

June 2010

GORABS Newsletter

Volume 32 Number 1

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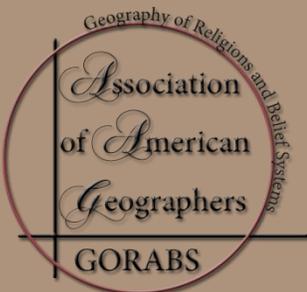
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Please send comments, questions, letters, and newsletter submissions to David J. Butler, GORABS Secretary, [d.butler@ucc.ie](mailto:d.butler@ucc.ie)

**GORABS** is pleased to announce the arrival of a United Kingdom anchored fledgling sister organization - entitled the **Geographies of Religion, Spirituality and Faith Working Group of the Royal Geographical Society.**

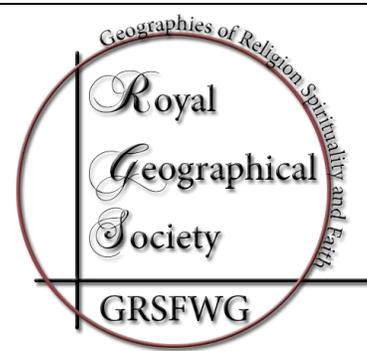
Membership of the working group - details of whose first involvement in the RGS-IBG September 2010 UK Conference is to be found elsewhere in this newsletter - is **open to all fellows of the Royal Geographical Society.**

**RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN:-**

The Fifth International Colloquium on the Changing Religious Landscape of Europe

After previous colloquia, held in Heidelberg/Germany 2003, Amsterdam/Netherlands 2004, Prague/Czechia 2005, and Presov/Slovakia 2009, the fifth conference will take place at Oxford/UK in September 2010. **Venue:** Mansfield College, University of Oxford/UK

**Time:** September 10-12, 2010. For further details please contact Professor Ceri Peach, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford, [ceri.peach@geog.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ceri.peach@geog.ox.ac.uk)



It is a stated aim of the **GORABS** and **GRSFWG** boards to cooperate in the interests of our sub-discipline, and to work towards a shared newsletter and listserver. Two new logos - above and left, below - have also been designed to emphasise this unity of purpose.

At the recent AGM of GORABS, it was mentioned that we would need to set up a new mailing list service as the current list will be inactive within the next couple of months. A new list has been set up with jiscmail so if you would like to subscribe to this, please use the link here and follow the instructions under the 'subscribe or unsubscribe' option: <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?AO=GEOGREL>



## Dr David Ley delivered the 2010 GORABS Annual Lecture: "Immigrant Subjectivities & Religion"

*Dr Ley is professor of geography at the University of British Columbia and he is well-known for his many publications on social geography and especially immigration. He delivered his presentation to a crowded conference room on Thursday, April 15<sup>th</sup>. Here follows a synopsis of his lecture, from notes made by Ed Davis:*

Dr Ley pointed out that "we've moved from the "end of history," "end of geography," and "end of religion" to a new period charged with difference, especially faith. So we need a more ambitious interpretation." He noted that currently three-fourths of all immigrants to the US are Christian, so clearly any study of migration must take some account of the power of faith.

"In 1996 I submitted proposal for immigrant research in Canada, with 100 policy foci, but unfortunately not one of those 100 foci mentioned religion. Just six years later, however, religion was a prominent focus in immigrant research." Dr. Ley noted that fellow scholar Lily Kong just last year counted eight major journals publishing special issues on religion. He noted that the immigrant church is not yet well understood, nor are the conditions which make it possible. Within migration research, Dr. Ley noted the "demand for a hermeneutics of the stranger."

Beyond migration research, he noted the power of new streams of Pentecostalism and related conservative theologies, especially in the Global South. In that region there are now an estimated 250 million Pentecostals, 72 million of them in China. Not unrelated to this is the renewal of Catholicism in Latin America, which Dr. Ley said depends on the charismatic movement. "Christianity must be understood in this new global perspective. For example: Nigeria has more Anglicans than any other nation." "... In London, forty-four percent of all church-goers are Black. The Ukraine now has 150 congregations all started from a Nigerian mother church.

