

The Theosophical Society in England
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INTERNATIONAL THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

**Saturday and Sunday
20 and 21 September 2014**

Programme

The London headquarters of the TS in England has regularly hosted international conferences on theosophical history since 1986. This year it features speakers from Canada, Denmark, Israel, the UK and the USA

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

SATURDAY 20 SEPTEMBER

9.45 *Registration and coffee*

10.20 Welcome – Colin Price, National President, TS in England

10.30 **1880 - When a British Agent Spied on Madame Blavatsky**

Paul Johnson (in absentia)

The fraudulent impersonation of a sincere spiritual seeker by the chief of the Indian secret police in 1880 led to a public relations crisis for the TS

11.15 *Refreshments*

11.45 **Oriental Order of Sikha and the Sat Bhai, Yarker & Blavatsky**

Geraldine Beskin and Barry Loft

A look of the origin of the combined Order with an Brahmin Pundit in the 1840s and its revival and re-organisation in the 1870s and 1880s as an 'occult order' encompassing tarot, astrology, crystal seeing, and mesmerism.

12.30 **A Necessary Evil: Theosophy's Ambivalence towards the Human Body**

John L. Crow

Theosophy has an inherent tension arising from two of its informing ideological undercurrents, Platonic idealism and spiritualized materialism. It casts the human body and its materiality as both a hindrance to spiritual development and a necessary component for humanities evolution

1.15 Lunch break

2.15 **Osvald Siren, Theosophy and Chinese Art**

Chuang Chienhui

Theosophy brought about multifaceted cultural exchanges between East and West at the turn of the 19th century however, surprisingly, the impact of Siren's esoteric view of Chinese art has been largely overlooked

3.00 **The Theosophical Society & Universal Brotherhood**

Tim Rudboeg

What is the origin of the important and characteristic idea of the Society's first Object (universal brotherhood)? Why did it become significant to the Theosophical Society? And how did the society implement the concept?



3.45 *Refreshments*

4.30 **Towards a Morphology of the Modern**

Theosophical Movement

Kevin Tingay

From its foundation in 1875 the parent Theosophical Society provoked a range of reactions and opinions about its nature.

This has continued into recent times. Was it an educational initiative? A religious organisation? An offshoot of

Spiritualism? A cabal of occultists? A vector for Indian nationalism? An agency for progressive causes and social action?



5.15 *Short break*

5.30 **Sincere Jews: The Jewish Theosophical community in Basra, Iraq**

Boaz Huss

In the late 1920s, a Theosophical lodge was founded in Basra, Iraq. But in 1931 members were excommunicated by a local Rabbi when they refused to leave the TS. They then created their own community called 'Sincere Jews'.

6.15 *End of conference day*

SUNDAY 21 SEPTEMBER

10.00 *Registration and coffee*

10.30 **Who was Agardi Metrovitch?** Erica Georgiades (in absentia)

This presentation hopefully brings to a successful conclusion the mystery surrounding the identity of a famous opera singer of the 19th century who when engaged in revolutionary activities used a *nom de guerre*

11.15 *Refreshments*

11.45 **Blavatsky & Neo-Gnosis in Modern Eastern Orthodox Contexts**

Yuri Stoyanov



This paper explores little-studied or unexplored convergences of Blavatskyan Theosophy and neo-Gnostic trends in several modern Eastern Orthodox contexts. It examines the interaction of Theosophy with existing Eastern Orthodox mystical and spiritualist currents 100 - 125 years ago and considers attempts at a polymathic synthesis of Blavatskyan Theosophy, “Eastern Wisdom” and modern science. It also reflects on the re-interpretation of Theosophy in the works and activities of Nicholas and Helena Roerich

12.30 *Lunch break*

1.30 **Esotericism, Pan-Asianism, and still-sitting:**

Mirra and Paul Richard in Japan Yoshinaga Shin'ichi

Western esotericism and Theosophy had not left a lasting influence on Japan before W.W.II, but their contacts with Japanese sometimes led to significant results in the field of religion and politics. This paper examines the network of spiritual seekers developed by Mirra and Paul Richard in Japan

2.15 **Theosophical Ideas of Collective Karma and their Relationship to Apocalypticism in America**

Erin Prophet

The notion of national karma or collective karma as articulated by some Theosophical teachers caught the imagination of several New Age authors in the United States during the twentieth century. This talk considers the Theosophy revealed in a number of books exploring the theme of apocalypticism



3.00 *Refreshments*

3.30 **Mapping Madame Blavatsky? Towards A Chronological & Bibliographic Approach to the Evolution of Her Thought**

Barry Thompson

What continuities and discontinuities do H. P. Blavatsky's teachings present? Other than inaccessible texts held in Adept Fraternities, what were her main accessible sources, and how were they used? How did she respond to currents of thought active in her time, and to parallel developments in kindred occult movements? Using *The Collected Writings* as our main template, this talk is an attempt to provide a blueprint to enable a better appreciation of her career as a populariser, polemicist and esotericist.

4.15 **Was the Theosophical Society a Spiritualist movement?**

Panel discussion of Jeff Lavoie's controversial 2012 book.

5.00 Conference ends, but all who are registered for the conference are invited as free guests to the 6 pm public lecture

Madame Blavatsky and the Seven Archival Mysteries by Leslie Price

Conference charges: £30 per day (£25 concessions, £20 TS members)
or £50 for both days (£40 concessions, £30 TS members)

Advance booking is not essential **except for payments by credit or debit cards.**

Call the accounts department to pay in this way:

020 7563 9818 or accounts@theosoc.org.uk

Only cash or cheques will be accepted at the door.