

## **RELIGION, MIGRATION AND DIASPORA: Getting started**

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International population movements are and have been among the most significant contributors to global and local religious change. Today, studies of religion, migration and diaspora count amongst the most dynamically growing areas in many disciplines, including, anthropology, political science, religious studies, sociology and theology. The intention of this brief article is to provide elementary tools for someone interested in doing research on religion, international migration and migrant settlement.

### **Preparation**

A good way to start is to gain some general understanding of issues related to international migrations. In that context, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (Castles & Miller, 2003) is a wonderful help. Another useful text is *Global Transformations: Politics, Economy and Culture* (Held et al., 1999) that includes a section on migration from the viewpoint of globalisation studies. As many of the areas of interest in religion and diaspora are related to general socio-psychological adaptation processes, it can be a good idea to have some background in that field. *Cross-Cultural Psychology: Research and Application* (Berry et al., 2002) is a nice introduction to the field, even though not particularly sensitive to religion. Furthermore, in order to keep track of existing research, it is recommended to follow general discussions in the field through journals, such as *International Migration*, *International Migration Review*, *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies* and *Migration*.

- Journals: <http://www.diaspora.fi/resources.html#Journals>

### **The context**

Global and transnational studies have been the most important contributors to the study of religion and migration in recent years. A fine summary of much the globalisation-localisation debate is Michael Peter Smith's (2001) *Transnational Urbanism: Locating Globalization*, even though it not does touch religion. Introductions to

the religion and globalisation include *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion across the Americas* (Vásquez & Marquardt, 2003), *Religion across Borders: Transnational Immigrant Networks* (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2002) and *Religions in Global Society* (Beyer, 2006). However, despite increased interest in diaspora, globalisation and transnationalism, much of the recent scholarship points out to the importance of the local and national context. Hence, studies on migrant religious activities should take into account both the local and the broader transnational or global context. Peggy Levitt's (2001) *The Transnational Villagers* is an insightful ethnography including both of these elements. The connections between the local and the global are also among the central themes in, for instance, *Immigrant Religions in Local Society: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives in the City of Turku* (Martikainen, 2004).

### **Finding the literature**

The starting point for most research on religion, migration and diaspora is often based either on a specific *religion* (e.g., Buddhism, Islam) or on an *ethnic group* (e.g., Bosnians, Turks). Alongside that the starting points are sometimes *theoretical* (e.g., transnationalism), *spatial* (e.g., a certain city or country) or related to a *particular topic* (e.g., health). Still, much of the existing literature is divided by religion and ethnicity, even though there are, increasingly, texts that cross these boundaries. Due to the segmentation of research, novel combinations may find it difficult to come across inspiration within one's discipline that underlines the importance of cross-disciplinary interest.

Unfortunately, we do not currently have a general, up-to-date textbook of religion and migration. Thus, the best way to get an overview of discussed topics is introductory chapters in recent monographs and edited books. An example of the latter kind is *Immigrant Faiths* (Leonard et al., 2005), where Alex Stepick provides a discussion of central topics in the field. Other similar books are *Gatherings in Diaspora* (Warner & Wittner, 1998), *Religion and Immigration* (Haddad et al., 2003) and *Religion and the New Immigrants* (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000). Also Sean McLoughlin's (2005) article "Migration, Diaspora and Transnationalism: Transformations of Religion and Culture in a Globalising Age" is a good introduction to the field. Handbooks are also useful and they increasingly take migration and diaspora into account. *The New Penguin Handbook of Living Religions* (Hinnells, 1997) was among the first to bring the issue to the fore. In addition, there are already several bibliographies on specific themes, religions or ethnic groups that are useful in finding references. For instance, *Muslims in Europe: The State of Research* (Buijs & Rath, 2005) is one such source.

Turning to specific religious traditions, there are already studies available on most religions of recent migrant origin. Islam has been the focus of much research, especially in Europe, during the last decades. Many-sided introductions to Islam include *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe* (Maréchal et al., 2003) and *Muslim Minorities in the West: Visible and Invisible* (Haddad & Smith, 2002). Buddhism, Hinduism and other Asian religions are gaining increased attention, and good introductory works include *South Asians in Diaspora* (Jacobsen & Kumar, 2004), *The Hindu Diaspora* (Vertovec, 2000) and – for the German speakers – *Tempel und Tamilen in zweiter Heimat: Hindus aus Sri Lanka im deutschsprachigen und skandinavischen Raum* (Baumann, et al., 2003). Christian migrations have gained less attention than could be expected. *Eastern Orthodoxy in a Global Age: Tradition Faces the Twenty-first Century* (Roudometof et al., 2005) is a rare example of a general volume of the topic. In addition, certain minor traditions have gained attention: for instance, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora* (Hinnells, 2005) is a volume covering the whole world from the viewpoint of the Zoroastrian religion.

The boundaries between the study of particular religions (e.g., Christianity, Islam) seem often difficult to cross. Nevertheless, cross-religion research or inspiration is highly useful, as it makes many differences in adaptation processes and other developments explicit. It can be recommended to seek for inspiration beyond the natural allies of one's particular field. It also helps one to identify what are the unique or specific features of one's own case. A convenient way to follow what happens in other academic specialities is to glimpse through general (e.g., *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, *Social Compass*) or specific journals (e.g., *Journal for Global Buddhism*, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*).

- Bibliographies: <http://www.diaspora.fi/bibliography.html>
- Guides: <http://www.diaspora.fi/guides.html>
- Resources: <http://www.diaspora.fi/resources.html>

## Discussion

This short presentation of some key-resources to the study of religion and migration already showed that we are working in a rapidly developing area as most of the works referred to have been published during the last five years. Naturally, there are also predecessors to these studies, but today both the volume as well the disciplinary diversity is much greater than earlier. This makes it also more difficult to follow those leads that are essential for one's own study.

The best way to guarantee "to be on the right track" is to find a knowledgeable supervisor or colleague, who can help in this proc-

ess. Also participation in cross-disciplinary seminars and conferences is important. There are many networks and mailing lists that are useful in context. The **Diaspora.fi** website aims to provide one forum for these endeavours.

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