

5th ESSWE Conference

WESTERN ESOTERICISM AND THE EAST

Organized in cooperation with
the Latvian Society for the Study of Religions,
University of Latvia,
Daugavpils University

16-18 April, 2015
University of Latvia

Programme and Abstracts

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Riga 2015

5th ESSWE Conference
Western Esotericism and the East

Programme and Abstracts

Organizing Institutions:

European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism
Latvian Society for the Study of Religions
Faculty of Humanities, University of Latvia
Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, Daugavpils University

The organizers of the conference reserves the right to change the programme, speakers or venue, should the need arise. Every effort has been made to ensure the stability of the programme but the organizing committee cannot guarantee the participation of any listed person.

The titles and abstracts of the individual papers, as well as names of institutions and countries are printed as submitted by the authors in their registration form.

Organizing Committee

Prof. Dr. Anita Stašulāne, Daugavpils University
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jānis Priede, University of Latvia
Marika Laudere, Daugavpils University

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Dr. Marco Pasi, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
Dr. Peter Forshaw, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
Prof. Dr. Anita Stašulāne, Daugavpils University, Latvia

Conference venue

16-17 October, 2014
University of Latvia
Raiņa bulvāris 19, Riga, Latvia
Sesion D: Kalpaka bulv. 4

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Conference Schedule

Thursday 16 April

8.30–12.00	Registration University of Latvia, Raiņa bulv. 19. Entrance hall			
From 12.00	Room 240 (close to the Small Hall) The registration desk will be open during conference: 9.00–17.00			
9.00–9.30	Conference Opening (Small Hall) Opening Words on behalf of the Organizing Committee The ESSWE President Andreas KILCHER <i>Esoteric Orientalism / Esoteric Occidentalism</i>			
9.30–10.30	Plenary Session: Keynotes (Small Hall) Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands) <i>The Globalization of Esotericism</i>			
10.30–11.00	Coffee Break			
11.00–12.30	Parallel Sessions <table><tr><td>Session A1</td><td>Session B1</td><td>Session C1</td></tr></table>	Session A1	Session B1	Session C1
Session A1	Session B1	Session C1		
12.30–13.30	Lunch Break (Banquet Hall, access through the University dining hall, lower ground floor)			
13.30–15.30	Parallel Sessions <table><tr><td>Session A2</td><td>Session B2</td><td>Session C2</td></tr></table>	Session A2	Session B2	Session C2
Session A2	Session B2	Session C2		
15.30–16.00	Coffee Break			
16.00–17.30	Parallel Sessions <table><tr><td>Session A3</td><td>Session B3</td><td>Session C3</td></tr></table>	Session A3	Session B3	Session C3
Session A3	Session B3	Session C3		
18.30–20.00	Welcome Reception The Riga Latvian Society, Merķeļa Street 13			

Friday 17 April

9.00–10.00	Plenary Session: Keynotes (Small Hall) Charles BURNETT (University of London, UK) <i>The Three Divisions of Magic</i>
10.00–10.30	Coffee Break
10.30–12.30	Parallel Sessions
	Session A4 Session B4 Session C4
12.30–13.30	Lunch Break
13.30–15.30	Parallel Sessions
	Session A5 Session B5 Session C5
15.30–16.00	Coffee Break
16.00–16.45	Thesis Prize Presentation and Lecture (Small Hall)
17.00–18.00	Meeting of Members of the ESSWE (Small Hall)
19.00	Dinner

Saturday 18 April

8.30–9.00	ContERN meeting Room: 240
9.00–10.00	Plenary Session: Keynotes (Small Hall) Allison P. COUDERT (University of California, Davis, USA) <i>Orientalism in Early Modern Europe</i>
10.00–10.30	Coffee Break
10.30–12.30	Parallel Sessions Session A6 Session B6 Session C6 Session D6
12.30–13.30	Lunch Break
13.30–15.30	Parallel Sessions Session A7 Session B7 Session C7 Session D7
15.30–16.00	Coffee Break
16.00–18.00	Parallel Sessions Session A8 Session B8
18.30	Cultural Programme Artist Talk: Miķelis Fišers on his Extreme Esoterics The Arsenāls Exhibition Hall, Torņa street 1

Conference Programme

Thursday 16 April

9.00–9.30 **Conference Opening** (Small Hall)

Opening Words on behalf of the Organizing Committee

The ESSWE President Andreas KILCHER

Esoteric Orientalism / Esoteric Occidentalism

Chair: Jānis PRIEDE (University of Latvia, Latvia)

9.30–10.30 **Plenary Session** (Small Hall)

Keynote: Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

The Globalization of Esotericism

Chair: Andreas KILCHER (ETH Zürich, Switzerland)

10.30–11.00 **Coffee Break**

11.00–12.30 **Parallel Sessions**

A1: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Chair: Henrik BOGDAN (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

Room: Small Hall

Egil ASPREM (*University of California Santa Barbara, USA*)

How to make “esotericism” fit for comparative research? On building blocks, comparativism, and esotericism as “special knowledge”

Marco PASI (*University of Amsterdam, Netherlands*)

And never the twain shall meet: An examination of the relationship between the study of Western esotericism and ‘Orientalism’

George SIEG (*University of New Mexico, USA*)

Esotericism in the Civilizational Model of History

B1: POLITICAL ASPECTS

Chair: Karl BAIER (University of Vienna, Austria)

Room: 153

Małgorzata Alicja DULSKA (Jagiellonian University, Poland)
The Influence of Esotericism and Eastern Philosophical Notions on the
Politics of the Interwar Period in Poland

Marek DLUHOŠ (Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic)
Nationalism in Czech esotericism

Kateryna ZORYA (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)
Eastern Influence on the Post-Soviet Occult Milieu

C1: CROSSING BORDERS ANTIQUITY I

Chair: GODWIN Joscelyn (*Colgate University, USA*)

Room: Museum Hall

Laura MICHETTI (California Institute of Integral Studies, USA)
Persian Conjunctions and Sade Sati: Saturn in the East, Near and Far

Sophie PAGE (University College London, UK)
Jewish and Arabic influences on the cosmology of learned magic in the
Latin West (ca 1200-1500)⁷

Rebecca LESSES (Ruhr Universität-Bochum, Germany)
Esotericism and Mysticism in Joseph and Aseneth

12.30–13.30 Lunch Break

(Banquet Hall, access through the University dining hall, lower ground floor)

13.30–15.30 Parallel Sessions

A2: ARTISTIC VISIONS

Chair: Caroline LEVANDER (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

Room: 101 (Auditorija 1)

Daniel GUÉGUEN (France)

Jean Delville: Painter and Initiate

Peter OLSSON (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

Painting the East on the canvas of the West: Ivan Aguéli as an interlock between Traditions

Carl KARLSON-WEIMANN (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

A Swedish Oriental: The esoteric evolution of Ivan Aguéli

Elita ANSONE (Latvian National Museum of Art, Latvia)

Eastern Spiritual Practices in the Latvian Artists' Works

B2: RETHINKING MIDDLE EASTERN DEVELOPMENTS I

Chair: Nicole Maria BAUER (University of Heidelberg, Germany)

Room: 153

Yoed KADARY (Ben-Gurion University, Israel)

East and West in the “Bible” of Jewish Magic

John MACMURPHY (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Swedenborg and Kabbalah: A New Perspective

Boaz HUSS (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel)

Colonialism, Zionism and Kabbalah: The Christian Zionist Kabbalah of Laurence Oliphant

Giuseppe CUSCITO (“Sapienza” University, Italy)

Apulia as a bridge for Jewish esoteric knowledge between Babylonia and Central Europe

C2: CROSSING BOARDERS FROM ANTIQUITY II

Chair: Sophie PAGE (University College London, UK)

Room: Museum Hall

Rafał T. PRINKE (Eugeniusz Piasecki University in Poznań, Poland)
The Bitch of Armenia and the Dog of Khorasan: Transcaucasian motifs and influences in Latin alchemy

Lauri OCKENSTRÖM (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)
Antediluvian light from the East – self-reflective creation myths in the Latin magical Hermetica

John TREAT (University of Arkansas, USA)
Ham-Amun and Cush-Osiris as Guardians of the Ark: Ethiopia, Egypt, and Israel in the Ritual Work of Moses Dickson

Tamás ENYEDI (Doctoral School of History, Hungary)
In Search of a Past that Never Was: Ancient Near-East in 19th century Occultism as a Form of Cultural Memory

15.30–16.00 Coffee Break

16.00–17.30 Parallel Sessions

A3: INTERPRETING TEXT AND CONTEXT I

Chair: György E. SZÖNYI (University of Szeged. Central European University, Budapest, Hungary)

Room: 101 (Auditorija 1)

Jonathan PAQUETTE (University of St Andrews, UK)
Representations of Eastern Wisdom in John Heydon's Theomagia, or the temple of wisdom in three parts, spiritual, celestial and elemental

Konstantin BURMISTROV (Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia)
Gregory Moebes and the occult renaissance in Russia of the early 20th century

Christian M. GIUDICE (Göteborg University, Sweden)
“Ex Oriente Lux/Ex Occidente Lex”: The Reception of Oriental Forms of Spirituality in the Traditionalist Ideas of Arturo Reghini (1878-1946) and Julius Evola (1898-1974)

B3: RETHINKING MIDDLE EASTERN DEVELOPMENTS II

Chair: Boaz HUSS (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel)

Room: 153

Uri SAFRAI (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel)

“Like Pulling a chain” – Mechanical Metaphors of Prayer in Early Modern Kabbala

Nicole Maria BAUER (University of Heidelberg, Germany)

“Becoming like God” – Self-improvement and Healing in the Kabbalah Centre

Yuval HARARI (Ben Gurion University, Israel)

Practical Kabbalah Online – Jewish Magic and the Web

C3: EAST COMES WEST: EMBLEMS AND HERMETICA IN EARLY MODERN ITALY AND THE BRITISH ISLES

Chair: Peter FORSHAW (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Room: Museum Hall

Lorenza GIANFRANCESCO (University of London, UK)

Exploring eastern esotericism in early modern Italian emblems

Ariel HESSAYON (Goldsmiths, University of London, UK)

Hermes Trismegistus in England – after Casaubon

Judith MAWER (Goldsmiths, University of London, UK)

The Abbot, the Alchemist, and the Emerald Tablet: how Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516) influenced the cosmology of Thomas Vaughan (1621-1666)

18.30–20.00 WELCOME RECEPTION

The Riga Latvian Society, Merķeļa Street 13

Friday 17 April

9.00–10.00 Plenary Session (Small Hall)

Keynote: Charles BURNETT (University of London, UK)

The Three Divisions of Magic

Chair: Marco PASI (*University of Amsterdam, Netherlands*)

10.00–10.30 Coffee Break

10.30–12.30 Parallel Sessions

A4: WESTERN ESOTERICISM IN TURKEY I

ESOTERIC CURRENTS AND THE LOCAL REACTION

Chair: Raoul MOTIKA (Orient-Institut Istanbul, Turkey)

Room: Small Hall

Alexandre TOUMARKINE (Orient-Institut Istanbul, Turkey)

On the 'Absence' of Theosophy in Turkey: A Case of Indirect, Hidden, and/or Delayed Transmission?

Dilek SARMIŞ (EHESS-CNRS, France)

The Reception of the Greek/Egyptian Tradition of Hermeticism in Late Ottoman and Republican Turkey

Thierry ZARCONI (CNRS – EPHE Sorbonne, France)

Freemasonry and esotericism in Turkey from the end of the 19th century until today

Raoul MOTIKA (Orient-Institut Istanbul, Turkey)

Turkish Theologians' Views of Esotericism

B4: INDIAN DIMENSIONS I

Chair: Francesco BARONI (Swiss Institute of Rome, Italy)

Room: 153

Johan NILSSON (University of Lund, Sweden)

Mahatmas, Scholars and Occultists: Occult Readings of the Sacred Books of the East

Sergey PAKHOMOV (St. Petersburg State University, Russia)

Is there esotericism in the East? The term “esotericism” and Indian religious traditions

Daniel ABRAHAMSSON (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

A Golden Dawn in the East: The Tattwa vision of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

Lori Lee OATES (University of Exeter, UK)

The Case for India: Theosophy and the Battle of East versus West in the Nineteenth Century Occult

C4: INTERPRETING TEXT AND CONTEXT II

Chair: Rafał T. PRINKE (Eugeniusz Piasecki University in Poznań, Poland)

Room: Museum Hall

Aren ROUKEMA (Birkbeck College, University of London, UK)

An Orientalist Shield – A. E. Waite and the Zohar

Birgit MENZEL (Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, Germany)

Eurasia as a Spiritual Realm

György E. SZÖNYI (University of Szeged. Central European University, Budapest, Hungary)

What Can You Learn In Fez? Oriental Wisdom in Western Fiction from the Rosicrucian Manifestos

Aviram SARIEL (Tel Aviv University, Israel)

East, West, Gnosis: Hans Jonas's esoteric system

12.30–13.30 Lunch Break

(Banquet Hall, access through the University dining hall, lower ground floor)

13.30–15.30 Parallel Sessions

A5: WESTERN ESOTERICISM IN TURKEY II

WESTERN ESOTERICIST THINKERS AND THEIR RECEPTION

Chair: Mark SEDGWICK (Aarhus University, Denmark)

Room: Small Hall

Yoann MORVAN (CNRS Idemec, Aix-Marseille University, France)
Berg's Kabbalah in Istanbul, more Western than Esoteric? On the Complexity of the Turkish Case

Cem KARA (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany)
Between Occultism and Orientalism. The Life and Work of Rudolf von Sebottendorf (1875-1945)

Till LUGE (Orient-Institut Istanbul, Turkey)
The Entanglement of East and West in Gurdjieff's Reception in Turkey

Laurent MIGNON (University Of Oxford, United Kingdom)

Rene Guenon in Turkey

B5: INDIAN DIMENSIONS II

Chair: Lori Lee OATES (University of Exeter, UK)

Room: 153

Nemanja RADULOVIC (University of Belgrade, Serbia)
Image of India and Slavia esoterica

Sander KALVERDA (Germany)
"Uprooted is the garden's royal tree": Franz Baermann Steiner's orientalist Judaism as the fruit of his perennial blend of Böhme and the Gita

Matylda CIOŁKOSZ (Jagiellonian University, Poland)
The Universal Embodied Experience as a Tool of Implementation of Indian Religio-Philosophical Notions in the Global Iyengar Yoga Community

Francesco BARONI (Swiss Institute of Rome, Italy)
Chakras in early 20th century Italian esotericism: re-enchanting the body, westernizing the East

C5: THE FAR EAST PERCEPTIONS

Chair: Thierry ZARCONÉ (CNRS – EPHE Sorbonne, France)

Room: Museum Hall

Jean-Pierre LAURANT (CNRS, France)

Western esotericism and the East: Japan, a difficult relationship?

Robert WEDIN (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

Western Esotericism and Japanese Popular Culture – The Grand Polemical Narrative in the Video Game Final Fantasy VII

Jiří MICHALÍK (Palacky University Olomouc, Czech Republic)

Fludd, Pauli, Jung and the mandalas

Olaf STACHOWSKI (Jagiellonian University, Poland)

Esoteric Buddhism through the eyes of a layman: Przemysław Smolik's memorials in the context of the reception of Buddhism in pre-war Poland

15.30–16.00 **Coffee Break**

16.00–16.45 **Thesis Prize Presentation and Lecture**

17.00–18.00 **Meeting of Members of the ESSWE**

19.00 **Dinner**

Saturday 18 April

8.30–9.00 **ContERN meeting**

Room: 240

9.00–10.00 **Plenary Session:** (Small Hall)

Keynote: Allison P. COUDERT (University of California, Davis, USA)

Orientalism in Early Modern Europe

Chair: Jean-Pierre BRACH (*École pratique des hautes études, France*)

10.00–10.30 **Coffee Break**

10.30–12.30 **Parallel Sessions**

A6: LITERATURE AND INTERTEXTUALITY I

Chair: Gloria COLOMBO (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Italy)

Room: Small Hall

Michele OLZI (Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy)

From mysterious India to mystical Russia: the “East” of Marc Séménoff as spiritual future of humanity

Damien KARBOVNIK (Montpellier III, France)

The *Réalisme Fantastique* and the East: enchantment and disenchantment in the French occulture of the sixties and seventies

Zuzana KOSTICOVA (Charles University of Prague, Czech Republic)

Eastern motifs in the work of Carlos Castaneda and his disciples

Yusuf MUSLIM ENEBORG (Gothenburg University, Sweden)

Revivifying Crowley’s Hero: Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890)

B6: WESTERN ESOTERICISM, ORIENTALISM, AND GENDER I

Chair: Manon HEDENBORG-WHITE (Uppsala University, Sweden)

Room: 153

Per FAXNELD (Stockholm University, Sweden)

Borrowing From the Hebrews: Lilith in Nineteenth-Century Occultist Discourse on Motherhood and Marriage

Fredrik GREGORIUS (Linköping University, Sweden)

The Sun is also a Warrior: The spiritualization of martial traditions and the construction of esoteric masculinity

Manon HEDENBORG-WHITE (Uppsala University, Sweden)

Seven Veils and a Garland of Skulls: Orientalism, Gender and Eastern Religion in Interpretations of a Celestial Harlot

Inga Bårdsen TØLLEFSEN (University of Tromsø. The Arctic University of Norway, Norway)

Suffering and Evil comes from within. A Gendered Perspective on the Problem of Evil and Suffering in the New Age

C6: ENCOUNTERING ISLAM

Chair: Till LUGE (Orient-Institut Istanbul, Turkey)

Room: Museum Hall

Lil OSBORN (Oxford University, Harris Manchester College, UK)

The Baha'i Faith and the Western Esoteric Tradition

Hadi FAKHOURY (McGill University, Canada)

Aspects of the Russian Influence on Henry Corbin: Slavophilism, Russophilism and Byzantinism

Mark SEDGWICK (Aarhus University, Denmark)

Neo-Sufism and Western Esotericism in the Contemporary Period

Saiyad AHMAD (The American University in Cairo, Egypt)

