NVMEN at 60

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I should like to thank all those colleagues who have contributed to NVMEN such interesting and stimulating articles. I am thankful but not satisfied. There are national groups in the IAHR from which contributions all too seldom reach my editorial desk. (Editor 1973) [Ed.note: this volume chapter 9]

Sixty years of a journal provide a rich but at the same time spotty resource for charting the course of a field of study. This is no less true of NVMEN, the official journal of the International Association for the History of Religions, than of any other. The Association and the journal came to life within a few years of each other: the Association in 1950, the journal in 1954 (Bleeker 1954a). As one flips through the journal’s pages—or now scrolls through the various digital files containing its contents—one can observe important developments in the study of religions, some salutary and welcome, others perhaps less so:

- the growing interest and activity in the field, as indicated by a gradual increase in the number of pages, from 238 in volume one to 699 in volume 60;¹
- the increasing prevalence of English for scholarly communication: as Olav Hammer notes, volume one had three articles each in English, French, and German plus shorter notes in Italian; volume sixty had twenty articles, all but one in English, and that one in German;
- the passing of the years and the loss of esteemed teachers, colleagues, and friends, as evident in the steady line of obituaries;
- the gradual limitation of the journal to scholarship as communication with members of the IAHR shifted to other venues;
- the introduction of new topics and methods to supplement the meticulous philological work that has characterized the journal from its beginnings; and
- the gradual digitalization of our work, signaled among other things by the emergence of an online version of the journal, apparently starting with volume 48 in 2001 (ISSN 1568–5276), to say nothing of the various digital searches I made in composing this brief piece.

¹ The first expansion in length came only 20 years ago; cf. Kippenberg and Lawson 1993.
And yet, one knows full well that a history of religious studies written solely on the basis of material in *NVMEN* would be incomplete. Mircea Eliade contributed only two articles to the journal (Eliade 1956, 1959), and these were arguably not among his most influential or best. Ninian Smart contributed only one article, an attempt to go “Beyond Eliade” (Smart 1978), and a book review (Smart 1995). Wilfred Cantwell Smith contributed nothing more than a presumably obligatory “Reply to a Response” (Smith 1980), the response having been written by Donald Wiebe (Wiebe 1979). The other prominent Smith, Jonathan Z., published an article in *NVMEN* relatively late in his career (Smith 2001), and Wendy Doniger has only published a co-authored piece and a short obituary on Joseph Kitagawa (Smith and Doniger 1989; Doniger and Ebersole 1993). Donald Wiebe only published the single article mentioned above, although he did write several book reviews, while Robert Segal has only published one article (Segal 2001) and Russell McCutcheon one review article (McCutcheon 1995). Bruce Lincoln and Ivan Strenski have never published in the journal, and neither did John Carman. These are some of the most prominent North American figures in the study of religions, past and present. Who, one may wonder, has been publishing in *NVMEN*?

Of course, the story is different if one fishes in different waters. I have no easy way of categorizing the more than 550 different authors who have contributed articles over the last sixty years, either in terms of country of origin or specialization. Some stand out through personal friendship, such as the specialist in Gnosis from the former DDR (East Germany), Kurt Rudolph, who published three articles (Rudolph 1961, 1962, 1978), including his methodological piece on the study of religions as a critique of ideologies, four book reviews, and an obituary. Others stand out for their prolific contributions. Hans Kippenberg, a German scholar of ancient religions and a former editor, has published five articles (Kippenberg 1970, 1983, 1992, 2000, 2005), plus a large number of reviews, while the American scholar, Luther H. Martin, has published six (Martin 1973, 1981, 1983, 1989, 1994, 2001), as did the Swedish scholar, Geo Widengren (Widengren 1954, 1955, 1960, 1961, 1963, 1971). The Italian scholar, Raffaele Pettazzoni, who founded the journal, published seven articles (Pettazzoni 1954a, 1954b, 1954c, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1959), although some of them are quite short, while the Dutch scholar and long-time editor, C.J. Bleeker, published eleven (Bleeker 1954b, 1955, 1958a, 1958b, 1959a, 1959b, 1960, 1964, 1966, 1971, 1978), in addition to a variety of communications. Most prolific of all was the German-born Israeli scholar, R.J. Zwi Werblowsky who—if one counts what JSTOR classifies as research articles—contributed a full fifteen articles to the journal. The evidence is a little one-sided, but it seems to show what one might