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*Religion in Austria* is peer-reviewed

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# Religion in Austria

Volume 4



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## Preface

*Hans Gerald Hödl and Lukas Pokorny*

We are glad to be able to present Volume 4 of the peer-reviewed book series *Religion in Austria*, which was launched six years ago (2012). Like its predecessors, this volume contains a section with in-depth studies of religious movements in Austria—using both historical methods and empirical research tools provided by the social sciences—and a section with book reviews. Evidently, the main purpose of the book series is to provide detailed research on topics connected to Austria’s religious panorama in past and present, both for scholars and the wider public. As in previous volumes, a further aspect of the contributions included is the interaction of society with themes pertaining to religion (in the present volume, this aspect is the main focus of the paper by Manuel Alexander Simon). Furthermore, the contributions published in the first section are of interest not only to scholars of the religious history of Austria, but also address topics of high importance for various fields of Religious Studies overall.

One focus of the volume lies on religious movements that spawned out of a largely Christian discourse in Korea. The two contributions that open and conclude the volume deal with the Unification Movement (UM) in Austria. In the opening paper, Lukas Pokorny (Vienna) continues his painstaking description of the early history of the movement (that has already been covered until 1969 in Volumes 1 and 2 of this series) with a careful account of the 1969 blessing when Austrian members first encountered the UM’s founder and self-styled Messiah Mun Sŏn-myŏng (1920–2012). He supplies historical background information, an extensive description of the “Essen Blessing” (being the first ever to be held in Europe), as well as an account on the subsequent visit of Mun to Vienna. For scholars interested in the UM, essential information is given on a year that can be looked at as a watershed in the movement’s history. Another more recent watershed in the history of UM is touched upon by Lukas Pokorny and Dominic Zoehrer (Vienna) in their paper, which centres on a bilingual (English and German) translation of the Cheon Il Guk Constitution (*CIGC*; *Ch’ŏnilguk hŏnbŏp*), having been promulgated in early 2014. In the introduction, Pokorny and Zoehrer first offer a thorough overview of the background and the different stages of the process of the *CIGC*’s promulgation. This is followed by an analysis of its reception

by Austrian Unificationists, based on empirical data gathered through a questionnaire to which thirty-four members validly responded. In this vein, this paper resumes Pokorny's contribution in Volume 3 of this series, which explored the reaction of the Austrian membership to the supposed substantialisation of Cheon Il Guk alongside Mun's passing. Like Pokorny's initial paper, this co-authored contribution to our volume is likewise of interest not only to specialists of the history of religions in Austria, but also to those studying the UM or investigating the broader spectrum of so-called new religious movements, both for the translation of a crucial primary source and a case-study of its reception by Unificationists in the West.

"Today Vienna, Tomorrow All of Europe" by Lukas Pokorny and Sang-Yeon Loise Sung (Vienna) provides a comprehensive profile of a Korean Protestant Church, the Vienna Korean Church (VKC, *Pienna Hanin Kyohoe*), which was launched by sixteen nurses that came from Korea to Vienna in the early 1970s. Since then, the VKC has grown to an impressive membership of around 450, representing some twenty per cent of Koreans living in Austria, and rendering it one of the largest Korean Protestant congregations in Europe. The backbone of the research comprises of, on the one hand, a vast scope of primary sources including materials found in archives as well as the VKC web-page and, on the other hand, of numerous interviews and rich participant observation. This variety of data stemming from different sources is used to draw a vivid portrayal of a diasporic Christian community that strongly commits itself to missionary work, based on the idea that the strength of Christianity in our time lies in diasporic communities like the church in question. This way, Pokorny and Sung provide a case study that will be useful for scholars researching recent developments within Global Christianity.

