the creation of endowed chairs, whose holders are expected not to offend the sensibilities of the donors. In legal terms, these developments can take place in the United States because the Civil Rights Act of 1991 nullified the protections against discrimination based on, among other things, religion, contained in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. According to the 1991 amendment:

it shall not be an unlawful employment practice for a school, college, university, or other educational institution or institution of learning to hire and employ employees of a particular religion if such school, college, university, or other educational institution or institution of learning is, in whole or in substantial part, owned, supported, controlled, or managed by a particular religion or by a particular religious corporation, association, or society, or if the curriculum of such school, college, university, or other educational institution or institution of learning is directed toward the propagation of a particular religion.

The fact that according to this legislation a university in the United States of America may be involved in 'the propagation of a particular religion' and may hire 'employees' on that basis, demonstrates that, in relation to religion, the exercise of academic freedom is not to be taken for granted.

Despite the dangers that the developments mentioned above entail, scholars of religion should not overlook that these trends allow them to observe at first hand—in some cases at their own institutions—how religion actually functions. To mention but one example: the current rediscovery of Catholic 'identity' on the part of teaching institutions related to religious orders allows one to witness the interplay between secularization and resacralization, an exercise that is far more useful than merely following the repetitious debates about the secularization thesis. Similarly, one's reading of, for instance, Perez Zagorin's *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (1990) can be fleshed out by contemporary cases of Nicodemism; that is to say, by cases of academics, who because of their precarious employment status—non-tenured, non-tenure track, part-time—may have to pretend to

religious or even specific theological allegiances. In like manner, given the right circumstances, one may be fortunate to supplement one's familiarity with Richard Trexler's work on reverence and profanity in the study of religion with the observation of the reverential attitude that perhaps prevails among one's colleagues. In short, however dangerous or deplorable or merely alien, the cases just mentioned should remind us that dealing with religion is more than dealing with the history of ideas or with colorful practices in exotic locations, from which one is always able to return to the safety of modernity. Confronting these cases forces us to engage in a second order reflection about modernity, for it is within modernity that these concerns with promoting one's religious identity occur, in some cases simply as attempts to ensure institutional survival in an unforgiving market; just as it is only within the horizon of modernity that the solicitousness for one's and others' Otherness can thrive.

Theoretical approaches

At its best, reflexivity leads to the exploration of the many ways in which 'religion' has been understood in the history of the West; to placing the scholarship on religion in its proper historical context; and to the investigation of the extent to which terms in other cultures parallel Western 'religion'. While there is no North American equivalent of Hans-Michael Haussig's *Der Religionsbegriff in den Religionen* (1999), the first two tasks have been fulfilled in an exemplary manner by Michel Despland in works such as *La religion en Occident* (1979) and *L'Émergence des Sciences de la religion* (1999). Unfortunately, the fact that these books have been written in French has led to their neglect by some of those who, despite professing to have an interest in the 'construction' of this contested subject, routinely ignore work that is not available in English. Historical awareness also characterizes Ivan Strenski's work, most recently in *Thinking about Religion* (2006). Strenski's earlier *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth-Century History* (1987) includes one of the first discussions in English of Mircea Eliade's right-wing political activities in Romania during the 1930s. His *Contesting Sacrifice* (2002) shows how an apparently neutral concept such as 'sacrifice' functioned in France from the early modern age into the twentieth century, contributing to the slaughter of the 1914–1918 war. The realization that scholarship on religion has been intimately connected with political developments of a frequently reactionary kind has been explored in a number of publications. Significant among them is Steven Wasserstrom's *Religion after Religion* (1999), a study of the scholars associated with the Eranos conferences, particularly Gershom Scholem, Eliade, and Henry Corbin. Despite its many virtues, Wasserstrom's book should be read with some caution, as the author's righteous indignation results in some unjustified indictments; regrettable also is Wasserstrom's lack of reflexivity

concerning his own theological and political allegiances. Noteworthy collective volumes include *Curators of the Buddha* (1995), edited by Donald Lopez, and *The Academic Study of Religion during the Cold War*, edited by Dalibor Papoušek, Luther Martin, and Iva Doležalová (2001). Given that, as we shall see, religion can be considered as a form of applied aesthetics, it is no surprise that the study of religion has itself oscillated between analysis and aesthetics, a tension explored in Daniel Gold's *Aesthetics and Analysis in Writing on Religion* (2003).

Just as the exercise of disciplinary reflexivity reflects a desire for a totalizing view—one that encompasses as much one's object of study as oneself studying or, as some claim, even constituting that object—the publication of two editions of *The Encyclopedia of Religion* within eighteen years (1987 and 2005), as well as of several guides, companions, and collections of critical terms to the study of religion, seems to betray a nostalgia for the age of the *summa*. Four of these works, most of whose contributors are based in North America, are *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark Taylor (1998); *Guide to the Study of Religion*, edited by Willi Braun and Russell McCutcheon (2000); *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, edited by John Hinnells (2005); and *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, edited by Robert Segal (2006). This abundance is all for the better, as it is difficult for the educated reader to know where to start in order to gain some perspective on this most contentious of subjects—and no less difficult for the scholar, given the relentless pressure to master ever smaller pieces of the puzzle that is religion. Several valuable reviews can be used to determine which of these volumes one may want to read. Likewise, no attempt will be made to discuss *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, as a proper discussion of this vast publication, if possible at all, would take up this entire essay.

If, when examining work that deals with 'religion', one is forced to address the controversies about the very validity of that category, when discussing the anthropology of religion, one cannot avoid confronting the issue of boundaries. (Once fashionable claims about the 'end of man' can be safely disregarded now.) Where does one, for example, discuss Roy Rappaport's early work—under the rubric of New Guinea ethnographies, ecology of religion or theory of ritual? Where does one place, literally, Stephen Lansing's *Priests and Programmers* (1991), next to the books on Bali or next to those devoted to ritual or to the ecology of religion? As any survey requires a certain order, however subjective, I will proceed to mention some of the most influential work produced by scholars trained as anthropologists. For years, in addition to referring to founding fathers such as Durkheim, North American scholars of religion read and quoted the anthropological trinity of Clifford Geertz, Mary Douglas, and Victor Turner. Geertz produced a symbol-based definition of religion, which despite its shortcomings regarding issues of power—pointed out by Talal Asad, Aletta Biersack, and Vincent Pecora, among others—is still

widely quoted. No less popular, due in part to Geertz's mellifluous style and in part to the widespread rejection of materialist explanations in the social sciences, are formulations such as 'thick description' and 'theater state', which are still used in a slogan-like manner by students of religion who have some familiarity with the social sciences. As a case of unmitigated vulgar culturalism, the notion of a 'theater state', Balinese or otherwise, ought to be regarded with the utmost skepticism; and if Geertz's *Negara* (1980) is to be read, that should be done alongside Lansing's and Leo Howe's work on Bali. No less influential on scholars of religion has been the British anthropologist Victor Turner, whose work on symbolism and ritual, was based first on his research among the Ndembu of Zambia and later expanded eventually to include Mexico and Ireland. In works such as *The Forest of Symbols* (1967), *The Ritual Process* (1969), *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (1974), *Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual* (1975), *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (1978), Turner emphasized the processual character of social action, focusing on liminal, 'between and betwixt' states such as pilgrimages. One of his most celebrated concepts was that of *communitas*, a somewhat romanticized way of referring to situations in which ordinary social constraints no longer seem to apply.

As a counterpart to the 'hermeneutical' approach, French structuralism, represented above all by Claude Lévi-Strauss, insisted on rigorous formal analysis, influenced by the procedures employed by the linguist and folklorist Roman Jakobson (although it must be added that Lévi-Strauss made a point of distinguishing between his structuralism and the formalism associated with Vladimir Propp). The influence exercised by Lévi-Strauss and by structuralism in general can be seen in essays such as the ones contained in *Structural Analysis of Oral Tradition*, edited by Pierre Maranda and Elli Köngäs Maranda (1971); in Wendy Doniger's *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (1973); and in Hans Penner's work. But in this as in many other cases in which a new approach is regarded as a 'new paradigm', a degree of skepticism is justified concerning the extent to which this paradigm is really understood. For example, in a chapter devoted to 'Structuralism, Anthropology and Lévi-Strauss' (*Impasse and Resolution*, 1989, p. 152), Penner quotes, without correcting it, a faulty translation of Émile Benveniste's presentation of Ferdinand de Saussure's understanding of the relationship between 'signifier' (*signifiant*) and 'signified' (*signifié*), according to which Saussure is made to say that by *signifiant* he means 'concept'.

Of the three topics traditionally studied by anthropologists and historians of religion, symbol, myth and ritual, the latter has received the most attention during the last decades. In addition to many ethnographies, we have theoretical studies such as Stanley Tambiah's 'A Performative Approach to Ritual' (1979); Ronald Grimes' *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (1982/1995); works by Jonathan Smith and Catherine Bell, as well as the two volumes co-authored by Thomas

Lawson and Robert McCauley. Roy Rappaport's early studies are both ethnographies and theoretical contributions, whereas his final statement, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (1999), is a theoretical or, perhaps better, a philosophical or valedictorian reflection on this central component of social life. From his early essays, collected in *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion* (1979), to *Pigs for the Ancestors* (1968/1984, to be read in its second edition, in order to have access to the 'Epilogue, 1984'), to his final book, Rappaport's central concerns have been the understanding of sacredness and ritual. His essay, 'The Obvious Aspects of Ritual' (1974), is one of the most lucid texts on this phenomenon. In his early work, based on research among the Tsembaga of New Guinea, Rappaport was concerned with the role played by ritual in ecological regulation, paying attention to the interaction between 'cognized models'—systems of meaning generated by human actors—and 'operational models'—the actual organization of nature. Such a distinction is, however, absent in his late work, which, without ceasing to pay attention to adaptive processes, is more concerned with sacredness and order (on Rappaport see *American Anthropologist* 101, 1999; and *Ecology and the Sacred*, edited by Ellen Messer and Michael Lambek, 2001).

Frits Staal's *Rules without Meaning* (1989) deals with Vedic ritual as well as with the theory of ritual. Staal stresses the parallels between the structure of ritual and that of music, paying attention to the issue of the origins of ritual—attention that is most welcome, as speculation on the 'origins' of anything has been declared anathema in the contemporary humanities. Smith's *To Take Place* (1987) focuses on the connection between ritual and space, more specifically, place (although, as Grimes has pointed out, it would be more justified to build a theory of ritual around the mastery of time). In *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (1992) Catherine Bell seeks to dereify 'ritual'; she in fact recoils from 'the notion of a fundamental force or conflict' that could function 'suspiciously like some key to understanding' (p. 37). Even more apophatic is the conclusion of Bell's 'Ritual [Further considerations]', published in the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (2005: 7855); there she writes that the contribution of ritual studies 'is less likely to be a special position or method as a stubborn refusal to reduce—in analysis or significance—so-called religious phenomenon into fully other (that is, non-religious, unholy) components or conclusions'. This is perplexing, not least because she appears to equate 'non-religious' and 'unholy', an equation that is unjustified, insofar as 'unholy' makes sense only in a religious context, whereas 'non-religious' can be used in a purely descriptive manner. No less puzzling is Bell's reaction to the cognitive approach to ritual proposed by Lawson and McCauley in *Rethinking Religion* (1990) and *Bringing Ritual to Mind* (2002). She writes that 'the primary assumptions, as well as the terminology and style' of Lawson and McCauley 'are difficult for people in religious studies and cultural anthropology' (p. 7851). That may be so, although one may ask whether there is a terminology and style proper to

religious studies and cultural anthropology. Be that as it may, the main critique that ought to be directed at Lawson, McCauley, and other practitioners of the cognitive approach has less to do with style or with difficulty, than with the relative narrowness of their ethnographic evidence, most of which comes from a small number of small-scale societies. Taking into account complex societies, doctrinal systems, and, above all, history would undoubtedly dilute the rigor of their analyses, but that may be a price worth paying if one is to do justice to complex religious systems. Attention should also be called to *Readings in Ritual Studies*, edited by Grimes (1996), an anthology that would be perfect were it not for the absence of Maurice Bloch's work.

After collective volumes such as *Myth, A Symposium*, edited by Thomas Sebeok (1955/1958), and *Myth and Mythmaking*, edited by Henry Murray (1960), the number of theoretical studies devoted to myth produced by scholars based in North America has been limited. Kees Bolle, *The Freedom of Man in Myth* (1968), deals with freedom as expressed through humor and mysticism. Other volumes include an excellent collection of studies dealing with South American mythology, *Rethinking History and Myth*, edited by Jonathan Hill (1988); and *Myth and Method*, edited by Laurie Patton and Wendy Doniger (1996). Meta-theoretical studies include William Doty, *Mythography* (1986/2000) and Strenski's *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth-Century History*. The most important recent study is Bruce Lincoln's *Theorizing Myth* (1999), which deals with the political role of myth from Homer to Georges Dumézil, the old master of Indo-European studies. (Robert Segal has written on the historiography of myth and on the relation between myth and ritual, but he is based in the United Kingdom). After having been rendered useless by Edward Shils (1981), the concept of tradition has been approached in a theoretically fruitful manner in Pascal Boyer's *Tradition as Truth and Communication* (1990) and in *Historicizing 'Tradition' in the Study of Religion*, edited by Steven Engler and Gregory Grieve (2005).

Symbolization and cognition

Unlike the interest in symbolism that prevailed during the 1960s and 1970s, at the height of Eliade's influence and at the time when, in 'Structure et herméneutique' (1963), Paul Ricoeur emphasized meaning against the structuralist concern with syntax, the interest in symbols and symbolism has decreased considerably. Besides the work produced in Great Britain by Raymond Firth (1973), in France by Tzvetan Todorov (1977, 1978), and the volumes edited in Europe by Haralds Biezais (1979) and Michel Izard and Pierre Smith (1979), we may mention, in addition to Victor Turner's work, Philip Wheelwright's *The Burning Fountain* (1968), Sherry Ortner's influential 'On Key Symbols' (1973), and two collections of essays: *The Interpretation*

of *Symbolism*, edited by Roy Willis (1975), and *Symbol as Sense*, edited by Mary Foster and Stanley Brandes (1980). Despite the excellence of its contributions, the latter has not had much impact on scholars of religion.

More recently, the main work on symbolization has been carried in the context of research on cognitive science—*Cognitive Aspects of Religious Symbolism*, edited by Pascal Boyer (1993)—and evolutionary theory—Terrence Deacon's *The Symbolic Species* (1997). Research on cognitive science, mentioned already in connection with Lawson's and McCauley's work on ritual, is one of the most promising new departures in the study of religion. Despite the narrow ethnographic basis and the initial lack of concern with history—partly ameliorated now by a series of studies undertaken under the leadership of Luther Martin—cognitive scientists such as Pascal Boyer have steadily built up their theories, refining their hypotheses and engaging in experimental work. In general terms, their research—a sample of which can be found in *Religion in Mind*, edited by Jensine Andresen (2001)—is concerned with accounting for the cognitive mechanisms that generate the counterintuitive but appealing—in fact, appealingly counterintuitive—representations, such as superhuman agents, that constitute the building blocks of religion. Against the fashionable rejection of universals, the very titles of Boyer's *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas* (1994) and of McCauley's 'The Naturalness of Religion and the Unnaturalness of Science' (2000) point to the recurrent features of the cluster of phenomena that constitute religion. Parallel to cognitive science is work on evolutionary theory and ethology, although one would wish for more cross-fertilization among these approaches. Among the main contributions reference should be made to Scott Atran's extraordinary *In Gods We Trust* (2002) and to David Wilson's *Darwin's Cathedral* (2002), the former being marred by the vehemence of Atran's critique of Wilson. Not as well known as Atran's or Wilson's are the contributions by Richard Sosis and Candace Alcorta, not to mention Joseph Bulbulia, who is based in New Zealand.

Other work in psychology that can help to clarify the genesis of the kind of reasoning that generates religion can be found in research on developmental psychology, especially on children's perception of agency, causality, and teleology, some of which shows that children are 'intuitive theists'. Relevant work on these issues is done by Deborah Kelemen, Jesse Bering, David Bjorklund, Dominic Johnson, and Justin Barrett. Equally relevant in that regard, as well as in connection to magic and moral reasoning, are the studies found in *Imagining the Impossible*, edited by Karl Rosengren, Carl Johnson, and Paul Harris (2000).

