Entangled Religions

Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Religious Contact and Transfer

9 (2019) Article 5: 139–164

Digressions on Polytropy: An Exploration of Religious Eclecticism in Eurasia

DIONIGI ALBERA

National Center for Scientific Research, Aix-Marseille University, France

Entangled Religions 9 (2019)
http://doi.org/10.13154/er.v9.2019.139–164

Digressions on Polytropy: An Exploration of Religious Eclecticism in Eurasia

DIONIGI ALBERA

CNRS-Aix-Marseille University

ABSTRACT The anthropologist Michael Carrithers introduced the notion of polytropy in the field of the study of religion, proposing that this notion (deriving from the Greek poly, 'many', and tropos, 'turning') may account for the eclecticism and fluidity of South Asian religious life. The exploration effectuated in the article suggests that the notion of polytropy could offer a promising tool for capturing some important features of religiosity in other Asiatic contexts, too, as well as in the Mediterranean. Polytropic trends appear in different religious contexts, from the fuzzy Chinese situation, where religious affiliations are very limited in their scope and relevance, to the South Asian contexts, in which religious orientations coalesce around the multivocal concept of *dharma*, to the tightly structured Abrahamic religions in the Mediterranean with their strong confessionalism. Polytropy is associated with a practical mode of religiosity and is linked to a particular conception of believing in which the believer tends to multiply the transactions with different supra-mundane partners. This orientation is distinct from religious styles that are based on a discursive and scriptural approach and/or on the cultivation of oneself, which often display a tendency towards unity, coherence and continuity. This permits identifying an opposite pole with respect to polytropy, which I define as monotropy.

KEY WORDS polytropy; monotropy; ambiguity; religious contact; syncretism; cosmopolitanism; Asia; Mediterranean

Introduction

During the last years, there has been a growing academic interest in the study of multireligious attendance at the same sacred places. This phenomenon has been studied in various geographical contexts and through multiple lenses, for example paying attention to the relations between groups or to the interference of social solidarities and cultural connivances at a local scale, across religious divides. This common attendance also offers a fruitful field to investigate the dimension of religious action and its articulation of beliefs and values. From this point of view, the behaviour recorded at shared shrines seems to challenge several assumptions concerning congruence in individual religiosity.

The issue of religious congruence has been authoritatively raised, on a general level, by Mark Chaves. In his presidential address delivered at the 2009 annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, he drew the attention to a pervasive problem in the scientific study of religion that he defined as the "religious congruence fallacy". Chaves gives a precise definition of three main related senses of the "religious congruence" that are currently postulated in the study of religion:

> (1) individuals' religious ideas constitute a tight, logically connected, integrated network of internally consistent beliefs and values; (2) religious and other practices and actions follow directly from those beliefs and values; and (3) the religious beliefs and values that individuals express in certain, mainly religious, contexts are consistently held and chronically accessible across contexts, situations, and life domains. (Chaves 2010, 2)

In other words, conventional thinking presumes that religious congruence is common, that one can expect a consistency both among individuals' beliefs and attitudes, and between their ideas and behaviour. Moreover, these ideas and dispositions are thought of as stable and with a chronological continuity across contexts and circumstances. Chaves suggests that this line of thinking is wrong, since a great amount of research in several domains (anthropology, psychology, sociology) has shown that this kind of congruence is, on the contrary, rare. Nevertheless, the assumption of congruence is still extremely widespread. It is a sort of reflex that goes against the results of scientific research. This is precisely the "religious congruence fallacy" pointed out by Chaves.

The literature on shared sacred places suggests some possible ways to expand Chaves' argument, which is mainly concerned with contradictions within a particular religious system. As a whole, these findings challenge conventional wisdom, which frequently postulates that individuals inscribed in a religious culture comply *only* with the individual and collective, private and public rites that are prescribed in order to substantiate a particular creed. Furthermore, they also defy widespread viewpoints concerning membership in one religion that imply, for example, (1) that individuals belong to a religion, (2) that they belong to only one religion, and (3) that their membership is stable during the time. In this article, I will propose some preliminary considerations with the aim of enlarging the scope of the discussion of religious congruence. I will concentrate the attention on the frontiers of religious systems, and this by following the thread of the notion of polytropy, which expresses the propensity to worship a variety of holy figures without restraining the choice to a particular religious tradition. I will pursue two main objectives: on the one hand, expanding the

comparative perspective across Eurasia; on the other hand, positioning the issue of the sharing of sacred sites in the general framework of a discussion of religious action.

From India to China

The British anthropologist Michael Carrithers has introduced the notion of polytropy in the field of the study of religion. In a seminal article, he proposed that this notion (deriving from the Greek poly, 'many', and tropos, 'turning') may account for the eclecticism and fluidity of South Asian religious life "in which people turn toward many sources for their spiritual sustenance, hope, relief, or defence", without confining themselves to a particular religious tradition (Carrithers 2000, 834). The ethnographic focus of the article is restricted to the case of the Digambar Jains in India, but as the author makes clear, the notion of polytropy fits with religious practices that are present in a vast area of South Asia, from the Himalayas to Sri Lanka, characterized by the pervasiveness of religious pluralism (ibid., 832). Carrithers refers to scholarly works such as Susan Bayly's (1989), Paul Dundas' (1992) and David Gellner's (1992), which have illustrated the fluidity and the eclecticism of Indic religious life in different regional settings. Living in a religiously plural situation, people develop a reverential attitude towards holy figures related to different religious traditions, and often manifest devotion towards them. As a matter of fact, there is a huge literature that shows this propensity, both before and after the publication of Carrithers' article (see for example Assayag 1995; Assayag and Tarabout 1997; Bellamy 2011; Bigelow 2010; Boivin 2005; Mosse 1994; Sébastia 2002; 2007; Sikand 2002; 2003; Younger 1992).

Let us examine how Carrithers defines the range of meanings covered by the term polytropy. First, for him polytropy denotes that

> the consumers of religion actively turn to persons, not to impersonal or natural powers. Such persons may be straightforwardly divine, such as gods and goddesses, or living divine persons such as gurus, or even living persons such as priests or mediums who may intercede with a divine person on your behalf. (Carrithers 2000, 834)

This diversity also reverberates in the modalities of the relationship to these entities. As a consequence, the second aspect of polytropy is that it covers many forms of religious relationship, "from the occasional request for relief or a favour from a distant god, through the god visited occasionally or on festival occasions, to the god whom one visits daily" (ibid., 835). Third, for Carrithers polytropy has a particular Indic quality and

is strictly associated with *puja*, the typical act of devotion and respect, often including a material offering which is reserved to a divinity (and its images), but also, on a purely human plan, to a highly honoured guest. Such an association with *puja* highlights the fourth feature of polytropy, namely the fact that it "is a dynamic process". *Puja* tends "to be applied widely and promiscuously to objects, persons and relationships". Moreover, "the thought which goes with puja is not scholastic or finely discriminating, but practical and interactive, arising from deeply felt corporeal attitudes"(ibid., 835–836).

