
Editors' Introduction

In 2018, sports lovers from around the world tuned-in to the twenty-third Winter Olympics, hosted by South Korea. Viewers of downhill skiing, however, may have been unaware of the controversy surrounding the events on Mount Gariwang. Many of the downhill ski runs, constructed specifically for the 2018 Olympics in order to meet international competitive guidelines, were built through old-growth forests considered sacred by some South Koreans. Along with 500-year old stands of trees, the forests were home to lynx, flying squirrels, and endangered plant species. While their response left many environmental groups unsatisfied, the local Olympics organizing committee agreed to transplant some of the trees and replant new trees following the conclusion of the games (McCurry and Howard 2015). Leaving aside views on the appropriateness of the Olympic Committee's actions, this story raises a key point for this issue of the *JSRNC*: rather than forgotten remnants of pre-modern religions, sacred forests remain vital dimensions of human societies across the contemporary world.

With issue 12.3 of the *JSRNC*, the editors are happy to introduce a unique special feature on sacred trees, arranged and edited by Carole Cusack of the Department of Religion at the University of Sydney. This special feature includes an investigation of sacred trees in India by Louise Fowler-Smith, a study of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' view of sacred forests by Jason Brown, and Cusack's own history of the Glastonbury Thorn, a tree situated on England's Wearyall Hill and at the focal point of many local religious observances. Cusack describes the vision driving this special feature and the content of the included articles in greater detail in her introductory comments that follow. The editors of the *JSRNC* are thrilled to include these featured articles and believe that our multi-disciplinary audience will find them to be important entries into the ongoing scholarship in the religion/nature/ culture nexus.

Following the featured articles, this issue continues with a review essay of Lisa Sideris' book, *Consecrating Science: Wonder, Knowledge, and the Natural World* (2017), by environmental philosopher J. Baird Callicott. In this essay, Callicott provides a detailed review of Sideris' book as well

as his own evaluations of the work of many of Sideris' research subjects, such as E.O. Wilson, Teilhard de Chardin, Brian Swimme, and Mary Evelyn Tucker, among others. The result is an engaging and entertaining journey through the intersections of spirituality and science by one of the world's foremost environmental philosophers. Readers who are interested in this debate should also consult *JSRNC* 9.2 where many of these issues were examined in a forum including Sideris, Callicott, and others such as Ursula Goodenough, Celia Deanne-Drummond, and Adrian Ivakhiv.

Returning to an arboreal theme, this issue concludes with Çağdaş Dedeoğlu's review of *Under Osman's Tree* (2017), an environmental history of the early modern Ottoman Empire by Alan Mikhail. As the *JSRNC* advances into its second decade of production, we hope to continue developing creative and unique formats for scholarship. Readers who would like to propose future special features or entire special issues should contact the editors or consult the Special Issue Proposal Guidelines (<http://www.religionandnature.com/journal/special-issues.htm>).

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References

- McCurry, Justin, and Emma Howard. 2015. 'Olympic Organisers Destroy "Sacred" South Korean Forest to Create Ski Run', *The Guardian*, 16 September. Online: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/sep/16/olympic-organisers-destroy-sacred-south-korean-forest-to-create-ski-run>.
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- Sideris, Lisa H. 2017. *Consecrating Science: Wonder, Knowledge, and the Natural World* (Oakland: University of California Press).