Dr Ley recommended a number of important new works in this field, including *God's continent: Christianity, Islam & Europe's Religious Crisis* by historian Philip Jenkins. He also noted the recent Pew Charitable Trust project on immigrants & religion, which has collected a vast amount of new data. He said that "Geographers are trying new ways of approaching these issues. Our old religious atlases were like butterflies in a case: pretty but dead." The philosophical basis of any geography of belief must be chosen carefully, he said. He recommended the recent TIBG article by Bailey on Methodists in Western England: There were three authors, each of whom admitted a different standpoint and that makes the ongoing study more valid. "We must watch out for reduction, and that is why we need to use hermeneutics; let's use the ideas of theologians."

He suggested we build on Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*, which traces secularism in modern life, and also John Milbank's *Theology & Social Theory*. According to Ley, "Milbank goes beyond secular reason, and regards socialism as Christianity's modern child. Milbank is provocative, pointing to the dominant value-impregnated social science. He says most social science is especially materialistic in its ontology, regarding religion as a remnant. In fact, we may see all 20<sup>th</sup> century social science of religion as a

"secular policing of religious life." He said social analysis sees religion as a phenomenon to be explained by other social facts. Geographers do this often, said Ley. "Atlases dumb down religion - we explain using such things as class. It is the imposition of modernity's iron cage on religious life. Is this any different from analysis using *Homo Economicus*?"

Ley suggested we would do better to look at spiritual renewal - cycles of awakening & forgetfulness. "Our categories of analysis must arise from the theology of the religion in question. For example, (using Milbank here) we can look at the religious language and see that Christianity uses weakness - the powerful opposed Christ. Their hubris blocked acceptance of his message. See parable of the rich fool; the theme is pervasive. So the vibrant church is the church of the poor, oriented to social justice. Clearly this relates to the marginality of the immigrant. Even middle class immigrants into North America are vulnerable, speaking no English. Using Alfred Schutz, we realize that a distinctive phenomenology of place accompanies religious experience. See the Book of Hebrews- church is home- Christians are aliens - citizens of another country, in creative tension with the world.

We may do more with Victor Turner's concept of liminality - the betwixt and between of immigrant life. Out of this liminal period comes vitality - out of it comes community and strong sense of the sacred (as in the Early Church).

Dr Ley was optimistic that a new interest in these aspects of religious experience will stimulate important geographic studies. The presentation was followed by a lively discussion period, but Ed collected no notes from that!

**GORABS sponsored 6 paper sessions at AAG 2010 Washington D.C., and there were also some relevant and related paper sessions organized by our members, although not GORABS-sponsored as such; a selection of paper session reports follow overleaf...**

- 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

## **Affective Geographical Explorations of Faith**

This session examined the theoretical and methodological issues and approaches to the affective quality of sacred spaces in geography of religion literature. Caitie Finlayson, a Ph.D. Candidate in Geography at Florida State University and the chair of this session, presented a paper entitled, "Spaces of Faith: Perspectives on the Geographical Exploration of Houses of Worship." She engaged in an interdisciplinary theoretical exploration of places of worship, offering an updated perspective on the geographical study of affect and emotion. She further offered a practical framework for investigating affective experiences in religious spaces.

Brad Huff, also a Ph.D. Candidate in Geography at Florida State University and the co-organizer of this session, presented his work entitled, "Spatial Signatures of Sacred Settlements." His paper focused on the mental frameworks of cultures, landscapes, and geography found in the works of Hong-Key Yoon, in particular, the notion of geomentality and its application to studies of spatial syntax. His empirical research deftly integrated qualitative research with GIS analysis in an investigation of a spiritualist community in Lily Dale, NY.

Julian Holloway, a Lecturer in Human Geography at Manchester Metropolitan University, presented his paper entitled, "The Space that Faith Makes: Dispositions, Sensibilities and the Politics of Religious Geographies." This project examined the ways in which faith is realized in and realizes different geographies. Further, his understanding of the patterning of affective experiences and the various ways in which faith shapes both place and space represents a useful new understanding on these important issues, and further offers a critical perspective on the politics of faith.

