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EDITORIAL

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Our contributions to this edition of FIR are wide-ranging in subject matter and in the geographical location of the authors. From Gina Smith, who draws upon the fieldwork that she conducted amongst Sufis in Senegal whilst working as a senior master in an upper secondary school in the locality, to Glenys Eddy from Sydney, Australia. The fieldwork includes research undertaken in Senegal, France, Australia, Britain, Mauritius and ranges from fire-walking as an example of “extreme ritual” to atheist conventions. I guess FIR is truly international in authorship and scope as it approaches its first decade of publication. Our articles are united, however, by the originality of approaches used to fieldwork from the application of advanced technology to the novel reapplication and reconsideration of classical theories in sociology and anthropology. I would like to take the opportunity to thank our contributors from around the world and remind our readers that FIR welcomes guest-edited editions. You may be sitting on a number of papers from themed conferences or postgraduate seminars in which fieldwork is a significant ingredient. Please send them our way as ideally we would like to maintain one guest-edited edition each year of publication.

The articles in this edition begin with Gina Smith’s “Educational Choices in Senegal: A Case Study among Tijani Fulbe in a Sufi Village, Department of Vélingara.” Her research centres on Islamic education in Senegal and on the

Gounassianke branch of the Sufi movement, Tijaniyya, in Senegal and in France. The case study, although rooted in the traditional Qur'anic education, becomes topical in that a renewed interest in such education globally is forming part of an emic/etic debate on Islamic education. The article examines the values attached to education in a village where a state school challenges the established educational culture of the Sufi shaykh and of the parents.

The next contribution is "Narrated Photography: Visual Representations of the Sacred among Young Polish Migrants in England," by Sarah Dunlop of the University of Birmingham and Peter Ward of NLA University College in Bergen, Norway. The article draws upon how a recently refined visual ethnographic research method, "narrated photography," contributes to the study of religion. The author demonstrates how "narrated photography" has the potential to expand our conceptions of lived religion through the inclusion of visual material culture and the visual context of the research participants. In this case, the data revealed that the Polish young people view structures within their landscape through a particularly Polish Catholic lens. These findings shed light on the religious tensions that migrants encounter in everyday life.

Dimitris Xygalatas, of Aarhus University and the University of Connecticut, has focused on the practice of extreme rituals around the world for most of his career. He has conducted several years of ethnographic research in Greece, Bulgaria, Spain, and Mauritius and has pioneered new methods, integrating ethnographic and experimental approaches in field research. His article, "The Biosocial Basis of Collective Effervescence: An Experimental Anthropological Study of a Fire-Walking Ritual," revisits Émile Durkheim's classical notion of "collective effervescence." He argues that although this notion has informed generations of anthropologists, it has been notoriously difficult to quantify. Through his case study he elaborates on the use of physiological measurements alongside traditional ethnographic methods to operationalize and quantify this notion.

There is one contribution from the University of Sydney. Glenys Eddy, in an article entitled "An Ethnography of the Vipassana Meditation Retreat: A Reflexive Evaluation of the Participant-Observer's Meditation Experience as an Interpretive Tool," uses data obtained from fieldwork conducted between 2003 and 2005 at the Blue Mountains Insight Meditation Centre (BMIMC) in Medlow Bath, NSW Australia, to illustrate the process by which aspects of doctrine come to be accepted through an experiential understanding of their import. The author demonstrates the limitations of the researcher's own meditation experience when used as an interpretive tool for ethnographic data, and the need for the researcher to reflexively examine the way in which their own religious preferences and biases affect

the significance they attribute to their own meditation experience, thus providing new insights into the old emic/etic debates in the study of religion.

The final contribution of this edition is an interesting departure for FIR and opens the doors to scholars involved in hermeneutical analysis of archival material. Andrew Cheatle, “Reflections on the Creation of a Research Archive on One of the Mid-Twentieth Century’s Most Renowned Religious Figures,” explores the processes of tracking down archival material on one of Methodism’s leading theologians during the period of WWII. The tracking of the archives involved the author in considerable interaction with people who held material, and consequently blurs the borders between textual and field study.