**Simon Theobald**

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| Education |

Doctor of Philosophy (Anthropology), Australian National University, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Thesis title: “The possibility of perfection: Living utopia in contemporary Mashhad”, 2014-2020.

Master of Arts (Anthropology), Australian National University School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, 2013.

1st class honours, The University of Sydney Department of Studies in Religion, Thesis title: ““Without my iPhone, I’m lost”: The merging of the tangible and the ethereal in religion in the digital age”, 2010. The thesis dealt with the topic of internet usage among religious communities, with a focus on the Chabad-Lubavitcher Hasidic movement.

Bachelor of Arts (Advanced), majoring in Government and International Relations, and Studies in Religion, The University of Sydney, 2006-2009.

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| Research Interests |

**Thematic**: The anthropology of religion, anthropology of Islam, anthropology of Judaism, anthropology of ethics and values.

**Region interest**: West and Central Asia, especially Iran/Afghanistan/Tajikistan; China; Western European Diasporic communities.

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| Publication list |

**Journal articles:**

Theobald, Simon. ‘Beyond the Prophet’s Heirs: Emergent Trajectories of a new Sectarian Polemic in Contemporary Iran’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2020), pp.1-20.

Theobald, Simon. ‘“We Deserve Better”: Ideologies of deservingness and status in the interpretation of Chinese goods in an Iranian bazaar’, *Iranian Studies* (2020), vol.53, no.5-6, pp.947-961.

Theobald, Simon. ‘Doubtful Food, Doubtful Faith: A Comparative Study of the Influence of Religious Maximalism on New Ideas of Food Taboo in Some Contemporary Jewish and Muslim Communities’, *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, vol.3, no.2 (2012), pp.245-268*.*

Theobald, Simon. ‘Faith, Interfaith, and YouTube: Dialogue, or Derision?’, *Literature and Aesthetics*, vol. 19, no.2 (2009), pp.326–342.

***Book chapters:***

Theobald, Simon. “It’s a Tefillin Date: Alternative Narratives of Orthodox Jewish Sexuality in the Digital Age” in Stephen Hunt, Andrew Yip, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Contemporary Religion and Sexuality* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), pp.289-304.

***Peer-reviewed online materials:***

Theobald, Simon. ‘Trump risks pushing Iran into China’s orbit’, *East Asia Forum*, 18th July, 2019, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/07/18/trump-risks-pushing-iran-into-chinas-orbit/>.

Theobald, Simon. ‘After US withdrawal, Iran embraces China’, *East Asia Forum*, 5th June, 2018, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/06/05/after-us-withdrawal-iran-embraces-china/> .

Theobald, Simon. ‘If the Iran nuclear deal collapses, tightening US sanctions may push Iran closer to China’, *East Asia Forum*, 19th September, 2018, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/09/18/with-us-sanctions-re-imposed-what-now-for-iran-and-china/>.

Theobald, Simon. ‘Beyond Stereotypes: Success, failure, and the complexity of women’s education in Iran’, *BroadAgenda*, University of Canberra, 23rd August, 2018, <http://www.broadagenda.com.au/home/beyond-stereotypes-success-failure-and-the-complexity-of-womens-education-in-iran> .

***Other peer reviewed materials:***

Theobald, Simon. ‘The Perfect Place’, in Shameem Black, Matt Tomlinson, Jack Fenner, eds., *Paradigm\_Shift: Perfection*, Australian National University College of Asia and the Pacific (2019), pp.52-57.

***Articles forthcoming:***

Theobald, Simon. “Virtuous Iran: ‘Ethical static’ and moral perfectionism in contemporary Mashhad”, *Critique of Anthropology.*

***Articles under review:***

Theobald, Simon. “The Possibility of Perfection: Prayers upon the Prophet as an Ideal Public in Contemporary Iran”. *American Ethnologist.* Second round of review (with minor revisions).

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| Academic Blogs |

“Colonial Spectres”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2020/11/09/colonial-spectres/> , November 9th 2020.

““It’s a lot of sand”: An Anthropological take on Trump’s Syrian Withdrawal”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2019/10/21/its-a-lot-of-sand/>, October 21st 2019.

“Eating Iran”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2019/06/17/eating-iran/>, June 17th 2019.

“Misinterpreting People”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2019/01/28/misinterpreting-people/>, January 28th 2019.

“Talking like a child: Language learning for anthropology fieldwork”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2018/09/19/like-a-child>, September 20th 2018.

“Does Anthropology Have a Point?”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2018/07/05/does-anthropology-have-a-point/>, July 5th 2018.

“Talking in Silences”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2018/05/03/talking-in-silences/>, 3rd May 2018.

“Anthropology is boring: Bring other books”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2018/04/05/boredom-is-culture/>, 5th April 2018.

“The Revolution that Wasn’t (Yet): Reflections on Iran’s protests two months out”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2018/03/08/irans-protests-two-months-out/>, 8th March 2018.

