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Routledge Handbook of Religions in Asia

Edited by Bryan S. Turner and Oscar Salemink

Routledge Handbook of Religions in Asia

Routledge Handbook of Religions in Asia provides a contemporary and comprehensive overview of religion in contemporary Asia. Compiled and introduced by Bryan S. Turner and Oscar Salemink, the *Handbook* contains specially written chapters by experts in their respective fields.

The wide-ranging introduction discusses issues surrounding Orientalism and the historical development of the discipline of Religious Studies. It conveys how there has been many centuries of interaction between different religious traditions in Asia and discusses the problem of world religions and the range of concepts, such as high and low traditions, folk and formal religions, and popular and orthodox developments.

Individual chapters are presented in the following five parts:

- Asian origins: religious formations;
- Missions, states and religious competition;
- Reform movements and modernity;
- Popular religions;
- Religion and globalization: social dimensions.

Striking a balance between offering basic information about religious cultures in Asia and addressing the complexity of employing a Western terminology in societies with radically different traditions, this advanced-level reference work will be essential reading for students, researchers and scholars of Asian Religions, Sociology, Anthropology, Asian Studies and Religious Studies.

Bryan S. Turner is the Presidential Professor of Sociology and the Director of the Committee on Religion at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, USA and concurrently Professorial Fellow at the Australian Catholic University, Australia. He was the research leader on globalization and religion in the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore (2005–2009) and the Alona Evans Distinguished Visiting Professor of Sociology at Wellesley College (2009–2010). He is the editor of the Routledge Religion in Contemporary Asia Series and was awarded a doctorate of Letters by the University of Cambridge in 2009.

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As all good handbooks, this one is a mine of information, including a host of references for following up the reading of any one of its chapters. More than that, many of its chapters, but especially its introduction and conclusion, contextualise their topics in theoretical debates in the sociological, anthropological and historical comparison of religions, wisely avoiding any attempts at authoritative definitions. But the best thing about it is the focus, beyond doctrines and philosophies, on religious practices be they internet puja, mother-goddess spirit possession, or the sacralisation of place.

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Religions in Asia presents a truly global combination of overviews and focused studies that traverses an Asian diasporic world stretching from London to Mongolia and deals with topics as diverse as amulets and the internet. This theoretically informed collection will be welcomed by all those seeking authoritative but student-friendly essays that illuminate the multiple ways in which global interactions continue to influence Asia's religious beliefs and praxis.

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This brilliant collection is a must-read for anyone interested in the religions of Asia. One of the rare books that offers a truly cosmopolitan dialogue across disciplines and cultures, it pushes the boundaries of contemporary thought on religion. A symphonic account of religions in Asia as they go through profound transformations in our global age, this volume prepares us for a better understanding of the future of religions.

Anna Sun, *Kenyon College, USA*

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*Edited by
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Oscar Salemink*

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Introduction

Constructing religion and religions in Asia

Bryan S. Turner and Oscar Salemink

The study of ‘the religions of Asia’ has long fascinated Western scholars. This engagement with Asia can be dated from at least the early Jesuit missions to China and Japan, but the understanding of so-called ‘Asian religions’ became more pressing and urgent with the growth of Western colonial encounters with Asia in the middle of the nineteenth century. Although Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and British traders had been engaged in global trade for centuries, a critical turning point was in 1853 with the arrival of American warships off the coast of Japan as the US demanded not only trade arrangements but also ‘freedom of religion’, which was a notion foreign to Japanese culture (Josephson 2012). Whereas theological studies had long been at the heart of much academic learning in the West and beyond, the comparative study of religion from a scientific and comparative perspective emerged as an important aspect of Western scholarship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Friedrich Max Müller, a founder of Religious Studies in Oxford, referred to his research as ‘the science of religion’ by which he meant the application of critical inspection to the phenomenon of religion. Müller was influential in Oriental scholarship through his translations of the *Upanishads* in 1884 and his editorship of the *Sacred Books of the East* that appeared in 50 volumes from 1879 to 1910 with Oxford University Press (Masuzawa 2005).

Max Müller’s work directly or indirectly inspired a good deal of theorizing on religion, partly based on comparative studies of religious doctrine and practice outside of Europe. Many of the key figures – Émile Durkheim, Mircea Eliade, William James, Bronislaw Malinowski, Marcel Mauss, Joachim Wach, Max Weber and Julius Wellhausen – are still highly respected (albeit critically evaluated) figures in the history of Western scholarship. This legacy is often critiqued by contemporary scholarship as reflecting the values and prejudices of the scholars themselves and their times rather than imparting any objective understanding of religion and religions. Such notions as *homo religiosus* or ‘the religious mind’ are simply ‘products of their own imagination and desire’ (Lincoln 2012: 122). Furthermore, much of the nineteenth-century study of religion was highly critical, if not judgemental, of other religions or of religion in general. In this critical tradition, which drew much of its inspiration from the rationalist assumptions of the Enlightenment, we can think of Karl Marx, David Strauss, Ludwig Feuerbach and Ernest Renan. The growth of a critical science of religion was to some extent a consequence of the rise of the modern secular university, which was independent and separate from the control of the Church.

As an independent research institution, the university was no longer extensively influenced by the theology faculty or heavily involved in the training of ministers of religion. The teaching of theology gradually gave way to the creation of interdisciplinary departments of Religious Studies and the decline of the faculties of divinity.

Within this Western legacy, there was some general agreement about the nature and importance of the so-called world religions and, while there was ample debate about the generic meaning of 'religion', there emerged also some degree of consensus about the five 'world religions' – Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism, that is the three Abrahamic monotheistic religions that found their origins in what is now the Middle East, as well as two religions that emerged in what is now South and East Asia; Africa and the Americas were not seen as breeding grounds for world religions. These major religions were recognized as having shaped the historical development of human civilization. The idea that religion lies behind human culture as such is associated with the debate about the so-called 'Axial Age Religions' in the period from 800–200 BCE. In Karl Jaspers' *The Origin and Goal of History* (1953) in 1949, these religious and ethical movements included Greek philosophy (Socrates and Plato), Zoroastrianism, Confucianism and Buddhism. We can regard Jaspers as simply one figure in a line of scholarship that recognized the importance of religion in shaping the history of civilizations in the West and in Asia (Momigliano 1994).

Modern scholarship is less inclined to make large-scale generalizations about religion and in addition in the second half of the twentieth century there was an emphasis on modernization, which was seen to involve the secularization of societies. In the work of sociologists of religion such as Bryan Wilson (1966) and Peter Berger (1967), the secularization thesis became the dominant paradigm. With the growth of urbanization, secular education and the dominance of scientific rationalism, it was argued that modern societies were, almost by definition, secular. It was recognized, however, that secularization was never a uniform pattern of social change (Martin 1978). For example the US was always described in terms of its 'exceptionalism', because religious institutions and values remained a vibrant aspect of civil society (Berger *et al.* 2008). While there might be exceptions, organized religion was declining under the impact of science, urban lifestyles, secular education and democratic politics. These secular processes were not confined to the West. In a famous study of Muslim villages in Turkey, Daniel Lerner in *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958) argued that the tranquil and static cultures of rural society were changing rapidly and inevitably under the revolution in communication systems as radio and television brought the lifestyle and culture of the city to remote village communities. The future lay with secular not religious cultures.

The paradox is that by the beginning of the twenty-first century, religion appears to be a dominant feature of both domestic and international affairs, and the sociology and anthropology of religion are enjoying a revival. In the light of these developments, which are perhaps misleadingly called examples of 'religious revivalism', there has been in the academy a so-called 'religious turn'. What has changed? In the first place religious developments seem to have acquired more importance in many places. For one of the present authors (Salemink), the interest in religion was a logical consequence of the massive conversion to Christianity among the Vietnamese Highlanders that he studied as an anthropologist. With that increased visibility of religious practice came a much greater sensitivity about the problematic character of Western views of Asian religions in comparison with earlier generations of scholars. It is fairly obvious that much of the research on religion in the nineteenth century was bound up with British colonial administration of African and Asian societies (Asad 1973). For example, Durkheim's approach to religion in 1912 (cf. Durkheim 1915) was dependent on the fieldwork of British colonial administrators (such as Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen) in Australia, which had produced *Native Tribes of*

Central Australia in 1899. Scholars such as Max Weber and Marcel Granet were often dependent on missionary reports for some of their evidence on China, as missionaries were predisposed to focus on native religion in ethnographies, thereby translating their relationship with natives into the latter's cultural 'essence' (Pels and Salemink 1999).

The growing awareness of the differences between the so-called Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and the religions of Asia became a critical issue with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which, employing the epistemology of Michel Foucault, analysed the connections between knowledge and power in the scholarship on the Middle East. In brief, the unequal power relationship in colonial history means that Western scholarship studies 'them' and thereby produces practical consequences for the people studied, while 'they' do not study 'us' with the same authority or powerful effects. The charge of Orientalism threw doubt on the credibility of Western interpretations of religion and encouraged the growth of what we might call indigenous or internal research on the religions of Asia – which might include some of the chapters in the current *Handbook*. A significant amount of critical research was stimulated by Said's intervention especially with respect to Islam (Turner and Nasir 2013). More recently there has been a reappraisal of Said's thesis, which among other things did not sufficiently differentiate between those Western societies that had a significant colonial history (such as France, Britain and the Netherlands) and those that did not (Germany, Austria and Italy) (Varisco 2007). Nevertheless the critique of Orientalism prompted a major shift in the approach of Western scholarship towards the religions of Asia.

One further development associated with the Orientalist debate has been the rise of a feminist critique of traditional religious studies as a distinctively masculine orientation to understanding religion. Edward Said (1978) himself had noted how Western writings about the Orient tended to portray 'Orientals' in contrast with the European self-image as rational, strong and masculine – thus essentializing Orientals as irrational, weak and feminized. Going beyond that, feminist scholars have noted that traditional research was not only dominated by Christian or at least Western assumptions, but it was often patriarchal in its presuppositions. Issues about gender and religion have become increasingly prevalent in modern research. In her chapter Fang-Long Shih considers the many ways in which gender plays a major role in the organization of religious practices in Asian societies.

Globalizing religions

One important aspect of this intellectual reorientation is the growth of Asian migrant communities in the West (Levitt 2007). Chinese minorities played an important role politically and culturally in large swathes of Asia, from Thailand to the Philippines (Wang 1991), but Chinese migration to the West from the nineteenth century onwards has had a transformative impact on host societies both economically and culturally (McKeown 2010; Ong 1999). There are now substantial Buddhist and Hindu communities throughout the Western world as a consequence of labour migration especially out of South Asia and China. These economic developments, including the growing power of the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), have modified the power relationships between East and West, and as a consequence the religious landscape of the West has become far more diverse and complicated. It is now far more difficult to refer to the religions of Asia – as the Asian religioscape (cf. Turner 2006: 213) has become incredibly diverse and Asians have migrated around the world; it has become even more problematic to talk about 'Asian religions', as many such religions have non-Asian adherents, like the Falun Gong (cf. Scott, this volume). These social and cultural changes are consequences of the impact of globalization on all religions. As a consequence many of the chapters in this *Handbook*

discuss the globalization of religions from Asia. For example, the chapters by Scott Dalby on the Falun Gong movement, Lionel Obadia and Fang-Long Shih on Buddhism, Knut Jacobsen on Hinduism, Surinder Jodhka and Kristina Myrvold on Sikhism and Pnina Werbner on Islam explore how these religions have become global phenomena. Perhaps an additional factor is the growth of the Internet that caused religions to some extent to become online religions. This issue – the impact of new media on religious change – is explored in the chapter by Sam Han. One further aspect of globalization has been the urbanization of the world's population, the decline of agricultural employment and the decline of folk traditions (but not necessarily of folk religions). This urbanization of religions was associated with Max Weber's thesis about the compatibility between Protestantism, capitalism and urban society (Weber 2002; Barbalet this volume). The parallel between Islamic piety and the Protestant ethic in Southeast Asia is explored by Daromir Rudnykyj in his *Spiritual Economies* (2010) and in his chapter 'Religion and Asia's middle classes'. The global cultural exchange, with Buddhism and Hinduism growing in the West and charismatic Christianity spreading to Asia (as discussed by Terence Chong and Daniel Goh in their analysis of Pentecostalism and the mega-church), makes it difficult to refer to 'Asian religions' as if they were neatly defined in geographical terms.

We need to qualify these observations on globalization. The traditional notion of 'Asian religions' typically included Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Shinto, Daoism and Confucianism. These religions are for instance the topic of such basic textbooks as *Eastern Religions* (Coogan 2005) or *Religions of Asia in Practice* (Lopez 2002). Christianity is almost never defined as an 'Asian Religion' and yet the Christian Church had established itself outside the Middle East early on. Miaphysite Christianity (451–622) had established missionary activity in Africa and Asia, and had encountered Buddhist monks in its eastern expansion. The Jesuits were already a global missionary movement when Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) arrived in Macau in 1582 and adopted the attire of a Buddhist monk. Another Jesuit Robert de Nobili (1577–1656) was working in southern India where he also adopted the local attire and practices of a high-caste Hindu. In China, Japan and India the Jesuits did not enjoy the backing of an imperial military presence to consolidate their missionary activity. In this respect, Asia as a missionary field was very different from Latin America where the Church had the backing of either Portugal or Spain. The principal exception was the Philippines, a Spanish colony named after Philip II, where the Augustinian friars could rely on considerable military force to underpin their missionary activities (MacCulloch 2010). In this *Handbook*, given the presence of Christian missions over many centuries, we have included several chapters on Christianity by Terence Chong and Daniel Goh, by Julius Bautista on the Philippines, by Thomas J. Csordas and Amrita Kurian on Roman Catholicism in India, and by Zheng Yangwen on conversions to Christianity in China.

Our second qualification therefore is to note that the globalization of religions is not exactly a modern development. Perhaps we could talk about historical waves of globalization while recognizing that globalization from the late nineteenth century onwards has been particularly intense. Sociologists have often mistakenly identified globalization as an effect of modern means of communication, but there is a strong argument to suggest that the Silk Road, for example, was a major economic factor in the spread of cultures and religions between the Mediterranean, the Middle East and China. The same goes for the so-called Maritime Silk Road (Kauz 2010). Contemporary research on the history of Southeast Asia has concluded that the region has been heavily involved in international trade (and hence with cultural and religious exchanges) since at least the ninth century (Lieberman 2003). Both Christianity and Islam played an important role in this global exchange of both commodities and cultures. In the *Handbook*, Paul Wormser examines the connection between the early spread of Islam and trade routes, and Pnina Werbner looks more generally at globalization and Islam.

The next qualification is that, with globalization and the modernization of religions through the growth of urban piety, it does not follow that folk religions disappear. Of course the idea of 'folk religion' along with the distinction between 'the great and little tradition' in Buddhist studies is much disputed, because anthropologists tend to argue that 'folk' involves an implicit normative judgement that such religious traditions are somehow inauthentic or corrupt versions of the religions of the elite. In this Introduction, by 'folk' we simply mean the religious practices of the people in their everyday settings, largely outside the purview of institutionalized religious organizations and clergy. This does not mean that 'folk religions' are not subject to social change and adaptation; in a variety of different contexts folk religions were considered superstitious, heretical or heterodox by religious, scientific and/or political authorities, and therefore controlled, curtailed, banned and driven underground. Ironically, at present many such folk religions are recognized as intangible cultural heritage by secular authorities or UNESCO (Salemink 2013). In this *Handbook*, we consider a range of folk or popular religious manifestations such as Mongolian shamanism (Morten Axel Pedersen), Daoism and folk religions in China (Thomas David DuBois), popular Buddhism in Thailand (James Taylor), spirit possession in Vietnam (Oscar Salemink) and neo-Sufism or urban Sufism (Julia Howell).

Having considered these various qualifications to globalization, we return to the discussion of the changes that have taken place in religious studies to some extent since Edward Said's (1978) critique of the Orientalist tradition that treated Asian cultures as static and incapable of self-reflection. Perhaps the most significant change has been greater sensitivity to the cultural specificity of the word 'religion'. Not only is there greater sensitivity, there is also genuine puzzlement as to whether we can use the term 'religion' to describe for instance Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism. One solution has been to distinguish between 'religion' as a generic term and 'religions' to refer to the actual manifestation of religious belief and practices in different contexts. Another common distinction is between faith and religion, where the former refers to powerful, foundational experiences of the sacred and religion refers to the institutions that house and occasionally conflict with faith. This distinction was important for example in Wilfred Cantwell Smith's influential *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1963). It has a parallel in Max Weber's distinction between charisma and institution in his *The Sociology of Religion* (1965). Other scholars have seen an important difference or antagonism between the otherness of the religious experience and the institutionalization of religion. For example, Rudolf Otto (1929) in *The Idea of the Holy* defined the religious experience of the sacred or 'numinous' as an event outside any mundane or routine world that aroused the individual to a new level of consciousness that he described as the '*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*'. We can translate this expression as referring to experiences that are simultaneously mysterious, fascinating and awe-inspiring. By contrast, the secular is routine, predictable and dull.

Other approaches have sought to treat 'religion' in terms of various components or dimensions. In *The World Religions*, Ninian Smart (1989) proposed to study religions in terms of their practical and ritual, experiential and emotional, the narrative and mythic, doctrinal and philosophical, ethical and legal, social and institutional, and finally material dimensions. This scheme is useful in bringing out the complexity of religion as a socio-cultural system. A similar approach was taken in the famous definition of religion as a cultural system by Clifford Geertz (1973: 90) in *The Interpretation of Cultures*:

a religion is (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

These definitions of religion had the merit of indicating that religion is more than a set of beliefs or world views. For example, belief in God or divine persons or spirits does not necessarily explain human action without reference to how those beliefs are embedded in rituals and religious objects. In the contemporary study of religion there is, for example, considerable interest in what is described as ‘material religion’ in which attention is directed at religious clothing, icons, buildings, amulets, relics and so forth. The subtitle of the journal *Material Religion* is ‘objects, art and belief’. In this *Handbook*, Carla Bellamy studies the role of shrines in worship and pilgrimage in South Asia. In this focus on material religion, the importance of the body in religious practices has also become a salient feature of current research. In his chapter on the Holy Week in the province of Pampanga, the Philippines, Julius Bautista considers how the way that penitents relate to the body of the suffering Christ indexes a specific type of Christology. In Thailand James Taylor examines the role of amulets in popular Buddhism.

While there is growing sophistication and sensitivity to the issues attending the comparative study of religion, the problem of definition is perennial and deep-rooted. Indeed in *Islam Observed*, Clifford Geertz (1968: 1) in his comparison of Morocco and Indonesia lamented that ‘The comparative study of religion has always been plagued by this peculiar embarrassment: the elusiveness of its subject matter’. The underlying problem for modern anthropology is that definitions of religion have been either implicitly or explicitly based on a Protestant view of what religion is, namely the beliefs of individuals about the sacred, the importance of conversion to faith, the centrality of an authoritative text, the congregational basis of the collective of the faithful and the role of a church embracing both ministers and lay people. The so-called ‘religions of India’ – Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Jainism – were classified mainly during the second half of the nineteenth century. In this process of construction and classification in early Orientalist scholarship, Protestant missionaries were prominent such as the Bombay Scottish missionary society whose members claimed to study religions from an objective and scientific perspective (Numark 2011). The criticism of this underlying set of assumptions was famously developed by Talal Asad (1993) in his *Genealogies of Religion*, who argued that the category of religion emerged historically simultaneously with the notion of the secular in early modern Europe. This did more than put in motion a Weberian process of disenchantment that breached the ‘sacred canopy’ that cast a divine gloss over all human relations (cf. Berger 1967); in *Formations of the Secular*, Asad (2003) argues that ‘secular’ was more than a negation of the ‘religious’ and was constitutive of subjectivities in a Foucaultian sense.

One issue, which this debate has raised, concerns the question of conversion to religion. In the Protestant evangelical tradition, the authenticity of religious commitment is measured in terms of conversion, which is often described as being ‘born again’. This perspective does not apply to all branches of Christianity and it is not relevant to many religions that are not related to the Christian paradigm. Several chapters in this collection also note that the idea that an individual should embrace only one religious tradition is alien to many Asian cultures. Given the pervasive character of Confucianism in parts of Asia, it would be common for an individual or social group to combine Confucian ideas with Buddhist practices and Daoist dietary notions. In popular culture, it would be common in Japan or South Korea for a young couple from a Buddhist tradition to want a Western Christian wedding. In short, while monotheistic religions worship a jealous God who assumes that with conversion an individual abandons previous beliefs and practices, this assumption does not necessarily hold in Asian religious practices that may be less oriented to an exclusive belief in one god and more based on notions of transaction and ritual efficacy.

In this collection various chapters bring our attention to the cultural specificity of many approaches to the definition of religion. For example, Jason Ānanda Josephson looks at the invention of religion in Japan as a consequence of Japan’s entry into the emerging global economy in

the second half of the nineteenth century. Aike Rots examines the complex evolution of Shinto 'from imperial cult to nature worship', and Andrea Pinkney looks at the creation of 'Hinduism' out of the development of the population census carried out by the British colonial administration in South Asia. The idea of 'Hindu' became a convenient administrative category for classifying the population. As an alternative approach, we can consider the various manifestations of religion in South Asia as growing out of an ancient Vedic spirituality (Pinkney, this volume).

As Turner shows in his conclusion to the *Handbook*, it was Buddhism that posed the greatest difficulties for any comparative study of religion, simply because the classical tradition of the Buddha was philosophically agnostic towards the existence of gods, spirits and other forms of divinity. In *The Foundations of Buddhism*, Rupert Gethin (1998) complains about the Western tendency to define religion by reference to belief in divine beings and offers a definition of Buddhism that concentrates on those practices that alleviate suffering or *duhkha*. In this interpretation, Buddhism is 'a practical way of dealing with the reality of suffering' (Gethin 1998: 64). Similar problems arise in the case of Confucianism. In his chapter Kwang-Kuo Hwang adopts a Chinese perspective when considering many of the problems in understanding Confucianism against the backdrop of the legacy of Max Weber by emphasizing metaphysical notions of 'heaven' rather than explicitly religious notions of 'god/s'.

As scholars have come to accept the complexity of the phrase 'religion and religions', there has been an equally important reanalysis and reconceptualization of various forms of the secular. Whereas in sociology there had been a conventional notion of secularization as a process involving the decline of religious belief and practice (see Bubandt and Van Beek 2012; Hansen 2000), there is now a recognition that secularism and secularity have varied considerably across the West. In Scandinavia, where most of the population is not religious, there is the idea that secularization is incomplete as institutionally the churches and the state have been deeply intertwined with each other (Van den Breemer *et al.* 2013). The so-called 'wall' between the churches and the state in America produced a dynamic civil society in which denominations could flourish (Warner 1993). These patterns of church and state were very different in Roman Catholic societies both in southern Europe and Latin America. It is also now common to distinguish between the official *laïcité* of Republican France and the close interconnections between churches and government in federal Germany. Finally there is also recognition that, while churches as institutions have declined in much of northern Europe, there is growing spirituality as a post-institutional and post-orthodox movement especially among youth (Bender *et al.* 2013).

In Asia there is no recognition of a clear pattern of secularization. Rather Pentecostalism has enjoyed considerable success in societies as different as Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. Charismatic Catholicism has a considerable following in the Philippines and among Filipino migrants. In China and Vietnam where the communist parties have shown greater willingness to tolerate religious revivals, there is evidence of religious growth of both Christianity and so-called 'cults' (Ashiwa and Wank 2009; Chau 2006, 2011; Taylor 2007; Yang 2012). As Julia Howell demonstrates in her chapter, there is an important growth of neo-Sufi practice in Indonesia and throughout Southeast Asia. In South Asia there is a broad growth in reformist Islam as Irfan Ahmad demonstrates in his chapter. Fang-Long Shih describes similar developments in Taiwan where Buddhists attempt to engage in new ways with the secular world. These global developments have often led students of religion to reject the original secularization thesis and instead argue the case for the re-sacralization or de-secularization of society (Berger 1999).

From this brief survey, we can see that the comparative study of religion and religions, facing many conceptual problems, has enjoyed considerable progress over the last decade. The taken for granted assumptions of conventional Orientalism have been identified and criticized, and

to a large extent these assumptions have been overtaken by a more generous and inclusive cosmopolitanism in both the humanities and social sciences. With globalization, there is a greater awareness of cultural and religious interconnections, and there is a deeper appreciation of the conditions under which 'the religions of Asia' were constructed through an encounter with the West (DuBois 2009; Masuzawa 2005; Van der Veer 2001). As Turner demonstrates in his conclusion to the *Handbook*, globalization has also meant that religions are now involved in a global dialogue about the nature of religious phenomena and about the conditions under which they might co-exist in harmony. In the West, The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) expressed recognition of the validity of other religious traditions and the need for mutual respect of different forms of spirituality (Casanova 2009). Similarly, the growth of Buddhism as a global religion has also resulted in engagement with other cultures, including contact with other religions through Buddhist 'evangelism'. Paradoxically this has also led to processes of purification and demands of exclusive faith, as in monotheistic religions worshipping a 'jealous god'.

There is the argument that, accepting the trend of cultural anthropology to contextualize all discussion of religion, modern globalization does change the framework of this epistemological debate about religion and religions. Religious leaders – priests, monks, ministers, mullahs and others – gather at international conferences and spiritual gathering, and share ideas about religious phenomena. They often adopt each other's strategies for organizing, commanding loyalty, proselytization and growth. In the context of religious diasporas, there are processes of assimilation that change traditions to meet new situations. In the American context, there has been a 'denominationalization' of non-Christian religions in their adjustment to a competitive Western environment. Mucahit Bilici (2012) in *Finding Mecca in America* examines the gradual transformation of Islam, for example, by adjusting the direction of prayers to Mecca by shifting the orientation of the *qibla* to match the curvature of the earth. The subtitle of his book describes the process *How Islam is Becoming an American Religion*. Despite considerable opposition to the *Shari'a* by Republican politicians, there is also evidence that *Shari'a* is being accepted in some circles in the US (Joppke and Torpey 2013). Similar developments are taking place with both Hinduism and Buddhism.

Religion and the state

In the above, we discussed religions in Asia to a major extent in connection with questions of secularization and of a perceived religious revival or upturn. As argued before, in much of the literature on secularization European history was held up as the standard for a long time, and in many ways it still is. A standard narrative of secularization holds that a secular space opened up with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which concluded a series of devastating religious wars between a hegemonic brand of Christianity, Roman Catholicism and 'heterodox' Christianities known as Protestantism. This formed the starting point for the separation between church and state and for a gradual de-sacralization of sovereign power (Turner 2006). According to Talal Asad (2003), the emergence of a discourse of religion as well as of the emergent categories of the 'religious' and the 'secular' can be located in this early modern period in Western Europe.

In various ways, theories of secularization universalized these specific and localized historical developments. Max Weber (1965) wrote about the process of rationalization and the consequent disenchantment of the world in the sense that the relations of humans with nature and with each other lost their religious gloss. In his footsteps, Peter Berger (1967) wrote about the disappearance of the 'sacred canopy' in terms of the disappearance of religion itself. José Casanova, however, argued that secularization did not mean the disappearance of religion, but rather its cordoning off in a separate social sphere in the context of the differentiation of society in various

spheres, like the economy, the state, civil society, etc. This turned religion into a private affair, thus making the individualization of religious belief and practice possible (Casanova 1994).

However, in his *Formations of the Secular* Talal Asad (2003) went beyond a simplistic notion of 'the secular' as meaning the 'non-religious', that is, what is left if you strip away the religious. Instead, he proposed to conceive of 'the secular' as productive in the Foucaultian sense of enabling new discourses based on different assumptions about personhood and forging new subjectivities. In *Formations*, he gives a number of examples, like the avoidance of pain and the pursuit of pleasure in this life, and the primacy of the 'human' bearing inalienable (human) rights. In other words, notions of the secular that proliferate with the process of secularization are simultaneously predicated on, and constitutive of, liberal notions of the free individual: thus, the secular and the individual are mutually constitutive, and inevitably affect religious sensibilities and subjectivities as well. For Casanova, then, there is no contradiction or even tension between religion – like Catholicism – and human rights, since religion is relegated to the private realm of individual belief and hence choice (Casanova 2011).

In early modern Europe, however, the Treaty of Westphalia did not establish freedom of religion for citizens, but attributed the choice of the dominant religion to the sovereign. This element of choice undermined the absolute religious and moral authority of the Catholic Church, thus allowing for different sources of authority to emerge. One such alternative – that is, other than religious – authority that is often seen as competing with religious authority and authorities is science as a secular, human claim to absolute knowledge; one can think of the various evolutionist schemas in which humanity moves via a religious and metaphysical stage to a scientific stage. The various political ideologies that emerged in the nineteenth century constitute another competing source of moral authority, oftentimes in contradistinction with religious authorities (Gray 1998). A more recent claim to global moral authority can be found in the notion of human rights, which in liberal thinking supersedes religious convictions (Ignatieff 2001).

The relevance of this rather Eurocentric sketch lies in the globalization of these religious and secular notions over the past century, as mentioned above and as shown in various chapters. However, this globalization does not mean that such originally Eurocentric notions are uncontested in Asia. One example of such contestation is the conversion to Christianity, Islam or text-based world religions among people that adhere to animistic community religions – often, but not exclusively, upland tribal groups. From a liberal vantage point conversion is regarded as a matter of individual choice, and hence of freedom of religion as one of the fundamental human rights. From the vantage point of the 'unconverted', however, the failure to abide by customary prescriptions and proscriptions and to perform necessary rituals endangers the entire community, and therefore is no matter of free choice (Ngô 2011). Jumping from a local to a national scale, many states in Asia regard conversion – especially but not exclusively to Christianity and Islam – as highly problematic and as a threat to national security. In many Muslim-majority countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Malaysia) but also non-Muslim countries as diverse as China, Vietnam, India and Sri Lanka Christian missionization is construed as a threat. Similar observations can be made with regards to Islamic proselytization or to the spread of new religions like Falun Gong in and out of China. The point to note here is that many states in Asia seek to control religious affiliations in their populations.

This religious control does not necessarily occur in countries with an official – like Iran or Malaysia – or unofficial state religion – like Sri Lanka or Thailand – but also in constitutionally secular states like India, Indonesia, Vietnam and China, as is brought out explicitly or implicitly in various contributions to this *Handbook*. As countries ruling with reference to Leninist principles of governance, Vietnam and China have Bureaus of Religious Affairs that regulate the degree of

permissibility and acceptance of religions that have to formally register with and seek permission to operate from the state. But more interesting in this regard are the examples of Indonesia and Malaysia. A secular state with a large Muslim majority, Indonesia guarantees freedom of religion, but is simultaneously founded on five philosophical principles, the *pancasila*. The first principle of 'belief in the one and only god' arrogates the authority to ascertain what true religions are to the state that recognizes six valid religions in Indonesia (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism). Malaysia also has a secular constitution but adopts Islam as its state religion, and the state strictly monitors the behaviour of its Muslim population for its conformity to notions of *sharia* law. However, this surveillance is limited to the Malay segment of the population (61 per cent) who are supposed to be Muslim, but not to the rest of the population which is served by a veritable religious market (Ackerman and Lee 1988; Lee 1993; Lee and Ackerman 1997). In other words, in many Asian countries the state assumes the authority to act as arbiter over legitimate religious affiliations, regardless of the secular or religious nature of that state.

Thus, although the Westphalian Treaty is far removed in time and space from the Asian regions discussed here, this would suggest that the main outcomes of that treaty – the establishment of internal state sovereignty and the affirmation of the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* [who rules the land determines the religion] – apply more to contemporary Asia than to Europe, in the sense that most Asian states seek to exercise control over the religious affiliations and practices of their citizens. The connection between religion and politics is often thought of in terms of the sacralization of sovereign power – at least by the current authors (cf. Turner 2006; Salemink 2007, 2009) – in past and present. However, in contrast with liberal notions of religion as a private affair, Asian states – including secular states – also seek to control religion as a social sphere apart from the 'sacred canopy'. China offers an interesting example of both continuities and interruptions, as the emperors were regarded as the ritual mediator between this world and Heaven and hence assumed the authority to classify religious traditions as orthodox or heterodox (hence illegitimate). In contemporary China, the (secularist) Communist Party assumes the same authority as the former emperors to outlaw religious traditions as heterodox, as 'crooked sects', as superstitious and unscientific, or as undermining national unity (cf. Feuchtwang 2001, 2007; Feuchtwang and Rowlands 2010; Zito 1997; for Vietnam see Salemink 2007). Following Max Weber's argument about charismatic authority as the secularization of a gift of grace from God (Weber 1922), it has often been argued that secularization entailed the shift of the attribution of sacrality from divinities to the state. If that implies that in China the Communist Party is sacralized, one could argue that this necessitates closer political surveillance of the sphere of the religious by the party-state. In general one could say that the religious and the political are deeply intertwined in Asia.

Structure and rationale

While in this Introduction we have looked at the problematic character of 'religion' in recent scholarship, the *Handbook* on the whole does not dwell on the epistemological problems of finding a satisfactory definition of religion. Definitions in general – whether of 'money' in economics or 'power' in political science – may be inevitably unsatisfactory and hence futile. Furthermore we do not engage in any protracted debate about what counts as 'Asia' (Duara 2010). Our approach is somewhat pragmatic; the chapters in this volume cover South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia and in the chapter on shamanism Northern and Central Asia. This *Handbook* is written mainly from the perspectives of anthropology, history and sociology. These disciplines are characteristically focused on how religions are actually practised in everyday life rather than on how the faithful ought to practice. As a result, these disciplines are not especially

concerned with the written, textual traditions or with the ‘orthodoxy’ of religions. They differ in this respect both from theology, from philosophy of religion and from religious studies. The social sciences are not concerned with the truth or falsity of religious beliefs, and indeed they are more concerned with rituals and practices in general. The chapter by Carla Bellamy on shrines and pilgrimage is a good illustration of the focus on the sites of religious practices rather than on belief systems. Anthropology and sociology in particular examine how religious institutions shape and are shaped by the social and cultural environment in which they exist. Jack Barbalet’s chapter on the debate about how religious asceticism (‘the Protestant ethic’) is connected to economic discipline (‘the spirit of capitalism’) is illustrative of this type of analysis. A corollary of this approach is that the *Handbook* is primarily concerned with contemporary developments in religions in Asia such as the growth of online religion (Sam Han’s chapter), neo-Sufism (the contribution by Julia Howell), popular Buddhism (the chapters by James Taylor, Lionel Obadia and Judith Snodgrass) or the reform of Islam in South Asia (in the chapter by Irfan Ahmad). Of course some chapters (by Andrea Pinkey and Paul Wormser) have provided a historical context to this debate about religion and modernity. Both Josephson and Rots in their chapters show how religions were transformed, invented and given new meanings in modern Japanese history.

Our second objective was to recruit scholars from around the world with some balance between scholars living in the West and those in Asia. Our authors come from Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Hong Kong, India, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, Taiwan and the US. Many of our authors who are living in the West are of Asian origin, and both editors have lived and worked in Asia. We have also achieved a relatively good gender balance among our authors. We believe that this composition gives us a cosmopolitan perspective on religion that goes some way in breaking down rigid distinctions between East and West (cf. Casanova 2011; Pollock *et al.* 2000).

We have a number of chapters on Islam – in South Asia (Irfan Ahmad), in Southeast Asia (Julia Howell) and globally (Pnina Werbner and Paul Wormser). In writing about Islam, we have tried to avoid focusing on religion as a security issue. In the modern academy, the sociology of Islam is all too frequently slanted towards studies of terrorism, civil conflict and violence. Of course there have been and are tragic episodes of inter-religious violence in Indonesia (specifically in the Moluccas Islands), in Myanmar, in South India and in the southern regions of Thailand. Paradoxically, similar forms of communal violence can be connected to Buddhist (Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand) and Hindu (India, Sri Lanka) religions. For these reasons we have not concentrated on a simplistic ‘clash of civilizations’ interpretation (cf. Huntington 1996) simply because this aspect of the politics of religion has been in large measure the dominant topic of research following such tragic events as 9/11 and the Bali Bombing. Against this background of contemporary conflict it is worth emphasizing the fact that the sea ports of Southeast Asia have cosmopolitan cultures and a history of compromise and adaptation (Peletz 2011). Our focus is on the routine and everyday character of religious practice rather than on rare traumatic and tragic events.

In a recent article in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Christian Smith and colleagues (2013) offered a range of theses that were aimed to redirect and uplift the sociological study of religion. They called on sociology to ‘expand its conceptual and theoretical focus to address a wider variety of disciplines, nations, and religions’ and the sociology of religion ‘needs to focus on big issues, questions and debates, and show how religion must be taken into account to address and answer them well’ (Smith *et al.* 2013: 36). We can immodestly claim that this *Handbook* contributes to the expansion of the focus of social sciences and examines ‘big issues, questions and debates’ from a multidisciplinary perspective, but it also seeks to overcome any simple East–West binary.

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Asian origins: religious formations

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The invention of religions in East Asia¹

Jason Ānanda Josephson

In 1703 London was abuzz with news that a native of Japanese-occupied Taiwan (Formosa) had arrived on England's shores. A popular dinner guest, this exotic foreigner regaled the Royal Society – Britain's premiere scientific organization – with accounts of his far-flung homeland (Keevak 2004). His celebrity status culminated in the publication of a widely read book that contained one of the first accounts of Japanese religions in the English language, *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa, an Island subject to the Emperor of Japan* (1704).² Unlike the comparatively monolithic religious landscape of eighteenth-century Europe, the Japanese were said to have three distinct indigenous religions (Psalmanazar 2007). One of these religions was idolatrous, another focused on the worship of God in nature and a third was essentially atheistic and philosophical. While a contemporary reader would surely reject the expression “idolatrous” as pejorative and inaccurate, she would be forgiven for seeing in this tripartite schema an early reference to a way of describing East Asian religions that is still popular today. One does not have to engage in strenuous research to find the religions of Japan described as Buddhism, Shinto and Confucianism (with Christianity appearing in the modern era). Furthermore, scholars of China are generally accustomed to seeing a triad of Chinese religions with Daoism (also written Taoism) occupying the place reserved for Shinto in Japan.

The problem with applauding the 1704 book as the distant progenitor of the disciplinary study of East Asian religions is threefold: first, Japan would not actually colonize Taiwan until 1895; second, the author George Psalmanazar (1679–1763) turned out not to be from Taiwan at all, but was instead a European imposter; and third, the tripartite schema he helped to popularize was likely produced by lifting from descriptions of China rather than Japan. Fortunately for us, this embarrassing source was not the only authority from which the tripartite schema emerged.

The ultimate origin for this schema is likely the Chinese three teachings (Ch. *sanjiao*, Jp. *sankyō*). This division of the Chinese cultural landscape into Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism was originally formulated in the Tang Dynasty (618–907) and then exported to Japan, where it was much later transformed into a reference to Japanese Buddhism, Confucianism and, later still, Shinto. To his credit, the Chinese category that Psalmanazar was cavalierly applying to Japan was one that some Japanese were beginning to use domestically. There was, however, a crucial difference. In eighteenth-century Japan the three teachings did not refer to three religions, or

three forms of idolatry for that matter, but rather represented the claim that different modes of discourse could describe a unitary reality.³

Recent scholarship has repudiated more than Psalmanazar. The so-called three religions schema – whether applied to Japan, Korea or even China – has presented conceptual problems from the beginning.⁴ Confucianism has always seemed to straddle European conceptions of philosophy, religion and statecraft. The same could be said for Buddhism, Daoism or Shinto. Moreover, scholars like Kuroda Toshio have demonstrated that in pre-modern Japan, Buddhism and Shinto did not represent autonomous “religions” or alternate philosophies but rather functioned as overlapping cultural systems.⁵ Combined with the existence of Shinto-Buddhists, the historical presence of Shinto-Confucians and Confucian-Buddhists has provided further evidence that they did not have separate religions in the conventional European sense. Simultaneously, scholars of Shinto have pushed back against the assumption that contemporary Shinto sects have much in common with each other.

Roughly in parallel, Sinologists began by demonstrating that Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism borrowed elements from one another and often shared specific rites and the worship of common deities (Hodous 1946; Wolf 1974). It then did not seem to make sense to talk about them as fully autonomous traditions and a range of scholars working on China or the Chinese diaspora coined new terminology like “Siniticism” or “Shenism” to refer to the common religion.⁶ In very early scholarship this shared Chinese folk religiosity was sometimes identified with Daoism. Sinologists, however, have now spent decades challenging the unity of Daoism as a category. First they began differentiating it from folk religion. Then there was an early effort to demonstrate that philosophical Daoism (Ch. *dàojiā*) had little in common with religious Daoism (Ch. *dàojiào*). Subsequently, the scholarly community reversed course and argued that there was really no autonomous philosophical Daoism outside the modern academy.⁷ Yet, just as the distinction between Daoist religion and philosophy was being collapsed, some scholars began arguing that Daoism was never really a unified religion but a set of different lineages with little in common (Robinet 1991).

As if this were not enough, a certain cross-section of Chinese and Japanese “folk religion” does not seem to fit in Daoism or any of the three “religions.” Where once scholars of East Asian religions seemed to be blessed with a profusion of different religions, since the 1960s there have been periodic calls to focus on some kind of culturally unitary “Japanese religion” (e.g. Earhart 1967; Kitagawa 1987) or unitary “Chinese Religion” (e.g. Tan 1995; Kuah-Pearce 2003).⁸ The argument is that most lay people in East Asia do not identify strictly with any particular religion but instead borrow from a host of religious and “folk” traditions. This common realm of experience and symbolism would then be referred to as Chinese or Japanese folk religion (Ch. *mínjiān zōngjiào*, Jp. *Minkan shinkyō*) in the abstract.⁹

Just when some might think that the matter was resolved, a further shift in the discipline of religious studies has called even this tentative resolution into question. Since the seventeenth century, religion has generally been supposed to be a universal aspect of human experience and culture. Several centuries later, religion is now thought by many scholars to be less an anthropological universal than a quirk of Christian history. If this is the case, then religion was not waiting in East Asia for Europeans to discover it, but instead it had to be assembled, admittedly from local elements, after their arrival.

The following pages discuss ongoing debates about the continuities and discontinuities of “religion” in East Asia. Were there native conceptions of religion or was its appearance an imposition? Are there clearly defined separate Chinese or Japanese religions? If so, what is their proper taxonomy? At stake in these issues is not only scholarship focused on East Asian religions, but more fundamentally the universality of the term “religion.”

Intersecting genealogies: Latin *religio* and Chinese *jiao*

At first glance, the similarity of the words for “religion” in contemporary European languages is striking (Ger. *Religion*, Dut. *religie*, Fr. *religion*, It. *religione*, Sp. *religion*, Pg. *religião*, Rm. *religia*, Pl. *religia*, Rs. религия, *ryeligiya*). This resemblance betrays their common origin in the Latin “*religio*.” In pre-Christian Roman usage, however, “*religio*” generally referred to a prohibition or an obligation, not to anything we would today recognize as a religion.¹⁰ In even a cursory analysis, the term “religion” shows all the signs of being a fairly recent invention, burdened with the marks of a particular cultural moment.

It should be no surprise, therefore, that attempts to historicize “religion” have been going on for some time. Over 50 years ago, Wilfred Cantwell Smith in *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1962) criticized essentialist approaches to religious studies, arguing that the term “religion” was of dubious usefulness. Although it took a while for these criticisms to gain traction, beginning particularly in the last 20 years, the academic study of religion has turned inward, engaging in genealogical reflections. Tracing out the twists and turns of “*religio*” and its descendants, a diverse array of scholars from Talal Asad and Jacques Derrida to Daniel Dubuisson, Timothy Fitzgerald, Jonathan Z. Smith and Tomoko Masuzawa have all repeatedly demonstrated that “religion” is not a universal entity but a culturally specific category that took shape among Christian-influenced Euro-American intellectuals and missionaries.¹¹ In so doing, they have called into question the very field of religious studies by showing that “religion” masks the globalization of particular Euro-American concerns, which have been presented as universal aspects of human experience.

Although these genealogies of religion have been valuable for the discipline, they have focused almost exclusively on the writing of Europeans and Americans. Taken together, they have tended to foster the conception that “religion” attained international hegemony unilaterally and without resistance. Additionally, they have tended to ignore the other part of the equation – the other terms that were overwritten or produced in response to the globalization of the Euro-American “religion.” In a sense, they have been preoccupied with a single etymology without tracing the other terms with which it has intersected.

In East Asia, the virtual neologism 宗教 (Jp. *shūkyō*, Ch. *zongjiao*, Ko. *chonggyo*) was coined in Japan in the 1870s as a translation for the Euro-American “religion” and was then popularized throughout the region. *Shūkyō* is a compound of two characters, *shū* 宗 and *kyō* 教. The character *shū* (Ch. *zong*) had long been used to mean “sect,” “lineage” or “principle,” while the character *kyō* (Ch. *jiao*) referred to “teaching” or “teachings.” Anthony Yu has demonstrated that in Confucian discourse the paradigmatic case of *jiao* was from ruler to subjects (Yu 2005); while Chen Xiyuan has shown that in the Chinese case the paradigmatic *jiao* was Confucianism, which was far from the center of religion (*zongjiao*), which tended to accord Christianity the position of prototypical example (Chen 2002). As Kuo Ya-Pei has argued to promote *jiao* (to engage in *jiaohua*) was thus something like an educational or civilizing project. Hence *jiao* was characterized by an implicit verticality between teacher and learner (or ruler and ruled) and, she argues, also by an emphatically this-worldly focus (Kuo 2010). By the time the word reached Japan, *jiao* was used in a broad sense to cover not only pedagogy but also systematic knowledge in general. Thus, membership in the category *jiao* (Jp. *kyō*) meant first and foremost that the tradition in question was a kind of pedagogy or systematic knowledge. *Shūkyō* was thus a qualification and transformation of part of the old meaning of *jiao*. Thus, *shūkyō* could mean the “teachings of a sect” or “the principles of the teachings.” These characters had occurred together in the pre-modern period, particularly in reference to textualized Buddhist traditions; much of the current debate concerns the connection between modern and early usages of this term.

One of the first sources to emphasize continuities between modern and pre-modern usages was the 1912 edition of the *Tetsugaku jii* (“Philosophical Dictionary”) by Japanese philosopher Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944), who noted that the two characters had appeared together in a Chan Buddhist text – *Zongjing Lu* (“Record of the Mirror Lineage”) by Yongming Yanshou dating from approximately 961 CE (Krämer 2009; Nakamura 1991). For a generation now, Chinese and Japanese scholars have examined the early usages of *zongjiao*, but they have generally emphasized the discontinuities between these early Chinese Buddhist usages and *zongjiao*’s modern fate as a translation term for “religion.”¹² For example, Nakamura Hajime has argued that in medieval Sino-Buddhist technical language, *zong* functioned as a translation of the Sanskrit *siddhānta*, meaning ineffable ultimate principle, while *jiao* translated the Sanskrit *deśanā*, meaning provisional verbal explanation. Thus, in its pre-modern Buddhist usage *zongjiao* referred to a linguistic expression of the ultimate principle of the dharma (Nakamura 1991). Other scholars, however, have seized on the few pre-modern occurrences of *zongjiao* to argue that East Asia had an indigenous concept of “religion.”

In regard to Japan, this position was put forward by Michael Pye at the 1990 Congress of the International Association of the History of Religions in Rome, published as “What is ‘Religion’ in East Asia?” (Pye 1994) and further described in a later essay “Modern Japan and the Science of Religion” (2003). Both essays aim to demonstrate that not only did Japan have an indigenous concept of “religion,” but it also had independently developed its own *Religionswissenschaft* in the early modern period. Pye argues that the academic study of religion in Japan was initiated by an Osaka-based intellectual, Tominaga Nakamoto (1715–1746). The lynchpin in Pye’s argument is a single sentence in Tominaga’s critical appraisal of Buddhism, *Discourse after Emerging from Meditation* (*Shutsujō kōgo*), in which the characters “*nishūkyō*” (二宗教) make an appearance. Although provocative, Pye’s translation of this as “two religions” seems farfetched upon inspection of the sources, which clearly indicate that Tominaga is discussing Manichean dualism, hence a more likely translation would be “the teachings of two principles.”¹³ Behind Pye’s project is an assumption that anyone discussing the three teachings as independent objects must be discussing three religions. But as noted earlier, the indigenous category of teachings (*oshie, kyō*) was not identical to the Euro-American religion. Instead, a closer reading of Tominaga demonstrates the differences between Euro-American assumptions of the period and Japanese ideas.

In a section of *State and Religion in China* (2005), Anthony Yu also emphasizes continuities between the pre-modern occurrences of *zongjiao* and modern ideas of religion. Although I do not have space here to do the nuances of his argument justice, he grants that *jiao* had a different meaning from the modern “religion.” But Yu’s main aim is to show that the Japanese did not invent the compound *zongjiao* in the modern period, and that the term was produced in China in a medieval Buddhist context (Yu 2005). To establish this, Yu demonstrates that there are multiple occurrences of *zongjiao* in the pre-modern texts of the *Wenyuange Siku quanshu dianziban* database. Nevertheless, as scholars of classical Chinese will be quick to note, the appearance of two characters next to each other does not necessarily mean that they represent a single semantic unit or binomial word, and nor does their appearance alone provide evidence of a specific concept. Hence Yu goes to some pains to select a handful of passages in which he claims the compound is being used to mean “religion.”¹⁴ The most influential work cited is the *Jingde Record of Transmission of the Lamp* (*Jingde Chuandenglu*), a set of biographies and anecdotes about Chinese Chan (Jp. Zen) patriarchs compiled in 1004–1007 CE by Daoyuan. From a portion of the text recounting a set of ten questions answered by the famous scholar-monk and Chan master, Guifeng Zongmi (780–841), Yu translates the relevant sentences of Zongmi’s reply as “After the Buddha passed away, it was entrusted to Kāśyapa as an individual to take turn in

assuming successive transmission thereafter. This refers generally to how the current generation can be the revered teaching/religion's lord (*zongjiao zhu*)" (Yu 2005: 13).

While both characters *zong* and *jiao* appear in the text, translating them as "religion" requires both ignoring the original question and cutting short Zongmi's reply. The relevant portion of the dialogue is:

[A monk asked Master Zongmi]: After the Buddha attained Nirvana, the Dharma was passed to Kāśyapa by means of the Mind-to-Mind transmission and thus the Dharma has been transmitted through each of seven generations of Patriarchs with only a single successor per generation. Subsequently it has been said that all sentient beings without exception have the foundation of the Bodhisattva path (lit. the ground of the one child). Why then is not the [Mind-Seal of the Dharma] widely transmitted?¹⁵

The Mind-to-Mind transmission of the Dharma from the historical Buddha to generations of patriarchs who are the sole true Chan masters was canonical to much of Song Dynasty. This question seems to be animated by the tension between this doctrine and the alternate Buddhist principle that all sentient beings have access to the compassion of the Bodhisattvas. Given that this was the question, it makes more sense to translate the relevant portion of Zongmi's reply as:

After the Buddha attained Nirvana, [the Dharma] was entrusted to Kāśyapa and later transmitted from one successor to another. They each serve as the current generation's teaching-master of the lineage (*zong jiaozhu*), just as a land cannot have two kings.¹⁶

Given that the text is discussing the lineage of the Mind-to-Mind seal of the Dharma and that the sentence ends with a comparison between this transmission and a king, it does not make sense to translate it as "religion." Even if the relevant binomial were (*zongjiao*), the text is not referring to Buddhism in general (much less religion), as Yu reads it, but instead to the Chan patriarchs who were sole guardians of the Mind-Seal of the Dharma. The appearances of *zongjiao* in pre-modern texts should less be seen as a sign of a pre-modern concept of "religion" so much as an easily available permutation of characters. To drive the point home, the occurrence of the binomial 鉛筆 (Ch. *qianbi*, Jp. *enpitsu*) that we can find in the same classical Chinese corpus, did not mean that pre-modern Chinese people used pencils, but instead indicates that an old term for a lead carbonate brush was later appropriated to describe a modern Western import.¹⁷

Yu and Pye are not alone in emphasizing the continuity of meaning between *zongjiao* and the modern concept of "religion." In a recent publication, *Religion in Asien?: Studien zur Anwendbarkeit des Religionsbegriffs* ("Religion in Asia?: Studies in the Applicability of the Concept of Religion") (Schalk 2013), based on a 2010 conference meeting of the German Working Group on Asian Religious History, contributors stake out almost the full spectrum of positions from emphasizing the construction of religion as a European category to emphasizing its universality and applicability to East Asia. As is clear, at issue is not only how to interpret East Asian culture and history, but also the very ground of the field of religious studies. If the universalist account were correct, it would represent a radical reversal in the main argument in religious studies, because it would show that "religion" was not fundamentally a Euro-American Christian category, but instead a natural kind. Nonetheless, I believe that scholars emphasizing conceptual continuity are fundamentally wrong, as a quick look at Japanese sources from the mid-nineteenth century will show.

Untangling genealogies

In 1853, American warships appeared off the coast of Japan. Ultimately, the Americans forced the Japanese government to sign a series of treaties intended not only to regulate commerce but also to protect a number of “basic rights,” including the freedom of religion. Japanese translators on first encountering the English word “religion” in these international treatises were struck with a particularly intractable problem. There was at that time no word in the Japanese language equivalent to the English term or covering the same range of meanings. Over the next 30 years, the problem of defining “religion” gained national prominence, giving rise to a broad debate at several levels of society. In my 2012, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, I trace these debates in significant detail, but even a superficial survey of them allows us to see through the impasses surrounding the current controversy about the relationship between “religion” and “*shūkyō*” or “*zongjiao*.”

Although Japan’s isolation in the preceding period has been exaggerated, it is fair to say that the opening of the country following the treaties of the 1850s led to radical shifts as Japan was increasingly linked into the global system of commerce and ideas. By the early 1870s, the first generation of Japanese scholars educated abroad returned to Japan. As elite cultural interpreters, this first group of foreign students had a lasting impact on the formation of public attitudes and state policy. One of the major sites for this debate was a short-lived but influential journal, *Meirokei Zasshi* (*The Journal of the Sixth [Year] of Meiji*). Contributors included famous scholars and influential officials who were directly involved in setting future government agendas. Indeed, many of the contributors went on to hold high offices in the Japanese governmental or educational circles. The journal existed in the interstices between an abstract academic arena and the pragmatics of nation-building. While *Meirokei Zasshi* authors discussed a wide range of issues, from the role of elected assemblies to trade reform, they repeatedly returned to the issue of “religion.”

Although there is no space here to go into details, for our purposes this controversy is particularly telling. Japanese intellectuals and policy-makers proposed over half a dozen possible translations for “religion.”¹⁸ When faced with the European term, even Japanese scholars educated abroad had to go searching for equivalents, and they proposed several different contenders and tried to hang different understandings of religion upon them.¹⁹ It seemed that “religion” could be a type of education, something fundamentally unteachable, a set of practices, a description of foreign customs, a subtype of Shinto, a near synonym for Christianity, a basic human ethical impulse or a form of politics (among other possibilities). This is clear evidence that it is glib to talk of Japanese religion projected back through the centuries.

What is more, not only did Japanese intellectuals produce different terms for “religion,” they also debated which indigenous traditions and practices fit into the category.²⁰ It was not clear to them what religions there were in Japan. The sole “religion” on which everyone could agree was Christianity. More than anything else, this clearly demonstrates the foreign nature of the category.

Taken together this evidence demonstrates that tracing the pre-modern history of *zongjiao* is misleading. That other terms were equally in play suggests that it was far from clear what analogues existed for the Western category. Hence the Japanese scholars who promoted *shūkyō* in the 1870s are unlikely to have based their use of the term on fairly obscure precedents (to which they made no reference).²¹ One is forced to conclude that *shūkyō* was promoted as a neologism not because it had been previously used in an analogous manner to the Western “religion,” but because it had few precedents.

Despite *shūkyō* becoming the standard translation for “religion” in Japan in the late 1870s, when the Japanese government ultimately chose to guarantee freedom of religion in its constitution of 1889, it used not *shūkyō* but the nonstandard neologism “*shinkyō*” 信教 (Ch. *xinjiao*).

This particular freedom was from the outset described as interior, private, bounded, and something distinct from most preexisting Japanese cultural systems.²² By using a nonstandard term for religion with “belief” in it, the Japanese state was producing a distinction not quite as freely available in English. It distinguished religion (*shūkyō*) understood in an institution or cultural sense as external and religion (*shinkyō*) understood in terms of internal faith or conviction. Leaving internal convictions rhetorically (but not actually) free, the Japanese state then set out to regulate external religious affiliations as a matter of course.²³

From three teachings to one and a half religions

What is more, in the implementation of this freedom, the three teachings were treated differently. Put briefly, Confucianism was not recognized as a religion, but was instead treated as a scholastic subject. After some debate, Buddhism was legally described as a religion, but in order to be protected as such it had to be radically reconfigured (see Ketelaar 1990; Josephson 2006; Hoshino 2012). The case of Shinto, however, is likely to be a greater surprise to those unfamiliar with the cultural history of nineteenth-century Japan. This is because the Euro-American concept of “religion” was popularized in Japan in the 1870s, a number of Japanese intellectuals argued that Shinto simply did not count as a religion. We might be able to ignore this argument – that Shinto was *not* a religion – if it were restricted to the writings of a handful of eccentrics. It was not. Japanese scholars and policy-makers, Buddhist monks and Shinto priests, repeatedly claimed for Shinto a non-religious status. In due course, the Meiji state would codify a version of this stance into law, giving legal priority to a non-religious Shinto, a status that was not reversed until the Allied powers forced a new constitution on Japan after World War II.²⁴ This would seemingly present a conundrum for those who take “religion” to be a universal category and who tend to regard Shinto as a natural member of the usual catalogue of world religions.

