

**EASA Media Anthropology Network  
&  
EASA Religion Network  
1<sup>st</sup> Joint e-Seminar**

**15-29 January 2008  
<http://www.media-anthropology.net/>**

**Media and religion in Japan:  
the Aum affair as a turning point**

**Dr. Erica Baffelli**

**Abstract**

This paper analyses the relationship between media and the so-called “new religions” (*shinshūkyō*) in Japan. The sarin gas attack on the Tokyo metropolitan subway by members of the Aum Shinrikyō in 1995 was an important turning point in the relationship between media and religions in Japan. In order to avoid harsh criticism new religion groups discontinued big events and massive advertising campaigns. Television broadcasts on new religions were stopped and, between 1996 and 1999, news concerning these groups was very limited. Twelve years after the attacks, groups are considering new ways to use the media, because the past strategies based on advertising and mass events are no longer possible. The re-definition of the media-religion relationship involves a re-construction of religious groups’ identity. As an example, this paper will focus on Agonshū and Kōfuku no kagaku and their media strategies during the last 20 years. The present analysis is based on fieldwork I did in Japan in 2003-2004 and 2005-2007, interviewing religious groups’ media representatives and attending ceremonies, workshop and religious festivals.

**From:** [jpostill@usa.net](mailto:jpostill@usa.net)  
**Subject:** [Medianthro] Media and religion e-seminar opens now  
**Date:** 15 January 2008 18:18:18 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [mediantthro@easaonline.org](mailto:mediantthro@easaonline.org), [religion@easaonline.org](mailto:religion@easaonline.org)

Dear All

Welcome to our first joint EASA Media Anthropology Network and Religion Network e-seminar! Over the next two weeks, and ending on Tuesday 29 Jan 2008 at 9 pm GMT, Erica Baffelli (Otago University, New Zealand) will be presenting and discussing a working paper entitled "Media and religion in Japan: the Aum affair as a turning point" through both our mailing lists. Erica's working paper is now freely available on the media anthropology website (<http://www.media-anthropology.net/workingpapers.htm>). If you haven't yet had time to read the paper now is the time to do so before the discussant's comments arrive sometime this evening GMT. All subscribers to either list are very welcome to participate in this session by posting brief comments and questions directly to their list in the body of an email (NO attachments please).

Erica Baffelli gained her PhD from the University of Venice, in Italy, and is currently a lecturer in Asian religions at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Before moving to Otago she was a visiting researcher at Hosei University (Tokyo) and a post-doctoral research fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. Her research interests lie in new religious movements in Asia, especially the relation between Asian religions and mass-media communication.

The discussant, Blai Guarné, has a PhD in cultural anthropology from the University of Barcelona, in Spain, and specialises in the anthropology of Japan. His research centres on the cultural production of difference in contemporary Japanese culture. His interests include theories of representation, postcolonial and cultural studies, and the study of visual culture. At present he teaches anthropology at Pompeu Fabra University, in Barcelona, where he is a member of the Inter-Asia Research Group (<http://www.fti.uab.es/interasia/>).

I would now like to invite Blai to post his comments on the paper, after which Erica Baffelli will have the opportunity to respond. The discussion will then be open to all subscribers across both lists. I will be forwarding messages across the lists as soon as I receive them. The resulting session will be transcribed onto a PDF file and posted on the media anthropology website. If you're still unsure about how these e-seminars work, you can read PDF transcripts of previous sessions at <http://www.media-anthropology.net/workingpapers.htm> Many thanks to the coordinators of the Religion Network, Simon Coleman and Ramon Sarro, for co-organising the session with us, and it's over to Blai now. I look forward to a great session.

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**From:** [blai.guarne@gmail.com](mailto:blai.guarne@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Re: [Medianthro] [Religion EASA] Media and religion e-seminar opens now  
**Date:** 16 January 2008 08:15:24 GMT+08:00  
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Dear All,

Thank you very much, John, for your invitation. It has been a pleasure to read Erica Baffelli's paper. I truly appreciate Erica's sharing of her work with us. I would also like to thank Simon Coleman and Ramon Sarro as coordinators of the Religion Network, for inviting me to make comments at this e-seminar.

I would like to start with a personal recollection. We all know well that fieldwork is a lonesome experience in which one might find oneself double-checking notes, re-interpreting voices and revisiting places in the quest for the sense of the Other.

Thus, during my fieldwork in Japan, I remember looking at the same advertisement every day on my daily train trip to the University of Tokyo campus. This is the SGI (Soka Gakkai International) magazine ad that I am referring to. Every month, the ad would change in order to advertise the new monthly issue. In its cover, the picture of Soka Gakkai's President, Mr. Daisaku Ikeda, recurrently appeared welcoming foreign dignitaries and participating in global forums.

In the inner pages, Mr. Ikeda's omnipresence was assured: pictures of him at university campuses, at speaking stands in International Conferences, surrounded by smiling students in various places the world over, receiving ovations after a lecture, issuing diplomas and degrees, at work on poems for his next poetry book at his study. The pictures of the Presidential study showed shelves containing all the possible translations of his writings in various languages. The elegantly gold framed mirror hanging on the study's wall, the immaculately kept floor carpet, the finely upholstered armchairs for the guests conform the scenery of a grand international leader.

The visual representation of Soka Gakkai reflects its founding principles of peace, friendship and hope for the 21 st century. All together, they construct a visual narrative in which the image of the President plays the role of a leader of outstanding wisdom and respected authority who travels the globe with his message of peace.

In my view, it is not unwise to believe that using the media in this way has been for many Japanese organisations, both political and religious, a model to follow. Erica's paper precisely focuses on the awareness of this intentional use of the media in **shinshūkyō** ('new religions') of present day Japan.

To speak openly about the **shinshūkyō** issue in Japanese society is no easy task. It is a sensible topic, if not an outright taboo which is eluded in any everyday conversation. It is interesting to analyse the fact that in the Japanese media, the issue of Religion is not a topic **per se**, it always stems from some other reported event, be it economic, social, historical... In Japanese society, religious experience is considered intimate and personal, it is not subject to somebody else's opinion. This turns the issue into something one cannot fully grasp. Erica successfully deals with these various aspects and difficulties throughout her research.

