

October 2009

GORABS Newsletter

Volume 30 Number 2

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The Geography of Religions and Belief Systems Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers invites submissions for its on-line journal, *Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems*. The journal, published once a year, features substantive articles, commentary, book reviews, and debate. Editorial Board members represent a wide range of geography of religion and religious studies approaches and include John Corrigan, Julian Holloway, Lily Kong, David Ley, David Livingstone, Carolyn Prorok, James Shortridge, and Roger Stump. All papers will be double-blind reviewed.

Please visit the specialty group's website for information

(<http://gorabs.org>) regarding length, format, and other particulars.

Questions may be directed to Elizabeth J. Leppman, editor, at ejleppman@windstream.net. Please consider submitting a paper based on recent research, collaborations, debates, or presentations at appropriate academic conferences for the 2009 edition.

The 2010 GORABS Lecture at Washington DC will be delivered by Dr David Ley, Head of Department at The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

The working title of Dr Ley's address is "*Homo religiosus?* Religion and immigrant identities".

VISIT GORABS ON THE INTERNET

Webpage:

<http://gorabs.org/>

The new GORABS webmaster is Cameran

Listserv:

To subscribe to the GORABS listserv simply send an email to listserv@listserv.wvu.edu with "subscribe gorabs firstname lastname" in the body of the message or send your request to Michael Ferber at mike.ferber@mail.wvu.edu



Please send comments, questions, letters, and newsletter submissions to

David J. Butler,
GORABS Secretary,
d.butler@ucc.ie

Message from the co-Chairs of GORABS: Progress in the Geography of Religions outside of the USA

Given that both of the current co-chairs of GORABS are working at institutions outside of the United States, it seems appropriate to reflect briefly on the progress of geographies of religion elsewhere and to reflect on the potential that we might have for engaging even more colleagues overseas in the future. From the perspective of the United Kingdom, geographers have become fully engaged in a number of important conversations about contemporary issues surround faith and belief, identity, institutions, and the politics of inclusion and exclusion. As the 12.3 million pound Religion and Society research programme in the UK enters its third year, geographers find themselves well represented amongst grant recipients and are conducting research on topics including homosexuality and the church, youth and faith-based volunteering, and the religious and spiritual experiences of young people living in poor places, to name a few (see www.religionandsociety.org.uk for these projects and others). Geographers are also producing exciting new publications that have attracted the attention of scholars well outside the discipline, and it is increasingly common to see articles about religion published in geographic journals. New links have been created between ourselves and colleagues in other countries ranging from informal, one-on-one collaborations to international comparative research projects. Similar kinds of networking across spaces and disciplines can be seen on the continent, such as the 'post-secular' conference held at Groningen University in November 2008 with a strong presence of geographers from Europe and the U.S. Like many of our other colleagues who study religion, belief or religious identities, we have constant inquiries from graduate students and have seen improvements in both the quantity and quality of student work on geographies of religion.

Perhaps most heartening is the wide public interest in the work that we do as geographers of religion. We have often been surprised by the interest in our work - though not always from the people or institutions where we might expect it. For example, after embarking on one project exploring how young people are reconstituting Christianity and its practices in Scotland, some of the greatest interest for the project emerged from community-based youth workers who often find themselves trying to help young people deal with difficult situations of loss, loneliness, and hopelessness. Rather than seeing religion as an answer to young people's problems, these youth workers were trying to find a language to facilitate discussions about resilience, sources of strength, and self worth, and our research in part produced some of this language.

What, then, might our goals be as a speciality group of the AAG which is linked in with the global production of knowledge about religion through a range of networks and in a variety of ways? Most of our accomplishments are individual in the sense that each of us goes about our work making the connections that are most important for its success. We might consider promoting

those places and spaces where it is difficult to find geographers working on themes related to religion, spirituality and belief, and consider how we as a group might promote this work, perhaps by supporting emerging scholars or those working in areas which are underrepresented. Perhaps the most effective way of doing this is by taking stock of what we do have and making our networks stronger by making them more visible.

This newsletter is one means for communicating our work to others, and so we encourage you to please keep in touch and let others know about your research. Likewise, we hope that the AAG paper and panel sessions sponsored by GORABS might also serve as opportunities to discuss new projects and collaborations, particularly with those new to the geography of religion.