Martha Kinney, an Assistant Professor of History at Suffolk County Community College, presented her work entitled, "Spatialization and Ritual Effectiveness within the Roman Catholic Sacrament of Reconciliation." This insightful paper examined the changing historical understandings of confessional space, and the ritualizations and hierarchies of power embedded in the three approved rites of Sacramental Confession.

## **The Future of Religious Geopolitics**

This panel session lined up some of the biggest names in critical geopolitics, including Simon Dalby, Klaus Dodds, James Sidaway, Nick Megoran, and Jason Dittmer. Each participant expressed enthusiasm in the topic, suggesting its growth but also a nervous hesitation as to how religion can be treated with in critical geopolitics, is it just another ideology to be debunked of its geopolitical assumptions? How can we study it? These questions and more made the session productive for a large audience of interested writers and voices in the sub-field.

## **Evangelical Transnationalism**

Justin Wilford and Tristan Sturm brought together a session on Evangelical Transnationalism, in other words, an interest in mobilities and flows, how ideas of the home are brought abroad to circulate and be contested in an increasingly global world. Papers were given by Ju Hui Judy Han on South Korean missionaries, Nick Megoran on evangelical reconciliation and apology movements that trace the paths of the Crusades, Justin Wilford on Saddleback Church's global aid missions, and Tristan Sturm's recent work on how Palestinian Christian Zionists blur the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Betsy Olson tied the works together as the session's discussant and provided excellent feedback, suggesting in conclusion that such religious transnationalism deserves much more attention and further discussion particularly within the academies recent interest in mobilities and itineraries abroad.

## Conference Report:

### Advancing geographies of religion – challenges and accomplishments

Newcastle University, United Kingdom

On 8-9<sup>th</sup> March 2010, the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology at Newcastle University hosted an international 'Geographies of Religion: a new dialogue' conference attracting participants from Australia, North America, Germany and the UK. The conference attracted over seventy delegates and included a range of keynote presentations, a panel discussion and numerous paper sessions on a diverse range of topics including: faith in the city; religion and development; methodologies in researching religion; methodological issues; positionalities in researching religion; gender and sexuality; religious places and events; and negotiations of the sacred and secular.

The first of a set of keynotes was presented by Lily Kong from the National University of Singapore. Lily explored new opportunities for bringing together the study of religion with health and medical geographies. Andrew Yip (Nottingham University) discussed his research about the intersections between religion, youth and sexuality, and Julian Holloway (Manchester Metropolitan University) explored spaces and sensibilities of faith through the religious formation of the sermon. Keynotes on the second day started with Kim Knott (Leeds University), the author of 'The Location of Religion' (Equinox), who considered how space has been theorised in religious studies and geography, and Elizabeth Olson (University of Edinburgh) set out an agenda for decolonising geographies of religion. Later in the day, Jason Dittmer (University College London) mapped out new directions in religious geopolitics and Jane Pollard (Newcastle University) explored the connections between faith and economic geography through her research about Islamic banking and finance.

Overall, the fact that a conference on geographies of religion could attract such an exciting, innovative and engaging set of presentations is testament to the fact that research in this field is catching the attention of geographers and is of increasing significance within the discipline as a whole. That being said, if the e-mail discussion on the critical geography forum that followed the advertisement for the conference is anything to do by, we still have much work to do in convincing our fellow geographers that geographies of religion matter.

