
NGG Annual Conference 2013

Lived Religion: Studying Religious Practice

24–25 October 2013, Leiden University



**Nederlands Genootschap
voor Godsdienstwetenschap**

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Programme overview

Day 1: Thursday 24 October 2013

12.00 – 13.00	Arrival and registration
13.00 – 13.15	Opening of the conference (Kocku von Stuckrad) Lipsius 228
13.15 – 15.15	Thursday panel sessions A+B Lipsius 228 and 307
15.15 – 15.45	Coffee break and poster session Lipsius 228
15.45 – 17.15	Thursday paper sessions A+B Lipsius 228 and 307
17.15 – 17.30	Relocation
17.30 – 19.00	Keynote lecture by Ronald Hutton Academy Building
19.00 – 19.45	Drink sponsored by BRILL Café Barrera
20.00	Conference dinner De Grote Beer

Day 2: Friday 25 October 2013

09.00 – 10.15	General assembly NGG Lipsius 002
10.30 – 12.15	Friday panel sessions A+B Lipsius 227 and 002
12.15 – 13.45	Lunch De Grote Beer
13.45 – 15.05	Keynote lecture by Nathal Dessing Lipsius 227
15.05 – 15.30	Coffee break Lipsius 227
15.30 – 17.00	Friday paper sessions A+B Lipsius 227 and 002
17.00	Closure of the conference (Kocku von Stuckrad)

Keynote speakers

Prof.Dr. Ronald Hutton, Bristol University

Lived Religion in Theory and Practice: The Case of Modern Paganism



Modern Paganism offers a field for study which addresses all of the aims of this conference: it explores non-institutional religion; the tensions between lived and prescribed religion; the role of history in the making of lived religious traditions; the problems of detachment and involvement; the status of 'insider knowledge'; and issues of validity, verification and reflexivity. It does so because of its special qualities as a modern religion. It was created largely on a model provided by the academic orthodoxy of the time, as published by leading historians, and using features of that model which were especially attractive to a modern counter-culture. In doing so it brought two difficulties on itself, that the orthodoxy changed over time, to pronounce the model no longer objectively valid, and that the image of the past with which it had identified itself was one deeply disturbing to mainstream modern culture. As a result, a scholar who writes the history of modern Paganism, and especially of modern Pagan witchcraft, is placed in an uncomfortable triangle of relationships: between professional historical writing, modern Pagans, and conventional society.

Prof. Dr. Ronald Hutton is a leading authority on history of the British Isles in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, on the history of the ritual year in Britain and of modern paganism.

Dr. Nathal Dessing, Leiden University

How to Study Everyday Lived Religion



In my talk, I will take the 1961 documentary film *Chronique d'un été* by the sociologist Edgar Morin and the ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch as a starting point for my discussion of what an emphasis on everyday lived religion implies for our research methodologies. *Chronique d'un été* portrays the everyday life mainly of a small group of Parisians in the year 1960 through interviews and short episodes of their lives. The documentary poses interesting questions about the interaction between observer and observed, the relationship between the individual and the social, and the role of reflexivity. It draws our attention to the performative dimensions of the everyday. The aim of my talk is to use perspectives such as this for the study of everyday lived religion. I will argue that a focus on everyday lived religion demands that we transcend the binaries of institutional and noninstitutional, belief and practice, mind and body, and religious authorities and nonexperts, and seek new ways of analyzing how social norms and values are lived in everyday life.

Dr. Nathal M. Dessing is university lecturer in Religious Studies. Her expertise is in anthropology of Islam, Islam in Europe, and ritual studies.

Thursday 24 October

Thursday Panel Session A: Off-topic Session for PhD Students

Thursday 24 October | Lipsius 228 | 13.15-15.15

Chair: Gemma Kwantes, PhD representative, NGG

Greer: "The Only Law We Live By is Fuck'um if They Cannot Take a Joke": The Church of the SubGenius's Mail Bomb to Bob Black

Christian Greer | PhD candidate, University of Amsterdam (Hermeticism Centre)

According to the police report, on November 22nd 1989, John Hagen-Brenner, or, as he was known to his fellow members the Church of the Sub-Genius, Hellswami Satellite Weavers, mailed a nonlethal, improvised explosive device to anarchist luminary and critic of the church, Bob Black. While defended as a prank by his SubGenii brethren, New York law enforcement sided with Black's assessment of the incident as a minor act of terrorism and charged Brenner with a criminal misdemeanor. The disparity between the Church of the SubGenius's interpretation of the letter bomb as a 'prank' and Black's understanding of it as an act of aggression illustrates the radicality of the Church of the Subgenius's idiosyncratic interpretation of what humor is and how it functions within their larger religious framework.