Erica's work starts by portraying a precise genealogy of the historical relationship between \*shinshūkyō\* and the media, highlighting the changes brought about in the different media strategies. These new religions mostly appeared in the 1970s, a decade of strong economic and social expansion, in a context of an opulent society enjoying a wealth and a wellbeing never known before. Japanese society was in search of new ways to live the individual's spiritual necessities. At the same time, in some circles, the quest was directed to alternative forms of thought such as **new-aca** ('new academicism').

Erica identified a turning point in the media and **shinshūkyō** relationship:

the Aum episode (the terrorist attack on the Tokyo subway system in 1995). Thereafter, a substantial retreat of these religious movements from the media is quite apparent in many ways: fewer public appearances by the better known leaders, a diminished presence of public advertisements, a limited distribution of publications... All this is a consequence of the increase of criticism in the media directed against the **shinshūkyō** that hindered the communication of its message to the general society. This is Erica's prime contribution to the study of the media and **shinshūkyō** relationship: the necessity to examine this issue 'in terms of the period before, and the period after, the events of 1995'.

One interesting point to note is the background of these organizations' media retreat. Following Erica's outline, in the case of Kōfuku no kagaku, the virtualization of the image of its charismatic leader seems to begin with the **Kōdansha jiken** and the need to maintain it free of damaging criticism, developing new forms of spreading the message, such as the presence of the organization on the internet. In the case of Agonshū, the first live satellite broadcasts of its religious rituals started at the end of the 1980s, during the boom of the expanding high tech means of communication, and it led to the interconnection of the organization's centres in a national network that would fully expand in years to follow.

For both of these \*shinshūkyō\* movements, Erica visualizes a period of wait and see media strategy immediately after the Aum incident, a true turning point in this sense. This event had core consequences in the construction of religious rites that affected the direct experience of their participants, i.e. the development of new ritual forms adjusted to fit the new media strategies incurred by Kōfuku no kagaku and Agonshū.

In Erica's view, the media played a central role in shaping the identity of these groups from that moment after. Hence, in these spiritual movements, 'media are not just informing about religion, but can make religion'.

It is always difficult trying to encapsulate the social reality in a single formula to explain it. For this reason, I consider interesting to keep on reflecting on the idea that the media strategies of the **shinshūkyō** have played 'a central role in creating, reshaping and innovating the identity of new religious movements'. The idea that discourse and practices related to the media construct the social reality is a well-known topic about which our media research colleagues might be able to give valuable suggestions. In this debate, I have always felt closer to Professor Goody's views, specifically in his usage of the term 'implications', more than 'consequences', to describe the relationship between writing and thought, in the case of **shinshūkyō** it would be between technology and discourse.

Erica's work confronts us with very valuable ethnographic evidences about the interactions between media and religious movements in the genesis of discourses and practices related to the creation of personal experiences and social realities. The accurate analysis of the

broadcast of the \*shinshūkyō\* rituals and the religious experiences associated with them (spectacular in the outdoor rituals and intimate in those carried out indoors) create what I would call a 'virtual communitas' that it is of the utmost interest for me. Hopefully, we shall hear more about it.

In fact, the representational strategies of these two moments analyzed by Erica seem to be placed in a spectrum that ranges from what it is \*revealed\* and what is **concealed**. In this sense, the Aum episode constitutes a turning point which exposed the ambivalent dynamic of **shinshūkyō** with the media and its subsequent adjustment in the new social context. For this reason, revisiting Erica's final idea –“media are not just **informing** about religion, but they can **make** religion”- we could say that media are not only **informing**, but also **conforming** religion through new discourses and practices ridden with underlying social and political implications.

Once more, I am very grateful for having been invited to comment on Erica's piece. I want to thank Eika for her splendid work and I encourage her to follow with this research. My thanks also go to the members of the EASA Media Anthropology Network and of the Religion Network. I hope my comments have contributed to open new elements for the debate.

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Professor Associat  
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<b>From:</b>	<a href="mailto:erica.baffelli@otago.ac.nz">erica.baffelli@otago.ac.nz</a>
<b>Subject:</b>	Re: Media and religion- Erica's response
<b>Date:</b>	17 January 2008 06:56:25 GMT+08:00
<b>To:</b>	<a href="mailto:medianthro@easaonline.org">medianthro@easaonline.org</a>
<b>Cc:</b>	<a href="mailto:religion@easaonline.org">religion@easaonline.org</a>

Dear all,

First of all, thanks to John for making this joint seminar possible, and thanks to Blai Guarné for his supportive comments.

I'd like to add just a brief note on Sōkagakkai:

I totally agree with Blai about the important role of Sōkagakkai as a “model” for religious and political organizations. Sōkagakkai, the largest of the new religious movements in Japan was founded in 1930 by the educator Makiguchi Tsunesaburō, but the group expanded and grew quickly after the War World II, especially under its third president, Ikeda Daisaku. Sōkagakkai's “block” and exam structure and its idea of leader-manager became a model for other new religions (i.e. Kōfuku no kagaku, GLA). Sōkagakkai was not unique among shinshūkyō to be involved in politics, but it was the first group to form its own political party (Kōmeitō, founded in 1964) and other groups tried to do the same (i.e. Aum shinrikyō). Furthermore Sōkagakkai's public events are an important example of the spectacularization of religious practices (and politics), stressing artistic performance and theatrical enactments.

Between 2006-2007 Sōkagakkai released an interesting advertising campaign on Japan TV. If SGI (Soka Gakkai International) visual narratives focused on leader's message of peace and international activities, TV spots in Japanese focused on being happy and polite here and

now, in your daily life activities, to construct a better future (the slogan is anata no, ashita wo, atarashiku “Your new future”)

A brief promotional video was also showed at the Shibuya crossing in Tokyo. The video is clearly targeting the Shibuya youth culture and, as the name of the group appears just at the end of the video, the first time I saw it I thought it was the new advertising campaign of a sport company...(the off screen voice says “Kanōsei mugendai, Sōkagakkai” “Infinite possibilities, Sōkagakkai”).

References:

Sōkagakkai TV spots:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpGHOxseMQ>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhAhMPCRLZw>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmPARYaOUgw>

Shibuya crossing video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3QjaUvS5dM>

Thanks again to Blai and to all of you, and I look forward to your comments/suggestions.