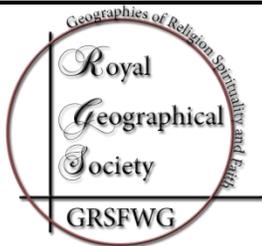
Shortly after posting a notice about the conference to the critgeog mailing list, a response to the conference announcement sent to the list stated:

'It's a sad day indeed when critical and radical geographers begin to run conferences on "religion, faith and spirituality." I recognize that there are very legitimate questions that social scientists must deal with regarding the role of religion and other superstitions in the mystification of social life. Perhaps this conference is directed to just such questions as these, though my sense is that it is more likely to serve covertly as a vehicle for some sort of positive affirmation of the intrinsic value of religion etc., as such. To the degree that this may be so, I wish to register my opposition. Allen Scott'

This in turn generated one of the most active discussions that many geographers have seen on the list for some time. Although the majority of responses to the list were critical of the first response, the

fact that this initial response was made highlights to me that there still exists a very strong opposition to, and suspicion about, research about geographies of religion. This may often remain unspoken, but in this context, the strength of feeling was such that the respondent felt compelled to let a community of 1750 critical geographers know how he felt.

This highlights a number of challenges for geographers of religion. First, it is clear that for some geographers, religion has no place in critical and/or radical geography. However, this needs to be challenged as there is important scholarship contributing to such research areas that is integrating aspects of faith, spirituality and religion into its analyses, and it is becoming increasingly important for such work to be given recognition. Second, there is an implicit suggestion in the response quoted above that the Newcastle conference was aiming to advance religion as a social force or to act as some mechanism for the proselytisation of particular expressions of religion, faith or spirituality. As the main organiser of this event and as someone who does not affiliate with any particular religion, I found this claim very surprising. However, what it does highlight is the need for researchers in geographies of religion to be critical of their personal beliefs and identities when researching religion and to be reflexive about ethical and methodological issues in the field and in disseminating their research. Finally, these challenges can hopefully be transformed into accomplishments as we continue to research geographies of religions and belief systems. In order to do so, it is useful to be sensitive to the ways in which our work may be interpreted, the ways in which our work connects with diverse sub-fields of the discipline and in which our personal identities and values are negotiated during the research process.



## Geographies of Religion, Spirituality and Faith

**Royal  
Geographical  
Society**  
with IBG

Advancing geography  
and geographical learning

**Session Organisers:** Justin Beaumont (University of Groningen, Netherlands), David J. Butler (University College Cork, Ireland) and Richard Gale (Cardiff University, Wales: **session chair**).

**Participants:** Peter Hopkins, Paul Cloke, Julian Holloway, Chris Baker, Rhys Jones, (grad, Aberystwyth).

**Session Abstract:** Until relatively recently, religion had been a neglected theme within human geography. In the last two decades, however, geographical interest in religion has become markedly more focused. Whilst the substantive themes addressed by geographers with interests in religion remain extraordinarily diverse, the maturity of the subfield is evidenced by two overlapping trends: firstly, by the ongoing development of core sets of interests around religion, space and place; and secondly, by a marked increase in the tendency for religious themes to be acknowledged and articulated within other longstanding debates and concerns in human geography. The purpose of this session is to build upon these concurrent trends, consolidating the developing research on religion, space, place on the one hand, and widening the thematic scope of this research on the other. In particular, the session aims to broaden geographical engagement with 'the religious' by encompassing spatial manifestations of faith and spirituality that are not necessarily captured by the categories of 'religion' and 'religious identity' as these are ordinarily construed. Correspondingly, the session will provide a platform for considering how expressions of religion, spirituality and faith are not merely place-based, but also simultaneously resonant at a variety of spatial scales.

## Member News

**Robert Stoddard**, now Professor Emeritus of Geography at the University of Nebraska has sent in the following list of his publications since retirement:

"The Geography of Buddhist Pilgrimage in Asia", in **Pilgrimage and Buddhist Art**, ed. Adriana Proser, Asia Society Museum with Yale University Press, 2010, pp. 2-4.

"Vaishno Devi, the most famous goddess shrine in the Siwalks", with Georgana Foster, in **Sacred Geography of Goddesses in South Asia: Essays in Memory of David Kinsley**, ed. by Rana P.B. Singh, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, 2010, pp. 109-124.

Book Review of *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy* by Asoka Bandarage in **The Professional Geographer**, Vol. 62, 2010, pp. 149-151

"Pilgrimage Places and Sacred Geometries", in **Pilgrimage: Sacred Landscapes and Self-Organized Complexity**, ed. J. McKim Malville and B. Saraswati, D.K. Printworld, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 163-177.