Vliegenhart: Franklin Merrell-Wolff: The "Secular Religion" of a Modern Sage

Dave Vliegenhart | PhD candidate University of Groningen

Recent studies have shown that the secularization of modern western culture(s) is a lot more complicated than scholars have long suggested. Religion is not giving way to secular developments such as science, but instead religious and scientific discourses seem to be entangled. On his personal page on the Website of Leiden University, Wil-lem Drees maintains that "Debates dealing with the relationship between science and religion ... are better understood, in my opinion, as instances of an ongoing competition between various religious and naturalistic views, values and attitudes." Following the "secular religion" of Kocku von Stuckrad, I will argue these debates have inspired interdisciplinary hybrids like the Introceptualism of "modern sage" Franklin Merrell-Wolff (1887-1985), which, in my opinion, are better understood as instances of an on-going reciprocal interaction—rather than competition—between religion and science.

Matsangou: Real and imagined Manichaeans and Crypto-Manichaeans in Greek patristic anti-manichaica (4th-6th centuries).

Rea Matsangou | PhD candidate, University of Leiden

In the Greek patristic corpus, the danger of the Manichaean threat is repeatedly stressed. An impression is created that Manichaeans existed everywhere, and the anti-manichaean polemic abounds. However, incidents of specific Manichaean individuals are very rare and

the Manichaean presence as a historically active distinctive religious community remains elusive, vague and unspecified.

This paper, taking into account the above problematique, aims, through a re-reading of the Greek byzantine ecclesiastic writers, church fathers, and historians, to re-evaluate questions such as: what was the religious and social identity of the Manichaeans in early Byzantium, or whether distinctive Manichaean communities and churches existed.

Ahlili: Magical Papyri: the use of the Qur'an in amulets

Hayat Ahlili | PhD candidate, University of Leiden

Since ancient times people have used amulets supposedly containing certain magical powers which were to protect their owner from the misfortunes and accidents of everyday life. It is precisely the ubiquitous presence of amulets and the widespread belief in and use in the magical powers they represent that make them such dynamic and receptive containers for cultural and religious interaction and exchange. Magic is a most inclusive religious practice and amulets are the written evidence of this dynamic process.

From Islamic Egypt numerous amulets are preserved in Coptic, Greek, Arabic and Judeo-Arabic written on papyrus and paper. Yet these amulets remain very much understudied and few have been published. In this paper, I will present the unique formula tradition of Islamic amulets by presenting an observation about the use of writing on Islamic amulets versus other features and other traditions. By comparing the amulets on papyrus and paper to neighboring contemporary and preceding (Byzantine, Coptic) magical practices from Egypt, I will examine to what extent Islam might have profited from these surrounding cultures in this respect.

Akca: Religious Knowledge in German Quaran Schools (Poster)

Ayse Almila Akca | PhD candidate FU Berlin/Institute of Islamic Studies

My dissertation project analysis the processes of legitimization and authorization of religious knowledge in Qur'an courses in local mosque associations in Germany. The aim of this ethnographical research project is to show, how Islamic knowledge is being preserved, modified, eliminated, or newly introduced through negotiations in the religious field. Main question here is, how the legitimization process depends on the positions of the agents in the religious and nonreligious field (Bourdieu). In the poster-session I plan to present observed controversies in Qur'an courses (e.g. co-education and gender-related topics) and how various agents (e.g. the Imam, the (lay-)board) legitimize the contents e.g. by taking recourse to religious arguments (e.g. certain tafsir), social arguments (e.g. gender-equality), and other arguments not yet classified. The analysis of the legitimization process so far reveals the correlation between authority and social status besides of formal religious authority.