Islamic Influences on Western Astrology: Guido Bonatti

D6: VARIETIES OF MOVEMENTS I

Chair: Massimo INTROVIGNE (*Pontifical Salesian University, Italy*)

Room: Library Hall, Kalpaka bulv. 4

Christian GREER (University of Amsterdam, Holland)

“Old White Hipsters in Fezzes”: The Ecumenical Heresy of the Moorish Orthodox Radio Crusade

Shai FERARO (Tel Aviv University, Israel)

The return of Baal (to the Holy Land): Canaanite reconstructionism among contemporary Israeli Pagans; A double-edged sword

Maria LIBERG (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

“Into the Womb of the Dark Goddess” – La Société Voudon Gnostique and the syncretism between East and West

12.30–13.30 Lunch Break

(Banquet Hall, access through the University dining hall, lower ground floor)

13.30–15.30 Parallel Sessions

A7: LITERATURE AND INTERTEXTUALITY II

Chair: Zuzana KOSTICOVA (Charles University of Prague, Czech Republic)

Room: Small Hall

Ullrich KLEINHEMPEL (Germany)

The Song of Igor’s campaign as a document of dvoeverie and its translation by Rainer Maria Rilke in the context of his religious quest

Gloria COLOMBO (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Italy)

The Interchange between Eastern and Western Concepts of the Transmigration of Souls in 18th-19th Century German Literature

Caroline LEVANDER (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

Where Eastern Gods meets Western Art: Schuré’s Les Grande Initiés and syncretism in Theosophical art at the end of the 19th Century

Simon MAGUS (University of Exeter, UK)

Rider Haggard and the Imperial Occult: Christian Egyptosophy, Mnemohistory and the Metageography of Egypt

B7: WESTERN ESOTERICISM, ORIENTALISM, AND GENDER II

Chair: Per FAXNELD (Stockholm University, Sweden)

Room: 153

M. E. WARLICK (University of Denver, USA)

Angelic Conversations and Practical Advice: The Role of Women in Early Alchemical Philosophy

Georgia VAN RAALTE (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

The Feminine and the East: Androcentrism, Imperialism and Appropriation

Karolina Maria HESS (Jagiellonian University, Poland)

Between Theosophy and Polish-Indian Library: The Great Work of Wanda Dynowska Umadevi (1888-1971)

Christine FERGUSON (University of Glasgow, Scotland)

Dis-Orienting the East: Mabel Collins and Theosophical Placelessness in the 1880s

C7: IN AND AROUND THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Chair: Lil OSBORN (Oxford University, Harris Manchester College, UK)

Room: Museum Hall

Karl BAIER (University of Vienna, Austria)

Theosophical Orientalism and Transculturation within the Theosophical Society in South Asia

Tim RUDBØG (University of Copenhagen, Denmark)

The Great Work of blending East and West: Blavatsky's The Secret Doctrine and Six schools of Indian Philosophy in the mix

Joscelyn GODWIN (Colgate University, USA)

The Mahatma Letters: Eastern Wisdom or Western Imposture?

Massimo INTROVIGNE (Pontifical Salesian University, Italy)

The Orientalist Masters: The Mystery of Hermann Schmiechen

D7: VARIETIES OF MOVEMENTS II

Chair: Egil ASPREM (*University of California Santa Barbara, USA*)

Room: Library Hall, Kalpaka bulv. 4

Júlia GYIMESI (Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Hungary)

Between “West” and “East”: the comparative aspects of the reception of spiritualism in Hungary

Mikhail TRUNIN (Russian State University for the Humanities, Russia)

The dynamics and religious-cultural characteristics in the development of Western Esotericism in Russia, on the example of the Order of Oriental Templars: The Way of the Esoteric to Exoteric

Andrés PIQUER OTERO (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain)

Dreams, Death and Desire. The Morals of Liminal Illusion in Magical Narrative

Vitalii SHCHEPANSKYI (The National University of Ostroh Academy, Ukraine)

Earth of mysteries: magicians ways in early modern Ukraine

15.30–16.00 Coffee Break

16.00–18.00 Parallel Sessions

A8: CULTURAL ENCOUNTER

Chair: Lauri OCKENSTRÖM (*University of Jyväskylä, Finland*)

Room: Small Hall

Fryderyk KWIATKOWSKI (*Jagiellonian University, Poland*)

“Wake up!” The Gnostic-Buddhist Vision of Reality in *The Matrix* (1999) by Lana and Andy Wachowski

Christopher MCINTOSH (*University of Exeter, UK*)

The Quest for Shangri-La

Robert A. PRIDDLE (*The University of Ottawa. The University of Toronto, Canada*)

“Art thou mankind?": Proposing a Western Esotericism 3.0 Analysis of the role of Occidentalism and Esotericism in the Animated Sinosphere

**B8: GENEALOGICAL APPROACHES TO A GLOBAL HISTORY OF
ESOTERIC IDENTITIES**

Chair: Julian STRUBE (University of Heidelberg, Germany)

Room: 153

Julian STRUBE (University of Heidelberg, Germany)

The Emergence of French Occultism against the Background of
Neo-Catholic and Socialist Orientalism

Dimitry OKROPIRIDZE (University of Heidelberg, Germany)

Orientalist Syntax in Esoteric Discourse: Carl Gustav Jung's Psychology
of Kundalini Yoga – Context and Impact

Ulrich HARLASS (University of Heidelberg, Germany)

The “other” Neo-Hinduism: Shaiva Siddhanta and Theosophy

Yan SUARSANA (University of Heidelberg, Germany)

Of Shamans, Gurus and Witches: Esoteric Bali as a Global Concept

18.30

Cultural Programme

Artist Talk: Miķelis Fišers on his Esoteric Touch

The Arsenāls Exhibition Hall

Torņa street 1

Abstracts of Keynote Lectures

Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF

University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

Wouter J. Hanegraaff is Professor of History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and former President of the ESSWE (2005-2013). Alongside numerous articles and seven edited volumes, including the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (Leiden / Boston 2005), he is the author of *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden 1996/Albany 1998); *Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447-1500): The Hermetic Writings and Related Documents* (Tempe 2005; with Ruud M. Bouthoorn); *Swedenborg, Oetinger, Kant: Three Perspectives on the Secrets of Heaven* (West Chester 2007); *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge 2012); and *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London 2013).

THE GLOBALIZATION OF ESOTERICISM

As the study of Western esotericism develops, the question of its boundaries keeps coming up. Do we look at esotericism as “Western” by definition, so that the East is excluded as a matter of principle? If so, why would we want to do so? Or does the adjective “Western” mean, on the contrary, that there must be an “Eastern” esotericism as well? If so, what is it? Do we really need the adjective “Western”? Or rather: what is the price of keeping it in, and what is the price of throwing it out? What do we understand by “the West” anyway, and what do we mean by “the East”? Where do we draw the boundaries, and why? I will be addressing these questions by placing our habit of drawing East/West distinctions in a historical context, with reference to some representative figures and currents in the field of (“Western”) esotericism. In doing so, particular attention will go to the so-called “Grand Narratives” that have been fundamental to the construction of both “Western” and “Eastern” identities, and what is happening to them under conditions of globalization today.

Charles BURNETT

University of London, United Kingdom

Charles Burnett, MA, PhD, LGSM is Professor of the History of Arabic/Islamic Influences in Europe at the Warburg Institute, University of London, and Co-Director of the Centre for the History of Arabic Studies in Europe. He is a Fellow of the British Academy, Corresponding Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America, and Fellow of the International Society for the

History of Science. He is leader of the Humanities in the European Research Area project on Encounters with the Orient in Early Modern European Scholarship (EOS). His research centres on the transmission of texts, techniques and artefacts from the Arab world to the West, especially in the Middle Ages. He has documented this transmission by editing and translating several texts that were first translated from Arabic into Latin, and also by describing the historical and cultural context of these translations. Among his books are *The Introduction of Arabic Learning into England* (1997), *Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages: The Translators and their Intellectual and Social Context* (2009) and *Numerals and Arithmetic in the Middle Ages* (2010).

THE THREE DIVISIONS OF MAGIC

The most authoritative work on magic in the Arabic Middle Ages was the *Ghayat al-Hakim* ('The Aim of the Wise') by Maslama Ibn Qāsim al-Qurtūbī (d. 964), which was translated into Castilian and thence into Latin as the *Picatrix* in the mid-thirteenth century. At the beginning of this text Maslama divides magic into three parts according to whether spirit operates on spirit, spirit operates on body, or body operates on body, the first being the science of *nairanajat* ('confections'), the second, that of talismans, and the third, that of alchemy. In the respective texts on these sciences we find the justification for this three-part division: e.g. the work on the *The Four Confections* attributed to Hermes tells one how to use your own spirit to attract the spirits of wild animals so that they become obedient to your command; Thabit ibn Qurrah's *On Talismans* describes how one makes talismans out of different material bodies and incorporates celestial spirits within them; and Pseudo-Razi's *On Alums and Salts* gives recipes for joining base corporeal substances to produce more exalted substances. These are examples of a whole range of Arabic and Latin texts from the Middle Ages which can be ascribed to one or other of the three divisions of magic mentioned by Maslama. The knowledge of how to govern these spirits and bodies exalts man to the highest rank of humanity.

Allison P. COUDERT

University of London, United Kingdom

Allison P. Coudert received her PhD from the Warburg Institute, University of London. Her focus of interest is on the interaction between religion and science with a special emphasis on Jewish contributions to science and gender issues. Her most recent book *Religion, Magic, and Science in Early Modern Europe and America* was published by Praeger in 2011. Her published work includes *Leibniz and the Kabbalah* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995) and *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the 17th Century: The Life and Thought of Francis Mercury van Helmont, 1614-1698* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 1999). Among her recent articles are, "Laughing at Credulity and Superstition in the Long Eighteenth Century," *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times* (2010); "The Ultimate Crime: Cannibalism in Early Modern Minds and Imaginations," *Crime and Punishment in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age*. (Berlin/Boston: Walter

de Gruyter, 2012), 521-543; and “Friend or Foe: Current Debates in Science and Religion.” *Controversies in Contemporary Religion: Education, Law, Politics, Society, and Spirituality*. 3 vols. Ed. Paul Hedges (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014), 2:23-52. She is currently working on a book about changing attitudes toward pain and suffering in the West, 1450-1900.

ORIENTALISM IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

When Edward Said published *Orientalism* in 1978 he fired a shot that was indeed heard around the world. Like all polemics, Said’s book was neither fair nor balanced. But Said’s book advanced the life of scholarship tremendously by encouraging scholars to reconsider the issue he raised about the power of Western discourse to define and marginalize the East for its own enhancement and imperial ambitions. As a result, it has become increasingly clear over the past decades that Orientalism was not the one-way street Said imagined. Before 1800 Eastern cultures and Eastern ideas – whether from the Middle or Far East – inspired fear and awe among Europeans, and the Western denigration of Islam and the East was in many cases a defensive reaction fostered by a profound sense of inferiority and vulnerability. Furthermore, Eastern ideas influenced key aspects of Western religion, science, and culture. What has come to be known as “Western Esotericism” would not exist were it not for the influx of Eastern philosophical and religious ideas. These ideas had a major impact on biblical criticism and attitudes towards Christianity and religion in general, paving the way for the Enlightenment. The Scientific Revolution cannot be understood without appreciating the impact of Egyptian, Islamic, Indian, and Chinese science on European natural philosophers (as scientists were called at the time). The popularity of oriental art, literature, and architecture stimulated European imaginations, influencing western art and aesthetics and leading many individuals to question behavioral norms as well as established notions of race, class, and gender. These are all topics that must be discussed in the light of Said’s excoriation of the West for Orientalism.

Abstracts of Papers

ABRAHAMSSON Daniel

University of Gothenburg, Sweden

A Golden Dawn in the East: The Tattwa vision of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

In most histories of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn it is emphasized that the Order was not particularly interested in the Orient and oriental philosophy, like for instance their contemporaries in the Theosophical Society. It has even been suggested that the Golden Dawn's emphasis on predominantly Western occult approaches and techniques was key to preserving a lack of antagonism between the two groups. However, in the Golden Dawn curriculum there are indeed references to certain "eastern" theories and practices – and more specifically, something known as the Tattwa vision is oftentimes mentioned and in a few cases, such as in papers by e.g. S. L. MacGregor Mathers and J. W. Brodie-Innes, also treated in quite some detail. This aspect of the Golden Dawn has generally been overlooked by scholars, and this paper will therefore offer a preliminary analysis of the use of "eastern" (i.e. Hindu) material in the Golden Dawn and its immediate milieu. Taking e.g. strategies of legitimation and processes of syncretism into account, I will discuss the Golden Dawn's reception and adaptation of the Hindu concept of Tattwa – its use, and its relation to other well-known Golden Dawn phenomena such as Skrying, Clairvoyance, and Astral Projection, as well as their occultist system at large.

AHMAD Saiyad

The American University in Cairo, Egypt

Islamic Influences on Western Astrology: Guido Bonatti

Translation of Light: Islamic Influences on Western Astrology via the *Liber Astronomia* ("Book of Astronomy") of Guido Bonatus (Bonatti). The *Liber Astronomia* of Bonatus (fl. 13 century AD) is an encyclopaedic compilation of the occult science of Astrology and presents its theory and techniques in as comprehensive a fashion as possible. Its English translation, by Benjamin Dykes is in two volumes and is nearly 1500 pages in length. Bonatus expressly states his indebtedness to Islamic astrologers and preserves a very large amount of material based on the writings of Arabic and Persian practitioners of the art. We will examine the influence on Bonatus' *Liber Astronomia*

by al-Kindi, Abu Ma'shar al-Balkhi, al-Qabisi and Abu 'Ali al-Khayat in the areas of the theory and defence of astrology, the so-called Arabic parts (or "lots") of the seven planets, and the judgement of nativities.

ANSONE Elita

Latvian National Museum of Art, Latvia

Eastern Spiritual Practices in the Latvian Artists'

Works

Over the past thirty years, there has been a great deal of interest among the people in Latvia in Eastern spiritual systems as ways of developing human beings and improving their health. From businesspeople to clergypersons, from homemakers to artists, people are researching their spiritual world and training their physical body. They are trying out both tested and untested methods. Eastern systems are being integrated into the everyday lives of people in the West. Ancient traditions of a religious and esoteric nature have been brought together with 20th-21st century discoveries in the fields of science, medicine and psychology. The paper will present four Latvian artists – Ilmārs Blumbergs, Aleksandrs Buse, Dainis Pundurs and Miķelis Fišers. Artworks of this artists are attributable to the impact of Eastern thought. Despite the key role of the Soviet ideology Ilmārs Blumbergs had already read in 1969 Swami Vivekananda Raja Joga, it began his spiritual path. With Qigong training Alexander Buse from the artist step by step turn into a practicing healer. Dainis Pundurs his artworks ground on the Vedic thought. Miķelis Fišers images for his paintings finds in a visionary meditations.

ASPREM Egil

University of California Santa Barbara, United States

How to make “esotericism” fit for comparative research? On building blocks, comparativism, and esotericism as “special knowledge”

Contemporary historians of esotericism have shown marked resistance against comparative approaches, fearing that they might open the door once more to universalizing, religionist approaches that have been discarded. In this paper, I argue that the key to reinvigorate the comparative enterprise while avoiding this and related problems lies in recognizing appropriate *levels of analysis* for comparison, and conceptualizing an appropriate *tertium comparationis* (or stipulated point of analogy) when conducting such analysis. One of the greatest difficulties that faces the comparativist, and one that has kept scholars cautious, is the historicity and

cultural contingency of key categories that might be used for setting up comparisons. For example, it seems clear that the category “esotericism” itself is unfit for doing comparative analysis: as researchers are now coming to agree, it is a complex category, shaped by specific processes of power and discourse in European history, which prevent us from defining “its” properties in abstract and general terms. The same is true for concepts like “mysticism”, “magic”, or even “religion”. This, however, does not mean that we cannot put specific practices, texts, persons or groups culled from these categories into a comparison with non-Western currents; only that such comparisons must be done in terms of features, elements, processes, or properties that are generic and in operation across socio-cultural formations. The already abundant literature on defining esotericism may be of some help for finding such appropriate points of analogy, but only if we shift focus to the building blocks that specific definitions have assembled. I will suggest some avenues for doing this, focusing on what appears to be a widespread notion that esotericism has to do with “knowledge” that is somehow set apart and special. In looking at these forms of specialness we can discern generic processes that allow us to look at cross-cultural patterns.

BAIER Karl

University of Vienna, Austria

Theosophical Orientalism and Transculturation within the Theosophical Society in South Asia

The Theosophical Society in South Asia was not simply a meeting point between Western Theosophy as a representative of Western Esotericism and Asian traditions but an identity-forming melting pot of two cultures in the making: the defiant culture of Western Theosophists and the defiant culture of Western educated South Asians who tried to construct and renew their cultural heritage under the conditions of the Raj. This paper investigates the structure of Theosophical Orientalism and its role as common ground for the entangled history of two groups: the South Asian and the Euro-American Theosophists. It will present the following theses: 1. The most basic framework that structures the “selfing” and “othering” of Theosophy vis-à-vis South Asian traditions is the distinction between ‘the West’ and ‘the East’ postulated as unified cultural traditions along the lines of nineteenth century Orientalism. 2. Gerd Baumann’s structural approach to the Orientalist grammar of identity/alterity provides a concept of Orientalism that makes the differentiation of a “standard orientalism” and something like a “reversed”, “affirmative” or “Romantic” orientalism pointless. 2. The Orientalist double reversed mirroring of East and West provides the basis of the Euro-American Theosophical appropriation of South Asian concepts. 3. At the same time it allows the border-crossing South Asian members of Theosophy to identify with the Theosophical project.

