

Pedagogies of Prayer: Teaching Orthodoxy in South India

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Zapraszamy do oglądania nagrania seminarium z udziałem Vlady Naumescu, które odbyło się 21.12.2016.

[Pedagogies of Prayer: Teaching Orthodoxy in South India, Vlad Naumescu](#) [1]

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Lecturer's name: Vlad Naumescu

Questions of personhood and ethical formation have been at the crossroad of the new anthropologies of ethics and Christianity, both of which emphasize the Protestant origins of the modern self. This talk provides an alternative story, looking at modes of shaping an Orthodox interiority among Syrian Christians (Nasrani) in South India. Like most Eastern Christians, their spiritual formation is closely tied to church tradition and mediated by exemplary figures whose words are internalized and made meaningful in their own lives. This process of molding oneself to the spirituality of saintly figures, canonical texts and prayers is both personal and liturgical, in as much as ritual constitutes the primary way for shaping an Orthodox personhood. Colonial pedagogies and modern education brought in new modes of ethical formation that stand in contrast to the old ones.

This conflict between new and old models lead to a confusing ethos of prayer most visible in children's religious education: they are encouraged to speak from the heart while asked to reproduce canonical models. Guided by the example of teenage girl from this community, I show how children navigate between such demands to forge a personal relationship with the divine.

Vlad Naumescu is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Central European University. His research focused on issues of learning and transmission in Eastern Christianity has shifted from religious transformations in postsocialist Ukraine (*Modes of Religiosity in Eastern Christianity* 2007) to ritual, temporality and ethics among Russian Old Believers in Romania (*The End Times and the Near Future*, 2016) and his current project on pedagogies of prayer in South India. He combines ethnography with filmmaking, producing a series of films that speak to his writings: *Birds' Way* (2009), *Bread of Life: The Word/The Silence* (2014).

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