

Since the beginning of my studies on religion, so-called mystical traditions, and specifically such that claim themselves to be «non-dualist», have been a major field of interest. For more than ten years now, this has led me to engage intensely with the tantric Śaiva traditions of Kashmir, commonly referred to as «Kashmir Shaivism». I had the great fortune to get to know and regularly meet Dr. Mark Dyczkowski both in Europe and India, one of the world's foremost authorities on Hindu Tantra. In 2022, I wrote a seminar paper under the supervision of Dr. Renger which addresses the reception of Swami Lakshmanjoo and his followers, popularly known as «the last (formerly living) descendant of the Kashmiri Śaiva traditions». The paper was preceded by my additional interest in and study of the reception of «Eastern» or (apparently) «genuine spiritual traditions» in the West's 20th century (I wrote papers on i.e. Terrence McKenna as a representative of neo-shamanistic movements, or Idries Shah as one of Neo-Sufism). Thus, the tantric traditions of Kashmir, both in terms of their historical and philosophical development as well as their global contemporary reception, constitute one major field of interest that I might pursue in the future.

Besides and over the years, I have also come to engage with certain schools and traditions of Islamic mysticism (Sufism), especially the complex philosophy of «Shaykh al-Akbar» Ibn-Arabi as well as Indopakistani sources, traditions and protagonists such as Sultan Bahu, Bulleh Shah or the «Red Sufi» Lal Shabaz, the founding father of the Qalandariyya. It is here that the circle to my aforementioned interests in Hindu and especially Hindu tantric mysticism could be completed, it seems, as these persons had themselves been «mystics at the border of Islamic orthodoxy», sometimes even positioning themselves as both Hindu and Muslim. Up to this day, their shrines draw both Muslim and Hindu followers, allowing for the creation of syncretistic religious spaces (see i.e. both the book and the movie by the German anthropologist Jürgen Frembgen on the «Red Sufi»).

Hence, with my anthropological interest in religious syncretism and pluralism, I conducted an ethnographic field research in Burkina Faso, West Africa, in 2021. There I worked with marabouts, a type of religious specialist that can act as Imam, healer or divinizer and that in other regions might be called «shaykh» (Near East), «pir» (South Asia) or «ishan» (Central Asia). My research was focussed on how Muslim marabouts draw from both orthodox Islamic as well as local indigenous knowledge. Here I've once more got to know an alternative inner-Islamic discourse, allowing for syncretistic or at least pluralistic approaches to religious orthodoxy. An autoethnographic paper on my experiences as researcher can be found in one of the latest editions of the «Basel Papers» here: [https://ethnologie.philhist.unibas.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/ethnologie/Publikationen/Basel\\_Pap\\_no23\\_24.pdf](https://ethnologie.philhist.unibas.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/ethnologie/Publikationen/Basel_Pap_no23_24.pdf)

As you can guess by now, my interests in the field of religions are very broad and throughout my studies, I've been writing on subjects as diverse as the motivations of yoga tourists in India, Australian totemism, comparing certain teachings of Meister Eckhart with Advaita Vedānta, Martin Buber's dialogic principle or the reception of Mahāyāna teachings in German Buddhist journals from the early 20th century.

Privately, I am married and father of two marvelous children, living near the city of Basel in Switzerland. Having originally an IT background, I am currently working in the management of a company providing digital strategies for its customers (see also <https://www.cab.digital>).

In case you have questions or remarks, be it related to this website or anything else, feel free to contact me: [raphael.waelterlin@stud.unibas.ch](mailto:raphael.waelterlin@stud.unibas.ch).

With warmest regards,

Raphael Wälterlin,  
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