Sociologies of religion

A panorama of current research on the sociology of religion in North America, after the dominance of Peter Berger during his pre-theological phase, can be

found in the *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (2003), edited by Michele Dillon, thirty of whose thirty-four contributors are based in the United States (of the remaining four, one is based in Canada, one in Great Britain, and two in Israel). Among the issues debated by sociologists, scholars of religion have generally been concerned with the issue of secularization, a debate that sometimes has been conducted with acrimony and more often than not in a historical vacuum. North American exceptions to this trend are two articles by Philip Gorski, 'Historicizing the Secularization Debate' (2000) and his 'Agenda for Research' published in the *Handbook*. Related to the presence or absence of secularization are two related issues: the phenomenon of fundamentalism, a term that has become part of everyday language, and the connection between religion and violence. Research on the first has been gathered in the five-volume 'Fundamentalism Project', edited by Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby (1991–1995), a vast work that deals with this phenomenon cross-culturally, and whose contributors come from a variety of disciplines. While in the popular imagination, as well as among politicians, journalists and religious representatives, episodes of religious violence tend to be understood as betrayals of religion, scholarly research in a number of fields, from ethology to history, shows that, on the contrary, religion and violence tend to go hand in hand. Violence involving religion, common in the context of millenarian or apocalyptic movements, has been the subject of numerous studies, several of which were published around the year 2000: *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem*, edited by Thomas Robbins and Susan Palmer (1997); Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently* (2000); *Millennium, Persecution, and Violence*, edited by Wessinger (2000); John Hall, *Apocalypse Observed* (2000). When the publication of those studies had ceased, the attacks on the United States in September 2001—an event usually referred to, apocalyptically, as '9/11'—led to a renewed interest in the relation between religion and violence, mainly in relation to Islam. Exemplary in this regard has been Bruce Lincoln's *Holy Terrors* (2003), a work devoted among other things to the study of the parallels between the dualistic, violent worldviews of Osama bin Laden and George W. Bush. It may be pointed out that the focus on Islamic violence, especially on the nature of *Jihad*—further intensified by the destruction unleashed in Iraq by the US invasion—has contributed to the neglect of the role played by violence in other religions, especially those in South and East Asia, which tend to be regarded as paragons of peace; but this is changing, as shown, for instance, by a session devoted to violence and Buddhism at the 2006 meeting of the American Academy of Religion.

Interest in the interaction between religion and the economy is not new, going back to the days of Max Weber; what is relatively new is the study of religion using the tools provided by economics. Significant in this regard is Laurence Iannaccone's work, especially those articles that deal with the issue of free-riding and the popularity of strict churches. This kind of work can be supplemented

by the ethological research being carried out by Sosis and Alcorta in ‘Signaling, Solidarity, and the Sacred’ (2003); Sosis and Eric Bressler, ‘Cooperation and Commune Longevity’ (2003); and Bulbulia, ‘Religious Costs as Adaptations that Signal Altruistic Intention’ (2004). Practitioners of the economics approach are likely to resist bringing in other disciplines, as this will dilute the rigor of their analyses; but, as already pointed out in the case of cognitive science, if one’s aim is to elaborate a comprehensive theory of religion one may have to risk endangering the beauty of one’s equations by incorporating evolutionary theory and other approaches. Reference should be made to several articles in which Robert Ekelund, Robert Hébert, and Robert Tollison approach the medieval church from an economics perspective (and to their book, *The Marketplace of Christianity*, 2006, not yet seen). In addition, historians of religion are beginning to show interest in the economics approach, as was shown by a 2006 session of the North American Association for the Study of Religion, organized by Gregory Alles, in which Iannaccone participated.

Mysticism and the senses

Moving from economics to mysticism may be unexpected, since the ‘mystical’ has been generally considered as the aspect of religion that eludes institutional constraints or, indeed, as not having anything to do with religion; however, as Hugh Urban’s translation of the songs of the Bengali Kartābhajās—*Songs of Ecstasy* (2001)—demonstrates, Tantric imagery and economic discourse do not exclude each other. The volumes on mysticism edited by Steven Katz—*Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (1978), *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (1983), *Mysticism and Language* (1992), *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture* (2000)—have provided a necessary corrective to the uncritical views that tend to prevail about this most uncertain aspect of religion. But some of the main components of the position advanced by Katz in 1978 had already been presented, in English, by Bruce Garside in ‘Language and the Interpretation of Mystical Experience’ (1972). Moreover, those acquainted with the scholarly literature produced in Europe since the beginning of the twentieth century are less likely to have been impressed by the novelty of Katz’ position, as the realization that experiences are to be understood as being shaped by the traditions within which they occur has been common knowledge there, for example, through the contributions of Erich Seeberg (*Zur Frage der Mystik*, 1921: 41), Henri Delacroix (*Les grandes mystiques chrétiennes*, 1938: 348ff.), and Roger Bastide (*Les problèmes de la vie mystique*, 1931/1948: 199ff.). As with many components of religion, mysticism can be approached in the context of a given tradition or from a comparative perspective. After years of neglect, caused in part by the reaction against the generalizations offered by authors such as Eliade, the cult of pure difference still prevalent among some

academics may be subsiding, giving way to a welcome return of comparative studies. A recent example of this trend is *The Presence of Light: Divine Radiance and Religious Experience*, a collection of studies edited by Matthew Kapstein (2004). While aware of the points raised by Katz and some of his collaborators, Kapstein defends the need for comparative studies. He acknowledges some of the problems with the concept of ‘experience’, raised, among others, by Robert Sharf; but he counteracts hyper-critical approaches by paying attention to the inter-subjective character of aesthetic experiences, especially of music.

Given the manner in which rhythms, melodies, and harmonies affect us, regardless of cultural filters, it is impossible not to refer to music when seeking to move beyond culturalist misconceptions. One hopes therefore that following the example set by Staal, scholars of religion will make use of research on music—for instance, of the essays found in *The Origins of Music*, the volume edited by Nils Wallin, Björn Merker and Steven Brown (2000). In any event, books such as *The Presence of Light* signal a welcome turning away from the fixation on pure difference, a fixation that is as uncritical as the infatuation with constructs such as *homo religiosus* that prevailed not too many years ago. Similarly, the distrust towards approaches to religion that paid attention to emotion—understandable as a reaction against positions such as Rudolf Otto’s—seems to be waning; as recent examples we may refer to Ann Taves’ *Fits, Trances and Visions* (1999) and to an anthology of previously published articles, *Religion and Emotion* (2004), edited by John Corrigan, a volume that one would hope will be followed by a collection of newly commissioned studies, analogous to some of the ones found in *Religious Organization and Religious Experience*, edited by John Davis (1982).

Because of the role played by the interplay between cognition and emotion in their emergence and practice, music, dance, posture, and the aesthetic realm in general, provide a privileged point of reference for understanding religion—one can in fact understand religion as a form of applied aesthetics. Despite the central role they play in the very fabric of religion, smell, taste, and touch have been generally neglected by scholars, research on aesthetics having been confined for too long to sight and sound. But that is changing. Besides theoretical work by David Howes and Constance Classen, there are studies such as Kathryn Geurts’ *Culture and the Senses* (2002), which focuses on the Anlo of Ghana; most recently, in *Scenting Salvation* (2006), Susan Harvey has studied the olfactory imagination in early Christianity in the context of the role of smell in the ancient Mediterranean world. A couple of conferences on this issue may also be mentioned: one at Princeton in April 1999 and one at Yale in October 2006; finally, in November 2006, the Critical Theory and Discourses of Religion Group of the American Academy of Religion sponsored a session, ‘Religion Through The Senses’, at the Academy’s annual meeting. The participation at that session of established scholars, such as Harvey, as

well as of scholars at the beginning of their careers indicates that the role played by the 'lower'—more 'material'—senses in the constitution and transmission of religion will catch up with the scholarly interest in the body.

Embodied religion

Few topics have received more scholarly attention in recent years than the body, especially in connection to sexuality and food. Some of the work on the body has consisted of impenetrable musings produced by adherents of some variety of 'post'-theory; but even readable work has been curiously immaterial, as hardly any attention has been paid to what most bodies do during most of their waking hours, namely, work—one of the exceptions being Peter Gose's remarkable *Deathly Waters and Hungry Mountains: Agrarian Ritual and Class Formation in an Andean Town* (1994). Similarly, insofar as it has not paid attention to the usual consequences of sexual activities, especially at times when reliable contraception was not available, some work on sexuality has a disembodied character. In general, however, interest in the role played by the body in religion has resulted in valuable monographs and collective volumes, such as those edited by Jane Law, *Religious Reflections on the Human Body* (1995), and Sarah Coakley, *Religion and the Body* (1997). In some cases, work on the body may appear in books that, because of their titles, may be neglected by scholars of religion; an example of this is William McNeill's *Keeping Together in Time* (1995). In terms of specific traditions there is an abundance of work. Christian theologians' concern with repressing sexuality or at the very least minimizing sexual pleasure has been studied in Peter Brown's almost canonical *The Body and Society* (1988); while the same theologians' wilful misreading of translations of Hebrew texts has been examined in painstaking detail in Elizabeth Clark's *Reading Renunciation* (1999), a book that every student of religion, regardless of area of specialization, ought to read, in order to see how theological exegesis can turn straightforward statements into their opposite. Medieval views of sexuality have been studied by Pierre Payer in his work on the penitentials and on the later Middle Ages (1993); as well as, comprehensively, by James Brundage, in *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (1987). In a celebrated essay, collected in *Jesus as Mother* (1982), Caroline Bynum has studied how medieval devotion led in some cases to imagining Jesus as mother; while her *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (1987) is devoted to the symbolism of food among medieval women. The peculiar interaction between desexualization and manliness is explored in Matthew Kuefler's *The Manly Eunuch* (2001), while the no less peculiar emphasis on the genitility of Jesus has been studied by Leo Steinberg in *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (1983/1996: not to be missed is the 'Retrospect, 1995', which has Bynum as one of its targets).

The distinctive Christian horror towards same-sex practices is the subject of Mark Jordan's *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (1997)—Christian horror being so different from the indifference towards such practices found among Japanese warriors and monks in pre-industrial Japan, as shown in Gary Leupp's *Male Colors* (1995). Other valuable studies of sexuality in the Buddhist world include *Buddhism, Sexuality and Gender*, edited by José Ignacio Cabezón (1991), and two volumes by Bernard Faure, *The Red Thread* (1998) and *The Power of Denial* (2003). The connection between sexual activities, pregnancy and, sometimes abortion—unaccountably disregarded in Miranda Shaw's study of female Tantric practitioners, *Passionate Enlightenment* (1994)—is the subject of Willaim LaFleur's *Liquid Life* (1992). In the case of China, partly under the influence of Kristofer Schipper's—and, before him Henri Maspero's—pioneering work on Daoism, renewed attention is being paid to sexual and dietary practices as well as to gymnastics; Livia Kohn has been at the forefront, both as author and editor. India has been traditionally regarded as the land in which bodily techniques of one kind or another have been carried to their extreme, research on asceticism and Tantrism having shown that extremes frequently meet. David White—who has proposed considering Tantra, rather than *bhakti*, as 'the predominant religious paradigm, for over a millennium, of the great majority of the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent'—has devoted substantial volumes to alchemy, *The Alchemical Body* (1996), and to Tantric sexuality, *The Kiss of the Yoginī* (2003). No less interesting, insofar as it deals with less obviously religious aspects of bodily techniques, is Joseph Alter's work on Indian gymnastics, *The Wrestler's Body* (1982), and on 'somatic nationalism' in general. Mention must also be made of Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney's splendid *Rice as Self* (1993) and of *The Manichaean Body* (2000), a book in which Jason BeDuhn shows the importance of bodily processes in a religion generally regarded as if it were, literally, disembodied (and whose parallels and possible historical connections to Jainism, another religion more often than not regarded as immaterial, deserve close scrutiny).

Traditions

A comprehensive survey of the work carried out by North American scholars on the main religious traditions would be beyond the competence of anyone. What follows constitutes, accordingly, only an arbitrary sample, which, like those found in the preceding sections, has been determined by the interests of the author of this essay.

Hinduism. Because of their complexity and continuity, the religions of India have exercised a continuous fascination on scholars of religion, including those who have devoted themselves to comparative or theoretical pursuits.

Confronted with such vastness, one can do little more than refer to Michael Witzel's work on Vedic religion, some of which is available online; Brian Smith's studies of Indian symbolism and classificatory systems; Frits Staal's research on ritual and science; Patrick Olivelle's many publications on renunciation; Wendy Doniger's work on mythology; Ann Gold's books on pilgrimage; David Kinsley's, Kathleen Erndl's, Tracy Pintchman's, and Rachel McDermott's work on the goddess tradition; Alf Hiltebeitel's research on the epics; Edward Dimock's and June McDaniel's work on Bengali traditions; John Hawley's and David Haberman's studies of *bhakti*. Finally, the author looks forward to reading Frederick Smith's *The Self Possessed: Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asian Literature and Civilization* (2006), a book that is likely to provoke a lively controversy among Indologists.

Because of the interest in issues of definition, current discussions about the validity of the concept of 'Hinduism' deserve special attention. In dealing with this issue, we find that, as is the case with 'religion' itself, 'Hinduism' is regarded by some scholars—such as Brian Smith in *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion* (1989)—as a category imposed by outsiders. A necessary corrective to this and similar views has been provided by David Lorenzen, a scholar based at the Colegio de México, who, in addition to work in Spanish, has made major English-language contributions to our knowledge of Śaivism—*The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas* (1972)—and, as author, translator and editor, to the study of the *bhakti* tradition, especially in its *nirguṇī* variant: *Bhakti Religion in North India* (1995), and *Praises to a Formless God* (1996). In 'Who invented Hinduism?' (1999), Lorenzen argues that the beginning of Hinduism can be traced back to the period of the early Puranas, between 300 and 600 CE. More specifically, he shows that the beliefs, gods, and practices described during the British colonial rule are already found in accounts written by Portuguese missionaries since the early sixteenth century, and later in those written by Spanish, Italian, British, and German ones. Already in 1973, in 'The Word 'Hindu' in Gaudiya Vaisnava Texts', an article not cited by Lorenzen, Joseph O'Connell showed that Bengali devotees of Krishna saw themselves as 'Hindus', as Gaudiya Vaisnava texts refer to 'the Hindus' (*hindu-gana*), 'Hindu practices' (*hindura ācāra*), 'god of the Hindu(s)' (*hindura debatāra*), 'God of the Hindu(s)' (*hindura īśvara*), 'Hindu scripture' (*hindu-śāstra*), 'Hindu law (or custom)' (*hindu-dharma*), among several others.

There was a time, not too long ago, when religious traditions, such as Hinduism, could be discussed in the classroom without regard for the opinions of those who considered themselves 'Hindus'. Now it is likely that some students in a course devoted to the religious traditions of South Asia were born in India or come from families that migrated to North America in the last few decades. The presence of such students frequently enriches the discussion, as they can provide concrete examples about ritual practices—either their own or, more frequently, their parents' or grandparents'. On the other hand, because of the

Western expectations concerning the self-contained nature of religions—or, more frequently, ‘faiths’—combined with a tendency to romanticize a culture with which they may be only fleetingly acquainted, students may have a reified understanding of what ‘Hinduism’ ought to be, or may have the tendency to regard a text such as the *Bhagavad Gītā* as the equivalent of the Christian gospels. Far more contentious is the situation when books written by Western Indologists are regarded as disrespectful of Hindu deities, holy men, or Hinduism in general—witness the attacks on Paul Courtright’s *Gaṇeśa* (1985) or on Jeffrey Kripal’s book on Ramakrishna, *Kālī’s Child* (1995), not to mention agitated online discussions concerning Wendy Doniger and Michael Witzel.

An attempt to do justice to the routinely neglected views of Indian scholars concerning the so-called Aryan invasion of the Indian subcontinent is found in Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture* (2001); while in ‘Autochthonous Aryans?’ (2001), Witzel convincingly defends the non-autochthonous position. More recently, linguists, philologists, archaeologists, and historians have addressed this issue in *The Indo-Aryan Controversy*, edited by Bryant and Laurie Patton (2005). Since the debates about the Aryan invasion are an aspect the ongoing controversies concerning the Indo-European homeland, the very existence of the Indo-Europeans, and, in terms of the politics of scholarship, the political sympathies of Georges Dumézil, in which the main North American participant has been Bruce Lincoln, it may be worth recalling—not for the first and perhaps not for the last time—the *cri de cœur* of Bernard Sergent, a man of the left: ‘*on peut être indo-européaniste sans être le moins du monde nazi*’ (*Les Indo-Européens*, 1995: 12). It may be added that despite the political controversies surrounding them, Indo-European studies continue to be pursued in the United States: after Jaan Puhvel’s *Comparative Mythology* (1987) Roger Woodard’s *Indo-European Sacred Space* (2006) has appeared in a series that has Lincoln among the members of its editorial board.