Milerski: US-Vatican International Quest for Religious Freedom (Poster)

Rafael Milerski | PhD candidate University of Munich

The principle of religious freedom has become a justified part of diplomatic activities of the “Western World” bringing together numerous agents of the public realm, including churches, governments and non-governmental organizations, to become defenders of that very right. But are all those different agents promoting the same “religious freedom”? How do they conceptualize it? What are the differences and similarities? What are the philosophical foundations of those concepts? Can a republic, a product of Enlightenment, proclaim the same message as that advocated by a successor of medieval scholasticism and an absolute monarchy?

My project examines the issue of the right to religious freedom as advocated on the international arena by the United States of America and the Holy See - two entities, which radically differ in terms of their political heritage and historical background, and yet are able to cooperate in promoting religious freedom internationally. The project identifies the history of this cooperation, analyzes its scope and scrutinizes the philosophical foundations of the concepts of religious freedom as advocated by the Holy See and the United States.

Thursday Panel Session B: Catching what matters: empirical methods and challenges in studying contemporary religion, sacrality, and spirituality

Thursday 24 October | Lipsius 307 | 13.15-15.15

Chair: Ab de Jong, Leiden University

Researching contemporary lived religion, spirituality, and sacrality raises many practical issues on how to actually conduct the research and get results from the gathered data. This panel addresses the research methods of participant observation, interviews, and questionnaires. In the presentations, Kuttiyanikkal deals with the complexity of different worldviews in performing participant observation in a Hindu community, while Arfman addresses the reciprocal character of the relationship between ritual scholars and ritual experts in the newly emerging ritual field he studies. Wijnia looks at a way of connecting the methodology to the field and the theoretical framework in her research on a festival regarding music and sacrality, and Berghuijs presents a variety of empirical approaches and their implications in exploring the variety of manifestations of spirituality. All four presentations relate methodological issues and challenges to the actual performance of their research and fieldwork for academic purposes.

Kuttiyanikkal: Universal application of participant observation: problems of different worldviews

Cyril Kuttiyanikkal | PhD candidate, Tilburg University

Participant observation is a method researchers use in order to gain an objective understanding of the life of a target group. Using this method to study a group, which has a different worldview, has posed problems for me as a researcher. The problems are on a conceptual level and on a spiritual level, which stem from the framework. On a conceptual level, it is difficult to transcend one's own concepts and frameworks. On a spiritual level, the people of different frameworks grasp the meaning of spirituality differently. Can we understand things independently of our own frameworks, without reference to what we already know?

Arfman: Expert amongst experts: being a ritual scholar in a newly emerging ritual field

William Arfman | PhD candidate Tilburg University

Since the early 1990s, the Netherlands have witnessed the emergence of a new ritual field of collective commemorations. This emerging field is part of a larger reevaluation in the Netherlands of the importance of ritual behaviour. This reevaluation has led to an increased demand for new ritual experiences, which in turn means there are people actively catering to these demands. Doing my fieldwork amongst such 'ritualisers' in the ritual field of collective commemorations, some interesting methodological issues surfaced. Being considered an expert amongst other ritual experts, my ideas and opinions on rituals were actively sought after. This paper discusses the kinds of research encounters in which the researcher not only learns from those involved, but where the reverse is equally true. How

should we deal with these encounters? Can and should they be prevented? Or should we simply accept that we are part of the field we study?

Wijnia: Performing ethnography, music, and sacrality

Lieke Wijnia | PhD candidate, Tilburg University

Sacrality is a notion that can be studied and explored in innumerable ways. The point of departure in this paper is that the sacred is a construct that can be actively attributed or experienced. In other words, it is continuously performed. Therefore, to study the sacred is to study these acts of attribution and experiences, while they take place, or the accounts of them given afterwards. To study the field, those places where these practices are performed, ethnography is a frequently used method. The field in this paper is that of the annual festival Musica Sacra Maastricht. In addition to the concept of sacrality and the method of ethnography, a third performance-related dimension is found here: music. This paper then explores from a performative approach, how the research method of ethnography regarding a field of musical performances can contribute to the study of the concept of sacrality.

