

Cross-cultural religious studies



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How to cite this article:

Yuehua, C. & Ali, I., 2024, 'Cross-cultural religious studies', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 80(3), a9772. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i3.9772>

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By and large, all interpretations are context-specific. This is particularly true for the interpretation of religious ideas. Religion operates within the context of culture, and the influence of the two on each other is paramount and of great significance. Today, the world's cultures are more connected than ever. Therefore, today, it is more important than ever to understand religious ideas through a cross-cultural lens. The section, Cross-Cultural Religious Studies, is an endeavour to delve into the diverse and vibrant field of cross-cultural religious studies in order to enhance our understanding of the cross-cultural and religious intricacies and nuances that illuminate our shared human experience. We have initiated this section to be a collection of academic research on religious studies, which especially highlights cultural subjectivity, with cross-cultural, inter-cultural, interdisciplinary or inter-religious perspectives.

One of the key themes explored in this section is the interplay between theology and philosophy in medieval Arab thought. In their article, 'Philosophy versus theology in medieval Islamic thought', Ali and Almulla (2023) point out that the encounter of medieval Muslims with Greek philosophy gave birth to the complex issue of 'philosophy versus theology'. Ali and Almulla (2023) proceed to explore the responses of medieval Islamic philosophers and theologians to the issue of 'philosophy versus theology', and conclude that the encounter of medieval Muslims with Greek philosophy shaped the course of their theological and philosophical thought.

The 'Three-in-One Doctrine' of Lin Chaoen is another important topic explored in this section. In his article, 'From Three-in-One Doctrine to the Religion of Three-in-One: Lin Chaoen's syncretic religion', Tang (2023) shows that the essence of the 'Three-in-One Doctrine' of Lin Chaoen is the philosophy of mind of Yangming. He explores the transformation of 'Three-in-One Doctrine' into the 'Religion of Three-in-One', and concludes that 'Religion of Three-in-One' is a new type of folk religion.

The contemporary religious relationships in the Chinese context are also explored in this section. Zhigang Zhang (2023), in his article 'Thoughts on China's contemporary religious relationship: Discussion in view of current theories', proposes positive orientating theory of Chinese religious relations on the basis of the review of the latest internationally acknowledged four theoretical orientations, namely religious market model, religious ecological model, religious compatibilism and religious praxism.

'A cross-cultural religiology between reductionism and anti-reductionism', authored by Guicai Wang, is another important contribution to the section. Wang (2023a) addresses the dispute between reductionism and anti-reductionism in religious studies. She proposes cross-cultural religiology as a middle path to settle the prevalent dispute between reductionism and anti-reductionism in religious studies.

Another important contribution to the section, titled 'Irony and salvation: A possible conversation between Kierkegaard and Zhuangzi', is authored by Peiyi Yang. In this contribution, Yang (2023) explores the possibility of dialogue between Christian and Daoist thoughts by analysing the consistency between the thoughts of Kierkegaard and Zhuangzi at the level of spiritual practice.

In his contribution to the section, titled 'A study on the ecological philosophy of Laozi', Zhicheng Wang provides a philosophical perspective on how to solve contemporary environmental problems. Wang (2023b) argues that the philosophical ideas of Laozi provide a way to resolve the current ecological crisis, wherein humans are required to imitate nature and adopt a Tao-centred way of living.

The ecological crisis has been discussed by Chuanhui Zeng as well in his contribution to the section, albeit from a different perspective. Zeng (2023), in his article titled 'Marxist view on the religious

Note: Hangzhou City University Section: Cross-cultural Religious Studies, sub-edited by Chen Yuehua and Ishraq Ali (Hangzhou City University, China).

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ecological culture: A review of the western studies in religion and environment and their discourses', deals with the topic of religious ecological culture from the perspective of Marxism and provides a response to the western discourses on the topic.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Editor-in-Chief of the *HTS Theological Studies* for providing a platform for this section. We are also thankful to the members of the editorial team of *HTS Theological Studies* including the members of the Chinese editorial office who worked efficiently and tirelessly to make this section a reality. We are particularly thankful to the Institute for Marxist Religious Studies in New Era, Hangzhou City University, Hangzhou, China and its director professor Wang Xiaochao for their unwavering support. It is also important to acknowledge the financial support of various funding agencies. We cannot forget to thank the anonymous reviewers whose valuable suggestions helped to enhance the quality of the articles included in this section. Last but

certainly not the least, we would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to the contributors of this section.

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