

# RelBib

Bibliography of the Study of Religion

<https://relbib.de>

Dear reader,

this is an author produced version of an article published in *Journal of religion in Europe*. This article has been peer-reviewed and copy-edited but does not include the final publisher's layout including the journal pagination.

Citation for the published article:

Titus Hjelm, Anne Koch, Kocku von Stuckrad

Ten Years of the Journal of Religion in Europe

Journal of the Religion in Europe, 2018, vol. 11, issue 3/4: pp. 105–109

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1163/18748929-01102001>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

Published with permission from: Brill.

Thank you for supporting Green Open Access.

Your RelBib team

## Editorial: Ten Years of the *Journal of Religion in Europe*

*Titus Hjelm, Anne Koch and Kocku von Stuckrad*

The *Journal of Religion in Europe* celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. On this occasion, we, the past and present editors, wanted to revisit the beginnings of the journal, discuss the work published in it, and think about future directions and challenges in the changing context of European religion and academic publishing.

### 1 **Beginnings**

The place of religion in European culture has been an important topic for scholarly research for a long time. But whenever ‘religion’ in Europe is at stake, one is confronted with a whole spectrum of cultural, philosophical, and historical assumptions. Religion is part of identity work in Europe but also outside of Europe. Questions about what ‘Europe’ is in the first place, how it relates to other parts of the world, and how we can understand the long processes that have brought forth the present situation, call for an interdisciplinary and open-minded approach to ‘religion in Europe.’

While many scholars from diverse academic backgrounds—notably from the academic study of religion, sociology, anthropology, and history—were researching the place of religion in European culture at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there was, strangely enough, no academic journal to provide a platform to bring those research activities together and facilitate an interdisciplinary conversation about relevant aspects of religion in Europe. Since the 1970s, there has been intense theoretical discussions in German religious studies (*Religionswissenschaft*) about religious and cultural pluralism, emphasizing the fact that religious traditions in European history have always been diverse and pluralistic. From this perspective, claiming that Europe was ‘Christian’ is, therefore, an example of what Burkhard Gladigow called the “singularization” of religion. Hence, religion can only be addressed usefully in relation to other societal domains, particularly with respect to the sciences, law, politics, art, and the economy. These discussions were, however, too isolated and too focused on the German scholarly community to offer international impact or even visibility.

Around the turn of the century, European scholars intensified their networks by organizing international conferences and preparing large research grant proposals. In line with global political developments, European scholars and politicians began to understand that secularization might not be the

whole story of religion in Europe and that the increasingly complex situation requires increasingly sophisticated scholarly approaches.

Against this background, Hans G. Kippenberg (University of Bremen) and Kocku von Stuckrad (then at the University of Amsterdam), who were both involved in German research networks, took the initiative to establish a scholarly journal to serve as an academic hub to connect international research on religion in Europe. Discussions with Brill followed, and the first text describing the scope of the new journal was drafted. The role of Brill's Commissioning Editor Regine Reincke was crucial in taking the next steps towards publication. It was clear from the outset that the scope of the *Journal of Religion in Europe* had to be interdisciplinary and that it had to include both historical (or genealogical) studies and contributions focusing on the contemporary situation. The editors were also keen to maintain a very open concept of 'Europe' for the journal, seeing Europe more as a discursive space than a geographic territory and, thus, also inviting studies to address the global entanglements of 'Europe' and the encounters with Europe's 'Others' (including the 'Others within').

The discussions with Brill turned out to be very constructive, and, after having formed an international Advisory Board, Kippenberg and von Stuckrad started to recruit authors for the first volume of the journal. Olav Hammer (University of Southern Denmark)—himself instrumental in building an international network of scholars in the field of religion in Europe—joined the team as the book review editor, and the first issue of the *Journal of Religion in Europe* was published in 2008.

The language of the journal has always been English. While there are compelling arguments for supporting research in all European languages, the idea of a pan-European forum for discussion dictated the choice of language for the jre. This creates its own imbalances, especially since the journal—like most journals—requires articles to be submitted in native-level English. However, we editors have been impressed by the consistently high standard of academic English in submissions from all corners of the continent.

## 2 Consolidation

The jre, as we call it, had a very promising start—it was for some time Brill's fastest-growing journal and soon consolidated its place among serious peer-reviewed publication outlets for religion scholars. For the first five years, jre was published three times a year, but with increasing recognition this was increased to four issues per year.

