



NZASR Conference 2010
A Century from Durkheim: Perspectives from the Pacific



Religious Studies
School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies
Victoria University of Wellington
30 June – 2 July 2010

PROGRAMME

DAY ONE, WEDNESDAY 30 JUNE

5:00-6:00 Registration

Religious Studies Library (HU 320), Hunter Building, Kelburn Parade

6:30- Conference dinner

Istanbul Restaurant, 156 Cuba St Wellington (ph. 385 4998)

6:30 arrival and pre-dinner drinks, 7:00 orders

FIRST PLENARY SESSION

Chair: Chris Marshall

Professor Paul Morris

Mana, Māori & Mayhem: Durkheim Down Under

DAY TWO, THURSDAY 1 JULY

ALL CONFERENCE SESSIONS IN HU 220 UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

8:00-8:45 Registration (for latecomers)

Religious Studies Library (HU 320), Hunter Building, Kelburn Parade

Morning coffee

8:45 Opening remarks

Professor Paul Morris, Head of Programme, Religious Studies, VUW
Housekeeping

9:00-10:30

PANEL ONE. Durkheim (1): Effervescence

Chair: Rick Weiss

*Dr Joseph Bulbulia,
Paul Reddish, and Dr
Ronald Fischer*

Observing Effervescence

*Dr Carlton Johnstone
Dr Art Buehler*

Worship as Collective Effervescence

The Study of Collective Effervescence for the 21st Century

10:30-11:00 Morning tea

11:00-12:30

PANEL TWO. Religion, Nation and Modernity in South and South-East Asia

Chair: Doug Osto

*Dr Rick Weiss
Mr Benjamin Schonthal
Dr Elizabeth Guthrie*

Non-elite Religious Innovation in Colonial India

Constituting Religious Rights in Sri Lanka

Son Ngoc Thanh and Cambodia's Holy Buddhist War against Communism

12:30-1:30 Lunch

1:30-3:00

PANEL THREE: Buddhism

Chair: Elizabeth Guthrie

Dr Michael Radich

Dr Doug Osto

Mr Atsushi Iseki

The Buddha's Relics as Veritable Embodiments of the Buddha
Samādhi as Altered State of Consciousness in some Mahāyāna Sūtras
Dharmakīrti on Causal Relations

3:00-3:30 Afternoon tea

3:30-5:00

PANEL FOUR: Middle Eastern Religions

Chair: Joseph Bulbulia

Dr Jan Ali

Ms Katharina Voelker

Dr Graham Hassall

The Cult of Chiti Sufism
Arkoun's Impact
Euphemia Baker and the First New Zealand Bahá'ís

5:00-5:45 General meeting of the New Zealand Association for the Study of Religion

DAY THREE, FRIDAY 2 JULY

8:30-9:00 Morning coffee

8:50-10:30

PANEL FIVE: Graduate Student Papers

Stream One (HU 220)

Chair: Geoff Troughton

Mr Phillip Carew

Mr Thomas Nagy

Ms Cornelia van Bunnik

Mr Wil Hoverd

Māori Participation in the Assemblies of God
Our Lady of Lourdes Grottos as a Fixture of Roman Catholic Parish
Landscaping in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India
Effect of Absence of Female Collaboration on Perceived Gender and
Subsequent Group Numbers
Measures of Religious Diversity in New Zealand: Preliminary Findings
From the 2009/10 New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey

Stream Two (HU 317)

Chair: Michael Radich

Mr David Weaver

Mr Benno Blaschke

Ms Nikki Aaron

Ms Isara Treesahakiat

Parsi Sugar in New Zealand Milk?
The Scientific Study of 'Lived' Religious Realities
Reviving the Devadasi tradition in Northern Karnataka
'The Holy Man' of Southeast Asia: Khrübā Sīwichai (1878 – 1939)

10:30-11:00 Morning tea

11:00-12:30

PANEL SIX: Durkheim (2)

Chair: Will Sweetman

Dr Eric Repphun

Dr Peter Donovan

Mr Christopher Howard

Telling Stories, Telling Culture: Emile Durkheim and Popular Culture

Technology and Our Spiritual Future

Sacred Travel in the Himalayas – Some Durkheimian Considerations

12:30-1:30 Lunch

1:30-3:00

PANEL SEVEN: Religion in the Internet Age

Chair: Mike Grimshaw

Dr Erica Baffelli

Ms Laura Campbell

Mr Sam Stevens

Religion and (Cyber)society

Durkheim Revisited: Is Google God?

