



Editors' Preface

This issue of *e-Rhizome* is dedicated to the general topic of *Religion in the Black Sea Region*. The topic was borrowed from the eponymous workshop established in 2014 by the American anthropologist, professor of history, anthropology and religious studies at Pennsylvania State University, Catherine Wanner. Each year, anthropologists, sociologist, and scholars of religions from Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Sweden, Georgia, Ireland, Germany, Romania, Switzerland, Hungary, Austria, the UK, the USA, and other countries present their findings at the conference on particular topics: religion and politics, everyday diplomacy, power, violence, the public sphere, etc. There are also the lectures of the key-note speakers on theoretical topics which provide the workshop participants with new tools to interpret the religious situation in the region. The workshop activity has had a great impact on religious studies and anthropology in Ukraine, especially on a new generation of scholars. The workshop participant Julia Bujskykh was one of the founders, for example, of the NGO *Center for Applied Anthropology* in 2017. This center is extremely active in the academic and public life of Ukraine.

This is not the first collection of papers by the workshop participants. Another special issue was realized in 2017 within the frame of a special issue of the journal “Euxeinos”,¹ No 24, created by University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. That issue was dedicated to religion and politics in Ukraine after the Maidan Protests with the guest editor Prof. Catherine Wanner and 4 articles by the members of the workshops. The book under the title *Anthropology of Religion: Comparative Studies from Prycarpattyia to Caucasus*² was published in Ukrainian by *Dukh i Litera* publishing house in 2019. It is the first book on the anthropology of religion published in Ukraine. It consists of 10 articles by the workshop members, the majority of which were published earlier in peer-reviewed journals. The contributions are united by their object – lived religion, and by the research methods – observation and interview.

This *e-Rhizome* issue contains four materials by the workshop participants. Alla Marchenko in her article *Do All Roads Lead to Uman? The Hasidic Pilgrimage during the Pandemic Times* explores the public discourse around the annual pilgrimage of religious Jews to the grave of Reb Nachman of Bratslav, in the context of COVID-19. Nicholas Lackenby's article *‘They’re So Into It’: Perceptions of ‘Religion’, Orthodoxy and Belonging in Post-Yugoslav Serbia* is based on the author's fieldwork and raises the problem of relations between ethnic/national, cultural and religious identities. Several forms of the political activities of Ukraine's Muslim communities are distinguished in the article *Political Practices of Ukrainian Muslims: A Methodological Dimension* by Denys Brylov. Finally, there is Andriy Fert's review of Tornike Metreveli's book *Orthodox Christianity and the Politics of Transition:*

¹ Available at the official website: <https://gce.unisg.ch/en/euxeinos/archive/24>.

² Byjskich, J., Vanner, K., *Antropologia religii*, Ducha i litera, Kyiv 2019.

Ukraine, Serbia, and Georgia (2021). Both of them – Fert and Metreveli – are participants in the workshop, but this fact does not influence the reviewer's critical approach.

While this issue of *e-Rhizome* was being prepared in 2021, the workshop was renamed to *The Working Group on Lived Religion in Eastern Europe and Eurasia* to make it publicly wider and to connect up researchers in the social sciences from different parts of the world. Their focus on lived religion includes, but also moves beyond, institutionalized forms of religion and their transnational and global connections to consider contemporary forms of vernacular religiosity and the experiences of the sacred they offer. The goal of the Working Group is to inspire insightful and influential publications from a variety of disciplinary perspectives on how religion affects contemporary social and political life in Eastern Europe and Eurasia.

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