Erica

<b>From:</b> <a href="mailto:Francisco.Osorio@manchester.ac.uk">Francisco.Osorio@manchester.ac.uk</a>
<b>Subject:</b> [Mediantthro] Media and religion in Japan
<b>Date:</b> 18 January 2008 01:20:16 GMT+08:00
<b>To:</b> <a href="mailto:mediantthro@easaonline.org">mediantthro@easaonline.org</a>

I want to thank Erica for his ethnographic work and interesting paper. Anthropologists (among others scholars) could have as a background thought some similarities between Carlos Castaneda and El Cantare. Castaneda, of course, used the technology available at his time. El Cantare uses the most updated technology, except perhaps mobiles.

El Cantare, and his corporation, arrives at the same conclusion than today The Guardian and BBC (just to give current examples of mass media) are developing. In the language of El Cantare?s Kofuku no kagaku is called media mix. Nowadays, The Guardian can be found in the local supermarket, but also on its website. Inside, we can find not only text, but videos, podcasts, and several technologies. The BBC is happy with BBC iPlayer (an Internet technology), but soon BBC, ITV and Channel 4 will have a new service for TV programmes online. I guess that satellite transmissions could be replaced in the future by broadband transmission. So far, Japan has 90% of broadband connections, compare to 40% in Germany. In the UK the regular user of Internet gets 4MB in broadband, but in Japan is 90MB, so the very concept of broadband is quite different.

Nevertheless, Erica gives us a key distinction. This is not about technology (which changes even when we wrote about it), but the social uses of it. Her distinction between live/mediated versus consumed is absolutely clear. It seems almost that Kofuku no kagaku is not only using the best company for an advertising campaign, but the best of social science, when they understand that public space must be live and controlled, because the private space is where television is consumed.

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Dr Francisco Osorio

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**From:** [jpostill@usa.net](mailto:jpostill@usa.net)  
**Subject:** [Medianthro] Research access and informants (Baffelli paper)  
**Date:** 18 January 2008 18:25:49 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [medianthro@easaonline.org](mailto:medianthro@easaonline.org), [religion@easaonline.org](mailto:religion@easaonline.org)

Erica

I'd like to ask you about your own positioning in the research you are reporting here, given that presumably these were not easy organisations to study. What kind of participant observation access did you have to these organisations? Were you restricted largely or entirely to public events? If so, how do you think this restriction may have shaped your understanding of these groups, if at all?

Also I was wondering if you could tell us a bit more about the 'well-educated young people' (p. 6) that both groups seem to attract. Who are these people? How do they justify joining groups that are still in many people's minds associated with Aum?

John

**From:** [tim.neal@shef.ac.uk](mailto:tim.neal@shef.ac.uk)  
**Subject:** [Medianthro] What are 'new religions' (Baffelli paper)  
**Date:** 18 January 2008 18:49:08 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [medianthro@lists.easaonline.org](mailto:medianthro@lists.easaonline.org)  
**Reply-To:** [tim.neal@shef.ac.uk](mailto:tim.neal@shef.ac.uk)

Thank you Erica for this paper which I found very interesting.

I admit to having no background in Japanese culture but I would like to inquire about something that struck me: What is a "new religion" in the Japanese context (perhaps more broadly too)? I ask what may seem a misplaced question because on my reading of your paper I was not left with a clear picture of what was being described. Is a "new religion" defined as such by its contemporary appearance alone or is there something else? Is there some break with a tradition that is fixed elsewhere? Is it being defined by the use of media itself?

Tim

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**Subject:** Re: [Medianthro] What are 'new religions' (Baffelli paper)  
**Date:** 19 January 2008 07:00:39 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [tim.neal@shef.ac.uk](mailto:tim.neal@shef.ac.uk), [medianthro@lists.easaonline.org](mailto:medianthro@lists.easaonline.org)

Dear Francisco, Tim, John and list,

Many thanks for your comments. To keep my response not too long, I'll address Tim's question here, trying to underline some key points about the definition of "New Religions" in Japanese context and will then respond to John in a later mail.

The concept of "new religions" was first used in Japan following the end of World War II to include the numerous groups that emerged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. These groups have been defined—according to the period of their development and the classification criteria adopted—as "New Religions" (shinsh?ky?), "New-new Religions" (shinshinsh?ky?), "New Spiritual Movements and culture" (shinreisei und?). What the many classifications proposed over the last few decades have in common is the need to distinguish the most recently formed groups from the so-called "institutionalised religions" (kisei sh?ky?) or "traditional religions" (dent? sh?ky?), namely the various schools of Buddhism and shrine Shinto. All the proposed terms are problematic (as new religions, new religious movements, sect and cults are problematic terms), all of them can be considered incomplete, and the definition of "shinh?ky?" (sh?ky? is the standard term for religion and shin means new) is rendered problematic by the fluidity and complexity of various groups, their phases of development and their affiliation.

### Phases

Various suggestions have been made about the dating of the "new religions," and their phases of development, but many researchers consider the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (around the so-called Meiji restoration of 1868) as the first period of development (even if "germinal forms" of these movements appeared at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century). The other phases can be considered:

**the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century;**  
**following World War II (when, after the new Religious Corporation Laws, the number of new religious movements increase remarkably);**  
**latter half of 1970's (following the so-called "oil shock" in 1973); In 1979 Nishiyama Shigeru first used the term shin shinh?ky? (new new religions).**  
**recently, some scholars added the post-1995 (post-Aum affair) as a new phase of the development of New Religions.**

### Definition of "New" and characteristics

Differences of opinion also exist about what kind of group could be defined as "new" and included in the category of "new religions". This discussion implies a distinction between new religions/renewal movements (relationship New Religions/ traditional religions) and new religions/folk religions.

We don't have any clear standard concerning the first distinction (new religions/renewal movements), but, generally speaking, a group is considered a shinshinsh?ky? if founded by a new leader and called by a new name, even if it still has strict connection with a previous "traditional" school.

Concerning the distinction between New Religions/folk religions the distinction is mainly based on organizational characteristics (new religions presenting themselves as a specific group with a specific leader and organization).

Summing up some characteristics attributed to shinsh?ky?:

**role of leader: the group are often centered around a charismatic leader;**  
**syncretic and eclectic: they can draw from different religious traditions and change their affiliation;**  
**“vitalistic”: they are dynamic and can change quite radically in a short time;**  
**this-worldly orientation and this-worldly or practical benefits (genze riyaku) oriented**

Concerning the post-1970's groups, they are considered more focused on the personal experience and individual fulfilment; more concerned with the “other world”, and, in some cases, they show a tendency to separate from the larger society. Then, the massive use of media and public event is considered one of their main characteristics.