Dr Elizabeth Olson and Dr Peter Hopkins, co-Chairs, GORABS Specialty Group



Inaugural GORABS Lecture and Robert Stoddard Award, 2009

At the 2009 AAG in Las Vegas, Professor Lily Kong presented the inaugural GORABS annual lecture and was also presented with the Robert Stoddard Award for her rich, theoretically-informed empirical research within geographies of religion over the last 20 years. Professor Kong is pictured receiving her award from GORABS immediate past chair, Dr Ed Davis.

GORABS sponsored calls for papers at AAG 2010 Washington DC...

- Young people, religion and place
- Affective Geographical Explorations of Faith
- Geographies of Slavery
- The Ethics of Energy
- On Faith, Place and Feminism
- Religion and Contested Spaces

For full details of session abstracts, suggested areas of focus and the closing dates for participation, please consult the GORABS website at <http://gorabs.org/>

Member News

Members of GORABS may be interested in a recent book by **The Revd Dr Matthew T. Sleeman**, entitled, *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts*, published by Cambridge University Press (2009; ISBN 978-0-521-50962-6). This, a monograph of his PhD in biblical studies, builds upon his early PhD in human geography. In it, he uses the notion of Thirdspace, as espoused by the geographer Ed Soja, to read the places and spaces in Acts 1.1-11.18 in the light of Jesus' ascension into heaven. The book combines innovative biblical scholarship with accessible and informative geographical analysis, and is suitable for those with research and teaching interests in human geography or biblical studies.

The author may be reached at matthews@oakhill.ac.uk

Jenny Lunn, a doctoral candidate at Royal Holloway, University of London has proposed establishing a **Geographies of Religion, Spirituality and Faith Working Group** in the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers (RGS-IBG). Increasing numbers of Geographers are now working on issues of religion, spirituality and faith but at present there is no obvious forum in the UK and many other jurisdictions in which to bring them all together. The establishment of this proposed group is dependent on 20 or more Fellows of the RGS-IBG making application, which is encouraged by 30 October 2009. Jenny may be contacted at jennyclunn@yahoo.co.uk

The **German Geographical Society's** annual conference took place in Vienna, Austria recently. There was a large attendance at the **Geography of Religion Special Interest Group**. The possibility of holding a Geography of Religions conference in Oxford in late September 2010 is under discussion.

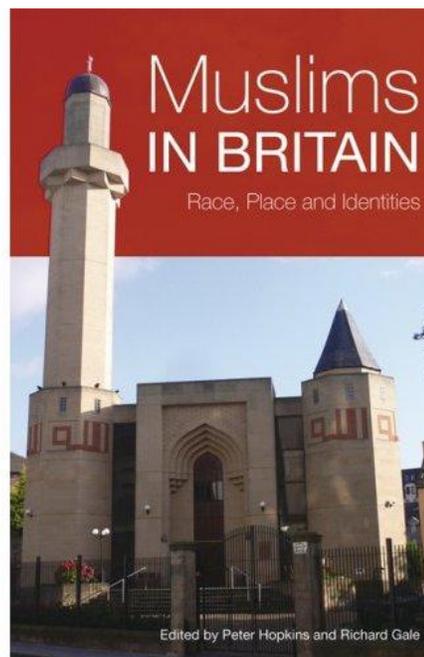
Jim Norwine, Regents Professor of Geography at Texas A&M University-Kingsville and author of *The Changing Climate of Texas and Worldview Flux*, is seeking contributors to a book he is presently in the early stages of developing, the working title of which is *Encountering Emerging Geosophies*. The book's thesis will be that a "double whammy" combination of climate change and postmodern culture change or worldview shift will together create, or at least contribute to, new "geographies of the mind" in the second half of this century, an effect likely to be most pronounced in regions like southern Europe, the Middle East, and the southern USA, as nearly all climate models suggest heightened vulnerability to global warming in the subtropics. He is seeking a European geographer to contribute a chapter addressing the "European case", i.e., a contemplative essay meditating/speculating about what possible changes of mental geographies--"what-being-in-the-world-is-truly-like (Yi-Fu Tuan)--might be and mean in Europe at large but perhaps particularly southern, subtropical, Europe. Those interested are invited to contact Jim at kfjrn00@tamuk.edu

Our GORABS chair, Dr Peter Hopkins of Newcastle University, UK has recently (with Dr Richard Gale of University of Birmingham) co-authored the book 'Muslims in Britain: Race, Place and Identity', which has been published by Edinburgh University Press.

