
Carole M. Cusack and Rachelle Scott

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

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 2022 showcases six research articles from scholars based in the Philippines, Scotland, Italy, Poland, Estonia, and England. It is a privilege to work with such a diverse group of scholars who engage with research in Religious Studies through a range of approaches, from participatory action research, through survey and interview techniques, to critical discourse analysis, and autobiographical elicitation. The topic areas of the articles are as varied as the authors' locations and research methods: Catholic religious vocations in the Philippines; Evangelicals working in the National Health Service (NHS) in England; participants in two identity-conferring sports in Italy; shifting attitudes to ecology and environmentalism in Catholic newspapers in Italy and Poland; researching in sacred spaces including the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route and English cathedrals; and residential immersive fieldwork among dancer-mediums in Bhaktapur, Nepal.

The first article by Petervir A. Paz (Caraga State University, Philippines) is "Exploring Life Narratives on Challenged Religious Vocation: A Phenomenological

Study of One's Discernment". This research presents interviews with three Christian brothers from the Alliance of Two Hearts which identified six key themes in their commitment to professed religious life. Fascinatingly, these themes address issues such as resilience in the face of a troubled conversion, and the value of a period of doubt or a spiritual crisis in strengthening commitment to the religious vocation. This article situates the testimonies of these men in the context of the Roman Catholic Church in the twenty-first century, which is struggling with acknowledgement of culpability for institutional child sexual abuse and is facing a decline in vocations to be priests, nuns, and brothers, among other problems.

The second piece, "Developing an Autobiographical Elicitation Methodology to Explore Lived Religion among Evangelical Christians Working in Healthcare in England" by Jennifer Riley (University of Aberdeen, Scotland), is an investigation of a new methodological blending of autobiographical self-reflection and semi-structured interviews. Riley employs a lived religion framework to examine faith, working life, and identity among Evangelical Christians working in the NHS. Her respondents share ethical concerns that are relevant to all Christians in healthcare (abortion, end-of-life care, patients with diverse sexualities, and so on) and the method is advocated because the interviewees have an unusual degree of agency as to what is discussed.

Next is "Exploring Engaged Spirituality through Martial Arts: Pedagogies of Engagement in *Boxe Popolare* and *Odaka Yoga*" by Matteo Di Placido (University of Turin) and Lorenzo Pedrini (University of Milan – Bicocca). This fascinating study considers two kinds of body-based discipline (one a form of boxing, one a form of yoga) which, despite formally non-religious status, both invoke ritual performance and demand certain commitments. The authors draw attention to the ways that practitioner activities focus on identity and transformation, and therefore disrupt the neo-liberal narrative about consumerist activities and (to a lesser extent) cultural appropriation.

The fourth contribution, "Different Shades of Green: Ecology in Catholic Weekly Publications in Poland and Italy from 2010 to 2020", is by Marcin Jewdokimow (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Poland), Wojciech Sadłóń (Institute for Catholic Church Statistics and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Poland), and Marco Castagnetto (Link Campus University in Rome and the University of Turin). This research explores Catholic press articles in progressive and conservative publications to determine their attitudes to the environment after the promulgation of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015), in which the then new Pope revitalized Catholic environmental thought.

The fifth article is by Tiina Sepp (University of Tartu, Estonia), and is titled "From the Camino de Santiago to English Cathedrals: Conducting Fieldwork in

Sacred Spaces". This study is an auto-ethnography in which the researcher considers her position (as scholar and pilgrim) in the field, assessing two projects, one along the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route, and the other the "Pilgrimage and England's Cathedrals (PEC), Past and Present" Arts and Humanities Research Council Grant (2014–2018).

The final contribution, "Ancestors, Goddesses, Ritual and Politics: Fieldwork in Bhaktapur, Nepal", is by Matthew Martin (Independent scholar, Cardiff, UK), and examines his two periods of fieldwork living with and among the Banmalas, a family of dancer-mediums which performs a series of rituals around Bhaktapur, Nepal between October and June every year. The experience of long-form residential work from an anthropological standpoint is interrogated, in addition to the culture and rituals Martin encountered while conducting research.

It is always inspiring to put together an issue of *Fieldwork in Religion*. My co-editor Rachelle Scott and I thank the authors who consistently send us such fine writing, and the referees who provided feedback on the six research articles in this issue. We are very grateful to George Chryssides, *Fieldwork in Religion's* Review Editor, for the book reviews. George has been in this role since *Fieldwork in Religion* began in 2005; we will miss his sound academic judgement and good humour as much as the reviews he so expertly commissions and edits for each issue. We acknowledge the assistance of the staff at Equinox Publishing, and of Sarah Norman, our amazing production editor.