



## *QAR PROJECT UPDATE 3: December 2020*

Welcome to the third 'Update' from UQ's Queensland Atlas of Religion project, being developed in partnership with the State Library of Queensland, 2019-22. You will probably have received this through our mailing list. If you are not on our mailing list, please contact us via the details below and we look forward to welcoming your input.

### **Introducing the QAR**

**Religious diversity is an acknowledged feature of Queensland society.**

Yet to date we have no comprehensive, authoritative and publicly available overview of patterns of religious belief and practice in the State, relating to both its past and its present. Hence there is no authoritative basis to inform policy and public discussion, especially in countering social division based upon misinformation.

*Khmer Buddhist Society of Queensland, Third Avenue,*



*Marsden.*

By providing the first systematic scholarly account of the presence and diversity of religion in Queensland's social life, the **Queensland Atlas of Religion** (QAR) aims to become the go-to reference platform for

journalists, researchers and others seeking to empirically ground the place of religion (and religions) in Queensland. The QAR and its ancillary projects will thereby substantially contribute to a much-needed improvement in Queensland's and Australia's religious literacy.

Existing treatments of religion in Queensland are overwhelmingly tradition-specific, primarily focusing on Christian denominations. The QAR will be unique in positioning the contributions of specific religious traditions against the broader tableau of Queensland's history and society.

*The QAR project aims to:*

1. capture Queensland's religious diversity, historically and in the present;
2. cumulatively build a multi-dimensional account of faith and religious practice in Queensland, recognising the significance of place, complexities of transmission and practice, transnational connections and diasporic experiences;
3. present this account in a Digital Humanities online format designed for universal access and public engagement, leveraging the University of Queensland's demonstrable track record in delivering similar high impact projects.

Developed as a partnership between researchers at the University of Queensland and the State Library of Queensland, the QAR has secured funding (2019-2022) from the Australian Research Council (Linkage Project LP 180100341).

See: <https://hpi.uq.edu.au/research/digital-resources-and-research>

### **PhD scholarship opportunity**

The Queensland Atlas of Religion funding supports four PhD scholarships, for research to

be undertaken at the University of Queensland in 2020-2023.

Three of these were filled in early 2020, with one student (Prabuddha Mukherjee) having commenced this year and two more arriving from overseas in early 2021. The fourth PhD scholarship has now been advertised, with a **closing date for applications of Friday 18 December**.

The scholarship is valued at \$28,597 per annum (2021 rate), indexed annually, for three years duration with the possibility of two 6-month extensions in approved circumstances.

#### *Description*

'Aboriginal Christianity in Queensland: a comparative perspective'

This anthropological or historical project will consider Indigenous responses to Christian evangelisation/missionary activity in Queensland. It will trace themes such as the significance of particular Christian traditions in relation to conversion experiences, inter-generational patterns of religious activity and church politics, the significance of church membership as an aspect of Aboriginal identity, the relationship between Christianity and Indigenous religion, and the politics of Christianity in Indigenous Australia including land use and tenure.

The specific regional and religious topic focus for the project will be determined by the successful candidate in consultation with their advisors.

#### *Eligibility*

To be eligible, you must meet the UQ entry requirements for a higher degree by research.

This scholarship is open to all applicants, but Indigenous researchers are especially encouraged to apply and may qualify for additional funding support equivalent to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Scholarships.

**For further details on the application process, please see:**

<https://scholarships.uq.edu.au/scholarship/aboriginal-christianity-queensland-comparative-perspective-phd-scholarship>

## Working with State Library of Queensland

A day-long induction session introduced the first group of UQ researchers to SLQ's resources and facilities on 4 November 2020.

Thanks to Chrissi Theodosiou, members of the QAR team joined this year's SLQ Fellows on a guided tour of the magnificent State Library building. Short presentations from Gavin Bannerman (Director, Queensland Memory), Robyn Hamilton (Lead, Collection Building team), Catherine Cottle (Specialist Librarian, Collection Building) and Olivia Robinson (Lead, Collection Engagement) gave some valuable insights into SLQ's operations and partnership role as the QAR develops.

The afternoon session (after lunch, and a quick check on progress on the election count in the US) focussed on oral history strategies and techniques, hosted by SLQ's Catherine Cottle. The new audio recording equipment purchased through the project's ARC funding was given its first run.



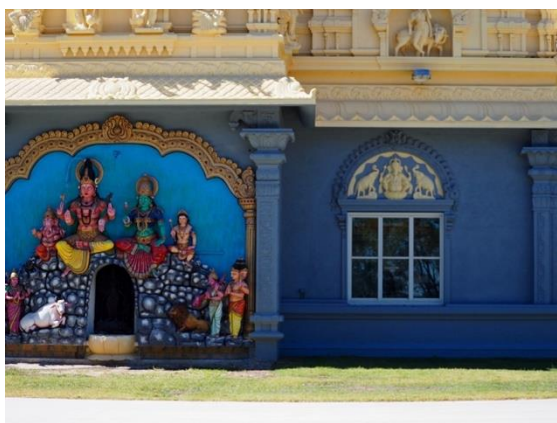
*Adam, Jess and Prabuddha getting to grips with the recording gear*



## Exploring places: South Maclean, Eden Grove and Inala

The striking architecture of the Hindu temple (two images, below) beside the Mt Lindesay Highway was an initial inspiration for the thinking behind the QAR project.

Now that two research projects are underway, Dr Adam Bowles headed out from St Lucia with Jess White and Prabuddha Mukherjee in October this year. Here they give us the story of their big day out...