BARONI Francesco

Swiss Institute of Rome, Italy

Chakras in early 20th century Italian esotericism: re-enchanted the body, westernizing the East

At the very beginning of 20th century, the notion of “chakra” entered the discursive field of Italian esoteric movements. In this context as elsewhere, the Theosophical Society played a major role in establishing a cultural bridge between East and West. The manner in which this process unfolds historically and its broad cultural implications are the focus of our study. At an early stage, Italian esotericists are clearly attracted to the exotic flavor of yoga occult physiology, seen as a relic of a higher wisdom and as a practical set of tools for spiritual advancement. In the neo-pagan milieu, this wisdom is opposed to Christian spirituality, poorly evaluated and often overtly despised. Later on, a shift occurs: the same authors start looking for the equivalents of Indian chakras in Western esoteric lore, browsing in particular the rich theosophical literature of the 17th and 18th centuries. This triggers a creative rediscovery of many trends of Western esotericism itself, whose traditions, comparatively studied, do not fail to display intriguing and controversial aspects. In a subsequent phase, a more sophisticated attempt to “christianize” chakras is made by those occultists who aimed at disinterring what they considered to be the authentic Christian esotericism.

BAUER Nicole Maria

University of Heidelberg, Germany

“Becoming like God” – Self-improvement and Healing in the Kabbalah Centre

A transformation process of today’s religious culture has been taking place for several years now. This development is particularly reflected in a combination of religious narratives and practices and elements of the therapeutic discourse, in each case associated with a strong focus on the self. One example of this continuing change is the Kabbalah Centre, a place where centuries-old Kabbalistic ideas are combined linked with components of different religious traditions and psychological as well as therapeutic approaches. Its founder, Philip Berg, simplified Kabbalistic theories and remodelled them to methods of self-improvement and Healing. This change is evident not only from the guidebooks published by the Kabbalah Centre, but also from their practices. At this point, the method of “Scanning” has to be mentioned in particular. This meditation technique developed by P. Berg is in the focus of fulfillment of the self. In this paper, the ongoing transformation process of Kabbalistic practice is examined on the basis of Kabbalah-Centre-specific, so called ‘spiritual tools’. Upon examination of those methods, the paper will show how Kabbalistic traditions have transformed to techniques of self-improvement and healing in order to “become like God”.

BURMISTROV Konstantin

Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia

Gregory Moebes and the occult renaissance in Russia of the early 20th century

In the early 20th century, after a long break caused by the governmental and church restrictions and persecution, there was an explosion of interest in esotericism in the Russian Empire. At that time, there were a number of occult groups of different schools and affiliations acting throughout Russia. One of the leaders of the Russian esotericists and the most reputed occultist of the first third of the 20th c. was Gregory (von) Moebes (Riga, 1868 – Ust’-Sisol’sk, 1930/34), the head of the Russian branch of the Martinist Order and the leading figure of the Russian neo-Rosicrucianism. I’m going to specify the place of Moebes in the history of Russian esotericism as well as to provide an overview of his teaching. Particular attention will be paid to the interpretation of Kabbalah in his writings. My analysis is to be based both on the published works and on some unexplored archival materials.

CIOŁKOSZ Matylda

Jagiellonian University, Poland

The Universal Embodied Experience as a Tool of Implementation of Indian Religio-Philosophical Notions in the Global Iyengar Yoga Community

Iyengar Yoga is currently the most widespread style of yoga practice worldwide. As a part of the global Modern Psychosomatic Yoga movement, it combines the influence of the Indian tradition (*pātañjala yoga*, *viśiṣṭādvaita vedānta*, *haṭha yoga*) and Western Esotericism, as mediated by Neo-Vedanta. As a part of the postural yoga tradition, it was also influenced by the European physical culture movement initiated at the end of the 19th century. Thus, it is a perfect example of a marriage between both the Eastern and Western esoteric tradition as well as between the esoteric and the exoteric. Through focusing on the practice of yogic postures (*āsana*), Iyengar Yoga intensifies and refines the practitioners’ experience of the body. This refined model of the body serves as a tool to translate the abstract Indian religio-philosophical notions (such as the concept of *puruṣa* or *ātma*) into the universal language of sensory and motor experience. In the proposed paper, the enactive paradigm, the category of the embodied experience and the tools of cognitive linguistics shall be applied to illustrate, how the universal feeling of the body – enhanced by *āsana* practice – contributes to the implementation and of the elements of Indian esoteric tradition in the global community.

COLOMBO Gloria

Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Italy

The Interchange between Eastern and Western Concepts of the Transmigration of Souls in 18th-19th Century German Literature

The beginning of the 19th century saw the publication of the first Latin and German translations of the Maha-Bharata, one of the most important religious texts of Hinduism. In 1802 Friedrich Majer published in the *Asiatisches Magazin* the German translation of the first three songs of the Bhagavad-Gita; in 1808 Friedrich Schlegel inserted a partial German translation of the same epos in his work *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*; in 1823 August Wilhelm Schlegel translated the entire Bhagavad-Gita into Latin; in 1824 Franz Bopp published a volume containing the German translation of different extracts from the Maha-Bharata. The above mentioned texts allowed the intellectuals of the time to consider from a new point of view the motif of the transmigration of souls, which had aroused deep interest in the German philosophical circles during the second half of the 18th century. The Hindu concept of samsara was added to the Lurianic-Kabbalistic one of gilgul, to the Hermetic-Neoplatonic one of metempsychosis and to the Hermetic-Illuministic one of "rational metempsychosis". The interchange among such different traditions gave birth to new conceptions of the transmigration of souls, first of all to the one developed by Goethe in the novel *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* and in the tragic play *Faust*.

CUSCITO Giuseppe

"Sapienza" University, Italy

Apulia as a bridge for Jewish esoteric knowledge between Babylonia and Central Europe

The Italian region of Apulia, located in the South-East of the peninsula, constitutes a sort of natural bridge in the Mediterranean. This paper will show how, during the centuries, it has been a cultural bridge as well, at least regarding Jewish esoteric knowledge. In the Middle Ages, the Jewish communities, some of them being present since the beginning of the Diaspora, were culturally thriving and they kept their contacts with the communities in the East (both in Eretz Israel and Babylonia) and with Western and Central Europe. The two most prominent authors who lived during the Byzantine domination in the region (namely, Shabbetai Donnolo and Ahima'az ben Paltiel) will be presented to show, on one hand, the Babylonian origins of part of their cultural heritage and, on the other hand, their influence to later Jewish esotericism, especially regarding the qabbalistic ideas of the *kavod* and the sephiroth as emanations of God and that of the golem. The paper will also briefly outline how this knowledge reached the far regions of Provence and the Rhine and the change of

paradigm that took place in a time between the lifetimes of the two authors (who lived, respectively, during the X and the XI centuries), during which the Babylonian Talmud gained the importance that it still has in modern day Judaism.

DLUHOŠ Marek

Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic

Nationalism in Czech esotericism

This talk focuses on describing the main trends in boosting Czech national identity through esoteric traditions, and especially Hermeticism. Its development is linked with the demise of Austria-Hungary in 1918 and subsequent endeavours to build and maintain a Czechoslovak state. Czech Hermeticism evolved from a Christian basis, although it borrowed a whole range of elements from Eastern traditions. The chair of the most important Hermetic association, Universalia, Dr Jan Kefer (1906-1941) claimed that: 'The world is not a fallacy (maya), but rather a reality, essential for ennobling the human spirit. The formula for salvation and eternal life does not begin with the word 'I' but rather 'he'; it doesn't depend on how we helped ourselves on our journey to God, but rather how we helped bear the burden of life for others.' Kefer studied magic and developed it to its allegedly higher form, so-called theurgy. This theurgy, however, also had a political idea and was linked to the identity of the Czech nation. He wanted to create egregores which would have a positive influence on the evolution of human history through theurgy and Kabbalah. This egregore was Kefer and the nation, the Republic, Czech-ness. Kefer attempted to create an initiation centre in Bohemia so that the state could be the world's first nation as regards theurgy. In Universalia's magazine, Logos, a declaration appeared in 1938 that: 'This initiation centre will be a pledge to the future of the Czech nation!' Over time a shared element was found, including in philosophy and the practice of so-called 'Fire of Horev', between Ancient Egyptian esotericism, Tibetan ngagpa practice and the spirit of the Czech, and this was meant to have the unique requirements needed for working with it. This teaching was to be complemented in many ways by the most advanced esoteric systems, which Kaballah, for example, is considered to be. It is also meant to be the basis for the highest esoteric practice.

DULSKA Małgorzata Alicja

Jagiellonian University, Poland

The Influence of Esotericism and Eastern Philosophical Notions on the Politics of the Interwar Period in Poland

In 1918 Poland appeared on the political map of Europe and, after a long period of partition, it gained freedom. The main figure on the political scene in the reborn

country was Józef Piłsudski, who was the head of the country since 1919 and who became the First Marshal of Poland in 1920. One of his closest co-workers was Michał Karaszewicz Tokarzewski (1893-1964), the General of the Polish Army. Karaszewicz was one of the most dynamic activists of the Polish Theosophical Society and one of the main Polish Freemasons. He was a member of the Grand Lodge of Poland and Le Droit Humain, which was established thanks to his work with Wanda Dynowska (1888-1971), the head of the Polish TS. He was also a friend of George Arundale, the President of the Theosophical Society Adyar. Piłsudski alone didn't belong to any kind of esoteric organisation, but closely co-worked with Dynowska and Karaszewicz. He was very interested in esotericism, Freemasonry and the activity of the Polish Theosophical Society. The influence of Eastern ideas on the Polish intellectual environment during the interwar period is unquestionable. These ideas came to Poland through esoteric organisations and inspired politicians during that time. The aim of the paper is the analysis of the relations between esotericism and politics in the interwar period, focused on oriental motifs and ideas and their impact on politics. It's also focused on the two main figures – Piłsudski and Karaszewicz – and their relations with esotericism, Hinduism and Buddhism. The influence of esoteric structures on politics will be analyzed, too.

ENYEDI Tamás

Doctoral School of History, Hungary

In Search of a Past that Never Was: Ancient Near-East in 19th century Occultism as a Form of Cultural Memory

The aim of the paper is to present the role of late 19th century English occultism in the formation of cultural memory of Near-Eastern religions. The main example will be the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, their attitude towards Egypt and Mesopotamia as a source of wisdom and authority, through the works of Samuel Mathers, Florence Farr and Aleister Crowley. Upon closer inspection of the rituals of the Golden Dawn, we can understand the general thought process that 19th century esotericism employed in their use and selection of Near-Eastern sources. They also played a major role in keeping the notion of mystical Egypt alive, even after scientific studies dispelled most of the old beliefs about hieroglyphs and Egyptian religion. The effects of their works can be traced to our times, in the popular attitude towards the Ancient Near-East. In this paper I aim to present the methodology of the Golden Dawn through the examples of a selection of its rituals: the equinox ritual and the zelandor initiation ritual. Also we will take a look at the knowledge literature and sources employed by the order.

FAKHOURY Hadi

McGill University, Canada

Aspects of the Russian Influence on Henry Corbin: Slavophilism, Russophilism and Byzantinism

Henry Corbin (1903-1978) was a French philosopher and pioneering scholar of Islamic esotericism who had a major role in legitimizing the academic study of esotericism. My paper will focus on certain aspects of the hitherto neglected though important Russian contribution to Corbin's thinking. In 1930s Paris, Corbin met émigré Russian intellectuals – notably Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948) – who initiated him into Orthodox thought and the tradition of Russian religious philosophy rooted in 19th-century Slavophilism. Drawing on previously unexploited material from Corbin's papers, my paper will address: (1) the Slavophile connection to Corbin's perception of the East-West divide; (2) Corbin's idealization of Byzantium in relation to the "romantic Byzantinism" of the Orthodox theologian Georges Florovsky (1883-1979); (3) the "mediating" role of Russia and Russian Orthodoxy in Corbin's project of an ecumenical rapprochement between Eastern and Western theosophy.

FAXNELD Per

Stockholm University, Sweden

Borrowing From the Hebrews: Lilith in Nineteenth-Century Occultist Discourse on Motherhood and Marriage

The paper traces how the female demon Lilith, originally a figure in Jewish lore, was appropriated by nineteenth-century occultists like Éliphas Lévi. In particular, it focuses on how Lilith was used by gentile esotericists to make certain points about marriage and motherhood, rhetorical maneuvers for which this demon was ideally suited. It will be demonstrated that Lilith was already by mid-century beginning to be employed by progressive and more or less feminist gentile voices in the cultural debate, and that occultist discourse relates to such usage as well as a competing conservative exploitation of the figure. It will also be shown how occultists with a mind to at times downplay gender differences, like Mme. Blavatsky, could strip Lilith of some of her traditional gendered traits in order to (primarily) make completely different cosmological points. Finally, it will be highlighted in what manner turning to a Jewish mythological being, rather than one from Christian myth, could serve as a means of presenting uncomfortable cultural critique of gender hierarchies with impunity in a Christian context.

FERARO Shai

Tel Aviv University, Israel

The return of Baal (to the Holy Land): Canaanite reconstructionism among contemporary Israeli Pagans; A double-edged sword

This presentation will focus on the recent emergence of Canaanite reconstructionism within Israel's small-but-growing Pagan community. In previous research I have argued that although Israeli Pagans may employ a community-building discourse, they constantly fear the perceived negative consequences of public exposure. They see the bond between (Jewish) religion and the state in Israel as a main factor in the intolerance and even persecution that they expect from the government and from religious fundamentalists. (Feraro, Forthcoming). The development of Israeli-based Canaanite reconstructionism, then, will be set against the background of the unique nature of Israeli society and identity politics, as well as of Canaanism – a cultural and ideological movement, which climaxed during the 1940s in British Mandate Palestine but declined after the founding of the state of Israel. To paraphrase Ronald Hutton, if Modern Israeli Pagans hope to achieve a “greater sense of integration into, and a common inheritance with, the parent society”, it is unclear which Pagan ‘path’ could best serve such a goal. As Hutton himself noted recently in an interview to an Israeli Pagan magazine following a visit to Israel, “Israeli Pagans are clearly at present in a double bind, whereby if they follow non-Israeli traditions such as Wicca and Druidry, they are accused of importing alien beliefs, while if they revive aspects of the ancient native religion, they are accused of bringing back the ancient evil against which true religion originally defined itself”.

FERGUSON Christine

University of Glasgow, Scotland

Dis-Orienting the East: Mabel Collins and Theosophical Placelessness in the 1880s

Mabel Collins (1851-1927) has long been a highly vexed figure in the history of Western esotericism, distinguished for her production in *Light on the Path* (1885) of one of the most popular Theosophical treatises of her age, but largely forgotten in accounts of the movement due to her acrimonious split with H. P. Blavatsky and subsequent disavowal of the role of the Mahatmas in her own prolific literary production. My paper reads Collins's controversial rejection of Mahatmic influence beyond the context of institutional feud, arguing that it reflects a larger feminist interest in deracinating the East that is pervasive in her 1880s esoteric writing and which can enable us to re-evaluate the role of, and ambiguity towards, patriarchal orientalism in the Victorian Theosophical imagination. In stark contrast to the lavishly exotic milieus of contemporary male-authored imperial romances, works such as *The Idyll of*

the White Lotus (1884) and *The Blossom and the Fruit* (1885) present instead stark and placeless versions of Egypt and Eastern Europe, conjuring up occult spaces, I argue, whose overt absence of orienting detail allow Collins to claim visionary authority outwith the control of male masters and beyond patriarchal traditions of representing and controlling a feminized East.

GIANFRANCESCO Lorenza

University of London, United Kingdom

Exploring eastern esotericism in early modern Italian emblems

During the early modern period books on emblems appeared throughout the Italian Peninsula. Addressed to learned audiences, texts on emblems by Giulio Cesare Capaccio, Onofrio Ricci, Cesare Ripa and others provided images for a variety of contexts. In academies images were used to devise symbolic emblems and mottoes. Images were also used as visual didactic tools to be displayed during preaching, public events such as festivals and funerary tributes, as well as private performances. Moreover, books on emblems notably Capaccio's 'Delle Imprese' (Naples 1592) also circulated among artists who chose icons to convey messages that often carried an esoteric meaning. As well as representing symbolic icons traditionally attached to European culture, early modern Italian books on emblems also contained images belonging to extra-European culture. These include representations of animals, plants and symbols linked to Jewish and Arabic culture. This paper explores the presence of esoteric non-European images and their symbolic functions in Italian books on emblems. By looking at a core of texts published between 1550 and 1650 this paper will discuss the following questions: What were the most popular extra-European images in Italian books on emblems? What did they signify and what esoteric meanings did they convey? What sources did authors draw upon, and why these? What was the reception of early modern Italian books on emblems with particular reference to the use of extra-European symbols?

GIUDICE Christian M.

Göteborg University, Sweden

“Ex Oriente Lux/Ex Occidente Lex”: The Reception of Oriental Forms of Spirituality in the Traditionalist Ideas of Arturo Reghini (1878-1946) and Julius Evola (1898-1974)

During the first decades of the Twentieth century, Italy, as many other European countries, witnessed an increase in the attention devoted to Oriental spirituality. Giuseppe Tucci (1894-1984), considered by many to be a pioneering figure in Buddhist studies, travelled widely in Tibet, India and China and taught Oriental languages at Rome's *Sapienza* University. The East had also come to the forefront in Occultism,

thanks to the presence of Theosophical lodges nationwide and to the efforts of individuals, such as Leone Caetani (1869-1935), one of the country's greatest experts on Islam. My paper will concentrate on two figures as examples of the reaction to the Occidentalism/Orientalism debate within the Italian Traditionalist milieu: Arturo Reghini and Julius Evola. Both heavily influenced by the founder of Twentieth century Traditionalism René Guénon (1886-1951), while Reghini auspicated the resurgence of a Western form of initiatory knowledge within masonic and occultist circles, Evola delved deep into Eastern studies, translating Arthur Avalon's (1865-1936) publications and being inspired by doctrines such as yoga and tantra. Thus, by choosing two members of the Italian Traditionalist milieu, and describing their diametrically opposite approaches to the doctrines coming from the Orient, it is my aim to depict the exceptionally varied manifestations of the reception of Eastern lore in the West.

