The Crystal Skull Narrative, Developing theory and methodology for the study of composite myths in new religious movements through the analysis of an exemplary narrative

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Title: The Crystal Skull Narrative, Developing theory and methodology for the study of composite myths in new religious movements through the analysis of an exemplary narrative
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Abstract: Years ago a fascinating story with a true ‘Indiana Jones’ feel to it sparked my interest. The story recounted of crystal skulls, brought to our planet by alien beings with the objective of aiding us in our quest to save the world. Intrigued I aimed to learn as much as I could about this narrative and the movement that carried it. Several obstacles were encountered: There was no previous research or secondary literature about this story or its movement. There was little to no theory regarding the development of new mythology in modern religious movements (except for fiction based religions in which the story is the primary motivator of the movement) and no method has been developed to study new religions and their formative myths within the social environment. This thesis therefore pursues three objectives: a comprehensive analysis is made of the myth of crystal skulls. Based on this analysis, a preliminary theory on the emergence of new mythological stories is formed. A methodology is developed to study those religious stories and to make the results comparable. The results lead to the development of a proposal for a review of terrain: narrativism, a method of studying stories that differs from existing disciplines such as narratology and myth studies and aims to be an interdisciplinary approach to story-study with emphasis on the operation of the story within a community of believers.

The outcome of this thesis consists of the redemption of three promises made in the first chapter:

1) There was little to no theory regarding the development of new mythology in modern religious movements (except for fiction based religions in which the story is the primary motivator of the movement) and no method has been developed to study new religions and their formative myths within the social environment. This thesis therefore pursues three objectives: a comprehensive analysis is made of the myth of crystal skulls. Based on this analysis, a preliminary theory on the emergence of new mythological stories is formed. A methodology is developed to study those religious stories and to make the results comparable. The results lead to the development of a proposal for a review of terrain: narrativism, a method of studying stories that differs from existing disciplines such as narratology and myth studies and aims to be an interdisciplinary approach to story-study with emphasis on the operation of the story within a community of believers.

2) A foundation has been laid out for the development of the theory on the emergence of new religious movements through the analysis of an exemplary narrative. This study is based almost entirely on written sources which are as noted previously, mainly primary in nature and consist of books as well as texts on websites. A minimum amount of field work is carried out during the first phase of the study. The theoretical foundation is largely based on the work of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur and the developed methodology borrows elements from the work of the American philosopher Loyal Rue. The work of both authors is discussed in the thesis. The outcome of this thesis consists of the redemption of three promises made in the first chapter: 1) There is insight into the creation and operation of the crystal skull story and the conclusion is made that the crystal skull movement - despite its own statement not be either a movement or a religion - in fact does fall under the banner of new religious movements and should be studied as such studied. 2) A foundation has been laid out for the development of the theory on the emergence of new religious myths and a tool had been presented to map these emergences. 3) A methodology has been developed to make the study of myths objective and comparable.

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- Theology and Religious Studies

Narrative Policy Analysis presents a powerful and original application of contemporary literary theory and policy analysis to many of today’s most urgent public policy issues. Emery Roe demonstrates across a wide array of case studies that structuralist and poststructuralist theories of narrative are exceptionally useful in evaluating difficult policy problems, understanding their implications, and in making effective policy recommendations. Assuming no prior knowledge of literary theory, Roe introduces the theoretical concepts and terminology from literary analysis through an examination of 1 Three basic questions have been paramount in orienting theory and research on NRMs [new religious movements]: what are the identifying markers of NRMs that distinguish them from other types of religious groups?; what are the different types of NRMs and how do these different types relate to the established institutional order of the host society?; and what are the most important ways that NRMs respond to the sociocultural dislocation that leads to their formation?