The published articles reflect the pluralisms mentioned in the aims of the journal: substantively, the articles cover topics from all European countries, religious traditions, and historical times. They discuss the influence of particularly European forms of religion in other geographical contexts as well. In line with broader social and scholarly trends, many articles have discussed Islam in Europe, even though Brill established the *Journal of Muslims*

*in Europe* in 2012. In terms of scholarly approach, the papers represent a rich range, including history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, media studies, urban studies, and aesthetics. Many of the papers reflect on the idea of ‘Europe’ and the transforming boundaries of this historical entity. Topics have included classical discussions on the meaning of ‘modernization,’ ‘disenchantment,’ and ‘secularization,’ but equally the rise of alternative religion and spirituality.

*jre* features regular special issues, often twice a year, with guest editors. The themes have included religion and the search for a transnational foundation of the European community (2009, edited by Hans Kippenberg), African Christians in Europe (2011, edited by Martha Frederiks and Ramon Sarró), the governance of transnational Islam (2015, edited by Tuula Sakaranaho), the localization of religion (2016, edited by Frederik Elwert), aesthetics of civil religion (2017, edited by Anne Koch), mediatization of religion (2017, edited by Johanna Sumiala), and this special issue on religion in social institutions, such as prisons and hospitals (2018, edited by Mar Griera).

Book reviews remain a key element of *jre*, despite pressures in finding reviewers and the explosion in the number of academic titles published per year. Although the language of the journal is English, we publish reviews of books published in any European language, thus providing opportunities for scholars to get at least a general sense of the field in other languages than their own or English.

There have been some changes in the editorial team during the years. In 2011, Titus Hjelm (University College London) took over for Hans Kippenberg as co-editor and Anne Koch (then at the University of Munich) for Olav Hammer as book review editor. In 2017, Kocku von Stuckrad, in turn, passed the baton to Anne Koch, and Katarzyna Zielińska (Jagiellonian University) joined the team as book review editor. Although with this shift the editorial team entered its second generation, there is continuity as well. Laura Vollmer has been indispensable in her role as editorial assistant in the beginning of *jre* and again in recent years.

Running an academic journal is a surprisingly personal business. Even if there has been a slight shift towards more contemporary research after the generational shift, this is not because of some editorial ‘line,’ but rather a reflection of the networks and contacts of the editors. Many of the special issues, especially, are an outcome of discussions at conferences, for example. In addition to regular submissions, we editors also solicit individual articles and whole special issues from conference panels and research projects.

### **3 Futures**

Religion in Europe will no doubt continue to be a topic of considerable interest in the coming years and decades. The worrying combination of economic austerity and the rise of the far right, coupled with mass migration from beyond

the increasingly fortified borders of Europe, will keep religion on the agenda. Europe's Christian heritage is increasingly used politically to exclude groups of people from the community. These and other current trends call for rigorous and critical research into the past and present of European religion. When it comes to subject matter, the *jre* has a well-established place among academic journals.

*jre*'s concept—a multi-disciplinary journal addressing both historical and contemporary issues—is one we will keep holding on to in the future. The plurality of viewpoints, approaches, and national contexts is what makes *jre* interesting and unique. We will also continue to support the publication of work by early-career researchers and scholars from minority backgrounds. We are proud to be a platform for both established, world-class academics and a venue for first peer-reviewed publication for younger scholars.

In terms of more practical matters, the production of first-class academic journal publishing is under pressure from multiple directions. Most crucially, academics are always short on time, and the explosion of the sheer number of article submissions and publication outlets has made matters worse for recruiting reviewers for journals. We are lucky to have an editorial board that is increasingly involved in reviewing, but still rely massively on the good will of our academic peers.

#### 4 Acknowledgements

Running a journal is a complex endeavor. Editors work as gatekeepers and overall organizers, but the final product is a sum of many actors, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of them collectively.

We want to thank all our authors during the last decade, who contributed their case studies and precious research to the *Journal of Religion in Europe*. Special thanks are due to the anonymous peer reviewers from all over the world, whose selfless dedication to the furtherance of the independent evaluation of scholarly work is of paramount importance. Our former and current board members have been instrumental in peer reviewing, suggesting special issues, and promoting the journal in various contexts. The Brill team in Leiden supports the journal from publication to marketing and has done so seamlessly since the beginning. Finally, we would like to thank all our readers. Your citations and references to the journal matter—now more than ever—and we hope to continue producing a first-class journal that tackles key issues in the study of religion in Europe.

Here's to the next successful decade of *jre*!