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**Guest Editor's Introduction:  
Indigenous Knowledge, Spiritualities, and Science:  
An Ongoing Discussion\***

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The central themes discussed in this issue<sup>1</sup> are intrinsically related. Indigenous Knowledge and its transmission is a key issue for both the indigenous and the scientific communities. It behooves the latter to decolonize its methodology and worldview in order to understand indigenous ecologies and their views of Western development in the name of science. Indigenous spiritualities are in the domain of the elders, many of whom have left warnings of imminent eco-catastrophes resulting from hyper-industrialization and offerings of spiritual hope for their followers and for all of humankind. Knowledge and spirituality together, then, address broader questions such as the future of humans in nature.

\* As Professor Wright explains in this introduction, a symposium held at the University of Florida initiated the discussions that have led to this special issue. The symposium was made possible by a grant titled 'Religion, Science and the Future', which was funded by the John Templeton Foundation, with additional funding from the College of Liberal Arts and Science, the Division of Research, and the Department of Religion at the University of Florida. This grant also supported a previous issue of the *JSRNC* and the 10th Anniversary Conference of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture, which was held in January 2016, and will lead to another special issue under this theme. I wish gratefully to acknowledge all this support.—Bron Taylor, *JSRNC* Editor-in-Chief.

1. I wish to thank the *JSRNC*'s editorial team, especially Managing Editor Joy Greenberg and Assistant Editor Joe Witt (Mississippi State University), who kindly assisted in the editorial process for this issue.

I begin this special issue by introducing the late Seneca philosopher and historian John Mohawk and reprinting an important essay by him, 'The Sacred in Nature: Mythology Can Change Our Minds', about the limitations of scientific knowledge, once so certain of its mechanistic and rational functioning. Mohawk reminds of the ways in which Western philosophy and science stand to gain from an understanding of indigenous sacred stories as 'ideas of how the universe works'. A recognition of mystery in the universe is a theme that has been of considerable importance in discussions of dark green religions (Taylor 2010), for example. Mohawk's essay provides a suitable comparative frame for what follows.

Next, James Treat's 'Peyote Woman' offers an example of the ancient peyote religion documented by late nineteenth-century ethnologist James Mooney's study of and experiences among Native Americans of the Southern Plains. They believe that the peyote plant and ceremony were given to them by Peyote Woman in primordial times, and an entire myth/ritual complex surrounds the taking of this sacrament that is also used as a cure-all healing plant. The peyote religion is, in Catherine Albanese's understanding, a 'nature religion' that 'worked to achieve a harmony [and]...control [over]...the powers that impinged on life as native peoples knew it' (in Treat, p. 142).

Relations with the Other (or others)—be it nature, the environment, other cultures—are a critical question in Marie Alohalani Brown's study of the political movement among Hawaiians regarding the sacred mountain of Mauna Kea, *Mauna Kea: Ho'omana Hawai'i and Protecting the Sacred*. There, science and nature religions clash directly over cosmologies. The legal and political battles over the construction of another powerful telescope (the fourteenth) on the mountaintop, which is considered a temple by Native Hawaiians, involve non-indigenous opponents who question the authenticity of the 'set of beliefs and belief-related practices' indigenous to the Hawaiian Islands (p. 152).

The wisdom in orally transmitted shamanic prophecies is explored in my article, 'Wise People of Great Power: Jaguar-spirit Shamans Among Baniwa of the Northwest Amazon', which explores Baniwa jaguar shamans and their sharp critiques of the West's destructiveness and its association with sickness and death. Shamanic powers, acquired over a lifetime, they believe, have prepared them to experience other realities and worlds, including those of the Creator, and time-spaces that transcend all material distinction. Such experiences can be revelatory and salvific or apocalyptic—in either case, prophetic.

