

# Live encounters

**Arts & Culture**

**Free online magazine from village earth**

**Volume Two December 2016**



**BYZANTIAN WOMEN**  
**DR GRETA SYKES**





Photograph by Mikyoung Cha

### **Support Live Encounters. Donate Now and keep the Magazine alive in 2017!**

Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Civil and human rights activists, animal rights activists, poets, writers, journalists, social workers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. Please help spread the free distribution of knowledge with any amount that you feel you want to give for this just cause.

#### **BANK DETAILS**

**Sarita Kaul**

**A/C : 0148748640**

**Swift Code : BNINIDJAXXX**

**PT Bank Negara Indonesia ( Persero ) Tbk**

**Kantor Cabang Utama Denpasar**

**Jl. Gajah Mada**

**Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia**

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

[markulyseas@liveencounters.net](mailto:markulyseas@liveencounters.net)

**All articles and photographs are the copyright of [www.liveencounters.net](http://www.liveencounters.net) and its contributors. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the explicit written permission of [www.liveencounters.net](http://www.liveencounters.net). Offenders will be criminally prosecuted to the full extent of the law prevailing in their home country and/or elsewhere.**

Cover - The Saint Theodora, wife of Theophilus iconoclast emperor, seated on a golden throne, with scepter and an icon of the Virgin in the left hand. Project Cretan painter Emmanuel Jane. 1671. [LINK](#)



# CONTRIBUTORS

Click on title of article to go to page



## Byzantine women

Dr Greta Sykes

Poet, writer and artist Greta Sykes has published her work in many anthologies. She is a member of London Voices Poetry Group and also produces art work for them. Her new volume of poetry called 'The Shipping News and Other Poems' came out in August 2016. The German translation of her book 'Under charred skies' has now been published in Germany under the title 'Unter verbranntem Himmel' by Eulenspiegel Verlag. She is the chair of the Socialist History Society and has organised joint poetry events for them at the Poetry Café. She is a trained child psychologist and has taught at the Institute of Education, London University, where she is now an associate researcher.



## The Persistence of Poetry

Dr Stephen Haven

Stephen Haven is the author of *The Last Sacred Place in North America* (2012), selected by T.R. Hummer as winner of the New American Press Poetry Prize. He has published two previous collections of poetry, *Dust and Bread* (Turning Point, 2008), for which he was named 2009 Ohio Poet of the Year, and *The Long Silence of the Mohawk Carpet Smokestacks* (University of New Mexico/West End Press, 2004). He is Director of the Lesley University MFA Program in Creative Writing, in Cambridge, MA.



## Public Hinduisms

Dr. John Zavos

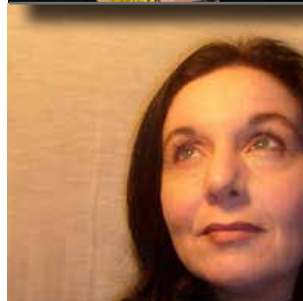
Zavos is Senior Lecturer in South Asian Studies at the University of Manchester, UK. Recent publications include *Religious Traditions in Modern South Asia* (2011), co-authored with Jacqueline Suthren Hirst, and several articles on Hinduism and Hindu organisations in the UK. He has worked extensively on the Hindu nationalist movement and is the author of *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India* (2000). 2008-10 principal investigator on the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded network project: 'The Public Representation of a Religion Called Hinduism: Postcolonial Patterns in Britain, India and the US'.



## From a Thin Place

Patricia Fitzgerald

Patricia studied Visual Education and Communication at Dun Laoghaire College of Art & Design (IADT) and also holds a first class honours degree in Philosophy and Sociology from University College, Dublin. Her first book *Healing Creations: Discover your mindful self through mandala colouring and journaling* was published in September 2016



## Artist, get thee to a residency

Sue Healy

An Irish writer, playwright and UEA Creative Writing MA alumna, Sue Healy is currently undertaking a PhD with Lincoln University, researching the Royal Court Theatre 1968-1975. Her drama credits include a full length play at the King's Head Theatre, London (2016) and nine radio plays, broadcast on BBC Radio 4, WLRfm, KCLR 96fm. She won the 2012 Sussex Playwrights' Award and presented in the 2013 Festival of Contemporary European Drama. Her prose has also won seven national prizes including the Molly Keane Prize and the HiSSAC Award and is published in nine literary publications. She was a 2013 Escalator Writer.



## Why we need museums...

Miriam Isabelle Cherribi

Miriam Isabelle Cherribi was born in 1998 in Amsterdam and lived in the historic city center for five years before moving to Atlanta where she is currently a senior at St. Pius X High School. She also lived in Mumbai in 2013 and was a student at the American School of Bombay. She has visited museums, memorials, and historic sites in many countries in Europe and Asia, as well as Morocco, Argentina and Chile. She enjoys painting, photography and martial arts.

## Celebrating 7 years 2010-2016



VOLUME TWO  
DECEMBER 2016



## A Balinese Formula for Living

Professor Unni Wikan *in an interview*

Wikan was in 2004 awarded the prestigious Norwegian Fritt Ord Award for "her insightful, openhearted and challenging contributions to the public debate on the value conflicts in multicultural societies". She has studied sociology at the University of Oslo (1965-66), social anthropology at the University of Bergen (1967-68) and Arabic at the American University in Cairo (1968-69). She does not have a degree at the undergraduate or postgraduate level, but went straight onto her PhD degree. Wikan has conducted field work in Egypt, Oman, Yemen, Indonesia, Bhutan and the Nordic countries. [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)



## Shoe Show

Emma Barone

Emma Barone is a contemporary visual artist. She makes still life and landscape paintings in acrylic on canvas. She studied animation and has an eclectic design background that ranges from interior design to architectural ceramics, and from stained glass to jewellery design. Barone's work has been featured in various publications including The Irish Arts Review, Senior Times, House and Home, and the Sunday Independent. With 19 solo exhibitions under her belt, her work is in private and public collections throughout the world.



## Beering and fearing in Khajuraho

Harish Nambiar

Nambiar is a journalist with Reuters in Mumbai. He has been a mainstream English journalist in India since 1990, having begun his career with the Times of India group. He has worked with the Indian Express, CNBC, and The Telegraph, Kolkata. In the course of his career as a reporter he has covered the 1992-93 communal riots and the serial blasts in Bombay. He has been responsible for several exposés in his stint as an investigative reporter with the Indian Express, specializing in economic offences, including the union housing scam.



## High Priest of Modern Song

Natalie Wood

Born in Birmingham, England, U.K., Natalie Wood began working in journalism a month before the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. She emigrated from Manchester to Israel in March 2010 and lives in Karmiel, Galilee from where she writes several blogs, micro-fiction and free-verse. She features in Smith Magazine's *Six Word Memoirs On Jewish Life* and has contributed to Technorati and Blogcritics along with *Jewish Renaissance* and *Live Encounters* magazines.



## Kaymakli Ekmek Kadayifi

Ozlem Warren

International cooking teacher and Turkish culinary expert Ozlem Warren is a native of Turkey, lived there and extensively travelled for 30 years. She has been teaching wholesome, delicious Turkish cookery in the US, Jordan, Istanbul and England. Her recipes have been published in the local media in England, Hurriyet and Sabah national daily newspapers in Turkey. Ozlem also took part at the "Turkish Chefs of the World", "Dünyanın Türk Seftleri" TV program aired at TRT, National Turkish TV channel and in 37 countries. [www.ozlemsturkishtable.com](http://www.ozlemsturkishtable.com)



## Merry Christmas and an enlightened New Year

Mark Ulyseas

Ulyseas is founder and editor of Live Encounters Magazine and Live Encounters Poetry. He is the author of three books: *RAINY – My friend & Philosopher*, *Seductive Avatars of Maya – Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*. <http://www.amazon.com/author/markulyseas>





Isis Nursing Horus

Poet, writer and artist Greta Sykes has published her work in many anthologies. She is a member of London Voices Poetry Group and also produces art work for them. Her new volume of poetry called 'The Shipping News and Other Poems' came out in August 2016. The German translation of her book 'Under charred skies' has now been published in Germany under the title 'Unter verbranntem Himmel' by Eulenspiegel Verlag. She is the chair of the Socialist History Society and has organised joint poetry events for them at the Poetry Café. She is a trained child psychologist and has taught at the Institute of Education, London University, where she is now an associate researcher. Her Particular focus is now on women's emancipation and antiquity. Twitter: g4gaia. Facebook.com/greta.sykes. German Wikipedia: Greta Sykes.



## DR GRETA SYKES INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION/UCL, LONDON BYZANTIAN WOMEN

*"Somehow, when women's history is involved, a very atemporal attitude emerges in scholarship, as if a woman's lot is a natural condition' – much of it determined by the bible/semitic interpretation and authors like Aeschylus..." (Doerr, 2005).*

*"Space and gender are interrelated: the former reflects and affects the ways in which gender is constructed and understood" (Herrin, 2007).*

Today women are still largely excluded from the space called 'political and economic power', proving Herrin's point. The recent opening of the film 'Suffragette' was accompanied by women demonstrating their anger about the continued inequality of women. Under the guise of apparent gender openness, as represented by trans persons the same wage inequality, rape, sexual abuse and silencing of women is exercised. How does it come about that history time and again misses out on the story of its women as active participants in society so that even now history books can be written with negligible attention paid to women's role in the making of human society? In his history of the world (Frankopan, The silk roads, 2015) begins his narrative with Mesopotamia, but fails to mention the powerful legacy of female power that was inherited by Hammurabi when he wrote his Code. The earliest poet in the world is arguably Enheduanna of Mesopotamia (2,600 BC). She wrote lyrical verses celebrating the achievements of the Goddess Inanna. Nisaba was the Goddess of writing. Ruether (2005) suggests that women had a hand in shaping the beginning of the written method of keeping records. Frankopan does mention Cleopatra, but he leaves out the story of the six other Cleopatras who ruled Egypt before the one we know best. He discusses Byzantium, but gives no indication of the surprising power that women were able to obtain during its over thousand years' existence. For the purpose of this essay I want to focus on Byzantium to illustrate the diverse and productive participation of women in social, economic and political power.





Isis depicted with outstretched wings (wall painting, c. 1360 BCE) [LINK](#)

In her book *Unrivalled influence – Women and Empire in Byzantium* Herrin explores the specific circumstances that allowed many women to achieve relatively high levels of power and self actualisation in Byzantium compared with most other areas around the globe at the time.

Go into any museum in the UK or Germany and you will find the story of Byzantium reduced to a minor subtext. An effeminate empire some historians argued, while others choose to ignore its presence altogether, naming it simply the Eastern part of Rome. Yet from the sixth to the fifteenth century Byzantium and its influence, albeit waxing and waning, became a constant feature of the Mediterranean world. Byzantians considered themselves to be Romans.

*“Byzantium was ...many centuries old by the time of Charlemagne and Harun El-Rashid in AD 800... it was born old, importing into its cities antique architecture and statuary.”* (Herrin).

When Charlemagne established his court in Aachen by having the cathedral built it was modelled on the most famous church of Byzantium and the Christian world, namely the Hagia Sofia in Constantinople. Its cupola is imitating the size and shape of that most famous of all churches. When exploring how women became powerful and what prevented them from being appropriately represented in history textbooks Herrin found how (male) historians’ preoccupations with their own prejudiced view of women as weak and unimportant had prevented them from making due reference to women’s enormous contribution to society. Female influence is doubly veiled from us: It is often silent, unvoiced by the women themselves, and frequently ignored, either deliberately or as a matter of course in the sources written by men. Many antique texts about women turn out to be ways men found to compete with each other. Here they sometimes led slip instances of those women who voiced their opposition. Herrin found that two key features of the Byzantine world led to the enormous power that some women were able to wield.

### Roman law

Women could gain power and influence through an intricate web of traditions in Byzantium. The culture of religious practice, legal status and Greek education all helped to facilitate their political influence. Roman case law - the *Peira* of Eustathios Romaios offers insight into how ingenious women were at using legal means to exercise their rights. Roman law allowed for women to inherit land and property and pass it on as they saw fit. While accepting that the authority lay with the ‘*pater familias*’ the law protected the inheritance of women.

When Charlemagne established his court in Aachen by having the cathedral built it was modelled on the most famous church of Byzantium and the Christian world, namely the Hagia Sofia in Constantinople. Its cupola is imitating the size and shape of that most famous of all churches. When exploring how women became powerful and what prevented them from being appropriately represented in history textbooks Herrin found how (male) historians’ preoccupations with their own prejudiced view of women as weak and unimportant had prevented them from making due reference to women’s enormous contribution to society.