**Nina Laurie**, recently published a most useful piece of research, entitled "Finding yourself in the archives and doing geographies of religion", which appeared in *Geoforum* 41:2 (2010), 165-167.

The following book synopses have been sent in by Rana P.B. Singh (Professor of Cultural Geography & Heritage Studies, Banaras Hindu University, # New F- 7, Jodhpur Colony, Varanasi, UP 221005. India). Email: [ranapbs@gmail.com](mailto:ranapbs@gmail.com) - where he has been involved as series editor:

**PLANET EARTH & CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING SERIES**

Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K.

Celebrating 'learning to live together sustainably' under the aegis of United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), and understanding the interdependency and fragility of planetary life support systems, and making better global citizenship that promote more humane and peaceful life, and develop mass awakening for universal brotherhood, this Series will publish the innovative and interdisciplinary works that enhance better understanding and reverentially preserving those values of the past that help the humanity in achieving the basic goals of the UNDESD, and also mark the celebration of United Nations International Year of Planet Earth, 2009-2010, United Nations International Year of Astronomy, 2009, *IYA-2009*. This is in corroboration with the IGU Kyoto Regional Congress in 2013 that focuses on '*Traditional Wisdom and Modern Knowledge for the Earth's Future*.' Think *universally*, see *globally*, behave *regionally*, and act *locally* but *insightfully*. This is an appeal for cosmic vision, global humanism, and Self-realization. ....

The Series is sponsored by the 'Society of Heritage Planning & Environmental Health'.

**2. *Geographical Thoughts in India: Snapshots and Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.***

Rana P.B. Singh.

Foreword: Prof. Martin J. Haigh (U.K.)

**Contents:** Preface, Metaphysics and Sacred Ecology, Lifeworld, Lifecycle, Landscape as Text, Historical Geography, Cultural Geography, Geographic Milieu and Belief Systems, Sacred space and Faithscape, the Ganga River, Indian Village, Heritagescapes, and Development; index; author.

1 August 2009, 22cm x 15cm, xvi+ 431pp.; 17 tables, 58 figures.

Hb, ISBN (10): 978-1-4438-1119-X: £44.99/\$66.99.

Pb, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1119-4: £23.99/\$35.99.

**3. *Banaras: Making of India's Heritage City.***

Rana P.B. Singh.

Foreword: Prof. Dr Neils Gutschow (Germany)

**Contents:** Preface: Call for co-pilgrimage, Geographical Personality, Transformation, Representations in the Cartographic Art, Sacred Geometry and Cosmogram, Shiva's Universe, Sun images and ordering, the Riverfront, an University Township, Making Heritage city, and Modern Lifeways; index; author.

1 October 2009, A4 29 x 21cm, xiv + 407pp.; 56 tables, 114 figures (c.152,000 words).

Pb, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1132-4: £44.99/\$66.99.

**4. *Cosmic Order and Cultural Astronomy. Sacred Cities of India.***

Rana P.B. Singh.

Foreword: Prof. John McKim Malville (University of Colorado, U.S.A.)

**Contents:** Preface and Acknowledgements, Introduction: Cultural Astronomy and Cosmic Order ; Khajuraho, where stone speaks; Gaya, where manes come and bless; Vindhychal, where goddess resorts; Kashi, where Shiva dances in (India); The World Heritage Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama, Japan— Singh (India) and Fukunaga (Japan); Preservation of

making order; Chitrakut, where mother earth blesses; index; author.

1 November 2009, 22 x 15cm, ca. xiv + 244pp; 15 tables, 72 figures, <ca. 82,500 words>

ISBN (10): 1-4438-1417-2, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1417-1.