Following the events of 11th September 2001 in the USA, and more especially, the bombings on the London underground on 7th July 2005 and the incident at Glasgow Airport on 30th June 2007, an increasing amount of public attention has been focused upon Muslims in Britain. Against the backdrop of this debate, this book sets out a series of innovative insights into the everyday lives of Muslims living in contemporary Britain, in an attempt to move beyond prevalent stereotypes concerning what it means to be 'Muslim'.

Combining original empirical research with theoretical interventions, this collection offers a range of reflections on how Muslims in Britain negotiate their everyday lives, manage experiences of racism and exclusion, and develop local networks and global connections. The authors explore a broad range of themes including gender relations; educational and economic issues; migration and mobility; religion and politics; racism and Islamophobia; and the construction and contestation of Muslim identities. Threaded through the treatment of these themes is a unifying concern with the ways in which geography matters to how Muslims negotiate their daily experiences as well as their racialised, gendered and religious identities. Above all, attention is focused upon the role of the home and local community, the influence of the economy and the nation, and

the power of transnational connections and mobilities in the everyday lives of Muslims in Britain.



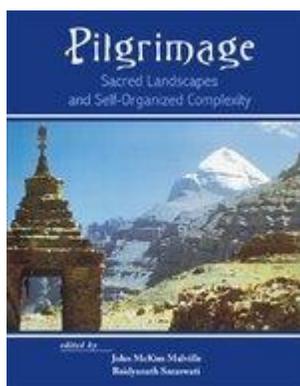
Dr Serena Hussain of the School of Geography at the University of Oxford recently had her book, *Muslims on the Map: A National Survey of Social Trends in Britain*, published by IB Taurus.



GORABS members may be interested in the book entitled *Pilgrimage: Sacred Landscapes and Self-Organised Complexity*, recently edited by **John McKim Malville** and **Baidyanath Saraswati**, with foreword by **R.K.Bhattacharya**, and published by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, India, in association with D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd.

Using case studies from pilgrimages around the world, the volume explores the ways many of these traditions have started and evolved. A common perspective is that of self-organization of complex structures in space and time.

The variety of pilgrimage described in the book is remarkable. The subcontinent of India is the location of many sites such as the temples to the nine planets in Tamil Nadu, the pilgrimage circuits of Varanasi, early Buddhist pilgrimages in Sanchi and Bodh-Gaya, the great ruined city of Vijayanagara, those associated with the Ramayana, and the death ceremonies at Gaya. Beyond India, the self-organization and stability of pilgrimage systems are analyzed for pilgrimages in Nepal (Kathmandu), Japan, Mexico, the Caribbean, Peru, Norway and the US."



Recently, a special issue of *Social and Cultural Geography* focused on geographies of religion. One of our members, **Dr Nicholas Howe**, SAGES Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Religious Studies Case Western Reserve University Cleveland, Ohio, had a paper published in this collection entitled "Secular Iconoclasm". Dr Howe may be contacted at nxh129@case.edu

The journal *National Identities* Volume 11:1 (March 2009) was a special issue which focused on Protestant minorities in European states and nations, under the guest editorship of Professors Jennifer Todd and Joseph Ruane.

Articles include "A political profile of Protestant minorities in Europe" by John Coakley; "Protestantism in the Czech historical narrative and Czech nationalism of the nineteenth century", by Patrick Cabanel; "Protestants and the French nation under the Third Republic: between recognition and assimilation", by Philippe Rigoulot; "Living in a nation, a state or a place? The Protestant gentry of County Cork [Ireland]", by Karen Lysaght; "Identity, difference and community in Southern Irish Protestantism: the Protestants of West Cork" by **GORABS secretary, David J. Butler** with Joseph Ruane; and "Does being Protestant [in Ireland] matter?: Protestants, minorities and the re-making of ethno-religious identity after the Good Friday Agreement" by Jennifer Todd, Nathalie Rougier, Theresa O'Keefe and Lorenzo Cañas Bottos.

Minutes of GORABS AAG Specialty Group Annual Business Meeting

The annual business meeting of the Geography of Religions and Belief Systems (GORABS) specialty group of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) was held in Capri Room 106, at The Riveria Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, on Wednesday 25 March, 2009, at 8.10 p.m.

Present: David Rutherford (DR), outgoing past chair; Peter Hopkins (PH), outgoing joint secretary-treasurer; Michael P. Ferber (MPF), David J. Butler (DJB), outgoing board members; besides Richard N. Dodge (RND), George W. White (GWW), Daniel H. Olsen (DHO), Darrel L. McDonald (DLM) and Cameran Ashraf (CA) in the general attendance.