Broadly speaking, scholars considering this issue have argued that the Japanese government, despite knowing that Shinto was really a religion, chose to frame Shinto as a non-religion for pragmatic purposes. While this argument gets at the crux of the matter – that Shinto was put to political purposes – it ignores the way Shinto was already presented prior to the importation of the category religion into Japan, such that as a byproduct of formulating a category “religion” (*shūkyō*), a non-religious Shinto would seem to many Japanese thinkers to be not only plausible but as an almost secondary, natural categorization. Restated, Japanese thinkers had already done quite a bit of comparing Shinto to European institutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed European models had been ready at hand in the very moment that contemporary scholars have described the birth of Shinto as an autonomous tradition.²⁵ As I argue in Josephson (2012), when Japanese thinkers initially formulated something they called Shinto, they explicitly compared it to European models and in terms of a European category. The surprise is that the category in question is not religion, but rather, science.

Part of the reason for this can be found in a particular quirk of Japanese history: for much of the Edo Period (from roughly 1620–1850), the importation of foreign books in Japan was strictly controlled and anything deemed to have an association with Christianity (including, for example, Euclid’s writings on geometry) was banned or censored (Yajima 1964). The Japanese government closely monitored not only the importation and translation of Western works, but it also censored all Chinese books imported into the country. Remarkably, in attempting to import Western learning without Christianity, Japanese intellectuals received a secularized (or at the very least de-Christianized) version of European civilization before anything of the kind existed in the European world. This point is worth dwelling on for a moment, because to my knowledge it is otherwise unprecedented.

Not only were books about Christianity banned completely, but also references to Christianity were purged in otherwise secular materials. Any book deemed to have excessive Christian references was either burned (if the whole book was unacceptable) or selected passages were blacked out with ink. After 1720 a greater variety of texts, instead of being burned, had the offending passages removed and were thus de-Christianized and allowed into Japan. For example, Hsieh Chao-Che's *Five Miscellaneous Offerings* (*Wu za zu*, 1600) was purged of even a short reference to Mateo Ricci and it was distributed in Japan with this passage omitted. Thus, one could have read about Hsieh's theory of magnetism and esthetics, but none of his comments on Christianity. Even if they circumvented import restrictions, Japanese booksellers were prevented from selling banned works on Christianity, including those by international and even indigenous authors (Kornicki 1998). Banned terminology included any reference to Christianity and even the basic terms of any monotheism such as "God" (Jp. *Tenshu*, Ch. *Tianzhu*) or the naming of famous Christians such as Francis Xavier. This meant that even the few references to Christian subjects that inspectors might have overlooked lacked context. Even works on Islam were excluded from the country based on the assumption that they in fact described Christianity. European science therefore functioned in Japan as an autonomous discourse. By contrast, in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, science (then "natural philosophy") was still embedded in an explicitly Christian context. To make a long story short, by stripping away natural philosophy's Christian trappings, Japanese translators produced an ideological vacuum that was later filled by Shinto.

As is well known in the field of Japanese religions, the form Shinto took in the modern era was the result of a series of policies initiated by the Meiji regime to "purify" Shinto. This process of identifying or constructing "pure" Shinto was based on the work of a few much older Japanese scholar-ideologues who were themselves part of movements dubbed *Kokugaku* or *Mitogaku*, about which historians have already had plenty to say.²⁶ In Josephson (2012), my contribution to this discussion was to take seriously a thread in these movements that is often regarded as peripheral – almost all the major thinkers involved in the creation of modern Shinto were not merely preoccupied by but were deeply engaged with Western science. In addition to poring over ancient texts, they wrote astronomy manuals, formulated theories of gravity, argued about archeology and medicine, and pioneered the philological study of the Japanese language. In so doing, they often presented Shinto as a science or mode of knowing, and this in several different registers at once: cosmological, philological and political. Accordingly what proponents of Shinto offered to supply the Japanese state was not a faith, but knowledge or something very much like science. Crucially, this Shinto was firmly in place before the concept of "religion" was imported into Japan, making it possible for Japanese policy-makers to lodge a form of Shinto on the side of the "secular" and as a complement to scientific modernity.

What this all demonstrates is that in the process of grappling with the Euro-American concept of "religion" in the 1870s, Japanese intellectuals and translators were increasingly forced to contend with a handful of categories whose oppositional relationship to religion was of vital importance. Restated, Japanese thinkers became aware that coming to terms with the category "religion" was as much about producing boundaries as it was about the recognition of underlying similarities. To be religious meant to be distinct, set apart, removed from both the "real" world of science/secularism and also the "imagined" realm of superstition. As Kuo Ya-Pei has shown to classify something in the category "*jiao*" did not place it in any analogous binary system (Kuo 2010). The old term had difficulty bearing the newly formulated conceptual distinctions that religion brought with it and, although the choice was underdetermined, there was accordingly an impetuous for a neologism.

That Japanese leaders had to understand what the secular was in order to formulate a concept of religion should not be a surprise to anyone who has deeply engaged with postcolonial theory.

Scholars like Talal Asad and Gil Anidjar have already emphasized how the meaning of “religion” is fundamentally entangled with the production of a concept of the “secular” (Asad 2003; Anidjar 2008). What is more, Asad and Anidjar have attempted to demonstrate that over the course of the Enlightenment, Western Europe produced a set of binary oppositions between the religious and the secular, Church and state, which it then attempted to foist internationally, generating “religions” at the colonial periphery where it encountered resistance. From this perspective, the surprise is not that this opposition between religion and secularism was implicit in the concept of religion itself, but that that Japanese elites managed to partially position Shinto as secular.

Nevertheless, there was another binary opposition in place in Euro-American thought, between “religion” and its doppelgänger “superstition.” In this context, a neologism (Jp. *meishin*, Ch. *mixin*) was formulated to translate the European concept of superstition and used to describe beliefs that were considered especially hazardous to modernization. In a movement that I call “darkness and barbarism,” local Japanese government officials identified a range of spiritual practices as obstacles to the government ideology and called for them to be purged. Although there is not space to trace the history of this movement here, in Josephson (2012) I lay bare a connection between modernizing processes and the manufacture of new orthodoxies and corresponding “heresies.” The shocker is that the rationale for the exclusion of certain practices had changed from pre-Meiji days, but the practices had not. Demons, spirit-foxes and various rituals that had previously been banned because they were seen as powerful and dangerous, were now legislated out of existence as backward superstitions or pernicious false beliefs. This meant not only that a host of folk practices were banned, but also meant purging existing traditions of superstitious elements. In effect, Buddhism and Shinto were radically reconfigured in terms of new conceptual categories. Thus, instead of a continuity in the three teachings, we see the marks of radical changes on many levels.

Conclusion

The process of articulating “religion” presented the Japanese state with a valuable opportunity. While acceding to pressure from international Christendom to guarantee freedom of religion to the Japanese people, officials defined “religion” in such a manner as to promote two other key goals. By excluding state Shinto from the category of “religion,” they enshrined it as a national ideology, a matter of pure fact rather than contested faith. Meanwhile, officials consigned the popular practices of indigenous shamans and female mediums, with their spirit-foxes and other supernatural entities, to the category of “superstition,” deserving no protection under the regime of religious freedom. In short, Japanese officials translated pressure from Western Christians into a concept of religion that carved out a private space for belief in Christianity and certain forms of Buddhism, but also embedded Shinto in the very structure of the state and exiled various “superstitions” beyond the sphere of tolerance. The invention of religion in Japan was a politically charged boundary-drawing exercise that extensively reclassified the inherited materials of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shinto.

Although the formulation of the term *shūkyō* in Japan was only one phase in the invention of religion in East Asia, it was a significant moment. There is only space here to gesture at what followed in China: scholars such as Chen Xiyuan, Kuo Ya-Pei and Marianne Bastid-Brugière have all traced in slightly different ways the process through which Chinese leaders like Liang Qichao (1873–1929), Hu Shih (1891–1962), and Huang Zunxian (1848–1905) redeployed the Japanese *shūkyō* as a translation term for “religion” with new oppositional terms, such as secularism or superstition, intact. Hence as Vincent Goosaert and Rebecca Nedostup have both argued, starting in the late Qing Period (and continuing in various forms to the present), Chinese leaders

worked to establish the boundaries of the officially recognized religions while distinguishing them from “superstitions” (*mixin*). More recently, Anna Sun (2013) has traced how the relationship between Confucianism and the category “religion” was a site of contestation.²⁷ In this sense, Japanese cultural translators functioned as intermediaries in the formation of the Chinese conceptual vocabulary. Nevertheless, Chinese elites had a degree of tactical agency in layering new meanings on *zongjiao* as they reformulated it to address their own needs. The result of this process was nothing less than a radical transformation of the Chinese cultural landscape.

These are not issues that can be ignored by someone with even a casual interest in Asian religion, history, or culture. On the one hand, scholars working on Chinese, Korean, or Japanese Buddhism, Confucianism, Shinto or Daoism are now free to pursue their respective research without the confines of the Western category of religion. These traditions can be, and in my assessment should be, analysed in the pre-modern period according to indigenous categories (like *jiao*). However, I would humbly suggest that instead of anachronistic readings of pre-modern Asian cultural or intellectual history, scholars would benefit from reflecting on the shifts that occurred in nineteenth-century Japan, and that were later transmitted throughout the region (for my own humble efforts in this regard, see Josephson 2012).

Notes

- 1 Portions of this chapter have appeared in Josephson 2011 (here reproduced by permission) and Josephson 2012.
- 2 Precedents for the tripartite division could be found in non-English materials. The largest single influence was probably Luis de Guzmán, *Historia de las Misiones que Han Hecho Los Religiosos de la Compañía de Jesus* (1601), in which Japanese religion is divided into the *Xenxus* sect who focus on meditation and worship idols called *Camis* (Guzmán 1601: 398), the *Xodoxius* who worship an idol called Amida (Guzmán 1601: 399) and the “Foguexus” who worship Iaca (Guzmán 1601: 399) and the breakaway *Icoxus* (Guzmán 1601: 400). While the last three are probably references to Jodoshū, Hokkeshū and Ikkoshū, the first could be either a discussion of Zen or some form of Shinto.
- 3 For example, according to the famous expression of Emperor Xiaozong (r.1163–1189), “Use Buddhism to rule the mind, Taoism to rule the body, and Confucianism to rule the world” (Brook 1993: 17).
- 4 Léon de Rosny addressed this debate at the first *Congrès international des orientalistes* in 1873 (*Congrès* 1876 v1: 142).
- 5 Kuroda 1980. See also Teeuwen 1996; Teeuwen and Rambelli 2003.
- 6 Hu 1931; Elliot 1955; Hodous 1946; Wolf 1974.
- 7 Kirkland 2004: 2–3.
- 8 Some have even attempted to revive Shenism as an analytic term (Tan 1995; Kuah-Pearce 2003).
- 9 This idea of a common Chinese “popular religion” fails to map onto historical indigenous categories and thus irrespective of the critique of religion in general has struck other scholars as smacking “of Orientalist imposition.” (Clart 2012: 219). See also Bell 1989.
- 10 One example will hopefully make this usage clear. In the play *Curculio* by Plautus (c. 254–184 BCE), the protagonist states “*vocat me ad cenam, religio fuit, denegare nolui*” (“He invited me to dinner, it was an obligation (*religio*), and I could not refuse”) (emphasis added) (Benveniste 1969: 520). I have retranslated the Latin into English using Benveniste’s French translation as a reference.
- 11 Asad 1993; Derrida and Vattimo 1996; Dubuisson 1998; Fitzgerald 2000; Masuzawa 2005; McCutcheon 1995; Smith 1998.
- 12 See also Chen 2002: 47–54; Kawada 1957: 25–90; Suzuki 1979: 13–17; Krämer 2009: 6–7. Moreover, the implications of the Euro-American critical turn have been extended to East Asian religion. Significant in this regard is Isomae Jun’ichi’s *Kindai Nihon no shūkyō gensetsu to sono keifu* (*Modern Japanese Discourse on Religion and its Genealogy*) (2003). Isomae traces the history of the term “*shūkyō*” in Japan in both government discourse and in the formation of the discipline of religious studies (*shūkyōgaku*) in Japan. According to his account, the fulcrum of the modern construction of religion was a politically instigated bifurcation of a public morality (*dōtoku*) and a private religion (*shūkyō*), which functioned as a way for nineteenth-century Shinto polemicists to assert their dominance over Japan.

- 13 My objection to Pye is discussed in greater depth in Josephson 2011. In summary, in the relevant section of the text Tominaga criticizes the importation of Manichaeism into China (Tominaga 1904: 58–59), stating “*fuduodan chuan erzongjiao zhe ci qi yuyu zhe*” (Tominaga 1904: 59). Pye translates this as “Futtatan’s transmission of two religions [at once] was a grandiloquent delusion” (Pye 1994: 121). As I have demonstrated, however, Tominaga is referring to Zhipan, *Fozu Tongji* (*Taishō Shinshū* 49:235), which states “In the first year of Yanzai (694) a Persian bishop bearing the false teachings of the Scripture of the Two Principles came to the court (*Yanzai yuannian bosi guoren fuduodan chi erzongjing weijiao lai zhao*).” Both context and scholarly consensus suggest that Zhipan is referring to the title of a now lost Manichean text (e.g. Tajadod 1995: 63), not to two religions transmitted from Persia. Hence Tominaga’s passage would be better translated “The Aftadan’s transmission of the teachings of the two-principles was a clever deception.”
- 14 Yu 2005 selects five passages in which the characters occur nearby, but only four in which they occur together. He also concedes that two out of the four could easily be given alternate readings that would not lend themselves to translation with the English “religion.”
- 15 “又佛滅後付法於迦葉以心傳心。乃至此方七祖每代祇傳一人。既云於一切眾生皆得一子之地。何以傳授不普。” (Daoyuan, *Jingde Chuandenglu*, Chinese text reproduced by the “Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association,” online at: www.cbeta.org/result/T51/T51n2076.htm, accessed 17 August 2013).
- 16 “滅度後委付迦葉。展轉相承一人者。此亦蓋論當代為宗教主。如土無二王。” (ibid.).
- 17 For this compound and its history see Liu 1995.
- 18 For more details see Josephson 2012, especially pp. 205–219.
- 19 Yamamuro 1999–2009.
- 20 Some of the possibilities on offer were *hōkyō*, *shushi*, *shintō*, and *kyōmon*.
- 21 Fukuzawa Yukichi and Mori Arinori were the main proponents of the term *shūkyō* and they did so without reference to prior uses of the term (Josephson 2012). For another discussion of the scholarly consensus on the status of *shūkyō* as a neologism see Krämer 2009.
- 22 Itō 1889; see Josephson 2012: 226–236.
- 23 Josephson 2012: 236.
- 24 Josephson 2012: 94.
- 25 Kuroda 1980.
- 26 There are many examples, but see Haga 1980; Koschmann 1987; Harootunian 1988; Burns 2003; Shimazono 2006; Hansen 2008.
- 27 Bastid-Bruguère 1998; Chen 2002; Goossaert 2004; Kuo 2010; Nedostup 2009; Sun 2013.

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Revealing the Vedas in 'Hinduism'

Foundations and issues of interpretations of religion in South Asian Hindu traditions

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In contemporary discourse about religion, 'Hinduism' is naturally counted among the major 'World Religions' – those religious traditions with a legacy of scriptures, sacred language(s) and ancient monuments, linked to a people or focused on a place, and understood as possessing world-historical significance, transnational scope or some combination of these elements. Many scholars have reflected on the 'construction' of the World Religions (King 1999; Pennington 2005), but in practice the framework continues to be used with great frequency in departments of religious studies in North America. Organizationally, the world religions are often paired in geographical opposition: the 'Western' religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) are contrasted to the so-called 'Eastern' religions (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Shinto, Taoism, Confucianism). From the globalized perspective of the twenty-first century, however, it is clear that many of these religions have been flourishing in both the eastern and western hemispheres for centuries – for example, Arabs have been identifying as Muslims since the seventh century but there have been Muslims in India and outwards into Asia from the eighth century onwards. The characterization of Islam as a 'Western' religion thereby obfuscates its 'Eastern' nature, and flags the underlying inadequacy of this framework.

The humanist and positivist project of framing of the world's religious experience comparatively began in the nineteenth century. The rubric of the 'World Religions' was itself linked to the emergence of nationalist, colonial, and even post-colonial, narratives in new nation states such as India and newly modernizing states such as Japan. In this chapter, I review some of the issues related to the framing of Hinduism as an Eastern contrast to 'the West', and discuss how this early inter-culture was itself an expression of newly modern revisionist ideas about Christianity and Western culture, with particular attention to the role of Hindu Vedic literature within it.

Hinduism is simultaneously understood as of distinctively Indic and South Asian provenance. Yet the details subsumed under the present category of 'Hinduism', may appear as a bewildering amalgamation of elements that – lacking the rubric of Hinduism to unite them – might otherwise cancel one another out. For the diverse kinds of religious beliefs and practices that may be subsumed collectively as 'Hinduism' may encompass lavish devotional religious ceremonies (*śodāśopacāra*), ascetic austerities (*tapasya*), congregational worship (*satsaṅgh*) and individual ritual; a sense of antiquity that transcends regional and ethnic histories alongside highly politicized Hindu

nationalisms; egalitarian religious movements and rigid social hierarchies; awe of feminine religious, moral and spiritual authority alongside doctrinal and customary misogynies; broadly Indic patterns of practice and belief and distinct regional ideologies – complemented by approaches to divinity that range from pantheism, henotheism, kathenotheism (worship of one god at a time), monotheism, agnosticism and atheism; and naturally overlapping through devotional links to gods via family tradition (*kuldevatā*) and tutelary tradition (*grāmdēvatā*) – but also through devotion to divinity through one's own personal choice (*iṣṭadēvatā*).

Hinduism is also popularly understood as the world's oldest living religion. This claim is based on the continuous reverence given to the oldest strata of religious authority within the Hindu traditions, the Vedic corpus, which began to be composed more than three thousand years ago, c. 1750–1200 BCE. Respect for the textual legacy of this remote past has been remarkably resilient, so that imaginings of the Vedic legacy as 'traditional' continue to find traction in contemporary understandings of Hinduism in important – if attenuated – ways. How does this distant Vedic past relate to the present? The Vedic religion that can be pieced together from texts is very removed from contemporary Hindu religious practices, beliefs, social norms and political realities. The society that is recalled by the record of Vedic materials is such a peculiar and singular one, and its worldview is of such extreme antiquity, that it was already ancient at the beginning of the Common Era.

By the time of the Buddha (c. fifth century BCE), the descendants of the Vedic people had already begun to produce interpretations and reinterpretations of their own forebears' textual legacies, which served to keep the religious practices and beliefs of its Vedic origins comprehensible and relevant. In dedicated communities of Vedic Brahmins, the tradition of performing Vedic rituals and transmitting Vedic learning persists in contemporary India, despite dwindling resources and other challenges (Kashikar 1964; Smith 2000: 261). The unbroken reverence for the Vedas is most immediately appreciated in the living legacy of Indian communities of Vedic Brahmins who must negotiate their ancient heritage with their contemporary needs (McCartney 2011: 61ff.). Borayin Larios has described how post-Vedic gods such as Rāma are routinely incorporated into 'Vedic ritual' performance at contemporary Vedic ashrams in Maharashtra (Larios 2013: 306). However, in the apt phrasing of Timothy Lubin, 'the religious climate of India is so far removed from Vedic ... piety that its periodic appearance in the public religious domain is a novelty and a source of some confusion to non-Vedic Hindus' (Lubin 2001a: 381). A fascinating example is detailed by Frederick M. Smith, who reflected on the 1996 inaugural performance of Vedic ritual (*agniṣṭoma*) in London. He noted that: 'the audience was enthralled by [the ritual] as performance regardless of its near complete incomprehensibility' (Smith 2000: 266).

French Indologist Louis Renou famously characterized the Vedas as: 'a distant object, exposed to the hazards of an adoration stripped of its textual essence' (Renou 1965: 53) and asserted that '[e]ven in the most orthodox domains, the reverence to the Vedas has come to be a simple "raising of the hat"' (Renou 1965: 2). In popular, contemporary terms, we may consider an evocative example of this incorporation of Vedic texts as a 'sign' in devotional practices, thereby imbuing them with value as being 'traditional': Yesudas, a renowned Keralan-Christian Bollywood playback singer, is credited with the popular 'Hymns from the Rigveda' (1979). Described promotionally as 'the earliest lyrical effusions of the Hindus, which have been handed down to posterity', this recording combined a textual performance of ancient scripture in alignment with contemporary 'light classical' musical aesthetics (Oriental Records 2014). In setting verses from the Rig Veda to keys or scales (*rāgas*) familiar from the contemporary Carnatic music tradition such as *haṃsadhvani* and *śubhapantuwarāli*, it continues to be commercially available more than three decades after its release. In short, while the social history and context of the Vedic texts are extremely distant from contemporary Hindu religious beliefs and practice,

a reverence for 'the Vedas' as an exemplar of Hindu heritage continues to inform a contemporary understanding of Hinduism.

Popular reverence for Vedic scripture is similarly focused on the abiding authority and prestige of the Vedas rather than on any particular exegesis or engagement with the subject matter of the text. In this reading, 'the Vedas' have come to symbolize a revived interest in an attenuated notion of Hindu heritage and are often conflated with 'tradition'. This approach to the Vedas is a hallmark of 'Neo-Vedanta' – a dominant form of Hinduism within the transnational Hindu community, and within India's middle and upper classes of 'neo-Hindus' (Williamson 2010: 18). Strikingly, this type of contemporary Hinduism presents India's Hindu traditions as simultaneously universalist and uniquely Indic. How does this reading of a distant past help to strike this balance and serve present-day understandings of 'Hinduism'? In short, how does one appreciate the appearance of popular, mass-marketed, devotional readings of the Rig Veda as an element with contemporary Hinduism?

In this chapter, I reflect on the role of Vedas in contemporary Hinduism in multiple contexts. I first turn to an overview of the methodological issues involved in studying South Asian religions, with particular attention to the historically recent framing of the category of 'Hinduism'. As has been discussed by many scholars, the origin of the English term 'Hinduism' is relatively recent and is related to early nineteenth-century initiatives to place non-Christian religions within a comparative framework that juxtaposed a number of major 'world religions' (Lorenzen 1999). The framing of non-Western religious traditions into Western religious categories is not limited to South Asian religions, but also deeply informs contemporary understandings of religion in East Asia, as discussed by Jason Ānanda Josephson in the current volume. During this phase of negotiation between Hindu reformers and apologists, Christian religionists, early Western Indologists and British colonials, a new relevance was accorded to selected aspects of the Vedic legacy. Now understood as primordially 'Hindu', Vedic religion became an essential foundation in the fortification of 'Hinduism' as one of the world's great religious traditions. In the third section, I move into the contemporary study of South Asian religion and conclude by looking at some of the ways that 'Hinduism' is understood now. I ask, in the balance, what does it mean to identify as 'Hindu' and what does 'Hinduism' mean in a popular sense? In the final section of this chapter, I review some of the foundational features of the Vedas, from Indological and philological perspectives. As we will see, the ritual complexities and criteria for membership of Vedic religion meant that it was exclusionary and elite – and never 'popular' or inclusive. In conclusion, I introduce two contrasting engagements with the Vedic legacy that employ the Vedas as a source of authority to legitimate very modern concerns, and hopefully illuminate thereby how modern re-readings of the Vedas stand at the centre of contemporary understandings of Hinduism.

A genealogy of 'Hinduism' and the world religions framework

For a variety of historical reasons, the religions most frequently cited as 'world religions' are significantly variable in character: some are characterized as world-historic, universal religions (Christianity and Islam); others as philosophical or ethical systems (Buddhism and Confucianism); and some are culturally imprinted (Shinto and Taoism). Hinduism is unique in being conceived of as a world religion that combines all three markers – universalist, philosophical and culturally specific.

Scholarship on comparative religious studies has produced usefully reflexive perspectives on how to frame a methodology that places all the formerly incommensurate 'world religions' on newly equal ground. This project has been singularly influential in the study of religion, for its success in advancing a non-confessional and culturally pluralistic approach to emic and etic

religious systems. One of its most important interlocutors was Ninian Smart (1927–2001) (Smart 1983), celebrated for framing the enterprise of comparative religion within a level playing-field by suggesting seven dimensions to the world religions: (1) ritual; (2) narrative and mythic; (3) experiential and emotional; (4) social and institutional; (5) ethical and legal; (6) doctrinal and philosophical; and (7) material (Smart 1998: 11–22). These categories, collectively applied, promised to provide a generalizable framework to understand religion, and render the variations across cultures mutually intelligible.

Yet some scholars have argued in recent years that the very idea of religion – conceived of as a universally applicable category – is, at base, a hindrance to understanding the range of religious phenomena in human societies. In this section, I re-approach the 'construction' of Hinduism by retracing a part of its genealogy through the lens of 'the Veda' (Pennington 2005). Russell T. McCutcheon's scholarship on the world religions framework has pitched debate on religion in terms of its construction and has called for a recasting of the ways in which religion is taught. He argues that the meaning of 'religion' denoted in the Western academy is largely incommensurate with the breadth of phenomena and civilizations it purports to cover:

'Religion' is an emic folk category scholars acquire from a rather limited number of linguistic/cultural families, a category that we simply take up for the sake of etic analysis and use *as if it were* a cross-cultural universal ... many of the peoples that we study by means of this category have no equivalent term or concept whatsoever.

(McCutcheon 2001: 10)

Similarly, Daniel Dubuisson characterized religion as a 'native concept, typically European, gathering and summarizing under its aegis the struggles of a Western consciousness grappling with itself' (Dubuisson 2003: 6). While McCutcheon and Dubuisson focused attention to the problematic application of the term 'religion' outside of Western contexts, Timothy Fitzgerald argued that the 'world religions' framework, studied through the comparative approach, was just as problematic, and particularly so in the study of Indian religious traditions (Fitzgerald 1990). Fitzgerald noted that, in some measure, by suggesting that 'the social', for example, was somehow a discrete category within 'religion', Smart revealed a tendency to view religion as existing discretely from its given social milieu. Fitzgerald contends that this bias pervades the teaching of 'world religions' and is especially problematic in teaching 'Hinduism' as a 'religion' to Western students, which expresses core principles characteristic of Indic civilization:

In the case of Hinduism it leads to all the problems that Religious Education specialists sometimes acknowledge but can never resolve, about how to account for this World Religion's stubborn and all-but-marginal refusal to budge from its moorings in a specific social system, and the problems about how to analytically separate the religion from its social dimension, including caste.

(Fitzgerald 1990: 106)

In other words, 'religion' must be reified as an entity that somehow exists independently of society in order to propose it as a phenomenon that crosses societal borders and functions at a level that transcends communities. Fitzgerald argues that this treatment of religion as an object ultimately reflects the universalist perspective of Christianity, which, he argues, condemns the idea of 'religion' as unfit for comparative analysis as it seeks to identify equivalent or approximately equivalent objects of study. Instead, the world religion model seems to put 'religions' on a spectrum, where the 'greatest' of them are the world religions, understood as having institutions

that transcend societal embeddedness. At the other end of the spectrum are those ‘religions’ that express a viewpoint of cultural relativism and cultural specificity.

‘Hinduism’, as one of the ‘great world religions’ does indeed incorporate an astonishing breadth of historical influences, but these influences need to be put in post-colonial historical context to be appreciated. For many of the apparent continuities with the past and the present must be questioned. What is understood as ‘Hinduism’ today may suggest that these ties to antiquity have had an uninterrupted relevance, while instead they were obscure prior to the nineteenth century and have been woven back into the tradition as it is imagined today as a form of religious ‘heritage’. With the post-colonial context of contemporary Hinduism foregrounded, the evolving stages of the ‘Hindu traditions’ are concomitantly rendered more coherent.

In summary, scholarly approaches towards ‘Hinduism’ may be largely understood in two camps. For some, the category of religion itself continues to be a viable analytic lens and the categorization of India’s indigenous religious traditions – readily appreciated as having evolved over time – as the ‘world religion’ of Hinduism is natural and necessary. For others, the rubric of the ‘Hindu traditions’ is preferable as a framework that privileges the social and historical conditions of religious beliefs, practices, community identity. Understanding these culturally derived practices as *ad summa*, ‘religion’ amounts to a reification of them – while religion itself, rather than a neutral comparative category, is seen as replicating a universalist type of Christian worldview that floats free from societal and historical, and political, exigencies.

The ascendance of ‘neo-Vedanta’ within Hinduism

What is the particular role played by ‘Vedic origins’ in the understanding of ‘Hinduism’? As I detail in the following section, the earliest Vedic religion was elite, esoteric, and has been obscure for millennia rather than centuries. The substance of the texts – in terms of deities, sacrificial rituals, language and metaphysical concerns – is largely alien to contemporary Hinduism. This is partially because of the impracticality of effort, expense and eligibility of maintaining such a standard of religious piety for all but a very limited community. Yet an attenuated idea of ‘the Vedas’ persists as one of the core identity markers of what is frequently imagined now as ‘Hinduism’, within which new readings of the Vedas are overwritten. Finally, aspects of transnational contemporary Hinduism may be referred to by scholars and practitioners variably as ‘neo-Hinduism’, ‘neo-Vedanta’, ‘Vedanta’ and ‘*Sanātana Dharma*’ (the ‘eternal’ religion): here I provide some elaboration about these terms, in relation to the Vedas.

For many contemporary Hindus, an understanding of Hinduism includes a relationship to the universalist framing of the ‘Hindu traditions’ popularized from the nineteenth century onwards, broadly drawn from ‘pan-Indian’ modes of religious identity that have since been deeply naturalized. Two charismatic Hindu intellectuals who have been closely identified with a reframing of Hinduism and Hindu identity are Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833) and Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), who both conceived of the Hindu traditions in rationalist, devotional and universalist terms – a modernist revision that made a tremendous impact on promoting greater unity among regional Hindu groups in the service of Indian nationalism. The success of this movement’s efforts to recast perceptions of religions of South Asia is still largely responsible for what we popularly understand as ‘Hinduism’ today, both inside and outside of India. What were the main objectives of this movement? In 1903, a work called *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics* was published by the board of trustees of Central Hindu College, an institution founded by Annie Besant in 1898 that was to form the core of

Banaras Hindu University, one of the principal institutions of higher learning in India. The aim of this textbook was no less than to unite all that divides Indians, specifically in the service of nation-building and – less explicitly but not less obviously – in the service of anti-colonialism. The influence of the view expressed of this text is enormous, in articulating and propagating a particular reading of the myriad Hindu traditions that influences innumerable presentations of 'Hinduism' from the 'monotheistic' (Chakravarti 1991: 23) and the 'great oriental religions' model (Eliade 1959 (1987): 1962) to the 'world religions' model (Smith 1958 (1989): ix) and the 'worldview' model (Smart 1983: 1–2) and so on.

The universalist view of Hinduism is exemplified in the writings and works of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), a philosopher and scholar of comparative religion, who was also the first vice-president and then president of India following Independence in 1947. Of many representative examples, Radhakrishnan's following statement exemplifies the neo-Vedanta characterization of Hinduism as a higher brand of universality that rebukes the exclusivity of 'High-Church Episcopalian-Protestant-Christianity' (Radhakrishnan 1960: 51):

Hinduism does not believe in bringing about a mechanical uniformity of belief and worship by a forcible elimination of all that is not in agreement with a particular creed ... Its scheme of salvation is not limited to those who hold a particular view of God's nature and worship. Such an exclusive absolutism is inconsistent with an all-loving universal God.

(Radhakrishnan 1960: 50)

In this sense, 'Hinduism' refers to Hindus' self-understanding of their 'religion' as 'Hinduism', one of the great 'world religions', and framed within the ontological categories of religiosity discussed above, and even exceeds the others for its humanism, universality and rationalism. The prominence of this variety of contemporary Hinduism may be partially accounted for by its association with the transnational Hindu community, as well as urbanites and the upper and middle classes in India. These communities possess and exercise their strong capacity to influence the terms of discourse regarding Hinduism in the public sphere in India and internationally. This sector includes in its 'traditional' mindset reverence for the 'Veda', the 'Vedas' and all things 'Vedic'. Veda, meaning 'wisdom' means something primordial, with a timeline for Vedic civilization falling on the exaggerated side of antiquity. For example, the BAPS *Akshar Purushottam Sansthā* claims that 'astronomical references' in the *R̥gveda* (e.g. 10.64.8) indicate an initial date range of 6500 BCE, pushing the antiquity of the Vedas back an additional *four* millennia, in contrast to the dates assigned by Indological scholarship on the basis of internal textual references.

Some aspects of very ancient Hindu traditions, particularly the philosophical and theological writings of the *Upaniṣads*, were revived during the colonially informed religious reform of the nineteenth century. This has meant that some of the rarified discourse and technical terms of these difficult texts, such as the symbol *aum*, have re-entered modern Hindu discourse as re-naturalized elements of contemporary 'Hinduism' for the last 200 years.

Another hallmark of the solidification of a Vedantic worldview is an imagining of the past according to contemporary norms. For example, there has been a significant shift of ritual practices towards vegetarianism and away from animal sacrifice, as has been the norm in many *Shakta* (goddess) communities. Since the Vedic inheritance includes meat-eating, this is one of the least well-fitting pieces of the past to be adjusted to contemporary norms. One example of this is the anachronistic reading of early Hindu traditions as being aligned with vegetarianism and conflated with the post-Vedic ideal of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence) to living beings. For example, the

characterization of Sitansu S. Chakravarty, in a concise 'guidebook of Hinduism', exemplifies a strong version of the neo-Vedantic viewpoint on Hindus and meat-eating:

A large number of Hindus take vegetarian food without meat or eggs, but with milk. Non-vegetarian Hindus do not eat meat of female animals out of respect for motherhood. Beef and beef-products are absolutely forbidden. The cow that nourishes us with milk is to be treated virtually as our own mother; the bull cannot be killed for it is the mount of Lord Shiva.

(Chakravarti 1991: 33)

While 'Hinduism' has become strongly associated with vegetarianism in later eons, many sub-threads of the Hindu traditions include animal sacrifice, particularly Vedic religion. In his field-work with contemporary Vedic Brahmins in Maharashtra, Lubin describes how, ritually, Vedic sacrificial spaces were proscribed as having unsealed openings, but that halls are now sealed to 'avoid interference from outsiders during offerings that call for animals to be killed' (Lubin 2001b: 299). Vedic practices are thus deeply unaligned with the trend towards 'Vaishnavization', discussed by many scholars, which is a post-Vedic religious movement that is characterized by vegetarianism (Busch 2011: 32; Vaudeville 1987: 27).

Issues regarding Hindu religious identity

In this section, I distinguish between 'Hindu' as a religious identity uniquely understood by individuals and the meaning of 'Hinduism' as one of the world's so-called 'world religions'. For 'Hindu', as a transnational religious identity, is applied to and embraced by people, communities and organizations, each networked within an extraordinarily vast spectrum of social and cultural systems worldwide. The meaning of this identity varies enormously for individual people within a broad range of various lived circumstances; so too does the meaning of 'Hinduism' in its various contexts.

Nevertheless, the identity of 'Hindu' has been applied collectively to Indian subjects as a category of religious identity for 140 years through the decennial all-India census exercise, first conducted in 1871–1872. It is now well known that the historical question of religious identity in British India and the categories offered to respondents as determined by the colonial administration were greatly at odds with existing modes of South Asian religious identity (Cohn 1984: 25; Jones 1981: 73). While the practice of census-taking started in the colonial era, the designation of religious identity continues to have important political and personal consequences for citizens of contemporary India, as the Indian constitution provides quotas or 'reservations' for members of particular communities deemed disadvantaged in parliament, educational institutions and civil service. An important factor in the politicization of religious identity in India since the late nineteenth century has been its government's practice of classifying citizens on the bases of caste and religion. The contemporary Census India website notes that 'religion' has been a constant category, while 'sect' was dropped as a qualifier from the 1941 census onwards:

[t]he question on 'Religion' was asked from each individual since the beginning of the census – 1872. In 1971 the religion of each individual as returned by him was recorded. In 1881 the caste of Hindu and the sect of the religion other than Hindu was recorded. In 1891 besides the religion, the question on the sect of the religion and in 1911 the sect of Christian was also recorded. In 1931 the question was worded as 'Religion and Sect'. In rest of the censuses, no information was collected on the sect of the religion.

(Government of India 2013a)

In the current census, the possible categories are: Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain and 'Others'.¹ Reflecting on the absence of any hyphenated relationship to these great religious communities – the qualification of 'sect' having being dropped from the census more than six decades ago – we may say that modes of religious identification in South Asia have rigidified since the nineteenth century (Oberoi 1994: 1–29). This means that subjects were permitted to choose the one category of their preference; the problem is that the categories themselves – framed as oppositional, either/or, religious identities – were largely incommensurate with the realities of religious pluralism in pre-colonial India.

One of the many consequences of this hardening of religious identity in India was violence between members of different religious communities – understood as animated by the factor of religious identity – with genocidal consequences following the partition of British India and independence of Pakistan and India in 1947 (Brass 2003: 71–90). While common linguistic identity was used to create new state boundaries in most of India, religious identity was the deciding factor for boundary delineation in Punjab and Bengal, so that the diverse religious identities of the people dwelling in these regions were bluntly polarized. On the new western border between India and Pakistan (then West Pakistan), Hindu and Sikh Punjabi speakers were divided from Muslim Punjabi speakers; on the new eastern border between India and Bangladesh (then East Pakistan), Hindu Bengali speakers were divided from Muslim Bengali speakers. In contrast, the rationale of linguistic identity was used to create state lines in most of India, as was done in Kerala (Malayalam speakers), Tamil Nadu (Tamil speakers), Orissa (Oriya speakers) and so on. This means that speakers of two religiously diverse language communities – Punjabi and Bengali respectively – were abruptly divided by different citizenships based on a binary notion of religious identity: Pakistan for Muslims and India for Hindus (and others).

'Hindu', then, is the response reported by the government of India as the religion of 80.5 per cent of India's citizens (827,578,868 people) or, conversely, is an available label for 80 per cent of India's people (Government of India 2013b). In other words, the lack of consensus about what 'Hinduism' means has not been an obstacle to 800 million people being identified by – and identifying with – the label of 'Hindu' according to the census exercise. With some perspective on how the dangers of conflating the identity category of 'Hindu' with the meaning of 'Hinduism' as a religion, let me now turn to reflect on the content of this category.

Contemporary scholarship on South Asian religion may take a guarded approach to the idea of 'Hinduism' per se, as it has such a loaded history in the colonial framing of religion in South Asia. While the term, of course, stands for a plurality of meanings, its implicit suggestion is that 'Hinduism' suggests a homogenization of diversity among those who identify as Hindu. This is problematic for many reasons, one of the more disturbing is that within the category of 'Hindu', as classified by the census, is a solid majority of those who may associate 'Hinduism' with social disenfranchisement, namely Dalits (members of the 'Scheduled Castes', also formerly known as Untouchables), Scheduled Tribes and certain members of the 'Other Backward Classes' (OBCs). In short, while the critique of McCutcheon, Dubuisson, Fitzgerald and others is an essential one, the contemporary idea of 'Hinduism' now flourishes in infinite ways in the transnational Hindu communities as an overarching category that has served to unite people, communities and organizations who identify as 'Hindu'.

So far, I have explored issues of interpretation in South Asian Hindu traditions and reviewed the systematization of those traditions, culminating in the ascendance of neo-Vedantic ideology and its dominance in the contemporary framing of Hinduism. In the second half of this chapter, I now turn to illustrate some of the ways that Vedic literature is read and reread through examples drawn from three contexts. First, I give an overview of Vedic literature and civilization derived from an Indological reading of the Vedas; then I turn to a pair of complementary and contrasting

readings of the Vedas in two different contemporary Hindu communities – a local Shaiva community in Singapore, and in the transnational Swaminarayan sect of Hinduism. On reflection, we can appreciate how the status of the Vedas as ancient authenticates neo-Vedantic interpretations of Hinduism as transcending culture and exceeding the limits of human history.

Indological perspectives on Vedic origins

There have been no ruins, graves, habitations or inscriptions unearthed that may conclusively provide insight into how Vedic people lived. Instead, there is a vast body of literature, composed by the Vedic peoples and transmitted by their descendants, which reveals facets of this ancient world in astonishing detail, and also highlights how extremely removed is the past of the intellectual, ritual and idealized world of Vedic civilization. In this section, I introduce the earliest strata of Hindu civilization, Vedic religion, with an overview of its earliest linkages, periodization and some of its most interesting and distinctive characteristics according to an Indological perspective.

Our access to Vedic society is through a received body of texts produced during the Vedic era, broadly dated from 1750–1500 BCE according to current scholarly conventions. While the historical period when Vedic literature was produced is impossible to ascertain definitively – especially its earliest stages – there is a store of philological evidence that has produced some degree of consensus among Indologists about the historical relationship and chronologies of the language of the *Ṛgveda* and other early civilizations. According to Asko Parpola, the Proto-Indo-Aryan civilization was influenced by two external waves of migrations. The first group originated from the southern Urals (c. 2100 BCE) and mixed with the peoples of the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC); this group then proceeded to South Asia, arriving around 1900 BCE. The second wave arrived in northern South Asia around 1750 BCE and mixed with the formerly arrived group, producing the Mitanni Aryans (c. 1500 BCE), a precursor to the peoples of the *Ṛgveda*. One of Parpola's many contributions has been to identify archaeological zones with centers of reconstructed language communities. He also suggested that characteristic elements of the Vedic traditions, such as the prominent use of chariots and the deities Mitra-Varuṇa and the Aśvins, be associated with the first wave of migrants, and that the second wave introduced Indra as the chief deity and the *soma* cult. Michael Witzel has assigned an approximate chronology to the strata of Vedic languages, arguing that the language of the *Ṛgveda* changed through the beginning of the Iron Age in South Asia, which started in the Northwest (Punjab) around 1000 BCE. On the basis of comparative philological evidence, Witzel has suggested a five-stage periodization of Vedic civilization, beginning with the *Ṛgveda*. On the basis of internal evidence, the *Ṛgveda* is dated as a late Bronze Age text composed by pastoral migrants with limited settlements, probably between 1350 and 1150 BCE in the Punjab region (Parpola 2013: 119–184). It then went through four subsequent stages: the late *Ṛgveda* (the tenth book and portions of the *Atharvaveda*); the language of ritual formulas (mantra, e.g. *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda Saṃhitā*, *Atharvaveda*, *Ṛgveda Khilāni*); the prose of the *Yajurveda*; the principal *Brāhmaṇas*; the late *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āranyakas*, earliest *Upaniṣads* and *Sūtra* literature, especially the *Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra* (Witzel 2003). This latest group of texts is called 'Vedānta', or the 'end of the Veda', and forms the terminal boundary of the Vedic literature under consideration here.

In the most general sense, 'Vedic literature' can refer to anything composed in Vedic Sanskrit during the Vedic era; it can also refer to a large body of literature that was produced over centuries that is considered 'connected to the Vedas'. The internal perspective of the texts' provenance is that they were not written by mortal authors, but that they were revealed or 'heard' as primordial sacred syllables, only audible to a class of exalted sages in an unsullied era (*satyayuga*) of an unimaginably distant past. These syllables, said to emanate from the universe itself, were not

trusted to writing, but were instead safeguarded for posterity through the more reliable route of oral transmission, as practiced with remarkable dedication by communities of Brahmins, the caste or class of people described in Vedic literature (*R̥gveda* 10.90.11–12) as occupying the highest ranking social order. Brahmins are typically designated as priests or ritual specialists.

This is the first of many remarkable features of Vedic literature, for the dedication of the Brahmin priests throughout their lineages means that the integrity of transmission of Vedic literature transmission is unmatched in any other world civilization, through the use of mnemonic structures in the texts themselves and memorization enhanced by the use of kinetic techniques. Since the texts are held as transcending human and even divine agency, they are considered sacrosanct and are the legacy of four extended family clans (*śākhās*) that have, over the millennia, preserved the tradition of Vedic learning and recitation in these groups. Hence, the first way of organizing Vedic literature is by the schools of transmission, or *śākhās*, with centuries-old traditions of learning and oral transmission that evolved out of family lineages. The oldest tradition is associated with the *R̥gveda*. The *Sāmaveda* and *Yajurveda* complete this earliest triad, which is affirmed in canonical *dharma* texts such as the *Laws of Manu*, wherein the tripartite core of Vedic literature is noted. The fourth Veda, the *Atharvaveda* is somewhat different in character and is definitively later than the earlier three. The four *śākhās* roughly cover four different religious spheres, which correspond to overlapping divisions and concerns among the Brahminical families that produced them. While each of these *śākhā* lineages are, naturally, far more complex than may be covered here, they may be characterized as follows: the *R̥gveda* is the source of the most ancient ritual texts with hymns to Vedic deities such as *Agni*, *Indra*, *Varuṇa* and so on. The *Sāmaveda* is concerned with the core *R̥gveda* material in metrical or musical terms and provides structure for recitation. The *Yajurveda* provides ritual formulas or *mantras* and commentary required for the proper execution of Vedic sacrificial ritual. The *Atharvaveda* covers esoteric topics, medicine, disease and matters related to domestic ritual. For a fuller account of them, see Olivelle (1999).

In addition to these lineages, there is a second standard way of organizing Vedic literature: by genres, arranged from oldest to youngest. The oldest is *Samhitā*, then *Brāhmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka*, with *Upaniṣad* as the most recently produced. This fourfold categorization is an idealized one as the genres' dates of production overlap and they share many stylistic characteristics. However, it is useful as it presents a semi-chronological way of understanding how Vedic literature fits together over time. The four genres are layered around one another, with the *samhitā* texts at the centre. By the time of the *Upaniṣads*, the approach to religious life had changed greatly, but one of the distinctive features of Vedic literature is that, despite this distance, the earliest core of *samhitā* remains the ultimate religious authority.

Samhitā is a genre of religious songs in praise of various deities concerned with maintaining balance in the cosmic order through performing fire sacrifices of ritual food, other substitute sacrificial items and animals (*pasuyajña*) (Kane, Vaman 1941: 1109–1132). The *samhitās* were produced in the earliest phase of the Vedic era over the course of approximately half a millennium. The oldest and most important *samhitā* is the *R̥gvedasamhitā*, a collection of 1028 religious songs associated with the *R̥gveda śākhā*. According to Michael Witzel, current archaeological and philological evidence suggest that this material was produced between 1650/1500 BCE and 1200/1000 BCE, as the internal evidence of the text suggests that it pre-dates the use of iron among the Vedic peoples, proximately located in modern-day Swat and Punjab in north western India (Witzel 2008: 55). This means that the *R̥gvedasamhitā* is the oldest scripture considered as a source or religious authority in the Hindu traditions, in terms of both genre and school. It is usually what is intended by the imprecise expression 'R̥gveda'.

The next genre to arise was *brāhmaṇa*, which interprets the *samhitā* and sheds light on technicalities that had become obscure with the passage of time. The era of *brāhmaṇa* prose literature

may be placed around 1000–700 BCE, which means that the world of the *brāhmaṇas* is already very far removed from that of the earliest Vedic literature. Next, a third genre of explanatory commentary, *Āraṇyaka*, arose with a shared concern to elaborate on the language and referents of the older texts. Finally, the fourth Vedic genre is the *upaniṣads*. By now, we can discern many significant shifts of emphasis; the authors retain reverence for the *saṃhitā*, but they reinterpret it in light of new concerns. Taking the most prominent place now are metaphysical issues such as rebirth and liberation from it, and the internalization of sacrifice and ritual into interior practices. There is also a new emphasis on renunciation, the performance of austerities to gain power over the self and viewing the quotidian world as an obstacle to perceiving the true nature of reality. The nature of the texts has changed too; the *upaniṣads* are structured as dialogues between teachers and students, who seek knowledge and insight into philosophical questions.

Now to turn to the limitations of Vedic literature alluded to at the outset of this section. Our only historical access to this society is provided by its own interlocutors, and there is no other known ancient contemporary source that can corroborate or challenge our reading of Vedic society as portrayed in Vedic literature. Furthermore, there are no external sources that could give perspective on the texts either, because there is no material or archaeological evidence that has been linked to Vedic society. We are thus limited to understanding this society only in terms of its own texts, which represent it in very particular ways. The texts mention other communities, but are read against the Vedic norms, which naturally dominate this literature, and foreigners are described as *mleccha*, stammerers or babblers – those who cannot speak Vedic Sanskrit. With, essentially, a single worldview represented in this literature – that of its putative human authors – it is extremely problematic to try to draw conclusions about the community that produced these texts and its broader social context; we can only understand the authors of these texts as a particular sub-community, which is representing itself. One thing that the textual evidence makes clear is that there must be additional caveats in understanding the Vedic community through its own self-representation because of the ideology of self-representation that comes through in this literature.

In summary, the content of Vedic literature is addressed to an extremely limited audience. The ideals of Vedic society, as interpreted through the language and ideas of Vedic literature, are hierarchical, patriarchal and insular. The language of Vedic literature, Vedic Sanskrit, is a highly restricted language of a male elite. As far as the texts can be said to represent gender norms, women participated in Vedic religious life as subordinates to men. Furthermore, Vedic literature, composed over centuries, contains statements that are difficult to reconcile with one another, a natural consequence of the differing contexts of literary production over time. For example, animal sacrifice was a standard element of Vedic religion, but so too were injunctions to avoid violence towards plants and animals. As discussed by H. W. Tull, Vedic religion, while predicated on sacrifice, was also deeply concerned with the effects of violence on the sacrifice and the sacrificial victims, based on a mutual identification between them (Tull 1996: 228).

Finally, on reflecting upon Vedic deities, the Vedic hymns to the gods are concerned with gods who have been obscure for centuries, if not millennia. For example, the most important Vedic deities are *Agni*, the fire that consumes the all-important sacrifices and conveys them to the gods, and *Soma*, a plant that imparts hallucinogenic insights upon ingestion, deified as a keystone of ritual insight (Falk 1989). Indra was another of the most important deities of Vedic literature, but has become marginal in contemporary times. Likewise, *Sarasvatī*, Vedic goddess of knowledge, is linked to a river deified so long ago that it is conjectured to have been the ancient Sarasvati river, the contemporary Ghaggar-Hakra river in northwest India that no longer flows above ground as a viable riverine system. Other Vedic deities may be still found today but their importance in the pantheon has radically declined. Conversely, some deities that make minor appearances in the

Vedas, such as Shiva (Rudra), have evolved into the major deities of contemporary Hinduism. In short, it is the ability of the texts to signify Hindu heritage that continues to inspire interest and reverence, rather than engagement with the detailed contents of them. This means that reverence for the Vedas involves a focus more on their canonical status as revealed literature than on the substance of the revelations.

Contemporary Vedas as universal – Singapore's Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple

In this and the final section of this chapter, I discuss how the Vedas are overwritten in different contemporary, transnational Hindu contexts to represent Indic cultural heritage so variably as to suggest that the 'essence' of the Vedas is both Indic-universalist (Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple) and Indic and particularist (BAPS Swaminarayan). In both of these and other contexts, the 'Vedas' continue to enjoy the weight given them as a source of religious authority, while an attenuated reading of them continues to strongly inform understandings of Hindu heritage. What are the motivations and agendas involved in keeping Vedic traditions alive?

Of the many contemporary Hindu institutions that exemplify inclusivist 'Hinduism', I turn to an example of great interest in Singapore – the Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple (*Śrī Senpaga Vināyagar Ālayam*). This temple has been a focal point of the Hindu Sri Lanka (Ceylonese) Tamil community for the last 150 years. Ethirnayagam Pillai is recalled as having founded a small temple at this site in the 1850s, after chancing upon a statue of *Vināyagar*, or Ganesha, underneath a *Senpaga* tree (*Magnolia champaca*). The Hindu temple then established passed into the formal custodianship of the Singapore Ceylon (Sri Lanka) Tamils' Association (SCTA) in 1923. It was consecrated in 1930 and newly rebuilt in 2003, when it received National Heritage Board designation (Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple 2013: 3–4). Aesthetically, the Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple is clearly a centre of Tamil culture, in that the building is adorned with images of Shiva, Ganesha and Nandi, Shiva's bull guardian and vehicle, and other members of the Tamil Shaivite divine pantheon (see Figure 2.1). In terms of religious practices, the temple promotes Tamil Shaivite devotional activities and cultural norms in terms of materials used in rituals and requests visitors to 'respect our customs' in dress and decorum.

The Sri Senpaga Vinayaka Temple serves and is maintained by Ceylonese-Hindu Singaporeans – a community with a very particular cultural, ethnic and national identity (Figure 2.2). At the same time, the ethos of the temple conceptually exemplifies what Brian A. Hatcher has described as 'Vedantic universalism' (Hatcher 2004: 196). Here, all beliefs and practices deemed to be 'spiritual' are subsumed under the category of 'Hindu'. For example, prominent signage at the temple entrance notes that, 'this place of holiness is for people of all religion and races. There is no conversion required. Everyone is deemed to be a Hindu' (Figure 2.2). This view is stated even more explicitly on massive painted slabs in the temple interior, which repeat the text from the first paragraph of the temple guidebook: 'Hinduism is the oldest religion in the world. Anyone can practice Hinduism – there is no conversion required' (Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple 2013: 1). Similarly, the temple literature characterizes the chief deity of the temple, Ganesha, by his 'universality', and claims that he belongs 'to the world and not only to the Hindus. He has myriad names but as the Divine One, is revered and worshipped throughout the world' (Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple 2013: 13).

While the temple's community has a strong sense of its distinctive regional and linguistic heritage, the kind of 'Hinduism' that the community expresses through its temple is both highly particular to Hindu devotional practice and to inclusivist Hinduism. Within this framework of Vedantic universalism, 'the Vedas' are interpreting simply as meaning 'wisdom' and are stated to



Figure 2.1 Exterior ornamentation at the Sri Senpaga Vinayaka Temple, Singapore

Source: Andrea Marion Pinkney

be equivalent to the Hindu ‘Bible’ (Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple 2013: 22). This kind of totalizing Hindu discourse appears to fit well with Joanne Waghorne’s discussion of globalization and universality, where she defines globalization as able to accommodate ‘locality’, while universalization ‘tends to blunt both locality and neighborhood in the religious dimension of worldwide migration’ (Waghorne 2004: 178).

Contemporary Vedas as ‘Indian’ – Swaminarayan Hinduism

For an illuminating case study of one contemporary use of Hinduism’s Vedic heritage, we need look no further than the sect known as Swaminarayan Hinduism. Various divisions and sub-communities have arisen but all generally look to Swaminarayan (1781–1830), as a Gujarati saint and founder of the *sampradāy* or community (Williams 2001: 54–55). Within the groups, the fastest growing and most influential is known as BAPS, the Akshar Purushottam Sanstha, or the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (*Bocāsanvāsī akṣar puruṣottam svāminārāyaṇ saṁsthā*). It has been identified as ‘the most prominent form of transnational Hinduism’ and has adeptly created an identity for itself as a ‘transnational world religion’ that fosters Gujarati ethnic ties with the global Gujarati Hindu population (Williams 2001: 198).

The Akshar Purushottam Sanstha is Vaishnava, meaning its primary devotional orientation is to the deity Vishnu in his various *avatāras*, and to Swaminarayan himself. In line with typical Vaishnava food norms, BAPS strongly promotes the consumption of exclusively vegetarian food. The imagining of ‘Hinduism’ in the Swaminarayan community is grandly universalist, and also



Figure 2.2 Entrance to Sri Senpaga Vinayaka Temple, Singapore

Source: Andrea Marion Pinkney

deeply celebratory of a particularly ahistorical reading of Indic civilization. In 2005, the Akshar Purushottam Sanstha officially opened a massive temple project, Akshardham, which has become one of New Delhi's most frequently visited tourist landmarks. In building such 'monumental architecture', Kavita Singh described BAPS as delivering an, 'aestheticized version of Indian culture that appeals to older and younger generations and generates pride in Indian traditions' (Singh 2010: 3–4). In BAPS' own framing, Akshardham is where: 'art is ageless, culture is borderless, values are timeless' (Akshardham 2010: 1). There are many other hallmarks of the 'world religion' framework in Swaminarayan literature and *Sanātana Dharma* is named as one of its organizing principles. There it is asserted that, spiritually, India's diversity can be reduced to the essence of *Sanātana Dharma*, '[i]n spite of India's mosaic of cultures, languages, boundaries and human features, its spirituality pervades from north to south to east to west' (ibid.: 8, 21).

In this kind of usage, *Sanātana Dharma* encompasses the meaning of an all-purpose framing of the Hindu traditions. It also embraces embodied forms of Hindu devotional practice, in that it typically includes ritual practices associated with images of sages and revered gurus and depictions of the god's images and statue form. When instantiated three-dimensionally, representations

of the gods, goddesses and people understood to be saints are a focus of devotional practice. This meaning of *Sanātana Dharma* is understood in Indic terms as a ‘*saguna*’ orientation to divinities; that is, gods are understood as having embodied forms, distinctive individual characteristics and presence in human history. Conversely, the ‘*nirguna*’ orientation understands divinity as being transcendent and formless.

