

Call for Papers

The Working Group on Religion in the Black Sea Region

Fifth Annual Workshop

Everyday Diplomacy: Religious Encounters from the Baltics to the Black Sea

14-16 June 2018, Kyiv, Ukraine

Theme

Anthropological research on religious expression and practice in Eastern Europe reflects the internal complexity and dynamics of religiosity in a region that has constantly faced political challenges, including shifting borders and massive in and out migration. The end of the communist era in Eastern Europe led to new forms of politicization, especially where newly independent states sought to consolidate their legitimacy by integrating religion into national / nationalistic visions of history. In a number of Eastern European countries, religious and national identities are closely entangled. Many in this imperial frontier region embrace religion as a vital element of their national belonging, connecting them with their land and ancestors, even as such attachments often take unexpected and ever evolving forms. Perhaps the most puzzling of all are the drastic differences in state engagement by religious institutions that can be found within this post-colonial, post-socialist, post-Soviet frontier region. The involvement of religion and religiosity in political, social and economic life reveals a multiplicity of blended religious forms and rites, contested and shared sacred sites, and a wide spectrum of sects, cults and other millenarian movements, all of which make balancing religious pluralism a challenge in the region.

This workshop engages the notion of “everyday diplomacy” as forms of interaction and exchange that occur over religion in imperial frontier contact zones. (Marsden, Ibanez-Tirado, Henig 2016) These everyday encounters serve as a means to know and engage otherness by maintaining trade, civility, cosmopolitan outlooks, and often ambiguity. They play a vital role in creating or quelling tension and conflict. A focus on “everyday diplomacy” enables anthropologists to engage in comparative research that moves beyond local, nation-state or confessional frames to consider how historicity and geopolitics shape religious practices, memory issues and socio-political change more broadly. We encourage research that engages the theme of borderlands and utilizes ethnographic methods to study the dynamics of religious encounters, pluralism, and extra-institutional lived religious practices in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region, including the Caucasus. We welcome proposals from anthropology, history, religious studies, and sociology of religion using a variety of methods and innovative styles of argumentation.

Topics include, but are not limited to, how individuals and religious communities negotiate: the blending/boundary maintenance of religious, social and ethnic identities; representations of history/memory in local communities; accommodating/challenging pluralism and reform in Orthodox societies; (post)secularism; doubt, indifference, vernacular religion; religiosity as a creator of place and feelings of belonging; contested or shared material manifestations of religiosity in borderland regions; and religion as a factor in conflict resolution/stimulation.

Confirmed Speakers:

Bruce Grant, Professor, Department of Anthropology, New York University (USA)

Magnus Marsden, Professor, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Sussex (UK)

Catherine Wanner, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Pennsylvania State University (USA)

Format: All papers will be pre-circulated to participants. One hour will be devoted to open discussion of each paper. Each author will give a brief, ten-minute introduction, followed by commentary by an invited discussant and open discussion.

Logistics: The costs of travel to Kyiv and three nights of accommodation will be provided.

Proposals: Please submit a brief CV (max. 3 pages) and a **300-word proposal** to: julia.buj@gmail.com; soc.injener@gmail.com by **1 November 2017**. Notification of acceptance will be given by **15 November 2017**.

Publication Plans: We will publish an edited collection of articles. An English-language editor will be provided, if needed. We ask participants to submit a final revised article of ca. 8,000 words by 1 September 2018.