GODWIN Joscelyn

Colgate University, USA

The Mahatma Letters: Eastern Wisdom or Western Imposture?

The letters received in 1880-84 by A. P. Sinnett and A. O. Hume, signed by the Mahatmas Koot Hoomi and Morya, have long divided Theosophists from their critics. The former take them as communications from Himalayan adepts. The latter dismiss them as a hoax by Madame Blavatsky and her cronies. A close examination of the letters (including the originals in the British Library) and of their recipients, especially the neglected Hume, suggests a middle way between the believers and the skeptics. The letters need to be considered in several contexts, including that of channeled literature, which seems in part to be their genre; that of fiction, in which two invented characters take on a life of their own; that of Indian colonial politics; that of parapsychological phenomena; and as a first draft of Blavatsky's Secret Doctrine. The afterlife of K. H., M., and the other Mahatmas, with whom later mediums claimed communication, the post-WW2 edition of the letters by Christmas Humphreys (English Buddhist and High Court judge), and recent research into their possible Tibetan content complicate the question, and counsel against easy answers.

GREER Christian

University of Amsterdam, Holland

“Old White Hipsters in Fezzes”: The Ecumenical Heresy of the Moorish Orthodox Radio Crusade

Two decades before he would rise to underground stardom with his text, *Temporary Autonomous Zone* (1985), the spiritual anarchist Peter Lamborn Wilson was initiated into an obscure branch of the Moorish Science movement. Founded by Noble Drew Ali in 1913 as a syncretic form of African-American Islam, Wilson's introduction to Moorish Science came in the early 1960s by way of an eccentric episcopi vagantes

or ‘wandering bishop’ named Father Michael Itkin. The Noble Order of Moorish Science, in which Wilson took the name ‘Hakim Bey,’ was an improbable mix of ‘Left-hand Christianity’ and ‘heretical Islam’ with psychedelic rituals, gay culture, and anarchism that acted as a means for white people to join a predominantly African American (or ‘Moorish’) religion. Along with Wilson, a number of white bohemians began to fill its ranks through the 1960s, which precipitated a name change from The Noble Order of Moorish Science to the Moorish Orthodox Church. Nearly nothing has been written on this contemporary antinomian movement, and no scholar has examined its non-African American branch, of which Wilson was a lifelong member. Based on an on-going archive project undertaken by the author, this paper outlines the history and development of Moorish Orthodox Science through the only public medium in which it propagated itself, a non-commercial public radio show entitled ‘The Moorish Orthodox Radio Crusade.’ Airing from 1983-2012, this New York City-based radio show operated as a platform for this marginal religion, as well as a means for other underground, antinomian spiritual traditions to disseminate their messages. The material used in the preparation of this paper has not yet been made public, and the analysis it contains is derived from private recordings of this radio show, as well as personal interviews with its creators. Special attention in this paper will be given to the discursive self-representation of Wilson and his radio co-hosts as representatives of ‘Moorish Orthodox Science’ as well as their ongoing construction of the religion.

GREGORIUS Fredrik

Linköping University, Sweden

The Sun is also a Warrior: The spiritualization of martial traditions and the construction of esoteric masculinity

The warrior-trope is a recurring motive in several esoteric movements from Freemasonry to magical orders like the Ordo Temple Orientis and the Temple of Set. Within these movements references to chivalric orders like the Knights Templar or more generally the concept of knighthood can be found as personifying an ideal to strive toward. The hierarchies found in these societies are at times used as a reference for initiations and the values found in martial manuals are regarded as esoterically valuable. The following presentation will focus on how modern esoteric writers and orders interpret martial orders to fit in a non-martial Western setting and how this creates a romantic and idealized image of these historical martial societies. The presentation will compare how western and eastern martial traditions are being reinterpreted, with focus on the Knights Templars and the Hindu Kshatriya caste, by modern esoteric orders. The main theme will be on how the reception of these traditions are instrumental in creating concepts of masculinity within Western esotericism and how this construction can come both in conflict and in dialogue with other prominent trends within the same order that rejects binary gender constructions.

GUÉGUEN Daniel

France

Jean Delville: Painter and Initiate

Jean Delville is one of the main figures of the Belgian symbolist period. Winner of the Belgian Grand Prix de Rome, he is famous for his magnificent painting *The School of Plato*, currently at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Painter, art critic, and founder of the *Salons d'Art Idéaliste*, he also regarded himself as an initiate, whose esoteric path strongly influenced his pictorial creativity. Born in 1867, Jean Delville became at a young age an «initiate» painter. He took part in the first *Rose-Croix Salons*, created a famous portrait of the *Sâr*, and diligently visited the famous Parisian initiates *Guaïta*, *Papus* and others. He embarked on the occultist path through *Martinism* via *Papus*, who appointed him a *Superior Initiate* in 1897. In 1899, he joined the *Theosophical Society*, quickly becoming one of its main leaders in Belgium. In 1903, he also joined *Freemasonry*, where he occupied every position of the *Blue Lodge* (the prestigious “*Les Amis Philanthropes*”) up to the 33rd degree. His paintings are more than a symbolist oeuvre; they are a truly esoteric work. A prolific author, Jean Delville wrote many occultist works, but first and foremost he was a theosophist, thus finding many opponents in the deeply secular and socialist Belgian *Freemasonry*. He fervently followed and promoted *Krishnamurti* as the *World Teacher* and the new *Christ*. Unfortunately, when the myth of *Krishnamurti* fell apart in 1929, so did Jean Delville. The recent discovery of private letters and paintings, in particular the “*Vision de la paix*”, documents Jean Delville’s gradual return to the limelight, following a period of spiritual involution and even a sort of anti-esoteric behaviour linked to his past involvement with *Krishnamurt*. Jean Delville died reconciled with himself in 1953, after rediscovering a personal initiation, which was oddly once again inspired by *Krishnamurti*, although no longer by the *Theosophical Society*.

GYIMESI Júlia

Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Hungary

Between “West” and “East”: the comparative aspects of the reception of spiritualism in Hungary

By 1853, as in other European countries, spiritualism had spread to Hungary. In the mid-1800s spiritualistic phenomena became popular issues in the press and soon began to influence prominent figures of Hungarian culture. Spiritualism made a remarkable stir among the representatives of science also, who, following the methods of psychical researchers and early parapsychologists, tried to understand spiritualistic occurrences in the framework of natural sciences. However, despite the fact that several leaders of Hungarian spiritualism were scholars, spiritualism in Hungary had a strong religious nature compared to English or German spiritualism. It remained very much defined by biblical and moral elements and was identified

as ‘evangelistic spiritism’ which primary aim was self-development in a unified Christian faith, following the teachings of Christ. As a result, the scientifically based research on spiritualism, that was so fruitful elsewhere in Europe, could not develop in Hungary. The aim of the paper is to understand the comparative aspects of the reception of spiritualism in Hungary in the light of the globalization of esotericism. It also aims to illuminate the process of differentiation of spiritualism in Hungary, with a special focus on the cultural and historical conditions that influenced the evolution of Hungarian spiritualism.

HARARI Yuval

Ben Gurion University, Israel

Practical Kabbalah Online – Jewish Magic and the Web

Magic practices and beliefs have been part of Jewish culture from the very beginning of its documentation in the Bible. The “insider” evidence of them is documented in thousands of magic artifacts (amulets, incantation bowls, magic jewelry etc.) and in hundreds of recipe books that stem from Antiquity onwards. With the rise of Kabbalah and its expansion this esoteric segment of Jewish culture became known as “Practical Kabbalah.” Jewish traditional magic is still being practiced in Israel by rabbis and kabbalists for the benefit of their clients, books of practical Kabbalah are being printed and the “practical Kabbalah” discourse is vivid. This activity is not missing also from the Internet. My paper will focus on the virtual facet of Jewish traditional magic and its New Age context. In this context I will suggest a distinction between two uses of the Web: as a digital platform for communication with surfers in order to offer them information and goods (magic online), on the one hand, and as cyberspace in which actual ritual power can be transmitted and act (online magic), on the other. I will first present some major websites of practical Kabbalah, deal with their appearance and contents and point at the ways they communicate with potential clients, and then demonstrate cases in which the Web itself serves as a sphere for magic activity.

HARLASS Ulrich

University of Heidelberg, Germany

The “other” Neo-Hinduism: Shaiva Siddhanta and Thesophy

The meaning of the term “Neo-Hinduism”, used as an umbrella term for Hindu reformist movements, is often limited to (neo-)vedāntist Traditions. Therefore, research on the connections between the Theosophical Society and Hinduism has, so

far, focused primarily on such traditions. Although there is a vast body of literature depicting Theosophy as an integral part of discourses on religion, Hinduism and India, South Indian Śaiva Siddhānta, on the other hand, appears to lie outside such conceptualizations of Neo-Hinduism – which can be attributed to the scarcity of both studies on Śaiva Siddhānta and studies on the Theosophical Society. Given that, Śaiva Siddhānta has been detached from considerations of developments in reform Hinduism. In this paper, I argue that this view should be re-examined. I will depict debates presented in the *Siddhānta Deepika*, a central organ of śaivaite discourse in late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Over the course of fourteen years, Theosophy is frequently mentioned in this publication in connection with topics such as science, philology, religion, and philosophy. By outlining references to Theosophy in this periodical I will argue that the society needs to be reconsidered as part of a development leading to the Dravidian nationalist movement, in which the distinction between “Aryans” and “Dravidians” played a pivotal role.

HEDENBORG-WHITE Manon

Uppsala University, Sweden

Seven Veils and a Garland of Skulls: Orientalism, Gender and Eastern Religion in Interpretations of a Celestial Harlot

The Book of Revelation (17:1-17:8) introduces the Whore of Babylon, a libidinous woman astride a many-headed beast. Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), founder of the religion Thelema and self-proclaimed Beast 666 reinterpreted the figure as an autonomous deity, the goddess Babalon. Babalon is a complex symbol who in Crowley's system simultaneously relates to one of the final phases of initiation, a magical formula, a kabbalistic sephirah, and the idea of sex as sacred. In a general sense, she also embodies the ideal of liberated female sexuality. Crowley called his most important female lovers “Scarlet Women”, earthly manifestations of the Babalon principle. The notion of Babalon is strongly inspired by concepts derived from Eastern religion and romanticized notions of the “Orient”. The ruminations on her in Crowley's *Book of Lies* echoes the story of Salome, and he links the Scarlet Woman with Hindu Tantric and Daoist notions. Since then, prominent occultists (e.g. Kenneth Grant) have continued to draw on Eastern concepts in their conceptualization of Babalon. Based on both literary and ethnographic sources, the paper will discuss how interpretations of the goddess have been influenced by the reception of Eastern religion in Western esotericism, drawing on gender theory and post-colonial research (crucially, the concept of Orientalism) to elucidate the inherent power dynamics in the construction of Thelemic divinity.

HESS Karolina Maria

Jagiellonian University, Poland

Between Theosophy and Polish-Indian Library: The Great Work of Wanda Dynowska Umadevi (1888-1971)

Wanda Dynowska took the Sacral Name Umadevi given to her by Mahatma Gandhi. As Kazimierz Tokarski wrote about Dynowska, “her biography in the interwar period overlaps to such extent with the histories of all the currents of the Polish Theosophical Society, that one could hardly find a more personal motif.” Dynowska was the person who, after many unsuccessful attempts by her predecessors, led to the establishment of the Polish Theosophical Society (of which she became the first Secretary General) as one of the national section connected to the TS in Adyar, India. She was interested in esotericism from early years, thanks to, among other sources, the works of Tadeusz Micinski. Her later engagement with Theosophical thought and the contact she made during her numerous voyages, led her to take interest in the thought of the Far East, which she did not abandon for the rest of her life. During World War II she founded the Polish-Indian Library in Madras, which was active until 1971. In the Library classic works related to the philosophy and religion of India were translated and published, but also Theosophical writings (Blavatsky, Besant, Leadbeater) as well as the works of J. Krishnamurti, who Dynowska regarded as her spiritual mentor. The paper aims to present the activity and works of this exceptional figure in two perspectives. On the one hand, from a diachronic perspectives, it will present an overview and analysis of the relations between Dynowska and organizations such as the Polish TS, the Order of the Dawn or the Order of the Star. On the other hand, from a synchronic perspective, it will discuss the influence of Umadevi’s works on the reception and the specific understanding of the category of The East in Polish esoteric milieus. The paper was prepared based on previously unpublished archival material and is a part of a research project under the auspices of the Polish National Science Centre.

HESSAYON Ariel

Goldsmiths, University of London, United Kingdom

Hermes Trismegistus in England –after Casaubon

In a digression to a theological treatise of 1614 the Huguenot classical scholar Isaac Casaubon disparaged the authenticity of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. That denunciation is now well known through Anthony Grafton’s work. Moreover, Casaubon was eventually proved correct. In its present form the *Corpus Hermeticum* is a disordered miscellany of texts mainly dating from the 3rd century B. C. E. to about the 4th century C. E. that have subsequently been shaped through a process of

textual transmission and the intervention of Byzantine editors. In late 15th century Europe, however, thanks largely to Marsilio Ficino's Latin version of fourteen chapters of the *Corpus Hermeticum* – erroneously called *Pimander* after the heading of the first document – it was generally believed that their author was contemporary with Moses. Whether this was the Egyptian deity Thoth, his Greek counterpart Hermes, or Mercurius Trismegistus ('thrice greatest') remained a matter for discussion. But the important point was that the *Corpus Hermeticum* became incorporated within the ancient theology of the gentiles beloved by Ficino and other Florentine syncretists. Although Casaubon's assault convinced Sir Walter Raleigh that the books bearing Hermes' name were counterfeit I want to suggest that on the whole few seventeenth-century English authors readily accepted Casaubon's conclusions; and even then, rarely in their entirety. Indeed, Casaubon was generally either ignored or else acknowledged with the proviso that elements of the 'Trismegistick books' still contained genuine Egyptian doctrines. This reluctance to dispense with apparent Egyptian learning requires explanation and may be linked not only to the belief that 'Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians' (Acts 7:22) but also the reception of purported Rosicrucian writings.

HUSS Boaz

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel

Colonialism, Zionism and Kabbalah: The Christian Zionist Kabbalah of Laurence Oliphant

In 1879, Laurence Oliphant (1829-1888) the famous English author, adventurer, and politician initiated a project of Jewish colonization in Palestine, and tried to obtain concession from the Turkish Sultan for the settlement of Jews in northern Palestine. Although the Sultan rejected his plan, which was received enthusiastically by the Jews, Laurence and his wife Alice, settled in Haifa, and continued to try and advance Jewish settlement in the new colonies. Laurence Oliphant is labeled a Christian Zionist, and most scholars assume that his colonization project was based on Christian Evangelist ideology. Nonetheless, no investigation of the ideology of his colonial endeavor has been made yet. The proposed lecture will investigate the mystical-colonial ideology of Laurence Oliphant, as he presented it in his two last books – the *Sympneumata* (1883) and *Scientific Religion* (1888). The lecture will show that in these two understudied works Oliphant developed a complex form of a Zionist Christian Kabbalah, which was based on the esoteric ideas of the American mystic, Thomas Lake Harris (1823-1906). The lecture will explore the connections and intersections between Kabbalah, Zionism and British Colonialism which come to the fore in the mystical works and political projects of Oliphant. It will probe the Imperial context of Oliphant's complex perceptions of Jews, Judaism and Kabbalah and the role of western esoteric perceptions of Kabbalah in Christian and Jewish Zionist ideology at the late 19th and early 20th century. Finally, it will compare the role of western esoteric

interest in Hinduism on nascent Indian nationalism to the impact of occult interest in Kabbalah on early Zionism, and discuss the conjunctions between Colonialism, nationalism and the “mystical East”.

INTROVIGNE Massimo

Pontifical Salesian University, Italy

The Orientalist Masters: The Mystery of Hermann Schmiechen

Madame Blavatsky's Masters were evolved adepts of immense knowledge and learning, whose mission was to guide humanity and, more particularly, the Theosophical Society. Quite early, Blavatsky conceived the idea of asking painters to portray the Masters as they really were, either by having the painter's hand physically guided by a Master, or by impressing in the artist's mind the image of the High Adepts through several different clairvoyant means. The paper focuses on the little known figure of the German painter Hermann Schmiechen, who in 1884 painted the portraits of Masters Koot Hoomi and Morya still popular in the Theosophical Society today. Even apart from this famous incident, Schmiechen was a significant figure in the early Theosophical Society. It then compares Schmiechen's portraits of the Masters with those done by other artists, from the amateur «Monsieur Harrisse», an even more mysterious figure than Schmiechen, in New York in 1878 to two artists connected with the Krishnamurti controversy, David Anrias (Brian Aurias Ross) and Florence Fuller. Unlike the other artists involved in painting the Masters, Fuller was a well-known Australian painter. However, the strong experience of coming into direct contact with the Adepts eventually landed her in a psychiatric hospital. Without passing judgement on the mystical experiences claimed by these artists, the paper notes how their paintings of the Masters were influenced by a larger Orientalist milieu and expressed an Orientalist taste.

KADARY Yoed

Ben-Gurion University, Israel

East and West in the “Bible” of Jewish Magic

MS Geneve – Bibliotheque publique et universitaire 145 (previously MS Sasson 290) is a collection of magical and kabbalistic texts mostly in Hebrew. This is the longest manuscript of Jewish magic which contains 672 pages. It was copied in the Ottoman empire, in a 15th century Byzantine script with additions in later hands. The greater part of the manuscript is a compendium by Joseph b. Elijah Tirshom titled ‘Sefer Shoshan Yesod Olam’ that includes 2174 numbered paragraphs, containing, inter alia, different magic books like ‘Harba de-Moshe’ (‘Sword of Moses’), ‘the book of

Secrets' ('Sefer Harazim'), 'the book of the Chaldeas', and many other texts, most of them haven't been published yet. This manuscript arrived to Safed in the 16th century. It was known in the flourishing kabbalistic center probably both in Cordovero and Luria circles. In my paper I will show that though the manuscript was copied in the east, it contains also different traditions from the west. I will present some of the unique traditions that this reach manuscript holds about: the names of God, angels, demons and magic. In some of the cases, those ideas are integrated to the kabbalistic views on the Ten Sefirot, in a way that present one of the most important evidence to Practical Kabbalah.

