
Introduction

Performing Religion

Professor Eileen Barker, one of the key figures in recent sociology of religion and the subject of this volume's portrait, recalls in her text how her first goal in life was to become an actress. Only later on and quite by accident did she stumble upon the social sciences of religion, without, however, losing interest in performing. Those reminiscences are somewhat of a motto for what we find in this volume of *Religion and Society*: texts concerned with the performance of religion in society from different angles and perspectives—from ritual to reflexivity, from advocacy to opposition (here Eileen's piece is illuminating in its subtleties of approach), and from definition to regulation.

One example is provided by the volume's special section, which discusses the problem of ritual and reflexivity by addressing, through cases drawn from diverse religious traditions in Turkey, Togo, Tibet, and Europe, how ritual performance and participation, including immanent critique, skepticism, and doubt, affect personal experience, knowledge, and worldview. The section deconstructs the conventional assumption that ritual should be understood as making sense in its own terms, and that critique is possible only from 'outside' ritual. Here, instead, our contributors consider the critique of ritual from within, incorporating reflexivity into both the performance of ritual and the analysis of it.

The texts published in the articles section also incorporate this critical dimension of religious performance. While Emerson Giumbelli's contribution describes the making of a 'religious tourism' project in the city of Imbituba, Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil, and its implications for a conceptual reconciliation of two seemingly disconnected tropes ('religion' and 'tourism'), Stacy George's article discusses how a socio-political movement in the US, the Tea Party, incorporates a ritual dimension within and beyond its Christian religious framing. She unveils a 'productive' dimension in sacrality, something we can also trace in Johan Fischer's discussion of religious 'appropriateness' in the age of globalization. Fischer approaches the topic from an original angle: the regulation of kosher foods in the framework of biotech production. Travis Cooper, in turn, takes us to another kind of critique: a discursive analysis of the anthropology of missions and their mutual engagements. A similar critical standpoint is taken in Khaled Furani's article, which reflects upon the secular formation of anthropology itself. These two pieces can be read as complementary genealogical reflections on the anthropological study of religion.

A few months ago, we learned of the passing of Saba Mahmood, a pioneer and key thinker in the anthropology of religion and a key interlocutor for those studying topics such as Islam, gender, politics, the secular, and Egypt. Her work has had an inspiring influence on all of us, and we plan to pay homage to her in subsequent volumes. Coincidentally, one of the themes Saba Mahmood debated the most throughout her career—gender and its relation to religion—also appears in this volume, through the discussion around Joan Wallach Scott's book *Sex and Secularism*, which addresses the interlocation of religion and secularity from the viewpoint of



gender and sexuality and against the backdrop of the ‘clash of civilizations’ trope. In this section, readers engage the text and its author from the perspective of a sex education research and action program based in the Netherlands that also considers religious diversity. That Islam is so consistently opposed to secularism in the contemporary right-wing political discourse of Holland appears to resonate strongly with Scott’s history of secularism for our critics. We feel that this section reflects Mahmood’s path-breaking work in these areas. Her extraordinary voice will be missed.

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