

CISMOR Voice 27, 2018

It is my pleasure to introduce the 27th issue of CISMOR Voice which covers the first few months of my work as the director of the center. I accepted the duty of director from April 2018, with the aim of creating a deeper and wider conversation between the different religious components participating in the Center.

One of the most important issues that seemed to challenge the Center is creating a welcoming atmosphere for young scholars, to facilitate new voices in the field of interfaith studies, and to contribute to the discourse on religious changes in our ever-developing world.

CISMOR's activity therefore started in April 2018 with the workshop for young scholars, which included post-doctorate scholars presenting their research as well as PhD students working on their dissertations who presented a chapter of their thesis. They all offered us a glimpse into their research which as can be seen from the titles of their presentations, was wide and interdisciplinary. This first workshop was dedicated to the Bible and Jewish Studies while the following two of this year will be dedicated to Ancient Near Eastern Studies and to Modern interpretation of Politics and Religions.

We devoted two seminars to Christianity and missionary work. One regarding Syria in the 16-17th centuries and the other in Japan in the 19-20th centuries. Prof. Bernard André Heyberger (Director d'études Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris-France), who visited Doshisha University as part of the academic exchange program between the universities enlightened us on Christianity in Syria. Prof. Heyberger offered an interesting look at the political developments during those centuries in which the Christian community of Aleppo was involved, offering an insight into the records he managed to study. The second seminar was delivered by Prof. Christian Morimoto Hermansen (School of Law and Politics, Kwansei Gakuin University), who offered a picture of the world of a Danish Missionary in Japan in the first half of the 20th century. Two lectures by visiting scholars to CISMOR and Doshisha were delivered on the theme of Animation. One by Dr. Miki Daliot-Bul (the Departments of Asian Studies of Haifa University, Israel), about the way Anime cartoons (a cultural adaptation in America from Japan) use black characters. The second by Dr. Amal Refaat (Japanese Department' Faculty of Arts, Cairo University), who was a visiting research fellow of CISMOR during 2018, and who spoke about the Anime as a cultural adaptation in Egypt from Japan. All lectures can be accessed in full on CISMOR website through You-Tube.

Further on in the month of June we organized a symposium with two prominent scholars on the attitude to "Religions and Prohibitions" specifically relating to "Kashrut" in Judaism and "Halal" in Islam. Prof. Rabbi Jonathan Magonet (Professor Emeritus of the Leo Baeck College, London, UK), spoke of the way Judaism understood Biblical prohibitions, and how they evolved historically, and their place in Jewish society today. He also referred to the way non-Jews approach these prohibitions especially in Europe. Prof. Yoshiko Oda (Professor Emerita of Kansai University) spoke on Islamic society. She talked about the meaning of Halal for Muslims, and in particular the way this specific food prohibition can shape their social encounters, differently from the way in which it is understood by the Japanese.

The theme of Religions and Prohibitions continued in the Fall semester with a second symposium which included Christian, Jewish and Buddhist attitudes towards prohibitions in the history of those religions. Please keep looking for the announcement on this symposium in February 2019.

The largest conference of the Spring semester took place through the academic collaboration between the CISMOR center and the School of Theology of Doshisha University and the Faculty of Humanity, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The conference took place in Jerusalem at The Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, and included a delegation of seven speakers from Japan mainly scholars from Doshisha University's School

of Theology. Other scholars who presented papers at the conference came from the University of Chicago (USA) and from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel). Some scholars from Japan also joined as audience.

The themes of the papers presented were mostly on Judaism in modern times but some papers also discussed interpretations of Biblical topics. This symposium, the third since 2012, offered young and established scholars time and space for engaging in discussions, learning from and getting to know each other. The atmosphere of the conference was highly motivating and encouraged open discussions. We very much hope to be able to hold the fourth symposium in the coming years.

The activity of the Center during these past six months affords a glimpse into our attempt to increase the variety of themes the Center touches on, engages with and provides a place for discussion. The opportunities for young scholars to be in contact with established scholars in their field is also an important factor in conference and workshop activities. Our detailed activities are described, videoed and posted on our website, so please go there to read and watch. Our journals published once a year also offer a platform for our scholars' research results; please check our webpage under Publications.

The Director of the CISMOR
Prof. Ada Taggar-Cohen