On the basis of an analysis of some Jain examples, Carrithers shows that *puja* has an exuberant character: a great creative effort has resulted in elaboration and complication in the practices, which may often attain a rather baroque complexity. The main aim of the worshiper, when he or she addresses a holy person through an elaborate series of performances and offerings, is to obtain worldly well-being in exchange, to be blessed with good fortune (ibid., 846–47). This material orientation of the devotion (both in its aim and in its enactment) has provoked the criticism of the austere purists, who nevertheless only represent a tiny, cultivated minority within Jainism. As a whole, Carrithers suggests that the notion of polytropy may be seen "as the label of a pervasive social process, a sort of religious Brownian motion or better, vigorous vegetative growth" (ibid., 836), which captures what the title of the article defines as "the natural condition of spiritual cosmopolitanism in India."

The pertinence of the notion of polytropy has been recognised in some works consecrated to the study of religion in South Asia (Gellner 2005; Frøystad 2012; Tuladhar-Douglas 2012[1]). Moreover, David Gellner (2005, 756) has suggested that this "felicitous term" may be used for other areas, since polytropic religious situations, "far from being unique to South Asia, are common in Asia as a whole". This direction has been followed by Adam Chau (2011; 2012), who has retained the notion of polytropy to describe the religiosity that characterised late imperial China, where the majority of the population lacked confessional distinctions. Here, commoners did not define themselves as Daoists, Buddhists, or Confucians. A collective religious identity of this type only developed among small groups of specialists and virtuosi who relied on canonical texts and practiced self-cultivation. Also at this level, which only concerned very restricted

1 Studying the Newars in Nepal, Tuladhar-Douglas (2012) raises some important issues. He puts polytropy in relation to what he defines as polynomy, so designating the multivocality of shrine images. Moreover, he stresses the local character of polytropy and the centrality of the dimension of place: "For Newars polytropies are local, and it is possibly because individuals are grounded in the ritual construction of a shared locality that each participant feels a profound sense of place" (2012, 72). His fieldwork in the town of Pharping shows that exclusivist behaviour, asserting a single religious identity, "tends to be disavowed or resisted by those who practice polytropic inclusivism" (2012, 73).

minorities, the traditions were not hermetically closed and self-contained. A reciprocal attraction to texts and philosophical reflections generated "frequent and serious trafficking of people and ideas between these three Great Traditions" (Chau 2012, 80). Moreover, even among elites, identities were not comparable to the confessional identities in monotheistic religions but were more akin to professional identities: "So a Confucian scholar-ritualist could learn to become a Daoist priest in a process culminating in the Daoist ordination ritual, which was more like additional professional accreditation than a statement of religious conversion" (Chau 2011, 557). Among the majority of the population, which was without any religious affiliation, the circulation of people and symbols was extremely widespread and the persons resorted easily to whichever ritual specialist or deities were available to them. As a consequence, "in their everyday life the Chinese are not dissimilar to the paradigmatically polytropic Indians characterized by Carrithers". Their domestic altars hosted Daoist, Buddhist, and other kinds of deities alongside the tablets for their ancestors pertaining to a Confucian tradition. Like their South Asian counterparts, Chinese approached deities or religious specialists in an opportunistic manner, without worrying about their association with this or that religious tradition, in order to receive supernatural help and assistance for a vast array of material issues (Chau 2012, 80). Thus, the majority of Chinese were involved in an "efficacy-based religiosity" in which what mattered above all was the effectiveness of rituals.

In particular, Chau concentrates his analysis on the example of Chinese funerals. In China, either Daoist priests or Buddhist monks were able to perform the burial rituals. People of the lower and middle classes could engage either the one or the other kind of monks, according to their availability and to local traditions. In contrast, rich families hired several groups of religious specialists in order to accrue spiritual benefit for the deceased and to affirm the social prestige of the household. A case that Chau examined in detail shows that the funeral choreography of a Chinese general, who died in Beijing in 1939, included substantial groups of Buddhist monks, Buddhist nuns, Daoist priests, and Tibetan Buddhist lamas, not to mention several lay sectarian practitioners. All these groups operated in a complex ritual sequence spread over at least a year, which implied the contemporaneous involvement of more than one hundred ritualists at different moments (Chau 2012, 87–88). To qualify this form of mixing, in which groups of specialists belonging to different religious traditions intervene in the same ritual event, Chau (2011, 558) proposes to modify the notion of polytropy as defined by Carrithers, speaking instead of "ritual polytropy". For him, the notion of "ritual polytropy" is the key for grasping the central nature of Chinese religiosity.

If Chau (2012, 89) underlines that "the Chinese lived in a Confucian-Buddhist-Daoist polytropy," he also emphasizes "a significant qualitative difference between

Chinese 'ritual polytropy' and the traditional 'religious polytropies' found in India and other South Asian countries such as Nepal." In South Asia, polytropy was associated with a situation in which people possessed "relatively unambiguous religiocultural identities." Thus, if "a Hindu might do *puja* to all figures of authority and deities of any tradition", nevertheless "he was still a Hindu." Analogously, "a Newar Buddhist might fully participate in a Hindu festival but he was still a Buddhist" (ibid.). On the contrary, in China it was only "the efficacy of the rituals (and the ritualists) that mattered, not the religious identity of the people," which was in fact almost completely indiscernible (ibid.). In this way, Chau draws a contrast between an "efficacy-based religiosity", typical of China, and a *dharma*-based (or path-based) religiosity that dominated in South Asia. Here, "being a Hindu, a Jain or a Buddhist was following a path, embodied in the teaching (*dharma*)", and this would concern all the social strata, without being confined to the narrow circles of the specialists and the virtuosi. Consequently, a *dharma*-based religiosity would correspond to a form of confessionality, even if Chau admits that in these contexts the latter was less strong than in the Abrahamic religions (ibid.).

As a whole, Chau's contribution is extremely stimulating and opens challenging comparative perspectives. Yet certain points of his argument arouses some perplexity. First, his analysis of Chinese ritual polytropy seems to rely almost uniquely on the scrutiny of funerals (and above all of rich people's funerals). This is undoubtedly a significant entry point to understand Chinese attitudes in religious matters, but it cannot be considered as representative of all forms of piety. On the whole, the miscellaneous hiring of a heterogeneous set of religious specialists seems confined to fairly rare events, while in their common polytropic activities, the great majority of Chinese interacted separately with the representatives of different religious traditions, like their South Asians counterparts were accustomed to doing.