Buddhism and Jainism. Buddhism is one of the religions whose study continues to flourish. Most historical periods, regions and aspects of this, the oldest of the world religions—including Buddhism in North America—are being studied in books, articles and conferences, the Buddhist Studies section being one of the most important units of the American Academy of Religion (AAR). It would be impossible even to list the main scholars who have contributed to this study, from anthropologists such as Stanley Tambiah, author of a trilogy devoted to Thailand—*Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in Northeast Thailand* (1970), *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets* (1984)—and, more recently, on the political role of the sangha in his native Sri Lanka—*Buddhism Betrayed?* (1992)—to Buddhologists. Among the latter we may mention Steven Collins, whose expertise in textual studies and in social theory can be seen at work in *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities* (1998); at the other end of Asia, we may mention John McRae, author of *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism* (1986) and *Seeing through*

Zen (2003); and Jan Nattier, who engages in the kind of research in Inner Asian Buddhism that one used to associate with Friedrich Weller and, more recently, with Paul Zieme and Werner Sundermann. Special mention must be made of Gregory Schopen, who in a number of articles, now collected in three volumes—*Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks* (1997), *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters* (2004), *Figments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India* (2005)—has approached Buddhism from the ground up, making use of traditional texts, but also of epigraphy and archaeological research in order to study how actual Buddhists, especially monks, have lived and died. Other important contributors have been Luis Gómez, who ranges over the whole field of Buddhist studies, and Donald Lopez, as much in his own work, which encompasses textual exegesis and ideological analysis, as in his indefatigable editorial activities, a recent example of which is *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism* (2005).

Before moving away from the study of Buddhism, reference must be made to two trends that are sometimes regarded as antithetical. One of them is the frequently thankless task of editing and translating texts, which is once again receiving the support it deserves. The other involves exercises in reflexivity. In regard to the first, it must be said that even while being aware of the need to move beyond the fetishization of the text, one must recognize that without access to written documents as well as to translations it is impossible to develop one's theories or even to engage in the denunciation of 'Orientalist' misdeeds. Therefore, one must be thankful for the many previously untranslated texts found in the 'Princeton Readings in Religion', published under the general editorship of Donald Lopez, and for the Treasury of the Buddhist Sciences series of translations, edited by Robert Thurman and published by Columbia University Press. In regard to the second task, one must welcome, despite the unavoidable exaggerations, the exercises in reflexivity in which scholars of various Asian traditions are currently engaging, as well as their overturning of myths about the peaceful nature of Asian 'spirituality'. In the case of Buddhism, attention should be drawn to the already mentioned *Curators of the Buddha*; to Brian Victoria's *Zen at War* (1997/2006), and to a number of articles by William Bodiford, Nam-lin Hur, and Christopher Ives, on the legitimizing functions of Buddhism and Shinto, published in the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. Yet, indispensable as it is, reflexivity may become merely a reflex: one more commodity demanded by the academic market. One would be tempted to understand from this perspective some of the English-language work produced by Bernard Faure in the early 1990s, were it not for the fact that the overabundance of theorists' names in *The Rhetoric of Immediacy* (1991) and in *Chan Insights and Oversights* (1993), contrasts with their complete absence in the books the same author wrote in French just a few years earlier, such as *La volonté d'orthodoxie dans le bouddhisme chinois* (1987) and *Le bouddhisme Ch'an en mal d'histoire* (1989). Similarly, the verbal

antinomianism and the fashionable claim that his is ‘no more than a story, as opposed to a history’ (1991: 364), are more than made up for by the author’s old-fashioned erudition as well as by his no less old-fashioned recognition—however wordy and double-tongued—that there is an ‘object’ somewhere:

Although it is true [*sic*] that scholars tend to project surreptitiously their own thought categories on their object of study, one can also hope that, *par la force des choses*, the resilient object—here the Chan tradition—in turn projects its structures onto the theoretical approach.

(1993: 151)

In any event, as one moves from the volumes published in 1991 and 1993 to the already mentioned *The Red Thread* and then to *The Power of Denial*, the rhetoric of undecidability, while not absent, diminishes considerably.

In the case of Japanese Buddhism, for many years the focus of scholarly attention was Zen. This is understandable, since, contrary to some current hypercritical views, Western scholars who study religions other than Christianity tend to look for religious phenomena that least resemble those found in the normative versions of the tradition in which they grew up. This understandable tendency is intensified when, for political and other reasons, members of the scholar’s culture seek to express their dissatisfaction by making use of the spiritual resources that exotic cultures seem to offer. Much as Zen fulfilled those needs, the fulfillment of Western needs led to the disregard on the part of Western scholars of the forms of religion that were actually popular in Japan. In *Interpreting Amida* (1997), Galen Amstutz has chronicled the process whereby, without forgetting work by Alfred Bloom and James Dobbins, Pure Land Buddhism became neglected by Western scholars.

Older than Buddhism, Jainism never became a world religion, nor has it become the subject of widespread scholarly interest. Studied for many years as a purely textual entity, Jainism has been approached more recently in a manner that does justice to the actual lives of its members. Among the works devoted to Jainism reference should be made to Padmanabh Jaini’s *The Jaina Path of Purification* (1979), to John Cort’s *Jains in the World* (2001), and to ‘Candabala’s Tears’, a recent essay in which Whitney Kelting studies the role played by emotion in this tradition, emotion having been usually assumed to be antithetical to Jainism.

Chinese religion. As is also the case with Buddhism, Jainism, Indian religions in general and, as we shall see, even Christianity, Chinese ‘lived’, ‘popular’, ‘local’, ‘folk’, ‘common’ religion is now increasingly the focus of scholarly research. We can refer to work by Daniel Overmyer and David Jordan (the latter on Taiwan), Stephen Teiser, Robert Weller, P. Steven Sangren, Edward Davis, and Robert Hymes. Valuable if read by themselves, some of the essays found in *Unruly Gods*, edited by Meir Shahar and Robert Weller (1996), acquire

even more significance if considered in conjunction with the pieces on Hinduism collected by Alf Hiltebeitel in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees* (1989). The debate regarding not just the manner in which the various components of Chinese religion relate to each other—on which see Timothy Brook, ‘Rethinking Syncretism’ (1993)—but also what those components are is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. In any case, there is no agreement as to the relation between the traditional ‘Three Teachings’ and ‘popular religion’, on the one hand, and ‘state religion’, on the other. To complicate an already complicated situation, in *Manufacturing Confucianism* (1997) Lionel Jensen has maintained that one of those components was indeed ‘manufactured’—Confucius by Jesuit missionaries and Kongzi by the Chinese themselves. In any case, there is no East Asian equivalent of ‘Hinduism’, and, as a result, ‘Chinese religion’ cannot (yet?) serve as a means of asserting one’s cultural identity, despite the occasional journalistic references to the role played by Confucianism in the economic prowess of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, and Singapore. It may be mentioned, however, that the author of this essay had the fortune of having a student born in China, who, instead of improperly defining herself as ‘Daoist’, ‘Buddhist’ or ‘Confucian’, would say in a purely descriptive manner, ‘I am Chinese religion’—the expression being used, it should be stressed, not because of any linguistic insufficiencies on her part, but rather in the same manner in which one could say ‘I am Christian’ or ‘Muslim’ or ‘Buddhist’.

Daoism. For years, all one could find in English about Daoism, other than translations of the *Daodejing*, was Welch’s *Taoism: The Parting of the Way* (1957); a number of Creel’s essays, collected in *What is Taoism?* (1970); and a couple of collective volumes, including *Facets of Taoism*, edited by Welch and Anna Seidel (1979). The situation has changed radically, so that now, in addition to the uninterrupted flow of translations of the *Laozi*, one has access to a large number of studies. They include the indispensable *Daoism Handbook*, edited by Livia Kohn (2000), many of whose contributors are based in the United States (which is not the case with the contributors to *The Taoist Canon*, 2004); Kohn is also the author of *Daoism and Chinese Culture* (2001), one of the several overviews of this tradition now available. Less an overview than an often polemical attempt to rethink the field of Daoist studies is Russell Kirkland’s *Taoism, The Enduring Tradition* (2004). Seeking to counteract generalized misconceptions about the connection between the *Daodejing* and the entire Daoist tradition, he writes:

for the most part, *Taoists* throughout history modelled their lives on the teachings found in the *Tao te ching* and the *Chuang-tzu* to about the same extent that Christians, from the time of Jesus’s crucifixion to the present day, have modelled their lives on the teachings contained in Jesus’s parables.

(2004: 69)

Kirkland points out that Daoism is not to be equated with popular religion or with Chinese millenarianism, while also rejecting ‘Confucian falsehoods’ about rulers who supported Daoism being ‘befuddled or gullible’ (145). Justified as it is, Kirkland’s emphasis on the legitimizing functions of Daoism seems to imply that scholars have paid undue attention to the popular and, *a fortiori*, the utopian aspects of this tradition; if taken too far, this position would be similar to that of a historian of Christendom, who, aware of the intimate connections between Christianity and royal power from the days of Constantine to the French Revolution—not to mention the contemporary United States—were to advise against paying attention to the movements, generally labeled as heretical, that sought to return to what these supposed heretics understood to be the message of the gospels.

Despite the awareness that the *Daodejing* does not stand for the whole Daoist tradition, the work attributed to Laozi continues to be translated into English; some of these are translations of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts discovered in 1973—Robert Henricks (1989), Victor Mair (1990)—and of the Guodian bamboo slip manuscripts found in 1993, which contains only thirty-one chapters—Henricks (2000). The text also continues to be the subject of radically different interpretations. A recent example of this can be found in the contributions of Mark Csiskzentmihalyi and Harold Roth to the volume edited by the former and Philip Ivanhoe, *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi* (1999). A defender of a mystical interpretation of the *Daodejing*, Roth has rendered into English the ‘*Neiye*’ chapter of the *Guanzi—Original Tao* (1999)—a translation that like those undertaken by Kohn, *The Taoist Experience* (1993), and Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (1997), helps to enrich one’s understanding of this tradition. It may be added that after the publication of Griet Vankeerberghen’s *The Huainanzi and Liu An’s Claim to Moral Authority* (2001), perhaps a group of English-speaking Sinologists may wish to follow the French example and translate the *Huainanzi*, available in its entirety in French in a *Pléiade* volume since 2003 but only partially available in English.

Christianity. A proper consideration of work on Christianity would require discussing, in addition to work on this religion, the scholarship on the religious aspects of the world within which Christianity emerged; the process of conversion, then and now; and Gnosticism, a trend that is sometimes considered as an aspect of Christianity and sometimes as an independent religion. On the first issue reference must be made to Ramsay MacMullen’s work, which for decades has contributed to our understanding of the Roman world and of the Christianization of that world: *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (1981), *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (1984), and *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (1997)—books which, besides the expected primary sources as well as philological and historical studies, contain a wealth of references to epigraphic and archaeological studies, sources similar to those

used by Schopen in his work on Buddhism. (To the list we should add a book not yet seen: *Voting about God in Early Church Councils*, 2006.) In terms of conversion to Christianity in the ancient world, reference must be made to Zeba Crook's *Reconceptualising Conversion* (2004), a study that, instead of engaging in the usual exegesis of canonical texts, forces us to look at all-too-familiar texts from a different angle. Crook approaches Paul's 'conversion', not in the usual psychological-cum-spiritual terms, but rather from the perspective of the patron-client relations prevalent in the Mediterranean world. Modern developments are studied in *Conversions to Christianity*, edited by Robert Hefner (1993), and in *Conversion to Modernities*, edited by Peter van der Veer (1996). While in *Rethinking 'Gnosticism'* (1996), Michael Williams had proposed replacing that term by 'Biblical demiurgical myth', in *What is Gnosticism?* (2003), Karen King proposes to abandon thinking in terms of heresy and orthodoxy, of origins and essence, and focus instead on practice. Whether King's views will be accepted remains to be seen; in any event, one looks forward to reading Birger Pearson's *Ancient Gnosticism* announced for early 2007, where a response—implicit or explicit—to King is likely to be found.

Traditionally, the history of Christianity has been synonymous with Church history or with the history of theology. That has finally changed, and now a growing body of scholars understand Christianity for what it is: a polymorphous body of beliefs and, above all, practices, which are as related to the presumed teachings of a first century Galilean holy man, as the varieties of Daoism are to the enigmatic sayings of the *Daodejing*—in fact, the parallels between the deification of Laozi, studied by Anna Seidel and Kohn, and that of Jesus, shed light on the promotion of superhuman agents at the expense of metaphysical principles, not to mention teachings about morality. Awareness of the multifariousness of Christianity has led a growing number of scholars to concentrate on the study of the lived forms of this religion—for example, in volumes such as *Religious Orthodoxy and Popular Faith in European Society*, edited by Ellen Badone (1990), and in general histories, such as *A People's History of Christianity*, published by Fortress Press. Common practices sometimes considered as belonging to the realm of magic or superstition rather than religion have received renewed scholarly attention. Work on early Christian magic cannot be undertaken without awareness of the studies on magical practices in the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean by Piotr Michalowski, Robert Ritner, David Frankfurter, and Christopher Faraone. Mention should also be made of two series on magic published by Penn State University Press and the University of Pennsylvania Press. Regarding early Christianity, see the translation of Coptic texts collected by Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic* (1994). Some of the most important discussions of this issue include Morton Smith's *Jesus the Magician* (1978/1998) and David Aune's 'Magic in Early Christianity' (1980). Smith's work has

generated controversy, some of which is not entirely free from apologetic tendencies; see, for example, Susan Garrett, 'Light on a Dark Subject and Vice-Versa: Magic and Magicians in the New Testament' (1989). In terms of work on magic, we may refer to Richard Kieckhefer's overview, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (1989), and to his theoretical discussion, 'The Specific Rationality of Medieval Magic' (1994). Concerning relics, Patrick Geary's *Furta sacra* (1978/1990), dealing as it does with the power attributed to stolen relics, forces one to think about the uncertain boundaries between religion and morality, serving as a reminder of the fact that *virtus* refers to both power and 'virtue' in the everyday sense of the word (much as does Chinese *de*, familiar from the *Daodejing*; consider, too, the interaction between Japanese *dōtoku* and *kudoku*, as discussed in Ian Reader's and George Tanabe's *Practically Religious*, 1998). Similarly, 'superstition', a term frequently employed in a manner that replicates normative clerical usage, has been the subject of Dale Martin's *Inventing Superstition* (2004). That an inquisitorial attitude is still in use can be seen in the 'Introductory Interpretative Essay' to the translation of Marguerite Porete's *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, published by the University of Notre Dame Press (1999). There the translators write with enviable confidence about what constitutes 'genuine mysticism' (p. lxxi); they pretend to know what spiritual abilities the author of the *Mirror* possessed (p. lxxxvi), while also purporting to honor Marguerite for dying 'for what she believed to be true' (p. lxxxvii). A sympathetic treatment of the woman burned to death on 1 June 1310 can be found in Joanne Robinson's *Nobility and Annihilation in Marguerite Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls* (2001); in fact, Robinson is eager to defend Marguerite against not unjustified charges of spiritual elitism (p. 14).

Exceptional in the field of medieval and of early modern Christianity on both sides of the Atlantic is Richard Trexler's work. Some of his studies have been collected in two volumes of essays, *Church and Community (1200–1600)* (1987) and *Religion in Social Context in Europe and America, 1200–1700* (2002). Scholars interested in the theory of religion would do well to pay attention to Trexler's work, at the very least to theoretical essays such as 'Reverence and Profanity in the Study of Early Modern Religion' (1984/2002) and to *Gender Rhetorics: Postures of Dominance and Submission in History* (1994), a volume edited by Trexler. Having mentioned work on both sides of the Atlantic, one may also refer to Sabine McCormack, who, after working on Late Antiquity, turned her attention to the Andean world a millennium later. In regard to explicitly comparative studies involving Late Antiquity and the New World, mention must be made of *Plagues, Priests and Demons* (2005), a book in which Daniel Reff studies the parallels between the Christianization of the Mediterranean world and that of New Spain, in a manner that takes into account the role of epidemics.

In regard to Latin America, Christian and non-Christian, we may begin with Lawrence Sullivan's immense attempt at synthesis, *Icanchu's Drum* (1988).

One cannot but be impressed by Sullivan's ambition, insights, and command of the literature on South American religion, but the book all but collapses under the 'meaning' that the author seems to be able to find everywhere, from the heights of the Andes to the depths of the Amazonian rain forest to his own writing: 'This book is not only full of images and symbols, originating in South America, but as a written corpus, it represents a powerful and symbolic mode of being in both literate and nonliterate cultures. A book becomes a world unto itself . . .' (p. 110, cf. p. 551). Less centered on meaning, despite the use of the misleading term 'spirituality' in the title, are the contributions found in *South and Meso-American Native Spirituality*, edited by Gary Gossen (1993). Other collections of studies dealing with myth, ritual, and symbolism in Latin America are *The Power of Symbols*, edited by N. Ross Crumrine and Marjorie Halpin (1983); *Animal Myths and Metaphors in South America*, edited by Gary Urton (1985); *Rethinking History and Myth* (1988), already mentioned; and *Native Religions and Cultures of Central and South America*, edited by L. Sullivan (2002). Aztec and Inca expansionism is studied in Geoffrey Conrad and Arthur Demarest, *Religion and Empire* (1984); while crucial components of Andean religion, such as sacrifice and pilgrimage, have been studied in *Ritual Sacrifice in Ancient Peru*, edited by Elizabeth Benson and Anita Cook (2001), and in *Ritual and Pilgrimage in the Andes*, edited by Brian Bauer and Charles Stanish (2001).

