



Nederlands Genootschap
voor Godsdienstwetenschap

Public Religions and Their Secrets, Secret Religions and Their Publics

**2016 Autumn Conference of the Dutch Association for the Study of Religion (NGG),
Thursday 27 – Friday 28 October 2016, University of Amsterdam**

OUTLINE OF THEME

Advocates of modernity and of secularization insist that religion is becoming increasingly individualized, a claim that in its most simplistic formulation presupposes religion's absolute retreat from the public to the private sphere. By contrast, thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas have argued that even in modern societies, religion should be allowed to participate in public decision-making processes in so far as its claims can be "translated" into the (non-religious) language of public reason and become a basis for discussion and consensus between religious and non-religious persons. Furthermore, quite a few significant trends of contemporary religion, such as Pentecostalism, Islamic fundamentalism, and new forms of national or political religion, pose an empirical challenge to the modernity and secularization paradigms by demonstrating the continued presence of religion in the public sphere. Debates concerning public religion have mostly focused on post-Enlightenment, modern society, but the negotiation between a public and a private sphere has been a concern for religion even before the Enlightenment and in other contexts than modernity. This opens up the question of the role of secrecy within these processes of negotiation, both in terms of practices and of discourses. To what extent do practitioners of public religions keep aspects of their practices, doctrines, and material culture behind the veils of secrecy? What role does secrecy play in religious traditions? Is secrecy opposed to public aspects of religions, or is it complementary and functional to them? And what role do accusations of secrecy, double standards (for example the alleged taqiyya in the case of Muslims in the West) and conspiracy theories play in interpreting the religions of others?

We are honoured to announce prof. Jan Assmann (Konstanz) as the conference's keynote speaker.

CALL FOR PAPERS

For this conference we welcome papers that address all aspects of the public vs. the secret in religion. Proposals can be submitted from all theoretical perspectives and on, and all areas of research within the study of religion. Each individual paper will be given a total of 30 minutes, i.e. 20 minutes for presentation and 10 minutes for discussion.

Please send your paper abstract of max. 350 words no later than **1 April 2016** to Gerard Wiegers, University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Humanities, Department of History, European Studies and Religious Studies, Oude Turfmarkt 147, 1012 CG Amsterdam, The Netherlands, e-mail: g.a.wiegers@uva.nl