Second, the opposition between Chinese and South Asian religious propensities seems to be based on too rigid a vision of religious identities of the latter. Undoubtedly, the fuzziness of religious identities was more pronounced in China, but decades of historical and ethnographic work on the Indian subcontinent suggest a more nuanced image of religiosity, marked by fluid religious categories and the lack of mutually exclusive religious groups. It seems rather problematic to put this variegated situation under the umbrella of an immemorial *dharma*-based religiosity. The contemporary situation, where clearly defined identities prevail, is the result of a complex history and cannot be projected indiscriminately on the past, even on a recent past. For instance, what is now called "Hinduism" is, in many respects, the result of the joint efforts of the British colonial administration, local Brahmins, Christian missionaries, European Orientalists and local reformists. A conglomerate of castes, cults, practices and beliefs

was thus subsumed under a unified religious community through a definition largely "reinvented" on the basis of the learned tradition of the Vedas, collated by Indian scholars, legitimized by the British administrative apparatus, canonized by European scholarship, and reinforced by the missionary activity of reformist movements (Assayag 1997, 32–42). Commenting on the argument advanced by David Gellner (2005), who suggested that the idea of a unique and exclusive religious attachment was propelled quite recently in Nepal by Western influence, particularly through the introduction of censuses unambiguously recording people's religious identities, Chau (2012, 90–91) observes that this exclusive religious belonging "is not entirely modernist or Western in origin." For him, a *dharma*-based religiosity has paved the way for modernist schemes of religious categories, and "there has been 'elective affinity' between the traditional *dharma-based* religiosity found in South Asia and modernist confessional religious identities." This vision is difficult to reconcile with recent findings which show that Nepalese migrants to the United Kingdom have a resilient propensity to affirm multiple religious identities. A survey carried out in 2010 shows that more than 25% of the interviewees, when asked what their religion (*dharma*) was, declared multiple affiliations: Hinduist and Buddhist, Kirat and Induist, Kirat and Bouddhist (Gellner and Hausner 2013; see also Hausner and Gellner 2012).

Third, and more crucially, it seems difficult to admit that an "efficacy-based religiosity" could be considered as uniquely Chinese. As a matter of fact, many descriptions point to the dimension of efficacy as a crucial "motor" of polytropic forms of devotion in other regions as well, namely in South Asia, where the notion of *dharma* is far from having a monopolistic influence on concrete practices of people. It is doubtful that the idea of an "efficacy-based religiosity" could be considered as a label exclusively for Chinese religiosity. Indeed, this orientation seems to be a widespread tendency present in different religious traditions.

Is Polytropy Compatible with a Monotheistic Environment?

The exploration effectuated so far suggests that the notion of polytropy could offer a promising tool for capturing some important features of religiosity in Asia. As Gellner (2005) has proposed, this notion could, for instance, also be useful in describing Japanese religiosity, which has long been characterised by a fuzziness of religious identities largely comparable to that observed in China. From the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century until the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a close association between Shinto and Buddhist practices, sites, and beliefs in

Japan. For centuries, the faithful went to the same shrines to worship both *kami* and *bodhisattvas*. These pilgrimages were marked by a confessional blur, making it difficult to attribute them to either tradition (Thal, 2005). It was only after the Meiji Restoration (1868), in fact, that Buddhism and Shinto were identified as separate religions (Grapard 1984; Sekimori 2005). Nevertheless, this process has been far from producing univocal religious identities and practices. For instance, Ian Reader (1991) has offered a vivid portrayal of religion in late twentieth-century Japan, showing that Shinto and Buddhism maintain a complementary nature. A vast bulk of evidence (participant observation, interviews, statistics) makes it clear that the two traditions "are not at all exclusive: praying to one does not prevent one from praying to the other." More generally, "there is very little differentiation, especially at explicit levels of religious action, between apparently separate religious traditions in Japan, with Shinto and Buddhism in particular interpenetrating to form an amalgam in the eyes of the general populace" (Reader 1991, 2).

Scholars like Carrithers, Chau, and Gellner seem to grant polytropy a somewhat cultural character. For them, this term would capture a basic tonality of Asian religiosity (even if they do not agree entirely on the relative strength of this tendency in the different regions of this continent). Polytropic orientations seem more or less intensely dissimilar from, and irreducible to, the logic of modernist schemes of religious categories and modernist confessional religious identities, which have been exported quite recently from the West to Asia, as well as the notion itself of "religion". These categories and these notions of religious identity are embedded in the history of the monotheistic religions. Therefore, it becomes relevant to test the possibility of using the notion of polytropy as an analytic tool in the latter context.

A number of works concerning several Asian regions show that the followers of monotheistic faiths, be they Christians or Muslims, are frequently implied in polytropic manifestations of worship (Assayag 1995; Assayag and Tarabout 1997; Bellamy 2011; Bigelow 2010; Boivin 2005; Mosse 1994; Sébastia 2002; 2007; Sikand 2002; 2003; Younger 1992). Yet in a culturalist vein, it would be possible to argue that this phenomenon could be the result of the acclimatization of monotheistic religiosity in the Asian context, dominated by a tendency towards fluid religious practices and identities. Thus, in order to assess more cogently if polytropy can be conceived of only as a cultural orientation typical of Asia or as a more general tendency, it is significant to test its presence in the Mediterranean region, where the religious landscape has been uniformly characterized by the exclusive (and exclusivist) presence of monotheistic religions for many centuries.

Looking at the vast body of literature that has explored the sharing of sacred sites in different sectors of the Mediterranean region[2] in the last years, it seems that even here it is possible to isolate polytropic forms of religiosity, generally linked to an efficacy-based orientation of religious practices. Moreover, these manifestations of devotion across religious borders are far from exceptional in this context: these phenomena are substantial and persist long-term everywhere that different religious groups have lived in close proximity. In other words, Mediterranean religious pluralism seems to produce effects comparable to those observed in Asia.

Several clues suggest that in monotheistic contexts, exclusivism is not a predictable, "natural" datum, simply stemming from the reverberation of an uncompromising theological core on the behaviour of the faithful, but rather the result, often partial and provisional, of the action of political powers and religious specialists aiming to establish the purity of the cult and to consolidate confessional borders. For instance, at the beginning of the Christian era, the separation between "the church" and "the synagogue" was a process that spanned several centuries, during which a broad spectrum of intermediate groups survived (Kinzing 1991). This sometimes led to a certain confessional fuzziness. Thus, faithful who were supposedly affiliated to different creeds could share, on certain occasions, the same shrines and perform similar acts of devotion. The homilies of John Chrysostom reveal phenomena of this type in the religious life of late fourth-century Antioch. From the pulpit, the saint attacks a whole series of "Judaizing" behaviours of Christians living in the city. He reprimands Christians for celebrating Jewish holidays, fasting along with Jews, and attending Jewish shrines and synagogues (to seek healing through incubation, to practice ritual oaths) (Vinson 1994; Shepardson 2007). In the fifth century, Sozomen relates another interesting example of religious mixing, located in the surroundings of Hebron, by the Oak of Mambre, a central place in biblical topography, where three mysterious figures would have visited Abraham as he was sitting at the entrance of his tent during the hottest hour of the day. Every year, a panegyris commemorating this episode attracted Christians, Jews, and Pagans in a mixture of rituals and interpretations (Sozomène 1983, 2: 246–247).

The following centuries witnessed the consolidation of the domination of monotheistic tendencies and the growth of a third great monotheistic movement: Islam. Even in this case, early phenomena of crossing may be considered as polytropic behaviours. Several sources, including especially the monasteries' books compiled by Muslims, demonstrate, for instance, the importance of Christian monasteries in

2 It is impossible to provide a complete list of the numerous articles that have explored these aspects here. Among the books that are concerned with this topic, see Albera and Couroucli (2012); Barkan and Barkey (2014); Ben Ami (1990); Bowman (2012); Chiffoleau and Madeuf (2005); Cormack (2013); Hayden and alii (2016); Valtchinova 2010.