**5. *Sacred Geography of Goddesses in South Asia: Essays in memory of David Kinsley***

Editor: Rana P.B. Singh

**Contents:** Remembering David Kinsley— Singh (India); The Legacy of David Kinsley— Mann (USA); Sacred Places of Goddesses— Singh and Singh (India); Mental Journeys and Cosmic Topography— Wilke (Germany); Devi in the Siwalik Region— Foster & Stoddard (USA); Kalika at Pavagadh— Sinha (USA); Ritualscape of the Ashta Matrikas, Nepal — Amazzone (USA) ; Notes on the Kamakhya Pitha— Ramasso (Italy) ; Goddess Chinnamasta at Rajarappa— Singh; Sacred geography of Vindhychal — Singh ; Goddesses of Kashi— Singh, Singh and Rana (India); Mahavidyas' Yatra in Banaras— Zeiler (Germany); Durga-ji: Sacred Abode — Rodrigues (Canada); Goddess Ganga River— Alley (USA); Green Tara in the wall paintings of Alchi— Rohilla (India).

1 March 2010, 22 x 15cm; xviii + 396pp, 34 tables, 69 figures, <ca.136,700 words>

ISBN (10): 1-4438-1865-8, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1865-0.

**6. *Heritagescape and Cultural Landscapes***

Editor: Rana P.B. Singh

Foreword: Prof. William Logan (UNESCO Chair of Heritage, Deakin University, Australia)

**Contents:** Preface & Acknowledgements. Heritagescapes and Cultural Landscapes: An Appraisal— Singh and Rana (India); UNESCO's Heritage-scape: A Global Endeavour to Produce 'Peace in the Minds of Men' through Tourism and Preservation— Di Giovine (USA); Heritagescapes of India: Appraising Heritage Ecology— Singh

Cultural Heritage and Revitalizing a Mining Town in Mexico— Vargas-Hernández (México); Varanasi, India's Cultural Heritage City: Contestation, Conservation & Planning— Singh (India); Bodh Gaya, a World Heritage Site: Tourists and Native's Perceptions of Heritage and its Conservation— Singh and Kumar (India); Interpreting Our Heritage: A Theoretical Interpretation— Uzzell (U.K.); People and Learning Difficulties in Cultural Heritage Sites— Jon Rix (UK); index; contributors; editor.

To be out by 1 Nov. 2010, 22 x 15cm, ca. xvi + 352pp; 17 tables, 44 figures, <ca.128,250 words>

### **7. *Sacredsapes and Pilgrimage Systems***

Editor: Rana P.B. Singh

Foreword: Prof. Robert H. Stoddard (Emeritus, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, USA)

*Contents:* Preface. INTRODUCTION: Sacredscape and Pilgrimage Systems— Singh (India); Pilgrimage and Literature— Scott (Canada); The Message of Place in Hindu Pilgrimage— (late) Sopher (USA); Hindu Pilgrimages: From Roots to Perspectives— Singh (India); Sufi views on Pilgrimage in Islam — Khalid Masud (Pakistan); The "Architecture of Light": From Sacred Geometry to Biophotonic Technology— Poenaru and Stănculescu (Romania); Rolwaling: A Sacred Buddhist Valley in Nepal— Sacherer (Japan); Landscape, Memory and Identity: Research on the Exiled Qian Bangqi— Dandan (China); Current Jewish pilgrimage-tourism — Collins-Kreiner (Israel) ; Rituals and Sacred Space of Pandharpur, India — Sand (Denmark); Pilgrimage Landscape and Sacred Environment: Mata Vaishno Devi— Chauhan (India); Buddhist Pilgrimage places in India— Singh (India); Kailash- the Centre of the World— Vinšćak and Smiljanić (Croatia); Development and Sustenance of Shirdi as a Centre for Religious Tourism in India— Ghosal (India); Pilgrimage Studies: Outline and Bibliography; index; contributors; editor.

To be out by 1 Nov. 2010, 22x 15cm, ca. xvi + 360pp. ; 14 tables, 36 figs. (c.140,370 words).

