

Author biographies

Dr Bettina E. Schmidt

Bettina E. Schmidt, DPhil (habil.), PhD, MA, Professor in Study of Religions and Anthropology of Religion at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK and Director of the Religious Experience Research Centre. Among her publications are *Spirit and Trance in Brazil: An Anthropology of Religious Experiences* (2016, Bloomsbury), *The Study of Religious Experience: Approaches and Methodologies* (2016, Equinox) and *Spirituality and Wellbeing: Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of religious experience and health* (edited with Jeff Leonardi, 2020, Equinox).

Dr Zsuzsanna Szugyczki, University of Szeged, Hungary

Zsuzsanna Szugyczki is an Assistant Professor, and non-formal educational trainer at the University of Szeged, Hungary. Her main area of research is mysticism in modernity. In 2023 she defended her doctoral dissertation titled: *Mysticism beyond time: A comparative study of Traditional vs. modern mysticism*.

Revd Richard Vroom

The Revd Richard Vroom is currently at Radboud University, Nijmegen, researching how psychological type is apparent in reported religious and spiritual experience within the Alister Hardy Archive. Previously he served in various parishes in the Netherlands (Old-Catholic Church, Union of Utrecht) and 10 years in Tywyn, for the Church in Wales. He studied in Amsterdam, Leuven, at the Sorbonne in Paris, and in Warwick. Currently he works on his PhD at the University of Nijmegen (Radboud).

Prof Jeff Astley, Bishop Grosseteste University

Jeff Astley is an honorary professor at Durham University, Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln and York St John University. He studied biology and theology at Cambridge, and theology at Birmingham and Durham. His doctorate is in the philosophy of religion. He was Director of the ecumenical North of England Institute for Christian Education for three decades, and Alister Hardy Professor of Religious and Spiritual Experience at Glyndŵr University, the University of Warwick and Bishop Grosseteste University. His primary interests are in practical theology (especially 'ordinary theology'), the science and religion debate (especially with respect to evolutionary biology) and the study of religious and spiritual experience. In addition to over 160 journal articles and essay chapters, he is the author or editor/co-editor of over 40 books on theological, educational and religious issues, including the *SCM Studyguide to Religious and Spiritual Experience* (2020).

Alan Murdie

Alan Murdie is a member of the Alister Hardy Trust as well as the Society for Psychical Research. He is a lawyer by profession and has investigated spontaneous cases both in Britain and abroad, for instance in Colombia, South America. He has in particular interest in hauntings and the paranormal and has published various books on these issues, including *Phantom Ladies* (with Andrew Green, 2024) and *Cambridge Ghosts* (with Robert Halliday, 2010).

Dr Manuela Palmeirim

Manuela Palmeirim is a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Minho, Portugal. She conducted extensive fieldwork among the Aruwund (Lunda) of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on foundation myths, ritual and kingship ideology, having published numerous articles and two books, *Of Alien Kings and Perpetual Kin: Contradiction and Ambiguity in Ruwund (Lunda) Symbolic Thought* (2006) and *Les Lunda/The Lunda* (2017)(published by Stichting Kunstboek, Oostkamp). She is currently writing on sorcery, healing, and the construction of knowledge, drawing on data from the Aruwund and the Waswahili of Zanzibar, where she lived and conducted research for several years.

Dr Makhabbad Maltabarova, Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany

Makhabbad Maltabarova, Ph.D. (2021), Friedrich Schiller University Jena, completed her doctoral studies at the Chair of Comparative Religion. Her publications on Islamic Studies and Esotericism include *Western Esotericism and Islamic Mysticism: Rethinking the Place of Sufism in the Work of George Gurdjieff* (Tectum 2022).

Dr Jennifer Uzzell, Independent researcher

Jennifer Uzzell holds a PhD from the Centre for Death and Life Studies at Durham University. Her research is concerned with the nature of modern religious Druidry in Britain, with an emphasis on the ritualisation of death. She is also a progressive funeral director based in the Northeast of England and an Educational trainer and consultant. She is the Education and Youth Manager for the Pagan Federation and a member of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids, the British Druid Order and the Druid Network. She can be contacted at j.s.uzzell@dunelm.org.uk.

Dr Andrew Dean, University of Sunderland

Andrew Dean is a natural and social scientist, who specialises in altered states of consciousness, particularly in relation to dreams, daydreams, visions, and hallucinations. He is currently working at the University of Sunderland as Associate Head of Marketing & Digital.

Dr Anna Waldstein, University of Kent

Anna Waldstein is a Senior Lecturer in Medical Anthropology and Ethnobotany at the University of Kent. She has done ethnographic fieldwork with Mexican Migrants in the United States and with Rastafari and other migrants from Jamaica in the United Kingdom. Her research interests include consciousness, spiritual ecology and health sovereignty.

Dr Raj Puri, University of Kent

Rajindra Puri is an Honourary Research Fellow at the University of Kent, where he led the Ethnobiology programmes from 2012-2025. He has done research with communities in Hawaii, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Spain and the UK. His main research interests are environmental anthropology, biocultural diversity and climate change adaptation.