Berghuijs: Mapping the fuzziness of spirituality

Joantine Berghuijs | PhD candidate, Utrecht University

'Spirituality' is a popular but also quite commercialised term, with an increasing range of understandings. Its manifestations are clearly not exclusively related to religion. In my research I have applied different empirical approaches to capture the variety of spiritual understandings, ideas, experiences, and practices in the Netherlands. These approaches include a representative survey where I asked respondents for a description of spirituality, their self-definition of being a 'spiritual' or 'religious' person, and their affinity with a large number of spiritual and/or religious expressions. In addition, in a number of interviews, it was possible to explore the background of respondents' spirituality in more detail. I will discuss the outcomes of the different approaches, and what we can learn from each of them, and from combining them.

Thursday Paper Session A: Theorising Lived Religion

Thursday 24 October | Lipsius 228 | 15.45-17.15

Chair: Markus A. Davidsen, Leiden University

Naerebout: Can these dry bones live again? Some thoughts on lived ancient religions

Dr. Frits. G. Naerebout | History Dep., Leiden University

"Lived religion" is a concept that is *en vogue*. Even though "lived religion" and "gelebte Religion" were already around, it seems to be since the publication of McGuire's *Lived Religion* in 2008 that "lived religion" has turned into a real buzz word – even amongst ancient historians: Jörg Rüpke was recipient of an Advanced ERC Grant in 2011 for a research project titled *Lived Ancient Religion: Questioning "cults" and "polis religion"*. This project is said to take "a completely new perspective on the religious history of Mediterranean antiquity, starting from the individual and 'lived' religion instead of cities or peoples." According to Rüpke "lived religion" "focuses on the actual everyday experience, on practices, expressions, and interactions [...]." This does not seem to be "a completely new perspective" but rather a return to a late nineteenth-century preoccupation with ancient rituals and their physical setting combined with current approaches, such as the cognitive study of religion, embodiment, spatiality or materiality. Altogether the question "quid novum" seems a legitimate one to ask. I daresay there is nothing new to what Rüpke (or McGuire) is doing. But now that "lived religion" has gained a name, this is a good occasion to problematize it. Is it in fact an easy thing to study religious practice in the past, either in the form of some new "lived religion" project, or in older approaches? Where does the student of ancient religion, whether he is called Nilsson, Burkert, Rüpke or Naerebout, get this mad idea that he can entrap life two millennia ago?

Tuckett: Altered and Ultered States of Consciousness: a phenomenological perspective on "religious experience"

Jonathan Tuckett | PhD candidate, Stirling University

In his seminal *Dimensions of the Sacred* Ninian Smart describes what he calls harnessing rituals as the "attainment of higher states of consciousness". The expression is somewhat stereotypical of the manner in which many scholars in Religious Studies have spoken about what we grandly call "religious experience". A "religious experience" we are informed entails a "higher" or "altered" state of consciousness. Utilising the phenomenology of Jean-Paul Sartre and Alfred Schutz this paper will argue that the use of "altered state of consciousness" is utterly vacuous and by no means indicates something special. Altered states of consciousness are a daily aspect of a person's life and so mundane that they do not warrant mention. The analysis will highlight that the very language of "religious experiences" and "altered states" perpetuates an essentialising discourse making more of these terms than there actually is on order to afford "religion" a *sui generis* status.

Thursday Paper Session B: Studying Lived Islam

Thursday 24 October | Lipsius 307 | 15.45-17.15

Chair: Merel Kahmann, Leiden University

Waltzer: “Being Muslim”: a deinstitutionalized and “moralized” relationship to the religious heritage

Dr. Lucie Waltzer | Researcher at INFPC

The project questions how muslim migrants in Luxemburg negotiate and redefine salient identity references in a new social political environment and discusses the changing significance of religion and the way it is integrated in the identity patchwork.

According to a constructivist approach, conceiving identity as a constantly negotiated project, reconstructed in interaction and with regard to social context, identities- including religious- are relevant only in relation to particular other groups and in certain situations of interaction.

This paper would explore the emergence of complex identity constructions, related to a dynamic process of appropriation of and distancing from different reference groups and social categories and show how “being muslim” is discursively constructed as membership to a community of values and not necessarily related to ritualized and institutionally recognized practices. The relationship to religion is constructed as “individualized”, “privatized”, “European” and “moralized” and is connected in the discourses of our participants to a certain way of living your life. A qualitative design and a “lived religion” approach were used.