Female household heads were common enough who were therefore able to dispose of their wealth as they wished. Litavrin in his analysis of the AD 1073 ‘*praktikon*’ calculated that about one quarter of the total number of households was headed by a woman. They would engage in social activities of their choice and participate actively in the life of their town.

### The Christian church

The ecclesiastical institutions and Christian beliefs at the time offered another avenue for women to extend their rights and status. Women made creative use of existing ecclesiastical rules and traditions to find opportunities to achieve self-determination. One of their strategies was to refuse to remarry if a husband had died. Thus they remained in charge of their property, land, servants and any trade links. These women could live by doing charitable work, such as caring for the poor. They might also free their slaves, give away their property to the church, or build hospices and even monasteries. This means that women played a significant role in maintaining properties and land with agricultural value and were able to dispose of it should they wish to do so.

### Ancient cultural traditions

The survival of ancient traditions of city life perpetuated public institutions and habits that influenced female behaviour in the early Byzantine period despite disapproval by the church. The Constantinople city records more often give an impression of women’s lives including that of poor women than of those who live in the country. Constantinople and other smaller towns and ports attracted people from the countryside to work in markets, fairs and urban occupations. City women feature at the races and the processions associated with court ceremonies and church feasts. They attended executions, shared in charitable distributions of food and participated in running food stalls, appearing as performers, dancing and rioting.

Paradoxically every public institution such as a public bath, due to segregation, had to have female attendants, thus there were positions for women. Such work was in the sphere of public employment, commercial activity, working in small businesses or running them from their homes, selling prepared food on the street and marketing produce grown in and around the city. Entertainment was hardly a public career but could be a very public activity, such as acting as dancers and entertainers. Women were also active as midwives and fortune tellers, participating in pre-Christian rituals, such as lighting bonfires at new moon and dancing in public spaces.



Of the three monotheistic religions it is only the Christian religion which allows for a female figure of adoration. Indeed Mary is to some Christians the most important person of the holy family. According to Ruether (2005) Mary was modelled on the Goddess Isis who was the most venerated Goddess in Egypt from about 3000 BC. Isis had power over nature, fertility and death. Together with her brother and lover Osiris Isis gave birth to Horus. The image of Isis with Horus on her lap or suckling him was adopted by the early Christians and turned into their own myth of the caring holy family.

## The role of fore-shortening human history

History tends to be presented to us at best as gender-less, if not entirely from a male pre-occupation, as shown earlier (Frankopan). This includes a perspective of the human story that begins with the bible. However, thousands of years of vibrant societies with highly developed cultures and spiritual traditions existed before that time.

*"The foreshortening of human history is to impose intellectual shackles upon the further investigation of the great transformation that occurred from savagery to civilisation"* (Engels, 1972).

*"The first class oppression is that of the female sex by the male."* (Engels, 1972).

Before the three monotheistic religions arose human societies were reigned by Goddesses, as a brief study of ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia reveals. Doerr (2005) comments:

*"The creation of the world by one male God stands in its oriental context chronologically at the end as well as an exception among the older creation myths."*

Of the three monotheistic religions it is only the Christian religion which allows for a female figure of adoration. Indeed Mary is to some Christians the most important person of the holy family. According to Ruether (2005) Mary was modelled on the Goddess Isis who was the most venerated Goddess in Egypt from about 3000 BC. Isis had power over nature, fertility and death. Together with her brother and lover Osiris Isis gave birth to Horus. The image of Isis with Horus on her lap or suckling him was adopted by the early Christians and turned into their own myth of the caring holy family. Ruether (2005) comments:

*"A favourite image of Isis and Horus shows the young king seated on her lap as she suckles him from her breast, an image that would be taken over into Christianity as the image of Mary suckling the baby Jesus on her lap."*

The continuity of ancient customs based on the dominance of female deities can thus be shown to have been inherited and adapted by early Christians. While the rites of public dances, moon adorations and other rituals were continued by women over time the church rulers who tended to be men set about to reduce the freedom women had. Yet scope for self-actualised expression of economic and political power existed throughout the existence of the Byzantine Empire.



From right to left: Isis, her husband Osiris, and their son Horus. [LINK](#)





Empress Theodora and attendants. Mosaic of Theodora - Basilica of San Vitale (built A.D. 547), Italy. [LINK](#)

## Eunuchs

The so-called beardless men were celibate men who had careers in the ecclesiastical administration. Castration was used in some cases shortly after birth in those cases when sons from ambitious men might try to reach for the throne. At the same time eunuchs could also be any men who had forsaken sexuality as an expression of their personality or who had for any other reason given up wishing to be sexually active. Thus a form of third gender existed of men, sometimes also women, who were able and willing to work in administration, as servants or otherwise as servants at the court. Women would need to use male dress to escape from normal female duties and fulfil similar roles to those of eunuchs. Monastic disguises were adopted by women who were able to pass as eunuchs permitting them to simulate a holiness reserved for males. An extreme form of self-expression consisted of choosing martyrdom. Such women became symbols of adoration for many other women.

## Cult of the Virgin Mary

During the fifth century a powerful development allowed women a whole new range of self-expression based on the cult of the Virgin Mary. The accumulation of the highest honour ever accorded to a Christian woman combining an elevated public image with the more usual private and personal role of mother forged a unique model. The 'discovery' of relics such as a girdle and a veil added to the mystique and power.

The church began to accept places for women such as convents, the devotion of girls and widows to celibacy against the social pressure of marriage. Women with inheritance founded their own monasteries. Joining a religious community guaranteed a woman greater self-control than in any other spiritual practice. St. Antousa lived in the 8th century. She committed herself to a spiritual life while still very young. She had a monastery built on an island dedicated to the Virgin. She also had a monastery for men constructed which she also ruled. In both places the veneration of icons was maintained, even at the time of iconoclasm.

Thus a focus for female ascetic life was created which attracted women to them for a whole variety of motives. It illustrates that the Christian religion was experienced by women as having the potential for power and status. The mere fact that such opportunities existed acted as an empowering inspiration for all the women.

“In myth and in laws, as well as religion the deep and persistent cultural consequences of disappeared human worlds live on, often in changed and differently presented forms’ which tell us of practices long since gone.”

## Empresses

The most powerful of these positions was occupied by Empresses. Over the centuries there were many Empresses who reigned Byzantium, such as Theodora, Zoe and Irene. Empress Theodora rose from a street dancer to become Empress in AD 842 and was instrumental in bringing about the end of iconoclasm which had led to thousands of icons being destroyed. Empress Irene ruled Byzantium for twenty-two years. In AD 769 Irene married Leo when both were only in their teens. She bore him a son called Constantine. Leo died in AD 780. Irene refused to remarry and thus assumed the powerful role of Empress Mother. For the next decade she appointed officials to lead the armies, to govern and tax the empire's regions. She ran the civilian administration, and conducted diplomatic relations with foreign powers. She patronised the building of new churches and monasteries. Together with Patriarch Tarasios she summoned the Seventh Ecumenical Council. This met in AD 787 in Nicea to confirm the reversal of the policy of iconoclasm.

## Conclusion

The story of Byzantine women is a compelling reminder of what we have lost over the thousands of years by way of the first class struggle (Engels, 1972). It also points to the way forward to achieve equality for women. It must involve a revival and celebration of ancient cultural traditions and a pre-monotheistic approach. Kornemann (1992) comments:

*“In myth and in laws, as well as religion the deep and persistent cultural consequences of disappeared human worlds live on, often in changed and differently presented forms’ which tell us of practices long since gone.”*

## References

- Doerr, G. (1992) *Muttermythos und Herrschaftsmythos*. Koenigshausen & Neumann. Wuerzburg.  
 Engels, F. (1972) *The Origin of the family, private property and the state*. Pathfinder Press. New York.  
 Frankopan, P. (2015) *The Silk Roads*. Bloomsbury. London.  
 Herrin, J. (2005) *Unrivalled influence – women and empire in Byzantium*. Princeton University Press. Oxford.  
 Kornemann, E. in Pembroke, S. (1992) *Frauen in der Vormachtstellung*. In: *Matriarchatstheorien der Altertumeswissenschaft*. Ed. Wagner-Hasel, B. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. Darmstadt.  
 Ruether, R. (2005) *Goddesses and the divine feminine*. University of California Press. Berkley.



Stephen Haven is the author of *The Last Sacred Place in North America* (2012), selected by T.R. Hummer as winner of the New American Press Poetry Prize. He has published two previous collections of poetry, *Dust and Bread* (Turning Point, 2008), for which he was named 2009 Ohio Poet of the Year, and *The Long Silence of the Mohawk Carpet Smokestacks* (University of New Mexico/West End Press, 2004). He is Director of the Lesley University MFA Program in Creative Writing, in Cambridge, MA.



STEPHEN HAVEN

## THE PERSISTENCE OF POETRY



It may be hard for Americans to imagine the pervasive presence of poetry in Chinese culture. Even in the modern era that presence persists, though modern Chinese poetry has had to survive the double onslaught of twentieth century communism and twenty-first century communist-capitalism. When I spent my first Fulbright year in Beijing, in 1990-1991, as a tribute to their foreign guest young children sometimes recited classical Chinese poems for me.

The Chinese love of beauty infiltrates the culture as a whole—an aesthetic sensibility that has filtered down through the influence of thousands of years. Among educated people, poetry in China is still regarded as the highest art because it unifies other art forms. Poetry has musical effects, visual effects, the emotional range of drama, and draws also from religion, history and philosophy. My sense from conversations with cab drivers through the window of my broken Mandarin is that even the Chinese working class has regard for the words “poet” and “poetry.” The twin spirits of poetry, bamboo and willows, are often planted together in many urban parks.

The poets Li Bai and Du Fu lived for many years in Szechuan Province where bamboo and willows grow.

An assault on poetry took place after 1949 in Mao’s reformation of the Chinese language. New generations educated to read only Mao’s modern reformed Chinese were largely incapable of understanding classical literature in its original expression. Meanwhile there was the muse’s other minor inhibition—the ideological correctness of all public poetry in the bloody, political hubris of the People’s Republic’s first decades. Only after Mao’s death in 1976, in the midst of the Democracy Wall Movement, poets began to write with reckless disregard for state censorship. A revolution in Chinese poetry took place in 1978 when Bei Dao, Mang Ke, Duo Duo, and other Misty School poets began publishing their oblique, plaintive poems in the journal Jintian (Today).

In April 2011, I had dinner in Beijing with poets Lan Lan, Duo Duo, and Wang Jiaxin. I asked Duo Duo what modern Chinese poet prior to 1977 had made a contribution to his generation. “No one,” he said. He said, “There is no Chinese poet like Wallace Stevens or Paul Celan.” In a beautiful restaurant near the American embassy, with caged song birds and potted trees all around us, Lan Lan’s twins, and Wang Jiaxin’s wife and son, Duo Duo claimed through the Frost scholar, my old student Lui Ruiying, that modern Western poetry was his literary father. In his complaint that many American poets are satisfied merely “to tell the story,” he suggested his affinity with the lyrical, non-narrative character of most classical Chinese poetry.

In a later conversation, Li Yongyi, a scholar, translator, Chongqing University professor, and Liu Ruiying’s classmate when they studied poetry with me in 1997-1998 at Beijing Normal University, defined the essence of the Chinese classical tradition, and Bei Dao’s place within it, as “spiritual, not in an other-worldly, religious sense, but in a fusion of the individual, either with history or with nature; essentially it is an awareness and a feeling that an individual’s experience is always connected with that of other fellow human beings, other species, even with the whole cosmos.”

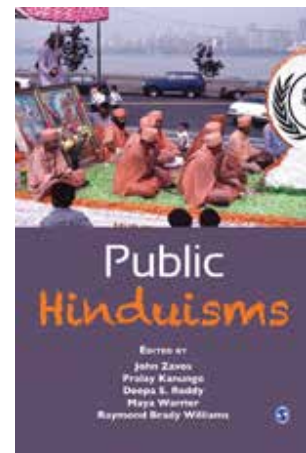
In the midst of China’s recent media explosion, in its many schools and guises poetry now competes for an audience with rock stars, bloggers, comedians, essayists, fiction writers, television and movie stars. At the People’s University in 1990, without stereos, radios, VCRs, cell phones or television to distract them, students entertained themselves by reciting poems, singing songs, telling jokes and stories, each classmate taking a turn to entertain the party. That year, shortly after the Tiananmen massacre, even political science students knew the poetry of Bei Dao, Mang Ke, and Duo Duo.