Recourse to the mass media has been adopted not only by new religious groups but by the traditional ones as well. In the case of the new religions, however, their evolution has run parallel to and is strongly influenced by the development of media communication, to the extent that they are sometimes defined as “mass media religions” (media sh?ky?).

Finally, “new spirituality movements and culture” usually refer to a network of practitioners and practices not structured as a religious group (informal gathering of people sharing the same interests, occasionally attending the same ceremonies or activities; often unclear leadership; any development of either rites or doctrine).

#### References:

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Inoue, N. 1992. Recent trends in the study of Japanese New Religions'. New Religions: Contemporary Papers on Japanese Religions 2(4-24), <http://www2.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/cjpr/newreligions/inoue.html#para0024>.

Shimazono, S. 2004. From Salvation to Spirituality: Popular Religious Movements in Japan, Melbourne: TransPacific Press.

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Received: Sun, 20 Jan 2008 12:10:28 PM GMT From: "G.Harvey" <G.Harvey@open.ac.uk> To: "John Postill" <jpostill@usa.net> Subject: RE: [Religion EASA] Erica Baffelli: What are 'new religions'? (fwd)
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In addition to all that's said below, there's a somewhat larger context in which the term “new religions” or “new religious movements” is used as a technical term, though a contested / contestible one.

Almost all Religious Studies / Studies of Religion departments offer courses using this title. Though people argue about what makes a movement / religion “new” (or “new” in “the West”), such groups are at least partly defined over against “World Religions” and, more recently, “indigenous religions”. None of these terms are entirely objective - especially the “World Religions” one which originates in the polemic by which only some religions are

“World Class” or deemed to offer a universal message - initially the term included Christianity, Islam and Buddhism - but then things evolved, especially as diasporic movements led to the recognition of the (near) global presence of what had previously been categorised as “ethnic” religions or somesuch. Then “World Religions” comes to mean “religions occurring everywhere” - but that makes it difficult to objectively exclude lots of “new religions” and even “indigenous religions” that often exist far beyond their “indigenous” homelands... Besides which, the religions in these various categories have few if any characteristics in common with other members of the group. Some “new” religions may be new, but many are evolutions of older “traditions” and they may also be indigenous somewhere and global (“World”) everywhere - and assert that they have a universal message.

best,  
Graham

<b>From:</b> <a href="mailto:jpostill@usa.net">jpostill@usa.net</a>
<b>Subject:</b> [Medianthro] Ioannis Kyriakakis: Erica Baffelli's paper (fwd)
<b>Date:</b> 21 January 2008 03:03:27 GMT+08:00
<b>To:</b> <a href="mailto:medianthro@easaonline.org">medianthro@easaonline.org</a>

----- Original Message -----

Received: Sun, 20 Jan 2008 06:59:26 PM GMT

<b>From:</b> ioannis kyriakakis < <a href="mailto:ioannis_kyriakakis@yahoo.co.uk">ioannis_kyriakakis@yahoo.co.uk</a> >
<b>To:</b> John Postill < <a href="mailto:jpostill@usa.net">jpostill@usa.net</a> >, “religion easaonline.org” < <a href="mailto:religion@easaonline.org">religion@easaonline.org</a> >
<b>Subject:</b> [Religion EASA] Erica Baffelli's paper

Dear Colleagues

I read Erica Baffelli's very interesting paper and I understand that this is a working paper, which therefore, cannot cover all the issues it touches in detail. However the conclusive statement that “media are not just informing about religion, but they can make religion” is not sufficiently justified, in my opinion, by the material presented in the paper. I can see three specific requirements for such a justification: 1) what is meant in the anthropological and Japanese context by the term “religion” (so that we can then examine how it is made). To what extent the terms used by various actors and agencies (including the researcher) share the same meaning? 2) A further socio-historical investigation of the distinction between “common” religion and Buddhism, mentioned in page 12 of the paper, in the Japanese society and 3) A brief contextual analysis of socio-political and economic changes occurring in Japan during the period under discussion, and a set of assumptions on how these changes may or may not have affect religious and non religious behaviours. Although one can have one's own views on these 3 issues, I do not think that any view would be less prejudiced and eurocentric, without a thorough socio-historical and contextual analysis, an analysis which I am sure that Erica can provide perhaps in another context.

best,

Ioannis Kyriakakis

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**From:** [erica.baffelli@otago.ac.nz](mailto:erica.baffelli@otago.ac.nz)  
**Subject:** [Mediantthro] Research access and informants (Baffelli paper)  
**Date:** 21 January 2008 07:33:05 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [jpostill@usa.net](mailto:jpostill@usa.net)  
**Cc:** [mediantthro@easaonline.org](mailto:mediantthro@easaonline.org), [religion@easaonline.org](mailto:religion@easaonline.org)

Hi John,

Regarding the participant observation access to these organizations, generally, almost all ceremonies end events are open to non-members. In particular, all the events I was interested in (using satellite broadcastings and videos) are open to all. It is more difficult to enter the “section” groups, but in Kofuku no kagaku I had access to some of them (namely, the student group and the English-language workshop group).

More precisely:

### **Kōfuku no kagaku**

When I arrived in Japan in March 2003 I tried to contact them by mail and by fax, but I didn't receive any response. So I decided to visit their publishing house office. I entered the wrong office that was the student association office. There I met Ms A., I explained her my research and asked to meet and to interview some representatives of media office. She offered to help me. They didn't allow me to interview a public relations representative, but I was allowed to take part in events, ceremonies and workshops. Furthermore I was allowed to watch some of their videos and movies at the student office. After some months Ms A. allowed me to watch some videos for members. Then she invited me to visit some other centres around Tokyo. In 2005 I contact her again asking to visit their centres in Shikoku island (where the founder was born) and to organize a visit to the main centre with some undergraduate students. After a quite long email exchange, I was allowed to visit all their facilities and to meet some members living there. Ms A. is working in the editor board of one of groups' newest magazine (a “magazine for women” called Are you happy?) and she gave me important information about groups' publication and media activities. I also managed to have a meeting with two of representatives of the media, but the meeting wasn't really fruitful as they repeated exactly what it was written on group's pamphlets.

Concerning the primary sources I needed for my research, the media texts, almost all publications (books, magazine, manga) are available at major bookshop or in the Internet. Several publications are also available at the Tokyo National Diet Library. All the movies were released at Cinema around Japan and I watched the oldest ones at the group's centers. I had some problems to find some old publications (before 1991), but I met a member living in Italy, I arranged an interview with him and he sent me all the books I needed.