Next is 'Re-imagining Nature and American Indian Identity in Film', an essay by Ulrike Wiethaus about the self-depictions by indigenous

persons in recent film production, which are distinct from non-native representations of Indians. Typically, the latter cast the Indian as part of a pristine and wild nature that Western colonists tamed and civilized. By contrast, recent films such as those about Indian boarding or residential schools have contested the religion/nature/culture nexus as a 'contact zone'.

The featured articles conclude with a Perspectives article by William Lyon, 'The Necessity to Rethink Magic', regarding the mechanistic scientific worldview and highlighting studies by Niels Bohr about the interrelation between matter and consciousness. Although the wider implications of these studies have been as yet undetermined, Lyon argues that one area, shamanism, is a good candidate for looking at such interrelations.

On October 13, 2014, the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program (A.I.I.S.) at the University of Florida sponsored a small Conference on 'Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous Spirituality and the Future of Humans in Nature'. The choice of conference date was intentional, as we strove to align with the growing movement in the Americas that commemorates Indigenous Peoples' Day, rather than the ill-famed Columbus Day. Indigenous Peoples' Day, in contrast, provides a day to remember the atrocities committed in the name of 'discovery', and the misrepresentations that generations of students have been taught about this process, and indigenous peoples' contributions to discussions involving the future of the planet and its inhabitants.

In her Field Notes contribution, 'What's in a Name? Autonymia Meets Cartography in Tribal Nations Maps', Joy H. Greenberg reports on cartographer Aaron Carapella's 2014–16 publication of a series of Tribal Nations Maps showing the locations of approximately 750 Native nations from North America to South America, using their indigenous autonyms prior to colonization. Based on over a decade of research, the maps are intended as a teaching tool and, in Carapella's words, 'to instill pride in Native peoples' (p. 232)—another of John Mohawk's life goals.

Indigenous 'discovery' issues continue to receive attention, spurred by the release of director Sheldon Wolfchild's documentary, *The Doctrine of Discovery: Unmasking the Domination Code* (2014) and the book upon which it is based by Steven Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery* (2008). Reviewed by Joy H. Greenberg in 'The Doctrine of Discovery as a Doctrine of Domination', the film and book refer to the Papal Bull of 1493 that justified the oppression by Christians of all indigenous peoples, which was the basis for US Supreme Court denial of Native American ownership of land in 1823. The film was shown across the United States on Columbus Day, 2015,

and reminds us of the Vatican's paradoxical gesture earlier that year: on the one hand apologizing to the native people of the Americas for the Church's actions against them over the past five centuries, while on the other hand, recently canonizing Father Junipero Serra, whose treatment of native Californians has been a long-time subject of controversy.

The concluding essay, "Earth Eaters" and the Spirits of *Omama*, is my review of *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*. Written by Yanomami shaman Davi Kopenawa from the Demini River region in northern Amazonas State, Brazil, and the French ethnologist and indigenist Bruce Albert, who has worked with the Yanomami since the 1970s, this remarkable book is the product of a 30-year collaboration between the authors. Detailing Kopenawa's life story, the book presents his views blaming Western society for its large-scale 'development' programs over the past 40 years that have wreaked havoc upon the Yanomami people in Brazil and Venezuela. This special issue of the *JSRNC* closes with an Appendix that contains the 'Indigenous Elders and Medicine Peoples Council Statement' presented at the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, COP21, that took place in Paris in November and December of 2015.

In nearly all of the articles, science and indigenous nature religions are placed in discussions relating to issues of power: the West's insatiable quest for knowledge of the universe clashes with indigenous Hawaiian spiritual ecology; the recognition of shamanic knowledge as 'the most ancient form of science' collides with the West's mechanistic view of science; knowledge of the human-like characters in the peyote religion that respond compassionately to people in times of great need conflicts with Western monotheism; and powerful knowledge of cosmic forces believed to be embodied in indigenous seers and savants who are capable of inverting ethnic inequalities contradicts Western worldviews. Above all, we hear indigenous voices critiquing the way in which the West's search for knowledge has frequently been accompanied by predatory development and colonial domination.

### *Reference*

Taylor, Bron. 2010. *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley: University of California Press).