© Stephen Haven



I have worked at the University of Manchester since 2000. I was awarded my PhD in the field of religion and politics by the University of Bristol in 1998. I also have an M.Phil in Modern Indian History from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. I am a historian by training, and have worked extensively on the development of the Hindu nationalist movement. More recently my work has focused on Hindus and Hindu organisations in diaspora contexts. My published work includes *Religious Traditions in Modern South Asia* (London: Routledge, 2011, co-authored with Jacqueline Suthren Hirst) and *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

I am the lead editor of *Public Hinduisms* (Sage, 2012, with co-editors Pralay Kanungo, Deepa Reddy, Maya Warrier and Raymond Williams) and have also edited two volumes in collaboration with other colleagues: *Decentring the Indian Nation?* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), with Andrew Wyatt, and *Politics of Cultural Mobilisation in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004) with Andrew Wyatt and Vernon Hewitt. I have also worked on the World Parliament of Religions and the representation of religious identities in the contemporary world. I have been the editor of the journal *Contemporary South Asia* since January 2008



## Dr. John Zavos

Senior Lecturer in South Asian Studies  
The University of Manchester  
Lead Editor of

## Public Hinduisms

Published by Sage Publications

Late in 2005 a controversy unexpectedly surfaced in the everyday procedures of the California State Board of Education. In the course of a public consultation exercise which forms a regular part of its review of Social Science and History textbooks for use in public schools, the Board ran into some diametrically opposed views about references to Hinduism and Indian history. The initial protagonists in this controversy were, on the one hand, two Hindu groups, the Hindu Education Foundation (HEF) and the Vedic Foundation (VF) who had suggested some edits to the textbooks, and on the other, Michael Witzel, Professor of Sanskrit and Indian Studies at Harvard University, who had written a letter supported and signed by nearly 50 other academics from around the world, objecting to the involvement of these two Hindu groups. Deepa Reddy, one of the contributors to a recent book entitled *Public Hinduisms*, takes up the story:

public awareness of the controversy was growing and various groups representing disparate sets of interests began to identify their positions vis-à-vis the issues. ...An array of groups joined in the chorus of opposition to the HEF/VF edits; most prominent among these were the Friends of South Asia, Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America, and the Coalition Against Communalism. Their opposition then precipitated further public debate: the Hindu American Foundation supported the HEF/VF edits, as did many other far more loosely organized groups and individuals (academics and others) writing into local media or directly to the SBE.

And so the controversy rumbled on, echoing to some extent a similar controversy that had emerged a few years earlier in India, where the National Council of Educational Research and Training was similarly embroiled in a struggle over historical representations in school textbooks. The way in which these controversies developed demonstrates a fundamental point about religions and the communities associated with them: public representation is an unpredictable, sometimes fraught process, both framed and influenced by a range of agents, both 'within' and 'outside' the fuzzy boundaries of the community itself.

The book from which the above quotation is drawn is concerned with this process. It looks at modern Hinduism, and the practices of Hindus in some areas of the world where this religion has a particularly significant public presence. India, not surprisingly, is at the heart of this study, but it also looks at the ways that Hindus have asserted and maintained a public presence for the religion in two key diaspora contexts: the US and the UK, where large numbers of Hindu migrants have settled over the past 50 years. Of course, this is by no means an exhaustive study geographically: Hindus are spread much more broadly than this. But it does provide some critical interventions focused on these three important sites, providing some models for further research on this important and rapidly developing field.

This is an edited volume with a title that challenges the reader to think carefully about the concept at its heart. It purports to study Hinduisms, rather than Hinduism, invoking a plurality justified by reference to theoretical work over the last twenty years or so which has emphasised the constructed nature of the concept of Hinduism (and in fact, of the concept of 'religion' on which it is based). Lots of work has looked at the ways in which the varied traditions of South Asia were brought together through a range of discourses in the early modern and colonial period, organised or even, some argue, disciplined by an overarching discourse of religion which articulated those traditions as a religious 'system' called Hinduism. This current volume explores how these historical processes have played out in the era of postcolonialism, how the idea of Hinduism continues to be produced in the complex public arenas of the contemporary world. Not all public representations of Hinduism are as hotly contested as those in the so-called California Textbook controversy described at the start of this article. But more generally speaking, the book argues that the processes involved are implicitly political (often with a small 'p'), in that they involve the public assertion of particular representations by particular groups; a claim to the power of representation, then, which may or may not be contested, depending on contexts and on the relative power of other groups with an interest.

First published in *Live Encounters Magazine* December 2013

© John Zavos



This is an edited volume with a title that challenges the reader to think carefully about the concept at its heart. It purports to study Hinduisms, rather than Hinduism, invoking a plurality justified by reference to theoretical work over the last twenty years or so which has emphasised the constructed nature of the concept of Hinduism (and in fact, of the concept of 'religion' on which it is based). This current volume explores how these historical processes have played out in the era of postcolonialism, how the idea of Hinduism continues to be produced in the complex public arenas of the contemporary world.

The importance of politics in the process of public representation means that there is one modern phenomenon associated with Hinduism which cannot be ignored in this book: the ideas and actions associated with Hindutva or Hindu nationalism. The book embraces this challenge, but the approach is influenced by a recognition, gleaned through the many debates that shaped the intellectual approaches in the volume, that this phenomenon has to be comprehensively situated – socially, culturally, religiously. We can only understand its development if we recognise the loose weaves through which it appears in the everyday articulations of Hindu-ness across the globe.

All this may sound rather general, and it has to be so, as the processes that the book theme encompasses are multidimensional, from the birth anniversary celebrations of the Nath Yogi sampradaya (or Hindu sect) in a Rajasthani ashram, to the representations of Hindu deities on underwear, toilets and even chocolates by various US companies.

As this suggests, just as there are a diversity of Hinduisms to take into account, there are also a wide range of public spaces that are potential sites for the representation of religious identities. In the contemporary world of advanced communication and media technologies, the complexity of these public spaces – how they relate to, interact and overlap with each other – is intensified. For example, our understanding of the development of Hindu communities has long been framed by the location of these communities 'at home' in India, or 'away from home' in the diaspora.

Many of the papers in this book, however, demonstrate that this divide is being progressively breached, as the internet and other forms of virtual public space provide new and critical avenues to representation, which are not constrained by national, or, for that matter, any other geospatial contexts. One organisation which has done much to develop its presence in these environments is the Bochasanwasi Sri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, a comparatively modern sampradaya which was established in Gujarat in western India, but now has a global reach and sophisticated internet presence. The book explores this organisation through four articles, including one focused explicitly on its websites.

The importance of politics in the process of public representation means that there is one modern phenomenon associated with Hinduism which cannot be ignored in this book: the ideas and actions associated with *Hindutva* or Hindu nationalism. The book embraces this challenge, but the approach is influenced by a recognition, gleaned through the many debates that shaped the intellectual approaches in the volume, that this phenomenon has to be comprehensively situated – socially, culturally, religiously. This approach challenges what the editorial group perceives as a damaging faultline in some previous scholarship, isolating the politics of Hindu nationalism from broader developments in the articulation of Hinduism as a religion. The book locates Hindu nationalism in this broader perspective, exploring the continuities and ruptures which inform the relationship between Hindu nationalism and movements and ideas which are not manifestly part of this project.

This is evident, for example, in chapters which explore such diverse organisations as the Krishna Pranami sampradaya and the Hindu Forum of Britain, and resonant diaspora ideas like the 'practising Hindu'. Pathologising Hindu nationalism does not lead to critical clarity. We can only understand its development if we recognise the loose weaves through which it appears in the everyday articulations of Hindu-ness across the globe.

Such insights point to a complex and developing set of ideas underpinning manifestations of public Hinduisms. The project from which this book is drawn seeks to continue to explore these manifestations, not just in and across the three countries that form the focus here, but more generally as a feature of the contemporary world. Recently, I have produced an article on the development of public Hinduism in the context of the European Union, and Europe more generally [LINK](#).

Other recent work on this area of study includes a book entitled *The Guru in South Asia: New Interdisciplinary Perspectives* [LINK](#). This book is edited by Jacob Copeman and Aya Ikegame, two scholars who took part in the network debates which also produced *Public Hinduisms*. These developments show how the research agendas explored in the *Public Hinduisms* project have been sustained, and the steering group is now looking to develop these agendas through further research and productive scholarly debate. Please refer to the network website for news of these developments [LINK](#).



Patricia studied Visual Education and Communication at Dun Laoghaire College of Art & Design (IADT) and also holds a first class honours degree in Philosophy and Sociology from University College, Dublin. Her first book *Healing Creations: Discover your mindful self through mandala colouring and journaling* was published in September 2016 by The Collins Press. She hosts workshops on the art of mandala and meditation both in Ireland and abroad. You can see more about her work at [www.healingcreations.ie](http://www.healingcreations.ie)



## FROM A THIN PLACE

### MANDALAS BY PATRICIA FITZGERALD

---

Thin Places are places where the eternal world and the physical world meet and mingle. When I am creating these mandalas, it often feel as though I am paying a visit to a thin place, another world or a space between worlds. Various motifs, a sense of other cultures and times appear to emerge on their own from the work. When beginning a piece, I go into a quiet meditation and then simply allow what happens to happen. There are no mistakes. If my mind conceptualises an idea and a 'mistake' occurs, I allow that mistake to lead me to wherever it wants to take me. Another path away from the beaten track. That is often where the most magic happens. Doors open to other possibilities that my mind had not seen. Always during the process of mandala making, the dream landscape becomes more vivid for me, and I would also consider this ethereal place to be a thin place.

[www.healingcreations.ie](http://www.healingcreations.ie)  
[www.facebook.com/healingcreationsbymandalaflame](https://www.facebook.com/healingcreationsbymandalaflame)



Shri Durga Mandala





Kalachakra for the Goddess



Woman





Through the looking Glass



Pisces





Free Spirit



When Angels Visit





An Irish writer, playwright and UEA Creative Writing MA alumna, Sue Healy is currently undertaking a PhD with Lincoln University, researching the Royal Court Theatre 1968-1975. Her drama credits include a full length play at the King's Head Theatre, London (2016) and nine radio plays, broadcast on BBC Radio 4, WLRfm, KCLR 96fm. She won the 2012 Sussex Playwrights' Award and presented in the 2013 Festival of Contemporary European Drama. Her prose has also won seven national prizes including the Molly Keane Prize and the HiSSAC Award and is published in nine literary publications. She was a 2013 Escalator Writer. She previously lived in Budapest, Hungary for eleven years and speaks Hungarian. She now lives in London where she is literary assistant at the Finborough Theatre. [www.suehealy.org](http://www.suehealy.org)

## ARTIST, GET THEE TO A RESIDENCY

They exist so the artist can create. It is a noble mission and one that has proved invaluable to artists since the first was launched over a hundred years ago in the United States. Traditionally, artist-in-residence programmes extend invitations to artists, ie writers, musicians, visual artists, dancers, film-makers etc... to leave aside everyday life and responsibilities and spend time on art, reflecting, researching and producing in a unique, often isolated environment.

Some residencies require interactivity with a local community, which may include giving workshops or donating art work. Others might place importance on some artistic conversation with the immediate environment. The majority will encourage an exchange of ideas between residents, providing opportunity to meet and be inspired by other artists at the top of their game.

The U.S. is where the concept of the residency was born and it is still home to the world's most famous residencies, their names instantly recognisable: Yaddo, McDowell and Millay. Mere acceptance into any of these top three anoints immediate status on the artist concerned. Such residencies are probably amongst the most generous too, providing free room and board, even sometimes a stipend, as well a beautiful environment, for weeks, sometimes months on end. Not surprisingly, gaining residency at these prestigious colonies is difficult without a solid and impressive artist's resume. There is no single model for an artists' residency however, and there are a number of respected residencies which are less well-known, and ergo entry is less competitive and the requirements less strict. Moreover, there is an increasing number of retreats available to artists which provide a similar services, but for fee. All that is needed for a such an environment to work for you is to know what you plan to achieve whilst there and to be prepared to put in the work. You have possibly noticed that when people say that they're jacking in the day job to write a book, work on an album or put together an exhibition, in the same breath they usually tell you where this project is taking place. "I'm going to move to Paris/rent a shack in the woods/go to a monastery/live by the sea" they say, as if the locale will lend more credibility to their project.