What is fascinating to note in the worldview of the Akshar Purushottam Sanstha is its integration of selected elements of Vedic heritage in its self-presentation as a contemporary beacon of *Sanātana Dharma*. The founder, whose life spanned the turn of the nineteenth century, is described as preaching ‘Vedic wisdom’ tempered with devotion (*bhakti*), a combination of strands of the Hindu traditions that historically fell some two millennia apart (Akshardham 2010: 22). Among the site’s visitor attractions is something called a *yagna kund*, or sacrificial pond, which is described as ‘traditionally Vedic’ with a ‘spectacular musical fountain’ (Akshardham 2010: 26). Akshardham has many state-of-art exhibitions within its environs, including an IMAX theater and a 14-minute boat ride exhibit through ‘more than 10,000 years of India’s ancient culture and contributions to the world’, which graphically represents a contemporary imagining of Vedic heritage and exemplifies some of the ways in which Vedic heritage continues to underwrite innovations in the Hindu traditions (ibid.: 31). Numerous tableaux during the boat ride are identified as scenes from ‘Vedic times’, including a blacksmith’s workshop (*dhātu udyog*), a potter’s workshop (*kumbhakāra*) and a ‘Vedic bazaar selling clothes, jewellery, and other hand-made articles’ (ibid.: 31–32). Some 800 life-size scale figures of men and women sit around brick homes and shops, so that visitors may ‘[e]xperience the sights and sounds of a Vedic village and bazaar’ (ibid.: 31).

Sanjay Srivastava described one of the site’s major appeals as presenting ‘its tableau of consumption (of objects and spaces) as contiguous with the world outside’ (Srivastava 2009: 341). As Srivastava rightly identifies, the site itself does not induce a sense of nostalgia for Hindu antiquity, but instead relates to it as a ‘traditional’. At Akshardham, the element of time in Hindu heritage is elided, so that its vision is anchored on the remote Vedic past as ‘based on authentic research’ and is made relevant to modern India through its state-of-the-art visitor and museum facilities (Akshardham 2010: 4). Regarding time and also space, J. E. Tunbridge and G. E. Ashworth note that the contemporary production of heritage hinges on a ‘peculiar’ relationship with time, but also, ‘a strong intrinsic spatial component’ (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996: 5). Material evidence of the Vedic past being unavailable, the localization of it at Akshardham for contemporary consumption is freed from any potential dissonance. In fact, the site’s ability to resonate with the antiquity of ‘Hinduism’ embodies an aspirational sense of Indian modernity upon on a selectively curated foundation of Vedic heritage.

Concluding reflections

In this chapter, I have tried to foreground and also foreshadow some of the other issues arising in the study of non-Western religious traditions following upon the discipline’s legacy as a byproduct of the colonial enterprise in South Asia. From an academic viewpoint, some now prefer to work with the framework of the ‘Hindu traditions’ as a historical and pluralistic approach to a 3000-year-old tradition. And from a post-colonial perspective, we can appreciate the so-called ‘construction’ of ‘Hinduism’ as having been part of a particular moment in history with long-lasting repercussions in our understanding of religious life in South Asia.

In the case of the Hindu traditions, religious beliefs, ethical systems, social organizations and practices span the spectrum of cultural specificity and universality. Certain beliefs and practices show high cultural specificity, including patterns of marriage, social relations and commensality.

Alongside these are other patterns, which aspire to universality, such as devotional religious practices, modern guru and spirituality movements, and so on. As I have discussed above, the idea of the Vedas is also used in both ways – particularistically, as the singular crown jewel of Hindu civilization – and universalistically, as India's spiritual bequest to humankind.

Note

- 1 According to the 2001 Government of India census, India's total population of 1,028,610,328 can be fully classified according to the following categories of religious affiliation: Hindus (827,578,868; 80.5 per cent); Muslims (138,188,240; 13.4 per cent); Christians (24,080,016; 2.3 per cent); Sikhs (19,215,730; 1.9 per cent); Buddhists (7,955,207; 0.8 per cent); Jains (4,225,053; 0.4 per cent); Others (6,639,626; 0.6 per cent); Religion not stated (727,588; 0.1 per cent) (Government of India 2013b).

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Dual belief in Heaven and spirits

The metaphysical foundation of Confucian morality

Kwang-Kuo Hwang

Max Müller (1823–1900), one of the founders of the discipline of comparative religion, listed eight “great and original religions” including Confucianism and Daoism in his preface for the *Sacred Books of the East Series* (Max Müller, 1876). Cornelis P. Tiele (1830–1920), another pioneer in the field, first invented the notion of “world religions” and elaborated their distinction from “national religions” in his monograph *Outline of the History of Religion to the Spread of Universal Religions* (Tiele, 1877). The former denoted “religions of the world” or “universalistic religions” to be cross national and ethnical, while the latter are confined to certain ethnic groups or geographical regions. For Tiele, there were only three world religions: Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam; Confucianism was excluded from his list of world religions.

Since then, the question “Is Confucianism a religion?” may evoke different answers depending on the definition or the classification of religions proposed by the researcher. Max Weber (1864–1920) was the first sociologist who studied Confucianism intensively from the perspective of social psychology (Weber, 1964), and classified religions into three categories: world religion, culture religion, and salvation religion (Weber, 1946). Though he acknowledged Confucianism as a world religion, he posited it as an example of an elaborate and mundane ethical system for sustaining traditional society, rather than a salvation religion. To him, it was even questionable whether the term “religion” can be applied to Confucianism at all (Schluchter, 2013: 252). C.K. Yang, a famous sociologist who wrote the introduction for the English translation of Weber’s *The Religion of China*, argued that Confucianism was a kind of diffused religion, essentially different from institutional religions like Christianity, Buddhism, or Islam.

In China, Confucianism has long been regarded as one of three major religions (*sanjiao*), together with Daoism and Buddhism since the Han dynasty. Soon after the Republican Revolution in 1911, President Yuan Shikai began to reinstate elements of Confucianism with support from Kang Youwei, an eminent scholar and leader in the political reform movement of the late Qing dynasty, who campaigned for the establishment of Confucianism as a state religion (*guojiao*). But, it was strongly opposed by Liang Chichao, another famous leader and Kang’s former comrade in the political reform movement, who claimed that Confucianism was an ethical system rather than a religion.

As part of Yuan’s movement for the revival of the monarchy, the campaign for establishing Confucianism as a state religion terminated when Yuan was forced to abandon his short-lived

monarchism due to widespread opposition throughout China. Confucianism became a target of attack for young intellectuals in the following New Culture Movement during the May Fourth period; the totalistic anti-traditionalism had resulted in an atmosphere of cultural nihilism that laid the foundation for the tragic Cultural Revolution later on.

Thirty years after Communist China adopted reform and open policy, more and more intellectuals believe that it is necessary for Chinese people to rehabilitate Confucianism for the sake of maintaining social order as well as seeking to forge a common cultural identity. Such a proposal evoked intellectual debates from 2000 to 2004 concerning the religious nature of Confucianism in China. According to Sun's (2013) analysis, there are essentially three positions in the controversy: (1) Confucianism is not a religion; (2) Confucianism is a religion, and as such has a negative impact, for religion itself is intrinsically a negative force in society; (3) Confucianism is a religion, and it has a positive or neutral impact, for religion is either a positive or a neutral force in society.

It seems to me that all three positions have to a certain extent been influenced by Western thoughts after the Republican Revolution. Along with Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), Max Weber is commonly regarded as one of the founders of modern sociology. He is widely considered the greatest of German sociologists and has become a leading influence in European and American thought (Gerth and Mills, 2009 [1946]). As the first sociological work on Chinese society and religion in the West, the publication of his book *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* in 1915 became a pioneer classic in this field and attracted a gigantic readership in the West. Some sociologists even followed his theory to form the Weberian school and had profound influence on various fields of social sciences before World War II and during the period of the Cold War.

Because sociology and other fields of social science are all products of Western civilization, when Chinese students go abroad to study those fields they tend to accept materials published in Western texts without much critical judgment, particularly when they don't have any alternative and robust theory about their own cultural tradition in their mind. In order to make a fair judgment on the religious character of Confucianism, it is necessary to trace the source of controversy in the Western academic tradition and to evaluate it from the Chinese perspective.

Weberian maze

Weber (1964) was the first Western scholar to try to delineate the nature of Confucianism from the perspective of sociology. Nevertheless, in my article, *A Proposal for Getting out of Weberian Maze* (Hwang, 2013), I indicated that he had been trapped in two fallacies when comparing Confucianism and puritanism by the ideal type method. First, he committed the fallacy of Eurocentrism when he analyzed the cultural system of puritanism and used it as a framework for comparison with Confucianism in his book, *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 1930/1992); second, he committed the fallacy of conflation by mixing up the cultural system and sociocultural interaction when he cited historical materials from various Chinese dynasties to depict the ideal type of Confucianism with a presumption that it is invariant.

The ultimate concern of Weber's academic career was retroacting the religious origin of rationalism that had emerged in the West since the European Renaissance. In order to achieve this goal, he conducted both sociological analysis as well as historical inquiry when he studied the relationship between the Protestant ethic and the rise of modern capitalism. Nevertheless, he used only the sociological method of ideal type to compare the economic ethics of world religions while ignoring their historical progress when he tried to explain why industrial capitalism had not occurred in other societies.

In other words, Weber used an approach of asymmetric comparison in his study of the historical development of various religions in the world. He was interested in Asian religions only because they could be used as points of comparison for studying the development of Western religion. Therefore, many crucial events in the history of Eastern religions had been neglected. In contrast to Weber, Jaspers (1949/1953) proposed the concept of Axial Age and argued that Socrates, Confucius and Buddha, i.e. the three paradigmatic individuals, had emerged simultaneously and independently in different areas of the world from 600 BC for a period of 800 years when interregional communications were unlikely to happen. He indicated that most crucial categories of philosophy had been well developed in those areas before the rise of modern Europe. Bellah (1964) followed his argument and recognized that, as a product of the Axial Age, Confucianism is a kind of world religion with its unique features.

Turner (2013) reviewed the major research works on Confucianism done by Western scholars and found that most of them had compared Confucianism with other religions from some particular viewpoints. Their points of comparison, however, were not as comprehensive as Weber's (1964) works on the religion of China. Therefore, he indicated that we are left with an open question of how today's sociologists might understand religion in China (Turner, 2013: 266).

Put differently, Weber's works on the religion of China had constituted a huge maze of knowledge for social scientists of the world (MacRae, 1974); sociologists haven't found any way to get out of the maze yet. It seems to me that in order to get out, it is necessary for us to follow the approach of analytic dualism (Archer, 1995), namely, to take Confucianism as a cultural system and study its morphostasis by constructing culture-inclusive theories of social science; next, to examine its morphogenesis by studying the progress of this cultural system in the historical context of China.

At the very beginning of Chapter VIII for contrasting Confucianism and Puritanism in his book, *The Religion of China*, Weber (1964) said:

To judge the level of rationalization a religion represents we may use two primary yardsticks which are in many ways interrelated. One is the degree to which the religion has divested itself of magic; the other is the degree to which it has systematically unified the relation between God and the world and therewith its own ethical relationship to the world.

(Weber, 1964: 226)

Weber revealed his Eurocentrism when he proposed these two yardsticks. Religions in China were not religious in the Western sense. Their metaphysical foundations were a structure of dual belief in Heaven and spirits. If we accept Weber's first yardstick to judge the degree to which Confucianism and Taoism have divested themselves of magic from a historical perspective, we must conclude that religions in China had completed the process of rationalization or secularization during the period of West Zhou (about eleventh century BC to 771 BC) before the so-called Axial Age (Jaspers, 1949/1953).

Chinese ancient belief in Heaven and spirits

In this chapter I argue that Confucianism as religion was constructed on a particular structure of Chinese dual belief in Heaven (*Tien*) and spirits (*kuei-shen*). Chinese belief in Heaven is the metaphysical foundation of Confucian ethics and morality. Heaven (*Tien*) is a transcendent concept for Chinese; it is absolutely impossible for anybody to become *Tien*. Nevertheless, Chinese do believe that a person who deliberately practices Confucian ethics or morality may ascend to the realm of Heaven and occupy a position in the hierarchy of gods according to his/her moral

achievement. On the contrary, anybody who violates Confucian ethics or morality may become ghost (*kuei*) and be descended to lower Hell depending on his/her guilt (Eberhard, 1967).

In order to illustrate my arguments, I first describe the ancient Chinese belief in Heaven and spirits briefly. Then I explain the original usage of *I-Ching* and how Confucius and his disciples reinterpreted *I-Ching* in terms of their ethical system so as to establish Confucian morality on the metaphysical foundation of their dual belief in Heaven and spirits. Finally, I illustrate my arguments by a series of citations from Confucian classics.

Unlike people in many other cultures who practice veneration of the dead or ancestor worship with the belief that the dead have a continued existence and/or possess the ability to influence the fortune of the living, ancient Chinese did not only believe in the existence of spirits after death, but also developed ancestor worship with the belief that humans might transform into either spirits of deity (*shen*) or spirits of ghost (*kuei*), depending on one's own moral performance as well as the ritual action on the part of living.

In his *General Introduction to Chinese Culture*, Wei (1968: 81–82) indicated that there were several significant features of religion in the Yin or Shang Dynasty (1766 BC–1122 BC). The core of Yin people's religious life was ancestor worship. They believed that one's spirit might exist after one's physical body was vanished, so they held an attitude of treating the dead as if they were still living. Because they believed that their ancestors might transform into deities, become mediators between gods and human beings, and bring them good or bad fortune, Yin people had a custom of organizing lavish funeral ceremonies.

In addition to ancestor worship, Hsian (1995) indicated that ancient Chinese also believed the world was dominated by the Emperor (*Ti*), God (*Shang-Ti*) or Heaven (*Tien*). This belief originated from the Yin or Shang Dynasty (1766 BC–1122 BC) to the Zhou Dynasty (1122 BC–256 BC). The oracles originally called the supreme dominator the Emperor (*Ti*), because the dominator in this world also called himself the Emperor (*Ti*), so they ended up calling the Emperor in Heaven *Shang-Ti* (Hu, 1944). The Chinese *Shang-Ti* was not a personal God and was gradually replaced by the concept of Heaven (*Tien*), which holds the supreme authority to rule nature as well as the human world.

Weber discussed the conception of deity in *The Religion of China*:

Here as elsewhere, there was originally a dualism of good (useful) and evil (harmful) spirits, of the “*shen*” and the “*kuei*” which animated the whole universe and expressed themselves in natural events as well as in man's conduct and condition. Man's “soul” too, was believed to be composed of the heaven-derived *shen* and the earthly *kuei* substance which separated again after death. This corresponds to the widely diffused assumption of a plurality of animating forces. The doctrine held in common by all schools of philosophy summarized the “good” spirits as the (heavenly and masculine) Yang principle, the “evil” ones as the (earthly and feminine) Yin principle, explaining the origin of the world from their fusion. Both principles were, like heaven and earth, external.

(Weber, 1964: 28–29)

The above paragraph indicates that Weber had only a superficial understanding about the concept of *Yin* and *Yang* in Chinese culture. He mentioned the well-known oracular lines of the *I Li* as well as the turtle as an oracular animal (Weber, 1964: 191), but he ignored *I-Ching* in his works on Chinese religion. He understood that Chinese had constructed their image of the world (*Weltbild*) by the root metaphor of *Yin* and *Yang*, but he knew neither the organic sciences that had been developed by Taoists with such a *Weltbild*, nor the moral implications of reinterpreting *I-Ching* done by Confucius and his disciples.

Disenchantment of *I-Ching*

The contemporary text of the *I-Ching* is a set of oracular statements represented by 64 sets of 6 lines that are called hexagrams (卦, *gua*). Each hexagram is composed of six horizontal lines (爻), each line is either *Yang* (a solid line), or *Yin* (an open line with a gap in the center). There are 64 possible combinations with 6 such lines stacked from bottom to top, thus 64 hexagrams are represented.

The symbolic system

The contemporary system of hexagrams and its interpretations have gone through a long history of evolution. Because Yin people treated ancestors as if they were still alive, and because beliefs in spirits were prevailing during the Shang Dynasty, Yin people utilized the divinatory method of burning oracle bones or turtle shells to pray for instructions from personal gods when they had to make important decisions in life. The divinatory concepts had changed to utilize yarrow stalks as method of divination at the beginning of the Zhou dynasty. A brief review on the developmental history of *I-Ching* may help us understand the significant implications of such a substitution for the rationalization of Chinese culture.

The principles of *I-Ching* were believed to originate from the mythical Fu Xi (伏羲), a hero who was one of the earliest legendary rulers of China dated about 2800 BC to 2737 BC. It was believed that Fu Xi received a supernatural revelation to create the eight trigrams (八卦, *ba gua*) to denote the eight images in nature, namely, Heaven (乾, *Qian*), Lake (兌, *Dui*), Fire (離, *Li*), Thunder (震, *Zhen*), Wind (巽, *Xun*), Water (坎, *Kan*), Mountain (艮, *Gen*), and Earth (坤, *Kun*) (see Figure 3.1). Each of the eight trigrams is composed of three-line arrangements that consist of either a solid line of *Yang* or a broken line of *Yin* with a gap in the center.

By the time of legendary Yu (禹) (about 2194 BC–2149 BC), the eight trigrams had supposedly been developed into 64 hexagrams (六十四卦, *liu shi si gua*), which resulted from the combination of two trigrams and was recorded in the scripture *Lian Shan* (連山). The scripture's name, *Lian Shan*, literally means continuing mountains, implying that the symbolic system of 64 hexagrams begins with the hexagram that depicts a trigram of mountain (艮, *Gen*) mounting on another.

The hexagrams had remained a symbolic system for depicting images of nature for 3500 years since Fu Xi created the eight trigrams. At the time of Shang's last king, King Wen of Zhou had contributed significantly to transforming the symbolic system into a divinatory system.

King Wen of Zhou (1152 BC–1056 BC) was born and named Ji Chang (姬昌) by his father Jili, the duke of a small state along the Wei River in present-day Shaanxi. He succeeded his father and won a high reputation with his honorable governance. Fearing his growing power, King Zhou of Shang (商紂王) imprisoned him in Youli (present-day Tangyin in Henan). For the sake of demonstrating his capability to communicate with Heaven, he decided to develop a new divinatory system to substitute the traditional method of burning oracle bone and turtle shell. He carefully studied the structure of hexagram, deduced the principles of changing or unchanging between six lines within each hexagram, and gave each hexagram a description regarding its own nature, which was called *Gua Ci* (卦辭).

Some of his officials presented King Zhou with many gifts, including gold, horses, and women, so he released Ji Chang, who subsequently planned to overthrow King Zhou. But, he died before he could accomplish this goal. His second son followed his wishes, defeated King Zhou's army at Muye, established the Zhou dynasty and became King Wu.

It was said that Zhou Gong Dan, the seventh son of King Wen and brother of King Wu, had created Yao Ci (爻辭) to explain the meaning of each horizontal line in each hexagram. Hence, the whole context of *I-Ching* as a divinatory system had been accomplished and served as a wide influence on the literature and administrations of the Zhou dynasty (1122 BC–256 BC).

During the Spring and Autumn period (221–481 BC), Confucius and his disciples were said to have written the *Shi Yi* (十翼, Ten Wings) as well as a series of commentaries on the *I-Ching*. Their works had transformed *I-Ching* from a divinatory system into a classic of Confucian philosophy and cosmology, which was frequently used by Confucianists for self-cultivation. The significance of this transformation should be interpreted in the historical background of Confucius.

Confucius (551 BC–479 BC), the most respected educator in Chinese history, was born in the State of Lu (now Shandong province) during the turmoil Spring and Autumn Period (772 BC–484 BC) in ancient China. His father, a mid-ranking official, died when he was three years old. Confucius worked as a shepherd and as an accountant for a noble family. He was very interested in the rites and institutions that prevailed in a much earlier period of Chinese history during the Zhou dynasty and devoted himself to the study of the traditional Zhou culture. During Confucius's lifetime, feudal princes were frequently trying to usurp the throne. He hoped to restore social order by advocating a return to the morality of loyalty and the ethical system of filial piety. Confucius began his career as a public teacher at the age of 22. His fame gradually increased, and it is said that he attracted 72 disciples and more than 3,000 students, which earned him a good reputation and made him famous.

In 517 BC, Duke Chao of Lu engaged in an open quarrel with three hereditary ministerial families in the state, who were continually encroaching on the authority of their feudal ruler. Confucius fled into Chi, the adjoining state, to avoid the prevailing disorder. After the rebellion was suppressed, he returned to the State of Lu at the age of 51 and obtained a position in the government. He was forced to resign after three months as he failed to persuade the king to destroy three castles constructed by feudal princes. From the age of 54, he toured with some of his disciples around various states for a period of 14 years, hoping that his political advocacy might be accepted by other feudal kings.

Confucius identified himself as an educator whose mandate was to rectify the world by teaching virtues. In attempting to restore the feudal social order of the early Zhou dynasty, he spent a lot of time researching and recording rites and music for ceremonies and other occasions expressing one's dedication to family, country, and state. He also edited poems and classics collected from various states, including Lu, Zhou, Sung, and Chi. He wrote a history of Lu entitled *Spring and Autumn*. In his late years, he annotated ten supplements to the oracular text *I-Ching*, which is considered the most ancient Chinese book of philosophy and cosmology. All of these were used as teaching materials.

The reinterpretation of *I-Ching* by Confucianists has very important implications for its rationalization and secularization in ancient China.

There is a Confucius saying in *The Analects*:

The Master said, "The people of the south have a saying – 'A man without constancy cannot be either a wizard or a doctor.' Good! Inconstant in his virtue, he will be visited with disgrace". The Master said, "This arises simply from not attending to the prognostication."

(*Analects, Tsze Lu, ch. 22*)

In this paragraph, the sentence "Inconstant in his virtue, he will be visited with disgrace" was directly quoted from the interpretation of one horizontal line in the 32th hexagram of the *I-Ching*, named *heng* (恒) or *Persevering*. The Confucian saying emphasized the importance of

seeking moral instructions for self-cultivation from interpretations or commentaries of hexagrams of the *I-Ching* without attending to any prognostication of divination.

The *I-Ching* was the most important divination text in ancient China. The Confucianists' interpretation of *I-Ching* had transformed it into a "philosophical masterpiece" (Abraham, 1999). It inspired not only the post-warring states' Taoists to develop Chinese organic sciences (Needham, 1981), but also later Chinese elites who used it as a classic for acculturating their personal virtues.

Thus, the *I-Ching* had two distinct functions in traditional Chinese society. First, as a classic for self-cultivation in morality. The second function was that of divination text used by the marketplace fortune teller and roadside oracle who serve the illiterate people. The Confucian elites were educated to have an entirely different disposition. They have long conceded all divination to be vain, so they had little use for the *I-Ching* as work of divination. Because they understood that the results of their actions were a function of their personal virtues, many of them used the *I-Ching* as a compendium for coping with difficult problems in daily life (Williams, 1848).

Metaphysical foundation of Confucian morality

In *The Religion of China*, Weber (1964) keenly indicated the particular structure of dual belief in Heaven and gods prevailing in Chinese society. In his discussion on the conception of deity in China, he mentioned that:

Here the timeless and irrevocable attained religious supremacy. This was brought about by joining an inviolate and uniform magical ritual to the calendar. The ritual compelled the spirits; the calendar was indispensable for a people of peasants. Thus, the laws of nature and of rites were fused into the unity of Tao. Not a supramundane lord creator, but a supra-divine, impersonal, forever identical and eternal existence was felt to be the ultimate and supreme. This was to sanction the validity of eternal order and its timeless existence. The impersonal power of Heaven did not speak to man. It revealed itself in the regimen on earth, in the firm order of nature and tradition which were part of the cosmic order, and, as elsewhere, it revealed itself in what occurred to man.

(Weber, 1964: 29)

The so-called "supra-divine, impersonal, forever identical and external existence" was the Chinese belief in Heaven (*Tien*). The ultimate and supreme existence of *Tien* was believed "to sanction the validity of eternal order and its timeless existence." It has moral will and power just like the God in puritanism, but, the impersonal Heaven does not "speak" to men.

Weber also traced the origin of impersonal Heaven in the history of China:

The founder of the Zhou dynasty worshipped as a dualist unit this God of Heavens together with the local spirit. Originally imperial power was like a feudal suzerainty over the princes. Thus, sacrificial rites to Heaven became the monopoly of the emperor who was considered the "Son" of Heaven. The princes made sacrifices to the spirits of the land and to the ancestors; the heads of households made sacrifices to the ancestral spirits of their kinship group. As usual, the character of the spirits was tinged by the Spirit of Heaven (*Shang Ti*) who could be conceived either as the Heaven itself or as King of Heaven. Then the Chinese spirits, especially the mighty and universal ones, increasingly assumed an impersonal character.

(Weber, 1964: 22)

Weber noted that the concept of deity among Chinese philosophers remained very contradictory for a long time and the impersonal conception of Heaven gained the upper hand in the

official cult (Weber, 1964: 23). In view of their belief in the impersonal Heaven, Weber (1964: 28) argued that “This optimistic conception of cosmic harmony is fundamental for China and has gradually evolved from the primitive belief in spirits,” but he drew a debatable conclusion: “Here, as almost everywhere else, this consistent dualism was optimistically attenuated and supported by identifying the redeeming magical charisma of sorcerers and heroes with the *shen* spirits who originated in the benign heavenly power, the Yang” (Weber, 1964: 29).

The Chinese might be undifferentiated in their conception of Heaven and deity during the era of Yin, but these two concepts gradually separated since the era of West Zhou. Especially after the interpretation of the *I-Ching* by Lao Tzu and Confucius, the belief in Heaven became the metaphysical foundation of Confucian morality with the belief in spirits as its supplementary system. Weber may claim that Chinese people identified “the redeeming magical charisma of sorcerers and heroes with the *shen* spirits who originated in the benign heavenly power,” but he neglected to explore the complex relationships between Heaven and the spirits within the context of Confucian cosmology. A person might become a *shen* spirit or a *kuei* spirit after his death, but it is impossible for anybody to become Heaven. Unfortunately, Weber was careless in making such a distinction in his works. For example, he stated: “The gods and spirits were powerful beings. No single God, no apotheosized hero or spirit, however powerful, was ‘omniscient’ or ‘omnipotent’. The Confucian’s sober wisdom of life concerning the misfortunes of the pious was simply that ‘God’s will is often unsteady.’” (Weber, 1964: 29).

In fact, the original Confucian saying of this citation was “Heaven’s will is often unsteady” [天命靡常]. Heaven and God were completely different concepts in the structure of Chinese dual belief. Weber was correct in his argument, “No single God was ‘omniscient’ or ‘omnipotent’.” But Heaven was believed to be “omniscient” and “omnipotent.” The distinction between these two concepts had very important implications for the construction of the Confucian ethical system.

The Confucian cosmology contains a view of the universe passed down from the Shang and Zhou dynasties of ancient China. This view is best depicted in the Ten Wings (Appendix I) of the *I-Ching* (Wei, 1968):

Vast is the “great and originating power” indicated by Khien! All things owe to it their beginning. It contains all the meaning belonging to (the name) heaven. The clouds move and the rain is disturbed; various things appear in their developed forms. Complete is the “great and originating capacity” indicated by Khwan! All things owe to it their birth. It obediently receives the influences of Heaven. Khwan, in its largeness, supports and contains all things. Its excellent capacity matches the unlimited power of Khien.

(*I-Ching, Ten Wings, Appendix I*)

This cosmology manifests three main characteristics. First, it assumes that the universe itself has infinite capacity for procreation. The endless flow and changes of the “myriad things in the universe” are caused by the encounter and interaction between Heaven and Earth. This understanding is not like the Christian view in the West, which sets aside a divine entity that surpasses the universe and created everything in it. Second, it assumes the change of all things in the universe to be cyclic:

The way of Heaven and Earth is characterized by its consistent change. Everything is going forth and coming back, its end is followed by a new beginning. The sun and the moon are always moving and shining in the sky, the four seasons are changing to foster the harvest, and the sages are consistently practicing their way to change the world. The nature of everything in the universe is revealed by watching its consistent change.

(*I-Ching, Ten Wings, Appendix I*)

The third point that this cosmology assumes is that all things in the universe have endless vitality. “The grand virtue of Heaven and Earth is to breed in an endless succession.” *Wei Chi* (未濟), the last hexagram in the *I-Ching*, emphasizes that “from an end there comes a new beginning.” The ideas of circularity such as “when things are at their worst, they will surely mend” and “adversity, after reaching its extremity, is followed by felicity,” are readily apparent in this cosmology (Fang, 1981).

Confucius was obviously influenced by the view of the universe outlined in the *I-Ching*. He expressed his thoughts in a conversation with Duke I of Lu.

Duke I asked: “Why should a *jun zi* (true gentleman) follow the Way of Heaven?” Confucius said: “Because of its ceaselessness. For instance, the sun and moon circle around from east to west, this is the Way of Heaven. Everything in the universe always follows its rule of change, this is the Way of Heaven. Accomplishing everything without doing anything, this is the Way of Heaven. The accomplished thing has its significant feature, this is the Way of Heaven.”

(*Li Chi*, Ch. 27: *Ai Gon Wen*)

Inspired by natural phenomena such as the alternate illumination of the sun and the moon, the cycle of the four seasons, the gush of water from deep pools, and the ceaseless vibrant flow of rivers and streams, Confucian scholars of the pre-Qin period made the following insights: “To entire sincerity there belongs ceaselessness.” “Without sincerity, there would be nothing.” “It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can transform.” Based on these insights, Confucian scholars concluded that “sincerity is the Way of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the Way of Humanity” (*The Golden Mean*, Ch. XX–XXV). The order and reason within the human heart correspond to the order and reason in nature (Liu, 1989/1992). Once entire sincerity is achieved, the nature of human beings and the Way of Humanity, which derive from the Way of Heaven, will emerge. Therefore:

It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, and only he who can give its full development to his nature. Once able to develop his own nature, he can do the same for the nature of others. Once able to give sincerity’s full development to the nature of others, he can give their full development to the natures of animals and things. Once able to give full development to the natures of creatures and things, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Once able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, he may with Heaven and Earth form a union.

(*The Golden Mean*, XXII)

This analogous deduction is a kind of practical reasoning that is specific to Confucianism; it sustains individuals in carrying out the Confucian way of personhood. According to this deductive reasoning, “Heaven exists within humans. As humans bring out their internal virtue, they bring to light the Way of Heaven. Hence, although a human’s life is limited, it may be channeled into the infinite and participate with Heaven and Earth” (Liu, 1989/1992).

Confucians believed that the Way of Humanity as revealed by their sages has a spiritual essence corresponding to the Way of Heaven. As biological organisms, individuals are destined by their congenital conditions. However, as human beings with moral awareness, they are able and obligated to practice the Confucian Way of Humanity, which corresponds to the Way of Heaven. Each person is endowed with the heavenly ordained mission of applying the Way of Humanity through the mind of benevolence, a key component of the Confucian ethical system.

Confucians of the pre-Qin period established their ethical system by constructing the Way of Humanity through an understanding of the Way of Heaven. According to them, benevolence embodies the Way of Humanity for the arrangement of social relationships. This is illustrated in the following passage from the Ten Wings of the *I-Ching*:

Heaven and Earth exist; all [material] things exist. After all [material] things existed, there came male and female. From the existence of male and female there came husband and wife. From husband and wife there came father and son. From father and son there came ruler and minister. From ruler and minister there came high and low. When [the distinction of] high and low existed, the arrangements of propriety and righteousness came into existence.
(*I-Ching, Ten Wings*)

This way of reasoning fully reflects the primitive thinking of mysterious participative law (Lévy-Bruhl, 1910/1966). In other words, in the *I-Ching* human beings are conceptualized as one of the myriad things in the world. The universe was composed of Heaven and Earth, corresponding to *Yang* and *Yin*. When males and females came into existence creating a social world, their unification gave birth to a second generation, providing grounds for constructing social relationships between father and son, and sovereign and subordinates. The arrangement of social relationships between oneself and others (the Way of Humanity) therefore corresponds to the Way of Heaven.

Confucian dual belief in Heaven and spirits

There is a famous record in *The Analects* that Confucius refused to discuss with his followers such metaphysical concepts as extraordinary things, feats of strength, disorder, and spiritual beings (*The Analects*, Shu Er). This was his fundamental attitude towards Heaven or spirits. Nevertheless, such an attitude did not imply his disbelief in Heaven and spirits.

Because he believed that an individual might become *shen* or *kuei* spirit after death, he prayed to the spirits as if they were present and requested his followers to express a pious and sincere attitude towards gods at the sacrifice (*The Analects*, Ba Yi). Therefore, one of his followers, Zengze, explained the necessity of ancestor worship and advocated that it may encourage the people to resume proper virtue (*The Analects*, Xue Er).

In his works on the history of Chinese philosophy, Lao (1995) conceived of the concept of Heaven in Confucian thought as a *metaphysical* Heaven in order to distinguish it from a *personal* God, as it represents an entity with orderliness and rules, but without will or intention. I agree with Lao that it is appropriate to use the concept *metaphysical* Heaven because Confucius insisted on an attitude of *epoché* towards Heaven and rejected to speculate on its nature with his students. Nevertheless, in his dialogue with his followers, the metaphysical Heaven was often represented as polysemous, having several implicit meanings that were popular during the Zhou dynasty.

A series of examples can be found in either *Analects* or *Mencius* to support my arguments: “Wang Sun-Jia asked, saying, ‘What is the meaning of saying, ‘It is better to pay court to the furnace than to the southwest corner?’” The Master said, ‘Not so. He who offends against Heaven has none to whom he can pray’” (*The Analects*, Ba Yi).

According to the interpretation made by *Chu Xi*, paying court to the God of Furnace (see Figure 3.2) was one of the five major rites of worship offered at year end, since it was believed that the God of Furnace may ascend to Heaven to report what had happened within the family during the past year. After that, people also paid court to other gods at the southwest corner of their house. Wang Sun-Jia was a favorite courtier to the King of Wei. Both of them wanted to

utilize Confucius' fame and reputation. Wang's words to Confucius implied that he expected Confucius to get closer to him. Confucius replied that it would be useless to pray to any God if one's conduct offended the way of Heaven. His answer implied that he would pay court to neither the God of Furnace nor Gods residing at the southwest corner.

Confucius' saying suggested a belief in Heaven with absolute moral will which was different from either *shen* or *kuei* spirits, who could be "bribed" by some means. The role of Heaven was akin to that of the God in Puritanism. According to the doctrine of predestination, God has the absolute power to determine the chosen one. His decision could not be changed by anything. Praying, attending church, or even granting indulgences were all useless in changing or moving his absolute will. His status was very similar to Heaven with its absolute moral will in Chinese culture.

Unification of Heaven and humanity

There were several famous sayings in Mencius' works that can be used to illustrate the relationships between the Way of Benevolence (*Rendao*), the Way of Heaven (*Tiendao*), conscience (*liangxin*), and the attitude of self-exertion (*jin-ji*) towards one's life. In his discourse on "the human nature is good," he cited sayings from the Book of Poetry: "Heaven in producing mankind, gave them their various faculties and relations with their specific laws. These are the invariable rules of nature for all to hold, and all love this admirable virtue" (Mencius, Jin Xin).

And Mencius argued that all creatures in the universe are created by Heaven with their own specific and invariable laws to be followed. So does mankind. The Confucian ethical system of benevolence-righteousness propriety (*ren-yi-li*) for ordinary people as I described in my book, *Foundations of Chinese Psychology: Confucian Social Relations* (Hwang, 2012), as well as the wisdom for utilizing them, are rules of this kind. Because all those rules came from the way of Benevolence (*Rendao*), which is supposed to correspond to the way of Heaven (*Tiendao*), every one of us certainly harbors them, and they are not infused into us from without.

Therefore, "all things are complete in us." The way of Heaven remains the same for everybody; it would cheat nobody, so we may say that sincerity is the way of Heaven. So long as one is willing to reflect with sincerity, he certainly will be aware of the way of Benevolence that is supposed to correspond to the way of Heaven. Hence, I deliberately call the Confucian conscience *Tienliang* [literally, conscience in unity with Heaven]. Whether one practices benevolence or not in a given situation is judged by his consciousness, which can be revealed by sincere self-reflection. Therefore, Mencius argued that "Never has there been one possessed of complete sincerity who did not move others" and "Never has there been one who had not sincerity who was able to move others."

Because to be benevolent or not is determined by the judgment of one's conscience (*Tienliang*), Confucians believed that good or bad fortune is brought to oneself by one's own actions: "A man must first despise himself, and then others will despise him. A family must first destroy itself, and then others will destroy it. A state must first smite itself, and then others will smite it" (Mencius, *Gong Sun Chou*). So they emphasized the importance of cultivating oneself by turning inward and examining oneself in every occasion, especially when one's desire cannot be satisfied by what one has done. An event's outcome that was beyond one's control should be attributed to Heaven or fate. Following the principle of "fixing the window and door of one's house before the heaven turns dark and rains," one's obligation in life is exerting oneself by doing one's best in preparation for the coming challenge. Therefore, Confucians frequently cited the classical sayings from *The Book of Poetry and Tai-jia*: "One should seek for the state of well-being as much as one can in harmony with the ordinances of Heaven," "When Heaven sends down

一家之主



Figure 3.1 The God of Furnace, Zao Shen, mentioned by Confucius in his dialogue with Wang Sun-Jia as recorded in The Analects, Ba Yi

Source: anonymous folk artist

calamities, it is still possible to escape from them; when we occasion the calamities ourselves, it is not possible any longer to live” (*Mencius, Gong Sun Chou*).

Function of Chinese dual beliefs

Unfortunately, Weber’s discourse on the religion of China diminished the importance of Heaven and overemphasized the role of spirits or gods from a Eurocentric perspective. In his comparison between Confucianism and puritanism, Weber said:

Animistic magic, as the only remaining form of popular religion, determined the traditionalist fear of any innovation which might bring evil charms or stir up the spirits. To be sure, this magic was despised by the educated Chinese; but, it was the form of religion supported because of the character of the official cults. The preservation of this animistic magic explains the great credulity of the Chinese. Thus, magical also is the belief that disease and misfortune are symptoms of divine wrath which the individual has brought upon himself.

(Weber, 1964: 233)

Chinese belief in Heaven laid the primary metaphysical foundation of Confucian ethics; spirits or so-called “animistic magic” played only a secondary or supplementary role. Hence, when Weber regarded “animistic magic” as “the only remaining form of popular religion,” he was destined to draw the wrong conclusion that Confucianism is an ideology for defending traditionalism.

In his discourse on orthodoxy and heterodoxy in China, Weber also argued:

Neither in its official state cult nor in its Taoist aspect could Chinese religiosity produce sufficiently strong motives for a religiously oriented life for the individual such as the Puritan method represents. Both forms of religion lacked even the traces of a satanic force of evil against which the pious Chinese, whether orthodox or heterodox, might have struggled for his salvation.

(Weber, 1964: 206)

This was a very famous Weberian thesis, which was also a thesis of Eurocentrism. Weber asserted that both religious forms of Confucianism and Taoism “lacked even the traces of a satanic force of evil against which the pious Chinese might have struggled for his salvation.” Obviously, he has tried to evaluate Chinese religion in terms of European Christianity. His assertion had been well-accepted by the international social science community, and even Chinese scholars generally agreed that lacking the consciousness of darkness is the main reason for the inability of Chinese society to develop Western style democracy (e.g. Chang, 1989).

My main argument in this chapter is that the structure of Chinese dual belief in Heaven and spirits has an important function in maintaining the operation of Confucian ethics. Since Weber insisted that animistic magic was the only remaining form of popular religion in China, while neglecting the important function of Heaven, he was unable to see the metaphysical foundation of Confucian morality and to make a fair evaluation on Confucian ethics. For instance, Weber indicated that, in Chinese society:

With these spirits one was on a footing of primitive mutuality: so and so many ritual acts brought so and so many benefits. If a tutelary spirit proved insufficiently strong to protect a man, in spite of all sacrifices and virtues, he had to be substituted, for only the spirit who proved to be truly powerful was worthy of worship.

(Weber, 1964: 29)

Weber was basically correct in saying so. We may find numerous examples to support his argument. For instance, Weber mentioned that:

Chinese antiquity knew a dual god of the peasantry (*She-chi*) for every local association; it represented a fusion of the spirit of fertile soil (*She*) and the spirit of harvest (*Chi*). This God had already assumed the character of a deity meting out ethical sanctions. On the other hand, the temples of ancestral spirits (*Chung-miao*) were objects of worship. This spirits together (*She-chihung-miao*) were the main object of the local rural cults.

(Weber, 1964: 21–22)

In Chinese language, the terms *shen* (god) and *kuei shen* (god and ghost) sometimes could be used interchangeably, both were used to denote spirits. After death all spirits were transformed by human beings. Gods of ancestors were transformed by the spirits of ancestors; ghosts were spirits of others who were hostile to oneself. So were the gods of nature. According to *Language in Lu*, Confucius said: “Those spirits of mountains and rivers might become gods of their keepers. The keepers of *She-Chi* are dukes who belonged to King’s family” (*Language of States*).

Confucian culture regards family as the foundation of society. If one has fulfilled his family obligations, one might become the object of ancestor worship after death (Thompson, 1996). Nevertheless, Confucian moral imperatives were much more than that, especially for scholars who had been subjected to Confucian moral education, and were expected to exert themselves in not only “cultivating oneself,” “putting family in order” but also “ruling the state and giving peace to the world” by their will to resist injustice (Bellah, 2011).

In case one’s moral conducts made a significant contribution to society, his/her moral achievements might be used as role models, she/he might be worshiped as “spirit of mountain and river” or “keeper of *She-chi* (the state).” The more significant one’s contribution to society, the higher status one might attain in the hierarchy of gods. “An individual of moral characters should be accredited with appropriate position in accordance with his moral achievements.” The Confucian cultural ideal could be realized by such a religious arrangement, thus constituting the *Homo Hierarchicus* in Confucian society, which differs significantly from the *Homo Aequalis* in Christian culture (Dumont, 1980).

Relative ethics

There was a saying in *Zuozhuan* (左傳): “Gods are bright, straight and consistent, they follow the will of people.” Because gods were bright and straight, they were able to play the role of judge to evaluate the right or wrong of human affairs on behalf of Heaven. Even then, they still had to follow the righteous will of people. One of the most frequently cited Mencius’ aphorism was “People are the most important element in a state; next are gods of *she-chi*; least is the sovereign.” (Mencius, *Jin Xin II*); “Gods of *she-chi*” also meant “the state” itself in daily usage of Chinese language. Mencius argued in the following paragraph that “gain the sovereign” is the way to become a prince of a State; to gain the prince of a State is the way to become a high officer. When a prince endangers the gods of *she-chi*, his pact must be replaced by a more adequate one.” Thus he advocated for the principle of relative ethics in Confucianism and insisted that every role in any of the aforementioned dyadic relations must fulfill his own role and obligations. The sovereign, the prince, the high officer, and even gods of *she-chi* were allowed no exception to this principle. When people offered sacrifices to the god of *she-chi*

with proper seasons, the sacrificial victims have been perfect, the millet in its vessels all pure, if yet there ensue drought or the waters overflow, then the god of *she-chi* had to be substituted by a more responsible one.

Conclusion

Weber had seen the manipulation of spirits by Chinese people, but he understood neither the Confucian conception of relative obligation implied in such a religious practice, nor the function of moral metaphysics constituted by the structure of dual belief in Heaven and spirits. It was unlikely for him to make a fair evaluation on Confucianism, he might even doubt whether the term “religion” can be applied to Confucianism from his Western perspective.

Is Confucianism a religion? This was not a question at all in ancient China. The translation for “religion” in Chinese is “宗教” (*zong-jiao*), which resembles two separate words “宗” (*zong*) and “教” (*jiao*). When Buddhism was imported into China during the tenth century, *zong-jiao* began to be used as a related term. Buddha’s teaching was called *jiao* (教, literally, teaching), while teaching from Buddha’s disciple was called *zong*. *Zong* was a branch or sect of *jiao*, a combination of both was called *zong-jiao*. But, long before that, both *zong* and *jiao* had the same denotation as religion.

This chapter is designated to illustrate the unique feature of Confucianism as a religion. As the metaphysical foundation of Confucian morality, Chinese dual belief in Heaven and spirits is very different from any other monotheism. To describe it simply as polytheism is also inadequate. Its unique feature can best be seen in the following paragraph of *I-Ching*:

The great man is he whose moral attributes are in harmony with heaven and earth; whose wisdom is coincident with the brightness of sun and moon; whose orderly actions are congruent with four seasons; whose fortunate and calamity are coordinated with the spirits of *kuei* and *shen*.
(*I-Ching*, *Qing*)

Among the four characters of a “great man,” two of them are directly related to my main arguments of this article: “whose moral attributes are in harmony with heaven and earth,” so that “whose fortunate and calamity are coordinated with the spirits of *kuei* and *shen*.” In other words, pre-Qin Confucianists believed that the Way of Heaven (*Tiendao*) is the metaphysical foundation of Confucian morality, Confucian Way of Humanity (*Rendao*) corresponds with the Way of Heaven, and a great man of Confucian morality would devote himself to serve the society or to teach all people under Heaven. In this case, he may totally ignore the supervision of *kuei* and *shen*. Therefore, *I-Ching* concludes on the moral actions of a “great man” with the following paragraph:

He may precede Heaven, and Heaven will not act in opposition to him; he may follow Heaven, but will act as Heaven would do at that time. If Heaven will not act in opposition to him, how much less will men! How much less will the spirits of *kuei* and *shen*!
(*I-Ching*, *Qian*)

This paragraph indicates that the Confucian way of Humanity (*Rendao*) is grounded on and congruent with the way of Heaven, while the spirits of *kuei* and *shen* serve as a supplementary system in the structure of dual beliefs in Heaven and spirits. Both of them constituted the metaphysical foundation of Confucianism as a religion in China.

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Sikhism and its changing social structure

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With a population of around 25 million, the Sikhs constitute a small but distinctive religious group in the world today.¹ Even though Sikhs do not have a nation-state in which they are in a majority, a large proportion of them live in India where they make for a little less than two per cent of the total population. An interesting aspect of the Sikh demographics is their emergence as a dominant and numerically majority group in the north-western state of Punjab on the Indian side, especially after the partition in 1947, and consequently the Indian Punjab has come to be seen as a 'homeland' of the Sikhs.

Notwithstanding the fact that almost all the Sikhs trace their origin to the Indian subcontinent, they are spread across all continents due to an extensive migration. After the annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849 many Sikhs were recruited for the army, police and other occupations overseas that encouraged migration, primarily to serve the British in different parts of the world (Thandi 2012). Although many of the early Sikh travellers in the nineteenth century were 'transient visitors' who eventually returned home (Singh and Tatla 2006), they were followed by a large-scale movement of people in the twentieth century. Especially after the Second World War and India's independence in 1947 a growing number of Sikhs began settling in different continents. Today there are significant concentrations of Sikhs in Europe and North America, especially in English-speaking countries such as the UK, Canada and the US (Basran and Bolaria 2003; Bhachu 1985; Chadney 1984; Helweg 1979; LaBrack 1988; Leonard 1992; Mann 2000; Nayar 2004; Verma 2002), but also in Africa, Oceania and other parts of Asia and Europe (Bhatti and Dusenbery 2001; Cheuk 2008; Jacobsen and Myrvold 2011; McLeod 1986; Sandhu 1993; Singh 1977).² The Sikhs have been categorized as a 'mobile people' because of their history and culture that is marked by a willingness to travel and adjust to different conditions (McLeod 1997: 251; Jodhka 2009a). Among the various ethnic and religious groups in South Asia, they have often been pioneers in exploring new areas of settlement and have characteristically engaged in a wide range of transnational activities that link them with co-devotees worldwide (Jacobsen and Myrvold 2012).

The Sikhs do not constitute a homogenous group but comprise people with multiple belongings and backgrounds. Sikh identifications are dependent on many different social and cultural components that continue to create both solidarity and tension within the larger community. With migration these identifications have been further redefined and transformed by broader

diasporic and global experiences of the Sikhs and their exposure to various societies and cultures (Jacobsen and Myrvold 2011).

This chapter provides an introduction to the Sikh religious movement, the religious philosophy and the changing patterns of social life of the Sikhs with a special focus on the local patterns of social hierarchy. In dominant discourses Sikhism is frequently presented as an egalitarian and caste-free religion that is based on the emancipatory teaching of the historical gurus and the religious practices and institutions they created to reject the brahmanical hierarchy and abolish social discrimination in the spiritual quests. However, despite these discourses with ideological sanction in the Sikh scripture the practices of caste survived among the Sikhs at a practical level and continues to play an important role in their organization of everyday life across different temporal and spatial borders. The chapter gives examples of how Sikh historiography presents religious institutions and practices that were established by the Sikh gurus in order to emphasize egalitarianism against caste exclusivism. With British colonial rule and its policies in the nineteenth century the question of caste became an important political issue when the colonial administration organized the population by new categories of social classification. Although the hold of caste on social relationships seemed to have been of less importance among the Sikhs compared to other groups in India, caste became a critical category for Sikh reformists in their attempts to define a separate religious identity and carve out a political space of the Sikhs. After independence in 1947 Punjabi society went through several economic and social transformations that changed traditional social stratifications within Sikh society and generated and sharpened caste conflicts within the community. Even as the Sikhs have emphasized the gurus' teaching on equality and have migrated to different parts of the world, caste continues to be an axis of social solidarity, conflict and competition within the religion.

Foundational values and social frames

Sikh historiography traces the origin and uniqueness of Sikhism to the first guru and founder, Guru Nanak (1469–1539), who in his late twenties had a mystical experience and set out on extensive travels for two decades to refine and spread his message before he settled in Kartarpur (Punjab) and established a community of Sikhs ('disciples'). Scholarship places Guru Nanak in the Sant tradition of Northern India, which flourished from the fifteenth century onwards and was more loosely organized around different Sants, or saint-poets of different backgrounds, including Kabir, Namdev and Ravidas. The Sant tradition eschewed formalized religious worship, asceticism and caste distinctions and instead emphasized inner and true devotion (*bhakti*) to a supreme formless god beyond qualifications (*nirguna*) and the importance of a holy congregation (*satsang*) for spiritual progress (Schomer and McLeod 1987). Dominant discourses in Sikhism today frequently project Guru Nanak and his nine successors as social reformers who opposed the hierarchical values of brahmanical Hinduism and the caste system to actively advocate and work for equality in a society characterized by social discrimination and religious oppression (see McLeod 1996: 85–86).

The socio-religious ideas of the Sikh gurus materialized in different social institutions and practices that emphasized egalitarianism and social work as against caste exclusivism. Already from the time of Guru Nanak corporate singing (*kirtan*) was practiced in devotional congregations. The tradition of keeping *langar*, or communal kitchen, became an integral part of Sikh religious practices and embodied the ethical principle of equality and the belief in the oneness of humankind. Regardless of caste, gender, religion and social status anyone should get a meal and eat on equal terms together with others. Another important key concept and practice that evolved in the Sikh community was *seva* or 'service' to others, which ideally should be voluntary

acts that are selflessly performed without desires or thoughts of reward and today may encompass a wide range of philanthropic work and institutionalized religious practices (e.g. Dusenbery and Tatla 2009; Murphy 2004; Myrvold 2007). According to Sikh teaching, humans do not pursue liberation by renunciation from the social world, but by cultivating devotion and divine qualities, while living a family life, earning one's living and actively working for the betterment of society. The social critique and ideal of equality in the teaching of Guru Nanak and his successors seem to have had a spiritual purpose in the first place, in the sense that spiritual progress and liberation were possible for all people who engaged in devotion, regardless of social identity and status. They rejected brahmanical hierarchy and notion of restricted access to religious knowledge and to spiritual liberation. The aim of salvation was union with god that transcended the cycle of birth and death. Since the divine presence was everywhere, it was available to everyone.

A central event in Sikh historiography occurred in 1699 when the tenth guru, Gobind Singh, declared the Sikhs as *khalsa*, 'the pure', and formed a new religious community and identity of the Sikhs. Disciples were requested to undergo an initiation ceremony and drink sanctified water over which hymns of the gurus had been recited while stirring with a double-edged sword. The first five Sikhs who took the nectar belonged to low and high castes and were called 'the five beloved' (*panj pyare*). By drinking the nectar from one bowl they were to reject ideas about ritual pollution and purity to be initiated into a casteless *khalsa* community. They were to change their original names to 'Singh' (lion) and follow new religious practices, such as, daily readings of the gurus' hymns, abstaining from intoxicants, keeping unshorn hair and wearing a comb steel bracelet, dagger and a pair of breeches.

The inclusion of the writings of different bards and saints in the Sikh scripture is further-more interpreted as a sign of the gurus' teaching on egalitarianism. Guru Nanak consciously rejected Sanskrit in preference for the indigenous spoken language and his successor, Guru Angad, standardized the *Gurmukhi* script, which eventually became a vehicle for the Punjabi language and identity. In the early seventeenth century the fifth guru, Guru Arjun, compiled the religious poetry of the first five Sikh gurus as well as compositions by Hindu and Muslim poet-saints who displayed ideological unanimity but were from different backgrounds and castes. This includes the writings of some of the saints who came from the ritually insignificant (such as Kabir, a weaver; Dhanna, a Jat peasant; and Namdev, a tailor) and even untouchable castes (such as Ravidas, a cobbler; Sadhan, a butcher; and Sain, a barber). A century later the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708) added the hymns of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur to this compilation and at his death bed declared it to be the eternal guru of the Sikhs. This decision marked the end of a succession line of human gurus, as the scripture succeeded to the office of guru and was endowed with the spiritual authority to guide the Sikhs. Thus, the majority of Sikhs today consider the scripture that enshrines the words and teachings of the historical Sikh gurus as well as of Hindu and Muslim saints from different castes as their eternal guru. Wherever they have settled in the world, Guru Granth Sahib is the focal point of their religious life and defines their place of worship – the *gurdwara* or literally the 'guru's door' (*gurdwara* has over the years become a generic term for the Sikh temples).

Regional formations and structures of inequality

The institution of caste is widely believed to be the core defining feature of the 'traditional' social structure of India. While in Hinduism, the caste system and untouchability had an ideological sanction, the other communities also practiced it, even when it was not legitimized by their religious teaching. However, despite this widely held common-sense about the pan-Indian nature of caste, there exists a considerable amount of variation in the manner in which the social

relations among different groups have been structured in different regions (Jodhka 2012). As is commonly known, there are different sets of caste groups in different regions of India and 'the preoccupation with purity and pollution was not equally marked in every part of the country' (Beteille 2000:172). The specific historical trajectory, the patterns of politico-economic changes experienced during the post-independence period and the composition of different ethnic communities determine the actual caste relations in a given region.

Though the empirical studies on the caste relations in Punjab confirm that the ideas of purity and impurity were rather weak in the region, they tend to emphasize the significant role that different reform movements have played in bringing this change about. It has been argued that Sikh religious identity often overlapped with other religious beliefs and practices and the religious borders were fuzzy in pre-colonial times. British colonial rule in the nineteenth century had a significant impact on the manner in which religious communities formed themselves (Fox 1985; Oberoi 1994). The British rulers 'encouraged the members of each community to present their case in communitarian terms' (Grewal 1989: 195). The question of caste became an important issue when the colonial administrative structure began to deploy new categories of social aggregation and classification, and the reform movements were initiated by the newly emergent Sikh middle class.

During the nineteenth century the Arya Samaj movement was the first major reform movement in Punjab and it directly targeted caste. However, in its efforts to reform Hinduism it also criticized the Sikh gurus and mobilized 'low' castes among the Sikhs for their return to Hinduism through the process of *shuddhi* (purification). The reports of low-caste Sikhs being enunciated *shuddhi* and their re-conversion into Hinduism were viewed with much concern by the emerging Sikh middle class. Since the numbers had begun to matter as a political force and the communities in the region had become very sensitive about their size, the Sikh leadership was understandably keen to keep the low castes within their fold.

The militant assertion of Hindutva identity by the Arya Samaj had already sparked off a debate on the question of Sikh identity. Sikhs began to assert that theirs was a separate religion and that they should not be clubbed with the Hindus (Oberoi 1994). The practice of untouchability, or discrimination against the low castes, among the Sikhs was attributed to the continued influence of Hinduism on the community. Thus the struggle against caste and untouchability, which were seen as core Hindu values, was implicated in the movement for a separate religious identity for the Sikhs.

The Singh Sabha movement that developed in the end of the nineteenth century and during the 1920s worked for the liberation of Sikh *gurdwaras* from the Hindu Mahants also became a movement for de-Hinduization of the Sikh religion. One of the main demands of the movement was 'unquestioned entrance to Sikh places of worship' for all (Juergensmeyer 1988: 28). Some members of the Sikh Khalsa Diwan, a religious body of the Sikhs that advocated reforms, tried to create their own 'depressed class movements' to encourage 'low' caste support. The movement was not confined to the liberation of historical Sikh *gurdwaras*, but its impact went very far. In his study of a village in Amritsar district, I. P. Singh reported that the decline of the Brahmins in the village began around the time when these reform movements were launched, that is, between 1922 and 1926. It was after these movements that a low-caste Sikh was appointed a *granthi* (literally a custodian of the Sikh scripture, who also performs various rituals in the *gurdwara*) in the local *gurdwara* and he began to give equal treatment to members of all castes in the village (Singh, I. P. 1977: 81–82). This process seemed to have continued during the post-independence period as well. More significantly, perhaps, the rural Sikh elite attributed the change in the status of untouchables in Punjab to the quality of their religion.