Abbasid society—in Iraq, Egypt, and Syria—and reveal a large attendance by Muslims in these places. The reasons for these visits were multiple and may also have had a devotional character. The annual festival of the monasteries attracted many Muslim visitors, who not only participated in the festivities but also mixed in the religious celebrations. Muslims worshipped icons (especially those of the Virgin), relics, and other religious objects. The monasteries' books also provided guidance on the thaumaturgic specialties of each shrine. Like Christians, Muslims went there to solve their problems and make vows. Some monasteries were known for their therapeutic properties. For instance, people bathed in sources to cure skin diseases, or took a handful of earth which ensured the protection of the house from scorpions (Landron 1994, 31–35; Kilpatrick 2003).

These border crossings are not confined to the early phases of Christianity or Islam. Several manifestations of the same nature regularly occurred when these religions were much more established. A great variety of sources—travel books, hagiographies, polemical writings, and, most recently, studies of folklore, history, and ethnography—testify to a myriad of exchanges in religious behaviour from the Middle Ages to the present day. An important contribution to the understanding of these interreligious phenomena comes from research on the relations between Christians and Muslims in the Ottoman Empire carried out in the first decades of the twentieth century by the English scholar Fredrick Hasluck (2000). The historical and contemporary sources studied by this author showed that relations between religious groups were often symbiotic. Both Christians and Muslims were ready to address their requests to a sanctuary administered by another religion, if the latter had a reputation for efficacy (ibid., 100)—to the point that, according to Hasluck (2000 97), this crossed frequentation constituted a "common phenomenon" and was almost banal. Although the focus of his work concerned the interplay between Christians and Muslims, Hasluck also documented several examples in which interreligious attendance of the same shrine concerned the Jews.

Over the centuries, the Mediterranean landscape has been punctuated by thousands of sanctuaries marked, often for long periods, by interpenetration between different traditions. Most of the shared attendance associated Christians and Muslims in places belonging to one or the other religion. This is not surprising, given the greater quantitative importance of these two religions. Some sites attract the faithful of the three monotheistic religions. On the other hand, depending on places and times, several forms of common visitation concern only Jews and Muslims. Judeo-Muslim cults were notably spread in the Maghreb. These phenomena were particularly studied in relation to Morocco, where a panoply of sanctuaries was the object of a mixed devotion (Ben Ami 1990).

As a whole, in the Mediterranean, where people of different religions coexist, one observes a regular implantation of manifestations of shared worship and the emergence of a variety of what Frederick Hasluck defined as “ambiguous sanctuaries”. In spite of the exclusivist tendencies typical of a monotheistic milieu, and of the fears of pollution stemming from contact with the ‘other’, ordinary devotional practices often blurred religious distinctions. Actors’ use of religious resources can be relatively detached from the realm of ideas, beliefs, and practices which define the institutional core of a denomination. Interfaith practices evade the establishment of coherent and monolithic groups and identities. They are an emanation of an efficacy-based religiosity: the hope of material help and relief pushes the faithful to explore other religions’ “pantheons” and frequent “foreign” sanctuaries.

The supernatural agents who charge the “plural” sanctuaries with their spiritual power may be local figures with an indeterminate profile, and therefore easily appropriated by individuals of different faiths. Frequently, devotions converge on holy figures that are recognised by different religious traditions. This is the case with certain biblical personages, such as Abraham and Moses or the Virgin Mary, who has an important role both in Christianity and in Islam. Moreover, there are figures that are part of a religious tradition but also allow shifts towards other religions, like the Koranic character of Khidr, sometimes perceived as a transfiguration of Saint George or the prophet Elijah. But Muslims can venerate even irrevocably monoconfessional saints, such as Saint Anthony of Padua, for example, in Albania and Turkey (Albera and Fliche 2012).

The diffusion of these devotional confluences is attested to at all times. In some cases, it is possible to identify longitudinal sequences of very long duration for some sites, from the Middle Ages to today, as in the case of several Marian shrines dear to Muslims. As early as the tenth century, Eutychius, a Melchite Patriarch of Alexandria, reported that Muslims gathered for prayer in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. In the following centuries, accounts of Christian pilgrims constantly report the presence of Muslims who came to Bethlehem to worship the Virgin and her Child here. The frequentation of the Bethlehem church by Muslim devotees has continued until today, and this is far from the only example of such a mixed attendance spanning on several centuries (see Albera 2012).

Interreligious porosities occurred more frequently and with a more pronounced historical continuity in the southern and eastern sectors of the Mediterranean, where the human landscape has been marked by religious pluralism, mainly due to the relative tolerance of Muslim governments concerning Christian and Jewish minorities. Viewed in the long term, polytropic attitudes are inscribed in an ancient Mediterranean order made of enclaves and connections, in a patchwork of territories, peoples, and local

cults (Hauschild et al. 2007). This ancient order has gradually collapsed. Transformation has become particularly rapid in the twentieth century as a result of economic change, urbanization and, above all, the process of ethnoreligious homogenization and polarization of identity. The clash of bellicose nationalisms has definitively altered the ethnic and religious profile of the southern and eastern Mediterranean through a process of homogenization that put an end to centuries of coexistence, and made interreligious sharing more difficult. The construction of religion-based nationalisms led to a new rigidity on the Muslim side, accompanied by the development of fundamentalist tendencies influenced by Wahhabism. Since at least the past one hundred years, everything seems to be leading to the closure of religious frontiers, to a narrowly defined identity politics, and to a strict policing of devotional practices. Nevertheless, even in this highly problematic context, and despite recurrent political and religious tensions, it is possible to look for signs of porosity (see, for instance, some cases examined in Valtchinova 2010 and Albera and Couroucli 2012).

The rapid comparative incursion sketched on the previous pages suggests that polytropic trends and efficacy-based religiosity cannot be interpreted uniquely, and even predominantly, in cultural terms, linking them to a particular social and cultural environment, be this Indic or Chinese, or more generally Asian, like Carrithers, Gellner, and Chau seem to suggest. The presence of polytropic traits in monotheistic religions even in the Mediterranean region, which is far removed from the Asian cultural environment, points to the need for a different perspective. The notion of polytropy, in other words, may be conceived of as a crucial component of a general, comparative theory of religious action in “world religions”.

In conclusion, it seems possible to expand the scope of the “religious congruence fallacy” pointed out by Chaves. A comparative examination of religious actions crossing the borders of religious systems permits adding some corollaries to Chaves’ argument and individuating at least two strictly related forms of fallacy in received wisdom on religious behaviour. I suggest calling the first form “religious uniformity fallacy” (postulating that individuals inscribed in a religious culture “naturally” conform only to the rites their religion proposes and congregate only with co-religionists) and the second “religious belonging fallacy” (maintaining that individuals necessarily belong to a religion, and that they cannot belong to more than one religion at the same time).

Trailing Clouds of Etymology

As is well known, the creation of notions—a particularly fertile activity in social sciences—is not without risks and problems. According to the empiricist position,

classically illustrated by Vilfredo Pareto (1935, I, 62–5), each notion is purely a matter of convenience. Faithful to his logico-experimental method, Pareto observed that the "thing" comes before the word. For him only "things" matter, while words are simply etiquettes: their technical meaning depends exclusively on the definition that the researcher gives them. Pareto asked his readers to absolutely avoid reconsidering the technical terms he proposed by looking at their etymology. In contrast, a philosophically oriented approach adopts a very different stance, attributing a great importance to etymology. According to this perspective, as it was nicely put by Austin, words are "trailing clouds of etymology", since a word never "shakes off its etymology and its formation" (1956-57, 27).