Beilschmidt: Lived Islam in Germany: DiTIB Mosque Communities as Private Collective Spheres

Theresa Beilschmidt | PhD candidate at the Department of Sociology, International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC), Justus Liebig University Giessen / Germany

Amidst debates about the role of ‘public Islam’ in the allegedly secular societies of ‘the West’, it often goes unnoticed that Islamic religiousness in practice involves much more than the public display of symbols. This paper deals with the religious practices of mosque community members of DiTIB, the largest Islamic umbrella organisation in Germany. Based on participant observation and qualitative interviews, I demonstrate that the mosque community members display a form of privatised religion which does not imply the renunciation of participation in religious organisations. Instead, they perceive the community as private and, thus, live their religion in the apparent paradox of a ‘private collective’ or ‘collective privacy’. This privatisation within the community can be seen as yet another facet of lived Islam which points to the diversity within Islamic religious practice in Germany, and all over Europe.

Sunier: Making Islam work in the Netherlands

Prof.Dr. Thijl Sunier | VU University Amsterdam

The paper addresses the theoretical and methodological outlines of a research project about the ways Islam takes shape in Dutch society, dealing with two closely interlinked central domains: (1) leadership, and (2) the creation and application of Islamic law. The project seeks to analyse these developments explicitly from the everyday perspective of 'ordinary Muslims'. The point of departure is the shift of Muslims from a (temporal) migrant community into an integral part of Dutch society.

I will first discuss some of the recent trends in the study of Islam in Europe and in the Netherlands in particular. Then I will elaborate a theoretical and methodological angle from which doctrinal developments in Islam could be studied from the perspective of everyday experiences of ordinary Muslims. Finally I will sketch some relevant domains in which these developments could be applied.

Friday 25 October

Friday Panel Session A: Approaching lived religion through death ritual

Friday 25 October | Lipsius 227 | 10.30-12.15

Chair: William Arfman, PhD representative NGG

Respondent: Prof.Dr. Peter Nissen, Radboud University Nijmegen

This panel brings in the value of death studies for the study of lived religion. Among life cycle events death appears to have a huge impact and the accompanying rites are often assigned great importance. In confrontation with death, the most important cultural values by which people live their lives and evaluate their experiences are conveyed and enacted in concrete practices. Life becomes transparent against the background of death, and fundamental social and cultural issues are revealed (Metcalf & Huntington 1991). Our panel represents the interdisciplinary approach of the Nijmegen Centre for Thanatology, using different methodological and conceptual frames, and is comparative (comparing secular, Christian and Islamic rites). Through studies of these ritual practices core values of religiosity can be observed, making them an indispensable primary source for the study of lived religion.

Markussen: “Turning the churchyard into a Tivoli”: The conflict between official and lived religion over grave decorations in Denmark

Anne Kjærsgaard Markussen | PhD candidate, Radboud University Nijmegen

In the early 21st century conflicts have arisen in Denmark about what items of material culture can be considered proper on churchyards. The great majority of the graveyards is controlled by the Lutheran Church. Local boards take responsibility for the rules and regulations. At issue is to what extent people can decorate the graves of their loved ones “without turning the churchyard into a Tivoli.” The matter, triggered by the steep increase of grave decorations, has been hotly debated: Is it possible to strike a balance between the taste of the bereaved who place manifold things onto graves and of those who oversee the churchyards and are affiliated with the state church? At stake, I argue, are not only different views on aesthetics but also, and foremost, distinctive notions of religiosity. At its core it amounts to a conflict on material religion between people practicing lived religion and representatives of official (prescribed) religion.