KALVERDA Sander

Germany

“Uprooted is the garden’s royal tree”: Franz Baermann Steiner’s orientalist Judaism as the fruit of his perennial blend of Böhme and the Gita

Orientalist and perennialist conceptions have been under scrutiny in academia in recent decades. Franz Baermann Steiner (1909-1952), grown up in the circles of German-speaking secular-Jewish Prague, came to mix these two in an oriental Judaism. His reading at an early age of German mystics, like Jacob Böhme, in combination with eastern wisdom teachings, most importantly the Bhagavad Gita, has strongly influenced his latter day views on politics, the cultural relationship between east and west and the role of the Jews therein. Main traits of his view are stated in his letter to Mahatma Gandhi (1946): that the Gita opened his eyes on how to read the Hebrew bible, or how, if the Jews had gone to live in India they would have served the God of all mankind together with the Hindus. To understand these statements this paper will trace Steiner’s turn to oriental Judaism through orientalist esoteric circles in Prague and Jerusalem and what became of these influences when Zionism got coupled with his ethnographic studies in Oxford. To illustrate all this, an aphorism he wrote in 1947 will be followed up, in which he describes the tree of knowledge as having its roots in heaven and equates this with the figure of an inverted tree used in Böhme and the Gita. By showing how in these two figures the perennialist notion of universalizing heterodox ideas of Godhood to ‘all mankind’ are already rooted, I want to display how these came to fruition in Steiner’s ethnographic, political and poetical writings.

KARA Cem

Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany

Between Occultism and Orientalism. The Life and Work of Rudolf von Sebottendorf (1875-1945)

Rudolf Freiherr von Sebottendorf was a colourful person: an adventurer and cosmopolite, a Freemason and a Sufi, an astrologer and an occultist, an anti-Semitic antecedent of Hitler and a spy of the Third Reich – these are different ascriptions in contemporary sources as well as self-attributions in his own works. As a traveller Sebottendorf visited the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century and spent several years there. During this period, he met several Sufi masters and was even – according to his own accounts – initiated into a Sufi order. Back in Germany, he tried to apply those allegedly received Sufi ideas into an Ariosophic and Anti-Semitic organization, the so-called Thule Society, which is regarded as an ideological precursor of the National Socialists. In this short presentation, I will emphasize how different racist and esoteric ideas such as the Völkische Ariosophy, the New Thought Movement, and an orientalist-possessive understanding of Sufism were intermingled in Sebottendorf's world view. Therefore, Sebottendorf is an interesting example of a very specific cultural exchange during which Sufism was re-contextualised in a racist setting.

KARBOVNIK Damien

Montpellier III, France

The Réalisme Fantastique and the East: enchantment and disenchantment in the French occulture of the sixties and seventies

In France, in the 1960's and 1970's, a unique esoteric and occultist movement appears, namely the *Réalisme Fantastique*. This movement, which initially started with the success of *Matin des Magiciens* (1960) co-written by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier and later on gained momentum with literary magazine *Planète* (1961-1971), is expressed essentially through literature. The topics mentioned are nowadays considered classics of Occulture: mythical civilizations, the occult roots of Nazism, the Theory of the Ancient Astronauts, etc. The *Réalisme Fantastique* is very successful. It is through that movement that the French public gets a grasp of allegedly forgotten oriental knowledge. But its stance with regard to this Fantastic Orient is ambiguous, because of a predominant fascination and an undeniable enthusiasm for it, it still shows wariness and disillusionment for it, as is conveyed in René Barjavel's novel *Les Chemins de Katmandou* (1969). We will dedicate our paper to the observation of the use made of the Réalisme Fantastique of the East. Oscillating between spirituality and occultism, the East helps fuel the arguments on the Réalisme Fantastique in

many ways. However, we will see that in spite of an esoteric tradition inherited from theosophy, Guénon and Gurdjieff, the *Réalisme Fantastique* distinguishes itself because of the qualified view that it holds of this fantasised East.

KARLSON-WEIMANN Carl

University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

A Swedish Oriental: The esoteric evolution of Ivan Aguéli

Perhaps most well known for having initiated the original Traditionalist René Guénon (1886-1951) into the Shadhiliyya Arabiyya Sufi Order in 1911 in Paris, the life and work of the Swedish painter and eccentric Ivan Aguéli (1869-1917) remains a curiously uncharted matter in the history of Western esotericism. Born in the small town Sala, the son of veterinarian, Aguéli came to travel first in Sweden, then to Paris and in Europe and eventually extending his horizons eastward: to Africa and Egypt. Related to his worldly travels were his spiritual and religious journeys; a development from an awareness of spirits at an early age during his Protestant upbringing, via Swedenborgianism in Stockholm, occult and Theosophical circles in France and finally converting to Islam and Sufism at the turn of the century. This paper will focus on the transformative dynamics of Aguéli's movement from an esotericism of the West to an esotericism of the East. As an esoteric, artistic, and even political, thinker, Aguéli challenges oriental and, not the least, occidental stereotypes. Furthermore, being a precursor of, and influence on, the Traditionalist movement, as well as being of relevance to Swedish art history, his life and though deserves attention in international scholarship.

KLEINHEMPEL Ullrich

Germany

The Song of Igor's campaign as a document of dvoeverie and its translation by Rainer Maria Rilke in the context of his religious quest

Proposal for a paper: The Song of Igor's Campaign ("Slovo o Polku Igorevye") as a document of "dvoeverie" of the Middle Ages, and its translation by Rainer Maria Rilke in the context of his pantheistic/panenthistic "new spirituality" in the early 20th century. The "Song of Igor's Campaign" is an iconic piece of literature. It comprises clearly distinct layers of Pagan and of Christian theology. It has been cherished as a rare document of Russians pagan history. However its elements of Christian character situate it in a transition zone of dual faith which is likewise discernible in Germany and Scandinavia at the time. This dual character appealed to the fin-de-siècle spirituality of Rimsky-Korsakov and of Rainer Maria Rilke, who felt at home in both Russian Orthodoxy and in Paganism, of in Rilke's case, of a pagan

“Nature spirituality”. Both themes are important in his work. The topic of this essay is 1.) to identify Pagan and Christian motifs in the lay, 2.) and to locate R. M. Rilke’s translation of the “Slovo o Polku Igorevye” in the context of his “nature spirituality” and “unorthodox” appropriation of Russian orthodoxy, in which “dvoeverie” paved the way for an emergent new spirituality.

KOSTICOVA Zuzana

Charles University of Prague, Czech Republic

Eastern motifs in the work of Carlos Castaneda and his disciples

Carlos Castaneda’s main inspiration had been the native North American and Mesoamerican spirituality; nevertheless, his works also shows other important sources, both ancient and modern. This paper focuses on Eastern religious phenomena discernible in Castaneda’s work, mainly focusing on the concept of “power” or “energy” and its relationship to Qi. Also, main important evidence that Castaneda’s group actively used Eastern religious motifs can be found in *Sorcerer’s crossing: A Woman’s Journey* by Taisha Abelar, one of the three principal Castaneda’s disciples. Abelar’s book exhibits Eastern symbolism, such as supplementing tensesgrita with martial arts, substituting the Eagle motif for a Chinese dragon, repeatedly mentioning “ancient Chinese wisdom” and “ancient Chinese wise men” and even explicitly using the terms “Tao” and “Qi”. This clearly shows not only that Castaneda’s work was influenced by a variety of inspiration, but also the tendency to regard truth not as something specifically tied to Native American wisdom, but rather something universal and transcending the borders of different cultures and religions.

KWIATKOWSKI Fryderyk

Jagiellonian University, Poland

“Wake up!” The Gnostic-Buddhist Vision of Reality in *The Matrix* (1999) by Lana and Andy Wachowski

The modern pop culture makes use of many motifs whose worldwiev-related origins can be found in various currents belonging to Eastern and Western esotericism. In my presentation I would like to analyse *The Matrix* film, especially emphasising the syncretic blending of numerous references to Gnosticism and Buddhism. I will prove that both of these traditions constitute the philosophical source for the construction of the image of reality in *The Matrix*. I am going to demonstrate that specific references to Gnostic beliefs can be observed in the analysed film, such as: the concepts of “Gnosis”, the figure of Messiah in the Christian Gnosis, the figures of archons, and the presence of ontological dualism. Then I will show how the Buddhist themes presented in the film were reinterpreted: the references to the premises of the doctrine of Dependent

Co-Origination, allusions to fragments of Dhammapada, the figure of Buddha and bodhisattva. Finally, I will place the analysed film in a wider context. I will refer to other films in which one can notice the juxtaposition of the ideas whose sources are different esoteric traditions. I shall also try to answer the question of the reasons of the popularity of the above-mentioned phenomenon.

LAURANT Jean-Pierre

CNRS, France

Western esotericism and the East: Japan, a difficult relationship?

The idea of the East structures the mental universe of Westerners. If the origin of this process is lost in the mists of time, a question remains: where is the East? Different geographical regions were identified with it, as the horizon of the Westerners broadened, and Japan was one of the last to be included. With the Meiji era significant cultural exchanges began: *Japonisme* became a fashion among artists and later Zen Buddhism was introduced in the West through the works of Suzuki. While the Theosophical Society had played an important role in the revival of Buddhism, Suzuki referred to Christian esotericists such as Boehme, Ruysbroeck, and Swedenborg. In Europe, occultist and esoteric artists close to Péladan's Salons de la Rose-Croix rejected the *Japonisme* of the Impressionists in the name of a traditional symbolic esthetic. Later, traditionalist authors following René Guénon blamed Japan as a typical example of westernization of the East. But there were also positive attitudes among esotericists. G. R. S. Mead, for instance, resumed Suzuki's attempt and the Eranos conferences in Switzerland with C. G. Jung often tried to strengthen the link between the West and Japan. It is with J. Evola's "heroic" way that the tradition of Bushido was taken as the most representative model of an oriental "chivalrous" tradition. Outside the study of comparative religion, the speculative approach typical of certain forms of esotericism appears particularly appropriate in the case of Japan to fill the function of creating a bridge between East and West.

LESSES Rebecca

Ruhr Universität-Bochum, Germany

Esotericism and Mysticism in Joseph and Aseneth

Some Jewish texts from antiquity call into question the characterization of esotericism as a western and European phenomenon. These have previously been studied in the framework of early Jewish mysticism and magic, but it is fruitful to analyse them also through the category of esotericism. One such text is *Joseph and Aseneth*, probably composed in first century BCE or CE Egypt, in which Aseneth,

an Egyptian woman who becomes the wife of Joseph, the son of Jacob, undergoes a mystical transformation and learns esoteric knowledge from “the chief of the house of the Lord.” She is renamed “City of Refuge” and learns that her name is first in the “book of the living in heaven,” while his name is first in the “Book of the Most High.” Aseneth’s story follows the plotline of the Greek erotic novels, but to marry Joseph she must overcome their spiritual difference, rather than undergoing the usual series of violent adventures that are present in the Greek novels. This paper will explore *Joseph and Aseneth* through the linked categories of esotericism, mysticism, and magic as a contribution to the discussion on esotericism in the contested boundary areas between “West” and “East.”

LEVANDER Caroline

University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Where Eastern Gods meets Western Art: Schuré’s Les Grande Initiés and syncretism in Theosophical art at the end of the 19th Century

The Eastern influence on Theosophy and occultism at the end of the 19th Century brought with it ideas of syncretism, most notable in *Les Grande Initiés* by Edoard Schuré (1889). He sets up a line of reincarnated prophets, or initiands, beginning with the Hindu god Ram and ending with Jesus Christ through Krishna, Orpheus and Pythagoras, inspired by Anna Kingsford’s and Edward Maitland’s book *The Perfect Way* as well as Antoine Fabre d’Olivet and French occult traditions. ‘The Great Initiates’ was widely read by artists within the symbolist movement and other artist groups inspired by the Theosophical Society. My paper will examine how Schuré’s ideas of syncretism can be seen in their art, ranging from the very subtle, as in Solomon J. Solomon’s painting *Orpheus*, which almost literally adheres to Schuré’s text, to the clearly seen, as in the Nabi initiate Paul Ranson’s painting *Christ and Buddha*. I’m suggesting that the influence of Schuré’s text on fin de siècle art is much greater than previously thought and that it was used as a sourcebook by artists connected to the Theosophical Society.

LIBERG Maria

University of Gothenburg, Sweden

“Into the Womb of the Dark Goddess” – La Société Voudon Gnostique and the syncretism between East and West

It has been pointed out by several scholars, such as Wouter Hanegraaff, Kocku von Stuckrad and Antoine Faivre, that Western esotericism is characterized by syncretism

and eclecticism, especially from the 19th Century onwards. This is perhaps especially true with regard to influences from Hinduism and Buddhism on Western Occultism. That being said, there has been relatively little research on contemporary Occultism and its adoption of Eastern traditions and teachings. This paper sets out to analyze one example of a contemporary occult society, La Société Voudon Gnostique, characterized by e.g. neo-Gnosticism and Vodou, founded in 2009 by David Beth, and which is a ramification of the Voudon Gnostic movement made famous by the occultist and Old Catholic bishop Michael Bertiaux. The focus of this paper will be on how individual members of La Société Voudon Gnostique appropriate Hindu and Buddhist teachings and practices, especially left-hand path tantra, as personal paths and how these appropriations are being expressed in the movement texts. This will be analyzed mainly through the theoretical framework of dis-embedding and re-embedding and related to the growing individualization and democratization of esotericism.

LUGE Till

Orient-Institut Istanbul, Turkey

The Entanglement of East and West in Gurdjieff's Reception in Turkey

This presentations shall delineate the various ways in which the entanglement of East and West in the life and teachings of Gurdjieff and his followers has been fruitfully employed in various means and given rise to conflicting interpretations. Gurdjieff spent the years from 1920 to 1921 with his inner circle in Istanbul, where they were located in immediate proximity to a Mevelvi Sufi lodge. Previously, Gurdjieff had traveled extensively throughout and beyond the Islamic world. He literarized his encounters with dervishes and other saints in allegorical accounts. The degree to which his thought and practices were influenced by Sufism remains contested, but the links between Gurdjieffian circles and certain forms of Sufism remained important for many decades. Sufis going to Europe or the United States made references to him in their works, both supportive and critical, as a means of legitimizing their own teachings. Later on, Gurdjieffian institutions served as interfaces for a second wave of Sufis seeking to establish themselves in the West. In Turkey, Gurdjieff's ideas were diffused in certain circles, but his literary reception did begin until the 1980s, when Turkish Spiritists began translating works by and about him. During the past three decades, interest has become more mainstream: Sufi musicians and music therapists began to engage with his musical legacy, Gurdjieffian groups were founded by psychotherapists, and, very recently, Islamic thinkers started to engage with his thought, displaying an ambivalent attitude in highlighting Gurdjieff's Sufi roots while at the same time critiquing him as misguided.

MACMURPHY John*University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands***Swedenborg and Kabbalah: A New Perspective**

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), the Swedish scientist turned mystic, is one of the most influential figures in Western Esotericism. Of the many scholarly discussions surrounding this prolific, enigmatic figure is the question of innovation. At the heart of this discourse is the debate between Marsha Keith Schuchard, who contends that Swedenborgian doctrines have a direct affinity with the kabbalistic tradition, and Wouter Hanegraaff, who opposes this thesis and defends the originality of Swedenborg's thought. By examining the evidence behind the Schuchard-Hanegraaff debate, this paper interrogates the issue of Swedenborg's access to kabbalistic knowledge and his putative anti-Semitic sentiments which, I argue, did not prevent him from pursuing Jewish-based teachings. The evidence suggests a direct derivation of his well known Doctrine of Correspondences from Hebraic sources; moreover, light could be cast on his allegedly unique biblical exegesis methodology through a review of *Or Ne'erav* (The Sweet Light) by Moses Cordovero (1522-1570), the father of Cordoverian Kabbalah. Finally, I show that previous comparisons by scholars such as Jane Williams-Hogan of theosophical Swedenborgian concepts like the Grand Man with the kabbalistic concept of *Adam Kadmon* (Primordial Man) failed to consider other parallels, such as the concept of *Adam Ha-Rishon* (The First Man). I conclude by emphasizing that the ample evidence that suggests a connection between Swedenborg and Kabbalah should not detract from the originality and innovation of this illustrious esoteric thinker.

MAGUS Simon*University of Exeter, United Kingdom***Rider Haggard and the Imperial Occult:
Christian Egyptosophy, Mnemohistory and
the Metageography of Egypt**

Sir Henry Rider Haggard (1856-1925) was one of the most prolific author-novelists of his age. Although now remembered principally as the author of *She* and *King Solomon's Mines*, he penned numerous other works of fiction and non-fiction. Among the former are a series of 'romances' set in Ancient Egypt. Haggard was fascinated by Egypt, and his own brand of Egyptian occultism reflects the concerns and agendas of Late Victorian and Early Edwardian Egyptology. In the following paper I shall consider the influence of Haggard's friend and colleague the Egyptologist E. A. Wallis Budge. Budge's Egyptology had a decidedly Christian inflection which was absorbed by Haggard and emerged in his literary Egypt. Haggard's Christian

Egyptosophy includes Budge's theorised 'Original Monotheism' in Egypt, conflated with 'Atenism' – the veridical monotheism imposed by the pharaoh Akhenaten during the Amarna period – and what I have termed an *Osiride Christology* – Osiris portrayed as Christ the Redeemer. Using these ideas I shall provide an exposition on the esoteric mnemohistory and metageography of Egypt with its religio-political appropriations, re-presentations and translocations, traversing latitudes from a Christian British Imperialism to Islamic and Nationalist Pharaonism.