Independent New Zealand Church and the Internet: Production,
Visibility and Changing Ritual

3:00-3:30 Afternoon tea

3:30-4:30

SECOND PLENARY SESSION

Chair: Art Buehler

Dr Mike Grimshaw

Secular Theology? The Social Sciences 'Doing Theology' after
Durkheim

4:45-5:00 Thanks and closing remarks

ABSTRACTS

Ms Nikki Aaron

PhD Cand., University of Otago

Reviving the Devadasi tradition in Northern Karnataka

Devadasis of Northern Karnataka are being forced out of their tradition and now hold one of the highest HIV/AIDS rates in India. My objective is to find culturally sensitive methods to help the women overcome this affliction. By incorporating religion and culture into development practices, I believe that Devadasis can be empowered in a more sustainable fashion. Revival of their song and dance tradition and integration of sacred space are two areas I am particularly interested in.

(Keywords: Devadasis, Karnataka, HIV/AIDS)

Dr Jan Ali

Lecturer, Islamic Studies, University of Western Sydney

The Cult of Chiti Sufism

Sufism is the inner, spiritual dimension of Islam. It involves an inward struggle for spiritual enlightenment and the discovery of God. Since its advent during the rule of the Umayyad Caliphate (661-750), Sufism has transmuted and proliferated into numerous orders enriching Islam with a lush mystical dimension. Using Durkheim's concept of cult, this paper seeks to gain insight into the asceticism and cultic nature of the Chiti order in Sufism.

Dr Erica Baffelli

Lecturer, Religious Studies, University of Otago

Religion and (Cyber)society

This paper investigates the relationship between online and offline representations of two Japanese religious leaders, Asahara Shōkō, founder of Aum Shinrikyō, and Fumihiro Jōyū, ex-member of Aum Shinrikyō and founder of Hikari no wa. The role of the Internet, especially the so-called Web 2.0, in reshaping or challenging religious authority will be discussed in relation to how new religious movements are perceived and portrayed in post-1995 Japan.

Mr Benno A. Blaschke

MA Cand., Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

The Scientific Study of "Lived" Religious Realities

An adequate science of lived religious realities depends upon a theory that can pass judgment on their validity. I will explore the epistemic foundations of such a desideratum. (1) I will ask: Is it conceptually impossible to verify lived religious realities? (2) I will argue that a unified principle of experiential evidence must satisfy two criteria. It must be: (a) prima facie justifiable (positive criterion); (b) defeasible (negative criterion).

Dr Arthur Buehler

Senior Lecturer, Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

The Study of Collective Effervescence for the 21st Century

Durkheim situated the notion of collective effervescence at the source of religious vitality, if not the source of religion itself. Although Durkheim asserted that collective forces/sentiments are measurable and can be investigated, this phenomenon has been almost entirely neglected by scholars. This paper assesses issues involved in gathering the requisite data for investigating effervescence in collective ritual.

Dr Joseph Bulbulia

Senior Lecturer, Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

Paul Reddish

PhD Cand., Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington

Dr Ronald Fischer

Senior Lecturer, Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington

Observing Effervescence

Experimental psychologists assess the effects of controlled, typically artificial conditions on psychological activity. What do experimental methods really tell us about cognition in the wild? Our talk briefly motivates and reconciles two apparently incompatible claims: (1) Laboratory experiments likely tell researchers little about ritual cognition in its natural environments. (2) Laboratory studies are indispensable for progress in the scholarly study of ritual behaviors. Examples are drawn from recent experimental work, including our own, exploring ritual effervescence.