In his article, Carrithers states that he has coined the word polytropy by combining two Greek words, and other authors have acknowledged his coinage (Gellner 2005; Chau 2011; 2012). In fact, it may better be qualified as the independent reinvention (in the field of religious anthropology) of a word that nevertheless had a previous and independent existence in other scientific domains. Polytropy has, for instance, been employed in natural sciences to describe interchange of both heat and work between a system and its surroundings (Sandler 2014). More crucially, the word polytropy cannot be considered merely as one of the many recent terms created *ex-novo* on the basis of Greek expressions. As a matter of fact, it already existed in ancient Greece and carries an important history with it. Let us see if this remote history may have any connection with the technical meaning attributed to it by Carrithers and other anthropologists (and to what extent this can possibly contribute to an enrichment of the semantic content of this notion).

In ancient Greek, the word *polutropia* meant "versatility, craft, multifariousness, variety" (Liddell and Scott 1940). The corresponding adjective *polutropos* has many occurrences in Greek literature, with the meaning of "shifty, versatile, wily". Significantly, this notion is connected with Hermes, the "divine trickster". Above all, *polutropos* is an epithet that accompanies descriptions of Odysseus. In the very first line of the Odyssey, the protagonist is evoked as the *polutropos* man. Later in the poem (Odyssey X, 330), Circe defines Odysseus as *polutropos*, describing his resourcefulness, which permitted him to successfully resist her magic (Pucci 1987).

A *polutropos* man is characterized by his mobility. He is flexible, undulating, and unstable only in appearance. His flips are the stratagems to escape a trap, or the tricks by which he tries to seize his opponent. Usually associated with Odysseus, *polutropos* defines his character of crafty and astute warrior. A long literary tradition has been concerned with this topos. Odysseus' *polutropia* was the subject of criticism in fifth-century poetry (Pindar) and tragedy (Sophocles and Euripides), and considered as the manifestation of a deceitful personality. In contrast, the figure of Odysseus *pulotropos*

was assessed more positively in later philosophical texts, like Antisthenes' *Fragments* and Plato's *Hippias Minor*, as the positive features of an enduring, skilled, and intelligent person. In these works, the polytropic, complex nature of Odysseus is contrasted with the "true and simple" personality of, respectively, Ajax and Achilles (Lévystone 2005; Adams 2010).

More generally, the word *polutropos* is associated with other terms, such as *polumekanos* or *polumetis*, meaning "cunning, shrewd, ingenious, with many tricks". Along with these terms, it is inscribed in the general semantic field of the *mêtis* (which is exemplified again by the mythical figure of Odysseus). As Detienne and Vernant have showed in their classical work on this subject, *mêtis* is practical, cunning knowledge, distinct from formal knowledge (episteme). *Mêtis* is associated with trickery and deceit, it combines flair, subtlety of mind, resourcefulness, and opportunism, and applies to situations that are transient and mobile:

> In the first place, the intelligent ability referred to as *mêtis* comes into play on widely varying levels, but in all of them the emphasis is always laid on practical effectiveness, on the pursuit of success in a particular sphere of activity: it may involve multiple skills useful in life, the mastery of the artisan in his craft, magic tricks, the use of philtres and herbs, the cunning stratagems of war, frauds, deceits, resourcefulness of every kind. (Detienne and Vernant 1991, 1)

Detienne and Vernant characterize some aspects of *mêtis*. First, the success of an action does not depend on the use of force (which the subject of *mêtis* often lacks), but on "the use of methods of a different order whose effect is, precisely, to reverse the natural outcome of the encounter and to allow victory to fall to the party whose defeat had appeared inevitable" (ibid., 13). Second, there is an essential temporal component. The man of *mêtis* should always be ready to seize an opportunity, to acquire mastery over the *kairos*. Third, the *mêtis* is not unified but multiple and diverse (and this aspect resonates particularly with the specific domain of *polutropia*): "Odysseus is the hero who is *polumetis* as well as *polutropos* and *polumechanos*. He is an expert in tricks of all kinds (*pantoious dolous*, *polumechanos*) in the sense that he is never at a loss, never without expedients (*poroi*) to get himself out of any kind of trouble (*aporia*)" (ibid., 18). *Mêtis* appears as multiple (*pantoie*), many-coloured (*poikile*), and shifting (*aiole*) because "its field of application is the world of movement, of multiplicity and of ambiguity" (ibid., 20). Fourth, *mêtis* operates through disguise and "is itself a power of cunning and deceit" (ibid., 21). As a consequence, a man of *mêtis* is also a master of masks and illusions.

This brief exploration of the ancient roots of the word polytropy and of its echoes within cognate semantic domains is presumably useless with regard to the contemporary use of this notion in the fields of physics or astrophysics. On the contrary, it resonates quite intensely with the meaning of the contemporary, technical notion introduced by Carrithers in the field of the anthropology of religion, designating an efficacy-based religiosity, conveyed in actions more than in states of mind or discursive assertions, and characterized by a great exuberance, like a Brownian motion or a vegetative growth (to use Carrithers' expressions). In several respects, Odysseus *polutropos* reverberates with more recent, anonymous religious practices conveyed by the notion of polytropy. In the Asian or Mediterranean cases that we have considered, polytropic behaviours of ordinary people seem to operate in the framework of a practical, cunning intelligence, akin to Greek *polutropia* and *mêtis*.

The Indefinite Plurality of Believing

To what extent may the "clouds of etymology" that the word polytropy carries with it enrich its technical meaning conceived by Carrithers in relation to religious studies? The association between *polutropia* and *mêtis* suggests that religious polytropy pertains to the domain of cunning intelligence, above all interested in attaining practical effectiveness. It is an attempt to seize an opportunity wherever available. It is multiple and many-colored. It is the expression of a flexible, ingenious, and shifting approach. I will briefly pursue the trail offered by these associations by building a bridge between polytropy and some aspects of Michel de Certeau's thought.

Michel de Certeau inscribed the practices linked to the Greek *mêtis* in a wider characterization of *tactic* as opposed to *strategy*. For him, the strategic model is typical of political, economic, and scientific rationality: "A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (*propre*) and thus serve as basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it" (de Certeau 1984, xix). On the contrary, a tactic does not possess a place, but "insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance" (ibid.). The tactic cannot capitalize on its advantages; it depends on circumstances, and tries to turn external events into opportunities. A tactic is the art of combining heterogeneous elements whose synthesis takes the form "not of a discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is seized" (de Certeau 1984, XIX).

In several respects, polytropic religiosity corresponds to a tactical infiltration of the weak in a territory that is alien to them, trying to get along in a network of already established forces and representations, and turn them to their own end. In general,

ordinary faithful lack control of the theological, ritual, and architectural elements that make up a religious tradition. Using de Certeau's language, their polytropic wanderings may be defined as clever tricks within an alien order, established by a more strategic intentionality.

