

BAHAR Bulletin No.1 November 2008

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[I am sending this bulletin to members of the BAHAR network and also to a few friends who may be interested. – Geoffrey]



BAHAR members on a walk at the Telscombe workshop

Introduction

BAHAR was formed in March 2008, initially as a research group centred around the interests of a number of staff at Cardiff University, in Religious and Theological Studies and other Schools. These interests were all connected with the body, health and religion, and the connections between them. BAHAR rapidly grew into an extended network of people throughout the UK, Netherlands, Germany, Canada and Australia; at the time of writing it has about 50 members.

BAHAR includes a range of viewpoints and approaches, but many of us are interested in approaches to the body, health and to religion that understand mind, feeling and emotion as embodied, and individual and environment as integrally related. In our research, we integrate body-centred practices and techniques with more academic and intellectual approaches.

Recent Events (October-November 2008)

First BAHAR Weekend Workshop, 24-26 October 2008



Dinner at Telscombe, Saturday night

The first BAHAR Weekend Workshop took place at Telscombe YHA in the South Downs near Brighton from 24th to 26th October 2008. Fifteen people were present for all or part of the weekend; Ann David, Bettina Schmidt, Colin Millard, Crystal Addey, Dawn Collins, Des Barry, Geoffrey Samuel, Helen Williams, Judi Loach, Richard Roberts, Ruth Smith, Santi Rozario, Stephen Biggs, Susan Greenwood, and Yolanda van Ede. The main agenda for the weekend was to discuss the initial direction and agenda for the BAHAR organisation. We approached this through a series of discussions, experiential practices, many of them body-centred, and more conventional academic presentations. Specific topics included movement in tango, Tibetan longevity practices, Afro-American spirit-possession, Hindu devotional dance, yoga, flamenco, and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's Vajra Dance practice.

The weekend was a great success. Above all, it was an occasion for getting to know each other and for beginning to sense the potential of the BAHAR approach. Many of us had felt that we needed to understand the issues we were studying in a way that recognised both mind and body, self and environment, intellect and emotions; the Telscombe weekend showed us that it was possible to create a space in which we could explore this in a creative, open and embodied way.

Heidelberg Conference on Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual

Several BAHAR members also took part in a panel, 'Varieties of Ritual Experience' at the Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual Conference, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Sept 29-Oct 2, 2008, convened by Henrik Jungaberle, Jan Weinhold and Geoffrey Samuel. BAHAR members who took part included Angela Sumegi, Barbara Gerke (whose paper was read in absentia by Santi Rozario), Geoffrey Samuel, Ingrid Lutz, Jan Weinhold, Jay Johnston, Santi Rozario, and Yolanda van Ede (some of whom joined BAHAR at or after the conference).



Members of the Varieties of Ritual Experience Panel and friends relaxing at a Japanese restaurant in Heidelberg

Future Plans

Weekend Workshop on 'Ways of Walking,' February 2009

The 'ways of walking' theme arose out of discussions at the Telscombe workshop; several of us felt that this would be a good theme for a weekend workshop, and Colin Millard undertook to be the main organiser for this event, to happen probably in February 2009. The location is still to be determined.

Public Event on End of Life Spirituality, April or May 2009

Judi Loach and Geoffrey Samuel are working on plans for a public workshop on end of life spirituality, religious aspects of hospice care, and related issues. This will probably take place in Cardiff in April or May 2009.

Living Landscapes Conference, Aberystwyth, 18-21 June 2009

This four-day trans-disciplinary conference may be of interest to BAHAR members. It aims to "bring together the diverse relationships - actual and potential - between landscape, environment and performance"; and to "draw together artists, practitioners and academics from such fields as geography, archaeology, anthropology, performance, music and dance studies, media studies, museology, cultural and environmental policy, folklore studies, art history... The conference committee welcomes participation from all disciplines and from varying research approaches, both scholarly and practice-led. We invite proposals for papers, presentations, dialogues, showings, interventions, performances and workshops in all formats." This might be a good occasion for a BAHAR presentation or performance drawing on the February Ways of Walking workshop; Colin (colinmillard@lycos.com) and Geoffrey are working on a proposal (deadline, 1 Dec 2008). Further details at <http://www.landscape.ac.uk/2009conference.html>



In the kitchen at Telscombe

Panel at Religion and Nature Conference, Amsterdam, 23–26 July 2009

A number of BAHAR members are considering a BAHAR conference panel at the 3rd International Conference of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature & Culture (ISSRNC) at the University of Amsterdam, 23–26 July 2009. Anyone interested in this proposal should contact Geoffrey (SamuelG@cardiff.ac.uk). The theme of the conference is Religion, Nature and Progress; organisers say that they “are open for the exploration of new forms of sessions”. Further details of the conference can be found on the web at

<http://www.religionandnature.com/society/conferences.htm>

Panel at BASR Conference, Bangor, 7-9 September 2009

Bettina Schmidt is involved in the organisation of the next conference of the British Association for the Study of Religion, which is to take place at Bangor University, North Wales, 7-9 September 2009, and has suggested that we might have a BAHAR panel at this conference. Please contact Bettina with suggestions (b.schmidt@bangor.ac.uk) and copy to Geoffrey (SamuelG@cardiff.ac.uk). Further information at

<http://basr.open.ac.uk/conference.htm>

Panel at EASA Conference, Maynooth, probably August 2010

The next biennial conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists will take place at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, probably in August 2010. This might also be a good occasion for a BAHAR panel. Information at <http://www.easaonline.org/>

Geoffrey Samuel, 27 November 2008
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