Apologies: Edward J. Davis (ED), outgoing chair; Betsy Olsen (BO), outgoing joint secretary-treasurer.

The meeting was called to order by DR, as acting chair owing to the unavoidable absence of ED, outgoing chair. He then introduced PH, the incoming chair, who then assumed office. In the absence of BO, DJB had been invited to act as minute's secretary.

The attendance was then invited to introduce themselves; this done, DR acknowledged the debt of gratitude GORABS owed to ED for services rendered over a sustained period; also to MPF at so many levels, most particularly for his work on our website.

PH thanked DR for his own work as acting treasurer and past chair over the past two years and spoke of the difficulty of any future secretary/treasurer coming from outside of the United States. PH then set out the business agenda, being:

1. The election of new board members
2. Annual Financial Report
3. AAG 2009 Conference Report
4. GORABS website
5. Any Other Business

Election of New Board Members -

Concerning the election of the new board, ED has now automatically succeeded as past chair for the next two-year period; PH and BO, having jointly filled the secretary-treasurer position will now be co-chairs of GORABS for 2009-11.

Following a meeting of the board of GORABS at The Riveria Hotel earlier on 25 March 2009 (8-9.40am), during which a number of items pertinent to our speciality group were discussed (see separate report), it was moved by DR that a new and separate position of secretary be

henceforth created, as the heretofore joint position of secretary-treasurer effectively limits the senior officer succession to citizens of the United States, thus depriving GORABS of international leadership; DR also moved that GORABS reform its bye-laws to take account of this.

DR having already written a draft amendment to our bye-laws following the passing of the above resolutions by a two-thirds board majority this morning, read these to the meeting, whereby the secretary would hold office for two years, then automatically succeeding as chair for a further two years, following which succeeding as past chair for a final two years.

The motion to change the byelaws formally splitting the office of secretary-treasurer was then formally proposed by DR, seconded by MPF and opened to the general attendance for discussion. It was agreed that this change would indeed encourage international scholars to become involved at board level, thereby diversifying its content and capabilities. DMD noted the change would allow the board to achieve more; MPF argued the division of labour would be more effective henceforth, without actually increasing the number of board members as an ordinary board member would now also act as treasurer, the board remaining at eight members.

On that basis, the motion was approved unanimously, being in excess of the required two-thirds of the membership present and voting.

DJB was then nominated as secretary - proposed by MPF, seconded by DHO and passed unanimously.

DR was then nominated as treasurer and ordinary board member - proposed by MPF, seconded by DHO and passed unanimously.

Regarding the position of graduate student ordinary board member, DHO proposed and DMD seconded the name of Cameran Ashraf, a second year master's student of California State University, Fullerton who wishes to pursue doctoral studies. Passed unanimously.

Concerning the final remaining ordinary board member position, MPF moved that GWW and DHO be invited to the board, but only one position remained. Ordinary board members duties include reviewing papers of the annual Sopher Award, contributing to board forum emails, and organising at least one session per two-year term in office. Following consultation with both potential candidates, DHO agreed to act, proposed by DR, seconded by DMD and passed unanimously.

The board elections being thus completed, the smaller than usual attendance was noted by DR and several other of the board and it was asked that we insist (having formerly requested) the AAG not continue to schedule the GORABS annual business meeting at the same time as that

for Cultural Geography. Agreed by the attendance.

Financial Report -

Being next on the agenda, PH called upon DR for his treasurer's report. DR reported an account balance of \$2,977.71 and noted very little account activity over the past year other than website fees and copyright for our electronic journal; the Sopher Award not being awarded this year.

MPF requested that our Sopher Award of \$250 annually available for the best paper submitted in advance by graduate students or junior untenured faculty must be better advertised in future, in our GORABS list-server, perhaps twice annually in the speciality groups section of the AAG newsletter and on any other list server we have access to.

PH noted we had only one two-part GORABS-sponsored session at this year's conference, comprising 9 speakers (reduced from 12 speakers over three parts owing to speakers being unable to attend); this is lower than normal, and we must redouble our efforts for next year in Washington DC. The attendance was generally pleased at the content of the session this year, however, and that having Professor Roger W. Stump present as paper presenter and discussant, as well as so many of the speakers relating to his new book *The Geography of Religion: Faith, Place and Space*, which was a central theme.