“The Price of Eggs: Iran beyond liberalism and capitalism”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2018/01/11/the-price-of-eggs-irans-protests-beyond-democracy-and-capitalism/>, 11th January 2018.

“Like a Skin”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2017/11/09/like-a-skin/>, 9th November 2017.

“The Restitution of the Dead”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2017/10/11/the-restitution-of-the-dead/>, 11th October 2017.

“Ethnographers vs. Tourists”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2017/06/22/ethnographers-vs-tourists/>, 22nd June 2017.

“Trump Misunderstands Iran”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2017/02/02/trump-misunderstands-iran/>, 2nd February 2017.

“Experiencing Multiculturalism: When is diversity, diverse?”, <https://thefamiliarstrange.com/2017/01/12/when-is-diversity-diverse/>, 12th January 2017.

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| Awards and Nominations |

Nominated for the Australian National University’s College of Arts and Social Sciences Excellence in Education Award (2019)

Australian Network of Student Anthropologists Travel Grant (2018)

University Postgraduate Award (2014)

Australian Postgraduate Award (2011)

University of Sydney Merit Award (2011)

G.S Caird Scholarship in Studies in Religion III (2010)

G.S Caird Scholarship in Studies in Religion II (2009)

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| Recent Conferences and Symposia |

*The repugnant anthropologist: ‘Suffering’ interlocutors and the ethnographer’s understanding of the good life in contemporary Iran,* Workshop on “Good Critique: Why We Can’t Talk About Suffering Without Talking About Values”, Max Plank-Cambridge Centre for Ethics, Economy and Social Change, Online, 25th March, 2022.

*The Sound of Utopia: Prayers as Sonic Invocation of a Perfect Public in Contemporary Iran*, American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Vancouver, Canada, 20-24th November 2019.

*‘The quality is terrible’: The Dilemma of Chinese Market Expansion and Iranian Middle Class Consumers’*, International Conference on China and Iran’s Political and Cultural Relations, Leiden University and the Centre of Iranian Studies of Shanghai International Studies University, Leiden, The Netherlands, 18-19th December 2018.

‘*Iranian, buying foreign goods is treason!’ Prestige and the struggle for life beyond precarity in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, Australian Anthropological Society Annual Conference, James Cook University, Cairns, Queensland, Australia, 4th -7th December, 2018.

*“Not in this carriage, hajji*”: *Negotiating the minute and the mundane of gender segregation on an Iranian Metro line*. Mundane Governance Conference*,* Research School of Humanities, School of Sociology, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, 22-24th November, 2017.

*When is Islamophobia not Islamophobia? ‘Anti-Muslim’ canards in the representation of local Sunni Muslims in Shi’ite Mashhad.* ‘In their words, in our words’ Conference, Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, 23-24th November, 2017.

*The ‘indispensable’ criterion of truth: Impossible lies and incredulous lives in contemporary Iran*. Australian Anthropological Society, Association of Social Anthropologists, and Association of Social Anthropologists Aotearoa/New Zealand joint Conference, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia, 11-15th December 2017.

*“One glance is acceptable”: Perfection and contradiction in an Iranian Islamist family.* Symposia Iranica, Pembroke College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK, 11-12th April 2017.

*“It’s bad, but we won’t change”: Impacts of Khomeinist legacies and ‘structural readjustment’ on resource management in middle-class urban Iran*. Australian Anthropological Society Annual Conference, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia, 12-15th December 2016.

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| Panels organised |

‘*Visions beyond precarity: Envisaging and practicing alternatives to neo-liberal modernity’*, Australian Anthropological Society annual conference, James Cook University, Queensland, Australia, 5th December 2018.

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| Employment |

**Postdoctoral Research Employment**

Junior Fellow, Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies, University of Hamburg (October 2021-Present).

**University lecturer and course coordinator, including course design, writing syllabi, and developing and marking assessments**

An Introduction to an Anthropology of Iran. Institut für Ethnologie, Goethe University of Frankfurt, (Weekly lectures, delivered April-July 2021).

Culture and Person, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University (Bi-weekly lectures, and weekly small group tutorials, delivered July-November 2019).

Gender in Cross-cultural Perspective, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University (Bi-weekly lectures, and weekly small group tutorials, delivered February-May 2019).

Spirit Rising – Religious Resurgence in its Local Context, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University (Weekly lectures, and weekly small group tutorials, delivered July-November 2018).

**University Guest Lectures**

*Islamic Utopianism: From the 7th/1st to the 21st/14th Centuries*, for Imagining the Future: A Sociology of Utopias, School of Sociology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University (April 2020).

*Blood and Spectacle: The Performance of Violence,* for Violence and Terror, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University (May 2017).

*The Ethics of Ethnography: Doing the ‘Right(s)’ thing in the field*, for Doing Ethnography: Practicum on Applied Anthropology, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University (August 2016).