Moreover, polytropic religiosity may be seen as a manifestation of a tactic of the weak at a second level as well, less sociological and more existential. Facing constantly problematic and often menacing human and natural worlds and an enigmatic array of supernatural forces, the individual tries to take the opportunity, in spite of the shifting terrain and the mysterious turns of fate. Thus, in a condition of incertitude, the practical, cunning intelligence increases its chances by multiplying the directions of its quest and augmenting the number of its supernatural interlocutors.

Such a religiosity is linked to a specific conception of believing, on which Michel de Certeau's (1981; 1983) reflections again offer challenging hints. In this conception, believing means to 'give credit' to a recipient. It is an act that implies both a different partner and a deferred repayment; it creates a reference to the Other and to the future. Believing produces a relational commitment whereby something is given to someone else, an 'Other', pending a reward from them. This requires that the latter recognizes the obligation and is able to do what is asked. Therefore, the deployment of belief is padded with uncertainties. Without ever being assured of his or her bet, the believer is moved to multiply the transactions with the supra-mundane partners who could meet the demands. Consequently, according to de Certeau, mobility is a dominant feature of the act of believing. In the search of a respondent, the believer tends to compensate for his or her uncertainty by an endless reference to a multiplicity of supernatural 'Others'. Moreover, in the absence of any certainty, the believer relies on the fact that other people believe in the action of supra-mundane guarantors. Even from this point of view, the process of believing proceeds from an indefinite plurality, very much like 'opinion' does. This is the domain designated by expressions like 'it is believed', 'they believe'. Hence emerges a general, neutral authorization of the belief. De Certeau defines this dimension as that of 'plausibility', whose subject remains undetermined.

Many examples may be associated with the mechanisms of this type of believing, from the votive religion in Antiquity (whose talismans, amulets, and ex-voto have been accumulated in so many contemporary museums) to the cult of saints in monotheistic faiths to the *puja* in South Asia to pluralistic rituals in China. From this point of view, polytropy may be seen as a "natural" outcome of the mobility and the indefinite plurality of believing.

Monotropy

Through a kind of gestalt effect, the discernibility of polytropy depends on the action of another, opposite way of conceiving religious behaviour. The "spiritual cosmopolitanism" embedded in the modus operandi of polytropy implies the existence of separate (and possibly incompatible or antagonist) established religious traditions, comparable to "religious countries" or "poleis" in which the carriers of polytropic religiosity may circulate, feeling more or less at home everywhere. In other words, polytropy supposes the existence of symbolic frontiers between religious traditions: the multidirectional movements of the quest that characterises this type of religiosity become visible precisely when they cross these frontiers, whose nature is obviously variable.

It is tempting to identify the opposite pole to polytropy as monotropy, in which people tend to turn towards a unique direction of spiritual relief. As we have seen, polytropy does not have a fixed shape: it is multiple, unstable, and fluid, it adopts a plastic, inventive, kaleidoscopic, and ever-changing approach. In contrast, monotropy may be characterized as a religious attitude that tends towards unity, uniformity, coherence, stability, and continuity. Monotropy corresponds to the tendencies that assure internal coherence of a given religious tradition in its particular physiognomy and consistency. It gives voice to the inclination for orthodoxy and orthopraxy, whatever the range and the intensity of these tendencies, be they reserved to a tiny minority of religious specialists and lay virtuosi, like in Chinese religions, or ideally extended to all the people, like in the monotheisms. Monotropic tendencies occupy the centre of the stage, as it were, in any religious traditions. They define its core and its frontiers. They have a strategic quality: they possess a place that can be circumscribed as proper, in de Certeau's terms, while polytropic trends correspond to the domain of subaltern tactics.

Monotropic tendencies towards unity, uniformity, and coherence are central in the working of religious institutions and contribute to selecting and refining assertions, to giving them the form of a doctrine by introducing determinations and producing order, and to organizing allowed ritual practice. In this way, each religious institution isolates and authorizes specific contents in the global sphere of what is credible and defines the sphere of a different kind of plausibility, which alters the general, neutral authorization of the belief (de Certeau 1981; 1983).

Monotropic propensities are the main inheritors of the breakthrough in different Euro-Asian cultural systems that the philosopher Karl Jaspers has identified with the term 'Axial Age'. This movement involved a radical questioning of existing traditions and a critical examination of accepted ideas and customs. This antagonistic second-order thinking, which affirmed its legitimacy against previous forms of religiosity, is the

main matrix of the current great religious systems, often designated with the label of "world religions". In this context, without monotropic tendencies, it would be impossible to ensure the continuity and stability of any religious tradition. The channels through which monotropic sensibilities become manifest in religious action are manifold: they include a discursive and scriptural style of religiosity; self-cultivation, also with ascetic practices; a concentration on soteriology and transcendence; ethical and spiritual tension; a pursuit of unity and coherence. The main carriers of these forms of religiosity are several strands of religious specialists and of virtuosi, while lay masses, in contrast, constitute polytropy's more receptive field. But it would be mistaken to attribute an absolute fixity to these sociological incarnations of forms of religiosity. Even if the dominance of a trend is generally quite clear, there is possible middle ground and the somewhat challenging coexistence of opposite tendencies in the same group, or even within the same person. Put differently, it is important to avoid excessive simplifications which become caricatures when one forgets that the models are heuristic devices that simplify reality and cannot entirely replace it. Polarities like polytropy and monotropy rarely exist in pure form in the concrete world and should obviously be contextualized. From this point of view, it is better to speak of tendencies rather than of objective conditions.

Monotropic tendencies are inner-directed: they are orientated by centripetal forces at work within a religious tradition. However, they are also concerned with what is situated "outside", with the "other", and cannot help but be involved in a series of interactions with separate religious traditions, generating a wide range of outputs. The identikit of an absolute purist and rigorist personality which refuses any compromise and promotes a strong antagonism with other religions does correspond to people that one can encounter in the real world. But the zealot surely cannot be seen as the only incarnation of these tendencies, and as a matter of fact, the range of positions in the monotropic field is considerably wider. Religious specialists, who are the main bearers of a religious system, may often accommodate lay people's polytropic trends, which they accept and also encourage, even if they don't personally adhere to these forms of religiosity. They may also extend this "tolerance" to incursions by the faithful of another religion into the field that they control. Furthermore, a particular position is occupied by mystical tendencies. In this case, an extreme quest for unity and uniformity may sometimes relativize the frontiers between religions, generating a somewhat paradoxical monotropic "spiritual cosmopolitanism", like in the case of some Sufi paths. Moreover, the official representatives of religious traditions have been increasingly engaged in forms of interreligious dialogue in the last decades through theological discussions, encounters, and common ceremonies. But it suffices to compare a formal

interreligious ceremony with a spontaneous pilgrimage at a shared shrine to grasp to what extent different logics of religious action are at work in these two contexts.

Likewise, polytropic tendencies have a general quality that cannot be reduced to the crossing of religious borders. This is only one of the manifestations of a propensity to multi-directional worship, which may be effective also in a mono-religious setting. It is only in a pluralist situation, when multiple denominations are present in the same territory and generate an increasing stock of available religious resources, that polytropic propensities may produce the crossing of religious frontiers, so acquiring greater visibility.