While the Sikh reformers attacked caste, the Sikh leadership, having become aware of the significance of numbers, did not deny the existence of caste among the Sikhs despite the denial of caste at the ideological level. Neither did they deny that the low castes among the Sikhs faced disabilities due to their birth. The Sikh leadership, in fact, had to lobby a great deal with the national leadership that, along with the Hindus, certain Sikh castes should also be included in the list of the Scheduled Castes for the provision of special benefits and reservations. Given the dominant orientalist view of caste associated with the Hindu religion, quotas were proposed only for those treated as 'low' castes within Hindu religion. Since the non-Hindu religions of the subcontinent did not provide religious sanction to caste, the historically deprived communities among them did not qualify for Scheduled Caste status. Given their close affinity to the local Punjabi Hindus, the Sikh leadership was obviously worried that if the reservation benefits were not extended to the Sikhs, the low castes among them may declare their religion as Hinduism.³ However, while all the Hindu untouchable castes were given special privileges, only four sub-castes of untouchable Sikhs were included in the list.⁴ After independent India adopted its constitution in 1950, the 'low-caste' Sikhs were the only non-Hindus to be included in the list of the Scheduled Castes, a status that was not granted to their counterparts in the other minority communities, that is, Muslims and Christians.⁵

At the empirical level, there are several reports and academic studies on the relatively lesser hold of caste on the social relationships among the Sikhs in particular and the Punjabis in general. Reporting on the problems of the 'low castes' in Punjab, one of the colonial administrators viewed it more in terms of politico-economic disabilities rather than in terms of their being 'untouchable', as was the case with the rest of India. A colonial government report, for example, observed in the 1920s:

It would be misleading to attach too great importance to the existence of caste in the Punjab ... Not only is it the case that the Brahman has no practical pre-eminence among Hindus, but as between 'caste' and 'non-caste' Hindus the distinction is not so strongly marked as to create the political problem found elsewhere in India ... The Problem in truth, if one exists, is rather of classes socially depressed than of 'out-castes' as such; while much remains to be done for the social uplift of some of these classes, they hardly present a separate political problem.

(Nayar 1966: 20)

Another British author, contrasting Punjab with rest of the subcontinent and comparing caste in Punjab with class in Europe, wrote that 'nowhere else in Hindu India does caste sit so lightly or approach so nearly to the social classes of Europe' (Anderson in Nayar 1966: 20). Some of the Western observers went to the extent of saying that the Punjab was a 'notable exception' to the caste system in India (O'Malley in Nayar 1966: 20).

Anthropologists have also made similar claims and have argued that caste inequalities in the region were much lesser than elsewhere in India. Comparing the disability experienced by the low caste in Punjab with the rest of India, Saberwal, who studied a small town of Punjab during the late 1960s, writes:

even if the Brahmins were able to carve a ceremonial place at Ranjit Singh's court for themselves, there is no evidence that they acquired much land or that they were able to enforce the social circumstances that they would have required for maintaining high levels of ritual purity; and therefore the lowest castes in Punjab had to carry only a light burden of ritual impurities, much lighter, physically and socially, than the burden elsewhere in India.

(Saberwal 1976: 7)

Joyce Pettigrew, another anthropologist, goes to the extent of saying that the rural society of Punjab differs radically from the Hindu India because of the absence of caste among the Sikhs (Pettigrew 1975: 4).

However, not everyone who has studied Punjab agrees with such a position. Paul Hershman, another anthropologist who carried out his fieldwork in a village near Jalandhar, for example, completely disagrees with the thesis that the ideas of purity and impurity did not exist in Punjab or that caste in the region functioned more like class.⁶ Contesting Pettigrew's claims on the absence of caste in Punjab, he writes: 'Pettigrew appears to argue from the premise of Sikh theology that there is no caste among the Sikhs, but this is manifestly not the case when one considers the relationships ... There are most certainly many caste divisions within the Sikh fold' (Hershman 1981: 21).

Most other students of Punjab studies would similarly agree that though the structure of hierarchy could be different when compared to other regions of India, caste divisions did exist among the Sikhs. To some extent pollution and avoidance were also practiced in the region particularly in relation to the ex-untouchable communities, listed as Scheduled Caste in the Indian legal system, both among the Hindus as well as among the Sikhs (Nayar 1966; Singh 1975; Singh, H. 1977; Saberwal 1976).

While recognizing that caste divisions existed among the Sikhs, the available literature also indicates that the change experienced in the attitudes towards caste during the last century has been quite significant in the region. Evidence for this is available from studies of individual villages or towns, as well as of the social reform movements for the uplift of the 'low castes'. Inder Pal Singh (1975, 1977), who did a study of a village near Amritsar during the late 1950s, provides a fairly good idea about the nature of caste relations in a Sikh village. The Sikhs living in the village were divided into two groups, the Sardars (the upper castes) and the Mazhabis (the lower-caste scavengers). The first group included the Jats, Kambohs, Tarkhans, Kumhars, Sunars and Nais (in the Hindu caste hierarchy, they would all be treated as Shudras and with the exception of Jats, they were perhaps all included in the list of the 'Other Backward Classes'). Though the agriculturist Jats considered themselves higher than the other groups in this category, Singh found no feeling of caste-based avoidance or prejudice among them. They visited each other's houses, interdined and attended marriage functions and celebrated most of the festivals together. In terms of the village settlement also, no demarcation existed in the houses of these groups.

However, the Mazhabis, who constituted nearly half of the village population in this study, were treated differently. They lived on one side of the village and had a separate well, while all the other castes used a common well. In the village feasts, where everyone was invited, the Mazhabis sat separately. Since many of them worked as labourers in the fields of the Jat landowners, the latter visited the houses of the Mazhabis but they did so as a patronizing gesture. There were also occasions where untouchability was either not practiced or its extent had been declining. Many Jats in the village let the Mazhabis enter their houses and did not consider their touch polluting. One of them had also employed a Mazhabi to clean utensils in his house. The practice of untouchability was less in religious affairs. There was only one *gurdwara* in the village where everyone was allowed entry and shared *langar* (community kitchen with eating together sitting in a row, institutionalized to decry caste distinction and untouchability). The custodian of the Guru Granth Sahib (*granthi*), who himself belonged to a low caste (Cheemba, washer-man), served all the castes without any discrimination. He had performed all the marriages in the villages irrespective of any caste distinction. This was quite in contrast to the Brahmin priest, who used to perform rituals for the Sikhs in the village until a *granthi* was appointed, but only served the upper-caste Sikhs (Singh 1977).

With the exception of Hershman's work, there would hardly be any study of rural Punjab that reports about the superiority of status enjoyed by Brahmins over the Jats (the landowning peasant caste) and the Khatris (mostly in trade and services). Brahmins themselves tended to concede such a framework of ranking (D'Souza 1967). Commenting on the lack of respect enjoyed by the Brahmins in Punjab, Saberwal quotes Chanana: 'In Punjabi the word *Pandat* (Pandit) denotes a Brahman and may connote some respect for the latter. But the word *Bahman* (Brahmin) almost always carries a little contempt' (as in Saberwal 1976: 10).

In his study of a small town of Punjab carried out during the late 1960s, Saberwal found a considerable change in attitude towards the traditional ideology of caste. As he writes, 'the conjunction of pressure from above with pressure from below had produced new cultural patterns, rejecting the ideas of inherited purity and pollution' (Saberwal 1973: 256).

Caste in Punjab today

In economic terms, Punjab has been among the more developed regions of India. Apart from being known as a land of the Sikhs, the region is also known as the food bowl of India. The introduction of Green Revolution technology during the 1960s and 1970s significantly raised agricultural productivity in the region. The process of economic growth also transformed the agrarian social structure and village life. Though conceptually, the Green Revolution was a 'caste-blind' programme of rural development, it ushered in various changes that had far reaching implications for the prevailing structure of social relations in rural Punjab. A gradual institutionalization of democratic politics has also had consequences for caste relations. The agrarian prosperity brought in by the new technology enabled land-owning Jats to emerge even more powerful in the regional politics of Punjab, and within the religious institutions of the Sikhs. This change also marginalized the urban upper castes within Sikh institutions and made other smaller caste communities virtually invisible in the state politics. The process of economic change also generated and sharpened the already existing schisms in Punjabi society. Caste became one such axis of social conflict and competition. Perhaps the most critical of these conflicts was between the dominant Jats and the Scheduled Caste or Dalits.

Punjab has the highest proportion of the Scheduled Castes among the states of India. As per the latest Census (2011) the 39 Scheduled Caste communities of Punjab make up nearly 31.9 per cent of the total population of the state, which is close to double the national average Scheduled Caste population. Notwithstanding the positive effect of Sikhism on the nature and practice of untouchability in the region, the Punjabi Dalits have been quite deprived. Even though they are mostly rural, less than 1 per cent of all the agricultural land is owned or operated by them. In an agrarian society control over land is very critical. Even though the Dalits of Punjab are less likely to be below the national-level poverty line, in relative terms their deprivation is quite stark, and in comparison to other communities, they stand far below.

Among other transformations in the Punjabi society, the change brought about by the Green Revolution also opened up new spaces for them to renegotiate their relations with the dominant castes and rural social structure, eventually leading to a near complete breakdown of the *jajmani* system, the traditional structure of patron–client relations that bound different caste together. Based on an extensive survey of 51 villages carried out in 1999–2000, Surinder Jodhka argues that these changes could be conceptualized through the categories of dissociation, distancing and autonomy (Jodhka 2002).

Due to their social and economic mobility and loosening of the traditional social order, a large majority of Dalits began to consciously dissociate themselves from traditional 'polluting' occupations that they were tied into. Surinder Jodhka's survey shows that some of these occupations

were no longer identified with any specific caste group in rural Punjab. For example, picking up of dead cattle became a completely commercialized enterprise. The local community now gave the work on contract to an individual contractor, who could even be from another village or a nearby town. Though most of those involved in this business belonged to 'low' castes, they were poor and often lived in towns. Similarly, some degree of commercialization had taken place in case of other low-caste occupations as well. Barbers, carpenters, blacksmiths, all had shops, and they came from a diversity of caste groups. Some of the barbers, for example, were the erstwhile scavengers. Relations of these shopkeepers with their clients were purely instrumental. The only 'unclean occupation', where a degree of continuity existed, was that of scavenging, but in this occupation the traditional structure of *jajmani* relations had almost been completely changed. The cleaning of drains and toilets or sweeping of the houses was mostly done on a commercial basis.

Agricultural land in Punjab has been almost exclusively owned by the dominant castes, Jats and Rajputs, for whom a large majority of Dalits work as labourers. Some Dalits also worked on long-term basis with the landowners. Though the traditional variety of attached labour, such as *sajhis* or *siris* (an arrangement that tied an indebted labourer with an employer landowner, often for life), has given way to more formalized relations, working on long-term basis with farmers still leads to relations of dependency and servitude.

Dalits obviously did not like getting into such arrangements and tried to withdraw from employment in agriculture, wherever they could. Their attempt to distance themselves from the local agrarian economy largely depended on the availability of alternative sources of employment. In the villages of Doaba, for example, the migrant labour from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar did much of the agricultural work. Local Dalits rarely liked working on land. They often preferred going out or bringing work home from neighbouring towns.

The 'low' caste Sikhs also invested in autonomizing their communities from the dominant caste-controlled village institutions. They had been working hard to build their own *gurdwaras* and community centres. Though in principle there are no restrictions on Dalits entering Sikh *gurdwaras*, caste prejudice at the local level seemed to work quite strongly. Dalits often felt that they were not really welcomed by the locally dominant castes in the village *gurdwaras*. Their children would be asked to come for the *langar* after everyone else had finished eating or they would be asked to sit in separate queues. In some cases, while the *gurdwara* management formally invited all the others, Dalits were not even informed about special programmes and festivities. Rarely were they allowed to participate in the cooking and serving of the *langar* in local *gurdwaras* (Jodhka 2002).

Other significant changes in caste relations in rural Punjab included the declining significance of segregated settlements; although with the growing population and a continual expansion of residential areas, the old settlement structure of the village had, to some extent, been diluted. As the newly prosperous upper castes made newer and bigger houses on the peripheries of the village, Dalit settlements no longer remained as isolated as they were before. There were also some interesting cases where upwardly mobile Dalits had purchased houses in upper-caste localities from those who had left the village for towns or had emigrated to the West.

While the intensity of these processes varied across sub-regions of Punjab, it was present almost everywhere. It was most clearly visible in the Doaba sub-region and relatively lesser in the Malwa. More importantly, distancing, distancing and autonomization also meant a near complete disintegration of the rural social structure and greater fragmentation of communities, which could also trigger inter community conflict more easily, unless the process of democratization was institutionalized (Jodhka 2004).

Although Sikh attitudes towards caste have been changing, the importance of caste continues to be visible in the context of marriage and the selections of spouses for the children within Sikh families. The guiding rules and principles of arranged Sikh marriages in Punjab have

traditionally presumed caste endogamy – the spouse is selected from within one’s own caste – and *got* or sub-caste exogamy – the spouse should belong to another clan or descent group than one’s mother’s and father’s. Basic kinship conventions have presumed patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence in times of marriage when the bride is expected to move into the household of her husband and in-laws (Myrvold 2004). The impact of migration, mobility and social changes during the twentieth century has certainly transformed many attitudes towards marriage with regard to caste, gender and ethnicity as the Sikhs have become embedded in more transnational networks of families. Premarital relationships are often approved and can be transformed into arranged marriages if the education, the caste identity and the financial position of the spouse is considered appropriate by the family. Many religious propagandists in Sikhism vividly support caste abolition and hypergamous practices on ideological grounds, with reference to the casteless *Khalsa* community, and sometimes go in between marriage arrangements to negotiate inter-caste between families (Myrvold 2007: 56). Studies on the Sikhs in the diaspora have illustrated that the traditional marriage customs of caste endogamy and lineages exogamy are generally preserved after migration, and have become important sites for negotiating and encouraging sustained migration among the Sikhs (Bertolani 2012; Mand 2002; Mooney 2006). Thus, caste remains an important social category for Sikhs in India and overseas especially when arranging marriages but is negotiated and redefined to suit new needs and conditions.

Caste practices beyond Punjab

With migration and an increasing number of Sikhs settling in the diaspora, caste identities and caste politics in India have not vanished but rather been reinforced in face of new challenges and situations far away from the homeland of Punjab. When Sewa Singh Kalsi conducted a study of the Sikhs in Bradford and Leeds in the 1980s he concluded that, despite the rejection of caste in Sikhism, the Sikh communities in the UK were organized around caste (such as Jats, Ramgarhias, Bhatras, Jhirs, Julahas and others) and caste differences and solidarity proved to be persistent in the diasporic situation (Kalsi 1989). One reason behind this is that the Sikh settlement in the UK and in many other countries has been caste based from its very beginning. As Eleanor Nesbitt reports with regard to British Sikhs, their successive phases of migration ‘largely correspond to the social and hereditary (caste, that is, *zat*) groupings, which constitute the structural diversity of the ‘Sikh community’ (Nesbitt 2011: 225–226). The migration experiences among the Sikhs in France and Spain, for instance, have similarly been shaped by caste identities and even sharpened caste differences that existed in the Punjab (Lum 2011; Moliner 2011). Caste membership of the Sikhs has turned out to be a firm base for strong transnational links and solidary networks that presume mutual obligation and reciprocity. As Christine Moliner writes with reference to caste-based solidary networks among the Sikhs in France:

Those networks operate as a socio-cultural resource helping migrants to adapt to their new environments. More specifically, in the case of prospective migrants to France, it helps them to finance their trip (through loans from family members settled abroad) and then to settle, find jobs and housing, adjust their migration strategy to evolving European immigration policies, secure access to smugglers and sometimes to resettle elsewhere.

(Moliner 2011: 176)

Given that Sikh identification on the operational level remains dependent on many different social and cultural components, including caste and clan, the diasporic Sikh communities are diverse and have in many countries created caste-based *gurdwaras* and congregations that have

caused both tensions and solidarity within the community. Although the larger part of the approximately 400 *gurdwaras* in Europe (around 300 in the UK and 100 in continental Europe) are inter-caste places of worship, open to all, the growing number of caste-based *gurdwaras* especially in the UK and Southern Europe indicates the continued relevance of caste in the construction of religious identity and social worlds (Lum 2011; Moliner 2011). In more recent years, caste differences and community consciousness have been sharpened among the diasporic Sikh in some countries. After the so-called 'Vienna incident' in 2009, when one of the leaders of the Ravidasia movement was killed on a tour in Europe, many of the Sikh Chamars in Spain strongly accentuated their Ravidasia identity separate from other Sikhs. Before they had identified themselves as both Sikhs and Ravidasias, but after this incident they removed the Guru Granth Sahib from their *gurdwara* and replaced it with a holy book containing only poetry of their saint Ravidas (Jodhka 2009b; Lum 2010, 2011).

Based on field studies among the Sikhs in the UK, Eleanor Nesbitt has pointed out the discrepancies that exist between the lived reality of Sikhs and textbook representations of Sikhism with regard to attitudes towards different religious and social categories, including caste (Nesbitt 2000, 2004). Nesbitt suggests that the diversity in terms of caste, religious grouping, generation and other categories that occasionally create tension in the Sikh community can be conceptualized as a triangle with three sides that 'pulls towards and away from *panjabiat* (traditional norms of Punjabi society), *sikhi* (the values enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib plus the discipline formulated in the *Sikh Rahit Maryada*) and, thirdly, 'modernity/Western society/globalization' (Nesbitt 2011: 236). Individuals may experience conflicts and conformity between *sikhi*, *panjabiat* and modernity as well as various types of pulls between the three in different contexts and life stages.

Using the metaphorical triangle with the three sides of *sikhi*, *panjabiat* and modernity, one can see how caste is played out in the lives of Sikhs and may create quite different experiences of social relationships and subject formations. As Nesbitt reports from her study in Nottingham, young women belonging to the Bhatra caste were expected to leave school and marry early, while their Jat and Ramgarhia counterparts were instead encouraged to pursue higher education. Whereas the Jat and Ramgarhia women were expected to get paid work sometimes away from home, the Bhatra women were only allowed earnings from work in the home. This, in turn, contributed to caste-based stereotypes and prejudices between the different groups (Nesbitt 2011: 238). Depending upon the situational context Sikh families in India and beyond may identify with and draw on both Sikh and Punjabi values and choose different strategies to map caste onto the triangle of *sikhi*, *panjabiat* and modernity. The Sikh interpretations of caste will therefore be multiple and diverse, and contrast stereotypical images of Sikhism and the Sikhs in public representations.

Concluding remarks

With the strong emphasis on equality in the Sikh teaching and practices one could presume that social categories such as caste would not be significant issues in contemporary Sikh communities. Even when hierarchy was seen as a natural mode of organizing social relations in history, the Sikh gurus preached equality of caste. However, as this chapter has illustrated the category of caste continues to present challenges to Sikhism even as the Sikhs generally consider their religion a modern faith, emphasize the gurus' teaching on equality, and have migrated to settle in different locations around the world. In a sociological study of Sikhism in rural Punjab, Clarence O. McMullen made this obvious tension a theoretical starting point when he compared people's beliefs and practices with normative standards. In his analyses he found it necessary to make a distinction between the normative level and the operative level of religion, the former being beliefs and practices 'which are officially stated and prescribed or proscribed by the recognized

religious authority, which can be a person, organization or an official statement' and the latter being beliefs and practices 'actually held by people' (McMullen 1989: 5). Academic studies that attempt to conceptualize the divide between the Sikh egalitarian ideology and Sikh practices of caste could follow a similar model and explain the tension as some sort of contradiction between ideology and normative behaviours and the social practices and operative behaviours. Although, as this chapter has shown, the issue can be far more complex since caste can be used for negotiating religious identity, political rights and social change and is given different significances depending upon the historical and situational contexts. In scholarship on Sikhism, caste has been a somewhat marginalized area of study, partly because of the dominant discourse of the religion's egalitarianism. More studies are required that investigate the dynamics and challenges of caste discourses and practices in different settings and especially how the Sikhs resolve the tension between the ideological foundation in the gurus' teaching and the relevance of caste in the social, religious and cultural practices of the Sikhs.

Notwithstanding their small numbers, the Sikhs are often seen in India as being a part of the national mainstream, relatively better off than others. This is perhaps partly to do with the fact that despite their demographic minority, the Sikh elite ruled over the region during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and subsequently the Sikh elite was also accommodated within the colonial system. The inclusion of some Sikh caste groups into the martial communities and recognition and promotion of their privileges in the local agrarian economy during the colonial rule further helped the Jat Sikh elite to consolidate its position in the regional politics and economics. It was this position of privilege that enabled the Sikhs to be pioneer migrants and spread to different parts of the world.

Notes

- 1 According to a recent estimate they make for only around 0.38 per cent of the total world population, a little more than Jews (0.23 per cent) (www.sikhwomen.com/facts/population.htm, accessed 10 October 2007). Another estimate puts this figure at 0.39 per cent (www.oxfordsikhs.com/SikhAwareness/Sikh-Population-Around-The-World_159.aspx, accessed 6 June 2013).
- 2 Even though in proportional terms, the numbers of Sikhs everywhere are small, they are often concentrated in a few pockets, which makes them a socially and politically important community in the local context. There is no exact data available on the number of Sikhs living outside India, but the rough estimates puts it somewhere around 1.5 to 2 million. Given that many of the men wear turbans and beards, their distinctiveness is quite literal.
- 3 Nayar reports that this 'concession was achieved in return for an agreement by the Sikh leaders that no further political demands would be made in the future on behalf of the Sikh community' (Nayar 1966: 238).
- 4 As K. Singh writes, 'The sub-castes excluded from the schedule showed little reluctance in abandoning the Khalsa (Sikh) tradition and declaring themselves Hindus in order to claim benefits' (Singh, K. 1966: 304).
- 5 Even the Buddhists and Jains were not considered for such a status. It was only in 1991 that the neo-Buddhist converts began to be registered as Scheduled Castes.
- 6 It may be relevant to mention here that the village where Paul Hershman did his fieldwork was surely not a typical village of Punjab. As mentioned above, rural population of the state is largely Sikh while his study village had a majority population of Hindu households. His village had as many as 40 Brahmins households and almost the entire Scheduled Caste households were reported as Hindus.

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Missions, states and religious competition

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Catholicism in India

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Christianity in India has a long, complex and varied history. It accounts for 24,080,016 or 2.3 percent of the total population¹ and is the second largest minority religion in India. Two-thirds of this population is Roman Catholic and almost 14 million Christians are Dalits² (Mosse 2012: ix; Michael 2010: 52). Although, the census uses the umbrella term Christian to denote the population, there are numerous sects within Christianity including Roman Catholics, Syrian Christians and several Evangelical and Protestant sects. Each has its own lineage, history and legends (Frykenberg 2008: x). Christian population centers are Goa, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Arunachal Pradesh and the Union Territories of Pondicherry and Daman and Diu (Robinson 2003).

In recent years, the rhetoric and violence³ of a muscular Hindu nationalism have attempted simultaneously to “minoritize” and make foreign both Christianity and Islam in opposition to an ideal Hindu nation (Prakash 2006: 178). This reactive nationalism reduces Christianity and Christians to agents of colonialism, whereas the complex history of it is intimately connected to the formation of nation-states in both India and Britain (Viswanathan 1998). The effects of Christianity as a “civilizing project” were the institutional and infrastructural development of education, healthcare and pastoral care in creating citizens in India (Frykenberg 2008; Viswanathan 1998, 2006; Zupanov 2009). Education remains the primary mode of creating ideal citizenship in post-colonial India.

Contemporary scholarship holds that abstract, monolithic categories such as Christianity and Hinduism trace their history to colonial modes of governmentality, or control of colonized population through census categorization and the separation of customary code from political citizenship (Sarkar 2006: 358). The literature on Christianity has departed from an earlier preoccupation with conversion and the paradox of syncretism to an approach that takes into account plural practices of Christianity in India, characterized simultaneously by continuity, discontinuity, rupture and change. Christianity consists of historically contingent practices enacted by adherents differently in different contexts. Common across these works is recognition that Christianity in India cannot be understood without taking account of historical conditions and regional/local variation. In particular, the history of Christianity is closely tied with the history of Dalits, caste and caste discrimination. For Dalits, Christianity provided a language to escape caste hierarchy through education, a theology based on equality and the separation of caste as

a civil code from personal salvation; ironically, at the same time it also propagated, reiterated and reconfigured caste hierarchies and discrimination within its institutional practices.

Christianity in India was also influenced to a great extent by the history of Christianity in Europe, the individual trajectories of colonial empires and the rise of Islam in Europe and Asia. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation movements and the formation of nation-states among European empires greatly affected the mode, mood and form of Christianity in India. More importantly, the difference in attitude of various colonial regimes within India also played a role in determining the meaning and form taken up by Christianity in India: the missionary empire of the early Portuguese was very different from the commercial hands-off approach of the East India Company and the secular nationalist nature of the later British Raj. For these reasons, a perspective on Christianity only as the force of the colonizers on passive natives or as a local phenomenon undermines its long history in the sub-continent. Christianity cannot be characterized exclusively by foreignness, indigeneity or syncretic exchange (Frykenberg 2008; van der Veer 2001; Viswanathan 1998).

Catholic missionaries in India

Some Indian Christians trace their origins to the mission of St Thomas in AD 52. Subsequent Christianity – like Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Islam – was the result of commerce and trade routes to India, via sea and by land. Catholicism first came to India with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498, and since then several waves of missionaries have entered various parts of India. As we shall see, historical precedence manifests within the Church as an internal caste system. The arrival of the Portuguese in India was preceded by a series of events in Europe that determined the militant nature of the Portuguese colony.⁴ The first journey to India by Vasco da Gama was followed by the arrival of Pedro Alvares Cabral in 1500. Within a decade, Portuguese had created fortresses and enclaves in the ports of Cochin and Goa. Goa became the center of Portuguese rule. In 1509, Affonso de Albuquerque was made the governor of the Estado da India. Although the Portuguese presence was strong in these ports and they had developed alliances with Arab and Moor merchants and local rulers, they were few in numbers and their strength was restricted to the sea. In Kerala, the Portuguese forged alliances with the pre-existing Christian community to access the spice trade and establish their trading empire (Bayly 1989; Frykenberg 2008; Neill 1984).

Unlike that of their Dutch, Danish and English counterparts, Portuguese trade was a royal enterprise based on a monopoly granted by the Papal authority in Rome to “invade, conquer, subject and rule territories of the unbelievers” (Neill 1984: 111). The title of *Padroado* conferred upon the Portuguese colony by Rome enabled them to trade with unbelievers, even Arabs and Moors, and to establish churches, monasteries and install missionaries of various orders in its territories. They actively proselytized “subjects” of their new territories. First came the Franciscans, followed by the Dominicans.⁵ The first vicar general under the *Padroado* was established in 1514 in Cochin and the first diocese was set up in Goa in 1534. The establishment of enclaves in Goa, Daman and Diu, Mumbai, Cochin and Mylapore enabled the clerics to increase their aggressive proselytization (Frykenberg 2008; Neill 1984).

The missionaries were plagued by internal rifts among their orders and with secular clergy. The arrival of Jesuits in 1540 added to this rivalry but they soon replaced the Franciscans. The lack of delineation of authority also meant that vicar generals, bishops and archbishops exercised a great amount of power. Stephen Neill characterizes the Portuguese mode of conversion as not just aggressive but as a mode of ‘enticing’ its converts with promises of trust and profit while re-creating familiar surroundings in Church (1984: 130). This was combined with more aggressive

tactics of destruction of Hindu temples and redirecting temples' revenues to mission activities with the promise of establishing for the locals a confraternity and a college (Neill 1984: 132).⁶ The complex struggle within Europe among Spain, Portugal and Rome affected mission expeditions to India. High mortality and poor retention of officials resulted in many empty ecclesiastical posts (Neil 1984: 96–97). Weakness in this respect probably explains the ceding of clerical rights to locals by the *Padroado* before others.

The Jesuits and Franciscans spread their missions to Agra and Delhi Sultanate during the reign of Akbar, and in the south to Vijayanagara, and Nayakas in Cinji, Madurai and Thanjavur (Frykenberg 2008: 137). Accounts attest to the presence Jesuits in Akbar's courts, who after failing in their attempt to convert the Mughals shifted their interest to the "non-elites" (Powell 2009: 85). The strategic allegiance to the king of Portugal and the conversion of Paravas (or Bharathas as they referred to themselves) to Christianity along the Coromandal coast was probably the first form of mass conversion under the Portuguese, who were soon joined by the Mukkuvars of Travancore. These groups of the lower castes were to play a significant role in Catholicism in the later centuries (Frykenberg 2008; Neill 1984).

The entry of the fisher folk or Paravas into the Christian fold was only nominal until the arrival of Francis Xavier in 1542. The work of Francis among the poor, needy and the out-caste gave him a far-reaching reputation. He lived with the Paravas at the village Manappādu, translating documents into Tamil and getting illiterate Christians to memorize Christian prayers. The Paravas would go on to adopt his legacy into their Christian identity. This group in their devotion and festivities showed great affinity to Hindu traditions of the goddess Mahadevi, evident in the building of the Great Church of the Virgin Lady of the Snow with a festival parading the adorned idol mounted on a car. This church and the festivity would later become a point of contention between the *Padroado* and the Jesuits (Ballhatchet 1998; Frykenberg 2008; Neill 1984). The Jesuit brother, Robert Nobili, contrasted with Francis and had a lasting influence on later Catholic missionaries in the south. In line with many of his contemporaries, he considered Europeans superior to their colonial subjects. However, incompatibility of the Portuguese lifestyle with Indian customs and the inability of the Portuguese to attract upper-caste Hindus led him to pursue a lifestyle he deemed acceptable to high-caste Hindus. To this end, he adopted the mannerisms of a *sannyāsi*, observing the purities of the Brahmanical caste. This strategy led him to conversion of many upper-caste Hindus in Madurai and was to become the iconic lifestyle of Jesuits in the following centuries (Neill 1984).

Several events occurred in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that led to the fall of the Portuguese empire. Rome weakened the Portuguese *Padroado* through reform programs. Moreover, by the mid-seventeenth century, the Dutch had advanced their operations from Colombo to the Coromandal coast into the Portuguese territory in Malabar. Although the Dutch were interested only in commerce and not territory acquisition, they did attempt to surround and immobilize the Portuguese. The British, with similar interests, entered north and northwestern India through the Mughal Empire. The period was tumultuous for Catholic missionaries in the Mughal regions as Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb were less inclined than Akbar to tolerate them. The rise of the Marathas and Tipu Sultan in the late seventeenth century to the south further complicated missionary work. Furthermore, the withdrawal of Jesuit missions from India, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars created a lacuna in the Indian clergy. Finally, Catholicism was faced with the rise of Evangelicals from the beginning of the eighteenth century, who apart from their conversions built educational institutions and worked toward the advance of lower-caste communities along the western and eastern coasts (Ballhatchet 1998; Frykenberg 2008).

The *Sacra Congregation de Propaganda Fide* in 1622 issued by Pope Gregory XV was an attempt to establish indigenous Catholic organizations outside the control of the *Padroado*. Capuchins and Carmelites were ordained in place of Jesuits and Portuguese clergy in Madras, Dutch Cochin and Bombay (Frykenberg 2008: 347–349). By this period, many of the clergy working for *Padroado* were natives, who saw this move as a threat to their existence.⁷ The Catholic Church from its inception in India had a preference for European clergy and an attitude of appeasing upper-caste converts at the expense of their lower-caste counterparts. Nevertheless, the *Propaganda Fide* was an attempt to incorporate natives into the clergy and proposed the inclusive rule that all Christians regardless of their caste should gather, hear the Mass and take communion together. However, this goal was never achieved, due in part to the racial bias of the missionaries.

This “dyarchy” (Frykenberg 2008: 349) between *Padroado* and *Propaganda* created by the appointment of the vicar apostolic in India led to a tussle for supremacy. The *Propaganda* succeeded in establishing the vicar apostolic in Portugal’s territories and had the support of the British. The *Multa praeclare* in 1838 passed by Pope Gregory XVI, whereby all dioceses were to come under the control of Rome, was a countermeasure to the 1642 law of the Portuguese king, disallowing papal appointments in Portuguese territory without the ratification of the Crown. What neither the *Padroado* nor the *Propaganda* could control were the multiple uses the parishioners, local clergies and laity applied to these dictates (Ballhatchet 1998; Frykenberg 2008). Ballhatchet (1998) discusses how caste conflicts and rivalries within Bombay, Kerala and Tamil Nadu played upon the existence of this dyarchy to shift from one aegis to the other in the occasion of dissent or dissatisfaction.

Two factors played an important role within local caste and class conflicts. First, the hands-off approach of the East India Company and later the secular nationalistic nature of the Crown allowed for a platform where grievances of parishioners and church conflicts could be addressed. The British alliance with Portugal and its acceptance of Papal authority placed it strategically as a neutral agent addressing issues of the Catholic Church. The Company used the Protestant method of majority opinion among parishioners to decide cases of conflict and dissatisfaction with clergy. In fact, until 1833, when the East India Company charter was renewed, the company was supportive of Catholic missionaries and dependent on local power structures dominated by caste Hindus. For the same reasons, it was only in the nineteenth century when Britain came under the pressure of Anglican missionaries that British colonials were forced to allow entry to Anglican and non-British missionaries (Ballhatchet 1998: 13–15; Frykenberg 2008: 222–30; Viswanathan 1998: 4–6). Second, unlike the Evangelicals who condemned caste, the Catholic missionaries had mixed approaches to caste, which often leaned toward reconciliatory measures favoring the upper-caste. With the suppression of the Jesuit mission and the Papal Bull of 1744 condemning their accommodative practices, the influx of Anglican missionaries created a formidable opposition to the Catholic missionaries that remained in India in 1830s and 1850s.⁸ Thus, it was not until late nineteenth century when a shift occurred toward inclusion of lower-caste and out-castes. The return of Jesuits to the Madurai mission in 1838 worked a long way in consolidating and spreading Roman Catholicism. However, they also carried on the tradition of Robert Nobili in Madurai, which worked to exacerbate existing tensions between Vellalas, Nadars (Shanars) and Paravas of the Coromandal coast. Unlike lower-caste communities in Goa and Bombay, the Paravas, Mukkuvars and Pariahs of the western and eastern coast preferred the reign of the *Padroado* to the caste-ist outlook of the *Propaganda* (Ballhatchet 1998; Frykenberg 2008).

Although the Papacy had authorized common mass in 1744 and incorporation of a new seminary to train local clergy in 1630, the racial and caste preference of local priests ensured

a method of circumventing of rules via building church structures that provided separate entrances for different caste groups. The rising socio-economic and political power of Paravas, who considered themselves the descendants of Francis Xavier but whom the Jesuits considered unruly, and the Nadars (Shanars) led to bitter strife with the dominant caste of Vellalas in Tamil Nadu over issues such as church properties, access to church buildings, training of clergy in common seminaries and festivals. The Paravas came under the jurisdiction of the *Padroado*, to the utter dismay of the Jesuits. A similar strife occurred in Kerala with the Carmelites and the fishing community of Mukkuvars. This resulted in a schism of diocese and of seminaries to Alleppey and Cochin in 1852. A similar conflict in Bombay led to the lower caste aligning with the vicar apostolic of Bombay, Pie'tro d'Alcantara, instead of the *Padroado*, which favored the Goan elites. Carmelite conflicts in Bombay led to their replacement by German Jesuits and Capuchins. In the aftermath of 1857 mutiny and withdrawal of Capuchins, the northern and southern headquarters of Bombay and Pune came under the jurisdiction of the German Jesuits (Ballhatchet 1998).

The ongoing caste and class conflicts and conflicts of authority between native and European, as well as Portuguese and Papal clergies ultimately led to the bull of 1885 by Pope Leo XIII, *Humanae Salutis*, authorizing the training of local clergy. Thus by 1886, a full hierarchy of Roman Catholicism was in place with 17 ecclesiastical sees under the *Propaganda* and the Archdiocese of Goa and Mylapore under the *Padroado*. Six new archdioceses were organized in Agra, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Pondicherry and Verapoly. Seminaries were built to train local clergy with a Papal seminary in Kandy (moved to Pune in 1950) (Frykenberg 2008). A similar resolution was brought about between the *Propaganda* and the Thomas Christians in Kerala with the separation of Syrian from Latin rite and the ordaining of three local vicars apostolic in Cochin, Thrissur and Kottayam. The Syrian Catholic churches were to become the second largest Eastern Catholic Church in the world by the twentieth century. A well-organized structure was in place in the twenty-first century, including 16 million Catholics whose churches do not come under Vatican authority (Frykenberg 2008: 375–6).

Meanwhile, the Portuguese had encountered the Thomas Christians when they came in search of “Christians and spices” to the kingdom of Zamorin in Calicut. In 1503, the Thomas Christians, headed by Mar Jacob, the *metran* of Angamali, extended an alliance to the Pfarangi Admiral of Portuguese, Alvarez Cabral.⁹ It lasted for the duration of the 50 years until the death of Mar Jacob. The rift between the two groups started with the establishment of Estado da India in Goa in 1510. There were several reasons for the rift. Neither group approved of the other's practices, rites or lifestyle. The Portuguese need for control and proselytizing did not sit well with the Thomas Christians who considered themselves upper caste and exclusively endogamous. By 1590, the rift had come out into the open with the Portuguese attempting not only to control the appointment of clergy, which went against the Nestorian practices of installing *metran* delegated by the patriarch of the Church of the East, but also trying to replace the Syrian rites with those of the Latin church. The refusal of the later *metran* to ordain students taught in the Jesuit seminary was the final breaking point for the *Padroado*, the Franciscans and the Jesuits. The archbishop of Goa appointed Archdeacon George of the Cross to replace Mar Abraham. In 1599, the famous “Synod of Diamper” (Udayamperur) was convened by the archdeacon to undermine the Syrian practices and to replace it with the doctrines and ecclesiology of Rome. This event created a schism among Thomas Christians, some siding with the archdeacon, while others split to form their own church with the first appointment of a native archbishop. The appointment of the new archbishop followed the solemn of oath at the “Koon Cross” in Mattancheri on 22 May 1653 by kattanars (Thomas Christian clergies), never to be led by the Portuguese or their rites (Frykenberg 2008: 132–6).

Christianity in India has had more ramifications than the conversion of various groups of people or their varied practices. The British colonial presence in India shaped the secular nature of the state in Britain and this in turn shaped the formation of the Indian nation-state. The British state in the post-Reformation era was simultaneously organized by opposition within Britain to enfranchisement of Catholics and Jews, and externally by opposition of the colonial state to the colonized. Secular educational, administrative and juridico-legal systems went a long way into shaping the nationalist movement within India as well as to the solidification of Hinduism as a religion *vis-à-vis* the Christianity of the colonial state. Two of the most important additions were the administrative enumeration via census of the colonized population and the separation of political from customary domains within the legal system. However, secular liberal ideology was first carried to India not by the British as much as by the Evangelical missionaries, providing a new language of transcendence and salvation, and universality and equality within India (Sarkar 2006; van der Veer 2001; Viswanathan 1998). The vast institutional infrastructure built by the Portuguese and Dutch especially in the form of schools, shelter homes, hospital and churches paved way for many to stave off existing hierarchies and imagine a new future. The educational facilities generated the Anglicized Indian elite and the newly converted, who fought against colonialism, Church authorities and caste discrimination.

In light of this history, Mosse's (2012: ix) definition of Christianity in India as a "fragmented, complex mosaic" seems apt. Catholicism, introduced by different agents, has had a different impact on the locality where it took root. Some of main points to note in this regard are: (1) competition that existed between Protestant missionaries and Catholic missionaries in the post-Reformation era, (2) the different approaches both sects used to accommodate the local converted population, political authorities and caste groups, (3) the internal strife that existed between groups of missionaries and colonial forces within Catholicism between *Padroado Real* and *Propaganda Fide* and between Jesuits, Carmelites Capuchins etc. and (4) lastly the preferential treatment accorded by British colonial forces first to the Catholics and then to the Anglican missionaries.

Catholic practices in India

The abundance of studies in southern India reflects the lively history of Christianity there, and contrasts with Schmalz's (1998) statement that Christianity in the north is "unstable," characterized by a proliferation of missionaries and very few converts. In the northern regions Christianity accounts for half of 1 percent of the population, among whom half are Roman Catholics (Schmalz 1998: 6–7). David Mosse (2012) makes an important and tangible distinction between Catholicism and Protestantism in India, emphasizing Catholicism's embrace of exuberant popular festivals and public rituals. Catholicism differed from Evangelicalism and other forms of Protestantism in its rationalization, secularization and accommodation of the Brahminical order, epitomized in literature in the figure of Jesuit missionary, Robert Nobili, in contrast to the latter's complete rejection of the caste hierarchy (ibid.). Whereas Protestant missionaries promoted a "transcendent faith" (ibid.: 10) beyond the materiality of the world, their Catholic counterparts relied on both transcendence and immanence. Immanence was materialized in objects of faith, such as images and object; continuity with existing beliefs was maintained through the "hollowing out" of meaning of existing sacred objects or by replacing them with other materialized forms of sacred of the Christian theology (ibid.: 4). Both forms of Christianity asserted an interiority, epitomized by personal sin and salvation, but unlike Protestantism's "disenchantment" and arduous personal endurance, Catholicism allowed for mediation (e.g. confession). The anthropological enchantment can be captured in the immanent materiality that lends itself to analysis.

Thus, there existed exorcists and healers among Jesuit missionaries and immanent transferable power within substances (Eucharist), words and figures of saints that could be passed along through ritual practices (Mosse 2012: 10–13; Zupanov 2009).

The anthropological literature has drawn from a varied analytical toolkit to understand and study Christianity in India. Mathew Schmalz (2011) describes four anthropological modes of studying the “Indianness” of Christianity: morphology, symbols, syncretism and identity. Morphology was the trope used by missionaries to contrast Christianity with traditions existing within India. Thus while Protestants viewed India as “pre-Christian,” the Catholics viewed Indian traditions as “proto-Christian” (ibid.: 279). Symbols have been used as a “linguistic shorthand” that organizes affect and dispositions (ibid.: 280). Syncretism studies the formation of a hybrid from two distinct traditions and presumes the existence of well-formed wholes merging.¹⁰ Morphology, symbolism and syncretism are powerful tools for analyzing Christianity but they can presume, according to Schmalz, stable binaries and hierarchies and cannot fully capture the “ruptures and discontinuity” that constitute Indian Christianity (ibid.: 283). Studies on identity have focused on individual charismatic figures in opposition to ecclesiastical authority and have focused on blurring of boundaries and affiliations formed between these figures and those who benefit from their charisma. Selfhood is often predicated on other concepts such as conversion, caste and gender to open the contours of experience of Christians in India. Here, the concepts straddle local political contexts, caste affiliations and legal and political systems that are instantiated in the experience and subjectivities of Christians. More importantly, Christian concepts and practices sometimes displaced, constructed and reconstituted existing structures of power (Schmalz 2011).

A common theme of current anthropological studies is to deemphasize the uniqueness of Christianity in India in favor of describing how converts in various settings strategically use the religious rhetoric of salvation and faith to assert their identity, consolidate ritual positions, or forge relationships *vis-à-vis* powerful others including caste Hindus, colonial discourses or the Indian nation-state. Anthropological literature achieves this by looking at tropes of practice that involve symbols, saint cults, festivals, healing, and exorcism. Although, contrary to the assertion of Evangelicals and Protestants, Christianity has not transcended the caste system but in some cases reproduced both old forms and created new forms of discrimination, it has also created openings for a new discourse that is future-oriented, transformative, secular, and critical of the existing caste exploitation. We briefly examine this thematic with respect to festivals, saint cults, lifecycle rituals and healing.

Festivals

The colorful display of chariot processions, a common theme of festivals in both urban and rural regions of Tamil Nadu, is the site of the continuity, discontinuity and ambivalence for Christian converts. It speaks to the “shared religious sensibility” of Tamils, whereby Hindus celebrate festivals of goddesses such as Mahalakshmi or the more marginal and fierce goddess Mariyamman in a similar fashion (Waghorne 2002: 11–12, 16). The chariot festival celebrating the resurrection of Christ shows signs of continuity but it is also a practice that dates back to the eighteenth century with approval from the Vatican. The continuity lies not in theology but in the details and modes of celebration. Here, Christ is carried in a wooden chariot led by St Michael and Mother Mary as Queen of Heaven.¹¹ However, the festival celebrating the birthday of Mother Mary at suburban Besant Nagar, near Chennai, is characterized more by institutional practices such as confessions and Mass. The procession uses a palanquin to carry the Virgin around the streets. While continuity exists in the use of “mixed metaphors” like the *tali* (a thread signifying the marital bonds) or in the thriving markets during festivals selling devotees offerings, festivals

have also in recent years become sites for reiterating religious identity in a secular public sphere (30–1). Waghorne (2002) observes that festivals with their large gatherings also become avenues for political mobilizing around vote-banks. Diane Mines (2002) details the interdependent function of various caste groups during Hindu village festivities.¹² Privilege and hierarchy of the caste order mark these functions where procession routes are determined by caste settlements. Mosse's (2012) comprehensive study of Roman Catholicism in the village life of Alapuram, in Ramnad district of North Tamil Nadu, points to similar themes in Christian festivals. Here the festivals of the saints and the Virgin, which in the early twentieth century reflected the caste hierarchy and interdependent service based on this hierarchy, have in recent decades become sites of violence and conflict among castes and the venue for the demanding of rights and equality and asserting Dalit identity. The festivals of Santiyakappar (St James), St Sebastian, and the Virgin Mary, which once were a venue of the thriving continuum between Tamil religious domains, have become purified to denote a Christian identity in opposition to a rising tide of Hindu nationalism. The 1969 takeover of the Lurtumata festival by Pallar youth was an act of appropriation transforming earlier expressions of hierarchy into assertions of struggle and innovation (Mosse 2012: 160). Thus, Pallars of Tamil Nadu distance themselves from the caste Hindus as well as the lower caste of Paraiyars, while higher-caste converts have taken refuge in the rising Hindutva movements. Waghorne (2002) points to the creation of the church of Our Lady of Health in Velankanni, Tanjore, by the missionaries as a way to combat the rising cult worship of Our Lady of Snow by Paravars in Tuticorin.

Schmalz's (2005) study of marginality among Untouchable Camārs of Rampur village, Uttar Pradesh, uses De Certeau's (1998) concepts of space (undefined, fluctuating) and place (defined, stable). Dalit Christians in Uttar Pradesh form a minority at the margins of caste Hindu society, displaced from state categories as well as from traditional caste exchanges within the village. Schmalz draws attention to ritual spaces where these forms of marginality are negotiated, such as the celebration of Holi when, despite restrictions as Christians, Lacchan and Ajay attend and use the carnival space to subvert caste hierarchies through acts of rage and abuse of upper-caste politicians (Schmalz 2005: 246–7). Robinson's (1998) study of Catholicism in the village of Santosagaon in Goa highlights a similar scenario. The history of Goa is one of sustained influence by the Portuguese. Although the Church no longer shows overt signs of caste distinction, such as in seating, its persistence is exhibited in festivals. Thus while the traditional *gauncari/communidade* system¹³ (the patrilineal community ownership of land by upper-caste settlers since the sixteenth century) was effectively dismantled by the Portuguese, and while Goa was effectively integrated into India with the opening up of labor markets, the remains of the system are exhibited in rituals and festivals of the Church. Today, the Chardos and Shudras, who constitute the Catholic community in Santosagaon, are further divided as major and minor co-fraternities for Church activities. The feasts of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour and St Sebastian are organized by the major and minor respectively. They are marked symbolically by the wearing of different colored capes and ritually insofar as the major fraternity carries the cross, while the minor follows carrying the image of Mary. This division of labor among caste groups has become the source of conflict. In several other contexts, such conflict has led to increased secularization of Church festivals in opposition to the representation of caste hierarchy in the ritual structure of the festivals.

Cult of the saints and the Virgin Mother

Saints such as St James and St Michael have replaced indigenous gods catering to the “pragmatic” needs of the people (Mosse 2012: 65), such that they have in time attained some of the ambivalent

qualities extolled in village deities. The not-so-smooth transition is evident in the processing of “othering” that occurred among deities. The Virgin became the symbol of purity and conjugality, with a cooling effect in opposition to the violent, punitive ambivalent male saints and the traditional female deities represented as temperamental virgins that had qualities of heat (Mosse 2012: 80–5). Corinne Dempsey’s (2002) work among Kerala Christians attempts to blur religious boundaries and provide an alternative to “dehistoricized” accounts of religions (2002: 134) by using the figures of saints healers and miracle workers. She illustrates the loose affinities formed among saints and healers regardless of the religious affiliation of seeker/receivers of boons, defying the categories imposed by Church authorities. In Peroor, Kerala, devotion to Mattasmuni, a Jewish woman from Iraq martyred for her faith, uses symbols and idioms of Judaism in a Christian adaptation. While church authorities seek to adopt her as a precursor to Christ, the worship of the saint by locals and the miracle performed by her transgress boundaries of sectarianism and religion. Similarly, at St George Jacobite Church, Ernakulam, adherents of the highly popular and “flawed saint” Katamattattachan use his association with demons and magic to heal (Dempsey 2002: 123). His proximity to Hindu myths and folklore make him an extremely contested figure within the Church but his ambivalent position underpins his popularity. Sr. Alphonsa, by contrast, exemplifies the Christian trope of gendered suffering as a mode of attaining salvation and healing powers. Her story of overwhelming suffering constitutes a path to salvation for Kerala Christians while allowing them to differentiate themselves from other forms of Catholicism that endorse the “hedonism” of the “West.” Sr. Alphonsa (beatified but thus short of recognition as a saint) rose to fame by healing a Muslim boy. The transgression of religious boundaries establishes her as a patron saint of the suffering, irrespective of their religious affiliation. Yet she exemplifies the “othering” that occurs in the Christian ordering of genders, whereby the suffering woman modeled on the Virgin Mother is starkly contrasted with the temperamental and sexually aggressive goddess of local Hinduism. Sr. Alphonsa provides an indigenous “antidote” to colonial influence through her suffering as well as by her position of not yet being canonized as a saint (Dempsey 2001: 36). A recurring trope in Dempsey’s ethnography is the consistent attempt by Kerala Christians, armed as they are with the Apostle Thomas’ legacy, to differentiate themselves from Western Christianity in a process of reverse orientalism (Dempsey 2001). The work of “othering” also allows them to separate themselves from Hindus, Muslims and other Christian sects within Kerala. The figure of St George, the slayer of the dragon, popular among non-Protestants in Kerala reflects the complex history of Christianity in Kerala. His physical appearance indicates his introduction by the Portuguese but it is also used as a way of distancing the devotees from the colonial legacy through the claim that he was present prior to the Portuguese incursion, brought to Kerala’s shores by Syrian merchants (Dempsey 2001: 38).

Devotion to St George attests at once to the ambiguity existing in popular symbols, whereby they can neither be fully encompassed by their qualities of appearance and associated myths, but emerge variously in contextual practices and in opposition to perceived others. Kerala Christians use the figure of St George to reiterate the foreignness of Christianity as well as the authenticity of Eastern Christianity in opposition to Western Christianity. The overwhelming prevalence of St George in public spaces speaks of his incorporation into the Kerala Christian tradition. However, Catholic Christians also heavily rely upon Papal authority for their institutional conduct in spite of their reiteration of a distinct identity through reverse orientalism. Reverse orientalism, or adopting a colonial discourse to identify themselves, points only to the complex history and practices of Christians (Dempsey 2001). The prevalence and power of Roman Catholics in Kerala is reiterated not only through their differentiation from Eastern Catholics, Hindus and the West but also in their identification and legitimization by Papal authority in Rome (Frykenberg 2008). The Syrian Christians of Kerala, even before their schism, were an extremely

mobile, versatile group with strong local political ties. The advent of Christian colonizers and missionaries further forged their standing until their caste practices and Nestorian affiliations came into conflict with the Portuguese colonizers. Even after the separation of Roman from Syrian Catholics in the mid-seventeenth century, their political and ritual standing meant that they received hearing not only from colonial missionaries within India but also from authorities in Rome (Bayly 1989).

Everyday and lifecycle rituals

Lifecycle rituals and everyday religious practice have retained elements of the older traditions. The influence of these traditions depends on the length of engagement with missionaries. In the regions of “Old Conquest” in Goa lifecycle rituals, customs, mannerism and attire have been influenced by the Portuguese model, such that hierarchy is asserted based on perceived Portuguese teleology. Some Roman Catholics retain practices of caste discrimination and endogamy, and still use traditional caste practices of using the sacred thread of marriage (*thali*) or following the Malayalam calendar or the use of cardinals in accordance with Hindu *shastras* on architecture. Elsewhere, the continuum has been more visibly demarcated by forceful or scornful suppression by the Church.¹⁴ Thus, the breaking of the drums or abandoning a local tradition of music and poetry has marked conversion in Church history until recently. One sees a reform within the post-Vatican II church, whereby several of the traditions have been revived while other Sanskritized practices have been incorporated in the effort to indigenize or “Indianize” (Mosse 2012: 91). In many regions of India, this process has been a reformulation of the Nobili tradition whereby Hinduization and Sanskritization occur simultaneously (Kujur 2010; Lobo 2010), especially in tribal belts in an attempt to combat rising Hindutva *shuddhi* (reconversion) movements (Froerer 2010: 129). In 1989, several Dalit Christians of Shahpur parish in Bihar celebrated the *Chhat puja* using the grotto of Mary and excluding some of the more Hindu aspects (Kalapura 2010: 81). Similarly in Jharkhand, several Sarna religious practices of tribals,¹⁵ such as domestic gods, ancestor worship, worship of ghosts, spirits, witchcraft and magic, have been replaced by Christian communitarian and spatial practices, and the recent indigenization and revival of tribal identity have brought additional changes (Kalapura 2010: 85–8).

These changes are unlike the “civilizing strategies” and “civilizing missions” used by the church in other places and at other times in an attempt to discipline its congregation (Froerer 2010: 121, 127). Among the Oraons of Chattisgarh, the church’s mission of creating pious converts is through a process of “material diabolization” consisting of ostracism and the “naming and shaming” of converts who disobey church restrictions or revert to tribal practices (Froerer 2010: 135–7). Selva Raj’s (2002) work on burial rituals among Santhals in Bihar show the dynamic straddling of three traditions: tribal, Hindu and Catholic. Traditional ancestor worship is still practiced while spirit worship and animal sacrifice to spirits have been abandoned. Similarly, the eating of carrion meat, practicing traditional caste-based labor and resorting to magic, sorcery and spirit worship have been used by converts to distance themselves from unconverted Dalits (Froerer 2010; Kalapura 2010; Mosse 2012; Schmalz 2005).

Healing, exorcism and spirit possession

The Catholic Church’s attitude toward healing and exorcism has been highly ambivalent. Zupanov (2009) mentions how early missionaries under the Portuguese were more open to practices of indigenous healing even when they expressed disdain, surprise and pity. Many early missionaries practiced indigenous and Galenic medicine, using healing of the body and spirit as a method of

conversion and path toward salvation. This engagement with local traditions and practices was not restricted to spiritual motives but enabled a viable drug monopoly as well as the hope of conversion of large groups around healing (Zupanov 2009: 2). Today, the orthodoxy of church institutions looks down upon healing as residual practices of heathenism and paganism. The anthropological literature on healing, exorcism and possession indexes the use of these practices as modes of heterodoxy practiced in contravention to the Church-instituted practices.

Richard MacPhail (2002) speaks of the use of existing Tamil resources by people to connect with sacred power and construct identities in his study of the urban prayer assembly, *Kōvai Tīya Mariyannai Cepakulam*, in Cepakulam, Coimbatore. The prayer assembly was organized and conducted by three sisters, one of whom works as medium for *Ārōkkiya Mātā* or the blessed Virgin Mary as Our Lady of Good Health. The long ritual process of *āvikkattu* (spirit-binding) (MacPhail 2002: 145) whereby Mary, through her medium, helps exorcize evil forces of “*māntrikam*” (sorcery). On the one hand, the prayers resemble Hindu ritual practices of exorcism and stand in opposition to Catholic orthodoxy and ideology. On the other hand, however, they use the human–divine continuum and material practices of Catholicism while engaging the tropes of gender and exorcism prevalent in Tamil Hindu traditions. Thus the prayer assembly lies in tension with ecclesiastical authority, but gains power and authenticity as a personalized religious experience and a mode of diagnosis and healing (MacPhail 2002: 156–8).

The simultaneous shunning and ignoring of heterodox cults by the hierarchy is also a testimony to the contradiction within Catholicism between the interiorization institutionalized in personal sin and confession and the exteriorization crystallized into a metonymic relationship of externally caused misfortune and an externally influenced sinfulness (Mosse 2012). In this sense, exorcism cults in Alapuram are not just resistance to the authority of the Church but also a mode of dealing with misfortunes, guilt and sins. Practices once rejected as heathen are now redefined as superstitious but still within the sphere of what might be called folk Catholicism. As Mosse observes, practices rejected as heathen during the era of Christian colonization have been redefined as superstitious in the post-Vatican II era, though both are still within the sphere of what might be called folk Catholicism.¹⁶ The ambiguation of religious boundaries in the post-colonial era has simultaneously led to a shift from these practices being embedded in village-centered activities to a more mobile practice of pilgrimage (MacPhail 2002: 89–92).

A similar shift occurred with the rise of Charismatic and Pentecostal movements in rural Tamil Nadu. While Mosse (2012) focuses on the quality of these movements to form loose affiliations, Robinson (1998) points out that the rise of Charismatic movements in Goa in the 1980s attracted the lower castes for reasons that include the unstructured and inclusive prayers and practices of healing in opposition to the institutional practices of the Church and upper castes. Here institutional practices are deemed attractive to upper-caste Catholics, who are also the recipients of Church honors and privileges. Institutional Christianity and Portuguese tradition carry more weight among upper-caste Catholics, including privileges such as beef- and pork-eating, attire, language and other cultural codes. By contrast, persistence of practices of spirit possession (*khetri*) exorcism appeals to the lower caste (Shudras) by means of affiliations with Hindu experts, *gaddhi* (shamans) (Robinson 1998: 193–4).