**GORABS subscribers** may be interested in a new initiative in the United Kingdom, entitled Religion & Society, <http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/>

**The Religion and Society Research Programme** stimulates collaborative research across the arts, humanities and social sciences, while aiming to inform public debate, and advance the understanding of religion in a complex world. A summary of its principal aims follow here:

#### **A. Research**

1. Knowledge: advance knowledge and understanding of religion and society.
2. Interdisciplinarity: promote effective working between disciplines and build new connections and understandings.
3. Intellectual capacity: develop an enduring research field in terms of theories, methods, sources, materials and case studies which will enable comparative analyses of religion and society to be undertaken.
4. Human capacity: develop the research community by supporting new researchers and integrating them with established ones.

#### **B. Knowledge Exchange**

5. Stakeholders: facilitate exchange between researchers and non-academic stakeholders, including those in government agencies, public, charitable and voluntary bodies, the creative industries, the cultural and heritage sectors.
6. Public and Voluntary Sectors: Provide insights of practical and policy relevance.
7. Research subjects: promote effective working relations between researchers and the researched, including religious organisations and their members.
8. General Public: contribute to public awareness by disseminating findings and addressing current issues of public concern through outputs directed at a wide audience.

## GORABS online journal

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](mailto:ejleppman@windstream.net)

Please consider submitting a paper based on recent research, collaborations, debates, or presentations at appropriate academic conferences.

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## Minutes of GORABS Annual Board Meeting for 2010

The annual business meeting of the Geography of Religions and Belief Systems (GORABS) speciality group of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) was held in Delaware Suite A, Lobby Level, at The Mariott Hotel, Washington, D.C.

on Thursday 15th April, 2010, at 8.00 p.m.

**Present:** Elizabeth Olsen (EO) and Peter Hopkins (PH), joint-chairs; David Rutherford (DR), treasurer; Ed Davis (ED) immediate past chair, acting secretary; Michael P. Ferber (MPF), Darrell L. McDonald (DLM) and Daniel H. Olsen (DHO), past chairs; Elizabeth J. Leppman (EJL), journal editor; besides John Benson (JB), Richard Dodge (RD), Simon Rail (SR), Frederic Dejean (FD), Brad Huff (BH), Justin Tse (JT), Tomas Havliceil (TH) and Stanley Brunn (SB) in the general attendance.

**Apologies:** David J. Butler (DJB), secretary; Cameran Ashraf (CA), webmaster.

### Opening and Minutes from 2009 -

The meeting was called to order by EO, who welcomed the attendance at the annual business meeting. She then introduced the officers and, in the absence of DJB, ED acted as minute's secretary. Copies of last year's minutes, as well as changes to our by-laws, having been provided by DJB, were circulated amongst the attendance for consideration during the meeting.

The attendance was then invited to introduce themselves; this done, the floor was then opened for the discussion of issues pertinent to GORABS.

The minutes of the 2009 GORABS business meeting were then passed - proposed by DR and seconded by DLM.

### **Financial Report for 2009-10 -**

The financial report of our treasurer, DR, reported no expenses or deposits since last year, and the current state of our current account is \$4,695.20.

Our treasurer then drew attention to the changes in our by-laws, which were approved last year and circulated accordingly.

### **AAG 2010 Conference Report -**

Joint-chairs, EO and PH then reported on the good selection of papers and sessions sponsored by GORABS during the AAG 2010 conference, comprising a total of 13 sessions.

FD noted that he would have been in an organised session.

EO noted the AAG now has a new session-organising option, which came into effect at the last minute this year.

BH proposed that a GORABS team could do the work of pulling together those papers submitted for our sponsorship during the final days before the deadline for submission of papers.

Henceforth, our minutes should include a list of all sessions and papers delivered at the annual conference.

A session on evangelical transnationalism had many graduate students presenting/in attendance, so GORABS should try to recruit from them.

### **GORABS Listserver -**

Our GORABS listserv needs a new home - if it's just AAG, we'll miss some members/regular attendance, since quite a number don't remember to pay their annual dues and are thus left out. PH will investigate the possibility of getting the Royal Geographical Society [RGS] to be our host. MPF will pass names to PH towards that end.

### **RGS-IBG related group -**

It was reported that the Royal Geographical Society, with the Institute of British Geographers [RGS-IBG] has recently facilitated the organisation a new working group '**Geographies of Religion, Spirituality and Faith Working Group**' [GRSFWG] under its auspices, which will, in 2012, become a formal research group.