MAWER Judith

Goldsmiths, University of London, United Kingdom

The Abbot, the Alchemist, and the Emerald Tablet: how Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516) influenced the cosmology of Thomas Vaughan (1621-1666)

In 1505, the German abbot, Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516), wrote to Germanus de Ganay about his new interpretation of the *Emerald Tablet*. In this enigmatic work, attributed to the mythical Egyptian sage, Hermes Trismegistus, reference to the 'one thing' had traditionally been understood to mean the philosophers' stone. Trithemius departed from the view of medieval Islamic and European alchemists: the *Emerald Tablet* was not in his view a 'recipe' and the 'one thing' of which Hermes spoke was not the Stone but the Monad, or Unity, from which all God's Creation had emanated. This was alchemy on a cosmological scale, in which the celestial influence of the Holy Spirit infused matter as part of a circulatory process of purification. Trithemius' reading of the *Tablet* was to prove highly influential in shaping the natural philosophy of Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535) and Michael Sendivogius (1566-1636), both of whom are cited as sources by Thomas Vaughan (1621-1666). In this paper I shall argue that Vaughan's synthesis and development of an alchemical system predicated on Trithemius' interpretation, and given final written expression in *Euphrates, or the Waters of the East* (1655), is an Hermetic construct. In Vaughan's system, matter requiring purification ascends to the heavens and descends back to Earth due to magnetic forces operating between the celestial Sun and a 'sun' located at the centre of the Earth. This macrocosmic process can be replicated in microcosm in the laboratory. Here, the material on which the alchemist will work is none other than elemental earth. He is seeking to reduce this to prime matter, a *salnitrum* extracted directly from the soil. The goal is restoration of the microcosm to its prelapsarian state. The significance of Vaughan's model is that the alchemist's domain is unquestionably the laboratory, where he operates on chemical matter. His philosophical paradigm, nonetheless, remains rooted in theomagical cosmology.

MCINTOSH Christopher

University of Exeter, United Kingdom

The Quest for Shangri-La

Thanks to James Hilton's classic novel *Lost Horizon* (first published in 1933) and the highly successful film of the same name (1937, remade 1973), the name Shangri-La has passed into our language, evoking the idea of utopian place of exotic beauty and bliss, far from the madding realities of the everyday world. Hilton's Shangri-La was derived partly from the notion of Shambhala, the legendary utopian kingdom with its spiritually advanced rulers, hidden away in the Himalayas or the mountains of Tibet or China. This theme has fascinated explorers such as the Russian artist and writer Nikolai Roerich. A different but related legend, also popular in western Theosophical and esoteric circles, is that of Agharti (sometimes spelt Agharta, Agartha etc.), a subterranean kingdom, often placed in Mongolia. This talk will explore the Shangri-La legend, revealing it as a particularly fascinating example of the utopian dream, combined with the mystique of a remote region of Asia. Illustrations to the talk will include (technology permitting) scenes from the 1937 film of *Lost Horizon*.

MENZEL Birgit

Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, Germany

Eurasia as a Spiritual Realm

Eurasia is a 'mental map' which has been defined as a (geo)political, cultural, symbolic, ideological and economic space. But Eurasia can also be conceptualized as a spiritual realm in its own right. In the Eurasia, defined as the former Russian/Soviet empire, which I will focus on, various practices of Eastern mysticism, such as Christian-orthodox hesychasm, Tibetan Buddhism, Siberian shamanism and Islamic Sufism, have been preserved longer than in the modernized Western countries. At the same time, they always coexisted, together with native paganism, in part overlapped each other, and, on their fringes, developed hybrid forms of esoteric traditions. In the late 19th, early 20th century, Eastern ideas, spiritual traditions and concepts began to travel West while Western, as well as Russian orientalism began to transform the spiritual East of Eurasia. Massive repression in the 20th century Soviet has deeply affected these traditions, but could not erase them. The Soviet type of modernization had its own impact on them. Since the post-atheist/communist decade of the 1990s, the new religious revival with its influences from West to East has brought a change of direction. Placed against this complex background, I will present several contemporary examples of hybrid Eurasian spirituality and esotericism (Arkaim; V. V. Nalimov; Kazakhstan) and discuss them in the context of East-West-relations of esotericism, but also as specific expressions of Eurasian spirituality.

MICHALÍK Jiří

Palacky University Olomouc, Czech Republic

Fludd, Pauli, Jung and the mandalas

Wolfgang Pauli, one of the most prominent quantum physicists, elaborated an interesting interpretation of Robert Fludd's and Johannes Kepler's controversy about the role of an image in the scientific endeavor. Nevertheless, his understanding of this dispute was based on Carl G. Jung's psychological ideas. The main aim of my paper is to reconsider possible sources of Pauli's conception in respect to Jung's theory of unconscious images, which are often presented as mandalas, the pictorial representations of the universe. Fludd seems to use highly symbolically complex illustrations of his treatises precisely in the similar way to the creators of mandalas. His illustrations should serve as the meditating instruction leading the reader to the meta-textual understanding of the presented information. This understanding takes place in the mind of the reader, namely in its imaginative, non-discursive section as a part of an extremely complex process of the mental interaction with the reality. I would like to express my view how the modern psychology and physics, interpreting the far eastern way of depicting universe, can help to explain mental patterns of the late-renaissance alchemist and physician.

MICHETTI Laura

California Institute of Integral Studies, USA

Persian Conjunctions and Sade Sati: Saturn in the East, Near and Far

Contemporary astrology makes much use of the concept of the Saturn Return but the historical origins of the idea are largely unknown and certainly not to be found in the western tradition. In the Medieval period, astrology witnessed a pivotal revolution in the flourishing intellectual communities of high Islamic culture. Persian, Arab, and Jewish astrologers bestowed gifts upon the system that would forever alter it in theory and practice. Among the most prominent and enduring of these gifts was the theory of planetary cycles, which, although having embryonic beginnings in the most ancient astrological traditions, was refined and elaborated with careful attention and great prolificacy in the early Medieval era. Drawing out the distinct parallels in Indian astrological practice this paper aims to show how the trend of interpreting individual lives and global history according to planetary periods is indicative of a profound syncretism of Western, Near and Far Eastern astrologies in the middle period. The planet Saturn was especially impacted by this intermingling of cultures and emerged as a key figure in the astrological tradition, commanding a mythic presence that would continue to inspire natural philosophers through the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

MIGNON Laurent

University Of Oxford, United Kingdom

Rene Guenon In Turkey

There has been an increased interest for the works of the French metaphysician René Guénon (1886-1951), who converted to Sufi Islam, since the 1990s in the republic of Turkey. Beside an Islamic reading by religiously conservative intellectuals and the promotion of his works by Islamic publishing houses, there have been attempts by esoteric publishers to reclaim Guénon's traditionalist and anti-modernist thought in the context of an increased interest for new religiosities and alternative spiritualities in Turkey. The aim of the paper will be to study the various, often conflicting, appropriations of Guénon's thought in the republic of Turkey and to contribute to a discussion on the place of Western esotericists and their critique of modernity in modern Turkish intellectual life.

MORVAN Yoann

CNRS Idemec, Aix-Marseille University, France

Berg's Kabbalah in Istanbul, more Western than Esoteric? On the Complexity of the Turkish Case

The Kabbalah is part of the Jewish tradition. In this sense, it is not a Western phenomenon. However, Berg's reshaping of the Kabbalah is a globalized but largely Western enterprise, with its center located in Los Angeles. A local branch was recently founded in Istanbul and can be used to problematize the natures of both the Kabbalah and Turkey as Eastern as well as Western, and as a means to deconstruct both categories. The several dozen of members of the local Kabbalah group in Istanbul are composed mainly but not exclusively of Jews. They meet weekly in order to follow Berg's path use Skype to meet with their teacher in New York. Their practice of this Americanized Kabbalah falls short of the mystical traditions of local Judaism in the Turkish metropolis. On the other hand, elements from the global popular religious and spiritual culture such as Astrology are fused into this reformed practice and of great appeal to local Turkish scene.

MOTIKA Raoul

Orient-Institut Istanbul, Turkey

Turkish Theologians' Views of Esotericism

During the past twenty years, new religious movements and modern esotericism gained ground in Turkish society. Since Islam in Turkey often is combined with a strong nationalist sentiment such new currents are not only seen as a threat to Islam

but also to an imagined national unity. Besides Islamist groups and media, the schools of theology (Ilahiyat faculties) at universities and the Directorate for Religious Affairs (Diyanet Baskanligi) of the central government are active in countering the recent pluralisation of religious thought and practice. The paper will analyse the arguments brought forward by important journals and theologians against these new currents. Thereby, it will try to answer the question whether there is a shift from nationalist or traditionalist views towards a more balanced analysis of this form of religious change and pluralisation.

MUSLIM ENEBORG Yusuf

Gothenburg University, Sweden

Revivifying Crowley's Hero: Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890)

Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890) was a scholar-adventurer par excellence: at once soldier, spy, diplomat, explorer, ethnographer, polyglot, translator, poet, and much more. An exemplar of his time, it is no surprise that he expressed an incessant quest for "Gnosis" as he called it, which brought him in to contact with Roman Catholicism, the Kabbalah, the Orphic Brotherhood, Hermeticism, Freemasonry, Alchemy, Spiritualism, Theosophy and Mormonism, but also with the Hindu Nagar-Brahmin caste, Tantra, Sikhism, and several forms of Islam, especially as an initiate of the Qadiri Sufi Order. The esteem with which those in all of these circles have held him reflects how seriously he took his involvement within them. Hence, it seems quite incongruous that the degree to which he was entangled in the Occultist climate of his time and the pivotal role he played in the reception of Asian religions has been largely overlooked in biographies from this and the previous century; as Aleister Crowley points out about his hero, already by his time "Sir Richard Burton was toned down into a famous traveller and translator". By offering a succinct appraisal of his life and thoughts with particular attention to this neglected dimension, I aim to help invigorate much needed interest in Burton within the field of Western Esotericism and Religious Studies.

NILSSON Johan

University of Lund, Sweden

Mahatmas, Scholars and Occultists: Occult Readings of the Sacred Books of the East

During the last decades of the 19th century a network of scholars centered around Max Müller devoted themselves to the project of translating Asian religious texts and publishing them in the book series called *The Sacred Books of the East*. The

publications appeared during the same period as the famous turn to the East took place within post-Enlightenment esotericism, and indeed the representatives of the occult revival seems, at times, to have studied the orientalist scholars extensively. Even though it has been noticed before, the connection between the rise of the scientific study of religion in the late 19th century and esoteric reception of Asian religions has not been exhaustively explored in a systematic way. My paper represents a limited case study of the esoteric reception of what was probably the most influential scholarly presentation of Asian religion in the English language at the end of the 19th century. The paper traces an outline of how the Sacred Books of the East were received by prominent English speaking representatives of the occult revival, and gives some small but significant examples of how the terminology, definitions and historiography of the book series shaped the thinking of some of the leading figures of post-Enlightenment esotericism.

OATES Lori Lee

University of Exeter, United Kingdom

The Case for India: Theosophy and the Battle of East versus West in the Nineteenth Century Occult

In the nineteenth century, Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steele Olcott decided to headquarter the Theosophical Society in Adyar, India. With the establishment of the international headquarters there, a new influence of the philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism on theosophy was achieved. Both Joscelyn Godwin and Wouter Hanegraaff have effectively argued that although there were Eastern influences on the society, it remained essentially a Western movement with limited Eastern influence. However, with the recent publication of *Celestial India: Madame Blavatsky and the Birth of Indian Nationalism* (2012) we now know that there was important overlap between the membership of the society in India and the Indian National Congress (INC). Society president, Anne Besant, was a founder of the Home Rule League and eventually became President of the INC. We now know that the Theosophical Society was an extremely important actor in the political history of India. In order to determine why the Theosophical Society continued to be headquartered in India, we need to examine both Britain's imperial interests in India and Besant's own political interests. Previously painted as the reason for the breakup of the international Theosophical Society, my paper prefers to present her as shrewd politician who saw opportunities for her own advancement, aided by the infrastructure of a global empire. My paper will argue that she did so to advance her own political interests within the society and India, thereby influencing the evolution Western esotericism and the approach to contemporary religion in the late modern world.

OCKENSTRÖM Lauri

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Antediluvian light from the East – self-reflective creation myths in the Latin magical Hermetica

According to introductory words of a medieval treatise, Abel wrote down all the talismanic wisdom inherited from Adam in seven books and engraved their content on marble tablets in the valley of Ebron. Later, after the Flood, Hermes Triplex found the tablets and composed those seven books of the planets that are transmitted in the same treatise known as *Liber septem planetarum ex scientia Abel*. Medieval Europeans shared commonly the conviction that the most valuable knowledge derived from the primordial times. For this reason many books that were in need of readers or credibility were accompanied by mythical stories of their age-old origin. A great deal of these introductory stories was related to an Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistos, who is mentioned either as the discoverer, translator, or author of the text. In this paper, I explore the self-reflective myths in the Latin technical Hermetica from the narratological point of view: What kind of stories do they deliver, what is the role of Hermes, and how are the stories related to the Arabian legends of three Hermeses? Furthermore, I examine how the myths constructed and supported Hermes' position as a representative of the antediluvian Oriental wisdom, and how this reputation was utilized in advertising purposes.

OKROPIRIDZE Dimitry

University of Heidelberg, Germany

Orientalist Syntax in Esoteric Discourse: Carl Gustav Jung's Psychology of Kundalini Yoga – Context and Impact

This paper focuses on the pivotal role of Carl Gustav Jung in the mediation of South Asian religions within 'Western' discourse. Jung understands the Sanskrit term 'kuṇḍalinī' as a potentially transformative archetypal force in the human body connected to the practice of Yoga. This interpretation fosters a reception of kuṇḍalinī within the therapeutic culture of the 20th century as a personal practice with soteriological and psychophysiological benefits. Jung explicitly universalizes kuṇḍalinī by creating analogous links to various mythologies, cultural narratives hereby inscribing and fostering an Orientalist syntax within Esoteric discourse. In my paper, I will contextualize the formation of kuṇḍalinī as a new ontological object jointly created by Theosophists, Indologists, and Psychologists with Carl Gustav Jung as the discursive spokesperson and nodal point of Orientalist desires and therapeutic aspirations.

OLSSON Peter

University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Painting the East on the canvas of the West: Ivan Aguéli as an interlock between Traditions

The Swedish artist and traditionalist Ivan Aguéli (1869–1917) may be perceived as a node or a bridge between divergent philosophical and esoteric ideas and traditions. His attraction to art awoke for real in his early twenties, a time also including his first encounter with the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). Aguéli's artistic efforts were to become further intermingled with various esoteric tendencies, in particular the doctrines of the Medieval Sufi Ibn ʿArabī (ca. 1165–1240). Aguéli initiated a quest to merge the aesthetic and the spiritual, and this brought him to Paris – where he converted to Islam in 1898 – and eventually to Egypt, where he was initiated into a Sufi order around 1902. Much scholarly research on Aguéli (e.g. Mark Sedgewick) portrays him as merely a Western Sufi, focusing chiefly on the connection with René Guénon, while for all intents and purposes omitting his artistic work. However, since some other scholars either tend to do the opposite – focusing solely on his art – or focusing on the Sufi elements in the analysis, there is a lack of non-Sufi interpretations. Based on some of Aguéli's preserved correspondence, this paper will highlight and place his art theory and art within a (Western) esoteric framework, and to discuss his esoteric and spiritual concerns.

OLZI Michele

Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy

From mysterious India to mystical Russia: the “East” of Marc Séménoff as spiritual future of humanity

Marc Séménoff is one of the most enigmatic character in the history of the French-Russian culture, and in that one of Western Esotericism at the beginning of the XX^o century. In the Thirties, Séménoff was a regular visitor of the the séances of *La Confrérie de la Flèche d'Or*, and he was a close friend of Maria de Naglowska. He was also an active member of *The Cosmic Tradition* movement, and close to Maurice Benharoche-Baralia. The year was 1932, Marc Séménoff published the most remarkable between his works, a genuine written expression of his thought, *De l'Inde mystérieuse à la Russie mystique*. The aim of this paper is showing that Marc Séménoff's description of *East* (in the work considered) is a research of the initiatory dimensions, milieux, sources to whom the modern man must address. The reason of this path (that the “Western man” must follow) is to reach a new era in the spiritual progress of the whole of human civilization. In particular we will focus on the “need of the sacred” arisen in France (and in Central Europe too) in the Thirties, and how

the author tried to satisfy this lack of spirituality by showing *the secret treasures of the East*. We will see that this initiatory sources, or circles are geographically located between the Eastern Europe, the Russia and the India, but spiritually speaking are in another dimension and/or era.

OSBORN Lil

Oxford University, Harris Manchester College, United Kingdom

The Baha'i Faith and the Western Esoteric Tradition

The modern Baha'i Faith claims to be the eight largest and second most widespread religion in the world, superficially it appears to be a fusion of Shiite millennialism, Western social radicalism and a benign globalist perspective. This paper seeks to reappraise a forgotten aspect of the introduction of the Baha'i Faith to the West, the importance of individuals seeped in the occult and esoteric to the creation of the synthesis of modernity and mysticism which underpins the Baha'i perspective, based on 'Abdu'l Baha's teaching of "The Unity of East and West". Whilst he drawing rooms of early twentieth century London and New York were second homes to many "wise old men of the East" who travelled to the West to promote their mystical and metaphysical musings to a receptive Western audience. Of these robed and bearded patriarchs perhaps none had quiet such a lasting effect than that of 'Abdu'l Baha, son of Baha'u'llah, the prophet, founder of the Baha'i Faith and successor of the Bab. The teachings of the Bab were freighted with traditional Islamic magic, of talismans and magic squares, whilst Baha'u'llah, in fulfilling the prophecies of the Bab, went further and revealed a new post Islamic, universalist religion. His son Abdu'l Baha visited the West in 1911 and again in 1912/13, there he met with those who counted themselves as his followers, amongst them were men and women who were immersed in the esoteric and occult. At least three of those who identified as Baha'is, Robert Felkin, Neville Meakin and Andrew Cattanach were all members of the Stella Matutina Order; Meakin also claimed the hereditary Grand Mastership of the Order of the Table Round, he attempted to initiate both Felkin and another Baha'i, Wellesley Tudor Pole, into this Order shortly before his death. Felkin would go on to take the ideas of Stella Matutina and the Order of the Table Round to New Zealand, where he established what would become the last directly linked faction to the original Golden Dawn. Pole was already enmeshed in the neo Celtic world of John Goodchild and William Sharpe; he had discovered an artefact in a well in Glastonbury which he and others believed to be of massive spiritual significance. Pole would forge another link between East and West with his lifelong quest for the origin of the artefact. He is, however, probably best remembered for his work with another Baha'i, Alice Buckton in the in the reestablishment of Glastonbury as a spiritual centre. The role of the British Israel Movement will also be considered as part of the underpinning of Pole's understanding of the relationship between the Celtic mysteries and the Middle East.