The rise of Catholic Pentecostalism

As in many countries, the Charismatic Renewal movement and its synthesis of Pentecostal practices such as baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and faith healing with Catholic communitarianism and sacramentalism was introduced to India in the early 1970s. Beginning in Mumbai in 1972, by 1976 a national convention in that city attracted 1500 registered delegates.

A National Service Team was elected at the first leaders conference in Bangalore in 1977. Another national convention in 1978 attracted 3,500, including Cardinal Lawrence Picachy of Calcutta, along with the archbishops of Bombay and Hyderabad and the bishops of Quilon and Kottar. Adjunct to the convention were a leaders conference, two priests' retreats and a three-day leaders' seminar on healing conducted by the renowned Francis MacNutt, at the time still a Dominican priest. A report from the movement's international newsletter in 1986 cited the spread of the movement into rural northwest India, and one in 1994 documented evangelization into tribal areas of northeast India bordering China. The Catholic Bishops Conference of India gave formal recognition to the movement's National Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) Services as a National Catholic Organization in 1996. A ministry called Youth United for Christ was inaugurated in 2008. The Indian CCR held its XV National Catholic Charismatic Convention at Nuvem, Goa, in 2012. It drew about 10,000 people from different parts of the country including an archbishop and two bishops. The Renewal claims to be present in every diocese and state of India, and lists 103 renewal centers, many of which are located in the southwestern state of Kerala where there is a concentration of Catholics of Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara and Latin rites. As of 2013, the Bangalore archdiocese had its own service committee and recognized nine groups, seven of which held services in English, one in Kannada and one in Tamil.

In 1987 a priest of the Vincentian Congregation named Mathew Naickomparambil received a divine inspiration to transform his small prayer group at Potta into a healing ministry, which has since grown into a veritable moral metropole within the movement, even bragging its own train station. Day-long healing services attract as many as 5,000 to 10,000 people, foreigners as well as people from all across India, apparently including substantial numbers of non-Christians. At Muringoor, six kilometers from the church/ashram, the group built a Divine Retreat Center where week-long retreats are conducted for as many as 10,000 and up to 20,000 people in the summer season, with preaching from 6:30 am until 10:00 pm simultaneously in six auditoria: in the buildings on one side of the road services are conducted in Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu, and in those on the other side are services in English, Konkani, Hindi and Kannada. Patients with mental health problems are excluded from retreats, and instead their family members are instructed to attend as surrogates.

Anthropologist Murphy Halliburton (2009) visited Potta in 1997 and reported that during the week-long retreat participants are not allowed to leave the grounds and nor are they permitted to drink or smoke. The facilities are impressive, with physicians, bookstores, snack bars and pharmacies on site, and the auditoria large enough to hold several thousand people. He described the atmosphere as "like that of a major rock concert in a big stadium, only with more facilities." He was also able to see patient wards, including a locked ward for alcoholics, where television monitors constantly show what is transpiring on stage in the auditorium. Halliburton's informant indicated that about 60 percent of participants are patients with a variety of medical problems including psychiatric and substance abuse problems, with many others coming for issues such as marital problems, infertility or other life situations, and about 10 percent coming "just for prayer." Of critical import is not only that Potta is a destination for foreigners and non-Christians, nor that Father Naickomparambil and his colleagues conducted retreats and services all throughout India, but that they also established an energetic presence in North America and Europe. For example, their website announced a five-week nine-stop tour of the US, a bible conference in Germany and listed numerous contacts among past retreat participants from the US, England, and Germany.

Matthew Schmalz (1998, 1999, 2005) has documented a series of striking postmodern dislocations and juxtapositions of Hindu and Catholic elements on the level of personal transformation

through Catholic Charismatic healing in North India. He describes the healing ministry of Jude, a lay Catholic south Indian living in a north Indian city sacred to Hindus, and attracting both Catholic Charismatic and Hindu supplicants. Jude was a repentant alcoholic and womanizer who relocated following a dishonorable discharge from the military and a failed business venture selling an Ayurvedic remedy for sexual impotence, subsequently returning to the Church and joining the Charismatic Renewal on the advice of a confessor. The cross-fertilization of Hinduism and Catholicism appears on several levels in the account of Jude's healing ministry. The forms of empowerment he deploys include the readily recognizable Charismatic "spiritual gift" of "discernment," a form of divine inspiration that allows him to identify the problems of supplicants, often embodying their afflictions himself as cues to their nature. They also include an authenticating narrative of a miraculous birth in which during a medical crisis he was surgically removed and replaced into his mother's womb, a theme paralleled in myths of the births of Krishna, Mahavira, Buddha and Parikshit.

The outlines traced by the Potta phenomenon and by this interface between Hinduism and Catholicism, and the points of both syncretism and contradiction that become highlighted in such accounts, are more than jarring anomalies and symptomatic of the simultaneous pull toward universal culture and postmodern cultural fragmentation that characterizes the global condition of religion. Schmalz (1998) illustrates how post-Vatican II sensibility has merged with Charismatic Christianity to form an indigenous variant of Christianity characterized by ascetic practices, ashrams and yogis in Varānasi. Dempsey (2001) recounts a conversation with a priest whose denunciation of Western influences included everything from the Portuguese to contemporary culture that was undermining the faith of young people in particular, but who was optimistic in part because of the Charismatic Renewal. She notes an irony in the fact that the movement itself is an import from the US, but resolves the irony by suggesting that:

the Charismatic movement has been assimilated and transformed by the Kerala Catholic community ... domestic adoption of this "Western" movement seems to have been so thorough as to enable it to be wielded by and on behalf of Malayali Christians as a means to combat what it used to be itself: "Western" influence.

(Dempsey 2001: 32)

Conflict of identity and activism

Agitation by Christians against colonizers, Church orthodoxy and casteism are not new phenomena. The agitation and protest of Thomas Christians against the Portuguese Inquisition, as well as the Dalit mobilization in regions of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh under both Evangelical and Catholic missionaries have been recorded. These earlier historical agitations led to violent suppression on a local basis by caste Hindus. The violence and atrocities against Dalit Christians continued in the twentieth century under the new guise of Hindutva movement. The post-independence period marked a shift in Dalit activism from localized movements to movements that have adopted the national identity of Dalit as crushed or broken people, following the lead of B.R. Ambedkar. The rise of communitarian politics and "majoritarian democracy" of electoral politics has resulted in the emergence of several movements (Hansen 1999: 136). Dalit politics saw a renewed growth in the aftermath of Mandal Commission protests in 1991. Precursors of this development were race and ethnicity movements such as the Dravidian movement, which has determined caste-based electoral politics in Tamil Nadu (Reddy 2005) and has spilled over into the regalia of public religious rituals (Waghorne 2002). These have enabled Dalit Christians to mobilize against both church discrimination and the atrocities of caste-Hinduism.

In the post-independence era, missionaries were deemed a threat to Indian sovereignty (defined as Hindu) with a foreign agenda. The proselytization of the poor was seen as violent and coercive and the poor themselves were viewed as impressionable and naive by the Niyogi Commission (Viswanathan 2006: 336–7). Foreignness and alienness have also been attributed to Christians by Hindutva movements. However, according to Froerer (2010) Dalit conversion to Christianity has resulted in a five-fold form of discrimination: by the state in their exclusion from the list of Scheduled Castes, by upper-caste Hindus, by upper-caste Christians, by non-converted Dalits and by other caste subgroups. The state restriction of affirmative action only to Hindus (Sikhism and Buddhism were added to this broad classification) was codified in the Scheduled Caste Order of 1950. Dalit Christians have also been excluded from the protection of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 (Michael 2010: 55–6), which has left them susceptible to attacks by Hindu nationalism, especially in tribal areas.

Exclusion and violence has led to acts of reconversion by many Dalit as well as to the formation of several regional and national rights groups. Dalits who protest or revert back often become the object of ridicule and scorn by the Church, caste Hindus and non-converts as *Nakli* (false) Christians (Kalapura 2010: 78–9, 87). However, Christian theology has also allowed for the dissociation of caste system from religious salvation, allowing some room for resistance, subversion and reorientation of identity among tribal and Dalit converts. In Tamil Nadu, according to Mosse, this has resulted in the formation of alternate churches, festivals and Dalit-oriented practices. Dalitness has been adopted and expressed in reconstructions of myths and narratives and the revival of Dalit music and drumming. Several Dalit have engaged in subversive tactics of public beef-eating or acts of pollution. In tribal regions, there is revival of indigenous culture or Adivasization and tribal culture with or against the Church (Kujur 2010; Lobo 2010; Mosse 2012).

Schmalz's (1998, 2005) work among Catholic minorities in Uttar Pradesh illustrates how Catholic theology is used as redemptive and subversive strategy by Cāmars. Here, the otherness of the Church is adopted to distance oneself from caste-Hinduism, while Untouchable status is used against both the Church and caste-Hinduism. Moreover, talking in various modes such as gossip, origin myths, narratives and stories, allows Dalit Christians to change spaces into places and vice versa while simultaneously creating a space for action and asserting agency when everyday life offers limited opportunities (Schmalz 2005: 218). The conversion to Christianity with the establishment of the Śāntinagar mission by Untouchables in Rampur and related villages has not facilitated transcendence of local caste hierarchies but it has enabled Dalit converts to use their new status as a way to align themselves *vis-à-vis* upper-caste Hindus, other Cāmars and the Church. The new identity, with its future-oriented goals and reorientation of power structures, redistributes power not directly in favor of the converts but in a way that provides a space to *reevaluate*, associate and disassociate with the Church and other non-converted Dalit contextually. As Schmalz (2005: 228) puts it, "untouchability is like a black hole whose gravity is always pulling them in. Within this context, Catholicism is understood to have a countervailing gravitational force in its otherness and institutional power."

Conclusion

Neither self-transformation nor socio-economic gain fully motivates conversion, and both factors work differently according to the context. Conversion, then, can be a "process of dissent" or "tool" of dissent rather than an "end result" (Viswanathan 1998: 245–6). Likewise, Catholicism can be strategically used within a "pragmatic ideology" as "subversive marginality" (Schmalz 2005: 249–50). We have suggested that Catholicism neither was nor is a monolithic religion but

is characterized by a diversity of practices operating at multiple levels across a variety of cultural settings through a range of historical periods. It is a form of identity as well as spirituality for many of its converts, operating in an immensely complicated political field and contributing to ongoing structural transformation and the ever-changing cultural mosaic of India.

Notes

- 1 This is according to the 2001 Census, online at: http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/India_at_glance/religion.aspx.
- 2 A term that means “crushed” or “broken” used by the Untouchable caste of India as a self-referential term of empowerment.
- 3 The 1977 Supreme Court ruling distinguished the right to propagate from the right to convert. The state supervision authorized the criteria for conversion (Viswanathan 2006). The past two decades have seen several occurrences of violence, like the burning of an Australian missionary and his son and a Roman Catholic priest in Orissa 1999 and attacks on Christians. This enumeration hardly accounts for the violence faced by Dalit Christians and Tribal Christians for centuries.
- 4 The Islamic conquer of the Iberian Peninsula in AD 711; the crusades of 1064 to 1250 to re-conquer the peninsula; its re-Christianization and consolidation had led to bitter memories of the “Moors” and a sense of militancy. In the reign of Henry, the Navigator, true to his name, was a period of innovation in the arena of navigation. The discovery of the Caribbean Islands by Columbus in 1492 and the Cape of Good Hope by Bartholomew Dias in 1487 opened up the possibility of accessing the spice trade in India by circumventing the Arabs.
- 5 These Franciscan brothers often clashed with secular clergies that existed under the aegis of the king of Portugal over differences regarding conversion and conduct.
- 6 St Paul’s College, from where the Jesuits got the name “Paulists.”
- 7 This marks the beginning of a schism within Catholic converts in different regions, who preferred or chose sides according to their existing relationships with parishes and diocese.
- 8 Catholic missionaries had a tendency to reconvert Protestant missionaries rather than Hindus or Muslims, probably explaining the entry of Catholic mission into the northern, western and eastern tribal belts.
- 9 According to the oral and lyrical sagas (*Margam kali pattu*, *Rabban pattu*, and *Thomas Parvam*), literary texts and the genealogies of the Thomas Christians, the Apostle Thomas brought Christianity to India around AD 52. Although his mode and point of arrival are debatable (by sea or by land), both the lyrical sagas and Acts of Thomas detail the life of Thomas in India ending with his martyrdom in Mylapore (in current Tamil Nadu). The Christians converted by Thomas were referred to as “Nestorians,” an epithet used by the West to refer to “Christians of the East” for their allegiance to the Church of Edessa and patriarchate of Babylon. The relative absence of Western historiography, a probable reason for the continued “foreignness” of Christianity in India, can be attributed to several factors. The rise and expansion of Islam in AD 632 effectively cut all contact between the West and Byzantine from the East. The wars raged in Europe and the internal war between Latin Catholicism and the Greek Orthodox Church contributed to the relative opacity of Christianity in the East for almost 1,000 years.
- 10 Viswanathan (2006: 338) claims terms like “hybridity” and “syncretism” do not capture the dynamism of conversion, rather concepts like syncretism blur difference rather than highlight “negotiation.”
- 11 This resembles the chariot procession of Shiva, led by his consort, Parvati, and son, Ganesh.
- 12 Mosse’s (2012) description of Christian festival carries similar analogical patterns as Mines’ (2002) description and uses it extensively.
- 13 Rowena Robinson’s study of a Goan village, Santosagaon, draws on the history of conversion in Goa and the socioeconomic changes in recent times to paint the complex matrix of Catholicism in Goa. The Portuguese brought Catholicism to Goa in what Robinson terms as two phases corresponding to two geographies, the “Old Conquest” and the “New Conquest.” In both regions, conversion was marked differently, though the Portuguese converted them. In the old region, conversions were slower and less forceful, using positive modes of conversion, as opposed to the missionizing colonial force of the later conversions. The Inquisition of Goa from 1560 to 1812 brought with it forceful methods of prohibiting and inhibiting practices of the upper-caste Hindus. Because of sustained intervention, the cultural complex that exists within Goa is markedly Christian and Portuguese while retaining caste hierarchies. Caste distinction and priorities within the Church retain traditional village and land-owning structures but are sutured and exhibited in terms of Catholicism.

- 14 The Catholic Church, via Jesuit missionaries, entered the tribal belt of central and east India only in the twentieth century (1930, 1969) following the Baptist, Lutheran and other Protestant missionaries of the nineteenth century.
- 15 Oraons, Munda, Kharia, Santhals and Ho tribes of Jharkhand form the major portion of Christians converts.
- 16 The Papal bull of 1744 suppressed the Jesuit missionary policy of accommodation, though in practice much of the discrimination and many popular practices remained indistinct until a few decades ago (Mosse 2012: 91; Waghorne 2002: 17).

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The localization of Roman Catholicism

Radical transcendence and social empathy in a Philippine town

Julius Bautista

Early Roman Catholic missions in the Philippines had emphasized a form of transcendence that is achieved through acts of pain-inflicting self-mortification. In his 1604 *Relación de las Islas Filipinas*, Spanish missionary Pedro Chirino reported that acts of ritual self-flagellation, first introduced in the island of Panay in 1590, had been taken up with ‘extraordinary’ vehemence by Filipino Christian converts (Chirino 1969: 285; Barker 1998: 6–7). Chirino described how Indios of all walks of life were ‘so eager and fervent’ in the practice that it was sometimes necessary to physically restrain them. This was remarkable, given that this was not a compulsory part of Church worship, and that the missionaries did not observe any similar rituals practiced prior to their arrival (Barker 1998: 6). Other Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries in the Philippines would later testify to the continuance of self-flagellation throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In these acts, self-inflicted pain was not only framed as a means of communion with the divine, but as a struggle towards a pious, corporeal self-mastery. Acting and reflecting on the Passion of Christ reiterated his trans-substantive presence in the sacrament, which can be fully appreciated through an ensemble of embodied rites called ‘disciplina’.

Today, however, the continued practice of such acts is not seen as an encouraging testament to religious vitality. In 2006, for example, the Bishop of Caloocan and the media affairs chairperson of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) publicly declared that such rituals are a result of a ‘wrong understanding’ of Church teachings. He insisted that ‘Hurting oneself, according to the Church doctrines, is wrong. And it can be considered a sin if you do it knowing it’s not right’.¹

Given that acts of self-mortification have an historical precedence of encouragement in Philippine Church history, how can we explain its eventual condemnation? If acts such as ritual self-flagellation had earlier been endorsed as signs of pious adherence to the faith, what is it about the Filipino enthusiasm for it that had led modern-day clerics and administrators to consider it against Church teaching? In this chapter I situate the wider topic of the Roman Catholic missionary expansion to Southeast Asia within a discussion of practices of radical transcendence in the Philippines. I aim to examine the faith’s localization into an indigenous cultural milieu, focusing on how a specific kind of embodied Christology is manifested in divergent ways of relating to Christ’s suffering body.

I contextualize this discussion within Holy Week commemorations in the Philippine province of Pampanga, north of the capital Manila, where hundreds of Catholic penitents still self-flagellate on Good Friday, in spite of official Church condemnation and discouragement. In Pampanga scores of men and women perform rituals of self-flagellation in ways that resonate with the idiom of Christ's passion. Drawing from ethnographic research in Pampanga, I argue that these rituals cannot be understood using explanatory frameworks derived solely from Christian theology, or as a response to Christian theodicy. Doing so may offer us approximate explanations of the outward forms the rituals take, but are of limited heuristic value in understanding their substance in the specific context of Pampanga. The objective in the latter sections of this chapter, then, is to consider a view of religious transcendence in which pain-infliction is seen as part of a process of crafting a specific kind of pious selfhood, as well as establishing vertical and horizontal modes of social empathy that resonate with local moral-ethical notions of personhood and sociality.

Colonial avenues to transcendence

The 124 million Christians in Asia make up only 5.6 per cent of the total world population of Christians, and even in the region itself, form but a small proportion of its religious mosaic. Around two thirds of Christians in the region are Catholics, and 90 per cent of Christians in the region live in only two countries: the Philippines (86,790,000) and Indonesia (21,160,000). There are concentrations of Christian groups within nation states, such as in the province of East Nusa Tenggara in Indonesia where 84 per cent of a population of nearly 5 million is Christian (Roman Catholic 55 per cent, Protestantism, 34 per cent) (Central Bureau of Statistics: Indonesia 2010). While most Christians in the world — 90 per cent in fact — live as religious majorities in their countries, in Southeast Asia, only in the Philippines² (93 per cent) and, very recently, in Timor Leste (93.1 per cent), do Christians make up the biggest faith (De Guzman 2011; Pew Research Center 2011).

Roman Catholicism had set its roots in the Philippines in 1521 when the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan arrived in what eventually became known as 'Las Islas Filipinas'. Since the arrival of the first Spanish missionaries from the mid 1560s, the numbers of converts grew from around a hundred baptized Filipinos in 1569 to as many as 250,000 converts out of a total population of 700,000 in the early 1590s (Moffet 2005: 155). By the seventeenth century, Spanish settlers instituted a system of colonial administration, which propagated the 'totalizing' reach of the *pueblo* system, whereby the authority of God's human agents was constantly emphasized as being superior to that of local sorcerers and spirits. Spanish Roman Catholicism had God at the apex of a colonial edifice in which temporal and spiritual authority emanated down through the Spanish king, and then onto the Spanish priest as an 'agent' of that authority. This laid the foundations for the establishment of a regime that was to last over 300 years — one of the longest in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, there were at least two significant challenges to the colonial regime's capacity to monopolize the avenues towards religious transcendence.

First, early conversion was not initially seen in terms of offering a viable alternative to transcendence. Rather, conversion was thought of as the prerequisite for residence within the Spanish *pueblo*, where locals were able to benefit from the protection and patronage of the colonial administration. Becoming Christian was synonymous not only with entry into colonial society. It meant being modern and civilized, along with its symbols and trappings — hygiene, clothing, comportment, association (Bautista and Planta 2009; Andaya 2012: 114). In this respect, the Spanish God was perceived as the purveyor of a mode of immanence, in which conversion facilitated the propagation of material existence. Catholic missions included medical and educational incentives as part and parcel of their mission work, not only as a means to gain access to

local communities, but as a forum through which their proselytism could be deployed. At least in the initial period, the majority of conversions occurred not because of dissatisfaction with pre-existing faith but because Christianity offered material benefit that could enhance one's social position.

Second, the turn of the twentieth century could be described as a time in which Filipinos became exposed to new and alternative ways of Christian transcendence. There were stringent efforts by American Protestants to gain converts as part of the American 'manifest destiny'. The 're-Christianization' of the Philippines was an explicit mandate of American missionization, in which Spanish Catholicism was vilified for its perceived idolatry and clerical excess. Meanwhile, the nationalist movement that had gained momentum during the Filipino elite-led Propaganda Movement in Spain had encouraged the development of schismatic movements within the Philippine Catholic Church. Filipinos themselves were active in offering alternatives to the Roman Catholic version of transcendence, and enjoyed some initial success in attracting disillusioned Catholics to their fold. In the early 1900s, Felix Y. Manalo formally established the Iglesia ni Cristo (INC), a Restorationist Unitarian Christian church that proclaims Manalo as the last messenger of God, and that the Roman Catholic doctrines of the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit have no biblical or theological basis. Similarly, Gregorio Aglipay had broken away from the Roman Catholic Church to form the Iglesia Filipino Independiente (Philippine Independent Church), fuelled largely by deep resentment at the Spanish clergy's reluctance to ensure the full ordination of Filipino clerics.

In spite of these challenges, the Roman Catholic Church was able to maintain influence, particularly in rural areas. The modern Church in the Philippines is an institution that has been victorious against formidable threats to its dominance. From its roots as Catholic welfare organizations in the aftermath of the Second World War, Filipino clerics sought the endorsement of the Pope in establishing the formal institutional foundations of the faith in the country. In 1968, the Holy See approved the establishment of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) as the official organization of the Catholic episcopacy in the Philippines. Today, the CBCP comprises over 90 active cardinals, archbishops and bishops who oversee 16 archdioceses, 51 dioceses, 7 apostolic vicariates, 5 territorial prelatures and a military ordinariate. The victory of the Church is that it has been able to maintain its ability to define the avenues towards spiritual transcendence. Among these avenues was the practice of rituals of self-mortification, which included self-flagellation and radical asceticism. Initially, these acts were conducted by clerics but were later promulgated onto the laity as a form of pious self-discipline and as signs of religious devotion.

Self-mortification as radical transcendence

'Mortification' has a scriptural basis in Christian exegesis. The term refers to an infliction of pain upon one's body for the purposes of atonement for one's sins, and the attainment of religious sanctity. In scripture, mortification connotes a 'putting the flesh to death' as a practice of spiritual discipline. 'If you live after the flesh', said the apostle Paul, 'you shall die, but if through the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live' (Romans 8:13; cf. also Colossians 3:5 and Galatians 5:24). Pope John XXIII cites St Augustine, who had highlighted the limits of good deeds alone, declaring that:

It is not enough for a man to change his ways for the better and to give up the practice of evil, unless by painful penance, sorrowing humility, the sacrifice of a contrite heart and the giving of alms he makes amends to God for all that he has done wrong.

(Pope John XXIII, 1962)

As such, Spanish religious authorities in the Philippines had not only introduced the practice of self-inflicted pain, but also endorsed it as a sign of an exemplary religious piety.

There are several references in the historical archive that attests to friar-sanctioned practices of self-mortification, collectively known as *disciplina*, as techniques towards spiritual transcendence. Expiation of sins, atonement and the imitation of Christ were the central premises that underpinned the efforts of self-mortifying monks in Counter Reformation Italy,³ and was practiced in fairly large proportion among Dominican and Franciscan orders in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Self-mortification was subject to precise forms of bodily discipline that concerned not so much the body's capacity to withstand pain, but the meticulous application of specific regimens as a 'battle' or a 'war' of the body against temptation. Meritorious self-flagellation was conducted in conjunction with the chanting of the Psalms, which was taken up by monastics and clergy in atonement of their own sins and that of those in purgatory. Shilling and Mellor (2010: 533) note that the centrality of expressive suffering in late medieval Christianity was characterized by a heightened sensitivity to pain, which was nurtured by bodily techniques that focused on the crucified Christ as mimetic model. Talal Asad (1983) has also analysed the administration of pain in medieval Catholicism as a 'collaborative' effort between the penitent and clerical authority. Painful penance, observes Asad, was a way of literally and metaphysically establishing the Truth about a person's sinfulness, as though it were a pathological condition in which a sick patient was revealing his illness to a physician. The techniques and methods of inflicting pain upon oneself, therefore, were both an expression of guilt and an administration of its remedy.

Both Barker (1998) and Murray (1988) point out that while flagellation was in decline in Europe towards the seventeenth century,⁴ there was a significant persistence of it in Spain among penitential *cofradías*. In the sixteenth century, flagellant groups such as the Vera Cruz in Salamanca received Papal sanction and benefaction from Pope Julian in 1508, and further legitimacy under Pope Paul III in 1536. It seems reasonable to assume that Hispanic missionaries had introduced the practice in their missions in the Far East, as they did in the New World in Mexico (Clendinnen 1990: 123–4), given that flagellation was at its height during the period of missionization in the sixteenth century.

In the Philippines, the European lineage of corporeal mortification is associated with the Franciscans and the Jesuits. Accounts of the practice from Jesuit Francisco Velez in 1601 state the prevalence of flagellation among 'a great number of penitents': 'The beginning of another pious work has been made this year with marked results. This is the practice of "scourging", not as hitherto on three days in Lent, but every Friday throughout the year, in our Church' (Murray 1988: 47).

What is noticeable about Velez's account is that self-mortification was being practiced outside the liturgical context of Holy Week, albeit still within premises of the Church. The account of Franciscan Marcelo de Rabindeneira in the early seventeenth century is also quite remarkable in this regard, for it also speaks of 'houses of advanced virtue' outside of the Church in which penitents:

ask each other to mortify them and to give them cause for merit, so that these houses are as it were places for spiritual souls. For in them they scourge themselves and ask that others scourge them. And some have themselves hang on a cross, others put great weights on their necks, others drag weights from a halter as if they were beasts, since they consider themselves such for having offended God. Others ... keep their arms extended in the form of a cross for such a long time to cause wonder ... whoever should enter into the towns of these faithful ... in particular during Holy Week, would think rather that he is entering a monastery of religious of great penance rather than into towns or houses of ordinary lay people.

(Rabindeneira, cited in Murray 1988: 47)

Rabindaneira's observation is valuable because it locates mortification in 'ordinary lay people's houses, and identifies those practices that effectively transform non-sanctified space into centres of high piety. We also get the sense that practices of disciplina, as signs of proper modes of ascetic practice, were not restricted to the religious elite, but were observed across a wide cross section of Filipino laity.

In *Historia de las islas indios de Bisayas* (1688), the Jesuit missionary Ignacio Alcina reported that the inhabitants of the Philippine islands had been practicing acts of ritual flagellation following its early encouragement by clerics. The vehemence with which they had done so was seemingly so great that they had been doing it 'regardless of physical ailments or Spanish attempts to stop them'. 'We are unable to remedy this', Alcina admitted, 'since we learn about it when it is all over' (Koback and Fernan 1981: 165; Barker 1998: 7). Two implications arise from Alcina's account. The first is the sense that clerics themselves had lost control over the practice of mortification, given that it was being practiced outside of the gaze and supervision of clerical authority. Conducting self-mortification was a 'problem' in so far as it was not premised on the involvement of clerical authority. Second, the passage suggests that clerics took it upon themselves to 'remedy' the situation, as though the faith that they themselves had implanted became afflicted with a troubling condition. That condition was that Filipino Catholicism was deviating from a prescribed order, reverting to beliefs and practices that correspond to indigenous perspectives on the world, even while they used the formal idiom of Christianity to articulate them. By 1771, the Spanish-led provincial council of Manila decreed that: 'Nobody should flog himself publicly in the streets or in churches during Holy Week' (Barrion 1960: 304). In 1773, the Synod of Calasiao followed suit and prohibited self-mortification altogether with an explicit ban on 'all bloody penances' (Smith 1970: 203).

In spite of there being a historical legacy of Friar-endorsed self-mortification in the Philippines, self-flagellation and other forms of pain-infliction are not explicitly encouraged by the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the Philippines today. There are those within the Church, in fact, who would consider the continued practice of self-flagellation as against Church teaching. Many high-ranking clerics are careful not to condemn self-mortifiers outright, but reiterated the importance of 'correcting' their misguided literal overemphasis on Christ's crucifixion and death. 'If you truly believe that Christ has already suffered for you', says Father Martin, from one of the parishes in Parañaque, Metro Manila, 'then you must realize that physically taking on his pain is like disregarding his act of sacrifice – like saying that it wasn't enough'.⁵ During Holy Week, the CBCP typically releases messages that declare that atonement for sins and a reflection on the experience of Christ's Passion do not require the extreme measures of pain-infliction. Instead, there are other 'more appropriate' ways of enacting religious piety that the faithful can adopt, primarily through partaking in the liturgy and the sacraments.

This is not tantamount, however, to dismissing any form of identification with Christ's pain. As the inheritors of a European colonial and doctrinal legacy, Roman Catholic clerics in the Philippines today have taken these traditional forms of disciplina away from its bodily application, channeling it instead towards an empathic, vicarious reflection on Christ's suffering. Prominent Church figures have prescribed that close *witnessing*, as opposed to full embodiment, of Christ's ordeal can still be achieved by placing oneself in a heightened state of meditative consciousness.

Filipino clerics are active and vocal in promoting a vicarious pain, rather than a physically embodied one. In 2004, for example, Monsignor Guadencio Rosales, archbishop of Manila, had issued a four-page pastoral message, urging those of his archdiocese to view Mel Gibson's 2004

motion picture *The Passion of the Christ*, calling it a ‘serious labor of love, painstakingly made, of genuine artistic and religious value’.⁶ The Archbishop encouraged the laity to:

[T]ry to see it in a spirit of quiet, prayerful reflection ... Approach it as if you were entering a period of meditation ... setting aside attitudes of ‘seeking to be merely entertained’ ... Try to enter deeply into the last hours of Jesus and let those final hours work their way into your mind and heart.

(Rosales 2004)

To ‘enter deeply into the last hours of Christ’ means relating emotionally and empathically to his divine Passion. But rather than the actual participation in self-mortification, what the archbishop had in mind was what Fink describes as an ‘empathic pain, feeling the pain of others as pain. Empathic pain might lack the incorporation into one’s own body image, but shares the negative evaluation and a need to act upon, while still being a sensation’ (Fink 2010: 5). In their promotion of an empathy that lacks ‘incorporation into one’s own body image’, Church authorities extol a vicarious witnessing of Christ’s ordeal that prompts a transcendence that can only be achieved by placing oneself in a state of solemn reflection and *imagining* Christ’s passion as biomedical pain.

The vicarious empathy with Christ’s transcendence of pain, therefore, has theological value because it emphasizes the soteriological challenge of Christ’s humanity. ‘Thus [the film] will be, not just another movie; not just another religious film’, urged the Archbishop, ‘Rather it can be a true “faith-experience” and an authentic invitation to conversion and renewal of heart and life’ (Rosales 2004).

A vicarious appreciation of Christ’s pain is only meaningful if it serves as a conduit towards partaking in his trans-substantive corporality. The consecration of the Eucharist by the priest provides the conditions for the literal consumption of Christ’s flesh and blood in the sacrament of communion.

While the self-mortifying flagellant may engage more corporeally with Christ’s passion, the absence of the consecrating power of the cleric renders the physical engagement with Christ’s passion illegitimate and, in the end, impotent.

This is the view of transcendence that is problematized by the actual engagement that many Filipinos have with Christ’s pain, as I describe in the following section. In the continued performance of self-flagellation rituals in Pampanga, acts of pain infliction are not premised upon the tradition of radical ascetic forms of transcendence promulgated by the missionary Church, or by the vicarious empathy that is encouraged by CBCP clerics. The occurrence of self-mortification, rather, is thought of in terms of local concepts of interiorized personhood and social empathy in ways that *must* be embodied, and could not be simply emplotted into Catholic doctrinal or theological frameworks, as I will show in the following section.

Self-mortification in Pampanga

For many in the province of Pampanga, north of the Philippine capital Manila, a reflection on Christ’s pain is not a call for partaking in the sacraments but an evocation of a form of embodied Christology in which pain is a crucial component. During Holy Week, the landscape of Pampanga is dominated by scores of Roman Catholic penitents, who embark upon walking journeys around towns and cities while performing acts of self-flagellation and other forms of ritual pain-infliction. Barker (1998: 8–9) has traced a two-tiered revival of the practice that

gathered momentum from the 1950s onwards. There are no official accounts of the scale of self-flagellants during Holy Week, since the practice is not based on any official brotherhoods or organizations. Rather, conducting the ritual is typically seen as a personal choice, one inspired by emulation of older relatives, and performed without formal institutional membership. In the 1980s, Barker (1998: 8) estimated the number at ‘tens and thousands’ of flagellants in the few days leading up to Easter, and my own ethnographic survey from 2010 and 2011 would place it at those levels as well.

The adoption of rituals of radical transcendence was not a straightforward process. Slippages in translation of scripture and doctrine into native vernaculars, as well as associations made with pre-existing indigenous notions of spirits and deities, contributed to the idiosyncratic nature of Catholicism in the Philippines. The use of amulets, the persistent belief in pre-Hispanic deities and the practice of faith-healing and spirit-mediumship signified a Catholicism that was interpreted in ways that Spanish Friars did not intend. Filipino converts, then as now, have integrated pre-Hispanic beliefs and practices into Catholic rites and rituals, thereby maintaining alternative and indigenous modes of religious transcendence – such as in praying to both animist spirits and patron saints in harvest – without a sense of duality or theological friction.

Tiatco and Bonifacio-Ramolete (2008: 61) have further categorized these acts into three distinct kinds of pain experience. The first refers to activities of cross bearing, *mamasan krus*, where penitents embark upon a walking journey around the town. Dressed in robes and often times barefoot, the cross is carried on their shoulder and dragged on a walking journey around town. The journey would typically start near the place in which the cross is held throughout the year and pass along the streets of the province, along major roads, across intersections, through major thoroughfares and commercial areas. To bear a cross in this way may not necessarily lead to nailing, though the pain and suffering under the prolonged weight of the cross is also considered an act of pain-infliction.

The second, *pamagsalibatbat*, involves penitents crawling and squirming in the hot dirt. This act is meant to commemorate the encounter with Simon the Cyrene who, according to the synoptic Gospels, helped Christ carry the cross on the way to Golgotha. This involves a hooded penitent wearing a crown of branches and leaves, who then walks, crawls and eventually squirms on the earthen ground towards a church or in a house in which the ritual chanting of Christ’s passion is done. Upon arrival, the devotee lies flat on the ground on his/her stomach, spreads the arms in the way of the cross, and has his buttocks, the back of his thighs, arms and back struck by an assistant (called *sunod*, literally, ‘follower’).

The third kind, *pamamalaspas*, or self-scourging, is perhaps the most prevalent. Penitents would flagellate themselves until blood saturates their backs while embarking upon a walking journey in commemoration of Christ’s scourging at the pillar. Zialcita points out that when *pamamalaspas* is done on Good Friday, ‘the self-punishment must be bloody’ (Zialcita 2000: 16). The penitents in Pampanga think of this form of self-mortification as *nagpapadugo*, literally, ‘blood letting’. Given that it is probably the most common act of pious ritual practiced in the province, it is with this third form of self-mortification that I focus on in the ethnographic portrait below.

The flagellant

It is slightly after lunchtime on Holy Thursday of 2010. There is a group of men gathered in an open field along the McArthur highway – a seemingly casual gathering of friends and acquaintances. Each of the men is accompanied by one or two relatives, each lavishing attention upon them as though he is about to embark upon a long journey. Making an unscheduled stop, I meet one of the men, Eddie, a former seaman who has been coming to this particular site at this specific time for more years than he can remember.

The joviality of our conversation was sometimes hard to reconcile with the fact that he was about to go through a highly solemn, emotional and painful experience of self-flagellation. The mood changed somewhat as Eddie began to explain the nature of this act.

He described it as his *darame*, his act of empathy, to God in commemoration of the Holy Days of Lent. 'It is that time of the year', he recounts, 'where I offer to God everything I've done because he has done so much for me. I offer this too so that he will continue to help my son, who is suffering much more than I am over there working in Dubai'.

Eddie mentions that he had begun this *darame* in around 1978, when his son was still an infant afflicted with 'blue baby syndrome': a cyanotic heart condition. The prognosis was not good, and the family did not have nearly enough to pay for the treatment and medications. Although they were able to gain some support from relatives, the constant anxiety and pressure took a great toll on the young family. 'I felt so helpless that even prayer and going to Church was not enough. So I decided to do some bloodletting (*nagpadugo*) so that he would get better'. For Eddie, his son's survival is a direct result of his *darame*.

Having been conditioned by what I've read in the many depictions of self-flagellation, I ask whether he was thinking about his own sins or transgressions, which he seeks to atone for through embodied rituals of pain. By asking this, I was interpreting his act according to the conventional explanation of expiation of sins, and that this *darame* is a kind of reconciliation with God. In other words, I had assumed that this was a form of disciplina, in which the expiation of sins could be achieved through the mastery over the body's ability to withstand pain. Eddie was quick to point out that he was thinking 'Not about just my sins, but also my good deeds ... All my successes and failures, all my hopes and fears ... It's something I feel inside of me. But in the end, I know that I'm actually doing it for my son'. This *darame* is not just about the penitent's sins, or about a solemn meditative pursuit of sacramental participation. The motivation for this act involves an empathic connection between those whom the flagellant holds dear, namely God and a third party, which in this case is his son, but could well be another person.

Like many others, Eddie and his companions prepared his own material implements and clothing, which would be used on their ritual. These included a *burillo*, which is a one to two foot whip made of rope on the tip of which is attached a set of five or six bamboo or wooden sticks one or two inches in length. They are normally custom-made by the penitent himself (although they are readily available for purchase around the village in makeshift stalls during Holy Week). A single rope called a *binidbid* is tied around his torso, legs and arms. Other materials include crowns made of vines, leaves and twigs, which are placed on the head. These vines do not typically have thorns and are, so I am told by one of Eddie's companions, not part of the pain inflicting process. Blindfolds or long pieces of cloth with eyeholes cut out (some would use balaclavas) are tied around the face to hide the identity of the flagellant. For though this journey is to be made as a group, it is also a journey that is solitary, emotional and anonymous.

But before the first incision is even made, Eddie is already flagellating his back with the *burillo*, producing the distinctive tapping sound of skin against wood. This is not a strong whip intended to cause pain, but firm enough to stimulate the blood vessels on the back. When the surface of the skin is flush red and swelling from these 'preliminary' whippings, the shirtless men, most with cigarettes in their mouths, submit themselves to a relative or close friend who would make up to 25 small but fairly deep wounds (*abad*) on the flesh of the flagellant's back. This is commonly done using a small knife called the *panabad*, or a single razor blade. Over the years, men in Pampanga have learned to make even this process more efficient by devising an implement that is a wooden block on which is affixed six sharp blades arranged in a row. Instead of making 25 incisions with the *panabad*, what I witnessed on this particular gathering was one of the men

would 'dab' the flagellant's flesh four times, achieving the same outcome, yet enabling the wielder to slash several flagellants in quick succession.

Eddie says that there is no specific time of the day at which to gather for this ritual, except to say that they prefer a time when the sun is not at its peak. There is some alcohol present, notably two bottles Red Horse beer, famous in the Philippines as the most potent in terms of alcoholic content. There is not much by way of food, except for a few eggs which Eddie and a few other flagellants will take raw. These items are not for endurance or even sustenance but for encouraging one's blood to 'flow more readily'. This is important because 'more blood means a higher chance of God hearing your prayer'.

Once the wounds are made, the flagellant continues whipping. In a short while the flagellants would be called to assemble on the street and form a straight line, some times several rows, to commence the *limbon*, or procession, together. It begins when the first flagellant swings the *burillo* on each side of his upper torso, whipping his wounded back all throughout the 5 to 6 kilometre walk around the streets of the province. Sometimes, depending on the route, the *limbon* would stop at makeshift house altars, the *puni*, where the flagellants make a silent prayer, before moving on again. Along the way, the lashes that they inflict upon themselves open up the incisions resulting in their blood flowing on to their trousers. Inevitably, their blood would also splash along with the motion of the whips, droplets of blood spraying along the path of flagellants maintaining their single file formation. So ingrained is this that there is even a word from Bergaño's 1768 dictionary, *Talangdang*, which specifically refers 'to be thrown off, like the drops of blood being deflected from the discipline of the penitents'.

Along the journey, some would pray the rosary or, for that matter, any other prayer that they have internalized through their upbringing. But this is certainly not the only aspect of their interiority. While it is primarily an individual ritual, Eddie's companion accompanies him throughout the journey, attending to any needs he has, or to catch him in case he should suddenly feel faint from the self-scourging. After the ritual, family members accompany Eddie to a nearby well where he will bathe off the blood from his *daramé*. He details his plans to take his family to a '*visita iglesia*', or a walking pilgrimage of various Churches around the province after he has finished his flagellation. 'What will you think about?', I ask, just as he places his hood over his face and head to begin his journey. 'Only simple things', he says, 'my family, and my son ... you know, everything'.

***Daramé*: embodied, empathic transcendence**

The ethnographic scenario discussed earlier prompts a reflection on indigenous Filipino categories pertaining to vertical and horizontal notions of social empathy. A self-flagellating penitent is not simply inflicting pain upon himself as means of imitation or atonement in accordance with friar-endorsed modes of disciplina. In condoling with the plight of Christ and of one's relative, the self-flagellation is felt and understood according to culturally conditioned rationalizations about personhood, interiority and the empathic transferability of pain.

It is significant that flagellation in Pampanga is not described as 'pain' (*sakit*), but as '*daramé*', from the Kapampangan root word '*dame*'. More than just a descriptive term, *daramé* evokes an entire ensemble of cultural and religious referents in which flagellation is not merely an experience of bodily sensation, but an expression of embodied empathy. In Bergaño's 1732 Kapampangan dictionary, '*dame*' is defined as 'to voluntarily take part in someone else's situation or predicament'. But more than an offering and expression of sympathy, *dame* involves placing oneself in a position of physical discomfort, which would enable one to approximate the burden of someone else's plight. Most often, this involves the illness of a relative or close associate, whose

pain the penitent seeks to alleviate by offering himself, or more specifically, his body. For Eddie to say that the act is offered for his son who 'is suffering much more than I am' is an expression of compassion for another's plight, but also evokes the speaker's intention to partake in the suffering of the addressed in order to ease his or her pain. *Darame*, then, is a form of emotional identification with another in which the verbal expression of sympathy is insufficient. The depth of compassion can only be channeled through the corporeal empathy of ritual pain.

Darame takes on a specific meanings in the context of Christian religious ritual, when corporeal empathy is also focused on the plight of the suffering of Christ himself. *Darame* in this respect resonates with the Tagalog 'damay', discussed in the work of Iletto (1979), who draws from the 1860 *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala* in defining it as a mode of behaviour filled with 'expressions of sorrow and compassion, tearful weeping, individuals helping Jesus to carry his Cross, changing their state of *loob* [interiority] to lead a pure life and follow Christ's example' (Iletto 1979: 51–52). As Eddie had mentioned, *damay* is thus felt as interiority, as *loob*, on the 'inside', upon the act of feeling sorrow or pity ('*awa*') from viewing the crucified body of Jesus on the cross. *Loob* refers to one's core 'nature', or the inner contours of one's personhood (de Mesa 2012: 22).⁷

For many self-mortifiers in Pampanga, a vicarious mental identification endorsed by priests cannot sufficiently constitute an empathic connection with Christ. To flagellate is to express embodied empathy according to culturally and religiously determined modes of suffering, one in which the flagellant's body is aligned towards the allegory of Christ's suffering in order to communicate an empathic identification with another's predicament. Glahn (2010), citing the German philosopher Wils, points out that it is only through the contextualization of pain according to culturally specific modes of suffering that it can be made meaningful. 'It is culture', she argues, 'that renders pain bearable ... because it enables persons to integrate pain as suffering into their own meaningful societal environment' (Glahn 2010: 3). In this way, self-flagellation in Pampanga is a mode of transcendence that is distinct from those sanctioned by clerical authority, most of whom are unable to reconcile the phenomenological reality of self-flagellation with the tradition of the Church and its doctrines.

Conclusion

The way penitents describe their motivations for self-mortification problematizes the presumption that these rituals are merely survivals of medieval Catholic piety. In taking an archival and ethnographic approach in examining acts of self-flagellation in the Philippines, I have sought to provide an analysis that does not perpetuate certain frameworks that have conventionally been used to analyse religion in the Philippines. Such frameworks identify 'hybridity' as the central problematic of Filipino religion. In 1966 for example, Jesuit Jaime Bulatao published what many now consider a classic essay on Filipino Catholicism called *Split Level Catholicism* (Bulatao and Gorospe 1966). The essay was a long commentary on the 'syncretic' character of religiosity in the Philippines, both in rural and urban settings. One of Bulatao's most crucial points is that Filipino Catholics have internalized the synthesis of their religious inheritance, on the one hand, and the persistent influence of indigenous pre-colonial beliefs, on the other. From the outset, Bulatao assumes that these are 'two objectively inconsistent thought-and-behavior systems', and the hybridity of the two in the practice and belief of Filipinos had been pushed back to the recesses of consciousness. Bulatao's analysis simultaneously pathologizes and moralizes the condition of Filipino Catholicism. The hybridity of religion is tucked so deep in the realm of the unconscious as to have a stultifying effect. Bulatao laments that 'there is no particular drive to make one system conform to the other either by a change in behavior or by the elaboration

of a conceptual system, of somehow reconciling both. Both systems are left to coexist without disturbance and without guilt' (Bulatao 1992: 22–25).

Instead of embarking upon a pathologized view, I have, in this chapter, demonstrated the heuristic productivity of seeing Filipino Roman Catholicism as a system of belief that has multiple ways of attributing positive value to Christ's Passion.

The ethnographic episode of self-flagellation I presented gives a sense of the Filipino moral-philosophical concepts of personhood and sociality that underlies the commitment to rituals of pain. The act of self-mortification can be seen as an externalization of the penitent's interiority towards God and towards one's fellow beings, such that ideas about relating to the plight of one's close associates (*darame*) are crafted in the process of pain-infliction. Whereas the institutional Roman Church in the Philippines encourages the notion of empathic communion as sanctified by their partaking in the sacraments, self-mortifying devotees in Pampanga construe the same kinds of relationships in ways that de-centre liturgical participation. Radical transcendence, therefore, is localized in the Philippines through a set of embodied practices of pain infliction, which are potent not because they highlight the institutional mandate of the Church, but because they channel interiorized notions of social empathy.

Notes

- 1 *Philippine Star*, 16 March 2006.
- 2 The Philippines is the largest predominantly Christian nation in Asia. The religious profile can be broken down further as such: Roman Catholic 81 per cent, Protestant 7.3 per cent, Iglesia ni Kristo (Church of Christ) 2.3 per cent, Philippine Independence Church 2.0 per cent, Muslim 5.1 per cent and Buddhist 0.1 per cent (Pangalangan 2010: 559). The Philippines leads the world in surveys about belief, such as the one taken by the National Opinion Research (NOR) Center at the University of Chicago, which involved over 30 countries in Europe, the US and Asia. The NOR survey found that 93.5 per cent of Filipinos professed that 'I believe in God now and I always have', while 91.9 per cent declared a belief in a personal God. In all, 60.2 per cent of those surveyed are 'certain God exists, always believed in God, and strongly agree that there is a personal God'. This is the highest among the surveyed countries, the next one being Israel with 38 per cent and USA with 35 per cent. Correspondingly, the Philippines is at the bottom of the list of patterns of non-belief. Only 0.1 per cent of Filipinos 'Don't believe in God; never believed in God, and strongly disagree that there is a personal God' (Smith 2012: 8–11).
- 3 The mortification of the flesh is traced to a legacy of European medieval piety popularized and systematized by Peter Damianus (1007–1072) in Sicily. According to Murray (1988), it became a mass movement in Italy in 1260 in light of the apocalyptic pronouncements of Joaquin of Friore.
- 4 Eventually, there were prohibitions against self-mortification issued by Pope Alexander in 1261 and by Clement VI through Papal Bull. In the latter, flagellants were considered heretical. The practice of disciplina was repressed by the Church in the mid-fourteenth century, but found revival in Italy in 1399 among Spanish Dominicans. As Barker observes, 'the practice of Christian self-flagellation is virtually extinct. Certainly, the decline of ritual self-mortification is beyond dispute' (Barker 1998: 3).
- 5 Personal communication from fieldwork conducted in 2011.
- 6 Not surprisingly, perhaps, the Archbishop's endorsement was echoed by the Catholic Initiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation (CINEMA), the film ratings and classification board of the CBCP, had given the film 5 points each for its moral value and technical merits – the highest rating it had given at that point. The group of film critics lauded the fact that: 'A milestone has been reached in cinema history with this film ... Its greatest achievement lies not simply in its technical excellence but in its being witness to a radical faith that has turned a movie into a powerful media for entering the mysterious' (*Asia News*, 2004).
- 7 This notion of *loob* as personhood and interiority has a fairly robust discourse of theorization in the field of Philippine history, Filipino psychology and theological philosophy. Most who have studied it suggest that to think of *loob* as merely a concept of interiorized personhood is only part of the picture. For *loob* as subjective interiority is, necessarily, a relational concept, whereby inner selfhood is crafted in and through its externalization towards 'others'. *Loob* is, according to de Mesa (2012: 22), 'what the person truly is deeply as shown in a specific act in a particular relationship'.

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The spread of Islam in Asia through trade and Sufism (ninth–nineteenth centuries)

Paul Wormser

This chapter deals with the spread of Islam in Asia from the ninth to the nineteenth centuries. In order to restrict somewhat the huge geographical area and timeframe covered here, we have decided to exclude the places where Islam spread through military conquest in the seventh and eighth centuries, i.e. the Middle East, Iran, Sindh and the southwestern regions of Central Asia.¹ We thus focus on three broad regions where the spread of Islam mainly followed major trade routes: Central Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia. In these three regions, Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, figured prominently in the early diffusion of the new religion and was almost universally practiced by local Muslims until the late nineteenth century. As opposed to the central lands of Islam, in these eastern regions Islam generally spread peacefully through trade rather than through military conquest and these shared Islamisation patterns form the main thread of this chapter. First, we deal with the general trends common to the three regions. Second, we detail the particular political and social chronology of Islamisation along the continental and maritime branches of the Silk Road.

The general trends of the spread of Islam in Asia

In the eastern regions of Asia, Islam first spread in merchant and court circles. In order to understand this phenomenon, we first examine what was the appeal of Islam for traders, before turning to the appeal of Islam for rulers.

Islam and trade

Unlike in many other religious traditions, there has generally been no negative attitude in Islam towards trade and traders (Goitein 2010: 217–41). Trade was not considered as a parasitic activity extorting wealth from both the producer and the consumer. The prophet Muhammad himself engaged in trade early in his life and his example explains the generally very favourable attitude of this religion towards commercial activities. There is no condemnation of capital accumulation, as long as part of one's wealth is redistributed to society. This can be done through almsgiving (*zakat*) or through a religious foundation (*waqf*), and the more a trader redistributes his wealth, the more religious merit he acquires. Another important factor is that Islam is a movable

religion, which values travel and can be practiced while travelling. In the regions under study, this contrasts most with the worship of land spirits, which requires attendance in specific places, and with Hinduism, because sea travel carries with it religious impurity. For many traders along the continental and maritime Silk Road, Islam was the first religion instituted by one of them and giving due consideration to their profession.

Islam and rulers: the legitimizing tools of Islam

Islam was not only attractive for traders, it also had a distinctive appeal among rulers. Islam carried with it new legitimacy tools that were quickly used by Asian rulers. These include the habit of striking coinage bearing the name of the ruler, the use of royal seals and of royal letters written on luxurious paper with elaborate floral designs. Muslim rulers also liked to present themselves as patrons of the arts by sponsoring royal literature. An especially famed genre was the mirrors for princes, books designed to educate young princes on the matters of kingship.² Islam was instrumentalised in many other ways to enhance the ruler's standing. The Friday prayer, the most important prayer of the week, is read in the name of the ruler and it was often the occasion of luxurious parades to the mosque. Everything was done to stage the ruler as his kingdom's leading Muslim, sometimes by presenting him as the shadow of God upon Earth, sometimes as the kingdom's leading mystic receiving direct inspiration from God. Some Muslim kings claimed to have a divine right to rule, in the image of the prophets Daud, Sulayman or Yusuf. In Persian literature, the figure of Alexander the Great was turned into a universal ruler appointed by God to spread Islam all over the world with the help of the Muslim prophet Khidr. This story of Alexander the Great became extremely popular and many rulers took inspiration from it, ordering rewritings of this work or even being named after its hero. Rulers were selective in their adoption of Muslim elements, since there are powerful egalitarian discourses in some Muslim traditions, while others clearly deny any legitimacy to anyone but God. They thus only retained the Muslim practices that could be used for legitimacy purposes. One very important aspect is that there is no objection in Islam towards merchant kings. In contrast, trade has generally not been deemed compatible with kingship in South Asia, where kings usually belong to the second caste and traders to the third. Popular among both merchants and kings, Islam was thus most successful among merchant kings, particularly in Southeast Asia.

The importance of Sufism

Among those who were neither traders nor rulers, what usually made Islam popular was Sufism, the mystical path in Islam. Between the eleventh and nineteenth centuries, most Muslims were Sufis in one way or another, sometimes because they were formally affiliated to a brotherhood, more often because they participated in the worship of mystical saints. Sufism is usually spread and practiced in brotherhoods called *tariqas*. Today, it is more common to find people with an exclusive affiliation to only one *tariqa* and each brotherhood claims to have a specific doctrine. However, the evidence suggests that this is a relatively recent phenomenon. Before the nineteenth century, many famous scholars had multiple affiliations and they were proud of it. In fact, the Sufis of that time seem to have collected brotherhood affiliations in the way some people today would boast of their club memberships. This fact explains why, although Sufism was very widespread, it is sometimes hard to point out the role of a particular *tariqa* in the spread of Islam. It was not the proselytism of these organised brotherhoods that made Sufism popular, but rather the colourful celebrations carried out around Sufi shrines, in particular on the tombstones of powerful deceased Sufi saints. These festivals were generally open to the general public and

it was not necessary to abandon entirely one's former religion to participate in the cult of a particular Sufi saint. The reputation of miracle-making of these mystical figures gained them many new followers. 'Artistic' factors were important as well. Sufi festivals could include scenic performances of devotees walking on burning coals or piercing their flesh with swords, mystical litanies could be accompanied by music, the mystical experience inspired a particularly prolific poetic production, and the lives of Sufi saints were written down into beautiful stories. One must note that in the three regions under consideration, literatures in vernacular languages started to emerge around the fourteenth century and in each case, Sufi poems and Sufi stories were among the first texts of these new traditions. In Central, South and Southeast Asia, the religious landscape preceding the arrival of Islam was marked by either polytheism or the worship of numerous powerful spirits. Sufi saints easily found a place in this framework as additional religious figures, even among people who did not abandon their former gods and spirits. Sufism also quickly became popular in South and Southeast Asia because of its similarities with the Indian mystical traditions. It was possibly the most familiar aspect of the new religion for those who shared a Hindu or Buddhist background, and local books elaborating on the parallels between Indian mysticism and Muslim mysticism can be found from Bengal to Java.

The three phases of Islamisation

Islam went through three broad successive phases in the process of its adoption by local populations: early contact, localisation and reform. During the first phase of early contact, conversions were limited to small numbers, but there was little to no distortion of Islamic ideas and practices. During the second phase of localisation, more local people converted, but they also slowly transformed the religion to fit local needs and perceptions. For instance, because Mecca was too far away and the trip too expensive for most newly converted Muslims, they created closer and more affordable local pilgrimages, most of the time to the graves of Sufi saints. In the same way, earlier religious concepts or practices remained and some were incorporated into the new local definition of Islam. In Southeast Asia, the most important local rites were prayers on the graves of ancestors performed to obtain blessings and prosperity. Although funerary rites are present in the Islamic tradition, they came to take a much greater importance in Muslim practice in the region. During the third phase of reform, some members of the Islamic community came to perceive the gap between localised Islam and the origins of the Islamic tradition. In Southeast Asia, the reformers started to criticise the very elaborate local funerary rites, pointing out that asking blessings from an ancestor amounted to a denial of the absolute power and transcendence of God. In the regions concerned by our study, the early contact phase extended from the seventh century to the sixteenth century. The localisation phase during which massive conversions occurred went from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The phase of reform started in the late nineteenth century and is still in full swing today. That is why it remains outside the scope of this chapter, except for a few early exceptions.

The social and political chronology of Islamisation in Asia

After having examined the common trends of the spread of Islam in Central, South and Southeast Asia, we will now turn to the specific chronology of Islamisation in these regions. In each case, we first give a summary of the political situation: where and when did rulers adopt Islam? Then, we detail the social chronology of Islamisation: why and in which order did given social groups convert to Islam? Our summary is divided into two parts: first, the spread of Islam through the continental Silk Road, from Central Asia to China; second, the spread of Islam through the

maritime Silk Road, from South Asia to Southeast Asia and South China. This division corresponds to two different currents of Sunni Islamic influences in Asia.³ Along the continental Silk Road, Islam was mostly associated with the Persian language and culture, with dynasties of Turkish origins and with the Hanafi school of law.⁴ Along the maritime Silk Road, Islam was mostly associated with the Arabic language and with the Shafi'i school of law.