In relation to monotropy, it is also possible to add some etymologic considerations. In its turn, in fact, this notion has a complex history. It is used in contemporary chemistry and physics to describe a type of polymorphism in which a material could exist in multiple forms, and only one of these forms is stable, while all others are unstable. Monotropy has also been employed in psychology to define a child's bias to attach to one person in particular (Prior and Glaser 2006, 63–4). However, the word already existed in Ancient Greek. *Monotropia* meant "uniformity, simplicity", while the related word *monotropos* had a wider semantic range, designating both 1) someone who has only one manner of being, who is simple, with a unified character, and 2) someone who lives alone, a solitary, unmarried person, and even a misanthrope (Bailly 1935). It is easy to see the logic of this double meaning. The prefix *mono* may refer either to the goal of the turn, or to the situation of the subject who is turning. In both these meanings, this word experimented further elaboration in early Christian thought. Among the Greek fathers, the monastic life was characterized as *monotropos*, meaning a celibate life, but also and above all a unified behaviour constantly focusing on a dialogue with God. For instance, Saint Basil (fourth century) compared the life of the "true" Christian, exemplified by the monk, to secular life: the former is *monotropos*, pursuing the only goal of glorifying God, while the latter is multiple and variegated (Saint Basil defines it as *polutropos* and *poikilos*, two terms with which we are already familiar)[3]. As is easy to see, the etymology here seems to corroborate significantly with the technical meaning attributed to this term in the previous pages.

Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to situate the discussion of multifaith frequentation of the same sacred places in the wider framework of the analysis of religious action.

3 For a valuable discussion of the notion of monotropia in relation to monasticism, see Guillamont 1972.

A comparative perspective suggests that the notion of polytropy (introduced by Carrithers in his work on India) could offer a useful tool for describing some features of religious actions whose constitutive qualities are diversity and multiplicity. The notion of polytropy seems to be an analytical tool that is able to describe a vast array of situations, well beyond the Indic milieu in which it was forged. A move towards the Mediterranean has permitted enlarging the scope of this notion. It has become clear that polytropy is not a "cultural" quality of Asian religiosity, but that it may be an analytical tool for grasping the multi-layered domain of religious action in the framework of "world religions". Polytropy emerges in various religious contexts, from the fuzzy Chinese situation, where religious affiliations are very limited in their scope and relevance, to the South Asian context, in which religious orientations coalesce around the multivocal concept of *dharma*, to the tightly structured monotheistic faiths in the Mediterranean. In this vast array of situations, polytropic trends are associated with an efficacy-oriented religiosity.

Moreover, a second move towards the Mediterranean, this time under the form of a genealogical and etymological exploration of this notion in Ancient Greece, has shown correspondence with the technical meaning put forward by Carrithers. *Polutropia* is associated with the semantic field of *mêtis*, and this suggested the inscription of religious polytropic behaviours in the framework of a practical, cunning intelligence, characterized by a flexible and shifting approach. Drawing on Michel de Certeau's distinction between tactics and strategy, I have suggested that polytropic religiosity corresponds to a tactical infiltration of a religious territory already defined in its theological and ritual elements by a more strategic intentionality.

Polytropy is associated with a practical mode of religiosity, primarily linked to intramundane goals. This raises the question of how to conceptualize belief in relation to this type of religious action. Developing some arguments put forward by de Certeau, I have suggested that polytropy is linked to a particular conception of believing in which the believer tends to multiply the transactions with different supra-mundane partners. This orientation is distinct from religious styles that are based on a discursive and scriptural approach, on self-cultivation, and on transcendental and soteriological aims, which often display a tendency towards unity, coherence, and continuity. This has permitted us to identify the opposite pole to polytropy, which I defined as monotropy. In several respects, this polarity between polytropic and monotropic tendencies seems to globally characterise post-axial religious systems, naturally with distinct outcomes regarding the strength of their contrast and the equilibrium point between them.

Monotropic tendencies are only one part of the religious landscape in "world religions", but they undoubtedly have a hegemonic position, especially in the monotheistic environment, and have shaped the common wisdom of what religious

behaviour is expected to be. This may contribute to explaining the pervasive influence of a number of wrong assumptions about coherence and unity in religious attitudes: they are at the basis of some conundrums expressed by formulas like “religious congruence fallacy” or “religious uniformity fallacy”.

References

Adams, Don. 2010. “Socrates *polutropos*?” *Apeiron* 43 (1): 33–62.

Albera, Dionigi. 2012. “Combining Practices and Beliefs: Muslim Pilgrims at Marian Shrines.” In *Sharing the Sacra. The Politics and Pragmatics of Inter-Communal Relations Around Holy Places,* edited by Glenn Bowman, 10–24. New York: Berghahn Books.

Albera, Dionigi, and B. Fliche. 2012, “Muslim devotional practices in Christian shrines: the case of Istanbul.” In *Sharing Sacred Spaces in the Mediterranean. Christians, Muslims, and Jews at Shrines and Sanctuaries*, edited by Dionigi Albera and Maria Couroucli, 94–117. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Albera, Dionigi, and Maria Couroucli, eds. 2012. *Sharing Sacred Spaces in the Mediterranean. Christians, Muslims, and Jews at Shrines and Sanctuaries*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Assayag, Jackie. 1995. *Au confluent de deux rivières. Musulmans et hindous dans le sud de l’Inde.* Paris: Presses de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient.

Assayag, Jackie, and Gilles Tarabout, eds. 1997. *Altérité et identité. Islam et christianisme en Inde.* Paris: Éditions de l’EHESS.

Austin, John L. 1956-57. “A Plea for Excuses: The Presidential Address.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series 57: 1–30.

Bailly, Anatole. 1935. *Dictionnaire Grec–Français*. Paris: Hachette.

Barkan Elazar, and Karen Barkey, eds. 2014. *Choreographies of Shared Sacred Sites. Religion and Conflict Resolution*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bayly, Susan. 1989. *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700–1900.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Bellamy, Carla. 2011. *Everyday Healing in an Ambiguously Islamic Place*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Ben-Ami, Issachar. 1990. *Culte des saints et pèlerinages judéo-musulmans au Maroc*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose.

Bigelow, Anna. 2010. *Sharing the Sacred. Practicing Pluralism in Muslim North India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Boivin Michel. 2005. “Le pèlerinage de Sehwân Sharif, Sindh (Pakistan): territoires, protagonistes et rituels.” In *Les pèlerinages au Moyen-Orient: espaces publics, espaces du public*, edited by Silvia Chiffoleau and Anna Madoeuf, 311–345. Damascus: Institut Français du Proche-Orient.

Bowman, Glenn, ed. 2012. *Sharing the Sacra. The Politics and Pragmatics of Intercommunal Relations around Holy Places*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Carrithers, Michael. 2000. “On Polytropy: Or the Natural Condition of Spiritual Cosmopolitanism in India: The Digambar Jain Case.” *Modern Asian Studies* 34 (4): 831–861.

de Certeau, Michel. 1981. “Une pratique sociale de la différence: croire.” In *Faire croire. Modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XII^e^ au XV^e^ siècle. Actes de table ronde de Rome (22–23 juin 1979)*, 363–83. Rome: École Française de Rome.