Gender roles are a main topic in the paper penned by Sarah Kuehn (Aix-en-Provence) and Lukas Pokorny (Vienna), as they focus on female leadership in a Neo-Sufi movement. Albeit a significant topic both for the wider field of Religious Studies as such and Gender Studies, this is by far not the only important aspect of this contribution: the meticulous and colourful description of the Inayati tradition in Austria against the background of a short sketch of its historical development is based on extensive fieldwork done by Kuehn among the group led by Zumurrud Butta, whose life and religious activities are described in much detail. The paper offers valuable insights into the development and practice of the movement by describing its overall historical background on the basis of former conducted research while also providing a great amount of novel data. Hence, it can be looked at as a source for further study in itself. For example, the texts quoted from Sufi sources in the paper give us a fascinating account of how the main ideas of Inayat Kahn and his successors are reflected in today's movement. The contemporary



discourse on religion and politics is the main focus of the paper by Manuel Alexander Simon (Göttingen), which investigates an important topic at the intersection of these two fields by employing discourse analysis: Simon examines the role the referencing to religious themes by the candidates played in Austria's 2016 presidential election campaign. Thus, the paper is an essential contribution to the present academic discussion about a change in Austria's traditionally inclusive religious politics. In addition to a concise description of the way players from different fields interacted by media usage in the controversy, the paper provides a case study that is also of relevance for the broader context of the discourse on religion and politics in contemporary European societies.

The review section commences with a close reading of a book on Antisemitism in the media (Tectum, 2017), edited by Ulrike Bechmann and Wolfram Reiss in the series "Anwendungsorientierte Religionswissenschaft" (Application-Oriented Religious Studies). This volume consists of two M.A. dissertations submitted to the Universities of Vienna (Bernadette Pensch) and Graz (Petra Andorfer-Leithgöb), respectively. Being critical about the way these scarcely edited dissertations have been bound together in one volume, the reviewer, Yuval Katz-Wilfinger (Vienna), offers important information on the issue in question. Another book from the same series (Tectum, 2013), a publication of a Religious Studies M.A. dissertation from 2012 submitted to the University of Vienna, namely Josef Peter Schuller's comprehensive study of Muslim prayer rooms in Vienna, is reviewed by Sarah Kuehn (Aix-en-Provence). Here again, the few critical remarks in this predominantly positive review hint at the fact that the dissertation has not been adequately revised (in this case: bringing in the wider context) for publication in the series. Dominic Zoehrer's (Vienna) minute account of Franz Höllinger and Thomas Tripold's study of the holistic milieu in Austria ("Ganzheitliches Leben," Transcript, 2012; Holistic Life) scrutinisingly summarises the work in question, adding some critical remarks pertaining to methodology; among them, one that addresses an often discussed problem in social research: on the one hand, the authors claim to give an overview of the field based on "objective" data from empirical research; on the other hand, they mention their sympathy for the field without disclosing their involvement in it—thus creating a tension between an "emic" and an "etic" approach.

The volumes hitherto discussed address specific topics in the contemporary religious field in Austria. A different approach is taken by Karl Vocelka, a historian, whose book "Multikonfessionelles Österreich" (Styria, 2013; Multi-confessional Austria) promises to give an overview on religious diversity in Austria. As Karsten Lehmann (Vienna/Krems) shows in his review, the terminology used is not state of the art with respect to contemporary

developments in the field, as Vöclka, for example, does not take into account the vast sociological literature on new religious movements. Moreover, outside the field of history of Christianity, the book shows some weaknesses. Having said that, Lehmann deems it a useful introductory overview on religious diversity in Austria. A genuine historical approach is taken by Rupert Klieber in his pivotal study “Jüdische – christliche – muslimische Lebenswelten der Donaumonarchie, 1848–1918” (Böhlau, 2010; Jewish – Christian – Muslim Lifeworlds of the Danube Monarchy, 1848–1918), which uses a micro-historical approach in depicting the religious lives of the “common people” at the time. Astrid Mattes (Vienna) provides a well-crafted summary of the book’s contents, which, in her opinion, are substantially relevant for more disciplines than “history proper.” Another book that could be labelled as a contribution to micro-history is reviewed by Astrid Schweighofer (Vienna): Anna L. Staudacher’s source-book on conversions to Judaism in Vienna in the years 1868–1914, “Proselyten und Rückkehr” (Peter Lang, 2016; Proselytes and Reversion). This two-volume publication contains a comprehensive list of persons who either converted or reverted to Judaism in those years, with detailed descriptions of the sources used. As Schweighofer states, it can be looked at as a “valuable source for further biographic and prosopographic research, especially with regard to motives for changes of religion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.”

Lastly, we want to express our gratitude to the contributors for their invaluable work and their great patience with respect to our ever delayed time schedule; to the peer reviewers who have helped essentially to ameliorate the contributions published in this volume; to Nickolas Roubekas for his masterful language-editing; and to Patricia Mayer for her professional work on the layout.