The spread of Islam through the continental Silk Road, from Central Asia to China (ninth–nineteenth centuries)

The early Muslim dynasties of Central Asia (ninth–thirteenth centuries)

After the end of the early Muslim conquests in Central Asia in the first part of the eighth century, which brought Muslim rulers to parts of present-day Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, several Muslim dynasties established their control over the region before the Mongol conquest (Dani and Masson 1992). The Persian Muslim Samanid Empire ruled most of present-day Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, Kirghizstan and Afghanistan in the ninth and tenth centuries. They were later replaced by a series of states led by Turkish military elites, most of which adopted Islam and the Persianate Muslim administrative culture the Samanids had contributed to create. These Turkish dynasties are:

- The Ghaznavids, which conquered Afghanistan and Northern India in the eleventh century, and were replaced by the Ghurids in the twelfth century.
- The Karakhanids, which conquered the other Central Asian possessions of the Samanids in the tenth and eleventh centuries and were replaced by the Khwarizm-shahs in the twelfth century. The Karakhanids had also been the first Muslim rulers of Eastern Turkestan, their homeland, but the non-Muslim dynasty of the Kara-khitans took it over in the twelfth century.

The area corresponding to modern Kazakhstan was ruled by a succession of coalitions of non-Muslim Turkish nomads during this period, most notably the Oghuz Turks, the Cuman and the Kipchak. In the early thirteenth century, the non-Muslim Mongol empire quickly conquered all Central Asia and replaced all the aforementioned Turkish dynasties.

The conversion of the successor states of the Mongol Empire (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries)

Although the first Mongol emperors were not Muslims themselves, they integrated many Muslim Turkish soldiers in their armies and resorted to Central Asian Muslims to administer their domains. This was because the rapid Mongol conquest of all Central Asia soon led to administrative problems. In order to rule the huge territories that had fallen under their domination, especially the settled urban areas along the Silk Road, the Mongol rulers employed Central Asian people of diverse origins for the daily administration of their domains. Most of these Central Asians were Muslim, used Perso-Arabic alphabets and had a Persianate political culture inherited from the Samanid Empire. They were not the conquerors, but they were among the main beneficiaries of the Mongol conquest. When the Mongol Empire split into four different states, the Yuan dynasty ruling China and Mongolia, the Chagatai khanate ruling Central Asia, the Ilkhan state ruling Iran and the Golden Horde ruling the steppes of Southern Russia, all four were staffed by a Central Asian Muslim bureaucracy and the rulers themselves soon converted to Islam in the Ilkhan state, the Chagatai Khanate and the Golden Horde.

The Muslim states of the Timurid period (fifteenth–eighteenth centuries)

The Turkish general Tamerlane took over the Ilkhanid state and conquered Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan and Kirghizstan in the late fourteenth century. Although his empire was quickly divided into numerous rival khanates, famous rulers of Central Asia after him claimed to be his descendants. This is why the period following his conquests is called the Timurid period. Central Asia became politically divided between the Kazakh Khanates in the north, the Uzbek Khanates in the south, and several independent oases in eastern Turkestan, but all these states had adopted Islam. Eastern Turkestan was even ruled for a time by the Sufi dynasty of the Afaq Khoja in the seventeenth century, before it was replaced by the non-Muslim Zungar Khanate in the late seventeenth century, the last big nomad empire of the region.

The end of Muslim rule in Central Asia (eighteenth–nineteenth centuries)

With the spread of gunpowder and firearms, nomad horsemen slowly lost much of their former military advantages, and the politically divided Muslim states of Central Asia lost their independence one after the other. The Kazakh and later Uzbek Khanates were conquered by the Russian Empire in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while eastern Turkestan was integrated in the Manchu Qing Empire in 1759 under the name Xinjiang. Only the Muslim Barakzai dynasty of Afghanistan remained in power, but with strong interferences from the British and Russian empires.

The social history of Islamisation in Central Asia

After the end of the early Muslim conquests in Central Asia in the first part of the eighth century, Islam started to spread in a more peaceful manner along the major trade routes from the ninth century onwards. One must note that Islam was one of many religions circulating along the Silk Road, next to Buddhism, Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity and Zoroastrianism. Islam first spread from the lands of the Samanid Empire, in present-day Uzbekistan, through the major trade oases of eastern Turkestan. The movement probably started among individual traders even before the Karakhanid rulers adopted Islam. The most important factor in the later diffusion of Islam in the region was the diffusion of a Persianate Muslim administrative culture among the traders and urban centres of Central Asia. The Sogdians, the ancient people of present-day Uzbekistan, speaking an Indo-European language related to Persian, were the earliest transmitters of this culture, which was later adopted by the Turkic-speaking Uyghurs of present-day Xinjiang (northwest China). As we have seen, the Mongol empire and its successor states soon resorted to Muslim Central Asian administrators to rule their newly conquered domains. These Muslim administrators were for instance responsible for the adoption of alphabets derived from Arabic and Persian, first the Uyghur Arabic alphabet that appeared in the tenth century, and then the Mongol alphabet that developed from the Uyghur alphabet in the thirteenth century. Although its rulers did not convert to Islam, the Yuan dynasty ruling Mongolia and China decided to create military colonies on its newly conquered western marshes, in particular in the present-day Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Gansu and Ningxia. These colonies were staffed by Central Asian Muslims who are the ancestors of the Hui, the Muslim communities of China today. It was in the aftermath of the Mongol conquest that Central Asia became overwhelmingly Turkic speaking and Muslim. The earlier inhabitants of Central Asia, who used to speak Indo-European languages related for instance to Sogdian and Persian, assimilated to the wave of Turkic speaking people that definitely swept the region after the Mongol conquest. Many

Turkic nomadic tribes became Muslim after the fourteenth century through processes of mass tribal conversion. From this moment on, Muslims were not only found in the settled oases of the Silk Road but also among the nomads. Both urban dwellers and nomads came to share the same Muslim Persianate political culture and the same Turkic languages. As Sufism gained in popularity, the region became dotted with Sufi shrines, and Muslim mystics even temporarily gained political power in eastern Turkestan in the seventeenth century. By the time the Russian Empire and the Manchu Qing Empire took control of Central Asia, its population had become overwhelmingly Turkic and Muslim, as it still is today.

The spread of Islam through the maritime Silk Road

The rise and fall of Muslim dynasties in South Asia (eighth–nineteenth centuries)

Sindh, the southwestern coastal province of Pakistan, was conquered by Muslim armies in the beginning of the eighth century (Kulke and Rothermund 2004). From the ninth century onwards, it was ruled independently by the Arabian dynasty of the Habbarids. It was the only South Asian region ruled by Muslims until the eleventh century.

The Muslim Turkish dynasty of the Ghaznavids, originally ruling present-day Afghanistan, successfully invaded northern South Asia in the early eleventh century. They were overthrown in the middle of the twelfth century by the Ghurid dynasty, which took control of most of their former territory and furthered their South Asian conquests in the Indo-Gangetic plain. After the death of Muhammad Ghuri in 1206, the Turkish governor Qutbuddin Aibak started to rule the former Ghurid South Asian domains from the new capital of Delhi. This was the beginning of the sultanate of Delhi, which ruled north India for more than three centuries. In the middle of the fourteenth century, two independent states were formed by Muslim adventurers coming from the lands of the Delhi sultanate: the Kashmir sultanate and the Bengal sultanate. Both were conquered by the Mughals in the end of the sixteenth century. The Delhi sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq (1325–1351) launched a series of successful military campaigns towards the south central Indian region of the Deccan, bringing Muslim rule to whole new areas. However, most of his southern conquests were soon taken over by the Bahmani sultanate, founded in 1347, which ruled over present-day Maharashtra and its immediate south. At the turn of the sixteenth century, the Bahmani state progressively broke into five separate Islamic states collectively known as the Deccan sultanates.

The sultanate of Delhi was conquered in 1526 by a Muslim Turkish dynasty of Central Asian origins, the Mughal dynasty. After the conquest of the Indo-Gangetic plain in the sixteenth century, in the seventeenth century, the Mughals conquered the Deccan sultanates and extended Muslim rule to most of south India, except Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Their power started to collapse in the eighteenth century under the attacks of the Hindu Maratha Empire, later followed by the extension of the British Empire.

The Afghan Durrani Empire ruled over most of present-day Pakistan in the second half of the eighteenth century, but was deprived of Punjab and Kashmir by the Sikh Empire in the early nineteenth century. In the east, the Nawabs of Bengal and the Nawabs of Awadh (present-day Uttar Pradesh) declared independence from the Mughals in the early eighteenth century and ruled parts of these regions until they were integrated in the British Empire in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Nizams of Hyderabad ruled over what is now the province of Andhra Pradesh and parts of its neighbours until they became a princely state of the British Empire in the early nineteenth century. Two other states were ruled by Muslims in the far south

at the end of the eighteenth century before their integration in the British Empire, the Carnatic state and the Kingdom of Mysore. Thus, at the eve of the British conquest, only a handful of regions of South Asia remained ruled by Muslims, most of the rest was part of the Hindu Maratha Empire.

The social history of Islam in South Asia

The trade between Arabia and the coastal regions of India predates Islam by several centuries. Therefore, individual Muslim traders were already present in these areas in the seventh century. By marrying local women, often by using temporary marriage, the Arab and Persian sailors gave rise to mestizo Muslim communities all along the west coast (Wink 1990: 69–70). With the growth of trade with Arabia, contacts between Arab traders and local groups became more frequent. At that time, Hinduism set barriers to commensality and marriage with foreigners, since they did not belong to the caste system. Hinduism also frowned upon professions requiring either maritime travel or the killing of wildlife (including fish), because these activities were supposed to carry religious impurity. Some of their business partners, the local traders, also converted to Islam because this religion valued their profession more than Hinduism. For maritime traders, sailors and fishermen, conversion to Islam could be used as a strategy to ease contacts with foreigners and remove the blame associated with their professions. However, this did not mean that these groups could escape the caste system. As a general rule, former Hindu groups retained the same ascribed social status after their conversion. As we have seen earlier, all these early coastal communities adhere to the Shafi'i school of law, while most of the Muslims of inland South Asia adhere to the Hanafi school of law, which was spread by the Turkish dynasties of north India from the eleventh century onwards. The communities established in Sindh, Gujarat and the Konkan later merged with the northern Muslims who conquered these regions, while the communities of the far south of India have retained their identity to this day. They are the Nawayath of Karnataka, the Mappilas of Kerala and the Maraikayyar of Tamil Nadu.

After the formation of Muslim states in the Indo-Gangetic plain, a number of administrators, state servants or generals converted to Islam in order to keep or improve their position in the state apparatus. The early Muslim dynasties of South Asia did not at first employ Hindus in their administration. After the fourteenth century, they started to employ Hindus on a large scale. Nevertheless, even after that date, some administrators felt that following the religion of the sultan might bring them closer to the centre of power and help their career. This movement, which started in the eleventh century in the Indo-Gangetic plain, was still under way in the far south in the eighteenth century. In spite of this movement, Hindu administrators who had no intention to convert remained very numerous all over the subcontinent.

Among the rural population of South Asia, conversions started at a much later date. Eventually, they led to overwhelming Muslim majorities in the regions of Baluchistan, Sindh, Punjab and Kashmir, which today form the state of Pakistan, as well as in Bengal, where present-day Bangladesh is found. Some peasants were initially attracted to Islam by the spread of Sufi shrines (*dargahs*) in the countryside. As we have seen, the festivals organised in honour of powerful Sufi saints were colourful and open to the general public. In the beginning, peasants could participate in the festival of a Sufi saint without renouncing Hinduism. A syncretic culture mixing Hindu gods and Muslim saints slowly gained ground. What tipped the balance in favour of Islam in the aforementioned regions was the fact that the opening of their agricultural frontiers was associated with the expansion of Sufi shrines (Ansari 1992: 34–5; Eaton 1993). Nomadic tribes living on these fringes of the Indo-Gangetic plain settled and became peasants in large numbers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, while the demographic expansion of formerly settled

areas led to the cultivation of new land near Sufi *dargahs*. Everywhere else in South Asia, partial peasant conversions and the growth of the groups of Muslim traders and administrators led to a Muslim population averaging 20 per cent in the nineteenth century.

The rise of Muslim dynasties in Southeast Asia (thirteenth–nineteenth centuries)

Although small permanent communities of Arab or Persian traders were already established in Southeast Asia since at least the ninth century (Tibbetts 1957: 38), there is no trace of local conversions before the thirteenth century.⁵ The beginning of the Islamisation of Southeast Asia thus rather corresponded to the localisation of foreign Muslims, as it did on most of the western coast of India. Since the pattern of the monsoon winds made very difficult the direct crossing of the Malacca Strait, Muslims coming from the Arab and Persian lands had to wait at least three months in the Malay ports to wait for the winds to change and resume their travels to China or take the road back to India. They often established unions with local women during their stay, and their mestizo children thus became the first local Southeast Asian Muslims. The earliest datable conversions to Islam started in court and merchant circles, among the social elite of Malay ports. The earliest evidence of a Muslim ruler is the tombstone of Malik al-Salih, a ruler of the sultanate of Pasai, in the northwest of Sumatra. It states that the king died in 1297, but we do not know when this king started to rule or when he converted to his new religion.

How can we explain the timing of this conversion, around five centuries after the establishment of the first Muslim communities? It is important to consider the broader Indian Ocean context to understand what it meant for a ruler to convert to Islam in the late thirteenth century.

Islam around the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea until the late thirteenth century

Although the heartlands of Islam were then being occupied by the Mongol Empire, the coastal regions of the Indian Ocean had then never counted more Muslim rulers or Muslim traders. Starting from the tenth century, Muslim traders and rulers established themselves all along the East African coastline (Pouwels 2000: 251–71). This development led to the emergence of a new language, Swahili, with a Bantu grammar and an important proportion of Arabic vocabulary. In the same way, as stated earlier, increasing numbers of South Asian coastal communities were converting to Islam since the ninth century, even though the first Muslim rulers only appeared there in the fourteenth century. This Islamisation movement was not restricted to East Africa and South Asia, it extended as far as southeast China. An important number of sea traders from South China started to convert to Islam after the Mongol conquest, which was achieved in 1279. Conversion to Islam was a means for these merchants to rise higher in the racial hierarchy of the newly established Yuan dynasty (So 2000: 115–16). This hierarchy had four categories: the first was the Mongols, the second was composed of Central Asian Muslims, found in great numbers in the administration of the empire. They were called in Chinese, *Semuren* 色目人, that is people with coloured eyes. The third category was the inhabitants of north China, who were already subjects of the Mongol empire in its very early years. The fourth and lowest category was the people of South China, which were suspected of having sympathies for the former Song dynasty (Tanner 2009: 257). By converting to Islam, the South China merchants were thus able to join the prestigious *Semuren* category and some were even allowed to manage part of the important fortune of the Mongolian ruling family. It must be added that in China, the Confucian ideology considered trade as a parasitic activity, while real wealth was thought to originate from agriculture (Li 2010: 24–7). These ideological factors also explain the attraction of Islam for some of the

South China Sea traders. In the late thirteenth century, the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea were thus in the process of becoming a Muslim lake, with Muslim traders, Muslim rulers or both everywhere from Southeast Africa to Southeast China. The first Malay ruler who converted to Islam thus followed a contemporary trend that promised to bring him many potential allies as well as the sympathies of the majority of the traders of the South Seas. The names of the first rulers of Pasai (Malik al-Salih and Malik al-Zahir) correspond to the names of famous sultans of Egypt, suggesting that it was important for Malay rulers to emulate their distant commercial partners of the heartlands of Islam.

After the conversion of the North Sumatran sultanate of Samudra-Pasai in the late thirteenth century, the spread of Islam generally followed the main trade routes from west to east. Most of the ports of the Malacca Strait before the fourteenth century had merchant kings using a mix of Hinduism and Buddhism as a legitimizing discourse and had at some time been under the rule of the Malay Srivijaya empire (seventh–fourteenth centuries). When the Javanese kingdom of Mojopahit (thirteenth–sixteenth centuries) invaded Srivijaya's capital, Palembang, and all its former tributary ports in the second half of the fourteenth century, it insisted on the necessary separation between kings and merchants, as they did not belong to the same caste. When the mix of Hinduism and Buddhism they had used for centuries was monopolised and aggressively used against them by the Mojopahit empire, the rulers of the Malay ports turned to Islam as another legitimizing tool allowing kings to be merchants. Islam provided not only a new legitimacy discourse but also the promise of powerful allies among the rulers and traders of the Indian Ocean.

The sultanate of Malacca was founded around 1400 by the royal family of the ancient Srivijaya Empire (Wolters 1970), and became the new major crossroads of the maritime Silk Road until it was conquered by the Portuguese in 1511. During the fifteenth century, many port-cities of north Java became Muslim sultanates and asserted their independence from the Mojopahit empire, which ruled from the demographic and agricultural heartland of Java (De Graaf and Pigeaud 1976). At that time, Islam also spread to the twin sultanates of Ternate and Tidore and to the Banda Archipelago in the Moluccas (De Graaf 1970), from which cloves and nutmeg originated. The only major port of the Spice route that had not yet converted to the new religion was Makasar, in south Sulawesi, whose rulers only converted in 1605. Islam also spread at a very early stage to Brunei and the coastal Philippines, during the fourteenth century. In Brunei, the earliest tombstones suggest that the first Muslim converts came from South China (Wade 2012: 128, 134). By the time the Spaniards reached the Philippines, there were Muslim sultanates in Manila, the Sulu archipelago and on the west coast of Mindanao. This Islamisation movement had not yet reached the interior Visayas islands, but it is quite probable that the Philippines would have become a Muslim country like Indonesia and Malaysia if the Spaniards had not set foot on these remote islands.

The heyday of Muslim sultanates and the colonial period

After Malacca fell to the Portuguese in 1511, it was soon replaced by the sultanates of Aceh (northwest Sumatra), Banten (northwest Java) and Makasar (southwest Sulawesi) as the main emporia of the spice trade. Meanwhile, the area that had harboured the Hindu-Buddhist kingdom of Mojopahit, the agricultural and demographic heartland of Java, turned into the powerful Muslim sultanate of Mataram and took its revenge on the Muslim coastal sultanates by conquering and razing most in the first half of the seventeenth century (Tarling 1999). The Dutch started to challenge the Muslim sultanates in the seventeenth century by founding Batavia in 1619, taking Makasar in 1667 and Banten in 1684. During the eighteenth century, the Dutch gained control of the whole north coast of Java and several trade ports all over the region, but many Muslim sultanates retained their independence, such as the sultanate of Aceh or the sultanate of

Johor, in the archipelago near Singapore. In the areas controlled by the Dutch, there was little to no Christian proselytism, and the population remained Muslim everywhere except in Manado and Ambon. In the Philippines, the Spaniards had successfully taken control over Luzon and the Visayas islands in the end of the sixteenth century and converted the local population to Catholicism. Nevertheless, Muslim sultanates remained independent in the South, in the Sulu Archipelago and on the west coast of Mindanao. After having established beachheads in Penang (1786), Malacca (1795) and Singapore (1819), the British established protectorates over all the Muslim sultanates of the Malay Peninsula in the end of the nineteenth century. During the nineteenth century, the Dutch achieved the military conquest of the interior of most Indonesian islands, putting an end to the existence of erstwhile powerful sultanates such as Aceh. In the Philippines, the Spaniards conquered the Muslim sultanates of Sulu and Mindanao between 1851 and 1878, but they had to cede their colony to the US soon thereafter in 1898.

The social history of Islamisation in Southeast Asia

In merchant circles, Islam represented the religion of cosmopolitanism. It was adopted even before the conversion of rulers by many traders of Makasar and of the north Javanese coast. Islam was very successful among rulers from the thirteenth century onwards because it carried with it new legitimacy tools. In Southeast Asia, the new trend of striking coinage in the name of the ruler began in Pasai and was followed by all the later Muslim sultanates. In Malay, royal seals are called '*cap*', a word of Persian origin showing from where this practice was adopted. Royal letters written on luxurious paper with elaborate floral designs were also integrated in the legitimizing apparatus of Malay courts from Muslim lands further west, especially from the later Ottoman and Mughal dynasties. For the rulers of Southeast Asian sultanates, being Muslim meant belonging to the club of these powerful states. Islam was instrumentalised in many other ways to enhance the ruler's standing. For instance, the ruler of the sultanate of Aceh in the seventeenth century led a sumptuous parade of horses and elephants every Friday to the mosque for the Friday prayer, and he himself, rather than the imam, gave the signal for the beginning of the ceremony. He, instead of the imam, also sacrificed the first animal on the Aid al-Kabir, where Muslims reenact Ibrahim's sacrifice of his son Ismail (Takeshi 1984: 173–247). Everything was done to stage the ruler as the leading Muslim of his kingdom. The routine attacks on the coastal polities periodically launched against the mountainous interior regions were rebranded as a *jihad*, a holy war for the propagation of the faith, after their conversion to Islam. With the possible exception of the Gayo Highlands of northern Sumatra, none of these holy wars brought about the conversion of the people of the interior. The fact that these raids were already very common before for economic reasons casts doubt on the sincerity of their religious motives. The word *jihad* added an Islamic legitimacy to raids that had always been practiced for other reasons.

We must note that, since Islam is a very diverse tradition, the adoption of Islamic elements by Southeast Asian rulers was quite selective. The strong preventions against interest loans and usury were usually overlooked, because debt slavery was an important means of consolidating a king's manpower. One must also note that debt slavery contradicted the prohibition of enslaving fellow Muslims. Early Malay law codes show that although the recommendations of Muslim jurisprudence were known, they were not usually followed in practice and what often prevailed was *adat*, that is the local customary law (Milner 1985). Many sultans are known to have kept a leading *ulama* or religious scholar at court and we may ask ourselves why this did not change the dominance of customary law. A look at the situation in the earlier Indianised period provides some clues. A leading Brahmin was kept at court to perform major legitimizing rituals, although the percentage of the local population converted to Hinduism is unknown and may have been

quite low. We can thus see the presence of a leading Muslim religious scholar at court not as a proof of deep Islamisation but as a sign of structural continuity with the Indianised period. Both the Brahmins and the *ulamas* were kept at court for ceremonial and legitimacy purposes, but often they were nothing more than employees who had to submit to the king's goodwill for fear of losing their position (Wormser 2012).

The formation of a localised Muslim tradition and the conversion of the countryside (seventeenth–nineteenth centuries)

In Java, a highly localised form of Islam appeared in court circles in the seventeenth century (Ricklefs 2006). Sultan Agung of Mataram (1613–1645) decided to combine Islam with earlier sources of royal legitimacy and is largely responsible for the flourishing of this enduring syncretic Indo-Javanese Muslim tradition. He was not the first Southeast Asian ruler to bear the title of sultan, but he was the first to ask in Mecca for the permission to bear this title. All the while, he claimed to be the spiritual consort of the Ratu Kidul, the Goddess of the South Seas, and maintained a lively cult for the kingdom's regalia, royal objects believed to possess spiritual powers. The royal graveyard complex he built for himself and his lineage was called Imogiri, a term derived from Sanskrit meaning mountain of snow. Despite its name pointing to Indian religious traditions and its function calling to mind the Austronesian tradition of ancestor worship, the place became for many Javanese a Muslim pilgrimage site that could replace the pilgrimage to Mecca. At court, Javanese elites started to elaborate a syncretic Muslim tradition, in which Sufi equivalents were found for the concepts of Hindu and Buddhist mysticism. It is only in the seventeenth century that Islam really started to be practiced by the majority of the population. One important step was the adoption of Islam in the interior of Java, which is to this day the most densely settled area of Southeast Asia. One of the most important factors in the conversion of the general population was the transformation of former Hindu and Buddhist hermitages and places of learning into Sufi shrines and boarding schools. Many hermits saw striking continuities between Hindu-Buddhist mysticism and Islamic mysticism and came to see Sufism as a kind of update of the mystical tradition. The name the Javanese Muslim boarding schools have kept to this day is a testimony of this continuity: they are called *pesantren*, a word of Sanskrit origin meaning religious school.

One element that helped the spread of Sufism in Southeast Asia was the cults associated with the saints' graves. The indigenous religious traditions of Southeast Asia have very elaborate ancestors' cults that usually take place in front of big ancestors' stones. The most venerated ancestors are those who founded a settlement, because they are thought to have originated his descendants' way of life. One can easily understand how the tombstones of famous Sufi saints came to be viewed in the region as equivalent to powerful ancestors' stones. The tombstones of the Sufis thought to have brought Islam to a particular place are to this day popular pilgrimage destinations for the Muslims of Indonesia and the southern Philippines, the most famous being the Nine Saints of Java, the *Wali Songo* (Chambert-Loir and Guillot 1995). As the Javanese countryside became dotted with Sufi shrines, each village came to have its local Sufi master, the *kyai*, the central figure of religious authority. As in South and Central Asia, the colourful rituals and the reputation of miracle-making of the Sufis earned them the trust of the peasants.

Early reformers

From the seventeenth century onwards, some Muslim urban merchants started to criticise the localised tradition that was gaining ground in the countryside. One of the main drives of early

reform movements was the need for social distinction. In the regions examined here, Islam first spread in cosmopolitan urban centres along the main trade routes among merchants and rulers, which were part of the elite of local societies. In the early contact phase when conversions were very restricted, being Muslim was enough to set oneself apart from local society. In the localisation phase, however, as more and more people of all social classes started to convert, something more was needed for early Muslim converts who wanted to stress their own social standing. The fact of criticising localised Islam and calling for a purification of the faith thus first became popular in courts and urban and merchant circles. The critics of these early reformers concentrated on the excesses of popular exteriorised Sufism, as they advocated more sober forms of mysticism. Some stated that the exclusive popular reliance on miracle making saints amounted to idolatry, and that mystical devotion could be no excuse to neglect the basic precepts of the Muslim faith. Wealthy urban merchant circles connected with the heartlands of Islam were the most receptive to these discourses, as it gave them new means of social distinction in an increasingly Muslim environment. One must also note that contrary to post nineteenth-century reform movements, early reformers only criticised some aspects of Sufism, and while early reformers criticised certain aspects of Sufism, they still claimed to be true Sufis themselves.

Conclusion

The study of the spread of Islam in Central, South and Southeast Asia before the nineteenth century shows that there is no correlation between the establishment of Muslim rulers and the conversion of the local population. Conversions by the sword were always an exception, and we have to look elsewhere to explain the appeal of Islam in these regions. As we have seen, there is no single explanatory factor valid for all times, places and social groups, but some trends are noticeable. Islam spread early through trade routes among merchant circles because of its mobility and positive attitude towards commerce. The earliest Muslims of the three regions considered here were always foreign traders and their mestizo children. In court circles, what made Islam most popular was its legitimacy tools, as well as the cultural and administrative models of Persian culture. For the majority of the population, the decisive factor was the appeal of Sufi festivals and associated art forms. In each of the three regions under study, Islam had become a highly localised mystical tradition. As more and more people converted, the urban merchant groups where the earliest Muslims had been found started to criticise popular Sufism in order to stress their distinct social standing. In the end of the nineteenth century, the critics of Sufism became much harsher and started to denounce the whole mystical tradition itself.

Notes

- 1 On the early history of Muslim conquests, see Hodgson (1974).
- 2 For South Asian examples of these practices, see Schimmel (2004).
- 3 Sunnism remains dominant to this day in Central Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Minority Shia communities can be found in central Afghanistan, Tajikistan and in some South Asian regions such as Gujarat and Kashmir.
- 4 There are four major schools of law in Sunni Islam: the Hanafi school, dominant in Turkey, Central Asia and South Asia; the Shafi'i school, dominant around the Indian Ocean, in East Africa and Southeast Asia; the Maliki school, dominant in North and West Africa; and the Hanbali school, dominant in the Arabian Peninsula.
- 5 Contemporary scholars have recently discovered that the eleventh-century Muslim tombstones discovered in Java and Champa, what is now central Vietnam, have no relation with the region and have been brought as ballast (Guillot and Kalus 2003, 2004).

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Reform movements and modernity

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Shinto's modern transformations

From imperial cult to nature worship

Aike P. Rots

Until recently, it was widely assumed that Shinto is *the* indigenous worship tradition of Japan, which pervades Japanese culture and goes back to pre-Buddhist or even primordial times. This continues to be the dominant narrative of popular-scientific introductory texts, shrine publications, travel guidebooks and online encyclopedias. In recent years, however, a number of critical historians have convincingly challenged this view. They have pointed out that Shinto is in many respects an (early) modern invention rather than an ancient tradition, and that in the course of history the term 'Shinto' has been used in a variety of ways, carrying numerous different meanings. Since the beginning of Japan's modern period, in the mid-nineteenth century, both the concept itself and the practices and ideas to which it refers have been subject to significant transformations – as has the relationship of Shinto to those other core modern categories, 'religion' (*shūkyō*) and 'the state' (*kokka*). Today, various competing definitions, conceptualisations and historical narratives coexist, and Shinto's category boundaries remain as fluid and contested as ever.

In this chapter, I examine some of the ways in which 'Shinto' has been conceptualised and configured in modern and contemporary Japan, taking into consideration its changing position vis-à-vis both the state and the category '*shūkyō*'. In addition, some of the transformations that shrines have undergone in recent history are discussed. The chapter consists of four parts. I start by discussing the category 'Shinto', comparing different modern conceptualisations and outlining some of the main scholarly developments and debates in the field of 'Shinto studies'. I then look at the tradition as it took shape in the Meiji period (1868–1912): a 'state religion' that was configured as 'non-religious' and 'public', as opposed to other 'religions', which were reconfigured as 'private' and faith-based. The late-nineteenth-century distinction between a public 'state Shinto' and private 'religions' was arguably artificial and the result of government coercion; nevertheless, I argue, it continues to be highly relevant today. The third part is an examination of the reconfiguration of Shinto as 'religion' in the postwar period, and looks at some of the ways in which postwar ideologues have tried to reinvent the tradition in response to political developments and negotiate postwar legal secularism. Finally, I will look at some trends in contemporary shrine Shinto, including some of the more recent attempts made by some shrine actors to de-privatise the tradition and reintroduce certain types of Shinto symbolism into the public realm. I argue that a new paradigm shift is taking place today, which is even affecting the conservative shrine establishment: shrines are being redefined as vestiges of ancient nature worship,

and becoming increasingly active in forest conservation and environmental education. Thus, I suggest, Shinto is once again subject to reinvention.

Defining 'Shinto'

The category 'Shinto' is by no means unambiguous. It is a contested concept, which has been employed in a number of different ways, at times contradictory. In academic debates on Shinto, various historical narratives coexist, reflecting a number of ideological and normative positions regarding the essence of the Japanese nation, the position of the emperor, and the role of 'religion' and ritual ceremonies in the public sphere. Thus, the category 'Shinto' is subject to ongoing negotiations, and conflicting definitions represent different political agendas. Consequently, it is practically impossible to give a neutral, empirically adequate definition of Shinto, as the very term is ideologically charged. 'There is a political factor to be taken into account in any understanding of Shinto', as Michael Pye rightly observed (1981: 61). Hence, the question 'what is Shinto' is not as simple as it may seem at first sight, for any attempt at definition is inevitably bound up with ideology (Bocking 2004: 263–6; Havens 2006: 14–19). 'Shinto' is an ideal typical construction that may be based on actual ritual practices and shrine traditions, but does not equal them. In Mark Teeuwen's formulation, it 'is not something that has "existed" in Japanese society in some concrete and definable form during different historical periods; rather, it appears as a conceptualisation, an abstraction that has had to be produced actively every time it has been used' (2002: 233).

Thus, Shinto is a historical construct, subject to continuous negotiation and redefinition, rather than a natural given (cf. Breen and Teeuwen 2010: ix). That does not mean, however, that the term is merely an empty label that can be projected onto any belief or practice. In discursive constructions and definitions of Shinto, there is a limited number of recurring themes, tropes and assumptions. Most importantly, the term serves an important function as a generic category covering a variety of institutions called *jinja* or *jingū* (usually translated as 'shrines' in English), as well as ritual and discursive practices associated with these institutions. As such, in the modern period especially (i.e. from 1868 onwards), 'Shinto' stands out as a very real presence in Japanese society – even though its category boundaries have never been clearly defined, and the societal and political position of institutions and practices referred to as 'Shinto' has gone through some significant transformations.

When looking at the pre-modern (i.e. pre-1868) and medieval periods, however, the picture gets more complicated. Constructions of 'Shinto' as an independent, pre-Buddhist, indigenous Japanese tradition were developed by Edo-period (1600–1868) *kokugaku* (nativist) scholars such as Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) and Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843), drawing on the inventions of Yoshida Kanetomo (1435–1511) and other late-medieval scholars and priests (Breen and Teeuwen 2010: 47–52, 60–5). Before the Meiji period, however, shrines were not usually independent from Buddhist temples, institutionally nor theologically. It may be argued, then, that modern Shinto is largely an invented tradition, which developed out of Buddhism (Teeuwen 2007) and incorporated elements from a variety of sources – including existing shrine traditions, imperial rites, and Neo-Confucian ideology. Although the term *shintō* (probably initially pronounced as *jindō*) – i.e. the combination of the character for 'deities' (*kami* 神) with the character meaning way, path or road (*michi* 道) – was already used in the eighth-century chronicle *Nihon Shoki*, in all likelihood at the time it did not yet refer to an independent worship tradition (Kuroda 1981; Teeuwen 2002). In any case, *kami* worship at the time differed significantly from Shinto as it developed in pre-modern times.¹

Consequently, imaginations of 'Shinto' as a tradition going back to primordial times often lead to the anachronistic projection of modern notions onto earlier shrine practices. While

some shrines do indeed go back many centuries, in some cases predating the introduction of Buddhism to the Japanese isles, they have been subject to continuous processes of transformation and reinvention (e.g. Breen and Teeuwen 2010: 66–128; Grapard 1992; Thal 2005; Zhong 2011). By no means does the variety of practices concerned with the worship of local deities in ancient times equal the singular, 'indigenous' tradition 'Shinto' as it was imagined in the Edo and Meiji periods. Significantly, then, there 'have been historical processes of "Shintoization"' (Breen and Teeuwen 2010, ix) – that is, in the course of history, some places and practices were discursively reconceived and configured as 'Shinto', while others were excluded.

Such a historical-constructivist approach to the study of Shinto, which takes into consideration historical processes whereby certain ideas and practices came to be categorised as 'Shinto', is by no means self-evident. Until the 1980s, the concept of 'Shinto' was generally considered to refer to 'the' indigenous worship tradition of 'the' Japanese people, which throughout history has existed alongside Buddhism, its essence more or less unchanged since 'pre-historical' times. The historicity of the concept itself was not usually studied, let alone processes of 'Shintoisation'. The historian Kuroda Toshio (1926–1993) is usually credited for being the first to question this notion of Shinto as 'the indigenous religion of Japan, continuing in an unbroken line from prehistoric times down to the present', arguing that 'before modern times Shinto did not exist as an independent religion' (1981: 1–3). Kuroda's work has been groundbreaking for a number of reasons, and it has influenced a generation of historians. Although some of his claims have been rejected for being too radical (e.g. Breen and Teeuwen 2000a: 4–5), his basic argument, that 'Shinto' is the outcome of historical construction and negotiation processes, remains highly significant. As Teeuwen and Scheid write:

[b]y stripping away the myth of a single, independent Shinto tradition, [Kuroda's] work has led to an emphasis on aspects of discontinuity in kami worship, both diachronically, between various periods of Japanese history, and synchronically, between center and periphery, between different locations and historical contexts.

(2002: 197)

Indeed, in the past two decades, a number of serious historical studies and overviews have been published that move beyond essentialist idealisations. They focus on individual actors and processes of historical change, rather than assuming the existence of 'Shinto' as a trans-historical entity (Ambros 2008; Breen and Teeuwen 2000b, 2010; Grapard 1992; Havens 2006; Inoue Hiroshi 2011; Itō *et al.* 2002; Moerman 2005; Teeuwen 1996b; Thal 2005; Zhong 2011). However, as stated above, the popular view of Shinto as an ancient, singular (religious) tradition, the essence of which has supposedly remained unchanged and is not susceptible to historical change, continues to be influential. This applies not only to widely read online encyclopedias such as *Wikipedia*, anthologies of texts from the major 'world religions' (e.g. Markham and Lohr 2009: 131–52) and popular introductions to Shinto (e.g. Kamata 2000; Littleton 2002; Picken 2002; Rankin 2010; Tanaka 2011; Yamakage 2006; Yamamura 2011), but also to works that appear to have been written for academic audiences (e.g. Kasulis 2004; Picken 2004; Sonoda 1998).

Thus, there is a significant difference between 'emic' narratives, which conceive of Shinto as Japan's ancient, indigenous worship tradition, and historical-constructivist studies that challenge such narratives. In contrast to what some critics have suggested, however, there is not one single 'emic' conceptualisation, although there is a number of regularly recurring tropes and themes.² In fact, in modern (i.e. post-1868) constructions and conceptualisations of 'Shinto', several different paradigms have emerged, which continue to coexist today. I distinguish between six essentialist paradigms,³ which I refer to as the *imperial* paradigm, the *ethnic* paradigm, the

universal paradigm, the *local* paradigm, the *spiritual* paradigm and the *environmentalist* paradigm. What these paradigms have in common is that – in sharp contrast to the historical-constructivist understanding of Shinto outlined before – they conceive of Shinto as a unique, singular tradition, the essence of which has remained unchanged since ancient times, not influenced by historical particularities. They differ, however, in their understanding of that very essence – and, therefore, in their understanding of the defining aspect(s) of the tradition. As their names suggest, they conceive of Shinto as, respectively and essentially, a national, non-religious ritual tradition centred around the imperial institution; the single moral, cultural and religious way of ‘the’ Japanese people; a religion with global salvific potential; a variety of ancient, rural traditions, best preserved in shrine festivals (*matsuri*) and folklore; a mystical, non-rational tradition that can only be understood intuitively, closely connected to so-called ‘sacred places’; and an ancient tradition of nature worship containing valuable ecological knowledge that may help us overcome today’s environmental crisis.⁴ Of these six, the imperial paradigm is arguably the oldest, going back to at least the early Meiji period. It is to this period that I now turn.

‘Shinto’ in the Meiji period

In recent years, several scholars of religion and social anthropologists have questioned the supposed universal applicability of the concept ‘religion’, and re-historicised the category by examining its historical configuration and application in various ‘non-Western’ societies (e.g. Asad 1993; Fitzgerald 2000; Masuzawa 2005; McCutcheon 1997). Accordingly, there has been some debate concerning the applicability of the term ‘religion’ in the Japanese context, and the question as to whether there was a differentiated ‘religious’ realm in Japan prior to the Meiji period (e.g. Fitzgerald 2003; Isomae 2003, 2012; Josephson 2012; Kleine 2013; Pye 2003; Reader 2004) and whether or not there was a differentiated ‘religious’ realm in the Edo period is subject to debate. In any case, the modern category ‘religion’ was first established in the 1850s, partly as a result of foreign pressure, and largely based on the model of Protestant Christianity (Josephson 2012). In subsequent decades, the new societal and legal status of existing traditions was negotiated and determined; some were configured as ‘religions’ centred around a particular belief system, while others were categorised as public and, hence, non-religious. During the same period, the socio-political functions of the institutions now redefined as ‘religion’ changed significantly, as did some of the practices associated with these institutions. First, centuries-old temple-shrine complexes were forced to split up into a ‘Buddhist’ temple and a ‘Shinto’ shrine in a process called *shinbutsu bunri* (‘separation of Shinto and Buddhism’), which took place in 1868 (Hardacre 1989: 27–8). Second, Buddhist temples transformed from semi-public institutions responsible for the registration of all citizens into private religious organisations that had to compete for individual followers. Third, the government reluctantly allowed Christian missionaries to re-enter the country and proselytise. And fourth, popular local devotional movements had to reorganise and register as ‘religions’; in the process, many of them adopted elements from Christianity (theological, soteriological and organisational).

Until the modern period, then, neither ‘Shinto’ nor ‘religion’ existed as independent, differentiated social entities. Hence, it was by no means self-evident that ‘Shinto’ should be configured as another ‘religion’ alongside Christianity and Buddhism. The Edo-period *kokugaku* mythologists had reinvented Shinto as the primordial, divinely inspired tradition of the Japanese people, superior to any other ritual traditions and worldviews. Their ideas were incorporated by some of the architects of the Meiji ‘restoration’, who intended to reshape Shinto as a national ideology surrounding the divine emperor, and remodel shrine traditions accordingly. During the first decades of the Meiji period, the relations between Shinto, ‘religion’ and the state were

unclear, and subject to continuous negotiation and political experiments. These included debates concerning the nature of Shinto, and the question as to whether Shinto should be conceived of as a religion or not (Hardacre 1989: 34–6).

It was in this period that the imperial paradigm was established: that is, the notion that Shinto is the singular, primordial tradition of the Japanese people, which is fundamentally a 'non-religious' collective ritual tradition surrounding the emperor. As such, it was seen as something fundamentally different from traditions concerned with belief, salvation, pastoral care and rituals for personal benefit, which were reconfigured as 'religion'. As Isomae writes:

The argument that Shintō was not a religion was constructed in order to protect Shintō, which was closely connected to the emperor institution, from competition with other religions such as Christianity and Buddhism. In order to overcome its doctrinal weakness, the government had attempted to systematize Shintō doctrine during the early 1870s but did not succeed in creating a unified system. Following this failure the government recognized the incompatibility between doctrinally-oriented religious concepts and Shintō's own practice-oriented characteristics and, boldly turning the tables, sought to reposition Shintō outside the scope of the Western concept of religion.

(2012: 239–240)

By the end of the nineteenth century, then, 'Shinto' had been established as a non-religious national morality and set of ritual practices, in which all citizens were obliged to take part. 'Religion', by contrast, was seen as a private affair:

working through the Imperial Constitution (*Teikoku kenpō*) promulgated in 1889 and the Imperial Rescript on Education (*Kyōiku chokugo*) issued the following year, the state divided the earlier undifferentiated world of *kyō* (teaching) into a private domain left to individual discretion called 'religion' and a public domain of national duties called 'morality'.

(Isomae 2012: 237)

Shinto clearly belonged to the latter. Thus, it came to be seen as, essentially, emperor-centred and non-religious.

Contrary to what Isomae suggests in the above quotation, however, Nitta (2000) has demonstrated convincingly that the notion of Shinto as a 'non-religion' was not merely a government strategy for protecting Shinto from religious competition. Nor, for that matter, was it actively embraced by all Shinto priests. On the contrary, some of them protested the government's decision to forbid shrine priests from engaging in activities that were considered 'religious' (e.g. individual rituals and pastoral care), which had constituted their main source of income. As Nitta shows, the configuration of Shinto as non-religious was the outcome of what may be called an unholy alliance between *koku-gaku*-influenced Shinto ideologues seeking to establish their tradition as *the* national ideology of the modern state Japan, and Buddhist leaders from the powerful Jōdo Shinshū school (Pure Land Buddhism) eager to deny shrine priests access to the newly established religious marketplace (Nitta 2000). Thus, the notion of Shinto as a non-religion, serving the entire nation and surrounding the emperor, is not just an ideological construction made by Shinto actors, but was also advocated by some of their rivals – at least in the initial period – for different reasons.

Nevertheless, although Buddhist leaders may have been involved in the establishment of Shinto as a 'non-religion' in the early Meiji period, these notions were subsequently appropriated by powerful members of the ruling oligarchy and prominent Shinto representatives. They

used it as a device for the construction of Shinto as a public state cult and morality, participation in which was obligatory for all citizens. As Sarah Thal has argued:

[b]y removing Shinto from the realm of religion, the accumulated rhetoric of decades succeeded in establishing Shinto, in its nineteenth-century form, not as a religious belief but as the fundamental expression of Japanese identity ... Using the concept of religion as a political tool, advocates of Shinto confounded the boundaries of church and state, religion and secularism, to shape the very idea of Japaneseness itself.

(2002: 112)

Thus, Shinto in its Meiji-period shape (i.e. elements derived from shrine worship, which were combined with Confucian notions of ancestor worship, modern nationalism and imperialism) came to be intimately intertwined with normative notions of what it meant to be Japanese. Thus the developed ritual-ideological system is conventionally referred to as 'state Shinto', which Helen Hardacre has defined as 'the relationship of state patronage and advocacy existing between the Japanese state and the religious practice known as Shintō between 1868 and 1945' (1989: 4). According to this view, between 1868 and 1945 Shinto was appropriated by the state, and became a central part of the ideological state apparatus. The priesthood has often been seen as complicit in this process, and the Shinto establishment as partly responsible for the development of imperialism and, ultimately, fascism. By suggesting that 'the government' was the main actor responsible for the construction of Shinto as a state ideology, made possible by the collaboration of 'the priesthood', Hardacre by and large follows Murakami Shigeoyoshi's classical account of 'state Shinto' (1970).

The nature and origins of 'state Shinto' is a topic that continues to be subject to heated debate, however. On the one hand, scholars such as Nitta Hitoshi and Sakamoto Koremaru have questioned Murakami's account, arguing that Shinto's role in the development of imperialism and totalitarianism was less prominent than traditionally suggested. Sakamoto, for instance, has argued that in the early Meiji period, the relationship between Shinto and the state had not yet crystallised. According to him, the full integration of shrine Shinto into the state apparatus did not take place until well into the twentieth century; 'state Shinto', he argues, was not fully established until the late 1930s, and was short-lived. Moreover, he has suggested that shrine Shinto was notably different from state Shinto as it was developed by government-related ideologues (Sakamoto 1994, 2000). On the other hand, sociologist of religion Shimazono Susumu (2007, 2009) has followed Murakami and Hardacre in arguing that 'state Shinto' was developed from the beginning of the Meiji period onwards. Moreover, he has suggested that it has never fully disappeared, and uses the term to refer to postwar attempts to reconfigure Shinto as national ideology, reintroduce imperial rituals and symbols into the public sphere, and re-establish shrines as public, national places of worship.

The debate on the length and characteristics of 'state Shinto' is partly semantic: whether it is considered to have begun in the 1860s or in the 1930s largely depends on how it is defined. However, it also reflects competing narratives (and corresponding political positions) regarding the responsibility of shrine priests and Shinto representatives for the development of totalitarian ideology. It is perhaps not surprising that scholars such as Sakamoto Koremaru and Nitta Hitoshi, who are considered as conservative historians or even Shinto apologists (Shimazono 2009: 96–8), tend to downplay the involvement of shrines in state affairs, pointing to other actors instead. Be that as it may, Sakamoto and Nitta are not the only ones who have pointed out that not all shrine priests were actively involved with, and complicit in, the establishment of 'state Shinto'. Other historians – less apologetic and politically outspoken – have also drawn attention to the fact that

local shrine priests and parishioners were in many cases victims of government coercion, as they were no longer allowed to perform popular rituals or even forced to close down shrines. By doing so, these historians have drawn attention to local diversity, which was often overlooked in the standard narrative of 'state Shinto' (e.g. Azegami 2009; Azegami and Teeuwen 2012; Breen 2000).

In addition, I would argue that there is another problem with the category 'state Shinto', whether defined narrowly (as Sakamoto does) or broadly (Shimazono's suggestion). That is, the distinction made in academic and public discourse between 'state Shinto' and 'shrine Shinto' can be misleading as it creates an artificial dichotomy between a political ideology seen as derived from, yet fundamentally different from 'real' Shinto, and an 'ancient' worship tradition that is perceived as essentially apolitical. That is, many contemporary Shinto authors suggest that 'state Shinto' was a distortion of the 'original' Shinto, which was a peaceful tradition of nature worship and harvest rituals, far removed from the realms of politics and ideology (e.g. Picken 2002: 24–5). The common assumption is that Shinto was 'hijacked' by the totalitarian regime (as well as, perhaps, by a handful of nationalist Shinto ideologues), thus becoming 'state Shinto', but that this was an aberration from its 'original shape', which was restored after the war. The conventional category distinction of 'shrine Shinto' and 'state Shinto' thus presupposes a distinction between apolitical shrine practices on the one hand, and state-induced political machinations, on the other. As such, it downplays the ideological elements inherent in various shrine practices, and the ongoing involvement of shrine priests in political affairs.

Postwar diversity

After the Japanese surrender, Shinto was separated from the state, and officially re-categorised as 'religion', participation in which was to become voluntary. A new, secular constitution was implemented, which stipulated a strict separation of state and religion. As a consequence, state patronage of Shinto institutions came to be seen as a violation of the constitution – an issue that has been contested ever since (Breen 2010a). In 1946, Jinja Honchō (the Association of Shinto Shrines, sometimes referred to as National Association of Shrines [NAS]) was founded as a general umbrella organisation for Japan's 80,000 or so shrines. Significantly, it was legally defined as a private religious institution instead of, say, a government agency. Thus, Shinto ceased to be state ideology.

This development has been deplored by influential members of the shrine establishment, however. As Breen and Teeuwen write:

In February 1946 shrines were registered under a new law as religious juridical persons (*shūkyō hōjin*), and NAS was founded as a new umbrella organisation. Rather than making a radical break with the past, NAS opted to hold on to many elements of the Meiji state cult. It retained the leadership of the Ise Shrine ... The imperial rituals instituted in the Meiji period have a prominent place on the ritual calendar of member shrines, just as they did before the war. Perhaps most importantly, NAS inherited the Meiji view of Shinto as a non-religion. This partly explains Shinto's weakness as a religious identity. NAS sees Shinto as a 'public' ritual system open to all members of the community irrespective of their 'private' beliefs, not as an exclusivist religion.

(2010: 13)

As this quotation makes clear, some members of the conservative establishment continuously strive for a fundamental re-categorisation of Shinto – as, indeed, a non-religion. They criticise 'religion' for being a Western import not suited to the Japanese context, and the separation of

state and religion for being an artificial construct imposed upon Japan by occupying forces that did not understand Japanese ‘traditional culture’. Accordingly, by means of legal struggles as well as political lobby work,⁵ they have consistently tried to challenge and reshape the boundaries between Shinto, the emperor and the Japanese state (Breen 2010a; Hardacre 1989: 133–64; Mullins 2012; Takayama 1993; Teeuwen 1996a). Ironically, however, the Shinto they wish to re-establish is not very ‘traditional’ either, but firmly grounded in Meiji-period inventions: the association of locally practised shrine Shinto with emperor worship, the primacy of Ise as the ancestral shrine of the imperial family (Breen 2010b), the national importance of Yasukuni as a place where war dead (anonymous soldiers as well as condemned war criminals) are enshrined (Breen 2007), and the ideological role of ‘Shinto’ in cultivating national pride through education. Until today, then, Shinto’s legal status continues to be subject to debate, closely related as it is to ideological notions of the Japanese nation, its history and cultural traditions, and the imperial institution. Thus, as I argued before, different historical narratives and definitions of ‘Shinto’ correspond to different political positions.

Given this diversity in opinions, it should come as no surprise that in the immediate postwar period, there was no clear consensus concerning the shape a new, depoliticised Shinto should take. As Breen and Teeuwen have pointed out, at the time:

it was far from obvious that Shinto would survive the demise of the old imperial Japan. All agreed that if Shinto was to be rescued from rapid disintegration, it needed to be reinvented. Yet the direction that Shinto would take after Japan’s catastrophic defeat in the war was far from clear. The choices made by leaders of the shrine world at this critical junction reveal much about the position of shrines in society, and about the ambiguities of ‘Shinto’ as a conceptualization of shrine practices.

(2010: 5)

During the initial stage, they write, there were three ‘camps’ within Jinja Honchō, represented by the ideas of Ashizu Uzuhiko (1909–1992), Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962) and Orikuchi Shinobu (1887–1953) respectively. The first ‘stressed Shinto’s role in uniting the Japanese people under the spiritual guidance of the emperor’ (Breen and Teeuwen 2010: 6), while the other two represented what I have referred to as the ‘local’ and ‘universal’ paradigms, which are not necessarily less nationalistic in orientation but deny the primacy of the imperial institution and the notion of the Japanese nation as a singular, homogeneous entity. As Breen and Teeuwen state (2010: 7), ‘Ashizu fought a hard battle to exclude the influence of Yanagita and Orikuchi from the new shrine organization ... Initially, Ashizu prevailed, but over time the alternatives offered by Yanagita and (to a lesser degree) Orikuchi have bounced back’.

Notwithstanding popular imaginations of national and institutional unity, then, the shrine establishment today appears to be as divided as ever. Moreover, it must be emphasised that the shrine establishment does not own the monopoly on the category ‘Shinto’. As with other religions, the definition and boundaries of this category are contested and subject to change; in addition to the shrines affiliated with Jinja Honchō, it includes the independent Fushimi Inari Shrine in Kyoto and its satellite shrines, as well as a number of organisationally independent shrines scattered around Japan (see Breen and Teeuwen 2010: 199–220). In addition, depending on one’s definition, the category may include several of the so-called ‘new religions’ historically categorised as ‘sect Shinto’ (*shūha shintō*) and their split-offs (e.g. Hardacre 1986; Staemmler and Dehn 2011), as well as a number of institutions outside Japan calling themselves Shinto. Within this disparate mix of institutions, numerous actors are active, for whom the term ‘Shinto’ may or may not be relevant but who somehow identify with *kami* and/or shrines. These actors include

priests, scholars, sponsors, practitioners, volunteers and others, representing a great variety in devotional practices and beliefs (Nelson 1996; Smyers 1996). In sum, there are multiple Shintos, today as well as in pre-modern times.

Five recent trends

Internal diversity notwithstanding, in contemporary shrine Shinto, five general trends can be observed. Some of these trends appear contradictory, while others are more complementary. I refer to them as, first, the ongoing attempts to re-establish Shinto as a national ritual-symbolic system and re-sacralise the public sphere; second, the discursive and institutional 'de-religionisation' of shrines and ritual practices, and their re-categorisation as 'traditional culture' and '(world or national) heritage'; third, the increasing popularity of shrines as sacred places believed to possess spiritual power (today referred to as 'powerspots'), and corresponding processes of commodification; fourth, widespread institutional decline, and the economic marginalisation of many (mainly rural) smaller shrines; and fifth, the popularisation of notions of Shinto as an ancient tradition of nature worship containing important ecological knowledge, as well as associated conservationist practices. In the remainder of this chapter, I briefly discuss each of these developments.

First, there has been a process going on in the past decades, which we may refer to as the re-sacralisation of public space (or the public sphere). As described by Mark Mullins (2012), certain 'sacred' symbols associated with Shinto, the nation and the imperial institution have regained new popularity, and the boundaries between 'the state' (public) and 'religion' (private) have been subject to continuous negotiation. Arguably, this development has been going on since the 1970s or 1980s, when it was referred to by scholars as the re-emergence of 'civil religion' in Japanese society (e.g. Takayama 1993); thus, it is perhaps not as recent a development as sometimes suggested. Nevertheless, attempts to challenge the constitutional separation of state and religion and to reassert the position of various Shinto-related symbols and practices in the public sphere continue to be made, and are often subject to heated debate. They typically concern issues related to the position of the emperor and war memory – but also, more in general, state patronage and sponsorship of shrines and other religious institutions (*shūkyō hōjin*) (Breen 2010a; cf. Tanaka 2011: 14–16).

In contemporary Shinto ideology, it is often argued that, in order for Japanese society to function well, shrines need to be reassigned their 'proper' place – not as private religious institutions, but as symbolic community centres located in the public sphere. Mullins' (2012) choice to refer to this development as 'de-privatisation' is apt, as the subject of these ongoing negotiations is precisely the extent to which Shinto and shrines are (legally) defined as either public or private. As Tanaka Tsunekiyo, the current president of Jinja Honchō, has argued:

When seen from our perspective as shrine priests, shrine ritual worship and governance (*jinja no 'matsurigoto'*)⁶ is always 'public' ('ōyake'). Private affairs do not take place at all. Put simply, all we do is pray for the peace and safety of the nation and the community (*kyōdōtai*) where we live. These are, so to speak, public prayers (*paburikku [public] na inori*).
(2011: 7; my translation)

Thus, Japan's postwar secular polity continues to be challenged and contested by different actors – including organisations such as Jinja Honchō, but also (local) politicians and bureaucrats that are part of the state apparatus themselves. Meanwhile, however, they are rigorously defended by others (e.g. leftist politicians and Christians).⁷

Second, as several scholars have observed, the category *shūkyō* is not very popular in Japan today. The term is commonly associated with exclusivism, intolerance, aggressive proselytisation and even violence. Surveys suggest that a majority of the population defines itself as non-religious, despite the fact that many of these people do participate in certain types of shrine and temple worship (e.g. *hatsumōde*, the first shrine visit of the new year, and Buddhist funeral ceremonies) and may believe in the existence of divine beings (cf. Roemer 2012). In particular, the Aum Shinrikyō subway attack of 1995 gave rise to a widespread distrust of anything associated with ‘religion’, and anti-religious attitudes continue to be held widely today (Bafelli and Reader 2012). Not surprisingly, then, in recent decades, shrines, temples and ritual practices have been dissociated from ‘religion’, and reframed on a large scale as ‘(traditional) culture’ and ‘(cultural) heritage’.