### **Agonshū**

In 2005, through a representative of the London center, I tried to contact the representatives of Agonshū's PR office in Japan, but they never answered me. But in 2006 I was introduced to Mr. B who, in the beginning of the 1980s, was the general manager of their Public Relations Department. He left the group and the beginning of the 1990's, but he had played a central role in the planning of Agonshū's media strategies. Thanks to him I could construct the development of group's relationship with the media and I had access to important documents about media strategies.

As I said, ceremonies and events at the centre are open to all, you need just to fill in a form at the entrance and you got a name card saying “guest”. The first time I visited the centre in Tokyo I introduced myself and my research and anytime I went there I organized some meeting with members. Then I asked them to watch the group's videos. The explained me

that it is not possible to buy them, but they granted me free access to videos at their centre. As for Kōfuku no kagaku, all Agonshū's publications can be easily found in libraries or bookshop. I consider my work on Agonshū still incomplete and I hope to have the possibilities to continue it in the next few years.

Considering the development of my research, if it's not too difficult to access media products of these organizations, audience and reception analysis could be much more complicated. First of all, it's quite difficult to define the "members" of a group, considering different level of affiliations (from occasional participants to members employed at group's related company or facilities); phenomenon of multiple affiliation (quite common in Japan) and, especially, inaccessibility of data. Then, is not easy to contact the members and interview them without any "control". Just once, during a fieldwork on the use of testimonies and conversion stories in NRM, the leader's son of a small organization in Tokyo introduced my research officially to the members, invited them to help me and allowed me to ask everything I wanted to them, but it's a rare case.

About your second question:

The "well-educated young members" is referred mainly to Kōfuku no kagaku and the reason why it was compared to Aum. Being the leader a graduate of the Tokyo University and a previous employee of a big company, the group seemed to attract a large number of graduate students from the top universities, employees of top companies, professionals. Furthermore, during the late 1980's early 1990's the group was very active in campus activities (now most universities have stricter regulation on religious organizations activities in campus).

About more recent figure of membership, little hard data is available on Kōfuku no kagaku membership. From my own observations, members tend to be young (in their 20's - 30's , early 40's) and I met a large number of professionals, young managers (KNK offers several workshop for businessmen, graduates or students from the "top" universities). About the students I met during the student meeting:

**some of them were from a Kōfuku no kagaku family;**  
**some entered the group because they met some members at the university (open campus festival, classmates ecc.);**  
**some of them will be (or would like) to be employed at KNK after graduation (the group has also residential facilities for young, single employees, as many Japanese company).**

Generally, they consider KNK clearly different from Aum (and they clearly divided what they called the "good religions" and the "evil religions"), but they tend not to talk about their religious affiliations to non-members and colleagues.

Erica

<p><b>From:</b> <a href="mailto:ziggy@temple.edu">ziggy@temple.edu</a> <b>Subject:</b> [Medianthro] Question <b>Date:</b> 24 January 2008 20:19:16 GMT+08:00 <b>To:</b> <a href="mailto:medianthro@easaonline.org">medianthro@easaonline.org</a></p>
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I want to thank Erica for a thought provoking paper. At the end of your conclusion you state that "Media are not just for informing about religion, but they can make religion." I'm wondering if you can address this point in relation to how and if the cases you analyse has in any way affected other religious communities in Japan.

All the best, Zig.

**From:** [tim.neal@shef.ac.uk](mailto:tim.neal@shef.ac.uk)  
**Subject:** [Mediantthro] What are 'new religions' (Baffelli paper)  
**Date:** 24 January 2008 20:25:27 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [mediantthro@lists.easaonline.org](mailto:mediantthro@lists.easaonline.org)  
**Reply-To:** [tim.neal@shef.ac.uk](mailto:tim.neal@shef.ac.uk)

Thank you Erica for your response to my earlier question. I feel better informed now. My further point is along somewhat the same lines as John's about your positioning as an anthropologist and also relates to Ioannis's comments.

I wonder what makes this paper an anthropological one I suppose is my query and feel that your thesis would benefit from more contextual data from fieldwork as suggested by your reply to John. This relates to a more general point about what it means to study the interaction of media and people, how to approach this and to judge the outcome. This query remains the same in the context of religion and the media. The comment made by Ioannis is very interesting and valid but seems to me to fall into the same, if more elaborate, area of confusion - namely that he offers a solution that moves away from interaction with people - anthropoi - and further into the realm of history, documents, static representations of media rather than an active present.

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Timothy Neal

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**From:** [danieltaghioff@yahoo.com](mailto:danieltaghioff@yahoo.com)  
**Subject:** [Mediantthro] Subjectivity and practice  
**Date:** 24 January 2008 22:30:22 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [mediantthro@easaonline.org](mailto:mediantthro@easaonline.org)

Hello media list, and greetings to the religion list, nice to "meet" you all ;-)

I find Erica's paper to be a very interesting set of organizational histories, that for me illustrate the relationships between corporate marketing techniques, religion and the media. The comparison I miss in this social history is with political actors.

But I also worry about the anthropological angle in this. It is interesting to note that the textual turn in media studies was partly born out of hermeneutics in literature studies. This in turn was born out of traditions of scriptural interpretation. Thus there is a link in the academic traditions of media studies and religious studies, a link that has also gone on to inform anthropological theory (Geertz springs to mind, Hobart being a fierce critic of this.)

The question of subject positions in texts, and responses / interpretations in practice of these is surely as fiercely relevant to religious studies as it is to media, and doubly so for anthropologists. The events described by Erica seem to most closely resemble media events discourse, in terms of describing a shared 'immediate' ( or seemingly un-mediated ) moment of simultaneity.

But surely these 'immediate' moments are part of a longer social history of formed subjectivities. We get the broader contours of public response to the "New Religions" but no nitty-gritty, either in terms of responses (possible shifting over time, I understand there are methodological difficulties there) from journalists, from people involved in the religions, from critics, from politicians and so on.

Surely the subject positions of those engaging in practice with these movements, as commentators, commercially hired promoters, members, critics etc, are the anthropological "stuff" of this history, also giving us a sense of the variety of responses, the differences in the discourses, the struggles and transformations in people's "subjective" life-worlds, which of course translate very strongly to how things play out in practice.

