



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
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Shamans, Visions and Ghosts: Exploring spiritual and Religious Experiences

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Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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Introduction

- What are religious and spiritual experiences?



What is religious experience?

- “The word experience can include everything we have ever been aware of, our whole experience of living. Or it may refer to certain exceptional occasions, memorable ones or even disastrous ones: the experiences of being married, having children or travelling abroad, for instance, or the experiences of shipwreck, being lost in a strange city or having one’s house burgled.” (Peter Donovan)

Common types of religious experience

- Visions, sometimes in dreams but also when walking alone in nature
- Do you know any famous examples?
 - e.g., visions of the Virgin Mary or Jesus
- How about not so famous people?
 - e.g., visions of seeing a deceased relative?

Near Death Experience

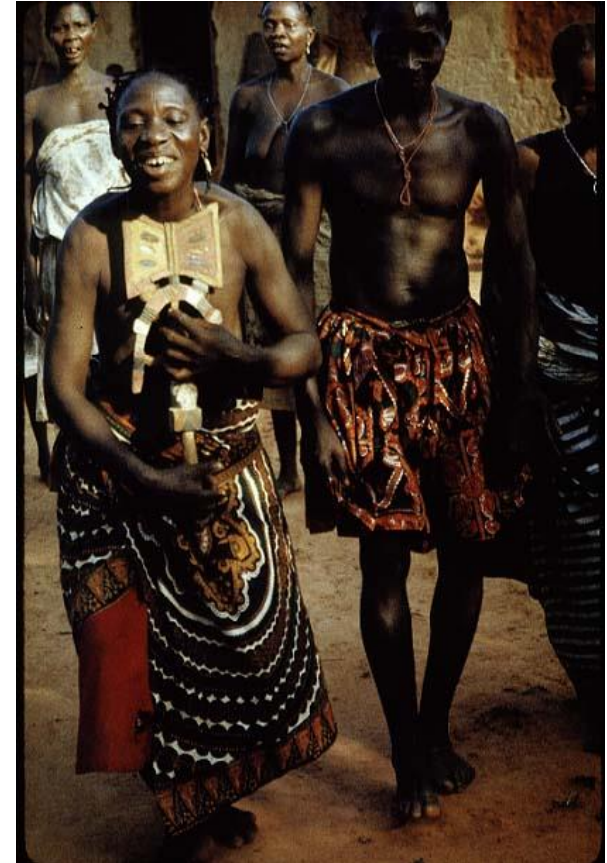


Is this a form of religious experience?



- Focus is often on religious experience that lead to dramatic changes such as conversion
- But religious experience is more widespread and does not always result in dramatic changes but in gradual changes (or none)

Different Forms of Religious Experience



Other cultures, other experiences



Overview of module

- Topics of this modules are:
 - Religious and spiritual experience (in general)
 - Gender differences (if there are any)
 - Spirit possession and incorporation
 - Shamanism and neo-shamanism
 - Experience due to ayahuasca
 - Can we trust 'experience'?

- Other topics are:
 - Early scholars of religious experience such as William James and Rudolf Otto
 - Current scholars of religious experience such as Ann Taves and Tanya Luhrmann
 - We might also look at Near Death Experience and Afterlife Experience (if time allows)

Special Resource

- Religious Experience Research Centre (Lampeter)
 - Occasional Papers (in repository)
 - Books (in library)
 - Accounts of personal stories about spiritual and religious experience (special access needed)
 - Recordings of guest lectures and seminars (on website)

Guests

- We will have guests (some via Skype) to speak about their work
- I also recorded some interviews with people involved in the study of religious experience in Lampeter, e.g.,
 - Marianne Rankin (Alister Hardy Trust)
 - Tom Pitchford, former librarian at the Religious Experience Research Centre
 - and others

Visual Resources

- YouTube clips and documentaries
- TED lectures (usually app. 15-10 minutes long)

Assessment

- Choose one example of a spiritual or religious experience
 - it can be a type of experience (e.g., shamanic trance, vision of God, spirit possession)
 - or it can be a specific experience, historical or contemporary (e.g., Visions of the Lady of Lourdes)

- The selection will be important for the whole assessment as the items of the portfolio can be arranged accordingly.
- We will have time during the normal sessions to discuss your chosen topic

Portfolio part 1

- A **short assessment** (up to 1000 words, 25%) about an Occasional Paper, Series 2, of the RERC to be submitted via **Turnitin on 26 February 2023**.
 - It does not need to be exactly 1000 words but can be shorter.
 - The aim is to select an Occasional Paper that is relevant for your selected example.

Students in Creative Writing

- Write a creative response to one of the Occasional Papers Series 2, of the RERC. You may choose any form for your creative work (e.g., poem, monologue, flash fiction), up to a limit 1000 words to be submitted via Turnitin on 26 February 2023.

Portfolio part 2

- One of the following to be submitted via **Turnitin on 5 March 2023**
 - A **Poster presentation** of your selected case study and its significance (25%), including a bibliography of used material
- *OR*
 - A **video presentation** of your selected case study and its significance (25%), including a bibliography of used material

Portfolio part 3

- A **critical assessment** (essay) of 3000 words (50%) of the selected case study within the academic framework that reflects debates in the field of the study of religious and spiritual experiences – to be submitted via **Turnitin on 19 March 2023**.

Students in Creative Writing

- A short story and accompanying critical essay. The combined work count should be 3000 words (50% of the portfolio). The critical essay should reflect upon the process of researching and writing your creative piece, and should include substantial reference to research in the field of the study of religious and spiritual experiences – to be submitted via Turnitin on 19 March 2023