Mathijssen: Lived Eschatology in Ecclesial and Non-Ecclesial Funeral Rites

Brenda Mathijssen | PhD candidate, Radboud University Nijmegen

We will address afterlife beliefs of ecclesial and non-ecclesial funeral participants. Although church membership has declined, traditional ideas of an afterlife such as heaven and angels are popular within and outside of the churches (Quartier, 2011). Also symbolic afterlife, for example living on through grandchildren, and literal afterlife, the existence of self after death, play a major role in contemporary funeral rites (Wojtkowiak, 2012). We will focus on literal afterlife beliefs, which uniquely exemplifies the relation between individual and

official belief. Research has mainly been focused upon ritual creativity and implicit ideas of an afterlife. In our paper, we address the question how this relates to liturgical traditions. Literal notions of an afterlife appear among funeral participants, and are influenced by Christian tradition. Using concepts from the Afterdeath Belief Scale as framework, such as annihilation, disembodied spirit, spiritual embodiment, reincarnation and bodily resurrection; we will focus upon literal notions of afterlife and explore their relation to lived religion and Christian tradition (Burriss & Bailey, 2009).

Venhorst: Negotiating Islamic Death Rites in a Small Town Context in the Netherlands

Claudia Venhorst - Postdoc researcher, Radboud University Nijmegen.

Death in a migration context is challenging in many respects, as Muslim migrants in the Netherlands face unfamiliar circumstances. It is an insecure context in which the bereaved often lack experience and knowledge of actual death rites they are expected to perform. This causes a profound fear of ritual failure among the bereaved (Venhorst, 2013).

In this paper is considered how Muslims negotiate their roles in death rites performed in a migration context. Although Islamic law is quite clear on who should participate and how, the regulations are often debated and bent in a given context. Such ritual negotiation appears to be a key to the development of ritual repertoires (Hüsken & Neubert, 2012). The concept of ritual negotiation is interesting when it comes to lived religion and the discrepancy between ritual prescriptions (as provided by Islamic sources) and the actual ritual practice in a particular context.

Friday Panel Session B: Straying from the straight path: how senses of failure inform lived religion

Friday 25 October | Lipsius 002 | 10.30-12.15

Chair: Kocku von Stuckrad, chairman NGG

Respondent: Prof.Dr. Mattijs van de Port

This panel investigates expressions of everyday, lived religion by focusing on self-perceived senses of failure among adherents of different religions in different parts of the world. The recent turn to discipline, ethics and piety in the study of religion has resulted in an overemphasis on religious 'perfection'. Less is known about the ways in which religious practitioners deal with ethical setbacks, including personal struggle, the perception of sins, feelings of inadequacy, or self-perceived lack of religious confidence, faith or belief. The premise of this panel is that these 'senses of failure' offer important and fruitful starting points for the study of lived religion in today's world, where religious commitments are often volatile, religious practitioners are regularly confronted by alternative lifestyles and worldviews, and believers face multiple challenges and desires in their everyday lives. Often, a religious life is a wandering life, in which the interplay between religious and non-religious concerns lead to doubt and ambivalence, but also to personal perceptions of ethical breakdown, minor or major relapse, or even (temporary or prolonged) moral collapse. The papers in this panel demonstrate that lived religion may not be adequately understood without taking this everyday negotiation of 'failure' into account.

Beekers: Trying to fit God in: Worship, work and time among young Muslims and Christians in the Netherlands

Daan Beekers | VU University Amsterdam

In this paper I discuss the setbacks and disappointments that young observant Sunni Muslims and Reformed Christians experience with regard to their ideals of giving worship a central place in their everyday lives. Research on each of these groups tends to focus on the discourses of religious ideals, giving less attention to the everyday practices through which these ideals are achieved to greater or lesser degrees. Based on ethnographic research in the Netherlands, I examine the imperfect realization of religious aspirations against the background of the constraints caused by contemporary capitalist work-regimes. Due to their preoccupations with their jobs and studies, my Muslim and Christian interlocutors simply did not manage to make as much time as they wanted for worship and the cultivation of 'closeness to God'. Nonetheless, it was precisely this recognition of pious 'deficiency' that enabled these young believers to formulate and work on 'projects' of personal religious improvement and, in the final instance, to know and understand themselves as pious subjects. These negotiations of failure, then, constitute a fruitful lens on lived religion. At the same time, this comparative approach provides an opportunity to study the commonalities between lived *religions* in situations in which their adherents are confronted with shared social conditions.