Arguably, this is not only the result of the recent impopularity of ‘religion’, but part of a larger process which has been going on since the 1970s and which has been referred to as the ‘culturalisation’ (*bunkaka*) of Japanese society (Robertson 1991: 32–7; cf. Morris-Suzuki 1998: 60–78): the rebranding of Japan as a country with a rich cultural heritage and unique aesthetic traditions, intimately intertwined with the Japanese intuitive appreciation of natural beauty and seasonal change, presented as essentially apolitical. This development was probably accelerated after the Aum affair, however: ‘religion’ came to be discredited and religious institutions sought to redefine themselves in alternative terms, which contributed to a development we may refer to as *the heritagisation of worship traditions*. Places of worship, ritual practices (e.g. pilgrimage) and ‘sacred’ buildings or objects are no longer primarily defined in terms of faith, ritual efficacy or available ‘religious merit’; nor are they necessarily framed as ‘religious’. Instead, they are redefined – in tourist publications, media texts, policy documents and so on – as important remnants of ‘traditional culture’ and ‘cultural heritage’. As such, they figure prominently in the national memory, and contribute to contemporary notions of nationhood.⁸

In the case of shrines, it is quite obvious that in recent decades many events, community activities and educational practices have been (re)framed as ‘(traditional) culture’ – not merely discursively, but also institutionally and legally (i.e. by setting up separate non-profit organisations) – thus allowing shrines to engage in a variety of activities that ‘religious’ organisations would not be able to do because of constitutional restrictions and/or reasons of popular support. The same applies to the appropriation of the category ‘heritage’, which gives them a legitimacy that far transcends the particularity associated with ‘religion’: it suggests that they possess a collective, even universal value, regardless of individual beliefs or membership. This redefinition of shrines and temples as cultural heritage has been interpreted as evidence of Japan’s ongoing secularisation, or even the ‘decline’ of religion in Japan (Reader 2012: 27–9). It should be pointed out, however, that the reconfiguration of certain sites as ‘cultural heritage’ has not been incompatible with their status as sacred sites associated with deities that are worshipped by visitors (in whatever way). In fact, it may be argued that the abandonment of the category ‘religion’ can be an important strategy for adaptation, leading to the reinvention and revitalisation of institutions and practices previously classified as ‘religious’. The fact that they are classified differently does not necessarily mean religious institutions in Japan are in decline; all it means is that they are changing.

This brings us to the third recent development, which we may refer to as the *(re)sacralisation of worship places*: the discursive (re)construction (by mass media, institutional actors, popular-scientific authors and others) of certain places as ‘sacred’ (i.e. transcendent and non-negotiable) and, indeed, as ‘divine’ or ‘spiritual’ (i.e. pertaining to, and/or inhabited by, deities and spirits). These places are not referred to as ‘religious’, contaminated as the category has become, but as ‘sacred’ – or, alternatively, as ‘spiritual’. Arguably, then, heritagisation is not simply a strategy for survival necessarily leading to secularisation; the redefinition of places and practices as ‘heritage’ can also go together with new processes of sacralisation (cf. Oakes and Sutton 2010).

A clear example of this would be the shrines of Kumano, which are part of the World Heritage Site 'Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range' that was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004. While Kumano may or may not be described as a 'religious' place depending on one's use of the term, it is commonly referred to in Japanese sources as a 'sacred place' (*seichi*) associated with valuable ancient cultural traditions as well as spiritual qualities (e.g. Shintō Kokusai Gakkai 2012). Likewise, in tourist brochures describing the Kumano pilgrimage trails, the word *shūkyō* is not usually used, yet the potential value of 'powerspots' (see below) along the way is asserted repeatedly – together with pictures of fashionably dressed young urban tourists/pilgrims praying at these sites. More ideologically significant, perhaps, is the sacralisation of Kumano as a site associated with the birth and success of the Japanese nation – not only because it plays an important part in ancient mythology, but also because the shrines are symbolically connected to the national football teams.⁹ Kumano has come to be associated with the nation as a whole, and its post-disaster reconstruction (in September 2011, the area was severely damaged by a typhoon) is seen by shrine priests as a symbol for the nation's collective rebirth (cf. Rots forthcoming). Whether categorised as 'religion' or as 'heritage', these developments indicate that shrines and their symbols continue to be perceived and constructed as places with great value and significance – indeed, as sacred. Thus, heritagisation and sacralisation are not necessarily opposed, but can mutually support and enforce each other.

It should come as no surprise, then, that several well-known shrines report ever-growing visitor numbers, and a renewed interest in shrine pilgrimage (some mass media have even referred to the apparent new popularity of shrines as a 'shrine boom'). The shrines of Kumano have experienced a significant growth in popularity in recent years, which seems related to the spiritual power attributed to its sacred sites as much as to its long history and natural beauty (e.g. Chiba 2008; Kamata 2008: 140–51). Likewise, the ritual rebuilding of two of the most famous and historically important shrines in the country, Izumo and Ise, has generated a lot of attention and interest.¹⁰ This renewed popularity of shrines as places not only of cultural-historical significance but also of spiritual power is directly related to another trend, which has been going on for the last decade or so: the so-called 'powerspot boom'. Shrines, temples and other 'sacred places' have been reframed as places with significant 'spiritual power' called 'powerspots' (*pawāsupotto*, in Japanese transcription), which attract pilgrim-tourists coming to 'charge their spiritual batteries' and seek 'this-worldly benefits' (*genze niyaku*) such as success in business, love and good health.¹¹

This 'powerspot boom' has led to an increase in media interest in shrines, as illustrated by the large numbers of popular books, magazines, guidebooks, websites and TV programmes devoted to the topic. It has also been advocated by local authorities and travel agencies for the purpose of attracting 'pilgrims' or 'spiritual tourists' – at various places (e.g. Izumo), they have set up 'powerspot tours', and made powerspot pamphlets and maps listing the sites in their locality considered to possess spiritual power.¹² Shrines are generally promoted as 'powerspots' by non-clergy outsiders such as journalists, local authorities and popular authors, rather than defining themselves as such. Nevertheless, the 'powerspot boom' is transforming ways in which shrines – and, quite possibly, 'Shinto' in general – are perceived, if not by priests, at least by a significant number of visitors. 'Superficial' or 'commercial' though some may perceive it to be, it does lead to a renewed interest in shrines as 'sacred places' (*seichi*) possessing 'spiritual power', which are believed to have the capacity to directly influence the lives of visitors.¹³

Not all shrines are redefined as 'powerspots', however, and not all shrines manage to attract large numbers of visitors. In fact, the vast majority of Japan's 80,000 or so shrines are small worship places, the significance of which does not extend beyond local community boundaries. Throughout the country, many of these shrines suffer from rural depopulation, a lack of financial means and, in some cases at least, declining community participation (Fuyutsuki 2010; Yamamura 2009).

Despite the nationwide popularity of some shrines, therefore, the fourth development characterising contemporary shrine Shinto is in institutional decline. Many rural shrines these days are dilapidated, and priests come to perform rituals for the deities only very occasionally, if at all. Likewise, in some places shrine festivals (*matsuri*) are no longer performed, as there are not enough young people for the festival to take place (most *matsuri* involve a portable shrine, or *mikoshi*, which is carried around the village or neighbourhood by young men). This type of institutional decline is mainly caused by demographic developments, such as the depopulation of rural areas and the fact that the remaining population is rapidly ageing. There are also challenges of a more institutional-political nature: for instance, as John Breen has demonstrated, many small shrines are in financial difficulties, which is partly due to the fact that Jinja Honchō requires them to purchase and sell amulets for the purpose of raising funds for the twenty-yearly rebuilding of Ise Shrine. The periodical rebuilding of Japan's 'most sacred' shrine constitutes one of Jinja Honchō's core priorities, for which significant amounts of money have to be raised by shrines throughout the country. This comes at the expense of the sale of local shrines' own amulets, however, and provides them with an extra financial challenge (Breen 2010b).

Fifth, and perhaps most importantly, in recent years the notion of Shinto as a tradition of nature worship containing ancient ecological knowledge has gained momentum, to the point that it has become one of the main paradigms by which Shinto is defined today. Moreover, it is often argued, this tradition contains important solutions for overcoming today's environmental problems. Thus, primordialist and essentialist notions of Shinto have been combined with environmentalist rhetoric, giving rise to something I have referred to as the 'Shinto environmentalist paradigm' (Rots 2013; cf. Pedersen 1995). Jinja Honchō has actively contributed to this development by means of various publications (e.g. Jinja Honchō not dated), and its cooperation with the UK-based inter-religious non-profit organisation Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC). But Jinja Honchō is not the only Shinto organisation explicitly associating Shinto worship traditions with nature and environmental issues; a number of Shinto scholars, shrine priests and other actors (volunteers, scientists, artists and others) have also been instrumental in this process.

A famous example of an artist who has contributed to the global popularisation of the notion of Shinto as a nature religion is the film-maker Miyazaki Hayao, well-known internationally for animated films such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke* and *Spirited Away*, in which environmentalist critique is combined with a creative re-imagination of Shinto-esque deities. Within academia, the 'Shinto environmentalist paradigm' has been legitimated by means of a re-imagination of pre-historical 'Japanese' people as living in harmonious coexistence with their natural surroundings, supposedly expressed in 'animistic' beliefs and practices. Scholars expressing such ideas (e.g. Kamata Tōji, Sonoda Minoru, Ueda Masaaki, Umehara Takeshi, Yamaori Tetsuo and Yasuda Yoshinori) often assert that in the modern period this traditional environmental awareness has been largely forgotten as a result of the import of 'Western' technology and ideology, which are said to have caused widespread environmental, moral and cultural deterioration. In their view, the solution to contemporary problems (social as well as ecological) therefore lies in the reestablishment of ancient modes of relating to nature; i.e. in the establishment of an 'animism renaissance' (Yasuda 1990), and the preservation and reconstruction of shrine forests (or sacred groves), so-called *chinju no mori* (Kamata 2000; Sonoda 1998, 2000; Ueda 2004; Ueda and Ueda 2001; Umehara 1995; Yamaori 2001; Yasuda 1990, 2006). It may be argued that, in recent years, these *chinju no mori* have come to constitute one of Shinto's core symbols, representing ecological balance as well as cultural continuity.

Throughout history, shrines have commonly been surrounded by small areas of woodland, or flanked by forested (sacred) mountains. Today, some of these shrine groves are said to constitute Japan's last remaining areas of primeval forest. More often, they have been (partly) planted

or replanted by people in the course of history. Depending on size, species composition and geographical location, some of these shrine forests constitute important ecological resources. In the course of the twentieth century, however, the total amount of shrine-owned forest land has decreased significantly as a result of government policies and construction projects. In response, in the 1970s, a movement emerged that focused on the protection of shrine forests; in subsequent decades, it gradually grew in importance and popularity. This *chinju no mori* movement has succeeded in drawing attention to the ecological value of shrine forests, and to the importance of conservation (Miyawaki 2000; Ueda 2007). In addition to their ecological value, however, shrine forests also have considerable symbolic significance: they have come to represent continuity between the ancestral past (i.e. 'traditional' values and cultural practices), the present and, if preserved well, the future. Hence, since the 1990s, several Shinto scholars and priests have joined forces with ecologists, and embraced the notion of *chinju no mori* as a symbol of Shinto's alleged primordial connection to the Japanese land and landscape (cf. Rots 2013: 243–74).

Arguably, then, in the discourse on Shinto, nature and sacred forests, ecological concerns and nature conservationism go hand in hand with cultural nationalism and institutional politics. However, the Shinto environmentalist paradigm is more than merely a discursive strategy employed by Shinto ideologues for reasons of public relations and identity politics. Significantly, these ideas have developed in tandem with various activities undertaken for the purpose of studying and preserving shrine forests, both as ecological resources and as symbolic community centres where cultural events and educational activities take place. I have already mentioned Jinja Honchō's cooperation with the ARC; of particular relevance is also the work of the non-profit



Figure 8.1 School trip, Kamigamo shrine

Source: Aike P. Rots



Figure 8.2 One of the Ise subshrines

Source: Aike P. Rots

organisation Shasō Gakkai (‘Sacred Forest Research Association’, founded in 2002), where scientists, priests and volunteers work together for shrine forest conservation and research, as well as the public dissemination of knowledge on these issues (Ueda and Ueda 2001; Ueda 2004). Similarly, several shrines have set up grassroots projects in cooperation with non-clergy volunteers for the triple purpose of shrine forest maintenance, the preservation of ‘traditional culture’ (ranging from festivals and performing arts to architecture and landscape design), and environmental education. Well-known examples include Shimogamo Shrine and Kamigamo Shrine in Kyoto and Meiji Shrine in Tokyo.¹⁴ Although perhaps not representative for ‘Shinto’ as a whole, these initiatives do seem to influence popular perceptions of shrines, and may well contribute to significant transformations in the ways in which priests and other practitioners perceive their tradition.

Conclusion

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, in modern Japanese history the term ‘Shinto’ has been used in various ways, carrying different meanings that are subject to contestation and change. Most shrines did not become institutionally independent from temples until the early Meiji period, and at first their relationship to both the state and the newly implemented societal and legal category ‘religion’ was subject to heated debate and negotiation. Eventually, ‘Shinto’ was established as a public ‘non-religion’ that was to serve as a national emperor-centred ritual and mythological system. Some traditions of shrine worship were not incorporated into this newly established ‘Shinto’, however, and were categorised as ‘private’, faith-based religious institutions.

In the postwar period, a new secular constitution was implemented, and Shinto as a whole was re-established as a religious tradition independent of the state. However, opinions about the nature of this tradition, and its relation to the nation and imperial family, differed considerably. These differences still exist today: there are several competing, even contradictory paradigms according to which Shinto is defined (by scholars, priests, mass media and institutions such as Jinja Honchō), and the boundaries of the tradition are as vague and contested as ever.

In recent years, I have argued, shrine Shinto has been characterised by five concurrent trends. First, attempts have been made to re-establish Shinto as a national ritual-symbolic system and re-sacralise the public sphere; i.e., to recreate aspects of prewar imperial Shinto. Second, given the negative connotations of the category 'religion' (*shūkyō*) in Japan today, shrine actors have made active attempts to re-categorise their practices as 'traditional culture' and 'heritage' instead of 'religion'. Third, there has been a process of sacralisation, which has led to shrines being seen as sacred places considered to possess spiritual power (i.e. 'powerspots'). Fourth, there has also been significant institutional decline, particularly in rural areas as a result of depopulation. Last but not least, the notion of Shinto as an ancient 'nature religion', associated with ecological harmony and environmental issues, has transformed understandings of the tradition in Japan as well as abroad. It has also contributed to the development of new shrine practices related to the preservation and cultivation of sacred groves (*chinju no mori*), and to these *chinju no mori* constituting one of Shinto's core symbols today – representing continuity and harmony, ecological as well as social.

Notes

- 1 On ritual practices in ancient Japan, and the various continental influences they incorporated, see Como 2009; on the imperial cult, see Ooms 2009.
- 2 For a representative summary of these core themes, see Bocking 2004: 266.
- 3 For clarity's sake: I do not use the term 'essentialist' as a value judgement. Instead, I use it to refer to the notion that a given phenomenon has a particular *core essence* that transcends historical change and contingency, is both foundational and primordial, and is, ultimately, *knowable*. As for the term 'paradigm', I use this to refer to a particular set of correlated, historically established, taken-for-granted assumptions concerning the basic structure and attributes of a certain phenomenon, which shapes and strongly influences interpretations and representations of that phenomenon. It is a foundational, authoritative set of assumptions regarding, first, the basic nature of something, and second, ways in which this basic nature can be known. As such, it is ontological as well as epistemological.
- 4 For a more elaborate discussion of these six paradigms, see Rots 2013: 126–190.
- 5 The political lobbying is done by Jinja Honchō's political sister organisation, which has close relations to the powerful conservative party LDP (Liberal Democratic Party): the Shintō Seiji Renmei, commonly abbreviated as Shinseiren, translated as Shinto Association for Spiritual Leadership. For discussions of this organisation, and its objectives and achievements, see Breen 2010a: 74–80; Mullins 2012: 71–80.
- 6 The term *matsurigoto* goes back to the Ritsuryō system, the Chinese-influenced system of state administration and ritual ceremonies implemented in the Nara period. Interestingly, it refers to both political administration and ritual ceremonies. The term was reapplied in the Meiji period, and used to refer to the role of the emperor (Bocking 1995: 118).
- 7 Undoubtedly the best-known such controversy considers the position of Yasukuni Jinja. Yasukuni Jinja is one of Japan's most internationally (in)famous shrines: built in 1869, it is here that modern Japan's war dead are enshrined. Among those enshrined are convicted Class A war criminals, which has contributed to the shrine becoming a highly contested nationalist symbol. Consequently, official shrine visits by (usually right-wing) politicians continue to frustrate relations between Japan and its East Asian neighbouring countries. Advocates of Yasukuni Jinja would like it to be nationalised and become the centre of public war commemoration. For an overview of the controversy, including polemic essays representing different opinions, see Breen 2007.
- 8 For discussions of the notion of 'heritagisation', and its relation to (national) identity, 'religion' and tourism, see for instance Bendix 2009; Kang and Sutton 2008; Salemink 2013.

- 9 The symbol of the national team, the three-legged crow (*yatagarasu*), is a mythical character from the *Kojiki* that is associated with Kumano. Accordingly, a special connection has emerged between the national football teams and the shrines of Kumano. Football players now visit these shrines before and after important tournaments, and some of the worship halls and shrine offices are full of signed footballs, shirts and similar paraphernalia.
- 10 In May 2013, Izumo Shrine celebrated the ritual rebuilding (*daisengū*) of its main hall, for the first time in 60 years. For this occasion, during several weeks, a large number of *matsuri* (shrine festivals), *kagura* performances (ritual dance) and other cultural events took place. In October 2013, Ise Shrine celebrated its 20-yearly *shikinen sengū*, which involves the rebuilding of all shrine buildings. Both Izumo's *daisengū* and Ise's *shikinen sengū* have received ample media attention, attracting visitors from all over the country (as well as, to a lesser extent, from abroad).
- 11 The term 'powerspot' was already used by Japanese scholars of religion in the 1980s to refer to sacred places, but it was not used commonly until the 2000s, when so-called 'women's magazines' (*joseishi*) started advertising them as places with special spiritual power; in 2005, *Asahi shinbun* (one of the country's leading newspapers) picked up on the topic and declared a 'powerspot boom', after which the term spread more widely (Suga 2010). On the topic of *genze niyaku* in Japanese ritual practices, see Reader and Tanabe 1998.
- 12 Perhaps unsurprisingly, these not only list the various sites and the particular qualities attributed to them, but also local culinary specialities (*meibutsu*) and other products available for purchase.
- 13 For a more substantial discussion of the 'powerspot' trend, see Rots 2013: 94–97; Suga 2010.
- 14 For in-depth discussions of these and similar projects, see Rots 2013: 274–365.

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Islamic reform in Asia

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The argument

In 2005, anthropologist Victor de Munck published a paper about a Sri Lankan village whose identity he sought “to camouflage.” His aim was to trace the “rise of Islamic fundamentalism at the local level.” In de Munck’s analysis, local equaled Sufism, whereas Islamic fundamentalism was represented by the “transnational Islamic orthodoxy movement” of Tablighi Jamaat (hereafter TJ), founded in 1926 by Muhammad Ilyas. “Ilyas was a Muslim reformer who,” de Munck wrote, “campaigns for Muslims to abandon non-Islamic accretions.” De Munck’s argument was simple: whereas local Sufi Islam was syncretic (i.e. adaptive to the majoritarian Sinhala culture) and moderate, for it operated within the frame of a village, Islamic fundamentalism was dangerous because its point of reference was outside the village as well as Sri Lanka as a nation-state. Among others, de Munck pointed out the objections raised by some TJ activists against the recruitment in a Muslim festival of the Buddhist *kattadis* to cure illness. Though there were only “approximately 10–20” members of TJ in the village of 1,000 Muslims, he described TJ “as the largest Muslim reformist movement” in Sri Lanka. Throughout the article, he used fundamentalism and reform as substitutes. He wrote that the espousal by the TJ that “Muslims should be committed to a transnational realm of Islam” (dar al Islam) and that “worldly constitutions and the governments are imperfect and subject to change and corruption” (Durrani 1993: 151 cited in de Munck 2005: 409) generated “antinationalist consequences.” TJ’s activities had “antinationalist consequences.” Leaving aside the issue that the quote (which in itself stands to reason) “worldly constitutions and the governments are imperfect and subject to change and corruption,” cited from the book (*The Impact of Islamic Fundamentalism*) by K.S. Durrani, is but the author’s own attribution to TJ for Durrani gave no citation and that his book is substandard in the literature, de Munck argued how TJ removed Muslims from the local moorings and offered them “full citizenship in a pan-Islamic transnational identity” (2005: 402, 409–411, 413). I don’t know if there is a “full citizenship” in a trans-territorial identity. However, from de Munck’s article this equation emerged: local=Sufism=heterodox=national=loyal; reform=orthodox=supranational=anti-national=treacherous.

The key premises informing de Munck’s analysis are: nation-state is the natural unit of analysis and, therefore, that which does not fit in the nation-state is anti-national. Furthermore, throughout he maintains an erroneous dualism between local (implying non-Muslim environment)

and universal/Islamic/Arab, rendering the former praiseworthy and the latter undesirable, if not repulsive. The first premise is the legacy of “area studies” – its roots are traceable to the imperial expansion of Europe – which was consolidated “with the cutting of the world into national states that covered the map after 1945” and which took the nation-state as the axis to define “territories of culture and history” (Ludden 2000: 1) as well as what constitutes acceptable knowledge. On the latter premise, I comment below.

Charles Allen (2004) seems to surpass de Munck as he, while equating reform with Wahhabism, likened the latter to Nazism. “The word Wahhabi entered in the popular consciousness at the same time as ‘9/11’,” he wrote, “and is now about as loaded as the word ‘Nazi’.” “A historian of the British colonial period in South Asia,” Allen (2005: 87) elsewhere defined Wahhabism as “a reformist theology first expounded by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab” (1703–1787). Without detailing the theology, he went on to say how various assassinations and uprisings in India against the British rule were organized by Wahhabis. “The man credited with importing Wahhabism to India,” he observed, “was Sayyid Ahmad of Rai Bareili (1786–1831)” who had gone for hajj to Mecca. He didn’t find it contradictory to say in the same paragraph that “The reality is that he [Ahmad of Rai Bareili] had already accepted the basic tenets of Wahhabism long before sailing to Arabia, as a student of the ... religious seminary in Delhi and as a pupil of its leader, Shah Abdul Aziz, son of the reformer Shah Waliullah of Delhi” (1703–1762). Contra Allen who imposed the label “Wahhabi” on Ahmad of Rai Bareili and his followers, their own chosen term for that movement was *ṭarīqa-e-Mu ḥammadīyā*, way of Muhammad (Pearson 2008: 36).¹

While in Hejaz for hajj, Waliullah studied under Abu Tahir Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Kurani, a reputed scholar of *hadith*. Wahhab studied at Medina under Muhammad al-Hayat al-Sindi, an Indian scholar and a student of al-Kurani who admired Ibn Tamiyyah, in Allen’s words “the notorious fourteenth century jurist of Damascus” (2005: 87–88).² In Allen’s view, the common teacher of Wahhab and Waliullah encouraged them “to follow Ibn Tamiyyah’s hard line and to regard militant jihad as a prime religious duty – which is what both Abd al-Wahhab and Shah Waliullah then went home to implement.” Allen’s text is replete with words like “intolerance,” “jihad,” “radical,” “assassination,” “militant,” “uprising” co-occurring as they do with words like reform, Islam, Wahhab and Waliullah. However, he does not bother to reference any of his claims.

Several assumptions inform Allen’s contention, which, as I show, is simply untenable as it displays, *inter alia*, either his lack of knowledge about Islam or his plain orientalism or both.³ To reduce Ibn Tamiyyah to *militant jihadism* without discussing his writings and complex thoughts, including those about jihad, is anti-scholarly. To call him a “notorious ... jurist,” as Allen does, without any analysis and evidence perhaps shows the notoriety of his own prose. As recent scholarship points out (see Anjum 2012, and also Memon 1976), Ibn Tamiyyah, much like Wahhab himself (see Haj 2002; Delong-Bas 2004), is a figure more vilified than soberly analyzed and understood. As Ansari (2001) demonstrates, Ibn Tamiyyah didn’t oppose Sufism. He opposed aspects of Sufism not in accordance with Islam. Ibn Tamiyyah indeed recognized the great Sufis like Junaid Baghdadi and Shaikh Abdul Qadir (Ansari 2001: 163–172). Allen’s contention that both Wahhab and Waliullah had the same teacher who made them “follow Ibn Tamiyyah’s hard line and to regard militant jihad as a prime religious duty” and that both “went home to implement” assumes that their teacher had a monolithic understanding of Ibn Tamiyyah that his pupils imbibed wholesale. The relation between teacher and the taught is a little more complicated. Students have their own subjectivity and critical thinking; they don’t simply digest what they are handed down. That they had a common teacher does not say much.⁴ India’s Mamluk Ali taught both Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi (1833–1877) and Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898). However, as is well documented, each of them followed a different trajectory

(Metcalf 1982: 74–78; Usmani 2013). Nanautawi, a “traditionalist,” went on to found a seminary, Dārul ‘ulūm, Deoband, whereas Ahmad Khan, a “modernist,” established a “Muslim Cambridge,” Mohammedan Anglo–Oriental College in Aligarh (Ahmad 2009: 50–51).

Allen’s attempt to weave a seamless unified ideology of Wahhabism linking Wahhab and Waliullah is also faulty because, as Dallal (1993: 341) has shown through his analyses of these two figures as well as those of Usman ibn Fudi (1754–1817) of West Africa (on the latter period of which, see Soares 2005: 181–184) and Muhammad Ali al-Sanusi of North Africa, there is no such predetermined, unified ideology. Though drawing on shared tradition and idioms, the ideas of each of these figures were not uniform bearing as they also did the marks of their respective milieu. To Dallal, bestowing the singular title of “Wahhabi” on such diverse reform movements as those in India and Africa is simply a “misnomer.” Yet it is the case that the imperial power – French (see Dallal 1993) and British – purposely deployed the term “Wahhabi” and “Wahhabism” wherever they faced resistance to their brute colonialism. Those engaged in resistance in India or Africa did not call themselves Wahhabi (Ahmad 1966; Malik 1970); it was a term used by the colonial rulers to weave a seamless narrative to render their enemy at once detestable, comprehensible and containable. The classic example is the 1871 book *The Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel against the Queen?* by W.W. Hunter, a colonial civil servant in India and honorary fellow simultaneously of the Ethnological Society, London and the Royal Institute of Netherlands India, The Hague. To Hunter, the province of Bengal where Muslims resisted colonialism was a “rebel colony” and such Muslims formed “fanatic swarms.” “Fanatical” Muslims were “engaged in overt sedition” in “Traitors’ Camp.” Without mincing words, he wrote: “The Musalmans of India are, and have been for many years, a source of chronic danger to the British Power in India.” Chapter two of Hunter’s book – the opening subtitle of which reads “The chronic *conspiracy* within *our* territory” – was devoted to treacherous activities of what he called “Indian Wahabis” (Hunter 1871: 9, 10–11, 44; italics mine).

From the above it should be evident that my aim is to liberate the understanding of Islamic reform from the reigning hubris of imperial–orientalist scholarship such as that of Allen, Hunter and many others. Based on my critique of de Munck, I also aim to free it from the subtle violence of nationalism to see it as a discursive tradition, as Talal Asad (1986) postulated. Central to Asad’s idea of Islam as a discursive tradition is his brilliant critique of anthropological writings that construed Islam in terms of tribes, armed nomads, unarmed merchants, illiterate peasants, literate clerics and so on. I agree with Asad’s positing of Muslims as thinking (contra Gellner’s behaving) subjects. Likewise, I endorse Asad’s broadside against Gellner and Geertz for dichotomizing Islam into Great and Little Traditions (Sufi Islam, for de Munck). Sufism is neither opposed to orthodoxy nor is it antithetical to sharia; it is indeed an important template in Islamic tradition as long as it includes and relates to the Qur’an and hadith (Ansari 2001; Qadri 1980: 11–28, 306–307). It is a particular version of Sufism that the likes of de Munck take as *the* Sufism to posit it against “orthodox” Islam. An account of reform, following Asad (1986: 14), should begin, “as Muslims do, from the concept of a discursive tradition that includes and relates to the founding texts of the Qur’an and Hadith.” To add to Asad’s formulation, there is no sound justification to reduce this discursive tradition to the conceptual catalogues of nation and nationalism, as de Munck does when calling activities of Tablighi Jamaat “antinationalist.” Nor is it analytically rewarding to read reform through the lenses of import and export as Allen does. Prior to the birth of the nation-state, the intellectual and social-cultural landscape in which this discursive tradition – in all its multiplicity, diversity and criticality – worked was what Eaton (1993: 31) calls “a world system, but one radically different from that modeled on *homo oeconomicus*.” “It was, rather, a world system linking men and women through informal [and formal] networks of scholars and saints, [traders and artists, desert and city], built on shared understandings of how to see the world

and structure one's relationship to it." Lawrence (2009), following Marshal Hodgson, prefers the term "Islamicate civilization."

The meaningful question to ask, then, is: what is the Islamic notion of reform? In Arabic, Farsi and Urdu, the term for reform is *iṣlāḥ*, often synonymously used with *tajdīd*, renewal. However, the two are not identical. A word occurring frequently in the Qur'an, the obverse of *iṣlāḥ* is *ifṣād*, meaning corruption and/or disorder. The latter necessitates the former. The Qur'an describes the mission of all prophets as that of enacting reform, *iṣlāḥ*. Thus in the Qur'an (11:88) Prophet Shu'ayb stated: "I desire only *al-iṣlāḥ* as far as I am able." With the end of Prophecy, the task of *iṣlāḥ* falls on *muṣliḥīn* (feminine plural *muṣliḥāt*; singular *muṣliḥ*), humans engaged in *iṣlāḥ* the meaning of which in the Qur'an and hadith is not singular. The root letters of *iṣlāḥ*, *ṣullḥ* (peace and harmony), and the verb *aṣlahā* as well as *ṣāliḥ* (person/deeds that are pious and beneficial) are *ṣ*, *l*, *ḥ* (Al-Musleh 2007, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2013). Having conducted a lexical and morphological inquiry into *iṣlāḥ* in Arabic language and its explication in the Qur'an and *hadith*, Al-Musleh (2007: 30) concludes as follows:

iṣlāḥ, as an Islamic concept, is a human corrective task in which any state of *fasād* is correctively changed into its opposite desired state which meets the Islamic criteria presented in the Qur'an and/or exemplified in the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ... and by *fasād* it is meant a state of loss of the benefit of a thing, inexcusable detriment, or unjustified deviation from a moderate norm.

In short, *iṣlāḥ* is a corrective project or initiative aimed at restoring the original message of Islam. It is at once individual and collective and addresses the domain of the private and the public and what Robinson (2008: 260) fittingly terms "inner and outer realities" of lives (also see Osella and Osella 2013). Unlike *iṣlāḥ*, *tajdīd* "does not appear in the Qur'an" (Al-Musleh 2007:33). Its basis is in a *hadith*: "God will, on the eve of every century, raise a person in this *ummah* who would renew the affairs of religion" (Nizami 2005 [1951]: 147n1; see also Voll 1983: 33). In one interpretation, *tajdīd* means liberating Islam from the "assault (*hujūm*) of *jāhiliyā*" and making it shine in accordance with its original message (Maududi 1940: 19). The call for a return to authentic Islam doesn't literally mean recreating the society of the first Islamic century or a return to medievalism as secularists often allege. Rather, it is a call to create a society (now) in line with the spirit and principles revealed in that earlier century. Furthermore, the key agents of both *iṣlāḥ* and *tajdīd* are not the government but *ulema*, scholars of Islam (Abdulkhalil and Haddad 2013). However, works of not all *'ulema* qualify either for *iṣlāḥ* or *tajdīd*. There are/have been two types of *'ulema*: *'ulema-e-sū*, false scholars, and *'ulema-e-ḥaq*, scholars of truth (Faruqi 1986: 13).

The final point about my overall argument concerns the ditto equivalence usually made between *iṣlāḥ* and reform as the latter is widely used in English language. While lexically "reform" resonates with aspects of Islamic notion of *iṣlāḥ*, its usage to refer to the sixteenth-century Reformation in Christianity does not (Al-Musleh 2007: 31–32). Reformation addresses papacy and the pastoral power that the Church as an institution exercised (Edwards 2002: 250–255; Hinnells 1997: 413). Both these institutions have no place in Islamic tradition. Islam, I have argued, has its own notion of *iṣlāḥ* and should be understood so. I thus find Robinson's (2008: 269) argument "reformed Islam was a willed faith, a 'protestant' faith" inaccurate. In fact he describes Islamic reform in the modern era as forms of "Islamic 'Protestantism'" (2008: 278). This description might be captivating to some, but it is inaccurate, even misleading, for Robinson does not engage with the Islamic notion of *iṣlāḥ*; he takes the Protestant reformation as a destination to fit his rich, historical materials from Asia into a Eurocentric teleology. Robinson's forceful essay and insight seem to lose their sheen by his excessive, uncritical

theoretical fidelity to Max Weber. At key turns in the essay, he makes Islamic reform appear like a photocopy of Protestantism without, *inter alia*, addressing the non-Protestant Christian standpoint which “charged the German Reformers, chiefly Luther, with endeavoring to introduce Mohammedanism [sic] into the Christian world” (in Khan 2002 [1870]: 444n1). Before I am misunderstood, let me clarify that I am not against historical comparison. Indeed I value it. I object to a particular *mode* of comparison.

The bridge: Shah Waliullah (1703–1762) and his legacy

If seen from the framework I built earlier, as a practice and concept *iṣlāḥ* precedes the rise of the West as well as the writings of Abdel Wahhab. In Asia, many regard India’s Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624) as a *muṣliḥ* as well as *mujaddid* (one who does *tajdīd*). However, any discussion of Islamic reform in the modern era justifiably begins with Delhi’s Shah Waliullah, who, to cite Aziz Ahmad (1964: 201), formed “the bridge between medieval and modern Islam.” An encyclopedic figure, historian S.M. Ikram (1964: 263) described him as “the greatest Islamic scholar India ever produced.” Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), the poet-philosopher, held that Waliullah was “perhaps the first Muslim who felt the urge of a new spirit” to rethink the existing understandings of Islam (Iqbal 1934: 92). To his colossal scholarship – ranging from theology, philosophy, mysticism, jurisprudence, politics, and economics to sociology – all schools of thought in the subsequent centuries trace their lineage (Hermansen 2008).⁵ Such is the breadth of his scholarship and significance of his personality that “liberals,” “Islamists,” “modernists,” “fundamentalists,” “traditionalists,” even “Marxists”, cite him to support their respective goals. Ubaidullah Sindhi (1872–1944), a noted theologian of Deoband’s Dārul ‘ulūm, derived his inspiration for a Communist revolution from Waliullah (Allana 1988: 182). Critique was both the theme and tool of Waliullah’s scholarship to examine the corpus of knowledge in order to advance his own, which was an uncanny accomplishment of rupture and continuity and “intellectual synthesis and systematization” (Metcalf 1982: 36).

Exceptionally gifted, Waliullah memorized the Qur’an at age seven and mastered the key books of Islamic sciences as well as mathematics, astronomy, medicine (including Arabic and Farsi languages) under the guidance of his father, Shah Abd al-Rahim, founder of Delhi’s *madrasa rahīmīya*. A reputed scholar, Waliullah’s father was a practicing mystic of the Naqshbandī order, into which he initiated his son. At 17, when his father died, Waliullah took over the madrasa leadership and teaching role. Ten or so years later, he went for hajj and lived for 14 months in Hejaz where he continued his rigorous study and research in a robust cosmopolitan milieu. In *Fuyūd al-ḥaramayn*, a book in Arabic recording 47 of his spiritual experiences in Mecca and Medina, Waliullah (1947: 219–221) wrote that through a gust of fragrance he realized that Allah would get the work of regeneration accomplished through him. It was on his return to India that his significant works – in total approximately 50 in Arabic and Farsi – appeared in which, based on his experience in the cosmopolitan milieu of Hejaz, he addressed a cosmopolitan audience, including Indians (Hermansen 1995, 2005, 2008; Khan 2009).

While I find it simplistic to reduce Waliullah’s reform project to a typical sociology of knowledge approach that squarely situates it within the socio-political conditions of eighteenth-century India, a brief description of his time is, however, desirable. Waliullah was born four years before the death of the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb in 1707. After his death the struggle of succession followed; the stability the Mughal Empire previously had no longer existed. The word “emperor” had indeed become vacuous. The center (of power) had begun to decenter as a result of which local ruling powers such as the Marathas, the Jats and the Sikhs began to mount ferocious challenges to the center. Their challenge even reached the capital Delhi; it grew fiercer to the extent

that they inflicted terror among the inhabitants of Delhi. These challenges from within were added to those from without; in 1739 Nadir Shah (king of Persia) invaded India. Delhi as the center of Empire suffered the shocks of those challenges and chaos resulting from the weakening of the Empire. Despair, despondency and calamities befell Delhi as well as other places as the political disintegration intensified (Hermansen 1996; Ikram 1964: 254–268; Nizami 2005 [1951]: 143–147; Rizvi 1980: Ch. 2).

Much of the literature views Waliullah as an “Islamic thinker.” It is more appropriate to call him a thinker/philosopher who wrote about religion as much as about/for humanity at large. *Hujjat Allāh al-bāligha*, his magnum opus, begins with a theory of universe, the place of various species therein, the laws governing the universe and what makes humans distinct from other species. In addressing these questions, *Hujjat* anticipated several key conceptual advancements in social sciences in nineteenth century and subsequently. It discusses formations and functions of language, mind and symbols and how they relate to nature, *fitra*. Qualities that distinguish humans from beasts are: rational faculty, aesthetic quest and purposeful (as opposed to instinctive) action (Waliullah 2001: 145–180). Based on these premises, Waliullah crafted a theory of four-stage social/civilizational development – *irtifāqāt*, in his terms – according to which humans developed, to cite Hermansen, to an “increasingly refined order and elaboration of arts of civilized life.” In simplified terms, these *irtifāqāt* (stages) are equivalent to “following natural or instinctive laws, integrating family life and social transactions, developing a local political order” and eventually a global political formation (Hermansen 1996: xix; also see Waliullah 1996: Books IV and VI). Here Waliullah comes close to Ibn Khaldun’s form of theorization.

For the purpose of this chapter, two aspects of his enormously complex works deserve mention as central to his reform project: (1) *islāh* through intellectual pluralism and eclecticism, and (2) critique of unreflective *taqlīd* (imitation) combined with an emphasis on ‘*aql*, (reason) and *ijtihād*. What connected both was his urge for the empowerment of the wider public through dissemination of knowledge. “None before him had addressed the masses on such issues,” writes Nizami (2005 [1980]: 326, italics original), “and drawn attention to their vital position in giving shape and strength to the sociopolitical systems of the day.” The sources of his reform were the Qur’an and *hadith*. He was one of the first subcontinent scholars to translate the Qur’an from Arabic into Farsi.⁶ As for *hadith*, volume two of *Hujjat* is devoted to understanding his larger theory of cosmology in relation to the prophetic sayings (Hermansen 1995: 490; 1996: xvi). The political decline, disunity and chaos Waliullah witnessed⁷ was simply a manifestation of ethical decline and chaos that marked the social-cultural landscape of his times. Though he viewed the two domains as interlinked, he placed greater emphasis on the cultural. To Waliullah, *khilāfat-e-zāhir*, exterior order, is ultimately predicated on *khilāfat-e-bāṭin*, interior order, whose custodians are ‘*ulema*. An important aspect of his project was to reform that *khilāfat-e-bāṭin*. To this end, he artfully synthesized the two main mystical positions then, as the French traveler to India Francois Bernier noted, in conflict with one another (Nizami 2005 [1980]: 326).

Ontological monism (*waḥdat al-wajūd*) and phenomenological monism (*waḥdat al-shahūd*) were two popular rival mystic philosophies. Associated with Ibn Arabi (1165–1240), central to ontological monism is the notion that “the ultimate reality is identical to what is found (*al-wajūd*)” (Rizvi 2005: 234). From this it followed that God alone is existent and everything else is non-existent. Practitioners of this school, in a state of ecstasy, considered God’s appearances and flashes as “One-in-all and All-in-one” – i.e. everything is Him (Ahmad 1964: 187; Abdurrahman 1970: 168–193). This position, its opponents held, had an immanent, not a transcendent, view of God and as such it led to pantheism. Many ‘*ulema* viewed proponents of *waḥdat al-wajūd* as unbelievers and *zindīq* who flouted elementary sharia (Abdurrahman 1970: 176). Phenomenological monism, associated with Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, himself a Sufi, held that

what the mystic thought was the unity of Being, erasing any difference between immanent and transcendent, was not the reality of Being per se but its appearance to the specific mystic. Sirhindi replaced the dictum “everything is Him” with “everything is *from* Him” reasserting God’s transcendence and faithful observing of sharia the flouting of which was visible among many Sufis who didn’t pray, fast and even remained naked (Abdurrahman 1970: 169–171). To Sirhindi, *wahdat al-wajūd* was a denial of the oneness of God (Dallal 1993: 346). Having analyzed both positions, Waliullah found that the difference between them was more terminological–interpretive than substantial. To him, each addressed the truth, though partly and differently. He preferred Ibn Arabi’s position to Sirhindi’s, which he found valid but not superior to others. He was cautious in pronouncing someone *mushrik*, polytheist. While not glorifying the visitation to tombs and critical of excesses by certain Sufis, he refrained from passing judgments on them in the style of *takfir*. Maintaining that prostration to stones, trees, stars are forbidden, he held that those practicing them could be declared unbelievers only when they themselves proclaimed that their acts were those of worship (Abdurrahman 1970: 181; Dallal 1993: 346).

Waliullah’s intellectual eclecticism was also evident in the field of *fiqh*, jurisprudence. In a milieu where most Muslims followed one specific *fiqh* of the main four – Ḥanafī, Shāfi‘ī, Mālikī and Ḥanbalī – regarding it as the only true path, he considered all four equally valid. He was not loyal to any imam of one school; he looked at the treatment of a specific matter in all schools and adopted (and modified) the one he found closer to Islam and reason. His approach was *tahqīqī* (investigative), not *taqlīdī* (imitative); hence his position was Ḥanafī in one respect, Shāfi‘ī in another, Mālikī in yet another and Ḥanbalī in a different respect. Behind this eclecticism and plurality was Waliullah’s larger point that differences were integral to the process of understanding God’s will. The Prophet didn’t discourage differences. Waliullah also outlined historical and structural factors (including lust for power and wealth) crucial to the onset and grasping of differences (Dallal 1993: 347–348; Muztar 2005: 91, 177–181).

Disavowing the dualism between reason and faith, he viewed them as complementary. To Waliullah, “reason is the faith of a man,” writes Muztar (2005: 169), “and he who is devoid of reason has no faith.” According significance to ‘*aq*l (reason), in *Hujjat* he clarifies that God’s injunctions should be obeyed not simply because they are divine; they are equally rational and aimed at benefitting the humanity. Islamic injunction is like a medicine the worth of which is known to the physician, though not always to the patient (Muztar 2005: 170). In the eyes of Abul Ala Maududi (1940: 72), who, in 1941, founded Jamaat–e–Islami and critiqued Waliullah, the latter was one of the first to critically read the whole of Muslim history to identify the causes of the downfall: degeneration of early polity into monarchy, the near atrophy of the spirit of *ijtihād* and the dominance of absolute *taqlīd*. Waliullah challenged the view held by many ‘*ulema* that Allah likes poverty. Differentiating self-contentment as chosen by some individuals from poverty, he argued that:

[F]orced starvation of certain classes is highly detrimental to the welfare of society. It is no virtue but a crime. Islam grants no license to any class to compel others to remain as hewers of wood and drawers of water. It aims at the achievement of social justice, which is possible only when society is free from class conflict and everyone is provided with to develop his latent powers and capacities and strengthen his individuality through free and active participation in the benefits of his material and cultural environment.

(cited in Siddiqi 2005 [1966]: 57)

Ijtihād, employment of reflective reasoning, and a critique of *taqlīd* were central to Waliullah’s intellectual project the cornerstone of which was his methodology to address and synthesize the

universal and the particular. I can do no better than paraphrase Iqbal's (1934: 163) understanding of Waliullah. The law revealed through a prophet is sensitive to the particular ways of a people to which Allah sent his prophet. The prophetic message itself is universal, not particular, however. This particular, to Allah, is simply a "nucleus" to shape the universal. The particular laws such as penalties for crime are specific to that particular people and thus their application to societies of future are not predetermined; rather they are open for interpretation in accordance with identifying Allah's will. This methodology of Waliullah remains somewhat vague; Hermansen (1995: 490) thinks that there is "an unresolved tension in his thought." My point here simply is to flag its salience.

With Waliullah's death, his sons, especially Abdulaziz (d. 1824), took the mantle of what Ubaidullah Sindhi called "Waliullahi's movement" (Hermansen 2005: 12). Abdulaziz taught at *madrassa rahīmīya*; many of his pupils subsequently became renowned 'ulema. In 1803 the British East India Company occupied Delhi. Abdulaziz gave a fatwa that India consequently became *dar al-harb* (outside the law of Islam). Much against the popularized myth that "Wahhabis" like him opposed modernity, Abdulaziz indeed approved of modern education like learning English language and also socialized with the new rulers (Pearson 2008: 35–36). Ahmad of Rai Bareili (see "Argument") was a pupil of Abdulaziz. He and Shah Islamil (d. 1831), one of Waliullah's grandsons, were important leaders of the unsuccessful jihad movement of 1831 in which both met their death. It remains under-noted that the 1831 campaign was only secondarily about the state and primarily about fashioning the reform-inspired society under an imperial rule that was not just political as it simultaneously sought to colonize self, tradition and social formations. The legacy of the Waliullahi movement was continued by *ṭarīqa-e-Muḥammadiyā* founded by Ahmad of Rai Bareili. Shah Islamil Shaheed served as its ideologue (Pearson 2008; Hermansen 1995: 491). The key call of *ṭarīqa-e-Muḥammadiyā* was to exhort Muslims to imbibe authentic teachings of Islam and observe its basic tenets. In particular, it stressed the performance of hajj. In *Taqwīatul Imān*, an important reform text, Ismail (undated: 112) urged his readers to renounce what he considered as *shirk* and practice *tawḥīd*, monotheism. He asked Muslims not to follow practices such as consulting a Brahmin about their fate, worshipping deities like Mas ānī, invoking Hanūmān or magicians like Nūna and Lūna (female magicians of Bengal) and celebrating festivals such as Holī and Diwālī. Another significant reform text titled *ṣirāṭ-e-mustaqīm* (published around 1820) exhorted Muslims to adopt a simple life and give up extravaganza such as costly marriage and pompous circumcision parties. The text noted how shameful it was that circumcision was delayed to arrange finances for the circumcision party, forgetting that the boy had grown older (Ahmad 1966: 8–9). Those reform initiatives were not limited to Delhi; they spread to areas like Bengal where disciples of Ahmad Shaheed of Rai Bareili – Imamuddin, Inayat Ali, Karamat Ali – carried on the reform in villages and towns alike (Ikram 1964: 286).

After the failed rebellion against imperial rule in 1857, the focus of most 'ulema became the cultural reform of Muslims through education, instruction and spiritual upliftment. The attention also shifted from city to small town, *qaṣbā*. To this end, in 1866, some 'ulema – Qasim Nanautawi and Rashid Ahmad, among others – established Dārul 'ulūm, an educational seminary, in Deoband, a town about 150 kilometers from Delhi. A key objective of Dārul 'ulūm was to offer what it considered as the correct, authentic Islam for the dissemination of which it actively took to print; it published guidebooks about rituals, advisory opinions (*fatwas*) on matters of public concerns, biographies, booklets on correct practices and so on. Both Qasim Nanautawi and Rashid Ahmad were spiritually and educationally linked to Waliullahi movement as disciples (Metcalf 1982: 72–85; 2003: 137). In Hermansen's (2008: 392) judgment, the Deoband school "has perhaps the most direct link to the Wali Allahi heritage." With its establishment, several branches were opened throughout India. One such branch was Mazāhirul 'ulūm one of whose

teachers, Muhammad Ilyas (1885–1944), was to begin a significant and organizationally unique movement of reform, Tablighi Jamaat, during the interwar period.

The travellers: Tablighi Jamaat

Muhammad Ilyas belonged to a reputed and pious family on either side of his parents who were associated, directly or indirectly, with the reform school of Shah Waliullah. Muhammad Ismail (d. 1898), his father, was a famous teacher of the Qur'an. Safia Bi, his mother, was a pious woman who had memorized the whole Qur'an. Ilahi Baksh, one of the relatives of the last Mughal king, Bahadur Shah Zafar, invited Ismail as a tutor to his children. Baksh built a mosque in Nizamuddin, Delhi, where Ismail lived. While tutoring Baksh's children, Ismail expanded the mosque into a seminary, known as Kāshiful 'ulūm. Located on the outskirts of Delhi, Nizamuddin (where rests the shrine of famous Sufi Hazrat Nizamuddin, d. 1325) then was largely unpopulated. In the seminary were some students from the disadvantaged families of Mewat, a rural region southwest of Delhi. It was through these students that Ismail and Muhammad, Ilyas' brother, came to know about Mewat's Muslims who were drawn to those two figures because of their piety, social concerns and their roles as teachers of religion. Ismail had helped establish many primary schools (sing. *maktab*) and mosques in the Mewat region. Before Ilyas himself moved to Nizamuddin, he went to study at Dārul 'ulūm, Deoband. Sheikh Mahmoodul Hasan, a reputed scholar, was one of his teachers at Deoband. Having memorized the Qur'an, he studied *hadith* at Deoband. On graduating from Dārul 'ulūm in 1910 he became a lecturer at Mazāhirul 'ulūm where he taught for some years. Meanwhile, after the death of Ilyas' father, the management of the seminary of Kāshiful 'ulūm was taken up by his brother, Muhammad. However, due to his illness he was unable to continue his role. In 1917, Ilyas went to Delhi to oversee the seminary. It was a time of trial. The income of the seminary through private donations had stopped, driving Ilyas and his students to go without meals. But committed he was to his father's reform work, which he continued. However, he realized that the institution of madrasa was far from satisfactory in acquainting Muslims, especially those of Mewat, with authentic Islam (Khan 1995; Masud 2000).

Muslims of Mewat had embraced Islam several centuries ago. However, they continued to stick to most rituals, practices, customs, even some aspects of beliefs, they had had before embracing Islam. Even the names of many Mewatis were not Muslim. Before he founded Jamaat-e-Islami in 1939, Maududi toured the area of Mewat to see with his own eyes the work Ilyas and his followers were then engaged in. His is a semi-anthropological, and perhaps one of the earliest, accounts of Mewat's Muslims, called Meos. Except that "we are Muslims," Maududi wrote, there was barely anything Islamic left among Meos. In Maududi's account, the unlettered peasant Meos continued to worship idols and an average villager did not even know the phrase recited for the declaration of faith – *shahāda*. They were unfamiliar with the posture of prayer in that if an outsider prayed there the whole village would gape at him wondering if he had stomachache or was crazy. Male Mewatis were accustomed to grow tufts of hair. They didn't observe the Islamic injunction of hygiene, *ṭahārah*. Men and women were semi-naked. Theft, robbery and crimes were common. It was difficult to travel safely in that region. The bitter fights on trivial issues were tribal-like and they persisted for generations. Applauding the reform work of Ilyas, Maududi (1939: 59–62) wrote that Meos' condition was like that of *jāhiliyya* (ignorance). In another account by Abulhasan Ali Nadawi, wearing bracelets and earrings by men was common; so were usury and alcoholic drinking and many other lewd and profane customs (in Troll 2008: 225).

To contextualize Ilyas' reform initiative, reference ought to be made to the campaign of *shuddhi* in the early twentieth century by Arya Samaj, a movement founded in 1875 by Swami Dayanand (1824–1883), a Hindu reformer. In his book on Arya Samaj published in 1914, Lajpat Rai, himself

a prominent Arya Samaj leader, explained the term *shuddhi*. The term literally means ‘purification’ in Arya Samaj language and was employed to (1) bring people of other religions or those who were previously Hindus but had adopted a different religion back to Hinduism, and (2) enhance the status of lower-caste Hindus. Relevant here is the first meaning about which Rai (1997 [1914]) gave some details. Rajput Shuddhi Sabha (RSS), a wing of Arya Samaj, converted in a single day 370 Muslims to Hinduism. Between 1907 and 1910, RSS stated that 1,052 Muslims were converted to Hinduism (Rai 1997: 153–154). Mewat was not untouched by Arya Samaj’s activism.

Ilyas received, as did Waliullah, his inspiration for doing the reform among Meos while in Hejaz during his second hajj. What methods of reform would he choose? As indicated earlier, he had realized that schools and seminaries were less than effective as they did not produce a lasting change he desired. So he adopted the method of *gasht*, making rounds, to preach (*tabligh*). He himself toured Mewat with many of his companions. He constituted groups (*jam’āt*) from among the villagers and his companions and sent them to different villages to preach Allah’s words. In some accounts, he invited Deoband ‘ulema to Mewat as well as sent many groups of Mewatis to Deoband to interact with and learn Islam from ‘ulema. He focused on propagating elementary teachings – proclamation of *shahāda* and offering of prayers (*namāz/ṣalāt*). The preachers stayed in the mosques of the villages, cooked their own meals and ate from the same plate. As they travelled from one village to another, they carried utensils and blankets on their shoulders. Travelling in order to preach meant leaving home. Ilyas appealed to Muslims to spare time for Allah’s sake. Such travel tours were reminiscent of the companions (*ṣahāba*) of the Prophet Muhammad; to Maududi (1939: 68) they resembled the ways of the Prophets. *Gasht* was a dialectical process; the touring individuals worked for *iṣlāh* among the villagers as much as they did their own *iṣlāh*. As it required only elementary knowledge of Islam, within a short span the addressee could well also become addresser. Organizationally, it was a unique movement as it had no policy of membership, nor did it have (even today) any flag, letterhead or a magazine for publicity. No register, no demonstration, no uniform. The decision not to adopt such a modern political repertoire becomes even more significant as India then had plenty of it. The communication was interpersonal and oral. The lived experience of travelling and being together inaugurated the change Ilyas desired. Sparing time to join the travelling *jam’āt* was indeed one of the six principles of Tablighi Jamaat (Khan 1995; Masud 2000; Nadwi 1988; Troll 2008).

Tablighi Jamaat’s focus on the transformation of the inner-self stemmed from the tradition of Islamic *taṣawwuf/ih̄sān* of which the founder, Ilyas, was a known practitioner (Metcalf 2003). Remembrance of God, immersion into His worship, spreading His words and leading an austere life were integral to *taṣawwuf*. Such practices, so went the belief, brought divine blessings in this life as well as life hereafter. In *taṣawwuf*, it is the unethical act which is undesirable, not its actor because she might embrace the truth when presented with sincerity and love; hence the pursuit of spiritual power and moral development. The emphasis is placed on winning and transforming the heart, not winning the argumentative battle and rational debate (Bari 2001: 141–142). This is illustrated by the narration of the following story. Agitated by his constant preaching, a strongly built Mewati once slapped and beat Ilyas. Fragile and weak that he was, he fell on the ground. When he regained his consciousness, Ilyas stood up and said: “You have done your job, now listen to me” (in Khan 1995: 166). Thereupon the assailant repented: “forgive me; otherwise God will not spare me.” To many of Tabligh’s critics, actions such as Ilyas’ were considered to be feminine. In her fieldwork in Pakistan, Metcalf (2000: 45) often encountered such observations from the opponents of Tablighi Jamaat. A journalist told Metcalf that his friend’s son, on joining Tabligh, “behaves abnormally. He acts like a Pakistani girl.” Puzzled by such comments, Metcalf studied Tablighi followers – men and women – to make an unusual, inspiring argument. She argued how differently its rivals read the modesty, humility, forbearance and tolerance that

Tabligh followers preach and value. She further argued how women's participation (though on a much lower scale) in Tabligh activities also subverted the established gender hierarchy.

With Ilyas' death in 1944, his only son, Muhammad Yusuf, came to lead Tablighi Jamaat. The initial years were quite challenging. The Partition of India in 1947 had unleashed brutal violence. Mewat, the area of Tablighi Jamaat's rise, was severely affected as Hindus there engaged in "ethnic cleansing." Devoted to the mission of preaching, Yusuf and his followers refrained from any political activity. After the 1947 violence, Yusuf was invited to a meeting to be addressed by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Yusuf declined the invitation saying the meeting was political. Under Yusuf's guidance, the work spread in different parts of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Travelling groups were also sent to the Middle East, the West, Southeast Asia and China. By the time of Yusuf's death in 1965, Tablighi Jamaat had become a transnational movement. The new head (called *amīr*) was Inamul Hasan; like his predecessor he expanded and intensified the preaching activities. To this end, he travelled across the continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. After his death in 1995, Tablighi Jamaat came to be led by a committee (*shūra*) of three rather than a single *amīr*. One indication of its popularity is that Tablighi Jamaat's annual gathering at Tungi, Bangladesh, is considered to be the largest after the annual gathering for hajj at Mecca (Masud 2000: 15–21, Metcalf 2003: 137).

Conclusion: the autonomy of Islam as a discursive tradition

Precisely in the decade "with the cutting of the world into national states that covered the map after 1945" (Ludden 2000:1), sociologist William Foote Whyte (1943: 697) advised political scientists "to leave ethics to the philosophers and concern themselves primarily with a description ... of political behavior." Readily embraced by political scientists, their preoccupation with political behavior generated mammoth statistics on techniques and procedures of politics. Ethics, it seems, were sent to a permanent exile. The pivot of such politics in the West was the conjunction of calculable material pursuit, rationality of profit and loss and a ruthless aggrandizement of national interests (Ahmad 2014). Recently, Bellah (2007: 59) wrote how many Americans held that "almost by definition politics is unethical." In contrast, as this chapter has shown, the history and sociology of Islamic reform, including that of Tablighi Jamaat, is profoundly political; however, it is not the kind of politics that is understood in the Western mainstream. The politics in Islamic reform revolves around ethics, formation and enhancement of moral self, and a vision of future where death is no less important than life, for one's activities in life are predicated on what is to come in life hereafter.