From among the scholars who deal with religion in Latin America during the colonial, republican, and contemporary periods, we may mention Frank Graziano, who has written a history of millenarianism, *The Millennial New World* (1999), of Santa Rosa of Lima, the continent's first official saint, *Wounds of Love* (2004), and, most recently, a study of non-canonized saints across the continent (the process of popular canonization being remarkably similar to what one finds in China), *Cultures of Devotion* (2006). After authoring books on religion in Italy and on Irish pilgrimage—*Madonnas that Maim* (1992), *Veiled Threats* (1996), and *Irish Pilgrimage* (1999)—Michael Carroll has studied the contested border between the United States and Mexico in *The Penitente Brotherhood* (2002). In *Crossing and Dwelling* (2006), Thomas Tweed takes the rituals of citizens of another borderland, Cuban exiles in Florida, as the point of departure for a theory that sees religions as 'confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries'. Work on Brazil includes Robert Levine's study of the Canudos movement, *Vale of Tears* (1992), and Todd Diacon's sociologically astute study of the early twentieth century Contestado rebellion, *Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality* (1991). In *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods* (2002) Paul Christopher Johnson has studied Brazilian Candomblé. Finally, reference must be made to Daniel Levine's work on religion and politics in Latin America, and to the process of conversion to Protestantism, one of the most significant

transformations in the history of the continent. This has been studied in David Stoll, *Is Latin America turning Protestant?* (1990); in the essays found in *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America*, edited by Virginia Garrard-Burnett and David Stoll (1993); as well as in those collected in *Latin American Religion in Motion*, edited by Christian Smith and Joshua Prokopy (1999).

This essay will conclude as it began, by dealing with the issue of boundaries, geographical and disciplinary. In *Hosay Trinidad* (2003), Frank Korom traces the Shi'i Muharran ritual from Iran to South Asia and from there to the Caribbean; in so doing, he addresses from various disciplinary perspectives the issues whose insoluble character led to the appearance of religions: identity, violence, maintenance, and transformation.

NOTE

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10 Latin America¹

Steven Engler, Anatlilde Idoyaga Molina, Renée de la Torre, Paulo Barrera Rivera, and Sylvia Marcos*

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* Steven Engler wrote the Introduction, Conclusion, and the section on Brazil, Anatlilde Idoyaga Molina the section on Argentina, Renée de la Torre the section on Mexico, Paulo Barrera Rivera the section on Peru, and Sylvia Marcos the section on gender.

THIS CHAPTER OFFERS A SELECTIVE overview of certain major themes, trends, and figures in the academic study of religion in Latin America. It is not comprehensive, and it is primarily descriptive rather than evaluative, indicating a few facets of a more complex whole. The fact that Brazil, México, Argentina, and Peru are highlighted merely reflects the limitations of space and time, the vagaries of communication, and the busy schedules of scholars who were invited to contribute but were unable to do so. Important work is also being done in other countries within Latin America.

Intraregional divisions and interregional connections

There is increasing international communication and cooperation among scholars of religion in Latin America, in large part due to conferences of regional professional associations, especially the Asociación Latinoamericana para el Estudio de las Religiones (ALER) and the Asociación de Cientistas Sociales de la Religión en el Mercosur (ACSRM).

As elsewhere, the work presented at these congresses varies, but the best work is on a par with that encountered at major North American and Western European conferences, for example that of the Société Internationale de Sociologie des Religions (SISR/ISSR). The panels and sessions are often more focused than, for example, those of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in North America. A key reason for this is the greater emphasis on movements and developments that are specifically religious, which reflects the incredibly rich landscape of religious material to study, the relative lack of people and resources to do much more than address the most obvious topics, and the related lack of emphasis on theory and on diffuse phenomena like implicit religion and 'religion and/in X'.

Despite these and other venues for interaction, and despite increasing use of e-mail and the Internet to foster international communication and collaboration, inter-regional connections among scholars in the field remain relatively weak. Scholars in the southern nations of South America remain relatively disconnected from those in the northern part of the continent and from those in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. This is due to the geographical and cultural distances involved, and to the usual constraints on time, energy, and resources. Latin American scholars also face additional pressures, when compared to many North American and Western European scholars, given both the generally greater need for political maneuvering to defend university programs and positions, and the difficulties of soliciting funds from often haphazard sources in the face of a relative neglect of the humanities and social sciences.

Argentina

There has never been a department or faculty of the history or study of religion in Argentina. The proliferation of public and private universities in the latter half of the twentieth century resulted in no departments, research programs, or positions specific to such a 'field'. The study of religious phenomena unites different individuals and research groups from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. A key moment was the establishment of programs in sociology and anthropology at the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA) in the 1950s.

Important for scientific investigation in all areas was the creation, in the 1950s, of the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET). CONICET continues to promote investigation in three ways: it funds a number of stable positions, the Carrera del Investigador Científico, allowing Argentina's top researchers to work from any university in the country; it supports the creation of active research units, centers, and institutes; and it funds research projects, generally within existing CONICET units in the country's universities.

Sociology

Sociological interest in religion took shape around Floreal Forni, CONICET researcher and professor at UBA who led a seminar on 'Sociology of Religions'. Forni set up a team of investigators at CONICET's Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Laborales (CEIL), with affiliates in other universities (Forni *et al.* 2003). This group has studied institutionalized religions, especially churches as institutions and new religious movements, including institutional Catholicism, various evangelical churches and Pentecostal groups in Argentina, the charismatic renewal, and, to a lesser extent, Umbanda and other Afro-Argentinian groups. It has also studied popular Catholicism, for example fiestas dedicated to saints venerated by the migrant population of the interior of the country and the emergence of non-canonical saints. A central figure in the group is Fortunato Mallimaci, a professor at UBA and director of CEIL/CONICET's, Society, Culture and Religion area, which publishes the journal *Sociedade y Religión*. He has also forged international research networks, especially with France's École des Hautes Études. Other important researchers include Joaquín Algranti, Aldo Ameigeiras, Abelardo Soneira, and Juan Esquivel.

More recent groups include that led by Alejandro Frigerio and Marita Carozzi, both CONICET investigators at the Universidad Católica Argentina, which has published studies of Pentecostal groups, Afro-Argentinian worship,

and the New Age movement in Buenos Aires (e.g. Frigerio and Carozzi 1993; Frigerio and Oro 1998; Carozzi 2001). The group has strong relations with Brazilian researchers through the Asociación de Cientistas Sociales de la Religión en el Mercosur (ACSRM) and publishes the journal *Ciencias Sociales y Religión*.

Anthropology

The emergence of anthropological studies of religion was rooted in field work with indigenous groups and in rural Creole and half-caste societies. From the 1920s into the 1960s, the myths of Argentina's indigenous cultures, especially in the Gran Chaco, were compiled and published, generally without analysis and with some information on religious beliefs (Metraux 1939; Palavecino 1935, 1940). Folklore studies of rural, Creole, and half-caste populations focused on the beliefs, 'superstitions', and rituals of popular Catholicism (Cortazar 1948; Vivante 1953; Ambrosetti 1971).

A significant change in the study of the indigenous cultures of Latin America materialized towards the end of the 1960s in the Instituto de Antropología de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, with a group investigating the broader cultural contexts of myth and ritual. Led by Marcelo Bórmida (see 1969–1970), the group created the Centro Argentino de Etnología Americana (CAEA), a unit of CONICET, which publishes the journals *Scripta Ethnologica* and *Mitologicas*. Thematic interests include myth, native cosmologies, ritual, and notions of power (in the phenomenological sense). The predominant methodological stance draws on Husserl's phenomenology and hermeneutical theories. CAEA has also studied the evangelization of indigenous societies, related adaptative strategies and religious change, and messianic movements. Prominent contributions include the work of Edgardo Cordeu (e.g. 1974, 2004), Alejandra Siffredi (1984, 2002), José Braunstein (1974, 1990), Pablo Wright (1984, 1994) and Anatilde Idoyaga Molina (1985, 1999, 2000). New lines of investigation examine relations between the medical and religious fields, including New Age, yoga, reiki, shiatsu, and ritual therapies among evangelicals, Pentecostals, Catholic and Afro-Argentinian groups (e.g. Saizar 2005; Korman 2005; Bordes 2006; Barrón 2004; Idoyaga Molina 2004; Idoyaga Molina and Luxardo 2004).

UBA's Instituto de Ciencias Antropológicas is also home to the Centro de Antropología Especiales, founded by Edgardo Cordeu and Alejandra Siffredi, which studies, among other issues, the indigenous societies of the Gran Chaco (Briones 2003; Ludueña 1998; Spadafora 1995). Pablo Wright has played an important role in shaping the careers of younger investigators, such as Cesar Ceriani Cernadas, Catón Eduardo Carini, and Silvia Citro. Currently, research into contemporary urban issues, for example New Age and Internet sects, has taken precedence over qualitative studies and hermeneutic approaches.

Work outside the UBA has addressed a number of issues: theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of indigenous societies; popular Catholicism, including beliefs and rituals regarding souls, the dead, the devil, and popular saints; the Pachamama (Mother Earth); rituals linked to the reproduction of the livestock; and the Inca presence in the Argentine northwest. The contributions of several scholars stand out: Cristina Krause (Universidad Nacional de San Juan) (1994, 2000), Ángel Cerutti (Universidad Nacional del Comahue) (Cerutti and Pita 1999), Luis Amaya (Universidad de Belgrano) (1996), Silvia García (Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Pensamiento Latinoamericano, de la Secretaría de Cultura de la Nación) (1984), Susana Gómez (Instituto Universitario Nacional del Arte) (2004), Cristina Bianchetti (Universidad Católica de Salta) (1995, 1996), Constanza Ceruti (CONICET) (1999, 2003) and Claudia Forgione (Universidad del Salvador) (1990, 1996).

Philosophy

Significant work is being done in the philosophy of religion (Ferrara 2005; Balzer 1988, 2000). At the Universidad de Quilmes, religious philosophy has developed in relation to studies on human rights. The Universidad del Salvador has a research center and Chair of Oriental Studies, largely due to the work of the Jesuit Fr. Quiles (1984, 1987), which is producing important work on Buddhism (Dragonetti and Tola 2002, 2004) as well as translations of and commentaries on eastern texts.

Brazil

The emergence and development of the study of religions

The study of religion in Brazil begins with the texts and images of those who were fascinated by indigenous and Afro-Brazilian cultures, from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries: colonists, travelers, priests, missionaries, ethnographers, folklorists, and novelists. The social sciences were established late in Brazil (e.g. Buarque de Holanda 1999 [1936], Rodrigues 2004 [1932], 1935 [1900]). In the 1930s, French, Italian, and German university missions jump-started Brazil's university system, creating the University of São Paulo (USP) in 1934. The French contribution was crucial, bringing to Brazil a series of young scholars who would later become influential in their respective fields, such as historian Fernand Braudel, geographer Pierre Monbeig, and 'sociologist' Claude Lévi-Strauss, replaced in 1937 by Roger Bastide, who stayed until 1954 (cf. Bastide 1960).

The social scientific study of religion emerged even later, a delay with complex roots. The motto on Brazil's flag, 'Order and Progress', reflects the prominent place of positivism in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Brazilian intellectual circles. In the 1960s, Marxist analyses and the influence of Lévi-Strauss became prominent. Beginning in the 1950s, many churches saw the humanities and social sciences as means of understanding themselves and their place in society, and of claiming a certain legitimacy in the public sphere. As the study of religions was beginning to be consolidated in the late 1970s and early 1980s, its development was hampered by the repressive actions of the military dictatorship (1964–1985). Religion was often associated with anti-government stances and repressed, especially given the then-prominent role of liberation theology as a counter-ideology.

Major ideas and problems

Not surprisingly, given the richness of the religious landscape, Brazilian scholars of religion tend to focus on the study of religious phenomena in their own country. The study of millennial movements was a foundational theme in the social scientific study of Brazilian religion (Queiroz 1965; Monteiro 1974). Valuable work has also been done on popular Catholicism (e.g. Brandão 1993; Pereira 2006), including religious festivities (Magnani 2003; Pereira and Camurça 2003), pilgrimage and 'religious tourism' (e.g. Steil 1996; Abumanssur [ed.] 2003), as well as the rapid growth of charismatic Catholicism (Machado 1996; Prandi 1997).

Brazilian research on Afro-Brazilian religions is, of course, rich and essential (e.g. Birman 1995; Prandi 2005; Bernardo 2003). Closely related to this work is a rich literature on syncretism, *mestiçagem*, and hybridity (e.g. Ferretti 1995, Sanchis [ed.] 2001).

Two other important Brazilian religions have prompted significant research. The French Spiritualism of Alain Kardec has put down strong middle-class roots in Brazil, as Espiritismo or Kardecismo (Camargo 1961; Giumbelli 1997; Stoll 2003). It was a key influence in the emergence of Umbanda, a uniquely Brazilian mixture of Afro-Christian traditions and Spiritualism (e.g. Montero 1985; Negrão 1996).

The study of religious aspects of indigenous cultures has been particularly strong. Egon Schaden (1913–1991) is the foundational figure. (European scholars also did important work, above all Curt Unkel [1883–1945] and Alfred Métraux [1902–1963].) Other important figures include Eduardo Galvão, Herbert Baldus, Darcy Ribeiro, Florestan Fernandes, Roberto Da Matta, Eduardo Viveiros De Castro, Dominique Gallois, and Renate Vietler.

Beginning in the late 1970s, a series of key works by Brazilian Protestant historians drew attention to the importance of Protestantism in the country's past and developed nuanced typologies of the emerging forms (e.g. Cesar 1973; Alves 1979). Valuable sociological studies have been published in a number of related areas: evangelicalism and neo-Pentecostalism (e.g. Campos 1999; Mafra 2001); Pentecostal growth at the expense of Catholicism (Campos 1996; Birman and Leite 2000); the Pentecostal 'war' with Afro-Brazilian religions (Soares 1993; Oro 1997); and the political roles of evangelicals and Pentecostals (Sylvestre 1988; Burity and Machado 2005).

The recognition of the growth of Pentecostalism turned scholarly attention beyond Catholicism, especially in the early 1990s. The late 1990s saw increasing recognition of the broader range of religions in their country: Judaism (Topel 2003; M. Carneiro 2001); Buddhism and the religions of Japanese immigrants in Brazil (e.g. Oro 2000; Usarski [ed.] 2002); Hinduism and related New Religious Movements (NRMs) (Guerriero 2000); the New Age movement (Magnani 2000; Amaral 2000); Brazilian NRMs that make ritual use of the drug ayahuasca, that is Santo Daime, Barquinha, and the Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal (e.g. Araujo 1999; Labate and Araújo [eds] 2002); and NRMs more generally (Albuquerque 2004; Guerriero 2006). There has been a recent wave of popular books on Islam, but relatively little scholarly work has been done on Islam in Brazil. A few important works explicitly consider religious pluralism, among them Bittencourt Filho (2003) and Teixeira and Menezes (2006).

A few examples will have to suffice of important work in other areas. Brazilian scholars have made especially strong contributions to the analysis of relations between media and religion, often with an emphasis on marketing strategies (Frigerio and Oro 1998; Campos 1999). Explicit discussions of relations between gender and religion are relatively infrequent in the Brazilian literature (but see, e.g. Rosado-Nunes 2000; Bernardo 2003). Statistical analyses of demographic trends are producing valuable results, including detailed work with regional variation, based on the 2000 IGBE census returns (Jacob *et al.* 2003, 2006) and analyses of surveys, which show a dramatic rise in people with 'religiosity' but 'no religion' (S. R. A. Fernandes 2006). Among rare work on science and religion is USP psychologist Geraldo Paiva's study of the religious views of Brazilian scientists (2000). Theological views of science are often explicit in research in this area (Cruz 2004; Marino 2005). Besides Paiva, João Edênio Reis Valle is a key figure in psychology of religion. The new Centro 'Cardeal Arns' de Estudos Interdisciplinares (CECREI), at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, shows promising signs of invigorating the social scientific study of relations between religion, science, biotechnology, and economics (online at <www.pucsp.br/cecrei>).

Institutionalization

Religious studies in Brazil is a small but growing field. Several recent collections of papers have brought the work of top scholars together under the rubric of *ciências da religião*, contributing to the consolidation of the field (e.g. B. M. Souza and Martino [ed.] 2004; Manoel and Freitas [ed.] 2006; and Usarski [ed.] forthcoming). A key figure in this movement and a strong advocate for the autonomy of the field is German-trained scholar Frank Usarski (2006).

There are currently three doctoral programs in *ciência(s) da religião*: Universidade Metodista de São Paulo; the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo; and Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora. Two differences from North America and Europe are the absence of undergraduate programs and the lack of emphasis on comparative study, including survey courses on 'World Religions'.

The IAHR-affiliated Associação Brasileira de História das Religiões (ABHR) is the main professional association, with important Brazilian participation in the international groups mentioned in the introduction. The Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais (Anpocs) and the Associação Brasileira de Antropologia (ABA) have working groups on religion. There are two important research centers on religion, both founded in the 1970s: the Instituto de Estudos da Religião and the Centro de Estudos da Religião (CER).