**Tutor**

Culture and Development, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University (February-May 2018)

Global Citizen: Culture, Development, and Inequality, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University (July-November 2017)

Violence and Terror, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University (February-May 2017)

Writing International Relations, Department of International Relations, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University (February-May 2017)

Refugee Politics: Displacement and Exclusion in the 21st Century, School of Politics and International Relations, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian national University (July-November 2016).

**Research assistance**

Assisting Dr Patrick McConvell on his Australian Research Council Grant *Skin and Kin in Aboriginal Australia: Linguistic and historical perspectives on the dynamics of social categories* (2016-17). My role included program management and administration, review and assessment of book matter, editing of book matter including copy editing. The output of this work was the publication of Patrick McConvell, Piers Kelly, and Sebastien Lecrampe (eds.), 2018, *Skin, Kin, and Clan*: *The Dynamics of Social Categories in Indigenous Australia*, ANU Press, Australia.

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| Fieldwork experience |

**Mashhad, Islamic Republic of Iran:** January 2015-March 2016, January-February 2018.

**Iranian diasporic community associated with the Islamic Centre of Hamburg, Germany:** October 2021 – Present

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| Media appearances |

Vanstone, Amanda, ‘Iran and China’, [*ABC Radio National Counterpoint*](http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/counterpoint/iran-and-china/9924468), 2nd June 2018.

Black, Alexandra, ‘Art of Anthropology exhibition opens at ANU’, [*The Canberra Times*](https://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/act/art-of-anthropology-exhibition-opens-at-anu-20171001-gys2ag.html), 1st October 2017.

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| Outreach and impact |

Organiser of ‘Art of Anthropology’ photographic exhibit (2016-18). Included personal submission from fieldwork.

Founder, chief commissioning and submissions editor, [www.thefamiliarstrange.com](http://www.thefamiliarstrange.com) – a social media outreach project for public anthropology including a blog and podcast and with a presence on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Reddit. Launched in September 2017, *The Familiar Strange* issupported by the Australian Anthropological Society and the American Anthropological Association. Since our founding, we have had over 137, 000 listens on Soundcloud and more than 95,000 visitors, with more than 164, 000 views on the website to May 2020. Our work has been republished by *Cultural Anthropology*, among other major anthropology journals. With over 85 podcast episodes, and over 130 blogs, our participating authors and interviewees include a number of anthropologists from all career stages, coming from countries including Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, India, France, Canada, Thailand, Indonesia, and China. Materials from the blog and podcast have been used for teaching purposes by lecturers in anthropology at the Australian National University.

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| Administration and commitment to department |

2021 – Junior Fellow, Symposia Iranica

2016-18 – Manager and co-ordinator, Higher Degree Research Seminar series.

2018 – Student representative at the Cross-school Anthropology Board of Studies group, Australian National University.

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| Languages spoken |

**English** – Native

**Persian** – Proficient

**German** – Intermediate

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| Grants |

Engaged Anthropology Fund, Australian Anthropological Society, February 2021. Funding for transcription of podcast interviews from *The Familiar Strange.*

$500 direct small grant, Deakin University, August 2019. Funding for development of podcast and blog project, *The Familiar Strange.*

$1000 direct small grant, School of Culture, History, and Language, College of Asia and Pacific Studies, Australian National University, July 2019. Funding for development of podcast and blog project, *The Familiar Strange.*

$5000 direct grant, College of Asia and Pacific Studies/College of Arts and Social Sciences Cross-governance fund, April 2019. Funding for development of podcast and blog project, *The Familiar Strange.*

$500 direct small grant, Australian Anthropology Society, October 2018. Funding for development of podcast and blog project, *The Familiar Strange.*

$1500 direct small grant, School of Culture, History, and Language, College of Asia and Pacific Studies, Australian National University, August 2018. Funding for development of podcast and blog project, *The Familiar Strange.*

$3000 direct small grant, Vice Dean of Development and Impact, College of Asia and Pacific Studies, Australian National University, July 2018. Funding for development of podcast and blog project, *The Familiar Strange.*

$500 direct small grant, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University, January 2018. Funding for continuation of podcast and blog project, *The Familiar Strange.*

$1500 direct small grant, School of Culture, History, and Language, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University, September 2017. Funding for establishment of podcast and blog project, *The Familiar Strange*.

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| Referees |

Dr James Barry, Alfred Deakin Institute, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University. Email: [james.barry@deakin.edu.au](mailto:james.barry@deakin.edu.au)

Dr Caroline Schuster, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University. Email: [caroline.schuster@anu.edu.au](mailto:caroline.schuster@anu.edu.au)

Professor Dr. Mirco Göpfert, Institut für Ethnologie, Goethe University of Frankfurt. Email: [goepfert@em.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:goepfert@em.uni-frankfurt.de)