———. 1983. “L’institution du croire : note de travail.” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 71: 61–80.

———. 1984. *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Chaves, Mark. 2010. “Rain Dances in the Dry Season: Overcoming the Religious Congruence Fallacy.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49 (1): 1–14.

Chau, Adam Yuet. 2011. “Modalities of Doing Religion and Ritual Polytropy: Evaluating the Religious Market Model from the Perspective of Chinese Religious History.” *Religion* 41 (4): 533–554.

———. 2012. “Efficacy, Not Confessionality: On Ritual Polytropy in China.” In *Sharing the Sacra. The Politics and Pragmatics of Intercommunal Relations Around Holy Places*, edited by Glenn Bowman, 79–96. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Chiffoleau, Silvia, and Anna Madoeuf, eds. 2005. *Les pèlerinages au Moyen-Orient: espaces publics, espaces du public*. Damascus: Institut Français du Proche-Orient.

Cormack, Margaret, ed. 2013. *Muslims and Others in Sacred Space*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Detienne, Marcel, and Jean-Pierre Vernant. 1991. *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dundas, Paul. 1992. *The Jains.* London: Routledge.

Frøystad, Kathinka. 2012. “Divine Intersections: Hindu Ritual and the Incorporation of Religious Others.” *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal* 4 (2). https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/mcs/article/view/2589.

Gellner, David. 1992. *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

———. 2005. “The Emergence of Conversion in a Hindu-Buddhist Polytropy: The Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, c.1600–1995.” *Comparative Studies of Society and History* 47 (4): 755–780.

Gellner, David, and Sondra L Hausner. 2013. “Multiple versus Unitary Belonging: How Nepalis in Britain Deal with ‘Religion’.” In *Social Identities between the Sacred and the Secular*, edited by Abby Day, Giselle Vincett, and Christopher R. Cotter, 75–88. Farnham & Burlington VT: Ashgate.

Grapard, Allan G. 1984. “Japan’s Ignored Cultural Revolution: The Separation of Shinto and Buddhist Divinities in Meiji (Shimbutsu Bunri) and a Case Study: To ¯no-Mine.” *History of Religions* 23 (3): 240–265.

Guillamont, Antoine. 1972. “Monachisme et éthique judéo-chrétienne.” In *Judéo-christianisme: Recherches historiques et théologiques offertes en hommage au cardinal Jean Daniélou*, 199–218. Paris: Recherches de Science Religieuse (Tome 60).

Hasluck, Frederick W. [1929] 2000. *Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans.* Istanbul: The Isis Press.

Hauschild, Thomas, Sina L. Kottmann, and Martin Zillinger. 2007. “Syncretism in the Mediterranean: Universalism, Cultural Relativism and the Issue of the Mediterranean as a Cultural Area.” *History and Anthropology* 18 (2): 309–332.

Hausner, Sondra L., and David Gellner. 2012. “Category and Practice as Two Aspects of Religion: The Case of Nepalis in Britain.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80 (4): 971–997.

Hayden, Robert M., Aykan Erdemir, Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir, Timothy D. Walker, Devika Rangachari, Manuel Aguilar-Moreno, Enrique López-Hurtado, and Milica Bakić-Hayden. 2016. *Antagonistic Tolerance. Competitive sharing of religious sites and spaces*. New York: Routledge.

Kilpatrick Hilary. 2003. “Monasteries through Muslim eyes: The *diyarat* books.” In *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule. Church Life and Scholarship in ‘Abbasid Iraq,* edited by David Thomas, 19–37. Leiden: Brill.

Kinzing, Wolfram. 1991. “‘Non-Separation’: Closeness and Cooperation between Jews and Christians in the Fourth Century.” *Vigiliae Christianae,* 45 (1): 27–53.

Landron, Bénédicte. 1994. *Chrétiens et musulmans en Iraq: attitudes nestoriennes vis-à- vis de l’islam.* Paris: Cariscript.

Lévystone, David. 2005. “La figure d’Ulysse chez les Socratiques: Socrate *polutropos*.” *Phronesis* 50: 181–214.

Liddell, Henri George, and Robert Scott. 1940. *A Greek-English Lexicon*, revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Mosse, David. 1994. “Catholic Saints and the Hindu Village Pantheon in Rural Tamil Nadu, India.” *Man,* NS 29 (2): 301–332.

Pareto, Vilfredo. 1935. *The Mind and the Society*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company (IV volumes).

Prior, Vivien, and Dania Glaser. 2006. *Understanding Attachment and Attachment Disorders: Theory, Evidence and Practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Pucci, Pietro. 1987. *Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and the Iliad*. Ithaca (NY): Cornell University Press.

Reader, Ian. 1991. *Religion in Contemporary Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Sandler, Stanley I. 2014. “Polytropic process.” *AccessScience*. https://doi.org/10.1036/1097-8542.537300.

Sébastia, Brigitte. 2002. “Māriyamman-Mariyamman. Catholic practises and image of Virgin in Velankanni (Tamil Nadu).” *Pondy Papers in Social Sciences* 27 (Institut Français de Pondichery).

———. 2007. *Les rondes de Saint Antoine. Culte, affliction et possession en Inde du Sud.* Montreuil: Aux lieux d’être.

Sekimori, Gaynor. 2005. “Paper Fowl and Wooden Fish. The Separation of Kami and Buddha worship in Haguro Shugendo, 1869–1875.” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 32 (2): 197–234.

Shepardson, Christine C. 2007. “Controlling Contested Places: John Chrysostom’s Adversus Iudaeos Homilies and the spatial politics of religious controversy.” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15 (4): 483–516.

Sikand, Yoginder. 2002. “Hindu-Muslim Syncretic Shrines of Karnataka.” *Indian Journal of Secularism* 6 (1): 63–97.

———. 2003. *Sacred Spaces: Exploring Traditions of Shared Faith in India.* New Delhi: Penguin India.

Sozomène, 1983. *Histoire ecclésiastique*, Edited by Bernard Grillet and Guy Sabbah, translated by André-Jean Festugière. Paris : Cerf

Tuladhar-Douglas, Will. 2012. “The Work of Mending: How Pharing People Manage an Exclusivist Response to the Procession of Vajrayoginī.” In *Sharing the Sacra: The Politics and Pragmatics of Inter-Communal Relations Around Holy Places,* edited by Glenn Bowman, 61–78. New York: Berghahn Books.

Thal, Sarah. 2005. *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods. The Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan, 1573–1912.* Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.

Valtchinova, Galia, ed. 2010. *Religion and Boundaries. Studies from the Balkans, Eastern Europe and Turkey.* Istanbul: The Isis Press.

Vinson, Martha. 1994. “Gregory Nazianzen’s Homily 15 and the Genesis of the Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs.” *Byzantion* 64 (1): 166–92.

Younger, Paul. 1992. “Velankanni Calling: Hindu Patterns of Pilgrimage at a Christian Shrine.” In *Sacred Journeys. The Anthropology of Pilgrimage,* edited by Alan Morinis, 89–99. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Layout: Jan Wenke, Typeset: Julia Reiker