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Media and Religion in (Post)Colonial Societies

Dynamics of Power and Resistance

Philippe Bornet / Stefanie Knauss / Alexander D. Ornella (eds.)

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FOCUS OF THE ISSUE

Media are contested spaces which express and shape people's lives and realities. They contribute to forming structures of oppression and of resistance, can facilitate social change, create alternative realities, or provide a venue to imagine different forms of living together. Media, the spaces they create and the spaces we create through them, are part and parcel of power dynamics in societies shaped by competing interests.

The articles in this issue of JRFM focus on how religion and media participate and complicate power dynamics between what is often perceived of and stereotyped as the "west" and the "rest", between colonizers and colonized. The contributions shed light on how colonial and resistant agendas draw on media for various purposes, e.g. identity-formation or propaganda. Resisting exclusive readings of images and objects, the studies in this issue are examples for the multi-layered, and often contradictory, processes of power and resistance in colonial and postcolonial societies. They offer rich material as waypoints to reconsider theoretical and methodological questions in the study of media and religion in postcoloniality: from a discussion about the power and creative possibilities of graphic novels, film versions of the *Rāmāyana*, missionary visual propaganda, Puerto Rican artwork, to social and digital media practices in the Netherlands.

Starting with the cover image by Indian graphic novel artist Amruta Patil and an interview with her as the opening contribution to this issue, we invite you to join our authors on a journey that turns ancient mythologies into lived experiences, and media into spaces of variegated practices.

ISSUE EDITORS

Stefanie Knauss is Associate Professor of Theology and Culture at Villanova University (USA). Her research focuses on theology and culture, body and religion, and gender/queer studies and theology. Recent publications include *Religion and Film: Representation, Experience, Meaning* (Brill, 2020); and the co-authored volume, *Sichtbare Religion: Eine Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft* (DeGruyter, 2018).

Philippe Bornet is Senior Lecturer at the University of Lausanne, in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations. After stays in Tübingen and at the University of Chicago, he completed a PhD in the comparative history of religions on rituals of hospitality in Jewish and Indian texts. His current research deals with the history of interactions between India and Europe (focus on Swiss missionaries in South India) and the circulation of material and visual cultures. Recent publications include *"Masters" and "Natives": Digging the Others' Past* (2019) (ed. with S. Gorshenina) and *Translocal Lives and Religion: Connections between Asia and Europe in Late Modernity* (ed., 2021).

Alexander Darius Ornella is Senior Lecturer in Religion at the School of Social Sciences, University of Hull (UK). He is also the Director of the Center for Spirituality Studies at the University of Hull. His research interests include: religion and popular culture; the sport of CrossFit, meaning-making, and religion; body and technology and religion. Recent publications include *'Why nature won't save us from climate change but technology will': Creating a New Heaven and a New Earth Through Carbon Capture Technologies* (2021) and *Sport as Bodily Practice of Remembrance: Remembering Heroes, Remembering Nations* (2020).

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