The working group was the brainchild of Jenny Lunn, and the founding committee comprises Justin Beaumont and Richard Gale as co-chairs and joint-treasurers, and David J. Butler as secretary - particularly to aid communication between this group and GORABS. EO also serves on that committee.

The group is already organising sessions in the context of the annual RGS-IBG conference in the UK this coming September, and some of the committee met on the fringes of the conference at Newcastle, UK, hosted by PH, as well as after our annual GORABS lecture in Washington DC this week.

### **The Second Annual GORABS Lecture -**

This was organised by PH and DJB and was this year delivered by David Ley; the event was very well attended. The room had seating 40 and was oversubscribed, with 45 in attendance throughout. Perhaps we should obtain a slightly larger room next year!

The lecture itself, titled '*Homo religiosus? Religion and immigrant subjectivities*', was very well received, and a lively question and answer session ensued, after which some of the committee and attendance repaired, with the speaker, to a nearby restaurant.

MPF proposed and JT seconded that we attach \$250 as the annual honorarium to the annual GORABS guest lectureship. PH and EO will write to Lily Kong, in connection with the inaugural 2009 GORABS lecture, sending her a draft for the amount, and the same will be done for this year's speaker, David Ley.

In terms of the 2011 GORABS guest lecturer, it would be good to have a crossover or interdisciplinary scholar, who would attract attendance from beyond GORABS. Fourteen names were then placed before the attendance, for consideration.

It was proposed by EO, and unanimously approved by the general attendance that DJB be asked to approach David Livingstone in connection with the 2011 annual lectureship.

### **The David E. Sopher Award -**

This GORABS-sponsored award for younger scholars or early career/non-tenured faculty was again not awarded this year, owing to lack of applicants. We did advertise it in the GORABS newsletter and on the GORABS website again this year, but perhaps we should look into advertising to a wider audience in an AAG newsletter or newsletters?

This was agreed.

### **The Robert Stoddard Award -**

This GORABS-sponsored award for senior scholars/lifetime achievements award does not have to be awarded annually, and was not awarded this year.

JT proposed that next year we consider David C. Harvey, while other names for consideration include Roger Stump, Wilbur Zelinsky and Ceri Peach.

## **GORABS Online Journal -**

Our journal editor, E JL, being present, reported that there have been no submissions recently! MPF is stepping down as managing editor and DHO will take over the position.

BH and MPF stated our journal is not cited in most citations. EO reminded the attendance of an earlier discussion that submissions to an electronic journal do not count towards academic promotion.

EO and PH proposed that we consider a print journal, as there is much more interest in GORABS than just a few years ago. EO volunteered to approach publishers and editors in connection with this aspect.

SB proposed that paper abstracts should issue in future. MPF said we need to be sure to speak with the Editorial Board, in terms of any proposed changes.

## **Any Other Business -**

ED is in charge of setting the slate of candidature for officers for 2011-13.

PH hosted a very successful conference on geographies of religion at Newcastle University in the UK in March 2010, which attracted 72 attendees and featured 6 keynote speakers! An online series of working papers may well emanate from the event.

MPF said we need a person to take charge of the listserv; PH will find cover for this.

The website was still being covered by CA, who is prepared, according to PH, to continue in this role. He was unavailable to attend the GORABS meeting owing to family illnesses.

EO proposed we continue to support graduate students. To this end, BH proposed we have a cash prize that be tied to journal publications; also, a travel award for graduate students, or a research award for graduate students. Perhaps the **Sopher Award** should be tied in future to a journal article?

SB argued that giving to research is too risky, but supported the idea of a travel award for graduate students. PH will therefore draw up a proposal for a travel award.

SB suggested that GORABS invite theologians in the Seattle region to our sessions at **AAG 2011** in that city and the AAG could look at waiving the attendance fee. Perhaps we could sponsor/organise a fieldtrip in Seattle also (MPF to investigate this), while JT to look at links to a seminary in Vancouver [?!]