Religion has been the focus of anthropologists, ethnologists and religious scholars for decades. Theories of religion, ritual and magic have been conceived by eminent scholars such as Émile Durkheim, William James, Marcel Mauss, Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski, Clifford Geertz, and Victor Witter Turner, among others. Religion, magic and ritual, along with kinship and family, gender relations, political systems, agriculture and modes of production, and the diverse manifestations of folk culture, belong to the classical research fields of ethnology and sociocultural anthropology. Although it has been decades since the publication of the classic works, religion remains a crucial area of research. Classic themes such as ritual, magic, and supernatural harm still appeal to contemporary scholars studying religion, even when viewed from new theoretical and methodological perspectives. However, recent decades have also brought new research topics in an empirical sense, such as religion in the online space or religion in a postmodern and globalised world. These changes are also reflected by the papers in the 2024 double issue of *Svetovi / Worlds*. While the first issue includes papers based on various types of empirical data, ethnographic or historical, etc., related to the Central European context (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary) and Japan, the second is devoted to the theoretical, methodological and epistemological aspects of the academic study of religion.

Evolutionary Inspirations in the Study of Religion with Emphasis on the Development of Ethnology and Sociocultural Anthropology in Slovakia” (Michal Uhrin), and “Malinowski’s Formative Contribution to American Folklore Studies” (Frank J. Korom).

The articles in this issue are devoted to various perspectives on the ethnographic and historical study of religion and related topics. The first contribution, “Applying the Conceptual Framework of ‘Event Religion’ to Two Hungarian Festivals”, written by Sára Eszter Heidl, presents a comparative analysis of two empirical field studies conducted in Hungary. The author applies the event religion approach to identify those aspects of festivals, regardless of religious affiliation, that can be interpreted with the tools of religious studies as religion-related or religionesque. The two festivals under study are the Lélek festival in Szombathely, Hungary, and the Fekete Zaj festival in Mátrafüred-Gyöngyös, Hungary. These two festivals, as Heidl explains, differ in the following aspects: design, style, programmes and participants. However, along some lines, the aspects of event religion are similar: the special space and time, the liminal nature, the symbolic message of the event, the community building, the relaxation and the break from everyday life, which are the most important aspects of a temporary event. Heidl argues that her analysis shows that the dimensions of event religion are suitable not only for showing whether certain events have a religious aspect or not but also for showing how the religionesque character appears to the participants: the four fundamentally non-religious dimensions have features that can be found in all kinds of events and thus reveal religionesque characteristics. She concludes that her analysis suggests looking at religion from a different angle: not as an institution or a belief in a particular higher power, but as an experience.

In the second contribution, “Sacred Nature: The Role of Shinto in Japanese Environmentalism” Aljaž Mesner examines the influence of Shinto on Japanese ecological consciousness and sheds light on the complex interplay between religion, politics, and environmental attitudes in Japan. The text discusses the complex relationship between Japan’s approach to nature and ecology, and the role of Shinto in shaping these perspectives. Mesner highlights the interconnectedness of nature and culture, and examines the historical role of Shinto in nature conservation through the concept of Chinju no mori. The author also emphasizes the role of local shrine priests and grassroots movements in addressing ecological issues and promoting environmental initiatives. In his inspiring analysis, Mesner explores the potential of these movements to have a broader impact through domestic and international cooperation. The author suggests that by addressing broader environmental issues in Japan and advocating for the integration of Shinto values and local knowledge, these movements can promote respect towards ecology and its advocacy. Therefore, Mesner’s text addresses issues connected with research on ecology and religion in contemporary Japanese society.

Angela Škovierová presents a description and historical analysis of the topic of “Slovak Scholars in Bohemia and Moravia and Czech Scholars in Slovakia Before and After the Battle of Biela Hora (1620)”. Škovierová states that in the period before 1621 there existed a large number (more than a hundred) of (mostly) Protestant scholars originating from the territory of today’s Slovakia, who lived, studied, worked, and published in one of the Czech
or Moravian cities. Then, the situation in Bohemia changed a few days after the Battle of Biela Hora. During this period, many Slovak scholars working in Bohemia and Moravia halted their public activities. In the aftermath of these political and religious changes, they applied the following strategies: some converted to Catholicism, and others returned to their original homeland together with the Czech Protestant emigrants who came to the Slovak territory. Škoviová concludes that before the Battle of Biela Hora the Slovaks in Bohemia blended well with the Czech religious environment, and draws a parallel to the Czechs in Slovakia after the battle, who established their lives there and could live according to their religious faith.

In the final contribution, “Tolerance and Cooperation in the Religious Life of a Roman-Catholic Community: A Case Study from the Brno-Country District”, a trio of authors – Michal Uhrin, Miroslav Horák, and Dorota Vybíralová – addresses the topic of religious tolerance and cooperation. Their research of the specific aspects of religious life in a small local community utilised the qualitative methods of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The data analysis revealed that religion is a vital factor in many aspects of life in small rural communities. The ethnographic research showed that religious tolerance is an essential aspect of religious life and that cooperation and religion are two areas that are inextricably intertwined. The residents in the research site cooperate in various domains, including daily activities and exceptional circumstances. The cooperation encompasses activities related to religion, as well as those that are not explicitly linked to it. Data on cooperation, tolerance and religion also hint at potentially high levels of social cohesion. The research confirmed that despite the widespread perception of the inhabitants of the Czech Republic as being among “the most atheist in Europe”, religion plays an important role in their lives.

The articles in this issue illustrate the stimulating theoretical and methodological diversity present in contemporary empirical research on religion. As editors, we believe that we cannot restrict ourselves to one approach when it comes to comprehensive explorations of a multidimensional phenomenon such as religion. If we want to shed light on the various roles of religion in any society, we need a diverse methodology. As the articles in this issue demonstrate, different methods might help reveal distinct aspects of religion and its role in people’s lives.