(Keywords: cognition, cooperation, embodiment, extended mind, ritual)

Ms Laura Campbell

MA Cand., Religious Studies, University of Canterbury

Durkheim Revisited: Is Google God?

This research looks at the Internet, one of the most widespread new technologies that has drastically changed the way we think, communicate and live our social lives. The Internet has become an inherently tribal place, and this research reads through the lens of Durkheim to look at what fills the role of religare online and asks whether Google is God.

Mr Philip Carew

Naenae College, Wellington

Māori Participation in the Assemblies of God

This presentation examines the extent to which the New Zealand Assemblies of God, one of the largest and oldest Pentecostal denominations in the country, has fostered participation by Māori. It identifies eight key historical, ideological, and organisational factors that have contributed to low rates of Māori participation.

Dr Peter Donovan

Formerly Associate Professor, Religious Studies, Massey University

Technology and our Spiritual Future

Durkheim observed “the old gods are growing old or already dead” and predicted “new ideas and new formulae” will arise. But neither he nor anyone else foresaw a global spiritual future emerging a century later out of sciences such as bioengineering, nanotechnology and artificial intelligence. This paper introduces the futuristic Singularity scenario promoted by AI specialist Ray Kurzweil, and anticipates the questions traditional religionists are likely to ask about materialism, consciousness and morality.

(Keywords: spirituality, technology, artificial intelligence, bioengineering, Kurzweil, singularity)

Dr Michael Grimshaw

Senior Lecturer, Religious Studies, University of Canterbury

Secular Theology? The Social Sciences 'Doing Theology' after Durkheim

Taking Durkheim's push that sociology would replace what theology did, this paper argues for a rethought Secular Theology, noting that Secular Theology and Critical theory share common attitudes, approaches and aims. Perhaps Secular Theology is in fact better regarded as allied to the Social (and Political) Sciences than, as often, located within and found under attack in the humanities who often seek an essence while talking of scientific method.

Dr Elizabeth Guthrie

Lecturer, Religious Studies, University of Otago

Son Ngoc Thanh and Cambodia's Holy Buddhist War against Communism

Son Ngoc Thanh (1909-1977), an ethnic Khmer from Southern Vietnam, was one of the founders of Cambodian nationalism in the 1930s, and was a key figure in the nation's drive for Independence from the French in the 1940s. In the 1950s he was forced from the political centre to the periphery, where he led guerrilla movements, and collaborated with the CIA and American Special Forces in the Indochinese war. After a brief return to power during the Khmer Republic (1970-1975) he returned to South Vietnam, and died in Chi Hoa prison in 1977. In my paper, I will argue that Son Ngoc Thanh is best understood as a neak mean bun, a Buddhist Holy Man or millenarian leader who emerges at the end of the Buddhist Era to lead the faithful to the time of Maitreya.

Dr Graham Hassall

Associate Professor, School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington

Euphemia Baker and the First New Zealand Bahá'ís

Margaret Stevenson' 1912 profession of belief in the Bahá'í teachings makes 2012 the centenary year of the New Zealand Bahá'í community. This paper explores the relationship between the first New Zealand Bahá'ís, including Stevenson, and early Australian Bahá'í Euphemia Baker. In 1925 they jointly undertook a first pilgrimage to Bahá'í Holy sites in Palestine.

Mr Wil Hoverd

PhD Cand., Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

Measures of Religious Diversity in New Zealand: Preliminary Findings from the 2009/10 New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey

This paper reports on a series of demographical differences amongst New Zealand religious denominations. It analyses religious group differences in religious identification, income and charitable donation, and reactions to the civil union and anti-smacking legislation. These findings are drawn from approximately 6000 respondents to the longitudinal 2009/10 New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey. This paper demonstrates significant denominational variation for all measures except in reaction to the anti-smacking legislation.