PAGE Sophie

University College London, United Kingdom

Jewish and Arabic influences on the cosmology of learned magic in the Latin West (ca 1200-1500)

In the late Middle Ages the universe was thought to be limited and intelligible, but vast. Within its structure of perfect spheres was an ordered variety, in which all created things were joined in harmonious cosmological schema. Tensions in this system remained, however, such as that between the competing forces of celestial influence (good and bad spirits) and between the free will of man and the omnipotence of God. In this paper I will investigate how cosmologies in Latin learned magic texts drew on but also deviated from the mainstream model of the cosmos, and how they attempted to resolve some inherent tensions, but also created others. A particular focus will be on the use of Arabic and Jewish magic texts to extend and elaborate the Christian Universe, populating it with a host of named spirits with particular cosmological roles, and spatial and temporal inhabitations. By contrast, Medieval theologians thought that precise knowledge of celestial realms and spirits, and of the means for humans to harness their power, was inappropriate and dangerous, expressing what was beyond the reach of men to know for certain.

PAKHOMOV Sergey

St. Petersburg State University, Russia

Is there esotericism in the East? The term “esotericism” and Indian religious traditions

Accepted in Western religious studies, the term “Western esotericism” excludes a huge complex of similar phenomena pertaining to Eastern religious traditions. Meanwhile, there is good reason to suppose that the East also has esotericism. But in this case, for it one has to either construct a special term “Eastern esotericism” or extend the semantics of the term “esotericism” and include into it as the Eastern and Western phenomena. India is a vivid example of an organic existence of esotericism from very ancient times to the present day. The study of esotericism in India can be carried out for at least on two grounds: 1) typological one: the exposition that in India there are forms of esotericism, which can be compared with the definitions of esotericism of A. Fevr, W. Hanegraaff, K. von Stukrad, A. Versluis and others; 2) historical one: an analysis of the different traditions, practices, teachings, developing over time, which can be a greater or lesser extent be attributed to the domain of the esoteric (yoga, early Upanishads, Tantrism, special secret rituals, magic, fortune telling, alchemy, astrology, and so on). However esotericism in India has some features that distinguish it from the Western one. In particular, a gap between “esoteric” and “exoteric” is not so significant; esoteric in general is more firmly rooted in tradition and culture; it is

respected and revered, etc. Despite of the destruction of traditional culture, which began in India after globalization and westernization in this country, such a state of affairs is largely persists to this day.

PAQUETTE Jonathan

University of St Andrews, United Kingdom

Representations of Eastern Wisdom in John Heydon's Theomagia, or the temple of wisdom in three parts, spiritual, celestial and elemental

John Heydon (1629-1667) acted as an early populariser of Rosicrucianism within Stuart England. In a colourful life that included fighting for the Royalists in the English Civil War he successfully wrote multiple esoteric texts offering 'Wisdom from the East' to his readership. The best example was his *Theomagia* (1662), which proffered elaborate cosmogonies of divine spirits combined with vivid depictions of cabalistic telesms. What proved so remarkable about *Theomagia* was its palimpsestic approach to older esoteric traditions. Heydon incorporated multiple streams of occult practice into this massive work. Reading *Theomagia* therefore necessitates careful exegesis in order to trace its intellectual genealogy. Most particularly, Heydon makes frequent reference to ancient Egyptian mystery wisdom and praises Egypt as it is 'nearer to God, to work and to do great wondrous things.' He also perceives ancient pharaonic hieroglyphs as sacred writings capable of revealing incredible mysteries to those who can decipher them. Thus, by reading 'celestial writings' written in Old Egyptian and Hebrew, prophecies can be foretold and the universe's secrets unlocked. Heydon's offering of 'Wisdom from the East' fascinated his readers who accepted his *sui generis* palimpsest of esoteric traditions. This paper will delineate the complexities of Heydon's work and make appropriate references to noted influences including Agrippa and Christopher Cattan. It will discuss Heydon's own Orientalist perception of Eastern mystery traditions. It will then contextualise him within early modern English Rosicrucianism and critique his continuing legacy within Western Esotericism.

PASI Marco

University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

And never the twain shall meet: An examination of the relationship between the study of Western esotericism and 'Orientalism'

In 1978 Edward Said published his famous book *Orientalism*, which soon became the object of a broad debate. Both the book and the resulting discussion have

significantly influenced most areas of study in the humanities ever since. In his book Said did not show a particular interest in esoteric literature, but various authors who were influenced by Said's ideas or who participated in the debate about the book (e.g. Richard King, Gauri Viswanathan) did refer to esoteric currents or sources – especially related to modern Theosophy – in order to assess the validity of the Saidian concept of Orientalism. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the first two volumes of another book, Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* (1987, 1991) generated a debate that was cognate to the debate around Said's *Orientalism* and did include references to Western esotericism. Despite the widespread idea that esoteric authors have always looked to the East as a cradle and source of perennial wisdom, what may be called the first generation of scholars in the study of esotericism (e.g. Antoine Faivre, Jean-Pierre Laurant, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, James Webb, Christopher McIntosh) did not show a particular interest in discussing the relevance of Said's ideas for our field. More recently, the concept of "Platonic Orientalism" has been proposed by some scholars (e.g. Dylan Burns, Wouter J. Hanegraaff), but its relationship to Said's concept remains unclear and needs further discussion. In this paper, after a brief historical review, I will discuss the relevance of Said's concept and of the related debates for the study of Western esotericism.

PIQUER OTERO Andrés

Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

Dreams, Death and Desire. The Morals of Liminal Illusion in Magical Narrative

Stories of magic and magicians play a fundamental role in the understanding not only of possible practices reflected in them, but also in approaching how the idea of magic (and, by extension, similar notions of privileged or "forbidden" knowledge) is constructed in the ideologies of different cultures throughout time and space. This paper will focus on the development of a motif which seems to recur in our Euro-Mediterranean space: the moralistic chastising of attempts to "go beyond" the established boundaries of human knowledge through resort to the placement of the offender in a liminal space of dream, illusion or even a rub with death. I will try to sketch the main lines for a typological study in this direction, which seems to keep a continuity hearkening back to Egyptian narratives (Setne I), through Jewish concepts of magic and illusion, down to Medieval Western theology and folk tales, moral *exempla* and, of course, present-day literature and popular culture. As a final and necessary reflection, bases will be laid for a reflection on how contemporary visions of the occult seem to be putting into question the traditional boundary between magic and illusion, reality and the dream-space of virtuality created in the Orient millennia ago.

PRIDDLE Robert A.

The University of Ottawa. The University of Toronto, Canada

“Art thou mankind?”: Proposing a Western Esotericism 3.0 Analysis of the role of Occidentalism and Esotericism in the Animated Sinosphere.

This paper is a proposal for the study of western esotericism that is present in non western sources. Since first and foremost this paper is an examination of animated art, I will provide three examples of Occidentalism and esotericism in Japanese animation. These examples will highlight how this art form remodels occidental images for a Japanese audiences. I then argue that current programmes analysing esoteric currents (historical and discursive) are useful for their respective scopes but when applied to the study of these images methodological obstacles occur. The list of which include failure to include the intention, audience, and subtext in non European and non historical examples. The solution I offer in the conclusion is a variation of Egil Asprenm methodology detailed in “Beyond the West: Towards a New Comparativism in the Study of Esoterism”. In doing so I provide an approach to several areas of study worthy for a Western Esotericism 3.0 programme as a potential PhD. Some of these areas include the perennially contested boundaries in the trinity of magic, religion, science, the deployment of supernatural storytelling to reaffirm or challenge cultural norms, the development of esotericisms in Japan, and not to mention the transmission of Occidental esotericism and its impact in the Sinosphere.

PRINKE Rafał T.

Eugeniusz Piasecki University in Poznań, Poland

The Bitch of Armenia and the Dog of Khorasan: Transcaucasian motifs and influences in Latin alchemy

The historiography of alchemy, both traditional and “new”, depicts the paths of its transmission to the West as leading from the Greco-Egyptian roots, passing through the Islamic flourishing, and entering the Latin world via the Iberian and Italian Peninsulas with the great translation movement of the 12th century. There was, however, another route – certainly less important but contributing to the syncretic synthesis of Early Modern European alchemy – which led from the Transcaucasian Post-Byzantine cultures, across the Ruthenian and Polish lands, to merge with the mainstream alchemical traditions in Western Europe. References to that Eastern path of transmission are scattered in symbolic imagery (both literary and visual), chemical terminology, stories of mythical adepts, and factual accounts of direct contacts. Most of them point to Armenia as the source of alchemical wisdom but neighbouring areas are also mentioned. Armenian alchemical manuscripts in the Matenadaran were

briefly studied in the 1940's but the results were published only in Armenian. The textual interrelationships of Latin, Armenian and Polish alchemical traditions will be presented on the example of an early 17th century manuscript written by Andrzej Torosowicz, brother of the Armenian archbishop Mikołaj, founder of the Armeno-Catholic Church through the union with Rome in 1630.

RADULOVIĆ Nemanja

University of Belgrade, Serbia

Image of India and Slavia esoterica

The paper deals with couple of esoteric movements that emerged in Eastern Europe during the 20th century: the circle around Serbian-born and England-based esotericist Dimitrije Mitrović, Bulgarian Universal White Brotherhood founded by Petr Dnov, Russian Agni-yoga (Nicholas and Helene Roerich) and reconstructionistic variant of Neo-Paganism which emerged in Russia, Ukraine, Poland and SouthSlavic contries since 1980ies. What is common to these seemingly disparate groups is that issues of (Slavic) identity plays an important role in their teachings. The creation of this image is strongly determined by appropriation of India and “Indian” concepts and that will be the focus of the work. On one hand, India is seen as *Urheimat* (and that reveals Romanticism as origin of their concepts). On the other, “Indian wisdom” being “preserved” within the movements actually comes from Western Esoteric sources: from Theosophy and Saint-Yves d'Alveydre to the New Age. All groups blend Western esotericism and Slavic identity using India as a source of legitimization. At the same time, this reveals self-image as placed “between East and West”.

ROUKEMA Aren

Birkbeck College, University of London, United Kingdom

An Orientalist Shield – A. E. Waite and the Zohar

Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942) was considered one of the foremost Western experts on Kabbalah in his time, and his works have had continuing influence, particularly in esoteric circles. Waite's incorporation of Kabbalah into his own belief system reflects the methods and priorities of modern occultists, yet he consistently elevated his own interpretations above theirs, criticizing occultists for ahistorically synthesizing their understandings of kabbalistic concepts from a range of Jewish, Christian and occult sources, while conversely claiming direct links between his own kabbalistic system and the teachings of the Zohar. This paper examines Waite's kabbalistic system as revealed by his three works of scholarship on the subject, further mystical writings, his autobiography, and the rituals he developed for his masonic Rosicrucian society, the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross. It finds that the kabbalistic concepts most important

to Waite – the Tree of Life, Ein Sof, Shekinah, and the gender symbolism that he called “the mystery of sex” – are more influenced by his personal mystical priorities and the influence of modern occult conventions than by the teachings of the Zohar, which, this paper argues, Waite could not have actually read. His appropriation of the Zohar is thus a branding – a seeking of legitimacy in an orientalist safe haven wherein Waite did not have to admit his debt to the modern occult figures, groups and ideas he frequently criticized.

RUDBØG Tim

University of Copenhagen, Denmark

The Great Work of blending East and West: Blavatsky’s The Secret Doctrine and Six schools of Indian Philosophy in the mix

Helena P. Blavatsky is generally known as one of the major popularizers of Eastern philosophy in the West and for fusing Eastern religious and Western esoteric ideas, yet not much detailed, critical work exists on her particular use and knowledge of Eastern traditions. This paper seeks to partly remedy this by: (1) tracing the sources related to the six traditional Indian schools of philosophy available to Blavatsky and used in the composition of *The Secret Doctrine* (1888); (2) analyzing how and why Blavatsky fused and integrated originally distinct ideas stemming from these traditions, such as Brahma, Parabrahman, Purusha, Prakriti, Atman, Buddhi and Karma to substantiate her own cosmology. This historical groundwork will lay the basis for a brief discussion and demonstration of some of the central ‘discursive patterns’ in which these Eastern traditions became embedded in ‘Western esotericism’ through Blavatsky’s work, such as the discourse of ‘occultism versus materialism’, ‘the wisdom of the East versus the scientific West’ and ‘the ancient versus the modern.’ It is thus hoped that in addition to critically clarifying how the six Indian schools and their concepts entered the melting pot of the *Secret Doctrine* this paper will shed useful light on the esoteric discourses in operation behind the fusion of East and West in Blavatsky’s *magnum opus*.

SAFRAI Uri

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel

“Like Pulling a chain” – Mechanical Metaphors of Prayer in Early Modern Kabbala

The sixteenth century is unique for the emergence of Kabbalistic prayer intentions literature (*Sifrut Ha’kavanot*) at this era. Many books were written in order to explain the technique in which the every-day prayer activates God and draws the divine

flow down to the world. Research regarding these writings faces a challenge since they are written in great detail, and are very difficult to understand. In this paper, I wish to offer a new method to approach this issue by exploring the metaphors the kabbalists used in order to describe the way prayer works and activates the divine worlds. Focusing on these metaphors reveals the connection to the mechanical developments of this era, such as the new cranes, water-mills, drilling equipment etc which marked the advantage of man over nature. The Kabbalist were aware of these developments and used them in order to describe the way the daily prayer works. By that they marked the advantage of man not only over nature but also over god himself.

SARIEL Aviram

Tel Aviv University, Israel

East, West, Gnosis: Hans Jonas's esoteric system

The story of Hans Jonas's existential interpretation of Gnosticism is supposedly well-known: its rise, hegemony, and fall from grace. However, reading of Roger Johnson's *The Origins of Demythologizing* (1974), originally a PhD dissertation supervised by Jonas, and texts authored by Jonas over the 1930's and 1940's in mandatory Palestine, suggests significant differences between *The Gnostic Religion* (and common representations) and the system of phenomenology actually developed by Jonas in the earlier decades of the 20th century. To this reading, the focus of Jonas's original system is not with free choices of alienated individual agents. Rather, it is with necessary dynamics of unified field of knowledge. Thus, it is not a description of an individual person divorced from the actual world but a theory of large human groups alienated within their (neo-Kantian) object-world. To my proposed reconstruction, Judaism exemplify and represents an authentic mode of the unified spirit. Gnosticism, on the other hand, is a non-authentic and individuated performance, occasioned by and manifested in a certain knowledge-crisis, in which east and west collided. Christianity, to this interpretation, is a slow and unaware mode of recovery of the knowledge of unity. To this interpretation, Jonas's original system has much in common with a recent criticism of Jonasian Gnosticism (King 2005). Furthermore, while critical of all forms of dualism, it seems to have been formulated within the semantic tradition of the "anti-apologetic tradition" (Hanegraaff 2010).

SARMIŞ Dilek

EHESS-CNRS, France

The Reception of the Greek/Egyptian Tradition of Hermeticism in Late Ottoman and Republican Turkey

The Greco-Egyptian or Alexandrian Hermeticism is a topic covered by some Turkish scholars of the early twentieth century, coinciding generally with the desire to produce a general history of mystical religious thought. Already partially secularized in classical theological education, the Hermeticist tradition is prone to progressive changes in the Turkish intellectual field, for example, through the mobilization of Western esoteric references (Maspero, Schuré) and through the amplification of its philosophical dimension, which associate it with the very origin of esotericism and a wider spiritualism. In this way, Mehmet Ali Ayni, Cavit Sunar and Cemil Sena, major Turkish Republican thinkers reshape religious thought and philosophy with the ambition to forge a history of mysticism.

SEDGWICK Mark

Aarhus University, Denmark

Neo-Sufism and Western Esotericism in the Contemporary Period

Past research has investigated the relationship between transregional Sufism and Western Esotericism over a long period. Esoteric Neoplatonism is known to be one major aspect of Sufism as found in the Islamic region, and this has been found to have conditioned the reception of Sufism in the West in past centuries. Transregional Sufism circa 1900 can thus almost be understood as a form of Western Esotericism. It is less clear, however, how we should understand contemporary Sufism. This paper will turn to the contemporary period, looking at the most famous Western Sufi of the last third of the twentieth century, Idries Shah. Starting with *The Sufis* in 1963, Shah's books are said to have sold 15 million copies. The paper will examine the nature of Shah's Neo-Sufism, the reasons for its success, and its relationship to Western Esotericism. It will argue that Shah drew on existing Western conceptions of Sufism as universal wisdom separate from religion, on Western Esotericism in the tradition of Georges Gurdjieff, and on the literature and anecdote of the Muslim world. The paper will also argue that Shah's success derives in part from the way in which he combined these three sources, and in part from the way in which he promoted his work and himself. The paper is based on archival and textual sources and on interviews.