*First published in Live Encounters Magazine March 2012*

© Sue Healy

volume two 2016 december © [www.liveencounters.net](http://www.liveencounters.net)





Neil Paris, dancer and artistic director of Smith Dancetheatre Company

It doesn't. You can spend a year on a prestigious writers' colony and come up with but a few pages of unpublishable, self-indulgent nonsense. Whereas, groundbreaking art can be created in a run-down apartment full of screaming kids, between the hours of 6-7pm every day – the important factor being "every day". In other words, it is not where you create that matters, but the fact that you do create and you do so in a focused manner. Still, time and seclusion in an attractive environment do nurture creativity and attending an artists' residency will likely inspire and support productivity. For many, an added benefit is the cross pollination of ideas via conversations with other artists. During daytime, artists often tiptoe around, quietly creating between trips to the kitchen for coffee and snacks. In the evenings, however, they read to one another, show their visual art, play music, listen to critiques and they talk, and they talk and they talk. In many ways, the modern art residency mimics the meeting places of the great art movements from Paris' Deux Magots to Greenwich Village's Café Wha – the residency is an environment which promotes the progression and discussion of new ideas. Obviously, such a scenario will provide ample opportunity for artists to network and enduring friendships and artistic collaborations are often born at residencies

That said, not all residencies emphasise artistic fellowship. There are a few that encourage artists to explore the hermetic experience, and such places are proving ever more popular in a world where it is increasingly difficult to, well, retreat.

**Áras Éanna** is one such residency. Located on the Irish island of Inis Oirr, one of Europe's most westerly and remote points, in winter months, it can provide the solitary existence some artists might require.

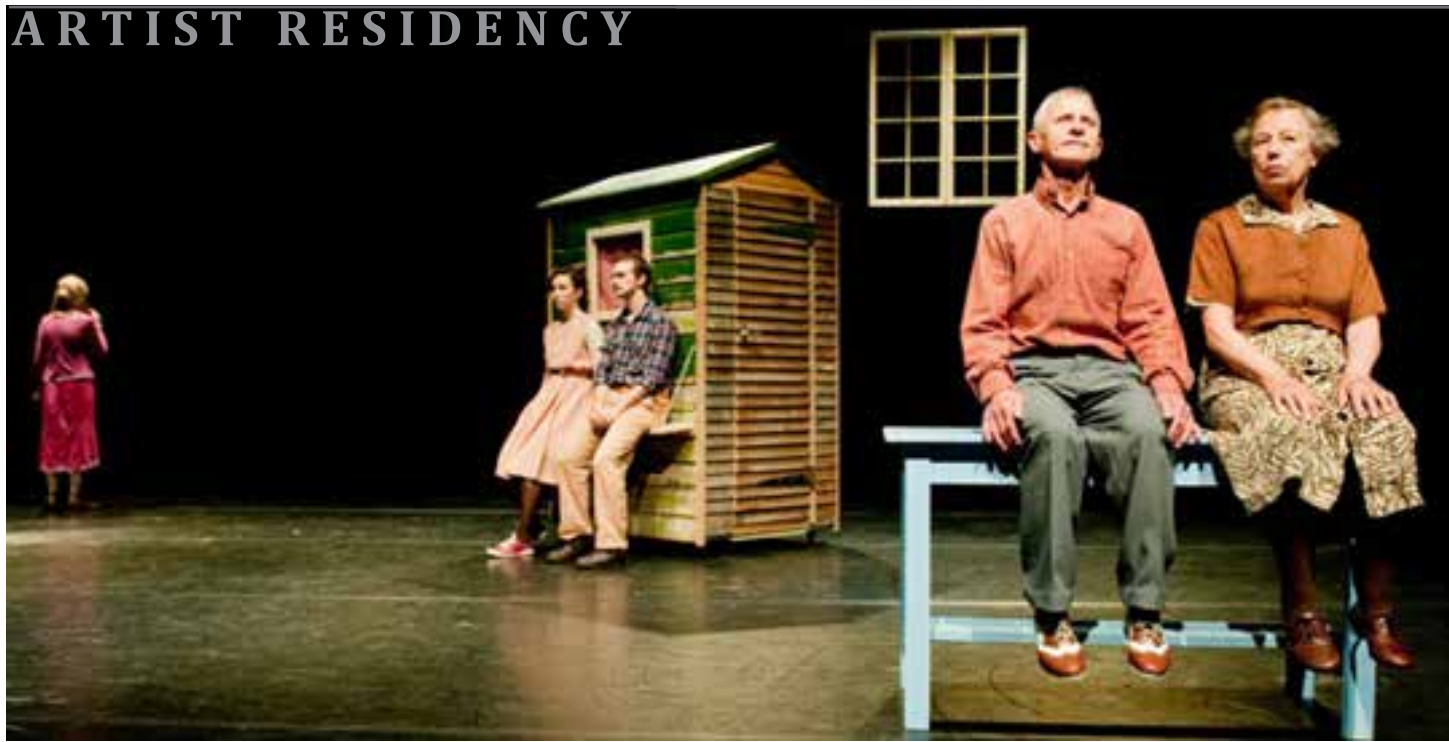
Neil Paris, dancer and artistic director of Smith Dancetheatre Company, Norwich, England, says his time spent at Ireland's Áras Éanna Residency was something of a metamorphosis.

"Although I had worked in the arts as a performer and teacher for over a decade, I was struggling with the idea of being an artist, and the residency on the Aran Islands gave me the time to crystallise and come to terms with that idea. It formed a bridge between my career as a performer working with pieces devised by others, to where I am at now, conceptualizing and developing my own work for my own dancetheatre company." Paris, a native of Norfolk, England, spent ten weeks on the remote island, situated off Ireland's Atlantic shore in early 2009, during this time he had little contact with other people, a solitary existence he feels greatly contributed to productivity.



Tyrone Guthrie Arts Centre, Monaghan, Ireland Pic © Sue Healy





Agnes and Walter: A Little Love Story

“The pressure of life was off. I was alone. I had time to allow ideas to percolate, to form, to move from the back brain to the fore – the experience allowed me to think, to breathe. In fact, I am only now realising the full extent of how inspiring and affecting Áras Éanna was. My current project, *Agnes and Walter: A Little Love Story*, which is touring the UK, was conceived at Áras Éanna and during that time, I also explored other art forms such as painting and writing which have since informed my creative practice. Áras Éanna allowed me to become the artist I am today.”

When researching a residency to suit you, it is also worth bearing in mind the difference between a “residency” and a “retreat”. Residencies are institutions to which you must apply and demonstrate your professionalism as an artist via a portfolio and references and a CV/resume that shows you are considered by your peers to be a practicing professional artist. Residencies are often funded by an arts and/or educational body and are usually cheap, or free and might even provide a stipend.

They are often offered with the proviso that you ‘give back’ to the community, perhaps via donating a service, such as hosting workshops. Residencies can last from two weeks to a year and are quite prestigious. Being accepted onto a residency is an impressive feat in itself. And, whilst there, you may come into contact with some top tier “names”.

Retreats differ from the above model. Retreats are institutions that sometimes offer courses – the UK’s ‘Arvon Foundation’ is a good example which has three properties around England and holds intensive writing courses throughout the year. Other retreats just offer room and board to artists for a fee, somewhat like a hotel but with an emphasis on creativity and productivity during your stay.

They’re not usually frequented by top-level artists, so you won’t find yourself having dinner with the arts’ world A-list ... but you might meet some interesting people and the surrounds are usually very picturesque and inspiring.

Retreats are good for novice or emerging writers who are not yet at the stage in their career where they might gain acceptance on a “residency”, but retreats provide many of the same advantages of a residency. Equally, if you are at an early stage in your career and simply need some peace and quiet to advance a project or mull a mission, then perhaps you should simply rent some respite via a holiday cottage in the wilds of Connemara in autumn, or stay in a B&B on Dartmoor or a shack in the Catskills – you may be able to get a ‘low season deal’ and it will probably provide the inspiration you seek.



Tyrone Guthrie Arts Centre, Monaghan, Ireland Pic © Sue Healy

Many artists combine the use of residencies with travel and thus feed their work via their global experiences. And it is perfectly fine to do so – so long as you remember to work when you get there – otherwise, you might as well just book a package holiday. One of the most innovative ways to work such a combination is to use freight travel (paid passage on container ships) to see the world, in between longer periods at sea where time is spent in cabins, creating.

Clearly, artists’ residencies and retreats have evolved into many forms since the Yaddo residency was launched in Saratoga Springs, New York in 1900 with a mission to “to nurture the creative process by providing an opportunity for artists to work without interruption in a supportive environment.” They have continued to provide, however, artistic refuge and inspiration to almost every artist of note from the mid-twentieth century onwards and there are few working artists today who have not availed of their unique nurturing environment.

The concept of the artist’s residency has long since spread its wings. The above mentioned Áras Éanna in Ireland, is an example of how residencies are no longer confined to the U.S. Indeed, there are a number of prestigious residencies located in India, China and South America today.

Ireland has a disproportionate representation of the same, perhaps not surprisingly in a land noted for its writers. Furthermore, a collection of startlingly beautiful residences can be found around Europe.

**So, there is no excuse, artist. Get thee to a residency.**

For listings of international residencies: <http://www.resartis.org/en/>  
<http://www.agnesandwalter.co.uk>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTgwV93ybBs>



Miriam Isabelle Cherribi was born in 1998 in Amsterdam and lived in the historic city center for five years before moving to Atlanta where she is currently a senior at St. Pius X High School. She also lived in Mumbai in 2013 and was a student at the American School of Bombay. She has visited museums, memorials, and historic sites in many countries in Europe and Asia, as well as Morocco, Argentina and Chile. She enjoys painting, photography and martial arts.



Miriam Isabelle Cherribi

## WHY WE NEED MUSEUMS...

In Salman's Rushdie's comic folk tale *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, the character Haroun travels to foreign lands in order to save his country and free his father from fatal illness. Haroun's father, Rashid Khalifa, a famous storyteller known as the "Ocean of Notions." Haroun is captivated by the stories his father tells him. When visiting museums and memorials, this writer often finds herself whisked away by her imagination just as Haroun was by his father's stories.

This writer attributes her love for museums, which began as a young child, to the fact that until the age of five she lived in the center of the city of Amsterdam, a veritable outdoor 17th century architectural museum. As a small child visiting Amsterdam's Van Gogh Museum with her family, she was mesmerized by his sunflowers but shocked by his self-portrait with a bandaged ear. Moving to Atlanta, after the first of many visits to The Carlos Museum, an antiquities museum at Emory University, she became engrossed in ancient mythology. At age eight, she returned to Europe for the summer. Visiting Anne Frank's House in Amsterdam, she felt empowered by her courage, disgusted by the Nazis, and dumbstruck by the enormity of the Holocaust. Remembering her walk through Berlin's modern outdoor Holocaust Monument, deliberately designed to disorient the visitor in order to feel as if one is living in suppressed chaos of the totalitarian society, she realized that her most memorable learning experiences involve museums and monuments.

From gazing at the ancient carvings of Shiva and Parvati in Mumbai's Elephanta Caves, to studying the historic bronzes of the gods in the museums of South India, and the wall-sized multimedia in the 2013 Mumbai exhibition by Rekha Rodwittiya, a leading Indian feminist artist, personal experiences such as these can leave a lasting imprint on the mind. When this writer's heart is moved by personal experiences in such contexts, she remembers vividly.



Shiva as Nataraja, the Lord of the Dance, the most famous subject found in Chola processional bronzes [LINK](#)



## MUSEUMS



A wall in the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Museum in China features images of survivors. (Kevin Dooley) [LINK](#)



US Holocaust Memorial Museum [LINK](#)

For every individual who has the chance to visit a museum, there is the potential for a unique and memorable learning experience. Museums provide an opportunity for experiential learning, which can be energizing. Art museums provide time for creative stimulation, contemplation, and powerful visual learning. Each work has its own history and tells a story. When gazing at a work of art, this writer thinks about what it means, how it came to be, and what the artist intended. Memorial museums and monuments provide time for reflection, cultural learning, and contestation. In the moving displays at The Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., for example, visitors are reminded of the lives lost of six million individuals, the atrocities committed, and the struggles humanity has faced.

This writer's appreciation of human cultures has flourished from the more than 60 museums, memorials, ancient temples, and historic sites that she has visited in a dozen countries over the years. It has been an enormous privilege to travel for weeks at a time with only a small bag and an insatiable appetite for learning. Her mother is a professor who often speaks abroad and it has been this writer's good fortune over the last four summers to accompany her mother and sister to visit many memorable sites over several weeks. From her experiences in several countries, she hopes to illustrate the instrumental role that museums have in the learning process and, more importantly, in reminding us of our common human values.