The field is only beginning to distinguish itself institutionally from theology (Engler 2006). Theology had traditionally been categorized as a sub-area of philosophy by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES), the federal agency that oversees Brazilian graduate programs. It received separate status only in the last few years. The status of *ciência(s) da religião* as an explicit sub-area of theology is currently being negotiated. This lack of disciplinary autonomy has four negative implications for the Brazilian field. First, *cientistas da religião* and theologians compete for the same small pot of grant and scholarship funding, almost always in confessional institutions. Second, some of the graduate programs in the field currently face resistance from ecclesiastically conservative administrations and colleagues. Third, very few of the faculty in departments of *ciência(s) da religião* are trained in the field: most are theologians, and some are anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, or philosophers. They produce excellent work, but a relative lack of comparative breadth is making it hard for the field to establish its identity. Fourth, theology is unique among all academic areas under CAPES jurisdiction in being granted special status, exempt from any interference in terms of criteria of curricular or research excellence. This respect for freedom of religion results in theology being seen as a pseudo-discipline within the university. *Ciência(s) da religião*, officially a sub-area

of theology, is subject to the same special status and so tarred with the same brush.

Religious studies in Brazil faces a double bind. On the one hand, the religious universities, recognizing the non-theological bent of *ciência(s) da religião*, often see the field as a threat to be contained or a competitor to be co-opted. On the other hand, the public universities reject the field as too theological. This deprives the non-theological study of religion of what would seem to be its natural home. The combination of these factors obstructs the development of the field's theoretical, methodological and institutional autonomy.

Mexico

The emergence of the study of religions

Despite the fundamental role of Catholicism in Mexican history, the birth of academic interest in the study of the religion in the country is very recent. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the emergence of a modern nation still faced ideological resistance from conservative sectors of the Catholic Church. The birth of modern nationalism caused intense conflicts, some armed, for example, the clash between Catholics and the military in the Cristero War (1926–1929). For decades, these same tensions were present in academia, in the form of tensions between conservative Catholics and liberal jacobines. This historical context permeated intellectual thought, especially that of liberals, who supported what Agustín Vaca (1998) calls 'the conspiracy of silence'. Since 1945, Catholics removed the historical gag concerning these struggles and recovered their voice and memory, writing epic novels on the role of the Catholics in national history and later denouncing the period of silence. As Jaime del Arenal (2002) puts it, 'All our twentieth-century historians were intellectual heirs of the conservative historians of the nineteenth century'. However, this history was always held in contempt by the universities, resulting in its exclusion from academic circles.

For decades, historians largely ignored the Cristero War, considering it of little relevance to the history of Mexico. In 1966, when a historian first chose this religious conflict as a dissertation topic, his advisors tried to dissuade him, considering it a matter of little importance. In 1969, at a meeting of Mexican historians, Jean Meyer stated, 'Our modern world, our history will not be intelligible until the place of religion in the life of the masses is clearly defined'. In a few years, he himself published his monumental work on *La Cristiada* (1973–1975), acclaimed by academics and general readers and inspiring many historians' interest in the topic. Only in the mid 1970s did a more objective,

academic, and scientific historiography, detached from these ideological tensions, begin to emerge, housed in institutions like El Colegio de México and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). Research into the roles of Catholics in the history of Mexico is now recognized as indispensable in understanding the construction of the modern nation, as demonstrated by the works of José Miguel Romero de Solís (1994), Roberto Blancarte (1992), Manuel Ceballos (1991), Martha Eugenia García Ugarte (1993), and Fernando González (2001), among others. Today, historians, most notably Roberto Blancarte, play a key role, not only in understanding the past, but also in analyzing the new role of laicism in contemporary Mexico.

The development of the study of religions

What we might call a religious sociology began in the 1960s and 1970s, emerging primarily from the reflections of progressive Catholic intellectuals who valued research as a resource for action. A sociology of religion emerged in the 1980s. Prominent here are socio-political analyses of Catholic institutions (Puente Luterroth 1993), of the political and social role of the Catholic Church (Reilly and de la Rosa 1985), and of the political experiences of religious movements (Arias *et al.* 1981; Concha Malo *et al.* 1986). Since these studies are generally undertaken by religious or by laypeople involved with liberation theology, they tend to focus on Catholic politics. Liberation theology has deeply influenced the theoretical conceptions and the analytical approaches of the academic study of religion in Mexico, privileging Marxist analyses and devaluing both the cultural study of popular religion and research into the customs and day-to-day lives of believers. With a few exceptions (e.g. Gilberto Giménez' [1978] work on popular piety in Anáhuac) such topics were, until very recently, considered of little relevance to the academic agenda. Since then, interest has grown in the culture of daily life as manifested in popular piety: e.g. pilgrimages (Garma and Shadow 1994), religious festivities (de la Peña and de la Torre 1990; Salles and Valenzuela 1997), and votive offerings (González Sánchez 1986).

In the 1990s the study of Catholicism's hegemony and of its presence in different spheres of secular Mexican society became a central topic of investigation, addressing not only religious actors but secular academics. Although earlier studies of Catholicism concentrated on bishops and priests (e.g. Martínez Assad [ed.] 1992; Ramos 1992), this perspective became less central. The social and political impact of the Base Communities led investigations to focus on laypeople. Research on lay movements broke with monolithic visions of Catholicism, highlighting its diversity and internal contradictions (Padilla 1991; de la Torre 2002). On the political stage, for example, laypeople, played important roles in right-wing Catholicism (Canto

and Rojas 1988; Loaeza 1988), in the democratic movements (Pastor 1995), and in the Christian left (Concha Malo *et al.* 1986). Similarly, the growth of the Charismatic Catholic Renewal Movement brought new challenges for the characterization of the institutional field and its relations with Pentecostal-type religions (Díaz de la Serna 1985; Juárez Cerdi 1997). This re-emphasis on the Catholic institution privileges the analysis of internal structures of power and of the agency of lay movements (de la Torre 2006, Patiño 2006).

Also in the early 1970s, anthropologists and ethnologists discovered the need to investigate a new phenomenon, one threatening the popular culture of indigenous peoples: the growth of evangelical Protestantism. This emergent academic sector focused on denouncing the cultural impact of non-Catholic evangelizing activities in the country. Initial investigations were conducted in the frontier states of the North (bordering the United States) and South (bordering Guatemala). These studies, though academic, were not free from prejudice. On the contrary, as Rodolfo Casillas (1996) points out, they lobbied for the defence of Mexico's cultural heritage and denounced the Yankee infiltration that they perceived in these Protestantisms. Even with these biases, the studies were the antecedents of the future anthropology of religious diversity in Mexico. Two were important large-scale projects, drawing together some of the most engaged and outstanding investigators in the contemporary study of Protestant minorities in Mexico. The north border states study drew together researchers from the then Colegio de la Frontera Norte: Rodolfo Casillas, Alberto Hernández and José Luis Molina. A team from the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS), directed by Gilberto Giménez and including Patricia Fortuny, Aída Hernández, and Elizabeth Juárez, undertook a project on 'Religion and Society in the Southeast of Mexico' (Giménez 1989).

Studies of Protestantism have undoubtedly contributed to theoretical and methodological reflection in the study of religion, emphasizing the themes of secularization and religious diversification. The tendency to stigmatize Protestants as foreign elements became less marked as a series of studies recognized the extent of their historical presence and their contributions to the construction of the nation (Meyer 1989; Bastian 1989; Gaxiola 1994). Anthropologists led the way in discarding the perception that Protestant groups formed part of a strategy of ideological penetration by the United States, and in emphasizing the processes of cultural appropriation through which new national and ethnic versions of Protestantism emerged. Beginning in the 1990s, ethnographic studies have analyzed processes of evangelical growth in certain regions of the country: e.g. Chiapas (Hernández Castillo 2000; Rivera Farfán *et al.* 2005), Yucatan (Fortuny 1982), Quintana Roo (Higuera 1997), the Sierra Norte of Puebla (Garma Navarro 1987), Oaxaca (Marroquín [ed.] 1995), Veracruz (Vázquez 1999), the Northern Border states (Hernández 1996, 2002), and Mexico City (Garma Navarro 2004). Many of these studies went beyond simply

recognizing increasing religious pluralism to analyze the reculturation processes among evangelical and Pentecostal groups that have produced novel expressions of Mexican Protestantism. Carlos Garma Navarro, for example, found that evangelicals serve as a source of resistance to the power of local *caciques*, thus contributing to alternative forms of political organization. Renée de la Torre, in her (1995) study of The Light of the World Church, explored how a model of life that emerged from this Mexican evangelical church functions as a 'total institution', an urban model that governs the day-to-day identity and political actions of the faithful. José Luis Molina (2000) analyzed the way in which Jehovah's Witnesses interact with Mexican nationalism in schools.

Several themes are prominent in studies of Protestantism: diffusion and conversion (Hernández and Molina 2003; Zalpa 2002); classification of denominations (Garma 1989, Fortuny 2001); Protestant relations with State and society, especially as regards the 1992 constitutional frame for State/church relations (Ruiz 1998, Hernández 2001); the roles of women in NRMs (S. Ortiz 1999; Marcos 2000; Juárez Cerdi 2004); and intolerance and interreligious conflicts, for example, the bloody conflict in Chiapas (Robledo 1987; Aramoni and Morquecho 1999).

Emerging issues

Beginning in the mid 1990s, the academic study of religion started exploring the presence of new religious movements in Mexico. Elio Masferrer Kan's influential collection (1995b) both continued the established line of study of confessional plurality in Mexico and addressed new developments in the religious field: for example the influence of the Age of Aquarius among Catholics (Gutiérrez Zúñiga 1995); religious dimensions of horse racing among the Children of God (Lagarriga 1995, Masferrer Kan 1995a); Christianity on the Internet (Segato 1995); and the Raelian (UFO) Movement (Smucler Rosenberg 1995). The first extensive study of NRMs and New Age spirituality in Mexico was carried out by Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga (1996) in the city of Guadalajara. Patricia Fortuny's pioneering study of 'Believers and Belief in Guadalajara' (1999) broke with institutional conceptions of religion, using surveys to explore the extent of Eastern and New Age religious influences among Catholics.

With the end of the millenium, the study of religious phenomena turned to contemporary cultural transformations found in popular piety. This work contributed to the recognition of the dynamism, plurality, and heterodoxy of the Catholic religious field. It also explored what might be called nativist religiosities, syncretistic expressions of both native and foreign elements: e.g. Trinitarian Marian Spiritualism, where popular indigenous magic mixes with Kardecist spiritualism (Lagarriga 1991); the *mexicanidad* movements that seek

to restore the ancestral culture of the Anáhuac; or the *neomexicanidad* movements that mix ancestral religiosities, such as Tibetan Buddhist Aztec traditions (Y. González 2000; de la Peña 2002). Other studies analyzed the profound changes experienced by popular religious practices in late modernity (de la Torre 2001), and the creation or invention of new popular worship forms, implemented as protectors of the masses in the face of problems not addressed by modern institutions: for example *la Santa Muerte* (patron of prisoners and prostitutes), *el Santo Malverde* (patron of drug dealers), and Juan Castillo, popularly known as Juan Soldado (patron of migrants) (Valenzuela Arce 1999).

Another topic much in vogue is the relation between religion and international migration. Translocal studies investigate migrants' use of religion as a resource for reanchoring identities, for maintaining stable relations with places of origin, and for carrying a piece of one's *matria* to a new home. The issue of migration is a very dynamic one for Mexicans. The dangerous border crossing into the United States is valorized because of its risks. For this reason, Mexicans constantly create new forms of popular worship, or imaginatively appropriate traditional ones, to seek protection for migrants (Morán 2000; Hernández Madrid 2000).

At present, the study of religion in Mexico is indispensable: 1) for the comprehension of our modern history; 2) for the modernization of the course of that history; 3) for understanding the shift from a homogeneous to a multicultural society; and 4) for capturing in a nuanced manner the continuous adaptations and changes of popular culture. Studying religion involves tackling cultural complexity, recognizing the changes that lie at the heart of continuity, and the continuities that lie at the heart of change. For these reasons, it is important to continue with the institutional, academic, and publishing efforts that support the study of religious changes in the contemporary world.

Peru

Prehistory of the study of religions

In attempting to construct a Republic during the late nineteenth century, Peru's political and intellectual elites 'discovered' the need to take into account 'the Indian' in thinking of the country's future. Two authors of this early *indigenismo* stand out: the works of Manuel González Prada (1844–1918) and the stories and novels of Clorinda Matto de Turner (1854–1909). For González Prada the development of the Indian is symbolized by the 'soul-destroying Trinity' of judge, governor and priest. Interestingly, we find in his works an explanation of the origin and evolution of religions that was advanced for its

time: 'Each religion germinates in the downfall of another. It fights against its own mother. It wins and rises to its climax, thereupon declining and ceding the field to a new belief destined to suffer the same fate' (1985, vol. 1: 318). Clorinda Matto also criticized the abuse of women and natives by priests. The social stage of Matto's fiction is the province, that is, indigenous territory, where Indians worked for no pay, without protection, and suffering various abuses at the hands of priests.

The emergence of the study of religions

Two early twentieth-century scholars were prominent in the emergence of the study of religion in Peru: José Carlos Mariátegui (1894–1930) and Julio C. Tello (1880–1947). Mariátegui's work (1928, 1970, 1979) consists of essays written in the heat of the militancy and the revolutionary thought that took shape in Latin America during the first decades of the twentieth century. Writing from an unorthodox Marxist perspective, Mariátegui was the first Peruvian to analyze the 'indigenous world,' emphasizing the social place of religion in contemporary, Andean Peruvian culture. Tello was interested in explaining the shape of ancient divinities, traces of which still existed. Peruvian archaeology begins with his investigations. His conclusions rest on empirical information—iconography in ceramic ware and architecture—as well as on chronicles, travelers' histories, myths and legends. His key work (1923) studies Wiracocha, one of the most important divinities of ancient Peru.

The development of the study of religions

Peruvian anthropology took an important step in the late 1940s, with the founding of the Instituto de Etnología y Arqueología de la Universidad de San Marcos en Lima. The resulting ethnohistorical studies made excellent use of colonial chronicles. Luis Valcárcel (1965) discussed the impact of Catholicism on indigenous cultures. He argued (1964, vol. 2) that, unable to resist the religion of the colonizers, the indigenous peoples feigned acceptance while continuing to adhere to the old gods. The result was the incorporation of indigenous elements into Catholic worship, with Christianity in the end merely superimposed on the ancient religion. John Rowe (1946) studied post-conquest Inca culture and presented a general vision of 'Andean religion'. George Kubler (1946) studied religion in the colonial era, concluding that the conversion of indigenous peoples to Catholicism was an established fact by 1660.

In the 1950s, the Department of Anthropology at the Universidad del Cusco was founded. Two works stand out in this decade: Harry Tschopik (1957) wrote a rich ethnography of the magical practices among the Aymaras of the

south Andean plateau. Rebeca Carrión Cachot (1959) following in the steps of her teacher, Tello, studied religious iconography in the architecture, ceramics, and textiles of the north and central regions of the country.

In the 1960s the departments of anthropology at the Universidad de Huamanga and the Universidad Católica en Lima became interested in religion. The work of Tom Zuidema was a key result. Zuidema (1964) introduced structuralism into the Peruvian academic world, looking for the roots of Inca social organization in their places of worship, beliefs, rites, and myths. Later (1986), he argued that the mass of material on Inca kinship recorded by the chroniclers can only be understood within a broad frame that includes political and social organization, mythology, ritual, and conceptions of time and of space.

A number of important works were published in the 1970s and 1980s. Manuel Marzal (1971) compared five areas in the province of Urcos, correlating levels of modernization with degrees of religious change. He also analyzed (1988) the religious changes that occur when immigrants from the interior come to the capital, bringing their cultural and religious traditions with them. His (1983) synthesis of the evolution of religion in Peru during the first century and a half after the Conquest concluded that the Andeans accepted Christianity while preserving and integrating elements of the old Andean religious system. Pierre Duviols (1971) produced a meticulous study of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century fight against idolatry, arguing that indigenous people did not abandon their beliefs and saw no incompatibility in practising both native and Christian rites. Nathan Wachtel (1971) drew similar conclusions about religious survival. Concentrating on the first forty years of Spanish domination, he documented the destructuring of Andean society and the disappearance of Inca state worship but argued for the survival of ancient religions within local worship. Alejandro Ortiz' (1980) structuralist study of Andean myths related symmetrical oppositions and hierarchies of divinities to tensions between the permanent and the transitory, order and the inexplicable. Popular piety only became a topic of interest for scholars of religion in Peru with rapid urbanization (J. L. González 1986).