Finally, if the media "make" these religions, what are the specific practices and instances by which this seems manifestly so, and what shape do the subjectivities engaged in those practices take?

I know these are tough questions, since telepathy is a "holy grail" of sorts for anthropologists, but such an (impossible) quest seems especially appropriate were religion, media and anthropology meet.

**From:** [s.m.coleman@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:s.m.coleman@sussex.ac.uk)  
**Subject:** Re: [Medianthro] What are 'new religions'?  
**Date:** 26 January 2008 17:41:09 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [medianthro@easaonline.org](mailto:medianthro@easaonline.org), [religion@easaonline.org](mailto:religion@easaonline.org)

Dear all,

I also enjoyed Erica's paper very much. One of my questions related to the production of media: in contexts where movements are keen to control the image they present to the public how do they restrict what their own members say about the group on websites, informal texts, etc.? If one thinks of American evangelical churches (yes, a very different context) the official websites of churches are often complemented by a fascinating efflorescence of personal websites and postings from members.

Also, can we learn more about how the New Religions' use of media in Japan compares with the use of media by more so-called 'mainstream' religious organizations?

Then a much more general question of how uses of media might relate to discourses that some New Religions have about what is said to the public versus information given to members, which may be justified by some kind of contrast between the explicit and implicit, or knowledge for the initiated versus knowledge for the non-initiated.

Cheers,  
Simon

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<http://www.therai.org.uk/pubs/jrai/jrai.html>

**From:** [danieltaghioff@yahoo.com](mailto:danieltaghioff@yahoo.com)  
**Subject:** [Mediantthro] Language and Religion  
**Date:** 26 January 2008 19:48:12 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [jpostill@usa.net](mailto:jpostill@usa.net), [mediantthro@easaonline.org](mailto:mediantthro@easaonline.org)

This is a tangential post, on the debate on the Piraha and universal grammar.

[http://www.edge.org/3rd\\_culture/everett07/everett07\\_index.html](http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/everett07/everett07_index.html)

It is interesting to note that the researcher who sparked the debate with Chomsky, Daniel L Everett, went to the Piraha as a christian missionary. The piraha, according to him, have a communication style, or a set of communicative norms, that refer only to the here and now. They were thus difficult to convert to a religion based on un-manifest beliefs. Everett lost his religion and his marriage based on this (long-term) encounter. What this goes to shows for me is the strong link between religion and communicative practices.

In his account, the “immediacy” of the Piraha is seen as crucial both to their belief systems and their language. This “immediacy,” in Everett’s view, is down to their cultural practices of communication, rather than an innate universal grammar. In a sense it is culturally appropriate for the Piraha to restrict themselves to an ‘unmediated’ world.

So is there ground to cover here about how one views mediation / communication and how one views the universe at large / the universal / divinity / the sacred?

Does this also cast Chomskian linguistics as a religion of sorts ;-)

Daniel

**From:** [realtinay@yahoo.com](mailto:realtinay@yahoo.com)  
**Subject:** Re: [Mediantthro] Language and Religion  
**Date:** 26 January 2008 20:24:43 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [mediantthro@easaonline.org](mailto:mediantthro@easaonline.org)

Thank you very much for this note, Daniel. I think there are multiple ways in which religion is linked to communicative practices. In a paper I presented at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Colloquium of Linguistics, I discussed how transgendered Turkish singer, Bulent Ersoy, uses the Ottoman vocabulary to perform a Muslim identity. With the aid of Butler’s theory of performativity, I

argued that lexical choice - beyond meaning and reference - is a performative act and it may be relevant for not only the performance of gender but also of religion, class and nationalism. I would be very interested to hear about the case with other religions and languages.

<b>From:</b> <a href="mailto:erica.baffelli@otago.ac.nz">erica.baffelli@otago.ac.nz</a>
<b>Subject:</b> Re: [Medianthro] Final round of e-seminar posts
<b>Date:</b> 27 January 2008 14:12:28 GMT+08:00
<b>To:</b> <a href="mailto:jpostill@usa.net">jpostill@usa.net</a> , <a href="mailto:medianthro@easaonline.org">medianthro@easaonline.org</a>
<b>Cc:</b> <a href="mailto:religion@easaonline.org">religion@easaonline.org</a>

Dear all,

Thank you all for your comments. There were some important perspectives and interesting suggestions addressed. Before answering Zig and Simon's questions, I'd like to say some words about the background of my research (especially on K?fuku no kagaku).

Considering the difficulties I had in contacting the group and meeting members, I decided to focus my PhD thesis (discussed as a thesis on Asian studies-Japanese studies, not Anthropology) on K?fuku no kagaku's image construction through the media. Indeed I analysed "media texts" produced by the group in different period, investigating their doctrinal changes and leader image's construction, and how media (mainly press) represented the group (especially in the 1990s). My aim was to investigate the relationships between marketing techniques, religion and media using KNK as an example.

Developing my post-doctoral research and in my new research project on NR online I'd like to focus more on responses/interpretations.

Ioannis, Tim and Daniel's comments pointed out some very interesting methodological questions I need to consider carefully when developing the theoretical framework of my research.

### **Zig**

Agonsh? influenced the relationship between NR and private company, as it was the first group to hire a private company for advertising campaign. After its first campaign several other groups used the same company.

Then Agonsh? leader's image construction, group organization as well as teachings influenced the groups founded in the 1980s (especially Aum shinriky?- Asahara, Aum's leader, borrowed a lot from Agonsh?'s cosmology and practices).

Agonsh? was also the first group to use satellite communication. Recently I saw a very similar use of "rituals through satellite" by some Buddhism organizations (i.e. a Thai Buddhist group here in NZ transmitting rituals from Thailand), but my research is still in an early stage and I'm not sure there are/were some influences from Japanese NR.

K?fuku no kagaku's massive events, advertising campaign and frequent apparition on TV clearly affected, on my opinion, how NR presented themselves in Japan during the 1980s , that is as wealthy, powerful, business-oriented groups.

The media become the most important means for NR to be "visible".

I think that now K?fuku no kagaku's use of the Internet (especially forums and social networking) is quite interesting, but it is still to early to see possible effects.