## MIRIAM ISABELLE CHERRIBI



[www.911memorial.org/](http://www.911memorial.org/)

Memorial museums can transport one back in time to gain a deeper understanding of the social histories of wars and conflicts. This writer was profoundly moved by what she learned at the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago, Chile, dedicated to the victims of the Pinochet regime, which came to power in a *coup d'état* as recently as the seventies. Apart from live news on the coup on 9/11/1973, the museum also contained memorable exhibits including a wall with pictures of everyone killed or missing during the regime, and oral histories from survivors about torture sometimes with electrocution using the wire bed on display. The museum was opened in 2010 by Chilean President Michele Bachelet, whose father was tortured to death in the Pinochet regime's early days. The Museum depicted a society that was in stark contrast to the country we experienced in the summer of 2015. This writer learned a great deal about Chile's history and society from our hosts in Santiago, Marta Lagos, director of MORI Chile, and her husband Professor Carlos Hunneus. He is author of *The Pinochet Regime*, a seminal book about how the regime could remain in power for nearly two decades in a country with a long democratic tradition.

This writer visited various museums in East Asia over the past few summers. Museums are important for one's understanding of the ancient histories and contemporary art in Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures. Before visiting Seoul, she knew little about the long history of the Korean peninsula and its people.



Museum of Memory and Human Rights, Santiago, Chile.




National Folk Museum of Korea [LINK](#)

The Korea Furniture Museum. Kim Nam-Hun/[CNNGO](#)

She immersed herself in the history of the Korean people in the National Folk Museum and the National Palace Museum, before heading north to visit the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), which is inappropriately named given that it is one of the most militarized borders in the world. Looking back at her visit to The Korea Furniture Museum, a private museum located in an estate on a quiet hill above Seoul, once part of the 15th century World Heritage Changdeokgun, that houses a collection of exquisite furniture, she learned that concern about potential conflict featured in the design of the centuries-old homes. Gravel landscaping was used to alert the royal guards at all hours to the presence of possible intruders.

It was important for this writer to visit museums to better understand the potential for peace and conflict in East Asia and the world today, and to learn about the history that she was not taught in school. At the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Museum, in China's ancient capital city of Nanking, she learned for the first time about the significance of the atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers and why it remains highly relevant today. She was profoundly moved by the stories of the survivors of the Nanking massacre which began on December 13, 1937, when the Japanese invaded and over a period of many weeks brutally raped, tortured and murdered 300,000 men, women and children. Yet in 2014, at the end of the main part of the Museum, she also saw an exhibition on contemporary peace relations between the peoples and leaders of the two nations.


Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum [LINK](#)

They left the Museum by way of a garden path to what became another small building that contained an open excavation. It was one of the massacre sites discovered in the mid-1980s and it was left as an open site for visitors to personally experience as they were leaving. This writer vividly remembers a thin white bone sticking up from the packed dirt with the sign naming it "femur, 12 year old girl," and the thought that had the girl lived, she would be in her nineties today. On December 13th each year, when the city of Nanjing commemorates the massacre with a moment of silence, an envelope postmarked from Japan arrives with another old photograph that documents the massacre of civilians, a massacre still denied by the Japanese government.

Visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima Memorial Park in Japan in summer 2016 forced this writer to reappraise what she was taught in school about the need for the U.S. to end World War II by dropping the atom bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The classroom experience is a far cry from the impact of actually visiting the Hiroshima Museum and realizing how many innocent children and adults were impacted. The profound effects at ground zero could be seen -- everything was eviscerated by the sheer force and heat of the blast that left only the random human shadow etched in concrete. Listening to oral histories, one learned about the long-term impacts of the radiation on survivors and their descendants. As President Obama had recently been there, a new section of the Museum about his visit was on display before the final section where there was a place for visitors to express their views. This writer joined thousands of others to sign her name to a pledge to maintain peace so that such events would never occur again.

Research has found that museums have become more internationally connected and more global in their orientation.<sup>1</sup> Studies on smaller museums that build on museum-community relationships involving community collaborations, also show they have a powerful impact on local and global knowledge.<sup>2</sup> It is clear to this writer that museums are important for people of all ages. The art, the exhibits and the factual information and interpretations on display are a source of knowledge, even if they may be a source of disagreement and contestation.

1. Karp, I., Kratz, C.A., Szwaja, L., and Ybarra-Frausto, T. with Buntinx, G., Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B., and Rassool, C. 2006. *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

2. Karp, I. and Kratz, C.A., (eds) 2015. The Interrogative Museum. In Raymond A. Silverman. *Museum as Process: Translating Local and Global Knowledges*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 279-298.





Wikan was in 2004 awarded the prestigious Norwegian Fritt Ord Award for "her insightful, openhearted and challenging contributions to the public debate on the value conflicts in multicultural societies". She has studied sociology at the University of Oslo (1965-66), social anthropology at the University of Bergen (1967-68) and Arabic at the American University in Cairo (1968-69). She does not have a degree at the undergraduate or postgraduate level, but went straight onto her PhD degree. Wikan has been a visiting professor at a number of universities across the world, among them Harvard University, USA; Beersheba University, Israel; L'école des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), Paris; and London School of Economics (LSE). Wikan has conducted field work in Egypt, Oman, Yemen, Indonesia, Bhutan and the Nordic countries. [www.amazon.com/Unni-Wikan](http://www.amazon.com/Unni-Wikan)

**Professor Unni Wikan** celebrated Norwegian anthropologist and author of *Managing Turbulent Hearts – A Balinese Formula for Living* in an exclusive interview with Mark Ulyseas.

*MU - Many visitors, women being in the majority, view Bali as a 'feminine' island with a culture that is all embracing. Do you feel that the increasing number of immigrants to this island will dilute or distort this culture? And will it (Balinese culture) morph into a more aggressive form thereby seeing a clash of cultures?*

UW - I never thought of Bali as a 'feminine' island; to me, such a concept does not make sense. Bali is a rich and complex civilization with a multitude of ways and "cultures" being practiced, some of them strongly patriarchal. I do not think that immigration as such presents a danger to this remarkable Culture. On the other hand, the exposure of youth to manifold influences through globalization, modern forms of communication, tourism etc. will undoubtedly have its impact, in Bali as elsewhere. We cannot say at this point in time what will emerge. It is not just a question of what happens in Bali but in the wider world.

*MU - Do you think that the concrete jungle that is growing across the isle will alienate the Balinese with the growing influence of the "hotel and villa" culture? And what, if any, is the way out?*

UW - I wish I had the answer to your question for there is clearly the danger that you point to. The Balinese have traditionally lived in close harmony with nature; you couldn't cut down a tree or erect a building, even a hut, without appeasing and taking permission from supernatural spirits. The "hotel and villa" culture is fundamentally transforming the land and disturbing spirits that used to belong in certain places and that are a part of Balinese cosmology. On the other hand, the Balinese resemble other humans in that they are pragmatic, and these new developments offer jobs to many people. There is no win-win situation.







Photographs by Mark Ulyseas

*MU - Many long time residents believe the Balinese must be more pragmatic in terms of rescinding their responsibilities of the numerous mandatory attendances at religious ceremonies for the responsibilities of a job? Please comment.*

UW - This is a challenge in many societies, how to accommodate job obligations with religious or ritual observances. I did fieldwork in Bhutan, a Buddhist country, and the same concern arose there: what could be required of job attendance of people who every so often had other “legitimate” ritual concerns. Or take Muslims in Norway, my country: praying five times a day at specific intervals is not easily combined with many kinds of job. Solutions must be found and generally, religions can be flexible: they are, after all, partly man-made.

*MU - There appears to be a growing gap between the haves and have not's – the former being expats and the latter, Balinese. Do you think that this will lead to a backlash that will see a rise in criminal activities and in general disrespect for the Tamu (guest) leading to law and order problems?*

UW - We see such problems emerging in many societies, they seem to be part and parcel of globalization. Organized, transnational crime is also on the rise everywhere. What is special about Bali, as I know it, is how peaceful and orderly the island still is. But one should be aware. Large-scale tourism naturally changes people's perceptions of the Tamu, and the way many tourists (and some expats) behave further creates disrespect.

*MU - Some say that marriages between expats and Balinese, where the age gap being a generation or two is abhorrent and should be curtailed; often these marriages are not legalized with competent authorities from the foreign embassies thereby disenfranchising the offspring from their rights to citizenship of the foreign country from which one parent comes from. Are we witnessing the birth of a generation existing between the gaps in society? And will these children of the morrow become the catalyst for change? And what change do you perceive this to be?*

UW - I do not have first-hand knowledge of such cases, therefore it is hard for me to think through the implications with regard to Bali. Not having a legalized marriage is, however, a problem that many people in many countries are dealing with, and there is much international discussion of how to secure the rights of the child to paternity, inheritance and citizenship. Recently, there was a case in Egypt where a woman went to court because the man, with whom she had entered into a non-legalized (so called traditional – urfi – marriage) denied the child he had fathered paternity. In this case, both were Egyptians. She won, and has become an exemplar for others. I believe women can become the catalysts for change.



*MU - “I will not blame the rapes on Norwegian women. But Norwegian women must understand that we live in a Multicultural society and adapt themselves to it.” “Norwegian women must take their share of responsibility for these rapes.” You stated this in reference to high profile incidents in Norway involving immigrant men and the local (Norwegian) women. Do you think the reverse will happen in Bali, like attacks on ‘visitor women scantily clad’ by ‘locals’ because the ‘visitors’ have shown ignorance of the social norms and/or not understood the prevalent culture?*

UW - I have never said that women must take their share of responsibility for rapes. This is sheer misrepresentation of my statement. The rapist bears full responsibility for rape, which is a crime. What I did say was that many immigrants come from societies where the way many Norwegian women dress and behave is misunderstood to mean that they are immoral. In a multicultural society, it is an advantage if people learn something about one another's codes of communication. The same applies if you are a tourist. It is a sad fact of life that women are exposed much more than men to sexual violence. So women need to be careful, and knowledge is power. But full responsibility for rape resides with the rapist.

*MU - Is then, cultural clashes and clichés the raison d'être for an emerging ‘irrational society’?*

UW - No, I wouldn't use such a term. Society is not “irrational” but persons can be. However, rape does not have to do with irrationality. It is a crime usually committed by wholly rational people.

*MU - You have written a number of books that have thrown light on the travails and tribulations and the constant fight for survival between man and woman in societies that discriminate. Does your book “Behind the veil in Arabia: Women of Oman” shed light or reflect the state of women in general in societies across the world like India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and beyond?*

UW - Oman is special. It was, and continues to be to me an exemplar of a good Muslim society where women are well respected and treated. Oman has an enlightened ruler, Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who has had the power for nearly forty years, and has done a world of good for his country, including women. Yes, there is an ethos in Oman that underscores gracious behavior and that is reflected in the treatment of women. It is different from what you find in many other parts of the Muslim world, local culture and religion always intersect, and so Oman is quite different from not just Afghanistan or Iran, but also its neighbor, Saudi Arabia. That said, there are also similarities: Polygamy – a man's right to have several wives simultaneously – still holds in many parts of the Muslim and non-Muslim world, Oman included. Men are privileged in numerous ways. But Oman could point the way to what other traditional societies, more harsh to women – Muslim, Hindu, Christian etc. – can become.





Photographs by Mark Ulyseas

*MU - What is the role of a culture? Does it create, give birth to or is it a matrix in which we are all born? And does this matrix hamstring enlightenment/progress in all parameters of society?*

UW - We are born into cultures; I was born on an island in the Arctic Ocean in a part of Norway called the Land of the Midnight Sun, and my view on the world is profoundly shaped by the influences I came under through my formative 18 years there. But cultures are ever changing, just like people; indeed, it is people who make up cultures, we are the agents, culture in itself can do nothing, it is just a word, a concept. It is important to keep this in mind: People have in their power to create and make “culture” happen, for good or bad. Therefore too, culture clash is not a term I use: it indicates that there is something there with the power to act by itself. Think of people instead, and you have a better instrument for building peace.

*MU - As a celebrated and highly respected anthropologist do you think that Bali will survive the onslaught of the continuing influx of alien cultures bombarding the island; and will this be the beginning of a convergence that will bring about a new evolved society or will it be another reason for a conflict of cultures?*

UW - Bali has withstood a continuing influx of alien cultures for a long time in history. That gives me hope for the future of this gem of a civilization. Bali is bound to go on changing and evolving; and society fifty years from now will be different from the one we know. But I believe there is a solid core that is sustainable and that may even take on a stronger identity as “Balinese” as cultures mix and mingle. Or, I should rather say, as people from different cultures mix and mingle. My husband, Fredrik Barth, wrote a book called “Balinese Worlds”, plain and simple. That says it all: Bali consists of many worlds, many cultural traditions that have co-existed, competed, and also enriched one another. This is due to the resourcefulness and tolerance of Balinese people.