The 1990s were rich in innovations, in terms of both topics and perspectives. José Sánchez (1990) wrote the first study in Peru on the Catholic charismatic movement. He analyzed the political positions taken by charismatic Catholics in an important Lima *barrio*. Hernán Cornejo (1995) studied the large charismatic masses celebrated by Father Rodríguez in Peru's major cities, with detailed accounts of the rituals and rich ethnographic material on the socio-economic conditions and illnesses of the participants. The first anthropological account of the Pentecostal phenomenon in Peru was Frans Kamsteeg's (1991) study of a Pentecostal church in the southern Peru city of Arequipa. Kamsteeg emphasizes the tensions of power that arise between pastor and congregants as a reflection of Pentecostal teachings. Another topic that emerged in the 1990s

was the relation between communication and religion. Several research projects in this field were begun at the University of Lima. The first publication to result was Gogin (1997), which studies the radio programs of four religious groups: the Catholic church, the Evangelical church, the Dios es Amor Pentecostal church, and the Hermandad del Cordero de Dios. A further subject of interest was Taqi Onqoy, a sixteenth-century native protest movement that extended over a wide region in the southern Andes (Millones *et al.* 1990). The movement consisted of preachers with numerous followers who expressed themselves in a sort of collective ecstasy preceded by songs and dances.

A topic little studied in Peru is that of relations between church, society, and the state in light of modernization and secularization. Pilar García (1991) made an important contribution, highlighting the enormous social and political influence exercised by the Catholic church in shaping the Peruvian state, beginning with its independence from Spain. Fernando Armas Asin (1998) has studied nineteenth-century polemics surrounding religious tolerance, ending with 1915, the year in which reforms to the Constitution prohibited forms of public worship other than Catholicism. Armas finds here a symptom of modernization: mobilized, more or less organized sectors of the population, each with its own interests, but each making a positive contribution by affirming the need for specific new developments. Fonseca (2002) examines the topic of modernization between the years 1915 and 1930, analyzing the role of Protestant missionaries and churches in the project of modernizing a nation shaken by the emergence of new ideas and new organizations, including political parties and unions. Imelda Vega-Centeno's (1991) study of the Aprista Party² offered a different perspective on the social and political functions of religion, as a system of ultimate meanings defining forms of political participation: she studied the party's 'doctrine' and the 'mystique' elaborated and transmitted by its leaders. Karen Sanders (1997) also studied religious, mythical, and messianic elements in the discourse of the Aprista Party. She found in the speeches its founder, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, elements of an entire 'project of salvation'.

Messianism has been an important theme in Peruvian studies of religion. Juan Manuel Ossio (1973) underlined its importance in ancient and contemporary Andean society. Several other works demonstrate the centrality of the myth of the return of the Inca for utopian and political projects in the Andean region (Salomón 1990; Szeminski 1984, 1990; Flores Galindo 1994; Fernández and Brown 2001). According to Rostworowski (1978), this myth appears repeatedly in the cosmivision and power relations of pre-Hispanic peoples. Her analysis (1992) of relations of domination and hegemony in the Lima region makes a case that political defeat and domination always implied the subjugation of the gods of the defeated, with defeated gods sometimes conflated with the divinities of the victors or re-emerging with new vigor.

Emerging issues

Valuable overviews of recent topics and perspectives are available in two collections published by a group of scholars associated with Manuel Marzal's monthly seminars (Marzal *et al.* 2000, 2004). Topics include institutional and political religion, new urban forms of Pentecostalism, religion and human rights, religion and health, the Jehovah's Witnesses, popular Catholic piety in the Amazon region, and religious belief among university students. In a separate book, Paulo Barrera Rivera (2001) analyzes a Brazilian Pentecostal movement (Iglesia Pentecostal Dios es Amor), established in Peru during the 1970s, which is attracting Peru's poor. Emphasizing social and cultural factors, he argues that people from the Andean world, filled with mythical ancestral beings, fit easily into Pentecostal worship with its emphasis on 'demons'. Another recent topic for scholars of religion in Peru is the relationship between evangelical Christians and politics (Barrera Rivera 2005). Hortensia Muñoz (2001) places the study of religion and politics in the context of poverty, violence, and social fragmentation in her study of the difficult but creative coexistence between Protestants (of various types) and Catholics during the consolidation of a lower-class *barrio* on the periphery of Lima.

Studies on gender and religion in Latin America

The initial momentum for work on women (or gender) and religion in Latin America emerged from liberation theologians and biblical scholars and among women committed to working in grassroots base communities. The primary focus was on issues of gender equity and justice. Previous secular feminist analyses on the continent had inspired and prefigured this work, and both trends have been interacting since the early 1980s. Elsa Tamez was a key figure in finding new inspiration through reading the Bible from the perspective of the poor and from that of liberation: 'liberation is taking place in the churches with the growth of the Ecclesial Base communities. In this new mode of being a church, women have found a possibility of a new mode of being a woman' (1983: 41; cf. *La Biblia de los Oprimidos*). Many others, like Coca Trillini in Argentina and Mary Judith Ress in Chile (2004), have also claimed the right of women and the poor to seek in sacred scripture the inspiration for their own liberation. Concrete efforts towards this end started in the 1970s among women working marginal areas, both urban and rural. Their formation as ecumenical theologians, biblical scholars and committed nuns took place within a largely

Catholic context. This stimulated their participation in a discourse that is inevitably constrained by the need to write and publish in a manner accessible to the large majorities of impoverished Latin Americans (Trespaso 1993).

These women's political awareness has produced analyses linking various phases of political struggles in the continent with their own religious and liturgical interpretations. Both Ivone Gevara (1999), a groundbreaking eco-feminist theologian, and Elsa Tamez (2004) speak of three or four large phases, coincident with the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and the beginning of the new millennium, that exemplify the impact of political and social changes on religious and gender justice analyses. Using an anthropological perspective, Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo (2004) has analyzed the work of 'teología india' (indigenous theology) as it reflects on gender in the pastoral work and social organization of the Coordinadora Diocesana de Mujeres (CODEMUJ) in Chiapas, Mexico.

Going beyond the emergence of socio-political perspectives within theological, biblical, and pastoral work, we find important ethno-historical gender analyses in the anthropological work of Noemi Quezada (1996) and Sylvia Marcos (1975, 2006), including analyses of contemporary movements that emphasize a gendered indigenous spirituality.

In Brazil, sociologists of religion such as Cecilia Mariz (1994) and Maria Das Dores Machado (Machado and Mariz 2002) have done wide ranging comparative gender research and analyses of Pentecostalism, neo-Pentecostalism, base communities, and charismatic Catholic communities. Their work was preceded by other important socio-anthropological analyses (Landes 1947; Birman 1995). Marion Aubrée crowned her long tradition of work in the study of Afro-Brazilian religions with an important paper (2004). Clara Luz Ajo (2004) has analyzed gender and Santería in Cuba.

Conclusion

As this chapter demonstrates, religion and its study in Latin America are extremely vibrant, and significant work is being done by scholars in the region, despite being virtually unnoticed by scholars outside the region. Perhaps the most significant characteristic of Latin American religiosity is the extent to which religious pluralism both transcends and reflects historical, regional, and class boundaries. For example, Chilean sociologist of religion, Cristián Parker Gumucio (1993, 1994), rejects the secularization thesis and places popular religion at the heart of a specifically Latin American modernity. He argues that popular religion in Latin America operates according to a 'different logic.' The dispossessed and marginalized retain their traditional religiosities, remain open to innovative syncretistic developments, and reject mainstream religions that cater to elites. Latin American religion expresses a broad set of 'syncretisms' that, by virtue of their complex relations to contemporary political, social and

economic realities, escape the usual theorizations of such phenomena. For this reason, if for no other, scholars of religion in other parts of the world might find it useful to keep two points in mind. First, Latin America is one of the main laboratories for studying relations between religion and society in the world today, and second, the work of Latin American scholars is a central resource in pursuing this study.

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NOTES

- 1 The chapter was edited by Engler, who also translated the sections on Argentina, Mexico, and Peru from Spanish. Some elements of the section on Brazil appear in a different form in Engler (2005, 2006); for a more extended discussion of Brazil, see Engler (forthcoming). Helpful national overviews include Lehmann (2002) on Brazil, Parker Gumucio (1996) on Chile, García Chiang (2004) on Mexico, Ortmann (2002) on Peru, and Soneira (1996) on the four countries of the *cono sur*.
- 2 'Aprismo' was a political movement rooted in a party, A.P.R.A. (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana), founded by the Peruvian Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre in 1924. It presented itself as a social democratic and 'indoamerican' nationalist alternative to both capitalism and socialism and was the first Latin American mass movement to achieve some continental impact. [SE]

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A fterword

Toward a global vision of religious studies

Gregory D. Alles

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THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS do not yet provide a global vision of religious studies. They provide satellite images, as it were, of the study of religion in different parts of the globe. To have a global vision, these images need to be stitched together. Placing them between the covers of a book goes part of the way to doing that. It is like spreading satellite images out next to one another on a large table-top. But it is not yet the composite image that one finds, for example, when images are combined seamlessly.

In this Afterword, almost a chapter in itself more than a typical Afterword, I want to try to stitch the images together a little. That is because a collection of region by region views amplifies regional identities and commonalities, but tends to neglect transregional connections and global movements. As a result, it seems useful to transgress the normal, behind-the-scenes role that editing entails and assume a voice. So in this Afterword I stitch the pieces together. The composite image that results will not be seamless, and it will not have a very high resolution. But perhaps it can contribute to developing a global vision of religious studies.¹

In a sense, such a vision is not new. Each of the scholars whom as a student I came to regard as the leading figures in the field had a global vision of religious studies. I suspect that the same is true of leading scholars in other parts of the world, too. I have already mentioned Wilfred Cantwell Smith's vision of interreligious dialogue in the introduction. Mircea Eliade's vision may have been more limited, but I still remember reading as an undergraduate many years ago a sentence that may have been the ultimate inspiration for this book:

When, in one or two generations, perhaps even earlier, we have historians of religions who are descended from Australian, African, or Melanesian tribal societies, I do not doubt that, among other things, they will reproach Western scholars for their indifference to the scale of values indigenous to these societies.

(Eliade 1969: 75)

By the 1990s Ninian Smart was envisioning a global context for all kinds of reflection having to do with worldviews, including not only the study of religion but also philosophy (Smart 1999: 261–372) and Christian theology (Smart 1996). Part of that vision was his proposal for a World Academy of Religion, which would 'not [be] tied to the rightly and strictly scholarly and scientific stance of the IAHR' and so would 'embrace all kinds of committed and non-committed scholarly organisations' (Smart 1990: 305).

Smith's, Eliade's, and Smart's visions mostly assumed the form of dreams. They referred to what will or might occur. Today we should talk about what is. What can we say about this activity of human beings all over the planet that we call the study of religion? To avoid misunderstanding, I should emphasize that a global vision is never, in Thomas Nagel's (1986) still useful

phrase, a view from nowhere. In the realm of vision, the constraints of geometry make a seamless view of the globe impossible. Our eyes cannot simultaneously detect, nor can our minds simultaneously represent, every spot on the surface of a sphere without making tears someplace. The same is true here. What follows inevitably reflects my own complex and in some ways idiosyncratic locations, probably in many ways that I do not even recognize. No one should expect a global vision to escape the limitations of its author's embeddedness in space, time, cultures, politics, economics, and so on. The most one can hope for is a vision whose subjective horizons, like its objective ones, are not too narrow, whose analytical constructs are not simplistic, and whose ambitions respect basic human rights, including the right of others to self-determination.

Structures and networks

One way to formulate a global vision of religious studies is in terms of global structures and institutions. Very few, if any, institutions or structures within the study of religions are *not* represented in the preceding chapters. In other words, very few institutions or structures in the study of religions are truly global. Almost all are limited by national, linguistic, and regional boundaries.

Perhaps the leading candidate for a global institution is the International Association for the History of Religions (founded 1950) along with its flagship journal, *Numen*, and the *Numen* book series. But despite the early participation of some Japanese scholars, the IAHR was at first 'international' not in the sense that it was global but primarily in the sense that it transcended national boundaries in Europe. Already in 1960 R. J. Zwi Werblowsky was commenting on the growing internationalization—today we might call it globalization—of the Association. By the end of 2006 the IAHR recognized local and regional affiliates on every continent except Antarctica and, because of a complicated mutual history, Australia. It has held five of its international Congresses, including the last four, outside of Europe and North America (Tokyo 1958 and 2005, Sydney 1985, Mexico City 1990, and Durban 2000). In addition, its leadership base has broadened since its founding. Since 1960 the IAHR's vice presidents have included, in addition to Europeans and North Americans, four scholars from Japan, Teruji Ishizu (1960–1965), Ichirō Hori (1965–1970), Masao Abe (1975–1980), and Akio Tsukimoto (2005–present; I count Joseph Kitagawa, vice president 1975–1985, as a North American), and one from Mexico, Yólotl González Torres (1995–2000). Under the leadership of Michael Pye (general secretary 1985–1995, president 1995–2000) the IAHR made a concerted effort to include members from outside Europe and North America on the executive committee. The current deputy treasurer, Pratap Kumar (2005–present), is from South Africa, a current member-at-large of the executive board, Alef Theria Wasim (2000–present), is from Indonesia, and a

current editor of *Numen*, Gustavo Benavides, is from Peru, although he was in part educated and is now working in the United States. The offices of president, general secretary, deputy general secretary, and treasurer, however, have all been filled exclusively by Europeans and, more recently, North Americans.

Another way to formulate a global vision of religious studies, probably a better way, is to examine not institutions and structures but webs of scholarly networks. At least for the moment, the actual study of such networks is beyond both my capabilities and resources. There might be several places to start mapping such networks: the production and distribution of translations, posts on email discussion lists, such as those administered by the European Association for the Study of Religion, or participation in the new IAHR network of women scholars. I suspect that the result of such mapping might resemble a composite photograph of the globe at night or, perhaps better, a map of routes serviced by a major airline. In terms of the first metaphor, some places on the globe would be ‘brighter’—have more scholarly activity and denser networks—than others. In terms of the second, certain regions would emerge as hubs—or nodes or major contact points—for global scholarly exchange. Given the preceding chapters, I suspect that quite a few places around the globe would light up brightly. I also suspect that the largest hubs for scholarly exchange are still in Western Europe and North America, and that there are few non-stop flights—few direct connections—between scholars working in, let us say, China and Brazil or Nigeria and Indonesia. I also suspect that there are many one-way flights or, to change the metaphor, that much scholarship is exported from North America and Western Europe to other regions without scholarship being imported in reverse. Seen from a global perspective the study of religions suffers from a serious imbalance of trade.

There is yet a third way to formulate a global vision of religious studies. That is to identify the common threads and distinct patterns in the chapters that form the heart of this book. I limit myself to three major topics, discussed very broadly: history; institutionalization; and objects, methods, and theories.

History

One feature of the history of religious studies that emerges from these chapters is striking—and often understated. The 1950s and especially the 1960s were a formative period for the study of religion almost everywhere in the world. During this period, with some regional variation—for Australia and New Zealand the 1970s were formative—Africans, Australians, East Asians, North Americans, and South and Southeast Asians incorporated the study of religions in earnest into university programs, while Western Europeans greatly expanded existing programs and founded new ones. Much of Latin America, North

Africa, and West Asia seem to have remained somewhat removed from this development, but there were notable exceptions, such as Israel. Scholarship in Eastern Europe went in a different direction.

In a climate such as ours, in which the approach to intellectual history is so heavily indebted to Michel Foucault, it is inevitable that we look to politics to explain these changes. Political factors do seem to carry explanatory power, in part because of the large role governments play in funding and administering universities and research institutes worldwide. For example, under the aegis of Communism scholars were often expected to attack religion, at least in those parts of their writings that state authorities might actually read. As He Guanghu notes, under Mao a critical approach to religions meant 'absolute negation, severe attack, complete suppression, and an utter clearing away'. Institutional organization followed suit. For example, the government of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) attempted to transform the Institute for the Study of Religion at Leipzig into an Institute for the Study and Promotion of Atheism (Rudolph 1992: 337–339).

In the 'free world' scholars took a much different attitude. After all, at the height of the Cold War the United States both proclaimed itself to be a nation 'under God' (1954) and funded research in the study of religions (McCutcheon 2004). Michael Stausberg has highlighted the degree to which conservative political loyalties characterized many, although not all, post-World War II Western European scholars of religions. He Guanghu points out that scholarship favorable to religion—indeed, that tried to appropriate the benefits of religion—emerged in China with the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 and then grew tremendously. Scholars in South Korea seem to have steered a course that in many respects closely mirrored developments within the United States. Within a European community living side-by-side with an appreciable number of Muslim 'migrants' and 'guest-workers', Islam became an object of increased attention, as it did in the United States after September 11, 2001. When Romania hosted the European Association for the Study of Religion in Bucharest in September 2006, a political edge was unmistakable. Writing in the official conference booklet, the Minister of Foreign Affairs welcomed participants with the thought that, after so many years of Communist repression, it was now 'payback time' (Ungureanu 2006).