SHCHEPANSKYI Vitalii

The National University of Ostroh Academy, Ukraine

Earth of mysteries: magicians ways in early modern Ukraine

In the late XV century social and cultural life on the territory of Ukraine was activated. It was caused by the activation of a new socio-political system. It was contributed by the restoration of Kiev principality headed by Olgerdovich-Olelkovichey, which existed from 1440 till 1471 and named "Olelkivskiy Renaissance". Kiev by that time became the center of rationalist-humanist movement that swept the Ukrainian-Belarusian lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Translation work under these conditions was developing extremely. Works of al-Ghazali, Moses Maimonides ("Moses Egyptian") and work «Secreta Secretorum» were translated in Kyiv. These texts particularly affected the development and establishment of philosophical Renaissance thought in Ukraine. This contributed the emergence of some original texts that were accompanied with the translations of Arabic and Jewish philosophers. "Lopatochnyk" is one of those works. This text contains a detailed description of magical rituals and occult practices. We believe this text describes a complex syncretism of Turkic shamanic magic practices, the examples of which are predicting the future by means of vanes ram, or Jewish mysticism. Such scholars as I. Paslavskiy and P. Kraliuk believe that such texts as "Lopatochnyk" arose among the Karaites of Kyiv and Galich. All Karaites living on the territory of Ukraine have Turkic origins. Therefore, it is logical to consider the hypothesis proposed in this vein. The development of magical tradition in present-days in Ukraine and Belarus had a significant effect of Jewish and Muslim text traditions combined with shamanic practices of Turkic peoples.

SIEG George

University of New Mexico, USA

Esotericism in the Civilizational Model of History

Philosophies of History driven by technological and material perspectives, or abstracted into histories of ideas, have limited usefulness in explaining the development, propagation, and differentiation of cultural features independent of utilitarian concerns. They have proven to be even more crippled in endeavours to explain the nuances of the establishment and diversity of religious thought-forms. While Philosophies of History which address this concern by attending to civilization, culture, religion, and world-view as irreducible, themselves run the risk of generating overly persuasive grand narratives exploitable by particular interests, this failing seems to highlight rather than negate their potential efficacy in providing a model which can adequately address esotericism as simultaneously a form of thought,

a mode of ideological influence and transmission, and a world-view differentiated along cultural and, perhaps, civilizational lines (such as the “Western” example we are already used to). My paper will briefly present and explore applications of civilizational models (examples inspired by Spengler, Toynbee, Huntington, and others) to qualifying “esotericism” and esoteric worldviews. It will conclude with a consideration of whether such a perspective itself qualifies as in some way esoteric, or influenced by esoteric worldviews, and address the question of whether esotericism itself suggests a philosophy (or philosophies) of history.

STACHOWSKI Olaf

Jagiellonian University, Poland

Esoteric Buddhism through the eyes of a layman: Przeclaw Smolik’s memorials in the context of the reception of Buddhism in pre-war Poland

Przeclaw Smolik (1877-1947) was a Polish physician deported by the Tsarist Russian government to the area of today’s Buryatia and Mongolia. Having no previous education in philosophy or the cultures of the Far East, he proceeded to compose travel diaries describing his meetings with the Buryati and Mongolian cultures as well as with the local religions, mostly Vajrayana Buddhism. His memorials have been published in 1927 under the title “Wśród wyznawców Burchan-Buddhy” [“Among the followers of the Burkhan-Buddha”]. There have been no later editions nor translations of the text, rendering it virtually unknown among the scholars of that field of study. It is my intention to present a summary of the text from the standpoint of comparative religion studies, setting it in the context of the reception of Buddhism as well as the knowledge about Asian religions and philosophies in general in Poland at the time of the author’s life, considering the popularising activity of the adherents of the then-prominent notions of Theosophy, Antroposophy and similar. As an unknown description of popular forms of esoteric Buddhism it may also be of interest to Mongolists and Tibetologists.

STRUBE Julian

University of Heidelberg, Germany

The Emergence of French Occultism against the Background of Neo-Catholic and Socialist Orientalism

It is generally understood that modern occultism emerged in the 19th century. However, scholarship has focused on the end of the century, when esoteric societies like the Theosophical Society or the Golden Dawn began to institutionalize certain esoteric

identities. Still, little is known about their historical influences. This paper will focus on one of their most important forerunners: the French Eliphas Lévi (i.e., Alphonse-Louis Constant, 1810-1875), who coined the terms *occultisme* and *ésotérisme*. It will be argued that Constant's occultism can be regarded as a direct result of socialist and so-called neo-Catholic discourses from the 1830s and 1840s. The emerging orientalist studies played a key role in the articulation of religious identities both socialist and Catholic, laying the foundation for modern Catholic traditionalism and religious universalism. It will be demonstrated that both aspects formed an important basis for Eliphas Lévi's occultism as well as for later esotericism in general.

SUARSANA Yan

University of Heidelberg, Germany

Of Shamans, Gurus and Witches: Esoteric Bali as a Global Concept

In 2010, the movie "Eat Pray Love" has brought the concept of 'Esoteric Bali' to a broader audience: Here, middle class American and spiritual traveler Liz (starring Julia Roberts) finds inner peace, love and happiness through the help of a local "medicine man" and a female shaman. However, the Esoteric idea of Bali can be traced back to colonial times, when the island was initially conceptualized as part of Indian culture; therefore, it offered certain 'fittings' for Esoteric theories propagated by the Theosophical Society which held intense contact with reformist Hindu groups in India back then. The presentation aims to portray the emergence of 'Esoteric Bali' as a global concept at the beginning of the twentieth century; furthermore, it examines the worldwide popularization of this idea through the upcoming mass tourism in the late 1960s, and also takes a look at Bali's 'Esoteric market' of today.

SZÖNYI György E.

University of Szeged. Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

What Can You Learn In Fez? Oriental Wisdom in Western Fiction from the Rosicrucian Manifestos

The wisdom of the esoteric adept is a featured motive in Western fiction, especially novels that deal with some aspects of magic or supernatural experience. Already Plato referred to the initiate "Brahmin" in his dialogues, but the idea that a special wisdom can be gained in the Orient, either in India, or in the Arabic world, has been a recurrent topic in novels, beginning with the Rosicrucian manifestos. As well known, Christian Rosenkretz learned his art in Fez, probably in the world's oldest university, the Qarawiyyin School. Ever since, Western writers have been

using Eastern cultures and locales to pinpoint transcendental hubs where wisdom springs and avatars work on saving the sinful and self-destructing humankind. In my paper I shall revisit this literary topos, trying to contextualize the lure of the East.

TØLLEFSEN Inga Bårdsen

University of Tromsø. The Arctic University of Norway, Norway

Suffering and Evil comes from within. A Gendered Perspective on the Problem of Evil and Suffering in the New Age

In this presentation I will examine ideas of evil and suffering in select New Religions/ the New Age milieu, with a special focus on Eastern-inspired practices, and how these relate to (or disregard) gender. The New Age milieu is imbalanced when it comes to gender – about three quarters of practitioners are female. Suffering, sickness and bad stuff are in various New Age traditions seen to stem from within humans themselves, as projections based on the power of thought, as illusion, or as lack of balance due to ignorance of the proper, individual path. Is a tendency to minimize the existence of external evil/ minimize meaningless pain somehow especially appealing to women? Can this be one of the reasons so much of New Age ritual action revolves around healing practices and development of a healthy soul in a healthy body?

TOUMARKINE Alexandre

Orient-Institut Istanbul, Turkey

On the ‘Absence’ of Theosophy in Turkey: A Case of Indirect, Hidden, and/or Delayed Transmission?

Known for its own contribution but also his role as a mediator in late nineteenth and early twentieth century western esotericism, Theosophy is curiously absent in the late Ottoman and Turkish scene. Despite Blatvatsky's stays in Constantinople it never succeeded in taking root there. The lack of translation into Turkish of major theosophical texts points to this failure. This presentation aims at investigating the reasons for this absence and its consequences. Nevertheless, Theosophy and its by-products reached the country by other means that will have to be traced. The delayed introduction of theosophical motives from the 70s on, is mainly due to local neo-spiritualist and ufologist groups. Nowadays, some classics of Theosophy (e.g. Blavatsky, Steiner, or Schuré) have been translated, but their impact is still not clear.

TREAT John

University of Arkansas, USA

Ham-Amun and Cush-Osiris as Guardians of the Ark: Ethiopia, Egypt, and Israel in the Ritual Work of Moses Dickson

As Verdi's *Aida* swept Europe and the U. S., Moses Dickson (1824-1901), an African Methodist Episcopal minister and former barber in the state of Missouri was constructing rituals for a family of African-American fraternal organizations that included the Heroines of Jericho, the Knights of Tabor, and the Daughters of the Tabernacle. Often dismissed as mere mutual benefit societies, Dickson gave these groups of working-class African Americans degree rituals that drew upon the popular tropes of orientalism, but upended them to find evidence of Africa as the home of perennial wisdom. In contrast to his peripatetic American contemporary, Paschal Beverly Randolph, and to the later work of the Noble Drew Ali, Dickson has received little attention for his blending of racial uplift and esotericism to create a powerful counter narrative to American social Darwinism and the institutionalization of racial segregation. Seeing a conflated Ethiopia-Nubia as the mother both of Judeo-Christian wisdom traditions, symbolized by the Ark of the Covenant, and of Egyptian religion, with the Biblical Ham and Cush becoming Amun and Osiris, Dickson's ritual work is a largely unstudied initiation into liberation that inspired as many as 100,000 members between the American Civil War and World War II.

VAN RAALTE Georgia

University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

The Feminine and the East: Androcentrism, Imperialism and Appropriation

The paradigmatic subject and scholar of Western Esotericism is white and male; feminist and post-imperial discourses remain on the sidelines, and have yet to be accepted as *the* fundamental issue in Esotericism today. Drawing on Jeffrey J. Kripal's inter-religious work on Mysticism in *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom* (Chicago, 2001), my paper will explore the way the feminine and the non-Western have been presented within the modern study of Esotericism in an attempt to understand how the study of marginalized narratives has become so normative, and how we as scholars might break away from this tendency. In order to do this I will explore how the ideas of the East and of the Feminine have been used as 'Others' in the construction of Western Esotericism as a scholastic category, both in order to strengthen identity through polemical opposition and as a way to claim 'insider' status and to identify with esoteric currents. I will examine the relationship between intellectual marginalism,

experienced by heterodox thinkers pushing the limits of acceptable thought, and social marginalism, experienced by those who live at the edges of society. Working from this, I will explore the connection between Orientalism and the concept of the monstrous Feminine, asking how these have informed one another and what they might tell us about how scholars of Esotericism understand their relationship to that which is 'other'. Further, I will question why both these polemical ideas hold such an attraction to the Esotericist, and what the relationship between illicit desires, 'esoteric' knowledge and the polemical construction of the secret might be.

TRUNIN Mikhail

Russian State University for the Humanities, Russia

The dynamics and religious-cultural characteristics in the development of Western Esotericism in Russia, on the example of the Order of Oriental Templars: The Way of the Esoteric to Exoteric

The topic of my research requires some explanation. It is both narrower and wider than the declared topic. Narrower, because the esoteric doctrine is presented by Russian branch of the Order of Oriental Templars. Despite its esoteric origin in Russia, the Order is most open nowadays – exoteric. Wider because I believe, it is necessary to raise the issue of today's socio-cultural, religious and political state of Russian society, influencing the development of today's esotericism in Russia. From the point of view of understanding the religious and cultural phenomena of modern Russia, along with the influence of Christianity and Islam (for specific ethnic groups – Buddhism and Judaism) which are traditional religions, new (non-traditional) religions and cults are becoming increasingly popular. However, with the new life of the traditional and proliferation of new religions that are available – the exoteric, we see the process of establishment of esoteric knowledge. In the country, there is a whole range of new religious, esoteric and magical cults. In this context, the problem of Western esoteric knowledge and experience seems relevant for research and understanding, because it has considerable influence on the spiritual atmosphere. Relevance and popularity of this phenomenon is a statement of the fact that interest to esoteric knowledge in general is a part of social psychology, socio-cultural and religious characteristics and identity of modern post-Soviet society. Today it is becoming increasingly important to study the factors of social life, which as "irrational" and "non-essential" – so far little attention has been paid to. Hence, there is the need for analysis and systematic study of socio-cultural and religious reality, using mainly long and valuable experience in the religion in western countries. In this study, we attempt to show the path of development of Western esotericism in Russia, in particular, on the example of the Russian branch of the Order of Oriental Templars. In addition, there was made an attempt to trace the dynamics of development and self-presentation of the Order in

Russia, affected nowadays by the factors of religious and cultural identity. Following its unique, peculiar way, the Order unlike its Western brothers who only partially abandon religious isolation, becomes far more open for uninitiated, although not losing its uniqueness and value.

WARLICK M. E.

University of Denver, USA

Angelic Conversations and Practical Advice: The Role of Women in Early Alchemical Philosophy

This paper will investigate the role of women as alchemical philosophers and practitioners. Alchemical manuscripts and early printed texts often contain images of women to represent gendered alchemical substances and processes. In contrast, women as contributors to alchemical philosophy are rare, except in very early texts where they appear both as teachers and as students. The apocryphal Book of Enoch relates the tale of the angelic Sons of God who imparted the secrets of nature to the beautiful daughters of men whom they desired. In a dialogue with her son Horus, Isis relates the acquisition of secret wisdom that she had received from an angel, Amnael. Zosimus of Panopolis, one of the first securely documented alchemical philosophers, conducted conversations with his sister and female disciple, Theosebia. He addressed her in the manner of a philosophic dialogue, similar to the role of Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*. In one passage, Zosimus related the story of the angels' passionate love for human women and their gift of scientific secrets. He embellished the biblical account by asserting that one of the secrets was a book called *Chema*. Zosimus also warned Theosebia of following false teachers and the ways of Paphnutia, another female alchemist whom he ridiculed for useless procedures. Theosebia authored her own letters to Zosimus, suggesting that she have been more of a colleague than a sister, or perhaps a fellow initiate in a secret cult. Zosimus mentioned another female member of a sect, the virgin Taphnoutie. Theosebeia also asked her brother about furnaces. Instructing her on the laboratory aspects of the work, he replied that the text by Maria the Prophet (or Maria the Jew), *On Furnaces and Apparatus*, remained the authority. In turn, Maria shared her wisdom concerning the "Stone of Truth" in her conversation with the philosopher Aros. These texts had a remarkable longevity, and many were included in several sixteenth century printed compilations of alchemical philosophy. They also demonstrate the influence of Hellenistic Egypt and the Middle East on the development of western alchemy. As the name of Theosebia transmuted to Euthica in the west, she became known as an Arabic female alchemist. Images of her appear throughout Mushaf-as-suwar's *Book of Pictures* (1211). Western images of these women appeared in printed alchemical texts, such as those published by Michael Maier in the early seventeenth century. Maria traveled even further to appear as a teacher of Aristotelian philosophy in the *Khamsa of Nizami*, created for the Mughal Emperor Akbar in the early 1590s. Whether or not any of these ancient

authors were actually women, the writings attributed to them suggest important exchanges between East and West. These texts contain some of the most fundamental precepts of alchemical wisdom and practical experimentation. Their descriptions of alchemical processes emphasize the gendered relationships between substances, and they compare laboratory operations and outcomes to the processes of human conception and birth. Examining their legends and their imagery may shed some light on cross-cultural exchanges in early alchemy and on the gendering of alchemical philosophy.

WEDIN Robert

University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Western Esotericism and Japanese Popular Culture – The Grand Polemical Narrative in the Video Game Final Fantasy VII

This paper is concerned with the role of Western Esotericism within Japanese popular culture, more specifically the video game Final Fantasy VII. In this paper, I will show how said game uses a mixture of elements from Western Esotericism, Shinto and the science fiction-genre to create a story that closely corresponds to what Wouter J. Hannegraaff has called the “Grand Polemical Narrative”, the tension between the cosmotheistic and the monotheistic world views that lies at the heart of what we call “Western Esotericism”. Further, as the game is a product by Japanese game developers, it serves as an example of how an “eastern” perspective of Western Esotericism is reproduced globally through the international success of the game. Following the reasoning of Christopher Partridge, my argument is based upon the assumption that the success of works of popular culture are due to the ability of these works to resonate with a large number of people, suggesting that popular culture reflects the concerns of its consumers. Studying the role of esotericism within popular culture will add to our understanding both of how elements of esotericism is utilized by authors to create meaning, and how spirituality in a broader sense is constructed in the contemporary global culture.

ZARCONE Thierry

CNRS – EPHE Sorbonne, France

Freemasonry and esotericism in Turkey from the end of the 19th century until today

In this presentation, I will examine the historical and ideological aspects of “esoteric freemasonry” in Turkey, by which I mean a Freemasonry interested in the occult more than in politics and society. One of the emblematic representatives of this current is

the thinker Rıza Tevfik (d. 1951) who was both a master mason and a Sufi. On the one hand, I will analyze two previously unknown French lectures of this thinker. These lectures, presented in a masonic lodge of Salonika, in 1909, are entitled “Freemasonry and its *raison d'être*” (La Franc-maçonnerie et sa raison d'être) and “Esotericism throughout History” (L'Esotérisme à travers l'histoire). On the another hand, I will investigate the interest shown by Republican freemasons in Western Esotericism and Sufism, from 1923 on until the present, through a study of the official publications of the Grand Lodge of Turkey and the literary production of several masonic authors.

ZORYA Kateryna

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Eastern Influence on the Post-Soviet Occult Milieu

The Soviet “iron curtain” had been a significant influence on the sources available to the Soviet occult milieu. If early XX century available sources had largely been French and theosophic, the Soviet Union and its policy of relocation created an influx of borrowings from Far Eastern religious and occult traditions. These borrowings were largely illegal and were spread by word of mouth and *samizdat* publishing. Nonetheless, the traditions available were rather broad, and included but were not limited to yoga, Buddhism, Taoism, shamanism, martial arts (most notably karate), quigong, feng shui and alternative medicine. After the downfall of the Soviet Union and the occult boom of the 1990s, this influence expanded as more books, translations, and open personal contact with teachers became possible, creating a vibrant “New Age” spectrum. The author examines sources from the “European” part of the post-Soviet territory to determine the scope of the influence and to single out the most influential elements and practices incorporated into the Western-oriented occult milieu, such as meditation, certain asanas and healing practices, and shamanic journeys. The author also examines Eastern-oriented milieus and the strength of their ties with the Western-oriented occult milieu.