*MU - What are you working on now and will you be visiting Bali in the near future?*

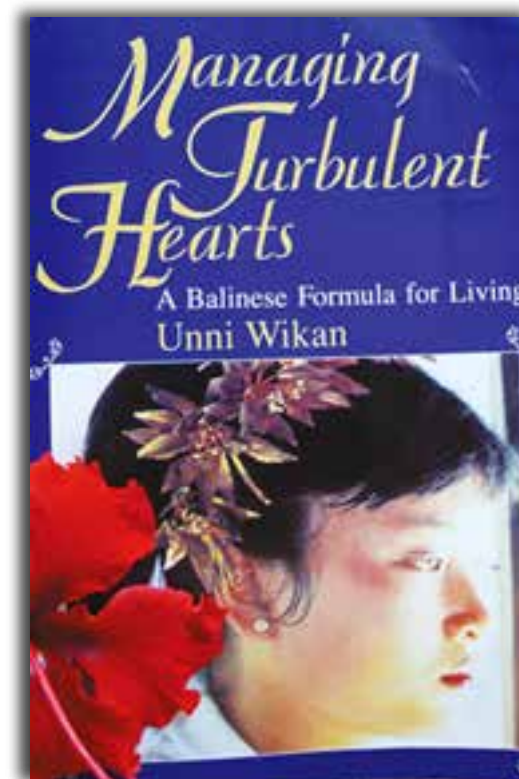
UW - I have just finished two books – one published in the US, the other in Norway, on honor killings in present-day Europe. A sad topic I never planned to handle but that became urgent with the murders of several young girls by their (immigrant) families in Europe. One is called *In Honor of Fadime: Murder and Shame* and deals with the fate of a young Swedish-Kurdish woman who was killed by her own father because she had “dishonored” her family by choosing her own love in life and refusing a forced marriage to a cousin. Her story made the international community wake up to the fact that honor killings do not just belong to “them” but to “us” in the West, and has helped to put the problem on the international agenda.



Now I am about to do something much more pleasant: embark on a long fieldtrip to Arabia (Yemen, Oman and Saudi Arabia) to explore ideas of freedom and dignity post 9/11, and to see how these ideas are put into practice in various walks of life. As an Arabic speaker I can work without interpreters and as a woman, I have easy access to people, I am not considered a threat. Among places I will visit is the Hadramawt in North Yemen where some families I know in Singaraja originally came from so I will explore the links; there have been close connections between inner Arabia and Indonesia for centuries, with influences going both ways. I have also an ongoing project in Bhutan, a Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas, where I have spent much time to explore culture and religion.

I was last in Bali a year ago, and hope to return later this year.

It is very much a part of my heart.





Emma Barone is a contemporary visual artist. She makes still life and landscape paintings in acrylic on canvas. She studied animation and has an eclectic design background that ranges from interior design to architectural ceramics, and from stained glass to jewellery design. Barone's work has been featured in various publications including The Irish Arts Review, Senior Times, House and Home, and the Sunday Independent. With 19 solo exhibitions under her belt, her work is in private and public collections throughout the world. [www.emmabarone.com](http://www.emmabarone.com)



## SHOE SHOW

### EMMA BARONE

---

An external covering for the foot? An unhealthy obsession? Or a peek into the inner workings of her soul?

Shoes are a template on which I base my artistic experiments. I feel compelled to use shoes as subjects because of the way the shape of the shoe lends itself to the my choice of unusual colour schemes. Shoes have a certain presence, they have an instant recognition by the viewer.

Each style of shoe is almost like a sculpture in structure form, amalgamated in the dimension of art.

Mixing & combining nature with manmade... the natural world with the material world, this is what intrigued me to pursue the idea of making paintings of shoes.

This isn't so surprising. From an early age we learn that shoes have magical power. They promise romance, excitement and the possibility of transformation.



HEELS TO HEAVEN





FLY AGARIC SHOES



EXOTIC PINK SHOES





MIDNIGHT WEDGES



ENCHANTED SHOES





PROM QUEEN



MILLION DOLLAR SHOES





Nambiar is a journalist with Reuters in Mumbai. He has been a mainstream English journalist in India since 1990, having begun his career with the Times of India group. He has worked with the Indian Express, CNBC, and The Telegraph, Kolkata. In the course of his career as a reporter he has covered the 1992–93 communal riots and the serial blasts in Bombay. He has been responsible for several exposés in his stint as an investigative reporter with the Indian Express, specializing in economic offences, including the union housing scam. His book *Defragmenting India: Riding a Bullet through the Gathering Storm* is available on [www.amazon.com/Harish-Nambiar](http://www.amazon.com/Harish-Nambiar)

## BEERING AND FEARING IN KHAJURAHO

Harish Nambiar

The temples are an exhilarating exhibition of sculpture and architecture rebutting the idea of medieval art being overburdened by formalism. It helped that the Chandela kings, who oversaw the construction of the temple complex, have a breathtakingly alternative history of being born of sin.

Legend says they are descendants of Hemvati, a fair maiden seduced by the Moon. The temples are the fulfillment of the Moon's promise that the child born of the out-of-wedlock union and ITS descendants will be remembered by the world.

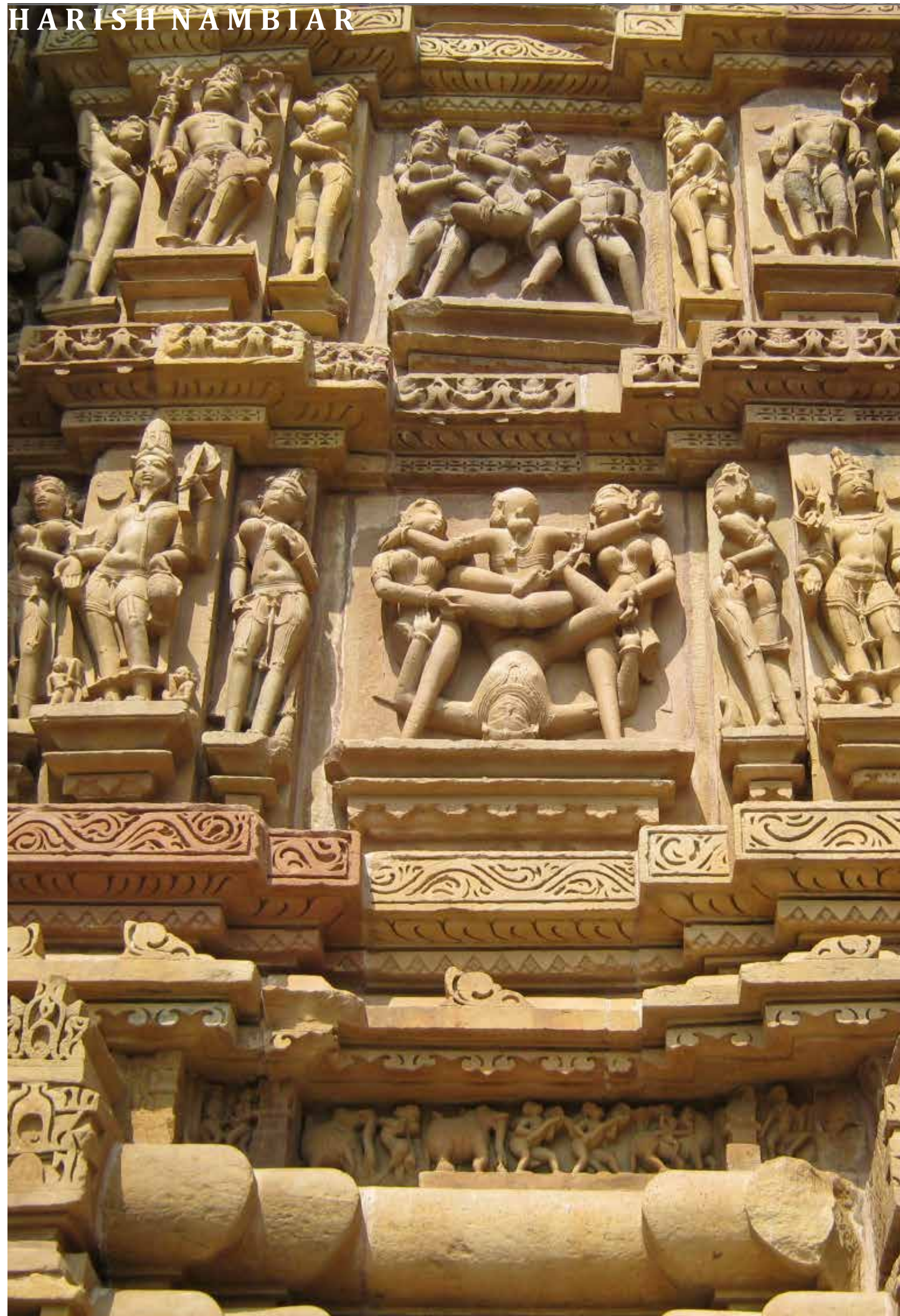
Khajuraho temples have that off-mainstream exuberance of the prodigal. The sculptures of breathtaking beauty in the art of living; curvaceous maidens caught in the act of self-worshipping make-up, coquettish behavior and the spiritual abandon of wild love-making and above all, dry wit and fun of monkeys watching men and women making out, or the slyness of the mocking sculptor who subverts a classical series of elephant heads with one that is distracted by the erotic act sculpted in the next panel.

I did not see enough date trees to be able to imagine the place as a land full of them once, the justification for the name of the place itself. But on the walls of the temple you see the artistic use of the double entendre. Khajuraho is said to come from Khajurvahaka, the carrier of dates. But, those who watch closely, will see several of the voluptuous maidens on the walls of the temples with a scorpion on THE thigh. This is because khajurvahaka can also mean scorpion bearer and for a creatively naughty artist, it is a theme worth giving form to. Some of the more alluring surasundaris are shown undressing to remove the scorpion that has been sneaking rather alarmingly close.

*First published in Live Encounters Magazine December 2012*

© Harish Nambiar

volume two 2016 december © [www.liveencounters.net](http://www.liveencounters.net)



Photograph by Harish Nambiar

© [www.liveencounters.net](http://www.liveencounters.net) december 2016 volume two arts & culture





Photographs by Harish Nambiar

After six years of a job that curtailed extended travels, I exhaled long when I finally booked my train ticket to Satna in Madhya Pradesh. I had been to Khajuraho in the late nineties on a whim, with a young friend. That trip took me eventually, with another friend, to Patna, Motihari and Raxaul before crossing over to Birganj in Nepal and then Kathmandu, all places that beaded up like drunken geographical bubbles at the rim of my glass where freedom from another job was chortling up noiselessly in silent celebration. I decided Khajuraho was a place worth landing up at again. And the only useful bit of that earlier journey that I remembered 15 years later was that the nearest railway station to Khajuraho was Satna.

Of course, a kind fellow passenger disabused me of any pride in memory I might have fancied when he told me the train I had chosen took a longer route. Outside Satna station, I had two hours to kill for the next bus to Khajuraho and at the end of the journey I found out it was a clean 4-hour journey by bus, not the 45 minute ride with the breeze in your face as I remembered it. The last time, I had hopped into a Jeep from Satna on its return journey after it had delivered newspapers to Khajuraho, with a German collegian who rushed into the bushes clutching his satchel when the Jeep stopped mid-way for tea, and a Japanese visualizer from Tokyo in a tattered T-shirt who spoke not a jot of English and most possessively hugged a Lonely Planet in his language.

On reaching Satna we all hit a bar, shared a couple of beers. The German explained, on his own, that an instinctive top-of-the-bus ride to Bikaner and an over-supply of Bhang had messed up his tummy. The Japanese said he had left his job for a 9-month backpacking tour, and after India he would cross over, to Afghanistan and then Iran.

Cut to 2012, and just outside the centre of town, I snapped out of my reverie when the bus stopped a little ahead of a fork where another road joined the mainline. The local bus stopped, spewing out a few people. Among those who got down were two teenage girls in school uniforms. Their bodies in their uniforms suggested early womanhood and so definitely in senior school. Both were barefoot. In the fading twilight they walked into the tree canopy of the main road into the temple town.

In 1997, the road was one bumpy, jerky ride and there were not many school children in uniforms that I remember seeing in Khajuraho of the time. This time the road from Satna has been nearly silk smooth. The barefoot schoolgirls were evidence that there was higher education a little away from the town.