PH also noted an attendance of slightly in excess of 20 persons at the inaugural annual GORABS lecture, delivered this year by Professor Lily Kong of Singapore University and the whole exercise as being well worthwhile. Professor Kong was recorded while lecturing, and this audio file will be available on our website as will all future such lectures, archived as necessary. However, our annual lecture was not advertised on the AAG newsletter or daily in-conference bulletins; nor were any GORABS posters mounted at the venue. All of this to be done for AAG 2010 and in the future.

A motion was moved, proposed by DR and seconded by MPF, that the Kong lecture be stipended retrospectively to the amount of \$250. Passed unanimously. A photo, caption and literary piece on the annual GORABS lecture will henceforth appear annually in the AAG newsletter and on our website (archived as required) and the piece will be forwarded to the relevant annual speaker.

It was proposed by PH and seconded by DJB that Professor David N. Livingstone of The Queen's University of Belfast in Northern Ireland be invited to give the Second Annual GORABS lecture in April 2010 at the 106th AAG, in Washington DC. Passed unanimously.

A motion was moved, proposed by PH and seconded by DMD, that the annual GORABS lecture be stipended annually, the final amount to be considered annually and subject to available funds. Passed unanimously.

PH noted that while neither the **Sopher Award** was not conferred this year, there was every possibility it would be next year with increased advertising; our **Stoddard Award** for senior faculty will not necessarily be awarded annually nor automatically linked to the annual GORABS lecture, although this year's lecturer, Professor Kong, was a joint-recipient.

GORABS website -

Concerning our GORABS website, PH requested that all website materials be referred to Chris Notaro as soon as they become available.

DJB suggested that all GORABS members in general, and board members in particular, should take every opportunity to highlight their GORABS membership, starting with something as simple as an additional line in their email signatures, following the usual office telephone, fax, email and web information. Agreed this would be useful.

CA, our new graduate board member, informed the meeting of his ability and willingness to assist in web design and electronic matters, and this was gratefully acknowledged.

Any other business -

DHO reported that Ashgate, the publisher, had approached him to coordinate the publishing of a book on the *Geography of Religions* with the assistance of the GORABS membership, DHO acting as editor. The theme would be 'Religion and Contested Places and Spaces', and there would be a call for chapters in the coming months with a potential link to AAG 2010. Ashgate made the approach, which is really significant, and DHO will manage the contract and other requirements for GORABS. There will be both a general call for chapters, as well as more specific invites. The project was greeted with acclaim by the general attendance, PH noting his own positive experience with Ashgate as a professional publisher.

PH informed the meeting that BO recently has given birth to her second child, a daughter named Ara.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm, PH thanking all officers and the general attendance for their time and contributions to the meeting.

DAVID E. SOPHER NEW SCHOLAR AWARD

The following announcement is presented here to encourage new scholars in the sub-discipline of geography of religions and belief systems to consider applying for the Sopher Award. The deadline for submitting the completed paper for consideration is 15th February 2010. However, the paper must be presented at the AAG annual conference in Washington DC in April of 2010, so if you intend to submit a paper for the award competition, you must submit the paper title and abstract to the AAG before the conference deadline of 31 October 2009.

Description:

The purpose of the David E. Sopher New Scholar Award is to promote intellectual enquiry from new scholars into geographies of religions and belief systems through the presentation of papers at the AAG meeting. Papers will be judged on potential contribution to the field of Geography of Religions and Belief Systems, organization, and written composition.

Eligibility:

Both graduate students and untenured faculty who are not serving on the GORABS board can apply for the award.

Award:

The amount for the 2010 award is a travel grant of \$250. The recipient will also be given an official certificate at the AAG awards luncheon.

Disbursement:

A check will be disbursed to the winner at the 2010 Geography of Religions and Belief Systems annual business meeting at the AAG event.

Requirements:

The paper and application form must be emailed to the GORABS chair in rich text or Microsoft Word format no later than midnight, February 15th. The paper must subsequently be presented at the national AAG meeting, though it does not have to be in a GORABS sponsored session. A panel of previous GORABS chairs will judge the papers and determine a recipient. The winner will be announced in time to attend the awards luncheon with a GORABS representative. GORABS reserves the right to not make an award in a given year.

More Information:

For more information please contact the GORABS secretary, David J. Butler, at d.butler@ucc.ie