It is certainly tempting to attribute the widespread blossoming of the study of religion that took place during the 1950s and 1960s to a rejection of anti-religious Communism by pro-religious—or at least anti-anti-religious—Capitalists. But that is probably not a full explanation. The blossoming also occurred in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South and Southeast Asia, where the most important political events were not connected with the Cold War but with de-colonization. When the European colonial tapestry began to unravel with Indian and Pakistani independence on August 15, 1947, that event ushered in a time of great expectations for the newly established nations. In

order to establish their national dignity they often founded universities (see Brodeur and Chitando in this volume), and when people in these universities studied religions, they tended to study the religions of their own regions, not someone else's. That certainly suggests that their studies were informed by an underlying nationalistic purpose, or at least a deep-rooted nationalistic interest. But the degree to which the desire to establish a post-colonial identity motivated and shaped the study of religion in these regions demands further study.

Thus, political factors would seem to provide a rich account of the motivation for and direction of the study of religions that emerged almost globally after World War II, but they are probably not the whole story. None of the factors mentioned above provides any real justification for the emergence of religious studies. Just as the political goals of Communists could be met by a dogmatic attack upon religion, so the political goals of anti-Communists and emergent nationalists could have been met by simply embracing religion—but they were not. The popularity of political explanations should not blind us to other forces that may also have been at work, some of them global in scale. Nor should we consider the study of religions only in isolation.

In the period following World War II, several factors interacted to produce a tremendous increase in the number of tertiary educational institutions worldwide. It is common to mention the desire of new nations to establish independent universities, a shift from elite to mass education, and a post-war increase in population (but cf. Schofer and Meyer 2005 on demonstrable causal factors). As John W. Meyer (2006: x) has observed:

[A]lmost 20 percent of a cohort of young people in the world is now found in an institution of higher education—fifty years ago [in the mid 1950s], it might have been 2 percent, and fifty years before that it might have been a fraction of 1 percent. . . . A country like Kazakhstan, for instance, might have as many higher education students as the whole world had in 1900.

Less impressionistically, Evan Schofer and Meyer (2005: 898) note that in 1900 there were about 500,000 higher education students worldwide; in 2000 there were about 100,000,000—20,000 percent more. The vast majority of this growth has occurred since 1960. With such a large increase in academic activity worldwide, a global increase in the number of people studying religions will have an impact on scholarly production, but it is hardly newsworthy.

Other developments may be newsworthy. In one of the very few careful studies devoted to the university worldwide, David John Frank and Jay Gabler (2006) examine the ways in which universities throughout the world changed during the twentieth century. They acknowledge the role of political and economic factors, but they see those factors as too variable to account for global patterns. Adopting a neo-institutional perspective, they explain changes in university structure in terms of 'changing assumptions about reality, written

into the cultural and organizational foundations of world society' (p. 114). In very broad terms, they postulate a global shift in what counts as universal, objective knowledge (citing Bourdieu 1988: xii) from an embrace of spiritual forces, both religious and 'idealistic' (e.g. art as revelatory, the poet as 'genius'), hierarchical organization, and categorical structures to naturalistic-materialistic explanation, horizontal organization, and dynamic networks. Among other things, their model predicts a decrease in what was earlier an important facet of the university, designated 'theology'. The data, however, reveal something different. In the period 1915–1935, theology claimed about 4.5 percent of the faculty in universities worldwide. (Frank and Gabler speculate that earlier the percentage was higher.) In line with their model, by 1955–1975 theology had lost almost two-thirds of its faculty share. But then something unexpected happened. The percentage of 'theology' faculty began to rise (p. 110).

This pattern interests us because in their tabulation Frank and Gabler did not distinguish between theology and religious studies. They themselves (personal communication) are inclined to attribute the faculty share gained by 'theology' to the emergence of a manner of studying religions more in accord with the new patterns defining universal, objective knowledge, what we have been calling the study of religion or religious studies. That inclination is at least consistent with the inverse relationship Stausberg observes in Western Europe between the decline in institutional Christendom and the rise of religious studies, but much more work needs to be done. For one thing, it is not actually known what part religious studies played in reversing the decline in 'theology' worldwide. For another, the rest of the world has not undergone the secularization that Europe has. Perhaps the political emergence of very strong religious commitments, often called fundamentalisms, in places as diverse as the United States, West Asia, and India during the 1970s contributed to the observed average rise in the weight of theology worldwide—or perhaps not. Universities may adhere to different standards of knowledge from those that prevail in the broader population. Think of tensions between Indian academics and Hindu nationalists, or between university biologists in the US state of Kansas and advocates of intelligent design. If further research does bear out that it was the emergence of religious studies that led to greater weight for 'theology' in universities worldwide, a further question arises: did the relative distance of Latin America and North Africa–West Asia from the development of religious studies result from the prevalence in those regions of a different set of cultural assumptions about what makes for universal, objective knowledge? In discussing the neo-liberal assumptions that often accompany the study of religion, Brodeur's account of North Africa and West Asia suggests that this may indeed be the case. But Brodeur also emphasizes the political dimension, namely, a link between the study of religions and democratic institutions. That postulated link is attractive, but it is also complicated both by the attraction that fascism and Nazism exercised on earlier European exemplars of the study

and by the flourishing of the study of religion in the People's Republic of China today.

Other, complementary global factors may also be responsible for the rise of religious studies worldwide in the 1950s and 1960s. One is what we might call the 'World War II effect'. Such an effect is discernible in the constellation of knowledge in both the natural and social sciences. To quote Frank and Gabler (2006: 67) again: 'The war stigmatized ethnic nationalisms and other exclusive corporate groupings and on the flipside gave rise to expressions of encompassing humanity (e.g. in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948).' One supposes that one kind of 'exclusive corporate grouping' that the war may have helped stigmatize, especially given the long history of Christian involvement with European if not Nazi anti-Semitism, was the kind of privileged epistemic community that religious claims presuppose. We should also not overlook other, basic global factors in the post-World War II environment that may have helped undercut claims specific to isolated religious corporate groupings, at least among people with sufficient resources: the emergence of commercial television and commercial jet air travel. (Presumably, these effects would only be amplified by more recent developments such as videoconferencing, the Internet, and email. One should note, however, that the use of these technologies is hardly incompatible with strongly held, exclusive religious convictions.)

Besides the global and political factors already mentioned, a finely grained history of the study of religions in any locality will need, no doubt, to take into account local factors as well (cf. Borgeaud 1999, cited by Stausberg). It seems likely that the changing demographic patterns which resulted when the empire not only 'wrote back' (Rushdie 1982; cf. Ashcroft, Giffiths, and Tiffin 1989) but also settled in the land of the former colonizers significantly shaped the development of religious studies in the UK. In the US, a series of decisions by the Supreme Court, starting with *McCullum v. Board of Education*, 333 US 203 (1948), applied First Amendment protections against religious establishment to state and local governments, including school districts, resulting in a body of law that proscribed the teaching of religion in public institutions but allowed and even encouraged teaching about it (*School District of Abington v. Schempp* 374 US 225 [1963]). In sub-Saharan Africa, according to Ezra Chitando, the different colonial policies of the British, the French, the Portuguese, and the Belgians are responsible for the significantly different trajectories of the study of religion in different regions. In China after the Cultural Revolution scholars came to terms with Marx's views through an 'Opium War', a term with unique cultural resonances in China. In Latin America, very real limitations posed by the demands of politicians, together with a complicated story of relations between church and state, have obliged scholars to work within parameters that have been in some respects unique to the region.

There is rich potential for exploring these developments. But most work done to date, including what I have written above, remains impressionistic and anecdotal. We need hard, quantified evidence. Once gathered, the difficulty, as always, will be to distinguish actual causes from non-causal correlations. To take an example outside of religious studies that many people should be able to appreciate: it is often possible to demonstrate a clear, direct correlation between ice-cream consumption and crime, but that does not mean that eating ice cream causes crime, or vice versa. Both go up with an increase in temperature.

Institutionalization

In her chapter, Satoko Fujiwara notes that although the study of religions has a relatively long history in Japan, it occupies a rather marginal place in Japanese universities. That lament is something of a refrain among scholars of religion worldwide. What can we say about this marginality?

The vast expansion of the university that has taken place since World War II has meant that, in terms of absolute numbers, every component of the educational core at tertiary institutions now has more faculty and students worldwide than it did fifty years ago (Drori and Moon 2006: 163). But some components have done better than others. According to UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (1976, revised 1997) 'religion and theology' belong to the core area of the university that has fared the worst, the humanities (class 22).² According to a study by Gili Drori and Hyeyoung Moon (2006: 164), in the thirty years from 1965 to 1995 the percentage of students enrolling in the humanities dropped by about 40 percent (see Table 1). The loss of faculty share was similar (see Table 2; I omit 'Humanities Applied', basically the study of law.) Drori and Moon (2006) do not distinguish subfields within the humanities, so without significantly more research it is not possible to say more precisely where the decline in humanities students took place, but in examining faculty share Frank and Gabler (2006) do distinguish subfields. According to their results, the loss in 'religion and theology' (to use UNESCO terminology) was among the worst: down 60 percent from 1915–1935 to 1975–1995. But philosophy's loss was even worse (71 percent),

Table 1 Worldwide share of student enrollments by division
(after Drori and Moon 2006: 164, numbers approximate)

	1965 (%)	1995 (%)
Humanities	20	12
Social Sciences	15	30

Table 2 Worldwide share of faculty at tertiary institutions (after Frank and Gabler 2006: 68, 133)

	1915–1935 (%)	1975–1995 (%)
<i>Humanities (basic)</i>	27.4	15.6
Classics and archaeology	4.5	0.6
History	3.5	3.0
Non-Western Languages and Literatures	2.3	2.0
Philosophy	2.8	0.8
RELIGION AND THEOLOGY	4.3	1.7
<i>Social Sciences (total)</i>	9.3	30.0
<i>Social Sciences (basic)</i>	3.8	12.4
<i>Social Sciences (applied)</i>	5.5	17.6
Anthropology	0.2	0.4
Economics	1.7	3.8
Geography	0.4	2.9
Political Science	0.8	2.0
Psychology	0.7	0.8
Sociology	0.1	2.2

and the loss in classics and archaeology was worst of all (87 percent). Note that these are fields with which religious studies has historical and institutional affinities. Similarly, a social science that is close to religious studies, anthropology, was also precarious. Frank and Gabler (2006: 136) write, ‘Anthropology . . . remained marginal in the university throughout the twentieth century’. Its faculty share did double, but the overall absolute numbers are very small. In addition, less than a third of the universities that Frank and Gabler (2006) sampled for 1986–1995 taught anthropology. That is worse than either philosophy, represented in half of the universities sampled, and even classics and archaeology, represented in slightly more than a third. Compared with all of these fields, a 1.7 percent faculty share for religion and theology and representation in 60 percent of the universities sampled looks rather good.

Despite the poor showing of anthropology, the social sciences were the core area of the university that grew the most during the twentieth century. From 1965 to 1995, the share of students enrolled in the social sciences doubled

worldwide (Drori and Moon 2006: 164). From 1915–1935 to 1975–1995, the share of faculty in the social sciences more than tripled in both the basic and applied fields (Frank and Gabler 2006: 68). The gains were smallest in psychology, where the faculty share grew only slightly. In four other fields the gains were much larger, economics, geography, political science, and sociology, but of these four, only sociology continued to grow after 1975 (Frank and Gabler 2006: 138–139). It is also worth noting that some areas of the humanities with affinities to religious studies suffered losses that were relatively modest. History lost only about 14 percent of its faculty share, non-Western languages and literatures only 13 percent (Frank and Gabler 2006: 105).

What do all of these figures say about the position of religion and theology in the contemporary university? More than being marginalized, they occupy a place of tension—probably healthy and creative tension. To the extent that they steer toward anthropology, philosophy, and the study of antiquity, they would seem to face dwindling interest and support. To the extent that they steer toward sociology, geography, ‘non-Western’ studies, history, and in some parts of the world, psychology, they rub shoulders with social sciences that have received increasing attention or with humanities that have resisted the general decline. Perhaps this tension, as well as disagreement over how religious the study of religion should be, is responsible for another distinctive feature of religion and theology. From a global perspective, universities moved over the course of the twentieth century to structural isomorphism in most areas, but not all. The area where structural divergence increased the most was religion and theology (Frank and Gabler 2006: 80). As the twentieth century proceeded, universities worldwide came increasingly to disagree about how—and whether—to incorporate religious studies and theology.

These observations need refinement. It would be desirable to have data that distinguished, to the extent that it is possible to do so, between religious studies and theology. It is also important to note that studies of faculty and student share do not address global variation in research and publication. They also undercount activity in religious studies. That is because they concentrate upon religious studies as a separate academic domain, located in an academic unit of its own. This observation touches upon a second issue of institutionalization that emerges from the chapters in this volume. Although some agreement has emerged on where to locate the study of religion, there is no unanimity.

The authors of most of the chapters in this volume concentrated on work within academic units devoted specifically to the study of religion. Most pointedly, Rowena Robinson did not, and for good reason. The study of religion in South Asia is not organized the way it is in many other regions. (But India is not alone; consider Argentina, but also Australia, New Zealand, and Eastern Europe, among other places.) Article 28 of the Indian Constitution prohibits religious instruction at state-funded universities (it allows such

instruction at private ones), but as interpreted by several government commissions—the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948–1949), the Secondary Education Commission (1952–1953), the Sri Prakasa Committee (1959–1960), and the Kothari Commission (1964–1966)—that prohibition does not ban teaching about religions. Indeed, the commissions found such education desirable as a way to promote morality (Khan 2005; Llewellyn 2005). Furthermore, some activity in India has treated the study of religion as a separate academic domain. In 1967, a consultation on the study of religion took place in Bangalore involving Indian academics and professors from Harvard University (Khan 2005). Several decades later, two IAHR-related conferences took place in Delhi, ‘Religions in the Indic Civilization’ (December 18–21, 2003) and ‘The Culture and Religious Mosaic of South and Southeast Asia: Conflict and Consensus through the Ages’ (January 27–30, 2005). Nevertheless, in South Asia specific departments of religious studies are extremely rare. The only such department in India may be the Guru Gobindh Singh Department of Religious Studies at Punjabi University, Patiala, founded in 1967 following a recommendation of Wilfred Cantwell Smith (Llewellyn unpublished; Khan 2005: 8790). In a survey of the *Commonwealth Universities Handbook* J. E. Llewellyn (unpublished) found that only 5 percent of graduate institutions in India offer anything that might at all be associated with the study of religions. Using the same source, Abraham Khan (2005) found that only thirteen institutions throughout the whole of South Asia ‘offer one or more courses on the study of religion as a subject either at the undergraduate or at the post-graduate level’, among them the department of world religions at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, founded as a department of comparative religion in 1999 and renamed the next year (Khan 2005: 8791).

As Robinson’s chapter makes clear, however, anyone who concluded from the preceding paragraph that religion was little studied in South Asia would be seriously mistaken. Scholars in South Asia study religion to a considerable degree. They simply do not institutionalize such studies in a distinct academic unit. In this respect India presents an alternative model to the trend, prevalent over the last fifty years, of establishing distinct programs, departments, and institutes in religious studies. On that alternative model, academics with an interest in religion would be dispersed throughout the university.

In accounting for a lack of religious studies in India, Abraham Khan (2005: 8791) notes that in that part of the world religion—in Hindi, *dharm*—is conceived of differently than it is in Europe, North America, and Australia; it does not make a distinction between the sacred and the secular. Indeed, it is often observed that the category ‘religion’ is an odd one. In this volume Satoko Fujiwara notes that the Japanese use of *shūkyō* has not been informed by the same concerns for essence as European uses of ‘religion’ have been, although she also points out that the term ‘culture’, popular with some critics of ‘religion’, is actually the more problematical term in the Japanese context. He

Guanghu, Chung Chin-hong, and Lee Chang-yick all remark upon how odd the term originally seemed in Chinese and Korean. Ezra Chitando expresses concerns about whether 'religion' accurately reflects practice in sub-Saharan African. Patrice Brodeur notes that it has been common in Islamic universities to study not religion (*dīn*) or theology (*lāhūt*) but *sharī'ah*. Michael Stausberg and Gustavo Benavides mention several studies critical of the term. Yet as Stausberg observes for Western Europe, and as Chung and Lee underscore for Korea, few people actually seem willing to abandon 'religion'. For all its faults, people still find the term useful.