When I got off the bus with my heavy backpack and a satchel with my laptop, a solicitous, elderly man said he would take me to the hotel. Like a seasoned tourist I asked him the rate, which sounded just about right, so handed him the backpack. As soon as he had taken it, an older man landed up saying he was cheaper. He was a cycle rickshaw man. Regret hit me hard because I had thought I would hire cycle rickshaws and pay them more than the fare. Besides, Khajuraho was a small village that we had covered on bicycles the last time round, much like Pondicherry. A little after I had checked into the hotel with Wi-fi and “under Italian management”, my cell phone rang with alarming news from the world I had left behind, but stayed wired to. I had to deliver a piece on political corruption. The next two days were spent burning the phone lines talking to people to update myself on the latest corruption scandal.

The two days inside the hotel also helped me shape my travel strategy. I’d stay in the places for a little more than the sights alone. I wanted to watch the town, its folks and the tourists. I ventured out once in a while to walk around town. The hotel was off the celebrated western group of temples. An entire mini Thamel had sprung up around it with flashy dress and textile shops, curios and several restaurants with open seating on the first floor that looked out into the temple complex across the road.

There were very many more hotels than before. Almost all of them were clean, cheap and all with negotiable rates. Some of the older establishments screamed in garish lettering their credentials about “Italian chef trained in Rome.” Many of the kiosks, which too had bred like rabbits around the place, sold memory cards instead of film rolls. Pan shops seemed to have established their own nobility with their lights, ostentation and display of foreign brands. Even the sellers of cheap curios, who displayed their wares on the pavement, had moved up to displays on handcarts.

There was a marked increase in the number of curio and antique shops with city-slick facia and some with glass doors with Visa and Mastercard stickers. When a few walks had exposed the net worth of my buying power in the more ardent sellers of illustrated Kamasutra books, I was able to move around without the attention of hecklers. The food at the hotel was the same stew with different ingredients. That is true of nearly most eating places there. Two I found which served what they advertised: the 60-year-old Madras Coffee House, and the Agarwal restaurant that served essentially basic vegetarian North Indian food.





Photographs by Harish Nambiar

A family from Salem runs the Madras Coffee House. When I walked, in I saw a young woman peeling shallots on the floor, immediately establishing its credibility as a south Indian restaurant. I asked its owner how he managed to keep up the supplies of the small onions essential for peninsular cuisine. He told me that whenever they went to Salem, where they still had relatives and an ancestral house, he would ship 50-60 kilos to Khajuraho along with as many coconuts. He then dribbled a fair-length story of woe about the amount he would have to pay if he attempted more, how the coconuts would go bad beyond a point and other troubles about having to bribe the railway and transporters to ship his essential groceries. “Coconuts can last long if I manage to keep the coir around the nut, but that would increase the bulk of my cargo and exponentially, the price of transportation.”

The auto man who dropped me to my hotel had asked for my cellphone number. He’d call every day, asking if I wanted to go to nearby picnic spots and that he would be available. After the first day, he’d just call and cut the line. I suspect he was confirming if I’d call back. I would, and he feasted on his phone savings for a few days. One day, about my third day in town, I got tired of refusing and said I would like to go to Raneh Falls. By the time I had breakfast and reached the hotel he was there with another auto rickshaw.

“Sir, this is my son. He will come with you”

So that day I have 19-year-old Kailash driving me to Raneh Falls, a 20-km ride along a fairly nice road winding through Bundelkhand villages to Panna Tiger Reserve’s buffer zone. There I pay 120 rupees as entry fee for me and the vehicle that includes a free guide. I discover six local men were trained to be authorized guides and a third of the fees I paid go to the guides.

My own guide, the knowledgeable Bharghav, meets me at the railed pathway that looks out into a spectacularly coloured rocky ravine. It was as if Michel Angelo had chipped away the volcanic rock bed into an installation that held deep green waters of the river Karnavati, later renamed bloodlessly as Ken, in bowls hewn into the rocks along the pathway of the river. The guide explained that in October the river was not swollen and therefore the sight was a minimalist sculpture of geographic landscaping. The railings and paved pathway along the edge of the gorge were built because once a family from Chattarpur was swept away, and another time, a Spanish tourist group was stranded on a small peak as the water rose suddenly when the dam at Katni opened its sluice gates.



The railings and paved pathway along the edge of the gorge were built because once a family from Chattarpur was swept away, and another time, a Spanish tourist group was stranded on a small peak as the water rose suddenly when the dam at Katni opened its sluice gates. At a distance was a rockface over which water may or may not be flowing down to the naked eye watching from the cemented, railed pathway at the edge of the river. The guide told me and a young Bengali couple with their small girl in tow, that the falls look most spectacular during the rains, when the river is roaring furiously.

“Those black rocks are dolomite, the rock is said to be a Dyke volcano formation, and these reddish ones are granite. Those bits of shiny specks you see in the rocks, that is quartz.”

The sun is relentless at the time. We eventually move towards the forest department’s modest cement structure where they serve tea, cool drinks and sell World Wildlife Fund T-shirts.

Forest officials run the kiosk with three price bands for the T-shirts. The cheapest, bad-quality ones are between 150-200 rupees each. The best quality one is 700 rupees, but that has no children’s sizes. Then, there is a Veblen T-shirt at a whopping 1,650 rupees apiece; a day’s double-bed room rent in one of the better-appointed hotels of the Madhya Pradesh Tourism. That is because Satya Paul designs them for WWF. I see nobody buy anything there. Though, it is also true that there just aren’t enough bodies to buy.

The Bengali family with the child leave and Bharghav asks if I would like a longish walk along the edge of the river. I agree and he takes me along a rocky and jagged edge of the jade green river that is almost as placid as a lake, 60 metres below. Bharghav is a keen guide and he tells me ‘if you look carefully you can see fish in the water’. I do and am surprised to actually be able see small schools of fish gliding in the river water. It is so amazing; I decide to check if my camera too has as good a vision. It does. I have pictures of fish swimming in the water taken from an automatic 60 metres above the water. After walking around for more than three hours in the sun it’s time to head back and I suggest to Kailash, the auto driver, that I would like to have a beer. He stops as soon as we are in Khajuraho, outside what he calls a dhaba. There are four poles with multicoloured triangular flags suggesting hotel stars, but this is no star hotel. Neither is it a dhaba with a name. It is outside a building full of shuttered shops that are yet to be occupied, with a few with curtains for shutters.





Photographs by Harish Nambiar

Kailash goes to the Dhaba run behind the building and lands up with a young boy, Chottu. He soon gets me the beer which costs exactly what it costs at Khajuraho's only wine shop run by the state government. We have lunch inside one of the shops with the curtains pulled up. The open air restaurants in town charge you a clean premium of 70 rupees for beer, though there is no licensed bar in town except those attached to the expensive five star hotels and one to a three star MP Tourism hotel. The beer is made available by sending the hotel waiter to this single shop, and served at a huge premium, which is entirely the restaurant owner's profit. Kailash tells me his brother is a drunkard and does not care about his family. He and his father take care of his brother's family. So I ask him how his brother could afford to drink daily and am told he has money for that.

"He is a lapka"

Lapka-ing is the biggest employment opportunity in Khajuraho, a town of 25,000 people. And what it means is heckling tourists to sell them anything from hotels TO curios or transportation vehicles. The commission feeds Kailash's elder brother's drinking habit.

In 1997 I had gathered that Khajuraho was the second-most visited tourist monument in India after the Taj Mahal and already had a few top-end luxury hotels and an airport. This time around, the town had a railway station and was much better connected. It got a lot of tourists from Varanasi. That evening I finally went for the Sound and Light show. The show attempts to use the western temples' landscape for its narrative but it was a right royal pain because many people seated on the lawns in the dark were busy flashing cameras to catch far-off temples bathed in coloured lights. I hope the officials ban photos in the dark when the Sound and Light show is on.

The next morning I finally decided to go to the set of temples that had bewitched me so much. I was surprised that I could hire an audio guide at the site, allowing me to tour the temples at my own pace. The Khajuraho temples remain an odd sideshow to the mainstream dynastic history of India. Between 900-1150 a series of temples built in a hidden, date-palm infested village is perhaps the biggest challenge from medieval India that debunks Orson Well's riposte about long-time peace begetting only cuckoo clocks. The temples are an exhilarating exhibition of sculpture and architecture rebutting the idea of medieval art being overburdened by formalism. It helped that the Chandela kings, who oversaw the construction of the temple complex, have a breathtakingly alternative history of being born of sin.



Legend says they are descendants of Hemvati, a fair maiden seduced by the Moon. The temples are the fulfillment of the Moon's promise that the child born of the out-of-wedlock union and ITS descendants will be remembered by the world. Khajuraho temples have that off-mainstream exuberance of the prodigal. The sculptures of breathtaking beauty in the art of living; curvaceous maidens caught in the act of self-worshipping make-up, coquettish behavior and the spiritual abandon of wild love-making and above all, dry wit and fun of monkeys watching men and women making out, or the slyness of the mocking sculptor who subverts a classical series of elephant heads with one that is distracted by the erotic act sculpted in the next panel.

I did not see enough date trees to be able to imagine the place as a land full of them once, the justification for the name of the place itself. But on the walls of the temple you see the artistic use of the double entendre. Khajuraho is said to come from Khajurvahaka, the carrier of dates. But, those who watch closely, will see several of the voluptuous maidens on the walls of the temples with a scorpion on THE thigh. This is because khajurvahaka can also mean scorpion bearer and for a creatively naughty artist, it is a theme worth giving form to. Some of the more alluring surasundaris are shown undressing to remove the scorpion that has been sneaking rather alarmingly close.

Architecturally, the mortise and tenon joints used for putting together the stones required great precision. The columns and architraves were built with megaliths that weighed up to 20 tons without any binding mortar agent to fuse them together. As I went around the complex, now with manicured lawns, benches and paved pathway, I was surprised at the difference in the crowd of visitors. In 1997, Vikram Sah and I went around each temple as if it WERE our property. Occasionally, we'd see an old Causasian couple or two admiring and photographing the sculpture. And then, suddenly there was a bus-load or two of young collegians that invaded the grounds. The army broke up into smaller groups and several of these groups would rush towards the old couples and insist on being photographed with them. They gracefully obliged, to be sure, but I am not certain if, even after 15 years, they understood why these local college kids treated them as Michael Jackson. The Indian visitor's profile has changed. I saw several couples with small children in tow being dragged around by an over-enthusiastic husband with the camera. The children lost interest soon enough, because the sculptures seemed uniform to untrained eyes. The wives, after they were pointed out some of the erotic and godly figures, decided that it was merely the man's version of making pornography holy by calling it art and religion. Or so I thought of the Telugu couple with a child and a very bored wife outside the Chitragupta temple.



The world heritage site is a great place to study the effects of liberalized India and the advantages and disadvantages of the process. Those who have capital and the lakhs, the bounty hunters, have cornered the services industry in tourist-warmed Khajuraho. The edge from the tourism-sparked culture industry is now with private moneybags with better infrastructure to sell at four times the price. I even suspected that some of the dancers were common to the tourism board folk dance programme and the Kandariya Arts Complex.

But, among the foreign tourists, I saw young couples. Caucasian and Japanese. They lingered, took romantic photographs and eventually headed home. Later, I attended a show of Bundelkhandi folk dances at the MP Tourism facility. Then, I was told, there was a grander show at Kandariya Art Centre for four times the charge. I landed there too. It was a medley of various folk dances from India, better outfits for dancers, the stage had shifting stage-lights and the theatre itself was air-conditioned. I landed up at the office of the regional head of MP tourism to see if I could get some insights into the way the economy of the town was doing. He had a local reporter with him. I was served tea and the reporter was deputed to answer my questions. The tourists arrivals do increase, but they are modest and low-figure; fairly stable. The state government's tourism department does the most important development work. Have the locals benefited? Well, it is a season-oriented economy.

Near the latest excavated temple, the Beejmandal, I break my cycling journey at a tea stall extension to the road of a regular house. As the young man there prepares my tea he asks me where I am from. Initial ice-breaking over, I ask him if there was a college in Khajuraho.

"Only a private college. For college you have to go to Rajnagar."

His house and stall is off a small local road that leads to the Chaturbhuja temple. The price of land is very good. 'It costs 30 lakh per acre and we have five acres', he tells me.