Mr Christopher Howard

PhD Cand., Cultural Anthropology, Massey University, Albany

Sacred Travel in the Himalayas – Some Durkheimian Considerations

This paper will discuss the practice of sacred travel in the Himalayan region. This will involve considering the evolution of the practice – from the elementary forms of wandering ascetics to institutionalised pilgrimage, to contemporary spiritual tourism. I will then explore the potential relevance of Durkheim's concept of collective representation in regards to this phenomenon. This exploration is intended to help inform the theoretical backdrop of my upcoming ethnographic field research with contemporary pilgrims in the region.

(Keywords: pilgrimage, tourism, religion, modernity, mobility)

Mr Atsushi Iseki

PhD Cand., Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

Dharmakīrti on Causal Relations

Causation is one of the most important notions in Dharmakīrti's philosophy. A complication is that he sometimes claims causation is real, but sometimes that it is unreal. He does this by employing different, overlapping notions of causation. I will map those notions onto their ontological statuses, while referring to some western views similar to his for further clarification.

Dr Carlton Johnstone

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Worship as Collective Effervescence

Durkheim's observation made in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* that the very act of gathering is an 'exceptionally powerful stimulant,' still holds true today. It is the gathered faith community, the material community, that enables the experience of what Durkheim calls collective effervescence. This paper explores the way that Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence articulates the bond of community and unity experienced by young adults through worship in the context of local churches.

Prof. Paul Morris

Professor, Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

Mana, Māori & Mayhem: Durkheim Down Under

A century after Durkheim wrote *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, this paper examines the impact of Durkheim on our understanding of the life and cultures of the South Pacific. Beginning with his evolutionary model of religious societies, via the use of his work in ethnographic studies, to his impact on the social sciences in our region, an assessment is offered of Durkheim's enduring legacy for scholars of religions down under.

Mr Thomas C. Nagy

PhD Cand., Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

Our Lady of Lourdes Grottos as a Fixture of Roman Catholic Parish landscaping in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

This talk will study the role of the Lourdes Grotto as used by Catholic parishes in Chennai as a symbol of Catholicism's legacy as a foreign religion in India. As such, this popular Marian display also owes much to Tamil sensibilities that mesh with the aesthetic of the grotto. It also serves to validate the locally popular, but less internationally known Vailankanni Shrine, often called the "Lourdes of the East."

Dr Doug Osto

Lecturer, Religious Studies, Massey University

Samādhi as Altered State of Consciousness in some Mahāyāna Sūtras

In recent years a number of scholars have comment on the role of *samādhi* in the formation of the early Mahāyāna. In the following paper, I will argue that in a number of passages in some important Mahāyāna sūtras, the term *samādhi* is used to describe an altered state of consciousness (ASC). I then suggest that the 'neuropsychological' model of ASCs developed by the anthropologist David Lewis-Williams may be used to understand certain distinctive features of the Mahāyāna as a new religious movement in ancient India.

Dr Michael Radich

Lecturer, Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

The Buddha's Relics as Veritable Embodiments of the Buddha

Relics of the Buddha have been called many things in Buddhist Studies. However, to date, no scholar has suggested that they were regarded as the Buddha's bodies, despite the fact that that is what they were called (*sarirani*). I will argue that the Buddha's relics were in fact regarded emically as his bodies, across many branches of the tradition, through large swathes of historical time.

Dr Eric Repphun

Associate Lecturer, Religious Studies, University of Otago

Telling Stories, Telling Culture: Emile Durkheim and Popular Culture

This paper focuses on the ongoing impact of Emile Durkheim's work, especially his functional understanding of religion, on contemporary popular conceptions of religion, examining Durkheim through the close reading of two particular literary texts about the communal practice of storytelling. The texts in question are (1) Canadian writer Douglas Coupland's 2009 novel *Generation A*, and (2) American cult novelist Chuck Palahniuk's essay 'The Church of Story', first published in 2005.

(Keywords: Chuck Palahniuk, Douglas Coupland, Storytelling, Emile Durkheim)

Mr Benjamin Schonthal

PhD Cand., Department of History of Religions, University of Chicago

Constituting Religious Rights in Sri Lanka

This paper looks at the development of the religion-clauses in Sri Lanka's 1978 constitution and traces two opposing conceptions of religious rights, one conception that that gives unique privileges to the majority religion, Buddhism, and one conception that accords equal "fundamental rights" to all religions. The paper examines the historical and legal tensions between these two conceptions and the implications for modern Sri Lanka.