One question these observations provoke is the following: does religious studies require a concept of 'religion' that is universal and unambiguous in order to be academically viable worldwide? An affirmative answer may seem self-evident, but it is not. On the one hand, the study of religion in South Asia is hardly the only case of institutional exceptionalism. In terms of faculty share, one of the most successful social sciences over the course of the twentieth century was geography, but not in the United States, where the field is very poorly represented. Is that exceptionalism due to a peculiarly US American conception of earth, planet, or land? On the other hand, some fields organized around categories with much firmer boundaries and presumably universal recognition prior to European colonialism have done considerably worse than religious studies. A good example is botany, which has lost a much larger proportion of faculty share than most other natural sciences and is represented at fewer universities in the Frank and Gabler sample than religion and theology (Frank and Gabler 2006: 160, 164). A field in even worse shape is astronomy, whose boundaries would seem to be sharply and unexceptionally defined as the science that deals with anything that is not on the planet earth. Always marginal, it lost 89 percent of its faculty share over the course of the twentieth century—more than even classics and archaeology—and it is almost entirely absent in the Frank and Gabler sample of universities worldwide (Frank and Gabler 2006: 160, 164). Combine these examples with the moderate growth in faculty share in religion and theology since World War II, and there is room to doubt whether departments of religious studies really need an unambiguous, universal category 'religion' to be academically viable. Indeed, there is reason to doubt the need for unambiguous highest-order structuring categories for any academic unit, from art and music to biology and chemistry. In the long run, what may be more important are categorical and methodological flexibility, a sense among other scholars that materials captured by the delimiter 'religion' are unusual enough to require more than passing attention, and a consensus that those materials are sufficiently significant socially to merit academic investigation. There may, however, be other good reasons *not* to institutionalize religious studies in a separate academic unit. Consider discussions in Southeast Asia summarized at the end of Vineeta Sinha's contribution.

Space allows me to do no more than enumerate several other important issues concerning the institutionalization of religious studies. (1) Can and should the study of religion take place in other locations besides the university? In the United States, at least, a full 50 percent of basic research in the natural sciences is done outside of universities (Drori and Moon 2006: 160). (2) Chitanda, Franzmann, and Stausberg note a connection between the study of religions at the tertiary level and primary and secondary education, including the training of teachers. Should the promotion of primary and secondary education in religious studies be a goal for scholars of religion worldwide? (3) In North America, Europe, and perhaps elsewhere, scholars of religion have been active as media, legal, and policy consultants. Is this an emerging activity worldwide? Especially in what has come to be known as a post-9/11 world, in which concerns for national security seem unavoidably to touch upon religions and religious identities, it certainly seems desirable for national leaders to understand religions better than they sometimes do today. (4) Inasmuch as the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services governs education, for example distance learning, to what extent will that agreement have an impact, beneficial or detrimental, on the study of religion, especially in poorer countries? (5) Several authors note changing demands placed upon researchers by the societies in which they live and work, as, for example, in Japan's Twenty-first Century Center of Excellence initiative. How should scholars of religions conduct themselves in a world which increasingly demands that scholarship should have social relevance and a potential for marketability?

Objects, methods, and theories

Gili Drori and Hyeyoung Moon (2006: 178) write, 'To a certain degree . . . all educational activities worldwide are glocalized [*sic*] forms of science, presenting the adaptation of modern Western science into a local mold.' The chapters in this book raise many issues about the objects scholars of religion study, the methods they employ, and the theories they develop. Here I address only one, an issue that cuts through objects, methods, and theories, all three. To what extent is the study of religion a form of Western science imposed on the rest of the world?

One difficulty concerns the language in which to frame this question. It is probably unhelpful to speak of a clash of civilizations in which the study of religion fights as a foot-soldier in a global campaign to spread Western civilization—terminology that would have the opposite effect from what someone like Samuel Huntington (1996) would desire. It is also probably unhelpful to see the study of religion as a representative of McWorld, one that some people will inevitably resist through *jihad* (cf. Barber 1995). Such language may capture something about the historical origin and expansion of

the study of religion, but it hardly does justice to the careful scholarly work being done by people of non-European ancestry that is detailed in many chapters of this book. Language that plays on emotional loyalties and large-scale identities is more useful for rallying troops, figuratively or literally, than for careful analysis.

In dealing with the complexity of global influence and local agency, some globalization theorists have coined stranger and stranger words. As George Ritzer (2003, 2004; cf. 1996; Ritzer [ed.] 2002) of 'McDonaldization' fame tells the story, a previously dominant account of globalization talked of Western modernization overwhelming and obliterating traditional cultures. Many theorists, among them Arjun Appadurai, Roland Robertson, and John Tomlinson, found this account unsatisfactory, because it ignored local agency in shaping the adoption of Western elements. In response, Robertson developed the notion of 'glocalization'. As Ritzer (2003: 193–194) explains it:

Glocalization [sic] can be defined as the interpenetration of the global and the local, resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas. This view emphasizes global heterogeneity and tends to reject the idea that forces emanating from the West in general and the United States in particular . . . are leading to economic, political, institutional, and—most importantly—cultural homogeneity.

But according to Ritzer, glocalization itself encapsulates an incomplete analysis, because it fails to recognize the ways in which 'nations, corporations, organizations, and other entities . . . desire—indeed . . . need—to impose themselves on various geographic areas' (Ritzer 2003: 194). The point is well taken, but to address it Ritzer coined the word 'globalization', which refers to 'the proliferation of nothing' (Ritzer 2003: 194). Neither the term nor its reference is immediately intelligible. To emphasize this point, I have left them unglossed. Moreover, the apparently sweeping reach of 'the proliferation of nothing' simply invites forceful rebuttals of the sort that James Watson and his collaborators offered in examining the positive contributions of McDonald's to East Asia (Watson [ed.] 1997).

Are such neologisms at all helpful in negotiating global hegemony and local agency in the study of religion? It is doubtful that the academic study of religion is in the business of proliferating 'nothing', by which Ritzer (2003: 195) means 'a social form that is generally centrally conceived, controlled, and comparatively devoid of distinctive substantive content'. This 'nothing' may call to mind real issues in religious studies and other academic fields, such as the disproportionate weight given elsewhere to publishing in journals or with presses located in Europe or North America (Sinha 2003: 16–17), but is centralized control a sufficiently subtle term for issues of this sort? Nor does the study of religion seem particularly characterized by what Ritzer (1996)

calls ‘McDonaldization’, that is, ‘the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world’ (Ritzer, 1996:1). These principles—efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control through non-human technology—may indeed be shaping the manner in which research is conducted and supported and education delivered worldwide, but to the extent that they are doing so, and to the extent that the results are negative, scholars of religions in Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand would seem to be victims of these processes just as much as scholars elsewhere. Consider the conclusion to Stausberg’s chapter and the kinds of stringent budgetary pressures that Franzmann identifies.

Rather than searching the literature for more adequate terms than globalization, glocalization, and grobalization, I want simply to reflect on the study of religions. I begin rather slowly with an observation that, I hope, is not controversial: there are ways of treating other people’s knowledge, including religious knowledge, that are clearly unacceptable. Here are two current examples. Legality aside, it is immoral for a pharmaceutical company to patent traditional medical knowledge that it has learned for free from other people, especially when those other people have meager access to economic resources and may as a result be denied access to the benefits of their own traditional knowledge, now supposedly the possession of someone else (cf. Mgbeoji 2006). It is also immoral for people to establish exclusive legal ownership of religious practices that they have not themselves created. According to *Foreign Policy* (Gajilan 2006), by mid 2006 the United States government had granted ‘at least 137 patents and 1,098 trademarks and copyrights relating to yoga’. To prevent the further patenting of its people’s traditional knowledge, the government of India has established a massive Traditional Knowledge Digital Library.

Theft is clearly wrong, but most scholars of religions are not thieves. They do not copyright other people’s knowledge in the hopes of making a fortune.³ But do they destroy other people’s knowledge? This is somewhat trickier. To reply that the study of religions, like anthropology, has actually helped to preserve religious knowledge is to miss the point. To reply that science is science, it is what the university does, come what may, is to beg the question. Does the study of religion impose one manner of thinking about religions and destroy others? Consider the opposition that has erupted in India over representations of the Harappans and the alleged Aryan invasion or migration by what a prominent Hindu-nationalist archaeologist has labeled ‘Marxists in India . . . Muslim fundamentalists and Neo-Imperialists in England and America’ (Gupta 2001: 58). Recently, some have taken to calling the destruction of traditional knowledge, especially in colonial situations, ‘epistemicide’ (e.g. Moosa 2006).

There are legitimate concerns about the creation and advancement of knowledge in situations characterized by inequality in power and access to

resources—situations epitomized by colonialism—but it should also be easy to see problems with a simplistic invocation of ‘epistemicide’. Like invocations of ‘perspectivalism’, ‘incommensurability’, or ‘imperialism’, the specter of epistemicide may lead to an argument that all local knowledges are equally true. We all know that knowledge is always contextually embedded and that we see the world from different perspectives. Nevertheless, it is impermissible—by virtue of the genetic fallacy—to accept or reject claims to knowledge on the basis of such embeddedness, as if British chemists two centuries ago were entitled either to deny the existence of oxygen or to insist upon their right to hold the phlogiston theory because the oxygen theory was French knowledge threatening British knowledge with epistemicide. (The word ‘oxygen’ was coined by the French chemist Lavoisier.) Scholars, including scholars of religion, do not set out to destroy knowledge; they aim to create it. But they do set out to assess claims to knowledge as critically as possible and to reject those claims that cannot withstand testing. Without such an attitude, one can hardly pursue knowledge seriously.

That is not to deny that the study of religion faces issues concerning objects, methods, and theories that are global in scope, even if those issues have been mis-stated or overstated, sometimes ludicrously so. A claim to be heard is not a claim to have one’s views accepted but a claim not to be excluded from the common pursuit of knowledge for arbitrary reasons. If this volume demonstrates nothing else, it should demonstrate that there are scholars of religions around the world whose thinking deserves attention by virtue of its quality. As Vineeta Sinha has noted, along with many others, that is not always the norm. To risk excessive generalization: keynote speakers at conferences in Southeast Asia—and I suspect elsewhere—tend to be Western Europeans and North Americans. Keynote speakers at conferences in Europe and North America tend to be—Western Europeans and North Americans (Sinha 2003: 15). When scholars in, for example, Africa, South Asia, or Latin America examine persons, events, and things in their localities or areas of interest, their results tend to be taken as having local significance. When scholars in Europe, North America, and to some extent Australia and New Zealand examine persons, events, and things in their own localities or areas of interest, they have a greater chance of ‘having’ universal significance (Sinha 2003: 16). Theories that claim wide attention generally originate in Europe and North America. Scholars elsewhere tend to apply those theories more than develop their own. To the extent that they do develop theories, the impact of their theories tends to remain local (Sinha 2003: 10–11).

As in the case of androcentrism, which Sinha also addresses, these observations have a political edge—in her words, they issue a call to ‘open the social sciences’ (Gulbenkian Commission 1996)—but they do so only because they point to violations of the ideals of universality and equality implicit in global standards of knowledge and scholarship. The same is true of the

widespread efforts to deconstruct inherited terminology. Statements such as ‘religion is a Western construction and therefore inapplicable elsewhere’ are simply examples of poor reasoning. But it is not poor reasoning to ask about each of our categories, including ‘religion’, what Vineeta Sinha (2006) has asked about ‘folk Hinduism’: ‘Given that the category was generated in a particular sociocultural, historical context in relation to a specific research agenda, what is its relevance in analysing phenomena in vastly different circumstances?’ Posing that question is nothing more than standard scholarly practice in every field, provided one does not prejudge the answer. For ‘religion’, at least, the current consensus seems to favor keeping it.

Where some see difficulties, others see opportunities. Some opportunities for a global study of religion are institutional: the opportunity to include representatives from various parts of the world on governing bodies; the opportunity to design conferences with keynote speakers who do not originate from or work in Europe or North America, as when, at the nineteenth Congress of the IAHR (Tokyo, 2005) scholars from China (Zhuo Xinping) and Japan (Shizuteru Ueda) as well as from Europe and North America gave plenary addresses. Other opportunities are intellectual. People recite their pasts in part to say who they are today. Scholars of religions who simply trace the study of religions to the arrival of Europeans or European thought in their regions overlook opportunities to explore earlier traditions of thought. For example, prior to European colonialism West Africans produced a rich literature in Arabic on religions, along with many other topics. The first Ming emperor, Ming Taizu (1328–1398), wrote a treatise on religion (Pye 2004: 91). In this volume Patrice Brodeur provides a rich account of the ‘proto-history’ of the study of religion in North Africa and West Asia, including the work of al-Shahrastānī (1076–1153), who, according to some, wrote the world’s first history of religions. Exploring such predecessors may in turn open up opportunities to explore distinctive objects, methods, and theories.

The success with which scholars worldwide make use of opportunities for a global study of religion depends in part upon the seriousness with which we recognize challenges within them. One significant challenge is the unequal distribution of wealth and power throughout the world, a point that Ezra Chitando emphasizes. On the whole, scholars from poorer nations find it more costly in terms of percentage of income and wealth, and therefore more difficult, to participate in international activities than scholars from richer nations do. Without significant support, these scholars will inevitably have limited voice. Poorer regions also face challenges in terms of human capital. One such challenge arises when a relatively large number of high-profile scholars understandably take advantage of opportunities to work in richer countries. Another simply comes from not being able to afford the social or monetary costs of higher education. Over the last fifty years, an increasing number of people throughout the world have pursued tertiary education, but

while in the year 2000 all other regions of the globe averaged more than 200 students in tertiary education for every 10,000 persons, that number for sub-Saharan Africa was less than fifty (Schofer and Meyer 2005: 908). A related problem, which emerges not only from Chitando's chapter but also from the contributions by Eugen Ciurtin, He Guanghu, and Patrice Brodeur, is political. We should be wary, however, of attributing political problems exclusively to the world outside Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. For example, along with others I argued, as president of the North American Association for the Study of Religion, against proposing to host the next IAHR Congress in the United States because of potential difficulties participants might face in gaining entrance to the country. (The 2010 Congress will be held in Toronto.)

Another significant challenge that a global study of religions faces is the challenge to avoid trivialization.⁴ We trivialize when we reduce epistemological issues to slogans such as 'epistemicide' or 'neo-liberal imperialism'. We trivialize when we ignore the complexity of people who inhabit our world, as in speaking about 'the Other', which excuses us from engaging with other people, including colleagues, and allows us to trade instead in nothing more than Hegelianesque antitheses to whatever it is 'we' happen to think—or more likely, whatever arguably prevalent views we happen to dislike. We also trivialize when we make, as I sometimes see happen in North America, the issue of studying versus practicing religion an issue of 'the West versus the rest'. On the one hand, interreligious dialogue is just as much a European and North American program as is the academic study of religion. Compare the distinction that Fujiwara notes (citing Tsuneya Wakimoto) between 'Japanese pluralism' and 'Western tolerance and dialogue'; note, too, that at Bangalore in 1967 Cantwell Smith tried to sell interreligious dialogue to Indian academics (Khan 2005: 8790). On the other hand, such an approach ignores the complex levels on which intellectual activity takes place in all parts of the world and risks confining scholars outside of Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand to the role of ethnographic object, nothing more. (Ezra Chitando reminds us how wrong it is simply to assume that prior to European colonization 'everyone' in sub-Saharan Africa was religious.) We trivialize when we speak today of the 'Western' university. The contemporary university is a distinctively global institution that arose after World War II. It is informed by European and North American predecessors, it is true; but it also differs from them, just as it differs from more distant predecessors in North Africa and West Asia and from the even earlier Buddhist universities of northeast India. Similarly, we trivialize when we speak of 'Western science'. Science is a global undertaking. It must be. A science that is geographically limited—one that sees the oxygen theory of combustion as fit for one group of people, but the phlogiston theory as fit for another—is no science at all. (That different groups of people may actually hold different theories is beside the point.)

Finally, a global study of religion may face a practical challenge that characterizes all human intellectual activity, but one that particularly characterizes the study of religion. If Robert McCauley is right, the human brain finds religion easy but science considerably more difficult. In addition, I suspect that the study of religion tends to draw people who find religious thinking personally attractive. That is probably especially true where, as in much of the world, the study of religion is localized in its own academic unit. Given both neurobiological and social dynamics, scholars of religion will probably always face the challenge of distinguishing religious from scientifically demonstrable claims. Among other things, that means that the study of religion as imaged in this book will never encompass all human discourse about religion.

NOTES

- 1 To avoid possible ambiguity, let me say that—along the lines of Clifford Geertz’s distinction between symbols of and symbols for—my intention is to provide a ‘vision of’ religious studies, not a ‘vision for’ religious studies, in the sense of setting a global agenda.
- 2 The classification appears in other languages as follows:
 Arabic: *الدين* (*al-dīn*) and *اللاهوت* (*al-lāhūt*) belong to *الدراسات الإنسانية* (*al-dirasāt al-insānīya*);
 Chinese: *宗教* (*zong jiao*) and *神学* (*shen xue*) belong to *人文学科* (*ren wen xue ke*);
 French: *Religion* and *théologie* belong to *Lettres*;
 Russian: *Религия* (*religiya*) and *теология* (*teologiya*) belong to *Гуманитарные науки* (*gumanitarnye nauki*);
 Spanish: *Religión* and *teología* belong to *Humanidades*.
- 3 Some do, of course, set themselves up as gurus. I leave to one side the question of whether large academic salaries in rich countries are justified by the value added to material from religious traditions during the course of research. I also recognize intellectual property issues concerning royalties from publishing primary sources, such as traditional oral stories.
- 4 Discussing the Eurocentrism of the social sciences, Vineeta Sinha (2003: 12) warns against three dangers: trivializing the issue, rationalizing it, or incorporating it into one’s considerations superficially.

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