The world heritage site is a great place to study the effects of liberalized India and the advantages and disadvantages of the process. Those who have capital and the lakhs, the bounty hunters, have cornered the services industry in tourist-warmed Khajuraho. The edge from the tourism-sparked culture industry is now with private moneybags with better infrastructure to sell at four times the price. I even suspected that some of the dancers were common to the tourism board folk dance programme and the Kandariya Arts Complex.

But the best food in town is still sold by those who vend on handcarts parked just outside the cordoned off crossroads that abut the Western Group of Temples. Boiled gram and eggs with Bundelkhandi rough ground masala and rock salt. They put up their stalls at the edge from the government liquor shop. The locals buy the cheapest country liquor and buy these goodies.

And yes, Khajuraho's best biriyani too is homemade AND sold at a handcart.

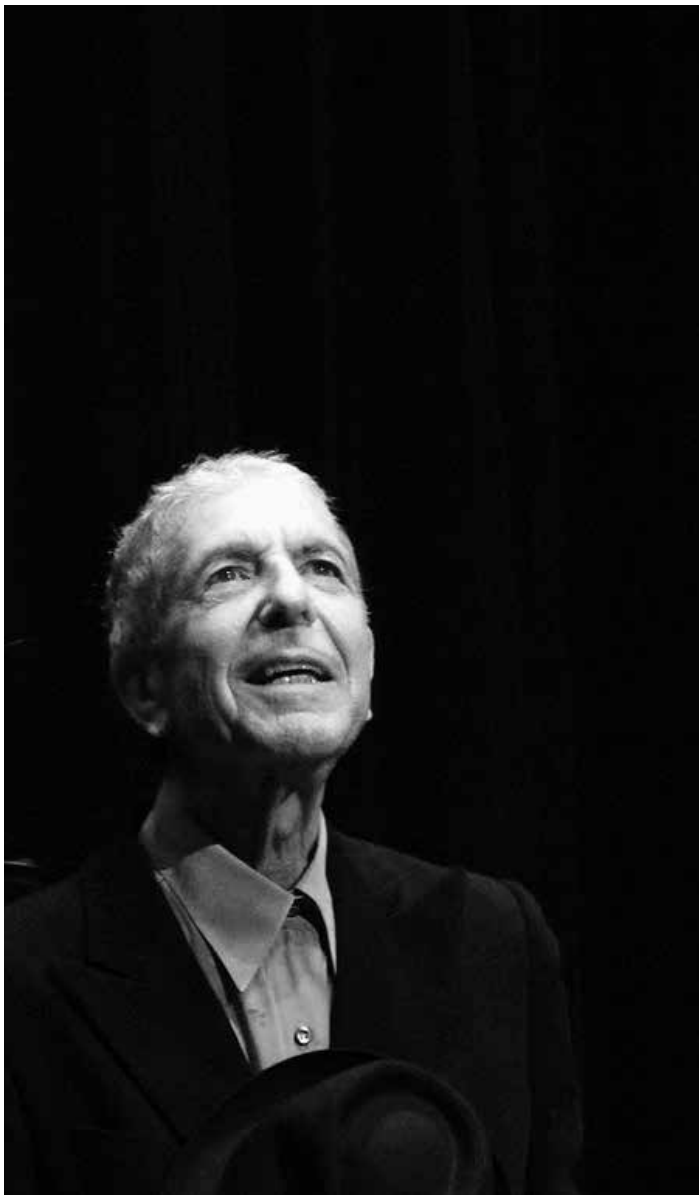




Born in Birmingham, England, U.K., Natalie Wood began working in journalism a month before the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. She emigrated from Manchester to Israel in March 2010 and lives in Karmiel, Galilee from where she writes several blogs, micro-fiction and free-verse. She features in Smith Magazine's *Six Word Memoirs On Jewish Life* and has contributed to Technorati and Blogcritics along with *Jewish Renaissance* and *Live Encounters* magazines. [www.perfectlywritepoetry.blogspot.co.il](http://www.perfectlywritepoetry.blogspot.co.il)



# The High Priest of Modern Song



Among the forests of words devoted to the life and work of Canadian singer-songwriter, [Leonard Cohen](#) is a website that takes a wry look at his many nicknames.

But I prefer my own - the 'High Priest of Modern Song'. How else to describe an artistic renaissance figure whose output – like his family name – is informed wholly by his Orthodox Jewish roots?

But how may we also describe a very human individual who's wedded to his Jewish faith, bolted to his art, but now aged eighty, has never committed to a steadfast relationship with any of his lovers – even the mother of his children? Cohen's work and life form part of the mental landscape of so many ordinary people, it is difficult to discuss him without being accused of either repetition or cliché. But here, nothing daunted, is my own view of him as a fellow Jew.

The cover image on his latest album, *Popular Problems*, cuts a lean, lupine figure, dressed as I've seen a thousand other elderly Jewish gentlemen, walking gamely to and from synagogue several times during a Sabbath day. So I can imagine his arriving at morning services, then removing his trilby to reveal a skull cap, reciting the traditional blessing as he wraps himself in his prayer shawl and then reading the Ma Tovu prayer - which he also recited at his 2009 concert in Ramat Gan, Tel Aviv, Israel.

But artists don't think like ordinary mortals! So we have the cerebral and elegiac Cohen wrestling with an erratic, even raffish existence in a private world off-stage.

His [Wikipedia entry](#) reminds us how often he has used the Hebrew bible (Torah) and Jewish cultural imagery as sources for his work, citing by example songs like *Story of Isaac* and *Who By Fire* and also his second collection of poetry, *The Spice-Box of Earth*, whose title alludes to the Saturday night rituals performed as the Sabbath concludes. The entry also devotes a separate section to the famous 1984 song, *Hallelujah*. I venture further that it remains Cohen's most popular single song because it examines his unending personal struggle - the clash of religious devotion with sexual temptation, symbolised by conflating the two stories of King David and Bathsheba and Samson and Delilah, then blending them most magically with his musical expertise.

Here he gives those new to Jewish thought a look at the distinction between the temporal and divine or '[the holy and the broken](#)', as described by music journalist, Alan Light in his book about the song. But there are two further interesting side issues I want to discuss.

The first is Cohen's involvement in Zen Buddhism and that he sees no split from his Jewish faith but rather that "in the tradition of Zen that I've practiced, there is no prayerful worship and there is no affirmation of a deity. So theologically there is no challenge to any Jewish belief".

The other – superficially - has nothing to do with his Jewish faith but is how he referred to [Kelley Lynch](#), formerly his manager, friend and even briefly his lover after she was jailed for harassing him. They were not the words of a plaintiff but the sermonic admonition of a priest.

Cohen's florid romantic life is well-documented. He remains unmarried, but while the mother of his children, Susan Elrod is Jewish it seems that Adam, a fellow singer songwriter and Lorca, a photographer and videographer do not take their heritage as seriously as their father. It remains to be seen whether any of Grandpa Leonard's descendants will be given his mantle to wear.

Meanwhile, even at 80, Cohen continues composing and performing and *Popular Problems* took only a few weeks to hit No. 1 in 29 countries on the iTunes chart.

*First published in Live Encounters Magazine December 2014*



[www.ozlemsturkishtable.com](http://www.ozlemsturkishtable.com)  
[www.ozlemwarren.myforever.biz](http://www.ozlemwarren.myforever.biz)



## KAYMAKLI EKMEK KADAYIFI TURKISH BREAD PUDDING IN SYRUP

Bread, ekmek, is a main staple in Turkish cuisine and the loaf of bread takes the center piece in Turkish homes, for breakfast, lunch and dinner. We also have a delicious and very popular dessert, made with the special (dehydrated) bread soaked in syrup, the delicious Ekmek Kadayifi.

One of the treasures that my parents kindly brought over from Turkey when visiting us was this special dehydrated bread used for making Ekmek Kadayifi. Topped with the thick Turkish clotted cream, kaymak, it is a heavenly and a very satisfying dessert. Ekmek kadayifi is also served during religious festivals like the end of Ramadan celebrations, Seker Bayrami, in Turkey.

Ekmek kadayifi is a very easy and a bountiful dessert. First you will need to soak the dry bread in hot water and it will dramatically expand, almost doubling the size, so bear this in mind. The next stage is the addition of the syrup and letting the bread soak the syrup. I have used half of dry ekmek kadayifi (15 cm/6" in diameter) and it served 8 people generously. Kaymak, Turkish thick clotted cream is the traditional accompaniment, if you can't get kaymak, clotted cream (as found in the UK) or a dollop of mascarpone cheese also work well.

I don't enjoy very sweet desserts and my syrup here is less sweet and fragrant with the lemon juice. We served ekmek kadayifi with crushed walnuts and glad to see everyone really enjoyed it – hope you enjoy yours too.





Kaymakli Ekmek Kadayifi -Turkish Bread Pudding in Syrup © Ozlem Warren

**Serves: 8**

### Ingredients

- Half of ready, dried ekmek kadayifi (15 cm/ 6" in diameter) – Turkish dehydrated bread for kadayif
- 1 lt /2 pints / 4 cups hot water
- For the syrup:
- 400 gr/ 14 oz./ 2 cups sugar
- 625 ml/1 pint 4 fl oz./ 2 ½ cup hot water
- ¼ lemon
- Crushed walnuts to serve
- Kaymak, Turkish clotted cream or clotted cream or mascarpone cheese to serve

### Instructions

1. Place the dehydrated ekmek kadayifi, the dried special bread in a large tray.
2. Pour the hot water evenly over the dry bread, making sure it's all wet. Let the bread absorb the water for 15 minutes.
3. After 15 minutes, the bread will be almost doubled its size. Get a clean kitchen towel and gently press and pat on the soaked bread to get rid of all the excess water in the soaked bread and in the tray. At the end of this stage, there should be no excess water remained. Take care not to press too hard, so that the bread won't break.



Ozlem in the kitchen © Ozlem Warren

4. In a saucepan, stir in the sugar and hot water. Dissolve the sugar and bring to a boil. Then squeeze the ¼ lemon juice and then leave the lemon in the sauce pan.
5. Turn the heat to low and simmer the syrup over 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Then turn the heat off.
6. Pour the syrup over the ekmek kadayifi evenly and cook for 25 -30 minutes on medium heat. Turn the pan occasionally so that all parts get to cook evenly. Spoon the syrup in the tray over ekmek kadayifi ; all syrup will be soaked at the end.
7. Remove from the heat and let the ekmek kadayifi rest for 15 minutes. Slice and turn the ekmek kadayifi upside down to a serving dish. You can serve at room temperature or after chilled in the refrigerator.
8. You can serve the ekmek kadayifi with Turkish thick clotted cream, kaymak and crushed walnuts over the slice. The British clotted cream or mascarpone cheese would also complement ekmek kadayifi well, if you can't get kaymak.



Ulyseas is founder and editor of Live Encounters Magazine and Live Encounters Poetry. He is the author of three books: *RAINY – My friend & Philosopher*, *Seductive Avatars of Maya – Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*.

<http://www.amazon.com/author/markulyseas>



## Merry Christmas and an enlightened New Year

Not Xmas. Not Season's Greetings. But a warm hug and wishes for a Merry Christmas, which is about love, sharing and rediscovering one's own wonderful memories. And the innocence that we once possessed and lost, like virginity.

Christmas for me is not about eating and drinking till one regurgitates all over the place. It is a reminder of times past spent ... family, relatives and friends, home cooked delicacies, singing and dancing and worshipping. A sharing of one's happiness and contentment with all whom one avoids throughout the year. It is like a peace meeting between warring factions in no man's land. An enchanted time out from the vagaries of living.

For many among us it is a reaffirmation of Faith. A belief that practicing non-violence, forgiveness and charity is the only way forward to enlightenment. For others it is a reminder of how far we are lost in the forest of iniquities of our own making, and how this time each year a path opens to lure us back to moderation, moderation of our senses.

This is the New Year for millions. The rebirth of hope and love. A soul stirring confluence of the past and present conspiring to resurrect our lives from the mundanity of mendacities. And an acceptance of the inevitable – that this could be the last Christmas on earth for a loved one...quite overlooking the fact that it could be our last Christmas.

Christmas is the reason for peace, peace that we must make with ourselves as we stand on the threshold between the old year and a new year. The choice is ours to make – to step back into the old year or step forward into a new year or continue to vacillate between the absurd and the light. Will this Christmas be the gateway to a seminal year for us or will it be just another reason for debauchery and waste and violence and thievery. The choice is ours to make while we continue genuflecting before the beast of consumerism.

Merry Christmas and a Peaceful New Year to the readers of Live Encounters Magazine.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om





# Live encounters

## Arts & Culture

Free online magazine from village earth  
Volume Two December 2016

