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Carole M. Cusack and Rachelle Scott

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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**Carole M. Cusack** is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Sydney. She trained as a medievalist and her doctorate was published as *Conversion Among the Germanic Peoples* (Cassell, 1998). Since the late 1990s she has taught in contemporary religious trends. She is the author of *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith* (Ashgate, 2010).

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**Rachelle Scott** studies the history of Theravada Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia, with an emphasis on contemporary Buddhism in Thailand. Her first book, *Nirvana for Sale?: Buddhism, Wealth, and the Dhammakāya Temple* (SUNY Press, 2009), examined contemporary debates over monastic and lay wealth in Thailand.

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The second issue of *Fieldwork in Religion* for 2018 contains five research articles that enhance our understanding of fieldwork in various ways. It also revisits scholarly questions and research contexts that have been important for the journal since its first issue in 2005. For this reason, the first contribution by Sophie Gilliat-Ray (Cardiff University), “From ‘Closed Worlds’ to ‘Open Doors’: (Now) Accessing Deobandi *darul uloom* in Britain”, is especially powerful, as it revisits the author’s famous piece, “Closed Worlds: (Not) Accessing Deobandi *dar ul-uloom* in Britain” from 2005, in which the unusual task of describing and analysing a failed research project was undertaken. Thirteen years later Gilliat-Ray can further clarify the state that obtained in the early 2000s and confirm that there have been significant changes, in part due to the emergence of a new generation of British-born Deobandi scholars.

The second article is by Hisanori Kato (Chuo University, Japan). In “Religion and Locality: The Case of the Islam Nusantara Movement in Indonesia” he investigates the particularly local flavour of Islam in Indonesia through a close study of the Islam Nusantara Movement which was launched in 2015 by *Nahdlatul Ulama*,

Indonesia's largest Islamic organization. This openness to local culture is contrasted with the more conservative approach of the second-largest organization, *Muhammadiyah*, which is rigid in its commitment to a less embedded version of Islam, one it deems more authentic, and which is termed "modernist".

The next article, "I am Mother to my Plants': Trees, Plants and Private Gardens in the Practice of Modern Witches and Pagans", is by Breann Fallon (University of Sydney), and reports on a survey administered in 2016 to collect information from members of nature-based religious movements in Australia, New Zealand, Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States. Fallon surveys the meanings of trees and other plants in a range of traditional religions and then reports on the data collected in the survey, emphasizing the ways that Pagans saw gardening as a means to connect with nature and the divine.

The fourth contribution is Richard Gauvain's (The British University in Egypt) "Just Admit it Man, You're a Spy!': Fieldwork Explorations into the Notion of Salafi 'Oppositionality'". This fascinating article investigates what Gauvain views as the lack of "positionality" of scholars doing fieldwork in Salafi circles, and their unwillingness to engage with what he terms Salafi "oppositionality". Gauvain is frank about the lack of success he had while doing fieldwork in two quite different Salafi circles in Egypt, and he cites Gilliat-Ray's pioneering study of fieldwork failure mentioned above.

The final article is by four Indonesian scholars, Siti Rohmah (Brawijaya University), M. Syukri Ismail (Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI) YASNI BUNGO), Moh. Anas Kholish (State Islamic University, Maulana Malik Ibrahim), and Mona Novita (Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI) YASNI BUNGO), and is titled "The Recontextualization of Islamic Peace Education: A Study of the Theory of Mohammed Abu-Nimer in the Indonesian Context". There are interesting synergies with Kato's broader study of the public role of Islam in Indonesia, and the focus is on school education and youth programmes. It is a rare occurrence that an issue of *Fieldwork in Religion* has four articles on Islam by scholars from such varied locations as the United Kingdom, Japan, Egypt and Indonesia, and we welcome this diversification of the authors and topics that are being published in our journal.

Our thanks, as always, are due to the referees who provided feedback to the five authors. We are grateful also to George Chryssides, the journal's Review Editor, for the book reviews. We acknowledge the invaluable assistance of the staff at Equinox Publishing, and also of Sarah Norman, *Fieldwork in Religion's* excellent production editor. We are especially proud of bringing this issue to completion on time, which testifies to the promptness and responsiveness of the authors, whom we congratulate on their published work.