## Simon

- 1) Your question about what the members say about the group on websites is the main question of my new research project on NR online. My idea was to study members' blogs, but I'm now thinking on focusing more on forum and social networking (especially 2channeru and Mixi) as it was extremely difficult to find members' blogs (and my impression was that many members don't talk about their religious activities in their blogs). The use of forum and social networking by NR is relatively recent (and less developed compared with their use of media). During the late 1990s some groups were extremely critical about the Internet and invited their members to be very carefully in using it (K?fuku no kagaku opened its official website just in 2004; S?ky? Mahikari, lost many followers and had to close down its official website because of a harshly critical book published on the Internet by a former member, S?kagakkai opened a website to reply to criticism of ex-members websites ecc.).
- 2) "new religions"/ "traditional" religions  
Yes, it's interesting to compare "new religions" uses of media and "traditional" organizations (Buddhism school and shrine shint?), but it's very difficult to define "mainstream" religion in Japanese context. Official number of recognized religious organizations is about 200 000 and the number of adherents larger than the whole Japanese population. Usually the affiliation to a Buddhism school or shrine Shint? is made by "family", (I met several people who discovers their "family affiliation" to a Buddhist school just when a relative dies) not "by choice" (as in NR). For that reason, for example, "traditional" organizations' advertising campaigns are more based on promoting their courses, festival than in attracting new members. Then, the role of leader and his/her relationship with members is a specific characteristic of NR.
- 3) Yes, interesting point. Many groups (but not all) have publications and videos "for all" and "for members only". Concerning publications, not just teachings are presented differently (more deepened in "for-members only" books and magazines), but also the group itself is presented differently. For example, in the English introduction to KNK, which can be found on their magazine in English, the Institute for the Research in Human Happiness (the English name of the group) is described as "an organization of people who aim to cultivate their souls and deepen their wisdom". The group presents itself as a "research centre", the teachings of which are based on the study of Buddhist principles. Then, their monthly publication "The Liberty" and "Are you happy?", that are sold in bookshops, are focused mainly on "social issues" ("The Liberty") and "family, household and relationship problems" ("Are you happy?") and less on doctrinal issues. Then the same text is presented quite differently in different "support": books, comic book, comic magazine, animated movies.

Concerning videos, in KNK there are different videos members can access in different stages of their training and are strictly reserved to members. Also videos on members' testimonies are usually reserved to members.

Texts and videos "for members only" reinforce both the division between inside/outside (members/non members) and the hierarchical division between members (members at higher stage can access more texts, videos and deeper teachings). I think it's really similar in other groups (i.e. Scientology).

In Agonsh?, the different access to texts is related to its relationship with esoteric Buddhism (only initiate can access some texts and teachings, but not all the members become initiate).

Best wishes,  
Erica

**From:** [tinni.andersson@telia.com](mailto:tinni.andersson@telia.com)  
**Subject:** [Medianthro] e-seminar, media and religion in Japan  
**Date:** 29 January 2008 03:55:20 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [medianthro@easaonline.org](mailto:medianthro@easaonline.org)  
**Cc:** [religion@easaonline.org](mailto:religion@easaonline.org)

Hi Erica and everyone,

Excuse late entrance into the discussion, my comments got caught up in a terrible cold.....

Thanks for a very nice paper!

I have some points that I find intriguing and that have remained in my head. I agree fully with Ioannis' point that the concluding statement need to be further established, and I think that Tim's and Daniel's questioning of the ethnographic basis of the study are h

ighly relevant. My questions are in line with those comments. The first is about the transformation of the leader in Kofuku ko naga after the Aum incident. You state that a new doctrine was put forward in the beginning of the 90ties, with the help of media. The leader was introduced as an incarnation of the chief deity, el cantare. He usually did not appear in person in front of followers but through different forms of media. The Aum incident transformed the representation of the leader; his image did no longer appear in the media, he was represented in the terms of a divine light, by a symbol or in the case of the Internet as a very small picture. You refer this to elements inherent in the image and structure of the group. The leaders body is "virtualised" and it is a way to maintain the leaders spirituality and authority. I simply would like to know a bit more of this transformation/ transgression of the leader in terms of ethnographic and theoretical explanations.

Second I have a question on the discussion on Agonshu's use of media in rituals as the star festival. You state that at the satellite broadcastings the members responded in the same way as in the live rituals. The members participate in the ritual, experience being there and enter the ritual space. Media extends the ritual and re-creates the ritual. Here you rely on Durkheim to establish the collective identity of the members as part of a national temple and states that the omnipresence of the viewers replaces physical proximity between leader and follower. I am a bit confused about this explanation; it might appear to be a bit shallow. Is the satellite ritual really of the same nature as the live ritual, and the participants' experiences really similar to what they experience in the real life ritual. I think that a lot more things might be included in this point, touching on issues as perception, discussions regarding body and performance, emotions and so on.

Best Kerstin

Kerstin Andersson Dept of Social Anthropology, University of Gothenburg,  
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**From:** [ramonsarro@gmail.com](mailto:ramonsarro@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** [Medianthro] reincarnation, by comparison  
**Date:** 29 January 2008 11:06:30 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [medianthro@lists.easaonline.org](mailto:medianthro@lists.easaonline.org), [religion@easaonline.org](mailto:religion@easaonline.org)

Dear All,

Hope I am still in time to send one of the final postings to our e-seminar, as suggested by our chair John.

I enjoyed Erica's paper and Blai's comments, as well as the discussion that followed them in both lists.

I think that in retrospect I can understand why some readers found the final phrase of the paper a bit too strong. I would suggest Erica to maybe state it in the beginning of the paper, as the leading hypothesis through which she wants to navigate, instead of reaching it without giving us any training for it. I also agree with some that her appeal to Durkheim's "conscience collective" (mispelt in the text) may be problematic. I should warn her that most of the most fundamentalist Durkheimians I know of would be skeptical, or even antagonistic to the very idea of applying Durkheim's notions of 'conscience collective', 'communauté morale', 'église' and the likes to 'virtual' or 'non-physical' modes of ritual effervescence and to 'virtual communitas', to use Blai's apt concept, so I feel a stronger rationale should be invoked and a more solid argumentation used in order to be Durkheimian in this field. Some authors (most famously H. Whitehouse in his book "Icons and Arguments") have argued that the Durkheimian basic tenet according to which community is made through ritual should be limited to societies with initiatory rituals (where the presence of the body is absolutely fundamental), but not to the wider, 'imagined communities' we seem to be speaking about here, in which the relation between community, rituals and religious doctrine has to be analysed using other models and theoretical frameworks. Not that you can not argue against this view, but you *do* have to argue!