“Our scoping visit started at South Maclean, on the Logan River, where we met with Surendra Muttiah, secretary of the Hindu Ahlaya Sangam Queensland, and Chief Priest Sri Santhan Kurrukul. While the morning ritual was taking place we admired the iconographic program, inside and out in the grounds, of this fascinating temple to Ganesh. As architecture, the whole precinct was designed in accordance with traditional South Indian temple guidelines superintended by an architect and builders from Tamil Nadu.



From there we went on to the Sri Lanka Buddhist Monastery at Eden Grove (image above), and met with the head monk, Venerable Wattegama Dhammawasa Nayaka Thero. With refreshments and a guided tour of the peaceful and inspiring setting, we heard about the range of activities including meditation, language classes, Buddhist teaching and community gatherings.

After lunch our last destination was the Guru Nanak Sikh Temple at Inala (above). Like other Sikh temples and community centres around the world, this Gurudwara is an open and welcoming place of worship. As we did not have an appointment we did not meet with any temple representatives formally, but look forward to taking up that opportunity in the future.”

## Census Data – a first look at historical patterns

Earlier this month the QAR project engaged a Research Assistant, UQ PhD student Liam Barnsdale, to undertake an initial assessment of the census data relating to religious affiliation in Queensland’s history.

Before 1859 the census was administered by NSW authorities, followed by nine separate

census reports between 1861 and 1901 administered by the Queensland colonial government. Since 1911, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has administered numerous censuses, now held every five years (the next scheduled for 2021).

Unlike other countries (notably the UK), the census questions have typically included statements of religious affiliation. As a result, in Queensland we thus have a remarkable record of religious identity as declared in the census across a broad timeframe. In some cases the data enables us to drill down to regional variations, although there are of course many gaps and absences. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, for example, were not included in the official census until after the 1967 referendum.

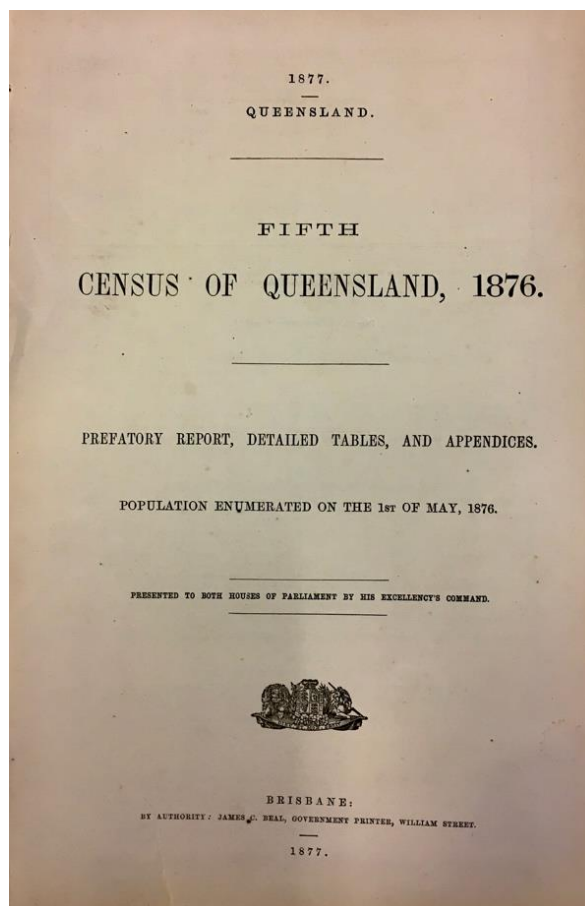
Liam's first task is to collate the existing data sets in a usable form, and investigate options for how that data can be mapped and presented visually. Much of the work relates to statistics, but there are some fascinating details already emerging.

In the fifth colonial Queensland census, for example, many people filled out their box using the option "other" – their responses make for quite a remarkable list!

Alongside Church of England, Roman Catholic and other well-known denominations, this 1876 census recorded quite a few less-familiar responses, including:

Anti-Trinitarians (5 people), Calathumpians (2), Christian Israelites (4), Cosmopolitans (2), Dickenite (1), Eclectic (2), Freethinkers (107), Materialists (3), Morrisonian (1), New Sectarian (2), Nondescript (1), Puseyite (1), Spiritualistic Freethinkers (9), Swedenborgian (21), The One Body (1), Universalist (5) and Unsectarian (2).

There were no Pastafarians or Jedi by then, it should be noted!



## Exploring places: The Gulf

One of the QAR CI's (Chief Investigators), Dr Richard Martin visited the remote Gulf Country town of Normanton in early December.



Situated on the traditional lands of the Gkuthaarn and Kukatj people, Normanton is a possible location for the PhD project on Aboriginal Christianity, and the impact of Christianity on Aboriginal peoples in Queensland.

Besides Gkuthaarn and Kukatj people, other Aboriginal peoples including Kurtijar people, Waanyi people, Ganggalida people and Lardil people live in Normanton, and play an active part in regular Christian church services, alongside non-Aboriginal Australians.

## Community Reference Group

New contributors and interested parties are very welcome to become involved, either through writing content, contributing to data or source collection, or by joining the Community Reference Group. Please email either Geoff Ginn ([g.ginn@uq.edu.au](mailto:g.ginn@uq.edu.au)) or Adam Bowles ([a.bowles1@uq.edu.au](mailto:a.bowles1@uq.edu.au)).

### *Find us on Instagram*

Our social media presence is a work in progress, as we source images and places of religious significance, stories and associations throughout Queensland. Search for qarel\_uq, or 'Queensland Atlas of Religion'.



### Interested? Finding out more

For further information about the QAR project, to get involved or to make suggestions, please email: Geoff Ginn ([g.ginn@uq.edu.au](mailto:g.ginn@uq.edu.au)) or Adam Bowles ([a.bowles@uq.edu.au](mailto:a.bowles@uq.edu.au)).

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