Van de Kamp | Success, risk and failure: the Brazilian Prosperity Gospel in Mozambique

Linda van de Kamp, Tilburg University

Pentecostal churches from Brazil have become popular in the urban centers of Mozambique since the early 1990s when the liberalization of the economic and political domains took off. The Brazilian missionaries stress that a combative faith brings prosperity in all aspects of life. Because many active Pentecostals are not experiencing a better life after their conversion, the question is how they deal with failure in a religious setting that stresses success. I will examine two different ways in which Pentecostals have been incorporating 'intelligent faith' that stresses the necessity of knowing how to use faith and how to engage with the Pentecostal practices. Some Pentecostals see failure as a fruitful element in the conversion process, helping them to learn discerning the powers of good and evil. Others decide to temporarily participate in Pentecostal services and practices to find out what they will gain from it. Their Pentecostal 'intelligent' engagement is important precisely in the way it is taking on private initiative and risk as ways forward, for example by offering excessive amounts of money in church.

Kloos: Ethical improvement, life phase, and the moral dynamics of failure and success in Aceh, Indonesia

David Kloos | International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden & VU University, Faculty of Arts (History), Amsterdam

Inside and outside Indonesia, the Acehnese are known as a particularly 'pious' people. The region has drawn international attention, moreover, because of the implementation since 2003 of (a formulation of) Islamic law. This paper seeks to investigate the various ways in which individual Muslims in Aceh deal with the purist pressures associated with the forces of normative Islam, and try to live a 'good' and successful life. I focus on the relationship between two young men, who run a small barbershop together in the provincial capital Banda Aceh. For both, becoming 'good' and becoming 'successful' are deeply intertwined notions. At the same time, the case shows how the idea of 'failure' constitutes a central repertoire for cultivating future aspirations pertaining to a more religious, more successful, and essentially also 'happier' life. I make use of this case to explore an understudied terrain, namely the relationship between expressions of religiosity and subjective stances toward life phase. By developing a personal, age-, and life-phase based perspective on ordinary ethics, I aim to open up new avenues for discussing the question of Muslim personhood in the context of global processes referred to commonly, but also problematically, as pious 'revival' or 'Islamization'.

De Koning: 'I'm a weak servant': The cultivation of weakness and the problem of sincerity in the life of Dutch Salafi Muslims

Martijn de Koning | Radboud University Nijmegen

It is often noted that Salafi Muslims acquire a sense of pride and empowerment by belonging to a community of the righteous and being part of the perfect religion of Islam. This is often contrasted with daily life where conflicting loyalties, ambiguities and temptations abound. In my contribution I will show that Salafi religiosity is not so much

about reaching for 'pious' perfection within the Salafi movement on the one side and dealing with the ambiguities and vulnerabilities of daily life (with other and often competing loyalties and sensitivities) on the other side. Instead of juxtaposing Salafi organized religiosity and daily life, I will argue that the relation between organized religion and lived religion is a dialectical one, resulting in Salafi Muslims fashioning themselves as weak servants of God. Through exploring the interrelationship of everyday life and Salafi organized religiosity I focus on how a sense of failure among Salafi Muslims is mediated and cultivated through organized Salafi events and institutions. I will show how their continuous doubts about personal sincerity turn into a cultivation of weakness whereby perfection is not about making no mistakes, but about struggling to satisfy Allah and to returning to him in case of errors.

Friday Paper Session A: Conceptualising Religious Affiliation

Friday 25 October | Lipsius 227 | 15.30-17.00

Chair: Frans Wijsen, treasurer NGG

Af Burén: Multiple religious identifications among religious ‘fuzzies’

Ann af Burén | PhD candidate in the Study of Religions, School of Historical and Contemporary Studies, Södertörn University

In this paper, I discuss the religious identifications of 12 neighbors residing in Stockholm, Sweden. These people, none of which are active in any organized form of religion, on two occasions replied to a questionnaire in which one question targeted religious self-descriptions. Their answers have been analyzed in light of the in-depth qualitative interviews made at the same occasions.

When asked to describe themselves in relation to different religious traditions, the respondents often, to varying extents, identified with several of these simultaneously. However, a majority of the respondents changed their identifications from one interview to the next, without an expressed change in outlook or practices.

I propose to view these religious identities as construed through a particular process of identification. As a heuristic tool, I put forth the model 'the wheel of religious identification', by which I try to convey one possible explanation for the multiplicity and change that the material gives evidence to.

