

After lunch, the final panel was work-in-progress presentations from PhD candidates at the University of Tokyo's Religion department. Aya Oba introduced their research among monks using a Death Studies approach. Aki Murakami presented fascinating research looking at the relationship between RS and Buddhist theology in Japan—which had striking parallels with the UK situation. Mina Lee was next, presenting her research among Jewish communities in Korean ghettos. She was also brave enough to directly refer to Gaza, which shamefully few of her more secure colleagues were. Hiroki Tanaka gave an impressively theoretically sophisticated presentation comparing secularism in France and Japan, with a focus on public scholarship and anti-cult rhetoric. Ikuo Tsuboko closed with an eloquent presentation on the relationship between “scientific” and “confessional” studies, focussing on the work of Charles Taylor. The standard of the presentations was high across the board, speaking to the quality of teaching in the faculty.

This was followed by the International Committee Meeting (the contents of which we will leave to the IAHR Bulletin to relay), and the conference closed. But for the international delegates, the organising committee had arranged two trips, beginning the following morning—a one-day tour of sites in Tokyo, and a three-day tour to Kyoto. For those staying in Tokyo, our attentive student guides took us to several Shinto shrines, including the Meiji Jingu shrine, dedicated to the Meiji royal family, where we were given an excellent personalised tour by a Shinto priest, the beautiful Tsukiji Honganji Pure Land Buddhist Temple whose fittings and architecture mixed Indian and Japanese motifs, and the bustling Sensoji Temple, by the famous Kaminarimon Gate and Nakamise shopping street, where we were taken into the inner temple by the priests. Perhaps the highlight, however, was a visit to the headquarters of Soka Gakkai International, where we were treated to lunch, a presentation on the group's peace lobbying and an audience with SGI Director General for Peace and Global Issues Hirotsugu Terasaki. While the atmosphere was more akin to a corporate boardroom meeting than temple, we

were all impressed by Terasaki's direct but measured answers to our questions.

The group that went on the three-day Kyoto trip, led by Professor Satoko Fujiwara and assisted by several students, took the train past a stunning view of Mount Fuji and visited mainly a wide selection of different Buddhist sites, including the famed Golden Pavilion (Kinkaku-ji), seeing different styles of gardens (water, moss and dry), as well as a temple complex with an impressive collection of bonzai trees. Some Buddhist sites embraced new technology in the form of an ‘android’ bodhisattva (Kannon) speaking lines from the Heart Sutra and small Buddhas attached to drones inspired by raigō paintings depicting the descent of Amida Buddha on a purple cloud to take deceased believers to the Western Paradise. There was such a variety, even between different Pure Land groups, making it impossible to characterise Japanese Buddhism as a whole.

A full transcript of the international panel will be published in a forthcoming IAHR eBulletin, and the conference proceedings will form the basis of a future volume of Equinox's IAHR Book Series.

David G. Robertson with Suzanne Owen.



features

A note on a new archival resource at The New Library, Llanilltud Fawr/Llantwit Major

Steven Sutcliffe

Many Bulletin readers will remember the late Dr. Terry (D.A.T) Thomas (1931-2011) as a warm and long-serving colleague in BASR and in the Religious Studies department at The Open University. I was fortunate to be supervised as a PhD student by Terry between 1994 and 1996. Terry was BASR secretary from 1987 to 1993 and the founding editor of the BASR Occasional Paper series in 1991, and worked hard to promote the association and spread the message of the value of the Study of Religion/s as a disciplinary field. He was appointed Staff Tutor in Religious Studies at The Open University in Wales in 1971 where he taught for 25 years and where he was involved in the production of the pioneering course 'Man's Religious Quest' in 1978 and later 'The Growth of Religious Diversity' and 'Religion in Victorian Britain'. In 1988 he edited *The British: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices 1800-1986* for John Hinnells' and Ninian Smart's series 'The Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices' and a revised version of his 1983 doctoral thesis at the University of Nottingham was published in 1999 as *Paul Tillich and World Religions* (for more details, see the tribute by Beckerlegge, Chryssides and Sutcliffe 2011 plus Terence Thomas Bibliography 2011).

A small personal archive of Terry's early papers has now been lodged with The New Library and will in due course become available to researchers interested in Terry's work and in related matters on the history of BASR and the Study of Religion/s in the UK. It all began with a communication in 2021 from Terry's son, Huw Thomas, to Stephen Gregg, BASR President. Stephen passed on the query to me as one of Terry's final PhD students. Since Terry's PhD had analysed Paul Tillich's thought, especially in relation to 'world religions' (Thomas 1999), I initially contacted the Paul Tillich Society in the US. They were keen but unable to accept an analogue archive. Dr Russell Re Manning then kindly put me in touch with Richard Parry, founder of The New Library. The rest, as they say, is (recent) history.



*Most of the archive contents sorted into
bundles on my kitchen table: February 2022*



Terry Thomas in India in 1963

The archive consists in paper documents mainly connected one way or another with the work of the German-American philosophical theologian, Paul Tillich (1886-1965): for example, notes made by Terry from Tillich's papers, copies of Terry's papers given at associated conferences and correspondence with the Tillich Society.

There is also scattered wider correspondence (sometimes quite brief) including with Thomas J.J. Altizer, Mircea Eliade, Michael Pye and John Heywood Thomas. There is not much on Terry's later interests in methodology and disciplinary formation in the Study of Religions (Thomas 1984) and in the historical sociology of religious diversity (Thomas 1988) so the archive must be seen as a very particular slice of Terry's scholarship. A further shift in Terry's interests came after he retired from the Open University in 1996 and became increasingly interested in the new cognitive science of religion and in naturalist explanatory theories of religion. An autobiographical fragment in my possession poignantly documents this personal shift over the decades from the Tillichian theology of his early career to naturalism and atheism.

It's important to see this archive in context: in the first place, as the early fruits of a particular, 'local' (Welsh) biography - Terry was a Welsh speaker - within a UK history of the study of religion/s in the wake of the pivotal 'turn' at Lancaster and elsewhere in the late 1960s; secondly, as the early steps in an intellectual journey from a theology of culture and interfaith encounter, to historical sociology, and finally to a naturalistic model of religion. Along the way, like many other British contemporaries, Terry engaged enthusiastically with the international scene: for example, he was a participant at the select 1988 conference in Marburg on the disciplinary shape of the Study of Religion/s (Pye 1989) and he analysed the politics of late Victorian studies of religion at the IAHR congress in Mexico City (Thomas 2000).

This new archive therefore is a valuable resource which documents the early research formation of an important scholar in the Study of Religion/s at both UK and international levels. It provides a fascinating new piece in the complex jigsaw of our field and reminds us of the value of disciplinary historiography for understanding where we are now. And if we don't write our own history someone else may do it for us.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Huw Thomas for permission to reproduce the attached image of Terry and for sharing files of Terry's unpublished draft material as well as trusting me with the archive as a whole; to Dr Jo Miller, who created an initial catalogue of the contents; to Dr Russell Re Manning at Bath Spa University for putting me in touch with The New Library in Llantwit Major, and to Richard Parry, founder of the New Library, for accepting the material in March 2023.