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Lund University

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Missiology with Ecumenical Theology, Ecclesial Studies; Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University

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The Missiology seminar at Lund University has been involved in several International research networks, such as the International Association for Missions Studies (IAMS), the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), and the European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies (ENBUCS). It also deals with different institutions for practical work within the fields of Mission, Dialogue and Ecumenicalism. The research at the department is carried out using historical, theological as well as anthropological methods. Ecumenicalism is stressed, and the encounter between religions is studied in its cultural context and from different religious perspectives. Gender relations are also in focus. Guest seminars have been arranged regularly, sometimes with focus on South Asia. In March 2002 Dominique Moghul, director for the Christian Study Centre, Rawalpindi, Pakistan lectured on *"Religious minorities in Muslim Societies. A Perspective from Pakistan"*.

Research and education connected to South Asia

From October 2006 the Arabist and scholar of Islam, Professor David Kerr headed the Division. He was formerly professor in the Divinity School at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland (and before that, during the years 1988-1996, he was Director of the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Hartford Institute for Religion Research, UK). During the Fall 2006 Prof. Kerr taught a 5 credits course on "Christianity in the Third World". It described and analysed this new global reality of Christianity, where the focus is on the history of Christianity in Africa, Asia and Latin America, contextual theological literature, and the ideas of leading "third-world" Christian theologians.

Sadly, Prof. David Kerr passed away on April 14, 2008, aged 62. [Read an obituary in Timesonline.](#)

Professor Emeritus **Aasulv Lande** (*photo to the right*) has been engaged in research on Interreligious dialogue and encounter between Eastern and Western cultures, focusing on the encounter between Buddhism and Christianity. Most of his research relates to Japan, but in 1991 he visited Nepal to study the practice of Tibetan Buddhism. During this visit he learnt about the role Christian mission played in the country during the last 10 years. Many Nepalese orient themselves towards Christianity as a reaction to the dominant Hindu and Buddhist religious practices, in a similar fashion as people in the West reject religion and turn to secularism. Christianity stands for a possibility of breaking through to change and a better future, and according to Prof. Lande this movement could be seen as a less violent and non-political parallel to the ongoing Maoist rebellion against the established society in Nepal.



Lande is also a board member of the [Institute for Contextual Theology in Sweden](#) (IKT), created in 1992 as a network by the then Prof. of Systematic Theology at Lund University, Per Frostin. The IKT functions as an independent critical party in dialogues with churches and fellowships of faith, universities and social movements in society, with a vision that the IKT will be a meeting place and a link for women's associations, peace- and environmental associations, solidarity movements and base groups within and outside the churches around the World.

Aasulv Lande retired in the Spring 2005. In honour of him and [Manfred Hofmann](#), Professor of Systematic Theology who also retired, the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies organised a farewell conference titled *"The Future of Contextual Theology"* at Lund University 27-28 January 2005. During the conference Lande lectured on "Christ and Buddha - hand in hand?", and Hofmann lectured on *"What is constant and what is variable in the Third World theology?"*

Dr. **Ann Aldén** defended her doctoral dissertation on **"Religion in Dialogue with Late Modern Society: A Constructive Contribution to a Christian Spirituality Informed by Buddhist-Christian Encounters"**, on Saturday 11 December 2004. It focuses on interreligious dialogue in a postcolonial perspective. Faculty opponent was Professor Paul Knitter, Xavier University, Cincinnati, USA.

Project abstract: In the dissertation a constructive contribution is made to a Christian spirituality for late modern religiously plural society. The words 'a constructive contribution' designate the methodological approach of the study. The words 'late modern religiously plural society' include the combination of social, political, cultural and economic factors in relation to which the question of spirituality will be discussed, and a contribution to a Christian spirituality is

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constructed.

Based on a description of contemporary religion, in which Aldén refers to modern sociologists (some general and some specifically involved with religion), she outlines certain recent characteristics of our contemporary way of relating to religion, and formulate a spirituality for late modern religiously plural society. She sees such spirituality arising within three dynamic fields: 'continuity and internal diversity', 'formal and informal structures' and 'vita activa and vita contemplativa'.

Against this background she presents and analyses a case study of Aloysius Pieris, a Christian theologian active in 'Buddhist' Sri Lanka and of Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist monk active in 'Christian' France. Based on identified presuppositions and in dialogue with these two personalities she proceeds toward a construction which contains some basic indicators of a Christian spirituality for late modern religiously plural society. The concepts 'community', 'baptism' and 'grace and concern' are central to the construction.

Dr. Göran Wiking defended a doctoral dissertation on 8 May 2004 about a diaspora Indian Christian Lutheran community in Malaysia, and their strategy for survival. The thesis was titled "Breaking the Pot: Contextual Responses to Survival Issues in Malaysian Churches".

Abstract: Protestantism in Malaysia is in many cases the result of labour migration from China and India in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Under the British colonial administration, it enjoyed a certain degree of protection. Furthermore, in the 20th Century, many Western missions started work in Malaysia often in order to strengthen and expand the ministry of existing denominations. This was particularly true of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran diaspora group. Until the time of independence in 1957, the Protestant Christian religion had a promising future. But after independence, the situation has gradually deteriorated due to two parallel developments: the withdrawal of Western support and the resurgence of local religions like Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism that compete with Christianity. These developments in turn have brought an array of serious issues before the church in general and the protestant mainline denominations in particular. Each major issue is outlined and discussed from a survival perspective. The local responses to the new challenges turn out to be manifold and many-faceted. Five contextual theologians are presented and analysed. Each theologian's approach to the contemporary issues assailing the church is examined. The theological output thus investigated is taken as an indicator of what kind the Malaysian churches are likely to develop into.

Göran Wiking spent two years in the late 1970s as a Mission volunteer in India, and later worked as a Missionary sent out by the Swedish Church to to Malaysia during the years 1985–94. Both his doctoral thesis and the Licentiate thesis, titled "*The Church of Sweden's Road to Malaya*", that he defended in 2000 were based on his experiences from Malaysia.

Dr. Wiking is now working as Assistant Professor at the [Lutheran Theological Seminary](#) in Hong Kong, China.

Some years ago PhD candidate [Kjell Nilsson](#) worked on a research project about the so-called Thomas Christians (the Syrian Orthodox Church) in Kerala, India, and their interaction with Hindus.

Stockholm

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