Gez: From religious practices to religious familiarity: lessons from Nairobi and the concept of religious repertoire

Yonatan Gez | PhD candidate, Institut de Hautes Etudes Internationales et du Développement / Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID) University of Geneva

In this paper, I will explore some characteristics of religious behavior among Christians in Nairobi. I will employ the term “lived religion” in showing actors’ tendency to significantly overflow beyond normative religious prescriptions. At the same time, I will critically examine the problem inherent in too great an emphasis on religious practice (and oftentimes, reported practice) as an indication for religious identity. Using examples from my fieldwork, I will make the claim that formally held religious associations tend to leave an imprint and a sense of “familiarity”, and thus, even if inactive, they should be considered as accumulated into the actor’s “religious repertoire”. Furthermore, I suggest that attitude towards familiarity is context-dependent; in Nairobi, the appeal of familiarity might have to do with the matter of suspicion towards unfamiliar religious forms.

Westendorp: Catholic and Buddhist celebrations of Ching Ming in contemporary Hong Kong

Mariske Westendorp | PhD candidate, Department of Anthropology, Macquarie University, Sydney

This paper will explore lived religion in contemporary Hong Kong, with a special focus on the celebration of the Ching Ming festival by Catholic and Buddhist practitioners. During Ching Ming – a festival to ‘sweep tombs’ of ancestors and make offerings to them – Hong Kong Buddhists and Catholics attempt to combine “local” and “official” religious backgrounds so as to accommodate their personal and their family members’ religious beliefs and values, as well as their cultural background. I will show the ways in which contemporary celebrations of Ching Ming in Hong Kong enables a meaningful relation between “official” and “local” religious practice while at the same time emphasizing distinctions between people with different religious backgrounds.

Friday Paper Session B: Ethnography of Lived Religion

Friday 25 October | Lipsius 002 | 15.30-17.00

Chair: Wim Hofstee, Leiden University

Knibbe: Charisma, Gender and Calling in a Nigerian-Initiated Church

Dr. Kim E. Knibbe | Dept. of Comparative Religion, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies Groningen University

Usually, a focus on 'lived religion' means a focus on 'regular believers', not on religious leaders. However, in the case of many Pentecostal (and evangelical) churches, this dichotomy is not fruitful. Crucial is the belief that once one gives one's life to Jesus, everybody will receive the gifts of the spirit, and everybody has a role to play and a duty to bring other people to Jesus (c.f. Harding 1987). Indeed, Pentecostal churches themselves use the metaphor of 'living' religion to contrast their churches and lifestyle with the 'dead' mainstream churches. This paper will focus on a Nigerian-initiated Pentecostal church with branches worldwide, including many in Europe and the Netherlands (Burgess, Knibbe and Quaas 2010, Knibbe 2009, 2011). The main topic of this paper will be how this expansion is realized through the continuous gendered formation of new charismatic leaders via the notion of 'getting a calling', within the Redeemed Christian Church of God, the largest Nigerian-initiated church. Furthermore, this paper will engage with the Weberian problematic of the routinization of charisma. Whereas Weber saw routinization as detrimental to charismatic leadership, here charisma, family life and organizational professionalization and expansion go together (c.f. Kirsch 2008).

Van Oostende: Lurodstvo: Blasphemy and Religion as a Good Couple

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Harsh punishments against blasphemy are threatening in Russia after the punk band Pussy Riot performed a protest song against president Vladimir Putin in Moscow's main cathedral last year. Some members were convicted for hooliganism and religious hatred. But Pussy Riot's performance could also be placed in the Russian tradition of *iurodstvo* (holy foolishness). In this context blasphemy is a means to a higher end. A classic *iurodivyi* uses provocation and aggression as tools to transmit a religious message. Pussy Riot members share a certain kind of behaviour with holy fools but not their outer appearance. They are no classic *iurodivye*.

But we can use the holy fool model for a reinterpretation of Pussy Riot's cathedral performance. The blasphemy of the band is a means to criticize Russian society. In today's Russia everything seems to be sacrificed to the interest of public order. Public order as society's ultimate standard is dangerous.

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