Mr Sam Stevens

PhD Cand., Religious Studies and Theology, University of Otago

Independent New Zealand Church and the Internet: Production, Visibility and Changing Ritual

The paper will discuss internet production and use by specific independent churches in New Zealand and whether new media add extra dimensions to religious practice – creating new "mediated" religious forms – or simply augment traditional communication systems. Content is based on interviews conducted with media developers from several New Zealand independent and mainstream churches in 2009 and 2010.

Isara Treesahakiat

MA Cand., Religious Studies, University of Otago

"The Holy Man" of Southeast Asia: Khrübā Sīwichai (1878 – 1939)

My paper examines the practices and the career of a well known monk in northern Thailand, Khrübā Sīwichai (1878 – 1939), and how these achievements opposed the central Thai authority and the Buddhist Sangha in Bangkok. I will also consider the shift in the role of Khrübā Sīwichai as a Buddhist monk to becoming a "Ton Bun" or the "source of merit".

Ms Cornelia van Bunnik

PhD Cand., Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

Effect of Absence of Female Collaboration on Perceived Gender and Subsequent Group Numbers

In Wellington Sister of Mercy Elizabeth Julian, outspoken, frank and direct despite political incorrectness, confronts fellow Mercies through feminist underpinnings of her writing, presentations, and homilies on the power of the imagination to facilitate collaborative solutions to human problems. Elizabeth's failure to receive explicit Mercy leadership support has impacted Mercy cohesion. Absence of support from fellow women creates an image of competitiveness and masculinity. This attitude impacts on Mercy numbers.

(Key Words: Sister of Mercy, confronts, feminist, collaborative, absence, masculinity, numbers)

Ms Katharina Voelker

PhD Cand., Religious Studies, University of Otago

Arkoun's Impact

Arkoun's project *Critique de la Raison Islamique* aims at reforms on multiple fronts. Some call his thinking "socially meaningless" (Henrich) or "uncomprehensible [*sic*] in the here and now of local communities" (Nielsen). I inquire into Arkoun's ideas on Quran, Prophet and Revelation, Hermeneutics and Reform. Then follows an evaluation of the potential of his thought by an examination of its inner consistency. Leading questions being: Do his concepts lend support to his anticipated reforms?

Mr David Weaver

MA Cand., Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

Parsi Sugar in New Zealand Milk?

"It is one of the supreme wonders of God that, though the Parsee community does not number more than a hundred thousand in the whole world, it has made a name for itself everywhere by virtue of its many illustrious qualities." (Mahatma Gandhi)

Few people in New Zealand have even heard of the Parsis. My presentation will sketch their background and the significance of their presence in New Zealand.

Dr Rick Weiss

Senior Lecturer, Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

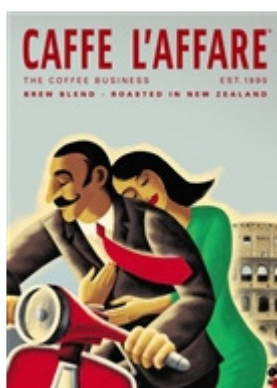
Non-elite Religious Innovation in Colonial India

Hindu leaders in the nineteenth century dramatically reconceived the importance of past tradition. Studies of these changes have focussed on elite formulations of a unified "Hinduism," their emphasis on textual authority, and the ways they imagined an ancient Hindu past. Lacking are studies of non-elite Hindu innovations. In this paper, I will consider some important ways that non-elite Hindus in colonial India reformulated prior traditions.

NOTE OF THANKS

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the conference organisers thank Caffe L'Affare for their generosity.



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ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Convenors Michael Radich
 Geoff Troughton

Committee Art Buehler
 Joseph Bulbulia
 Chris Marshall
 Paul Morris
 Rick Weiss

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