Speaking of physicality, an idea that got my imagination running after reading the text is the tension between 'being there', physically, and, let us say, 'not quite being there', which I imagine is a common theme in the anthropology of the media (not my field), but that I also explore in my work on religion. I am very interested in charismatic leaders and the effects of their 'real presence', and I found very interesting the references in this paper to 'images', 'virtualisation of the leader's body', Grimes' notion of 'making present' and, especially for the objective of this posting, that of the idea of the leader of a movement being a 'reincarnation' (first of El Cantare, but then, we read, of Jesus, Buddha and El Cantare; why did he go from one -purely divine- to three, two of which are also historical figures?). This caught my attention more than anything else in my first reading. To a certain degree, we could say that notions of 'reincarnation' are common and very powerful in many religious cultures, of course. Far away from Japan, in some Central African religious movements, for instance, some charismatic leaders are regarded as the reincarnation (though this may not be the word used in the region) of the founder of the movement and thus become very powerful agents. They 'make present' the most virtual of all realities: the true spirit of the movement. It is fascinating to think of it and then think of the virtualisation of the leader's image as Erica describes it in her case study.

Fascinating stuff, but also one that begs for some conceptual clarification. Are we not being a bit too lazy by describing these transformations as 'reincarnation' (which is a complex and loaded concept in itself) without better grounding them in local notions of body, self, person, spirit, and, especially, copy? When is a religious leader not copying a model, but being a reincarnation of it? How is a sense of 'real presence' culturally constructed and defined? I suspect the "medianthro" list members (let alone specialists in Japan) may be more than

accustomed to discuss notions of copy and reality, but since I read the paper from the religion anthropology list, I hope I am excused to ask for a wider cosmological context in order to understand the politics of presence in these religious movements, which could help readers like myself compare this interesting stuff with that gathered in other contexts.

I am aware that this might take Erica away from the objective of her paper, and I am not suggesting she ought to take it into whole account; it was just a 'parallel thinking' connection on 'reincarnation' that occurred to me, because as it happens I read this interesting paper while I was going through my thoughts and material on charismatic movements in Africa. So she can take them for what they are worth, but I would suggest her to include, at least, a footnote to clarify the semantics of the local concepts used in her field to describe what she glosses in English as 'reincarnation' and that seems to equally apply to both the embodiment of divine and of historical agents.

Best

Ramon

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<b>From:</b> <a href="mailto:jpostill@usa.net">jpostill@usa.net</a> <b>Subject:</b> Baffelli e-seminar closed; next media anthropology e-seminar <b>Date:</b> 30 January 2008 05:14:32 GMT+08:00 <b>To:</b> <a href="mailto:religion@easaonline.org">religion@easaonline.org</a> , <a href="mailto:medanthro@easaonline.org">medanthro@easaonline.org</a>
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Dear All

The joint EASA media and religion e-seminar has now come to an end. Many thanks to Erica Baffelli for sharing her working paper with us, to Blai Guarné for his discussant's comments, to Ramon Sarro and Simon Coleman for co-organising the seminar with us, and to all other list subscribers who contributed to the session. A PDF transcript of the seminar will shortly be available on the media anthropology website (<http://www.media-anthropology.net/workingpapers.htm>) courtesy of Ivan Kwek and Philipp Budka.

The next media anthropology e-seminar is scheduled for 25 March to 8 April 2008 and will be chaired by Sigurjon Hafsteinsson who, as many of you will know, is about to succeed me as media anthropology network coordinator. We shall be discussing a working paper by Gabriella Coleman (NYU) on hackers vs. scientologists.

All the best

John

**From:** [erica.baffelli@otago.ac.nz](mailto:erica.baffelli@otago.ac.nz)  
**Subject:** Re: [Mediantthro] Baffelli e-seminar closed; next media anthropology e-seminar  
**Date:** 30 January 2008 05:33:45 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [jpostill@usa.net](mailto:jpostill@usa.net)  
**Cc:** [medianthro@easaonline.org](mailto:medianthro@easaonline.org), [religion@easaonline.org](mailto:religion@easaonline.org)

Dear all,

I'd like to thank John, Simon and Ramon for hosting and co-organizing this seminar and Blai for his discussant's comments. And thanks to EASA Media Anthropology and Religion list subscribers for your comments in the seminar.

I found this seminar to be extremely valuable. Your interesting comments, precious suggestions and critics make me think about important theoretical questions and rethink about some of my positions.

I apologize I wasn't able to reply to everything immediately, but I need more time to think about questions raised and points made during the discussion.

Thank you all for your time and for sharing your thoughts,

Best wishes,

Erica

**From:** [blai.guarne@gmail.com](mailto:blai.guarne@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** [Mediantthro] Baffelli e-seminar closed; next media anthropology e-seminar  
**Date:** 31 January 2008 05:54:44 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [medianthro@easaonline.org](mailto:medianthro@easaonline.org), [religion@easaonline.org](mailto:religion@easaonline.org)  
**Cc:** [ramonsarro@gmail.com](mailto:ramonsarro@gmail.com), [erica.baffelli@otago.ac.nz](mailto:erica.baffelli@otago.ac.nz)

Dear all,

At the closing of this e-seminar, I would like to thank John Postill, coordinator of the Media Network, and Simon Coleman and Ramon Sarró, coordinators of the Religion Network, for their kind invitation to comment on Erica Baffelli's paper. It has been a pleasure to discuss her work and I would like to thank Erica for sharing such a stimulating research with us. I would also like to thank the members of the EASA Media Anthropology Network and of the Religion Network for their participation.

All the best,  
Blai

Blai Guarné, Ph.D.  
Professor Associat  
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**From:** [jpostill@usa.net](mailto:jpostill@usa.net)  
**Subject:** [Medianthro] Over to Sigurjon  
**Date:** 1 February 2008 07:21:53 GMT+08:00  
**To:** [medianthro@easaonline.org](mailto:medianthro@easaonline.org)

Dear All

Since this is my last day on the job as EASA media anthropology network coordinator, I just wanted to write a quick thank you note to all of you who've contributed to the network's numerous activities over the past three and a half years, and especially to my fellow committee members Philipp Budka, Anna Horolets and Jens Kjaerulff for their superb work.

I wish my successor, Sigurjon B. Hafsteinsson, the very best of luck and I hope he enjoys the role of coordinator as much as I have.

Best wishes

John