To properly and fully grasp the historical anthropology of Islamic reform, I have argued, is to transcend the styles of thinking centered on the recently sacralized entity of the nation-states. Continuing to obey and reproduce the categories of the nation-states, as de Munck, Allen and many others do, will mislead analysts to read reform in the catalogue of "anti-nationalist" and "import" and "export," or in the case of Misra (1971) the binaries of "indigenous" and "foreign." I find it equally inadequate, even erroneous, to read *iṣlāh* through the prevalent dichotomies – exemplified, among others, in Clifford Geertz's *Islam Observed* (1968) (see Soares 2005: 6) – of presumably tolerant, benign, accommodative, local, Sufi tradition on the one hand and the putative intolerant, scriptural, universal, Arab Islam on the other. My contention has been that such dichotomies are an imposition from without as they seldom resonate with the tradition and vocabulary of Islam; following Asad (1986) reform, therefore, ought to be analyzed within the realm of Islam as a discursive tradition. Sufism is neither opposed to orthodoxy nor is it anti-theoretical to sharia. They all are indeed important templates within the Islamic tradition. The issue indeed is the *mode* and *form* of Sufism and their (non)accordance with the Islamic principles. Thus

viewed and contrary to the received wisdom, the verily vilified figures such as Ibn Tamiyyah (on which also see Benjamin and Simon's (2002) *The Age of Sacred Terror*), Abdul Wahhab, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Waliullah as representing anti-Sufism "intolerant," "jihadi," "scriptural," and "universal" Islam need to be seriously thought through.

The subject of *iṣlāh* and *tajdīd* in South Asia as this chapter discusses in the thoughts and practices of Shah Waliullah and his followers during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the popular activism of Tablighi Jamaat in the twentieth century may offer the ground for the much needed reconceptualization of the notion and tradition of reform in general.⁸

Notes

- 1 In transliterating Arabic/Urdu/Farsi words, I follow *Annual of Urdu Studies* guidelines, available online. I have not transliterated the names of persons.
- 2 Citing Voll, Dallal (1993: 342) writes that the common teacher was al-Sindi. See also Voll (1975).
- 3 Commenting on his book *God's Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad* (2004), Lelyveld (2008: xi) described Allen as "a founding father of 'imperial nostalgia'."
- 4 Similarly, does the bare assertion that Hitler and the philosopher Wittgenstein went to the same school (Sluga 1994: 4) add much to scholarship?
- 5 Geaves (1997: 168) makes a similar point, adding that during his fieldwork in the UK he found that, regardless of the differences amongst themselves, British Muslims of various *maslaks* from the subcontinent acknowledged Waliullah as their source of inspiration.
- 6 Many erroneously believe, as Ahmad (1966: 6) did, that Waliullah was the first to translate the Qur'an into Farsi (see Hermansen 1995: 490; Rizvi 1980: 230–233).
- 7 Waliullah wrote a series of letters to rulers of his time (Nizami 2005 [1951]).
- 8 For lack of space, this chapter is far from comprehensive. It does not discuss reform work of all movements and organizations, including Islamism, which Robinson (2008: 281) calls "the current end point of Islamic reform." My aim has been to identify the salient themes of *iṣlāh* so as to theorize it afresh.

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Engaged Buddhism in 1920s Japan

The *Young East* mission for social reform, global Buddhism and world peace

Judith Snodgrass

Certainly the chief participants at the conference held at Zōjōji present a quite different picture from that depicted on ancient scrolls of the great Buddhist teachers of the past spending their lives in solitary meditation and quiet, introspective contemplation.

Japan Advertiser, 5 November 1925 (Young East 1(6): 201)

The comment above comes from an article in the *Japan Advertiser*, a journal of the Western expatriate community in Tokyo, observing the ‘decided and vigorous’ revival of Buddhism across a range of social and political activities in Japan at the time. Its tone reflects the popular characterization of Buddhism as ‘other-worldly’, the pursuit, through meditation, of individual spiritual development. The Zōjōji event, the first meeting in Japan of the Far Eastern Buddhist Conference (*Tōa taikai kondankai*) that had taken place in Tokyo from 1 to 3 November 1925, did indeed challenge this perception with its dedicated program of what we would now call ‘engaged Buddhism’. Moreover, what was being discussed there was already happening in Japan, as we can see in the pages of the *Young East*, the English language journal that carried the report. Its first issue had been published in Tokyo in June that year.

Though there is now a considerable literature on the social and political activism of contemporary Asian Buddhism, to many in the West the term ‘Buddhism’ continues to mean a religion of introspective withdrawal (Queen and King 1996: ix; McMahan 2012: 4). This is particularly true of popular perceptions of Japanese Buddhism, in large part because of the success in the propagation of Zen as the essence of Japanese Buddhism. Paradoxically, both Zen for the West and the engagement activity that is the subject of this chapter emerged from the same movement of Buddhist revival in Meiji Japan (1868–1912). The activities we see in Japan in 1925 were the culmination of the movement that began in the 1870s when the installation of the Emperor Meiji and creation of Shintō as a national religion in 1868, forced the redefinition, restructure, reform and revitalization of Japanese Buddhism, and, most significantly, the creation of its relation to the state and to society (Ketelaar 1990).

The new Buddhism of Meiji Japan, *shin bukkyō*, was a typically modern manifestation of the tradition aimed at providing the ideological basis for the new state. It was a rational, philosophic, trans-sectarian, and non-institutional interpretation of Japanese Buddhism, molded by both domestic and international forces. Its social engagement was a result of the need to make it relevant

and to define a domestic role for Buddhism in the new society. Buddhist revival took on a political edge in the late 1880s when reaction against the excessive Westernization of the previous decade instigated a movement to create a distinctive modern, Japanese national identity, and with the related international imperative of negotiating the nation's place in the world, defined at that time by Japan's treaties with Western nations. Nation is intrinsic to modernity, and modern Buddhism in Japan, as elsewhere, was caught up in nationalism in both these modes. As we will see, there was a direct continuity of people and purpose between Meiji initiatives of the 1880s and the engagement evident in the 1920s. My plan is to begin by examining the conference as an encapsulation of early twentieth-century Buddhist social and political engagement. The proposals that emerged from the conference aimed at extending activities already established in Japan throughout its Asian colonies, giving substance to the vision of Japan as the leader of Asia enabled at this time by colonial expansion, and also to continue the negotiation of Japan's place in the comity of nations. Both projects are more specifically detailed in the *Young East*. I will then return to the Meiji period to trace the antecedents of the 'engaged Buddhism' we see in the 1920s.

Although the *Young East* would continue to be published until 1945, the utopian ambitions that are the subject of this paper would be short lived. Within a decade Japanese militarism would strain links with Asian leaders, and after the death of two of its three founding editors, the *Young East* would be put to other purposes. It changed hands in 1934 after Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations. By that time it had established a readership and network of contributors across Asia, Europe, and America, and was therefore a convenient vehicle for the government's new program of cultural diplomacy. My concern here is with the *Young East's* founding mission of liberal internationalism as it appeared in the early years of its publication: the related projects of social and political reform in Japan and its colonies, and the propagation of a modern, socially and politically engaged East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism as a world religion.

Buddhism in the world and for the world

The Far Eastern Buddhist Conference at Zōjōji was the world's first major conference on modern Buddhism. It was a Sino-Japanese initiative, bringing together Japanese and foreign academics, politicians, and leaders of Buddhist reform from China, Japan, and Japan's colonies – Formosa (Taiwan) and Korea – to discuss what Buddhism and its institutions could contribute to 'the pressing issues of the time'. It was international, public, and large. Over 1300 people attended. The 'chief participants' the *Advertiser* refers to included the Chinese leader Taixu (1890–1947) who headed a 21 member delegation.¹ He is remembered now as a patriarch in two of the most important lineages of Humanist Buddhism, Fo Guan Shan (Buddhist Light International), and Tzu Chi, both of which have a global presence (Pacey 2005:1; Pittman 2001). Chief among the Japanese were Takakusu Junjirō (1866–1945) and Watanabe Kaikyoku (1872–1933), pioneers of modern Mahāyāna scholarship, Meiji Buddhist reform, Buddhist social action in Japan and also two of the founding editors of the *Young East*. The conference proceedings mapped out a wide and ambitious program of reforms in education, health, social welfare, as well as initiatives for international harmony and world peace through the dissemination of a universal, East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism. The conference was, as the *Advertiser* put it, a demonstration of Buddhism 'as a social force at work in the lives of the people'. Although it expressed doubts about just how closely such practices adhered to the teachings of Gautama – that is, whether they constituted 'real Buddhism' as understood in the Anglophone world at this time – it nevertheless concluded that such efforts were 'a distinct gain' and called for endorsement and approval from Christians and Buddhists alike. The Japanese editors of the *Young East* reproduced the article in full as evidence of Western support and appreciation of this Buddhist initiative.

The diverse range of lay and clerical participants indicates the real world interests of the movement and also its global aspirations. Among the 300 guests particularly mentioned in the report were (in order listed) the German ambassador, the Japanese minister for education, the director of the Religious Bureau in the Department of Education, and the director of the Asiatic Bureau of the Department of Asiatic Affairs. The premier of Japan and the Chinese minister in Tokyo both gave opening addresses. Western support was represented by German scholars Professor Bruno Petzold and Professor Wilhelm Gundert, and the American Professor John Owen Gauntlett. The presence of a number of women – specifically highlighted in the report – signaled the organizers' enlightened social attitudes (*Young East* 1:1, 1925: 173–176). This international event hosted by Japanese Buddhists was, however, in the eyes of its organizers, just an initial step towards a much grander project, 'the forerunner of a greater conference in which Buddhists in India, Ceylon, Siam, Burma, Europe and America will be fully represented'. They expressed the hope that 'the day when such an international Buddhist conference is held will arrive in no distant future. Such a conference is a desideratum for world peace, for humanity' (176).

The key issues of concern to East Asian Buddhist reform leaders at the time are apparent in the three-day program. The event was academic in format rather than ecclesiastical. The opening ceremony of the first day, featuring speeches by government officials, was followed by the presentation of formal academic papers. One of these, delivered by Taixu, constituted something of a keynote address, outlining the agenda and the rationale for East Asian Buddhists to work together propagating Buddhism at home and abroad to raise modern civilization to a higher plane and to maintain world peace. The first day concluded with a dinner at the Kōgyō Club (The Industrial Club of Japan), an imposing multistorey building in the heart of the business sector of the capital (174). This was hosted by 'a union of various Japanese associations interested in China' indicating commercial, 'real world' support for the venture, and reminding us that the event was enabled by Japan's colonial expansion into China, Korea, and Taiwan. Mr Baigyo Mizuno, president of the *Shina Jiho* (*China Times*) had worked closely with the Foreign Ministry to bring it into existence (Pittman 2001: 111).

The second day was devoted to two forums. The first was on the future of Buddhism and resolved that 'for the sake of world peace and prosperity' Buddhists of Eastern Asia would cooperate in the world wide dissemination of Buddhism through publications, including those in 'Occidental languages', not simply in English. Missionaries were to be sent abroad, and in what we can now see as a particularly prescient move, the Buddha's birthday was to be celebrated by all Buddhists with the ultimate aim of making it a 'universal custom'. Vesak, as it is known in Southeast Asia, was declared a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) day of international observance in 2003. Japanese Buddhists had already demonstrated how this event could be used very effectively to express Buddhist modernity and mobilize domestic public interest in a shared Asian heritage (Snodgrass 2009b). The event, with variations appropriate to local customs, was a regular feature in Japan and in its colonies (Pyeon Mo Yeong 2005).

Dissemination depended on education, the topic of the second session, which was chaired by Takakusu, at that time professor of Sanskrit at Tokyo Imperial University. Its extensive list of resolutions covered all aspects of education from Sunday schools for young children through to university curricula. It sought to raise the general level of education and morality across society through 'Buddhist based human education' such as that offered at the Musashino school for girls founded by Takakusu in 1924. This was both a social benefit and a means of winning support for Buddhism through its relevance to modern society. Advancing the education of women to the level of men was a stated priority. Other resolutions were aimed specifically at training Asian Buddhist scholars; that is, accrediting Asian Buddhist scholars according to the rules of Western

academia. Japanese Buddhists had already learned that this was an essential prerequisite to having a voice in the international academic discourse, which, in turn, was essential for achieving international propagation (Snodgrass 2009a). The study of Pali and Sanskrit was to be made compulsory in Buddhist colleges and universities, and an archive for future research was to be established through the collection and preservation of ancient texts. A normative basis for teaching at these universities was to be created by fixing the fundamental principles of Buddhist education and preparing textbooks. Since the vision was for East Asia as a whole, this would be a culturally non-specific, universally applicable, East Asian Mahāyāna.

As indicated, the initiatives for East Asian reform that came out of the two forums of the first day were already in place in Japan, and had been for some time. The lead article in the June issue of the *Young East*, 'What Buddhists are Doing in Japan', written by Takakusu, is almost a template for the resolutions taken at the conference in November. Both speak of the importance of publications to disseminate knowledge, of fostering education at all levels (*Young East* 1:1, 1–6). Among the activities it mentions were Sunday schools for children, public lectures, and summer camps, a daily paper and a number of periodicals that were distributed as organs of popular education, including one specifically for women. The Young Women's Buddhist Association (YWBA), a related association, was 'working vigorously for the cause of women's suffrage' and had its own journal, *Akatsuki*. There were Buddhist middle schools that offered tuition conforming to the government regulations and curriculum, and specialist training institutions such as a school of commerce, a school for the blind and a school for nurses. These were not institutions for teaching Buddhism as such but for putting Buddhist principles into practice. The *Young East* article even concludes with an account of the spectacular public celebration of the Buddha's birthday in Tokyo on 8 April, just two months earlier. Community building through public performance was already in place.

Japanese Buddhist reformers had begun propagation abroad as early as 1887 with the founding of the Society for Communication with Western Buddhists (*Obei bukkyō tsushinkai*). The Buddhist journal *Bijou of Asia* was published in 1888 and a branch office was opened in London in 1890. Also around this time the Buddhist Propagation Society (*Kaigai Senkyōkai*) published their journal, *Overseas Buddhist Affairs (Kaigai Bukkyō jijō)* (Yoshinaga 2012: 111). The delegation to the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 had introduced Mahāyāna Buddhism to the West with considerable success, and as a consequence of this event, a number of books and articles had been published and distributed, principally in English but also in French and German. Among these, in addition to the papers the delegates presented, were Kuroda Shintō's *Outlines of the Mahāyāna as Taught by the Buddha* (1893); Toki Hōryū's French publication on mudra, *Si-do-in-dzou: Gestes de l'officiant dans les ceremonies mystiques des sects Tendai and Shingon* (1899); and a German translation of Ashitsu Jitsuzen's paper, *Die buddhistische Religion in Japan*, 1895. D.T. Suzuki's articles in English began circulating in journals from 1898. His first book *Asvaghosha's Discourse on the Awakening of Faith* appeared in 1900; *Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism* followed in 1907. The Eastern Buddhist Society had been founded at Otani University in 1921 with the aim of promoting knowledge of Mahāyāna Buddhism as a living tradition, principally through its journal, the *Eastern Buddhist*. This was edited by Suzuki and his American wife, Beatrice Lane Suzuki. Japanese scholars studying abroad also contributed to the international discourse on Buddhism in 'occidental languages', most notably, Nanjō Bun'yū's groundbreaking *Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka* (1883).

Japanese Buddhists had also already published normative texts. One early initiative was the compilation of the multi-volume *Essentials of Buddhist Teaching* that had been commissioned in 1890 by the Buddhist All Sects Council (*Bukkyō kakushū kyōkai*) as a basis for the newly formed trans-sectarian modern Buddhism of the Meiji reform, of which more later. There were a number

of other attempts to produce a 'Buddhist bible' for educated lay consumption, but the ultimate scholarly achievement, particularly in terms of preserving the ancient texts and providing the basis for future scholarship must be Takakusu and Watanabe's *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (*Taishō Tripitaka*, 1924–1934, 97 volumes), the definitive version of the Chinese Buddhist canon. It remains the basis of international Mahāyāna scholarship to the present. Compiled from materials in temple repositories, the Imperial library, from Dunhuang, as well as from Chinese and Korean collections (*Young East* 1:1, 3), it was very much an example of collecting ancient documents as a resource for future research recommended at the conference.

Tokyo Imperial University set the precedent for teaching Buddhism as an academic subject – that is, as a system of thought divorced from its ritual and practices studied in a secular institution, as Buddhist studies were in the West – in 1879. By 1925 its program included courses in the Science of Religion, Critical Study of the Old Testament, Durkheim's Theory of Religion, Indian Philosophy and Buddhism, History of Religions, as well as studies in Buddhist languages, and Western philosophy (*Young East* 1:2, 61). The recommendations for training Buddhist clerics were also already in place. Following the Meiji government's example of seeking knowledge abroad to strengthen imperial rule, major Buddhist institutions had sent scholars to European universities from the early 1870s. Takakusu and Watanabe had been among them. On their return they took positions in universities, passing on their skills to peers and to the next generation.

By 1925, as the *Young East* reports, each of the 13 major sects had established a tertiary college for the study of its particular doctrine. Five of these sectarian institutes were ranked as universities offering full degrees as well as Buddhist training. Leading secular universities also taught Buddhist studies. Keio University, founded by early modernizer, Fukuzawa Yukichi, offered courses in Buddhist philosophy, history, economics, and art. A network for the exchange of scholars was already in place; Japanese travellers had established links in both Asia and the West. The eminent French professor, Sylvain Levi, a close friend of Takakusu, spent a year in Japan in 1923 establishing the Hōbōgirin Buddhist dictionary project. The *Young East* attracted an impressive number of contributions from Asia, Europe, and America.

The resolutions on education presented at the conference in 1925 calling for such actions were therefore directed at including China, Korea, and the rest of the Buddhist world in the internationalization project. As well as revitalizing Buddhist education, and bringing it into line with international standards, these measures would contribute to universalizing Buddhism across the diverse cultural traditions of Asia. Taixu clearly saw it this way when he declared that: 'The first thing we should do is to organize an International Buddhist University to train men for the propagation of Buddhism'. It was to have two departments: one providing a tertiary-level education in languages, science, and philosophy; the other specializing in Buddhist texts and other specifically religious subjects. This international outlook and desire for collaboration was specific in the resolution that facilities should be made available for the exchange of scholars, and in the decision 'that a Buddhist primary school shall be established in England' (175). Buddhism was to be the religion of the modern world.

'while earnestly thinking of the life beyond ...'

The third day was devoted to social welfare work, chaired by Watanabe Kaigyoku, at that time Professor at the University of Religious Studies (*Shūkyō Daigaku*) and at Tōyō University, Tokyo.² While Watanabe was as deeply involved in education as Takakusu, he had a particular commitment to social welfare as a Buddhist praxis (Penwell 2013). In 1911, immediately after his return from ten years study in Germany, he had founded a society to assist low-waged workers (*Jōdoshū shikkō*). This was followed in 1912 by the trans-sectarian Buddhist Social Work Research Society

(*Bukkyōto shakai jūgyō kenkyūkai*), which aimed to improve methods and coordinate member organizations across the country (Penwell 2013). The agenda for this session of the Far Eastern Buddhist Conference listed in order: forming a federation of Buddhist social works, clearly an extension into the broader environment of his earlier initiative; fostering respect for women and children and arranging for their protection; extending free medical treatment for the poor; and vigorously suppressing drinking and opium smoking. While the mention of opium suggests the inclusion of China's particular social problems, here again the resolutions were an extension of initiatives already in place in Japan. Taixu, speaking on behalf of the Chinese delegation, was specific about what needed to be done in his domain:

Our social services should be (1) famine relief work, prevention of natural calamities and medical aid to those wounded in war, (2) promotion of industry by establishing factories and encouraging land reclamation, (3) aid such helpless people as the aged and the crippled persons and helpless widows, and (4) to build roads and provide street lights, free ferry services and such like public utilities for the travellers.

(181–182)

Buddhist social engagement in East Asia, was, by this time, thoroughly grounded in real-world problems and aimed at structural reform to alleviate social ills. China's problems were different from those of Japan, but the concern for the alleviation of suffering was shared. The *Young East* records a great deal of effort directed towards healing the trauma of the great Tokyo earthquake of 1923, rebuilding public facilities, providing accommodation, and refuge for country girls brought to the city to work, of training for nurses, free treatment of eye diseases, and the distribution of medicine among the poor. Social reform at the level and extent envisaged by the *Young East* necessarily involved political engagement. It is not surprising therefore that even from the first issue, the *Young East* carries articles on domestic, colonial, and world issues: manhood suffrage in Japan; the situation in Korea under the new, more liberal administration of Viscount Saito; and US immigration policy.

Only Buddhism can save the world

These domestic activities were an initial stage of a much wider vision, establishing peace in the world through the propagation of Buddhism. Taixu's address opened with an impassioned denunciation of Western civilization and its pursuit of wealth and power that had, as he saw it, caused the gross inequalities, international wars, racial feuds, and class struggles so evident in the early decades of the twentieth century. Socialism, 'the West's attempt to address these excesses' had failed to cure the evils of capitalism and anarchism, or offer 'an antidote to Imperialism'. The salvation of the world required a return to religious principles, but, he argued, the teachings of Jesus Christ and Mohammed 'have lost their hold on man's mind in the present materialistic world' and 'have been disproved in the light of modern scientific discoveries'. Therefore only Buddhism could save 'the present skeptical world' and it was the duty of Asiatic Buddhists to disseminate it for the sake of humanity.

Taixu's speech is typical of Asian anti-Western rhetoric in the wake of the First World War (Aydin 2007). The unprecedented destruction of the Great War had undermined the ideology of Western superiority and the mission to civilize which had been used to justify colonial rule; it was evidence of the decline of Western civilization and the breakdown of the diplomacy of imperialism (Aydin 2007: 93). It therefore offered the opportunity for challenge, one strengthened by European critics of capitalist modernity who also looked to the East for answers. Western

contributions and letters of support to the *Young East* testify to the already established interest in Buddhism among Westerners.

Taixu's call for action resonates very strongly with the mission statement at the start of each issue of the *Young East*, which more clearly articulates the connection among Japanese Buddhism, social action in Asia, and world peace. This message 'To Our Friends and Readers' observes that 'the world is face-to-face with a new epoch ... a turning point in ... civilization' and that 'we young Buddhists of Japan have a great mission to accomplish for the East as well as for the West'. Towards the East, this mission was to 'harmonize and bring mutual understanding' through a shared Buddhist heritage brought to new life and modern relevance by learning from the Japanese model. He called on 'our Asian brothers and sisters' to throw off 'the chains of moribund traditions'; 'We must put fire to the dead or dying leaves and welcome in their place fresh buds full of life and vigour. In this way, we must bring back to life the old East, the sick East, the dying East'. The journal was a tool in the realization of the mission, the medium through which to 'show our friends abroad, possessed of the same faith as ours, what we young Buddhists of Japan are thinking and doing'. It was to create a 'bond of common unity' through which to 'work together for the achievement of our common object'; it was to be a forum and facilitator for this pan-Asian Buddhist movement of widespread social reform, putting Buddhism to work to develop and benefit modern Asian society.

The mission for the West was similarly based on the dissemination of modern Japanese Buddhism: 'The shortest cut to remedy [the West's] shortcoming and make it complete is, in our opinion, to spread to the West the culture, philosophy and faith of Buddhism'. This was, in part, the familiar call to balance the excessive materialism of the West with Eastern spirituality, but it was also more than this. Because of the nature of Buddhism and its teachings, it would bring tolerance, respect, and peace. Knowledge of Buddhism would, it was hoped, 'induce many men of the West to give up the prejudice and pride they hold in regard to race, religion, and politics'. It was 'our duty to implant in their minds the spirit of Buddha, whose love extends not alone to men but to all living creatures on earth. Such is our mission to the West'.

The emphasis on Western prejudice we see here and throughout the early issues of the *Young East* reflects Japanese reaction to the American Immigration Act of 1924, which is a recurring presence in the early issues of the *Young East*. The Act prohibited entry of aliens ineligible for US citizenship. While directed more specifically at Chinese labourers, it also excluded Japanese, and was therefore seen as a racist insult and a betrayal of the long-standing friendship between the two countries. The American Exclusion Act, as it is referred to in the *Young East*, was a painful reminder of the ongoing difficulty Japan faced as an Asian nation in attaining international recognition. It was the most recent expression of the continuing racial discrimination, manifested for example in the treaties imposed upon Japan in the 1850s when it first opened to diplomatic relations with the West, and in 1919 when Japan's proposal for racial equality at the Paris Peace Conference was defeated. It was particularly painful in 1924, since Japan had become one of the four permanent members of the newly created League of Nations in 1920. The repeated emphasis in the *Young East* on the need to overcome racial and national distinctions point to it as a significant factor in shifting the balance in the negotiation of Japan's position between Asia and the West (Aydin 2007; Stalker 2006), and towards the *Young East's* vision of world peace through the propagation of Buddhism, the religion of universal tolerance. Of particular interest therefore is a translated excerpt from an article in a Japanese journal, 'Japan's Mission in the Twentieth Century' (*Kyōson*, June 1925). It is included in an editorial survey of Japanese reactions to the Exclusion Act (57–59) although this particular article does not specifically mention it. As the author, Takikawa Kametaro, saw it, 'the twentieth century is an age in which distribution of international justice will be realized. Whether Japan will be able successfully to meet this great and unprecedented

situation or not is an issue that will determine her destiny'. Japan's mission was to found 'a moral state' at home, instilling 'sound moral ideas and means of making a decent living' among the people of Japan, 'to exercise a beneficent influence over all Asia'. In this way Japan was to create a moral force between the irreconcilable powers of capitalism and socialism as her contribution to the attainment of international justice. It would do this through the propagation of Buddhism.

The Buddhism that must be propagated was of course Japanese Mahāyāna Buddhism in its modern, socially engaged, and universally applicable manifestation. As the *Young East's* mission statement put it:

We hope that our friends and readers will understand that we are followers of the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism. As such we are neither dreamers nor pessimists. We make much of action, and while earnestly thinking of the life beyond, we seriously regard the life we live now. Towards other religions we are tolerant and entertain no enmity whatever against people holding faith different from ours, while in regard to race and other matters, we have no notion whatever that East is East and West is West.

(*Young East frontispiece 1925*)

A league of world religions

The universal vision evident here was more explicitly apparent in Watanabe's proposal for a World's Religious Conference to be held over a week in April 1928 (YE 1:6, November 1925, 188–190). The rationale for the event here too was that the Great War had shown the need for fundamental reform based on high ideals in every phase of civilization:

Never indeed has the world so keenly felt the need of religious forces as foundation of the new civilization and motive for a new and better world as it does today. The League of Nations will be effective and be able to accomplish its aims only when the nations composing it are spiritually associated and allied with each other.

(*Ibid.*: 188)

Watanabe speaks of the common aim of religions to promote happiness and world peace, and therefore the logic of them working together towards 'the resurrection of the world' (188). In his vision, this emphatically did not require amalgamating existing religions or creating new ones, but simply the cooperation and mutual respect of them all. He proposed that Japan was best placed to host the conference because of its demonstrated record of liberal and tolerant attitudes towards other religions, and because of the likelihood that if it were held in a Western country, the Christian influence would predominate. In Japan, 'all religions and religious movements of the world' would find 'a fair and common ground'.

The matters to be discussed included 'relations between religions and various current problems, such as industry, politics, and diplomacy', and 'ways and means for realizing universal peace'. The delegates were to be received as individuals rather than as representatives of particular faiths. It was the World's *Religious* Conference, a meeting of men of religion rather than of the world's religions. Most significantly, it was not to be simply a meeting of clerics. Religious scholars and critics were specifically welcome, as were 'persons connected with religions, men of influence engaged in religious movements or prominent laymen'. By way of example, Watanabe mentioned that 'Mr H.G. Wells of England, Mr H. Holmes of the United States, and Mr Gandhi of India would be invited as guests' (189). 'Mr Holmes' was John Haynes Holmes (1879–1964) a prominent Unitarian minister, pacifist and anti-war activist who had worked for civil liberties

and the advancement of coloured people. He was also a great admirer of Gandhi. The message was that this was not to be a festival for the competitive comparison of faiths but a forum on how to apply religious principles to world problems.

Japan and Asia

The first issue of the *Young East* carries an announcement, program outline, and call for participation in the then forthcoming Far Eastern Buddhist Conference (22–23) that would, in its resolutions, produce a call for Buddhists across Asia to emulate and extend the action in education, Buddhist scholarship, social reform, and world peace that we see already well underway in Japan. The Japanese leadership and priority was clearly a manifestation of the vision of Japan as leader of Asia, bringing the revivifying spirit of Japanese Buddhism to the world. This point was not lost on the members of the Chinese delegation, as is apparent in Taixu's spirited challenge: the main thrust of his address was for the necessity of an Asian *partnership* (my emphasis) in this great work. The partnership he envisaged was one of Chinese Buddhists and Japanese Buddhists (he included Formosa and Korea in this latter category). Each had strengths, and neither was without weaknesses (*Young East* 1:1, 179–181). He conceded Japanese superiority in organization, the ability to carry out 'public charity work' and 'large scale education campaigns for the public benefit'; superior training in modes of propagation of the dharma; in patriotism that enabled them to 'oftentimes render useful, though worldly services to the country and the community'; and their ability 'to make Buddhist teachings acceptable to the modern mind'. The main 'good points' of the Chinese monks was their commitment to prayer and contemplation, the austerity of their practice, their avoidance of religious controversy, and their preservation of 'the main features of primitive Buddhism'. On this basis he concluded that 'What the Chinese Buddhists lack may be found among their Japanese co-religionists, while the virtues which the Chinese monks boast of are wanting among Japanese Buddhist monks' (ibid.: 180). His vision of Asiatic Buddhist cooperation included Ceylon, Burma, and Siam, but the work at hand was 'beyond the scope of the Hīnāyana school'. Though willing to concede that they too had good points, he hoped that they would 'send students to China and Japan to study the teachings of the Mahāyāna school' (ibid.: 181). While Taixu clearly shared Japan's vision of a global Buddhism based in East Asian Mahāyāna directed to this worldly issue, he did not share Japan's vision of leadership.

Modern Japanese Buddhism: the new Buddhism of Meiji Japan

I have argued that the *Young East* mission, and the Far Eastern Buddhist Conference that it encompassed, was the culmination of activities initiated in Buddhist reforms of the Meiji Japan. The universal East Asian Mahāyāna that was to be the saving ideology of the modern world was the new Buddhism of Meiji Japan (*shin bukkyō*), the product of the restructuring of Japanese Buddhism necessitated by the formation of the modern state. It is necessary therefore to look briefly at this earlier period to map the Meiji antecedents of the engaged Buddhism of the 1920s.

Buddhism is so intrinsically a part of our contemporary images of Japan that it may come as a surprise to discover that there were fears for its survival in the mid-nineteenth century. In an attempt to establish a centralized modern state on a new configuration of the Emperor as the chief priest of Shintō, the Meiji government (1868–1912) decreed the separation of Shintō and Buddhism from the religious syncretism in which they had co-existed for over a thousand years (Grapard 1984; Ketelaar 1990). In domains where Shintō revival was strong, the enforced separation (*shinbutsu bunri*) escalated into a persecution of Buddhism, the destruction of many Buddhist temples, the confiscation of temple wealth and property, withdrawal of patronage,

forced retrenchment of a large part of the clergy, and, most significantly, the end of the connection with the state that Buddhist institutions had enjoyed since the sixth century. In the process, Buddhism was cast as a foreign religion, an unscientific, anachronistic vestige of the past, of no benefit to modern society.

Response to these crises established some of the basic features of modern Buddhism in Japan. Its claims to universality usefully countered the criticism that Buddhism was Indian and therefore a foreign religion. Buddhist defenders argued that its very diversity in Japan and across Asia was evidence that it applied to all people at all stages of development, and therefore, by extension, to modern Japan, and even to the West. The first step in giving reality to a unified trans-sectarian Japanese Buddhism also emerged from the need to defend the faith. The Association of Buddhist Sects (*Shoshū kaimēi*) was formed in the second year of the new regime, 1869, bringing together leaders from across the large number of different Buddhist schools in Japan. (In 1925 *Young East* mentions 13 sects and 58 sub-sects, each with distinctive teachings and practices.) Its two main priorities for reform were to establish a new relationship between Buddhism and the state, and to redefine Buddhism to meet the needs of the modern nation. The pursuit of these two intertwined projects would forge other characteristic features of Buddhist modernity such as the imperative to social action. Japanese Buddhist unity was given substance with the publication of the five volumes of *The Essentials of Buddhist Teachings* (1890), the first normative text of Eastern Mahāyāna.

Following the government's charter of seeking knowledge abroad, major Buddhist institutions sent delegations on learning expeditions to the West. The first was in 1873 when Shimaji Mokurai, Akamatsu Renjō and several colleagues travelled to England to gather information on the role of religion in modern Christian society. Protestant Christian models of propagation and social practice led to the creation of Buddhist Sunday schools, youth camps, the creation of the Young Men's Buddhist Association, the publication of tracts and other modes of propagation we see proposed at the Far Eastern Buddhist Conference in Tokyo in 1925. However, since this was a time of considerable religious debate in the West, they also gathered evidence of the criticisms of Christianity. Shimaji produced a treatise on the relationship between religion and the state (Josephson 2012: 135), and brought back and translated Henry Ball's *Self Contradictions in Christianity*, and Renan's *Life of Christ*. Most significantly, these travellers also became aware of the emerging interest in Buddhism in the West. Akamatsu Renjō, who stayed in England for over two years, would observe to a British friend that 'his sect of Buddhism' contained all that was good and true in the Christian religion and that the people of England were ripe for Buddhism (Reed 1880: 81).

Western interest in Buddhism emerged in the mid-nineteenth century as a response to the crisis of religion in the age of science. Buddhism, as it was understood from Orientalist scholarship on the Pali texts of the Theravāda tradition, was seen to offer a humanist alternative. Its value was not exactly that it was 'scientific' as such, but that it presented an ethical system remarkably similar to Christianity's own, but one that did not depend on those aspects of the Christian system that were seen to be in conflict with scientific knowledge: it did not depend on an interventionist God, a Creator, or belief in an immortal soul (Snodgrass 2007). This Buddhism was not a religion but a philosophy of ethics taught by the Indian teacher, Sakyamuni; a philosophy that had remarkable synergies with developments in modern Western thought. While the Japanese priests, highly educated in their tradition, were fully aware of the limits of this as a representation of Buddhist thought and practice, Western approval of Buddhism as a religion for the modern, scientific age was nevertheless a crucial endorsement in promoting the new Buddhism of Meiji Japan, stripped of ritual and superstition, as the ideological basis of the new society. It also provided the opportunity for international propagation. Akamatsu's notion was to become a major strategy in Buddhist revival.

Before discussing that, however, we need to look at another extremely significant early step in the modernization of Japanese Buddhism, an antecedent for the proposals of 1925: establishing universities, modernizing Buddhist scholarship, and training the clergy. In 1876 two outstanding young Buddhist scholars, Kasawara Kenjū (1852–1883) and Nanjō Bun'yū (1849–1927) were sent to England where they studied Sanskrit and Indian philosophy with Professor Max Müller at Oxford University. Others would follow, to Oxford as well as to universities in France and Germany, including Takakusu and Watanabe. Studying in these centres of Western learning they mastered the techniques and academic protocols necessary to present Mahāyāna Buddhism in a manner acceptable by international academic standards. They also joined learned societies, published in English, and so gained scholarly respect. Back in Japan they taught in the newly founded universities and laid the foundations of modern Mahāyāna scholarship, introducing the science of religion, comparative religion, canonical Buddhist languages, and Western approaches to the study of Buddhism through history, philosophy, and art. Future generations of Japanese students could then be trained locally. While this ensured that priests were academically trained, it also made serious study of Buddhism available beyond the monastic centres and available to educated lay people. It became possible to study Buddhist philosophy in the same secular institutions that offered Western philosophy. These pioneers exemplified the ideal of Asian Buddhist scholars envisioned by the 1920s proposals, and the contacts they made abroad provided the basis of the international network that we see in the *Young East*.

The importance given to publication at the Far Eastern Buddhist Conference, and apparent in the *Young East* also has a precedent in Meiji Buddhist revival. Buddhists travelling and studying abroad kept up with intellectual developments in the West and channelled information and translations back to Japan for dissemination through periodicals. In October 1891, for example, the *Japan Weekly Mail* reported that the Buddhist press carried articles on Comte's humanitarianism, Spencer's philosophy, Max Müller's 'Science of Religion', a translation of Dr Clark's 'Ten Great Religions', and a review of Monier-Williams's *Buddhism*. From this time, the *Mail*, an English-language newspaper, produced a 'Monthly Summary of the Religious Press' in recognition of the extraordinary activity in religious publications. There were more than 400 Buddhist journals at that time. Among them was the *Hansei zasshi*, founded in 1887 at what is now Ryūkyō University. Classmates Takakusu Junjirō and Sakurai Gicho, the third of the *Young East's* editors and the source of its financial support, were both involved.³ The *Young East* was, for them, the culmination of a long career in journal production.

There are clear continuities in content and purpose. Commenting on the Buddhist journals in 1891, the *Mail* observed the 'attempt being made on all side to settle the problem of religion in its political and social bearings' for the 'possession and guidance of social development in the empire'. There was not, it commented, a great deal of space devoted to 'doctrinal exposition' or 'speculative and technical disquisition': 'as a rule the entire press devotes itself to news, and to the discussion of the topics of the day'. The same may well be said of the *Young East*. The connection between publications, education, and the propagation of Buddhism we see in the resolutions of the Far Eastern Buddhist Conference decades later is evident even at this time. The journals were the forum for the formation, presentation, and propagation of the new reformed Buddhism in its social relevance, promoting modernization and social change by educating their readers. They were not produced for a committed audience but attempting to form one. In the Meiji period the target was domestic. The overall aim was to win the support of the contemporary intellectual elite, the active and influential Western-educated class, people concerned with social and political issues, the formation of the modern Japanese state, and by this time, resisting Western imperialism. On September 1892, the *Mail* observed that what the religious papers say 'is coloured through and through with that spirit of independence of foreign control that is so

manifest in the political world'. The political tension this refers to, the ongoing problem of the failure to renew Japan's disadvantageous treaties with Western nations, was a crucial step in the globalization of Japanese Buddhism – the introduction of Zen – as I have discussed elsewhere (Snodgrass 2003, ch. 8).

The social relevance we see so prominently in the *Young East* has Meiji precedents, as we can see in the work of Ouchi Seiran (1845–1918). Following the Protestant model, he propagated Buddhism through public lectures, wrote tracts and stories to be read by families, and designed observances suitable for domestic practice. Ouchi also gave Buddhism social relevance through such diverse and pioneering projects as education for the blind and mute, printing, publishing newspapers, forming a society for the protection of animals, and establishing a life insurance company. He took direct action to the problem of re-establishing a state role for the religion in 1889 by standing as a candidate for election in the first representative government (Tsunemitsu 1968: 182–192). His work demonstrated a wide range of lived, engaged, Buddhist social practice, such as we see continuing into the 1920s.

While such activities may initially have been taken on in emulation of the activities of Christian missions that were creating much good will among the people, a Japanese Buddhist precedent was readily found in the work of Prince Regent Shōtoku Taishi (572–622) who is credited with establishing Buddhism in Japan. His first temple, Shitennōji, built in 593, included a library, hospital, dispensary, following the ideals of the great third century BCE Indian Buddhist King Asoka, who, in the late nineteenth century – contemporary with Meiji reform – was lauded in the West for his humanitarian rule. *Young East* actually describes Shōtoku as 'a Japanese King Asoka' (*Young East* 1:3, 73). References abound. The *Shōtoku Taishi Hosankai* (society honouring Shōtoku Taishi) distributed free medicines among the poor (*Young East* 1:2, 6). There were of course doctrinal bases for social work as Buddhist praxis within Mahāyāna Buddhism – particularly within the Pure Land Schools – as Watanabe articulated in his writings (Penwell, 2013).

At the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893, Japanese Buddhist delegates made an even stronger claim for Buddhist commitment to philanthropy with their definition of *nirvana*. As they explained, far from meaning 'annihilation' as Western scholars at that time understood the Theravāda term, in Japanese Mahāyāna Buddhism attaining nirvana meant 'mastering the mind ... abiding in truth ... even among worldly relations' (Toki 1894; Kuroda 1893). It was a state of perfect wisdom, of complete awareness of reality, and far from demanding renunciation of worldly affairs in the pursuit of personal spiritual attainment, it enjoined its followers to devote themselves and the knowledge they attained to selfless work for society as a whole, 'to engage in active exertion for humanity' (Toki 1894). By the time of the *Young East* three decades later, Buddhist reform activists had done much to demonstrate Buddhism's social engagement. They had taken it beyond the charitable works and philanthropy of the earlier models. As the *Young East* shows, they now sought social welfare through politics and structural change, and moreover, saw their responsibility not just locally but across the expanding empire of Japan and even worldwide. Buddhist engagement necessarily therefore meant concern with the political and international relations.

Going global: the Meiji precedent

Meiji Buddhist revival may have originated as a response to the upheavals and social change that accompanied the formation of the modern state, but it rode a surge of enthusiasm from the end of the 1880s when, as a consequence of Western intransigence in the ongoing attempt by Japan to seek revision of the discriminatory treaties it had inherited from the former regime, Buddhism was promoted as the basis of a distinctive Japanese modernity (Snodgrass 2003: 150–154). In this

atmosphere Inoue Enryō (1858–1919), a former priest and graduate of Tokyo University, called upon ‘young men of talent and education’, the Western educated elite, to support Buddhism as the basis of the modern, sovereign state: ‘The best way Japanese can be made Japanese and Japan can remain independent is to preserve and propagate Buddhism’ (Inoue 1888: 8). The basis for this claim was laid out in his 1887 publication *Bukkyō katsuon joron* (Inoue 1954 [1887]; an English translation is available in Staggs 1979) in which he engaged the interest of educated Japanese by explicitly comparing Western philosophy and Buddhist thought. His aim was to show that Buddhism contained all the wisdom of the West, but then went further. As he saw it, the Buddha, 3,000 years before, had taught the truth that Western philosophers were only now approaching *but did not yet possess*. More than this, the full truth was preserved in Japan alone because the higher forms of Buddhism had died out in other parts of Asia. This Buddhism was therefore the one great and unique contribution Japan could make to the modern world. The new philosophical Buddhism of Meiji Japan, stripped of all things irrational or superstitious, was both the ideal religion for modern Japan, and an area of human endeavour in which Japan could be a world leader. It was a source of national pride and of potential international prestige. As he observed, ‘The advancement of science appeared to have induced an interest in Buddhism among the Christian people of the West’, and continued, ‘even the Hīnayāna doctrine of Southern India was highly admired by them. How much more then must they glorify the wonderful doctrine of Mahāyāna?’. Western understanding was further hindered, he observed, by the fact that the books on Buddhism in the West were all written by Christians (Inoue 1887, trans. Staggs 1979: 366–367). Inoue’s message was clear. If the West was to realize the worth of Japanese Buddhism, able Japanese scholars must present it to them.

Inoue’s strategy was both domestic and international. On the one hand, by appealing to their patriotic spirit, he aimed to win the support of the Western educated elite of the country for domestic Buddhist revival. This strategy depended on them being aware of the reality of interest in Buddhism among Western intellectuals. Western approval for Japanese Buddhism would endorse its modernity and legitimate their adoption of it. If, however, it were possible to have Japanese Buddhism recognized by Westerners as the universal religion of the future, this would establish Japan among the nations that contributed to world progress, a nation to be taken seriously in the international arena. In 1889, when Japanese Buddhists were invited to participate in the World’s Parliament of Religions four years hence, they recognized it as fortuitous, an opportunity to put the idea into practice. As it happened it would also establish enduring links with other Asian nationalist leaders that would persist into the 1920s.

From creating citizens of the nation to negotiating national status

While there are, among the followers of the many schools of Buddhism in Japan today, those that practice solitary meditation and whose practice is centred on ritual, in the nineteenth century the imperative of establishing the relevance of Buddhism in the modern state gave rise to a new Buddhism that socially and politically engaged in much the same way that we see among Engaged Buddhists in the West in the twenty-first century. There were certainly continuities between the two moments in its history that I have described here, but also crucial differences determined by the changing historical context, and by Japan’s changed position in the world at these times.

Inoue’s rhetoric in 1887 was directed primarily at a domestic audience, attempting to win support for Buddhist revival through an appeal to patriotism, the national spirit. In the late 1880s, Western intellectual interest in Buddhism was usefully deployed in the campaign to defend Japan against the threat of Western imperialism manifested by its treaty agreements. The modern

philosophical interpretation of Japanese Buddhism was offered as evidence that Japan was a civilized nation, worthy of respect and equal treaties. The delegation to Chicago gave reality to the call for international propagation and initiated a movement that would eventually lead to the globalization of Zen Buddhism, but it was also, in 1893, at least as much a performance for the domestic audience, verification of the claims of Western interest and appreciation of Buddhism as the universal religion of the modern world. By 1925, however, Japan was established as a world power, the first Asian country to hold a permanent seat in the League of Nations. Japanese expansion into Asia had given reality to the vision of a Japanese-led revival of Buddhism in Asia, and the devastation of the Great War provided an opportunity to renew the push to propagate Buddhism to the West. This time Eastern Buddhism was offered as the solution to world problems, the only path to world peace.

It is important to remember that all this took place well before the outbreak of war in China in 1937. The *Young East* in its original manifestation ceased publication in early 1930. Hostilities broke out in Manchuria in 1931; Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in March 1933 and looked to alternative paths of international influence through promoting understanding and world peace. The journal with its established international readership, and its mission for peace, was a convenient vehicle for this ‘cultural internationalism’ (Abel 2013). It was revived in mid-1934 under the auspices of the newly founded International Buddhist Society (Kokusai Bukkyō Kyōkai 1933–1945). There is a strong continuity in its vision of East Asian Buddhism as an alternative to destructive Western ideologies. The ‘extremisms’ at this time are identified very clearly in an article by Professor Bruno Petzold as Russian communism and German nationalism (*Young East* 4:11, 20–37.) However, the focus on Asia, Buddhist social action, and its Asian participation disappears, replaced by articles on Buddhist philosophy and Japanese traditional culture. The audience remains international, but regional content largely disappears. Articles aim to introduce Westerners to the peaceful and positive aspects of Japanese culture, reinforcing the growing Western interest in Buddhism apparent in the publication in English of D.T. Suzuki’s influential works on Zen. Takakusu would lecture at the University of Hawaii from 1938–1939; his lectures were subsequently published as *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, 1956. Watanabe died in 1933.

Pan-Asian Buddhist links persisted, increasingly supported by the government, a useful tool in building friendship and allegiance among colonial subjects. Research by Narangoa Li (2003), Micah Auerback (2007), Jum-suk Je (2012), to name just a few, show that this was not a one-sided relationship; there was a considerable amount of genuine, if ambiguous, intra-Asian Buddhist exchange. Asian Buddhists pragmatically took the opportunities and financial support available under Japanese colonial rule, studied in Japan, and worked with Japanese Buddhists in what we might now call Engaged Buddhist practices, instigating social reform through education and humanitarian movements, and developing local manifestations of modern Buddhism.

The partnership between Taixu and the Japanese did not last. His mission persisted but he turned to Southeast Asia and the expatriate Chinese community to form an association to promote Buddhism and pan-Asian Unity, visiting Singapore in 1926, 1928, and 1940 (DeVido 2009: 10). Though he passed through Japan returning from a world tour in early 1929, there is no mention of it in *Young East*. In 1940 the Chinese nationalist government funded his tour, his aim now to raise funds for the worldwide promotion of Buddhism and the war of resistance against Japan. His travels in Southeast Asia were also to have an important influence on Buddhist reform in Vietnam in the 1920s–1940s (DeVido 2009: 15) where Buddhists were also dealing with the impact of modernization and imperialism. By contrast, Vietnamese Buddhists studied at Japanese universities and contributed to the *Young East* into the early 1940s. Clearly, work remains to be done in tracing the networks of modern transnational Buddhism and the part they played in the history of Engaged Buddhism.

Notes

- 1 A list of the delegates from China, Formosa, and Korea appears on p. 205.
- 2 Tōyō University was founded in 1887 by Meiji Buddhist reform leader Inoue Enryō with a mission to teach both Western and Eastern philosophy.
- 3 Others involved included prominent Buddhist reform leaders Shimaji Mokurai, Akamatsu Renjō and Inoue Enryō.

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Conversion in post-Mao China

From 'rice Christians' to 'cultural Christians'

*Zheng Yangwen*¹

An increasing number of mainland academics visit the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures at the University of Manchester on government-funded schemes. As scholars who work on China, many of us at the Centre for Chinese Studies have either hosted or befriended them. I came to know Cheng Yang, a dance scholar from Shanghai in 2010. She was expected to give a talk and attend our seminars. After the first few days, I soon realised that her English was minimal and she had no interest in our research. In addition, she was often nowhere to be found. Whilst we were not concerned about her joining the illegal immigrant crowd, we wondered what she was doing. After a few weeks, I bumped into her on the street. A few minutes into the conversation, it was obvious that she had been attending church and bible studies. When I told her that she should be careful as sometimes they can be fundamentalists who hold extreme views, she defended the church and her friends by telling me how wonderful they were and above all how much she had learnt about Western culture and society. Not only that, she became a missionary herself as she managed to persuade other visiting scholars from the mainland to join her. She spent her hard-earned sabbatical studying the Bible rather than researching and debating about dance with me and other dance scholars in Manchester.

The case of Cheng Yang is worth investigating because it raises new questions about Christianity in China that have generated excellent works such as those produced by Daniel Bays (1996), Richard Madsen (1998), Eriberto P. Lozada (2001), Ryan Dunch (2001), David Cheung (2004), Alwyn Austin (2007), Alan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan (2007), Fredrik Fällman (2008), Lian Xi (2010), Nanlai Chao (2010), Paul P. Mariani (2011), and much debate. Is she representative of the ordinary Chinese given that she was an academic from cosmopolitan Shanghai? What exactly is it about Christianity that is attractive to her? What does her interest tell us about the socio-cultural and spiritual landscape of the post-Mao era? This chapter tries to probe these questions by situating the re-emergence of Christianity in China's on-and-off encounter/engagement with this foreign religion; it also examines the categories of people who are attracted to it. It is important to approach the case of post-Mao China from the long historical perspective because it takes not just time but also a whole array of variables for a foreign religion to survive and indigenise, which can be seen from the case of Buddhism and Islam. The process of indigenisation is worth investigating because it sheds new light on the dynamics of Sino-foreign relations, and more importantly on the capacity and complexity of local culture and

society, as I have argued consistently (Zheng 2005, 2007: 252–262, and 2011). In other words, it furnishes us with a new way of analysing and understanding the Chinese past. Many Chinese historians have written about the Jesuit and Protestant missions/missionaries. However, few have synthesised their collective and long-term impact on the country, which can be seen from their re-emergence and popularity in the post-Mao era.

Christianity came to China four times: during the Tang (618–907), Yuan (1271–1368), Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties; and it seems that it disappeared four times as well, as these dynasties disappeared from the map of China. What can we learn from China's on-and-off encounter with Christianity in the past 1400 years? The case of post-Mao China can help us answer this question. The various missions/missionaries left churches, converts and practices. Although many of the churches have been converted into universities, hospitals and even government offices, others have survived or been restored in the post-Mao era. Their presence on the Chinese landscape from Xi'an and Treaty-port cities like Tianjin, to lesser-known places like Kaili [凯里] in Guizhou province and Sheqian [宿迁] in Jiangsu province kept faith alive during the Mao era and made it possible for converts to return and for congregations to grow in the post-Mao era.

The post-Mao re-emergence of Christianity raises many questions about the ways in which we study the history of missions/missionaries as it provides us with hindsight unavailable to us before. First, Christianity in post-Mao China is diverse; it differs enormously not just in terms of denomination and brand but also in terms of practice as some congregate in house or underground churches, some in old churches built by missionaries of different denominations at very different times, and others in new facilities provided and sanctioned by the government. How significant were the foundations laid in the two millennia before? Second, this wave of conversion is not foreign mission/missionary imposed but homegrown. Many Chinese people, both the elite and the ordinary, have become interested in Christianity even though their interest may not lead to conversion. Who are these new and old Christians and what do they reveal about the vacuum left by the atheistic Mao era and the spiritual needs of post-Mao China? Finally, the post-Mao era teaches us a good lesson about the enduring politics between Christianity and the Chinese government. Would the contest between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP hereafter) and Chinese people lead to rebellions like the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864)? Ordinary Chinese like Cheng Yang are seeking, some would say embracing, the foreign religion. Would this popular interest stay as a cultural phenomenon or ultimately translate into indigenisation and last despite possible change of regime in the future? The following discussions are geared towards answering these questions.

One thousand four hundred years in the making

Historians of China, Islam and Inner Asia all believe that the first Nestorian missionary named A-lo-pen (Reuben according to Howard Wechsler, 1979) arrived in Chang'an, capital of Tang dynasty (618–907) China in 635; Emperor Taizong (reigned 626–49) became interested in this foreign religion and soon ordered the translation of Nestorian Christian texts (Wechsler 1979: 235; Benite 2010: 409; Mackerras 1990: 333). One Nestorian church still stands in Zhouzhi [周至] county outside Xi'an, Shaanxi province today. Another piece of crucial evidence is the Nestorian Stele erected in the year 781 and found nearly 700 years later during the Ming dynasty. The Nestorian official website claims that Nestorian missionaries were persecuted by Empress Wu (reigned 690–705) and again during the reign of Emperor Wuzong (840–846), a devout Daoist who believed that foreign religions like Buddhism and Christianity were dangerous to China and who issued edicts banning them in 845. This sent Christianity into decline and

spelt the end of its first encounter with China, which lasted on-and-off and roughly for nearly 210 years.

It is easy to assume that nearly 1,400 years of dynastic and social change would have destroyed Nestorian Christianity other than the above-mentioned relic Zhouzhi church. This however is not the case. Evan Osnos, Beijing bureau chief of the *Chicago Tribune*, travelled to what is called the 'Bethlehem of China' in 2008. He met with Christians descended from the Nestorian line and turned his report into a documentary called *Jesus in China* (Osnos 2008). Osnos was taken by Pastor Zhang Yinan to where they used to hide and worship in caves carved out of the loess mountain of western China, similar to those found by Richard Madsen in Tianjin (Madsen 1998: 7). Paster Zhang told Osnos: 'When we were in an underground state, we would gather here to meet'. But they left the caves in the post-Mao era even though the situation was far from safe, as another church leader told Osnos: 'Right now, it is not completely secret, but it's not considered public'. This is indeed what Eriberto Lozada called 'God Aboveground' (Lozada 2001). Although they have left the caves, the situation is still precarious as their worship is neither secret nor open; things have changed but not so dramatically (Lim 2012: 6). If we can use the first Nestorian missionary A-lo-pen's entry into Chang'an in 635 as a starting point, 1,378 years have passed since then and what they left behind is still alive today. How did these Chinese Nestorians manage to survive and pass down their faith for so many generations? Have they adapted Nestorian Christianity for local use? These questions alone deserve much more study than Osnos's report and this paragraph here.

Christendom came to China when it was under Mongol rule during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) in its effort to forge an alliance that could defeat Islam (Lewis 1977: 221). Medieval historians and theologians believe that the Sicily-born Franciscan John of Montecorvino (1247–1328) reached Beijing around 1294 and built the first Catholic Church in 1299 (Moffett 2005; Jackson 1999: 718–719 and 2005; Zutshi 2000: 661). He learned the Mongol language and translated the New Testament and the Psalms. Pope Clement V appointed him bishop of Beijing in 1307. Using letters left by John of Montecorvino, many believed that he travelled the breadth and length of the vast land and baptised some 6000 Mongols before he died in Beijing in 1328. It is easy to assume that the end of Mongol rule in 1368 saw the end of the Franciscan mission and that the churches built by them had disappeared without trace. The case of post-Mao China would again challenge this assumption. Tim Gardam, principal of St Anne's College, Oxford, visited China in 2011 and produced a report that was aired on BBC Radio 4 on 12 September under the title of *God in China: Christianity and Catholicism* (Gardam 2011). Gardam visited the village of Sangyu [桑峪] in the mountains west of Beijing where a Catholic Church and monastery are thriving.

The history of the village and church in Sangyu can be found on its official website. It claims that the Catholic Church was originally started by missionaries who came to China in 1334 during the Yuan dynasty; Gardam agrees with this. Is it possible that this was built by the Franciscan mission that began with John of Montecorvino? The website also claims that the original church was expanded in 1534, which can be seen from the horizontal board above the front door that says 'Expanded in the thirteenth year of the Jaijing Emperor', 1534 in the Western calendar. Did the Ming regime endorse the foreign religion given that this was 67 years before the first Jesuit entered Beijing in 1601? The website highlights that the church was expanded again in 1896 and rebuilt in 1999. How did villagers of Sangyu keep their faith alive for nearly 700 years? Gardam tried to understand that and concluded that: 'the tough faith of these old people had withstood the Japanese invasion and the Cultural Revolution. The village clinic was run by nuns, one from Inner Mongolia, a Catholic stronghold' (Gardam 2011). This seems to suggest that hard times had in fact helped harden the faith; it also alludes to the Mongol connection. The church of Sangyu is now thriving not just because of the service they hold but

also because of the medical care they provide. Catholic nuns have continued caring for the poor and the sick. This came just in time when post-Mao economic reform has dismantled the old state medical care apparatus, leaving many vulnerable. This can help explain why it is thriving today as the church provides moral and material support to the needy.

If Christianity left behind by Nestorians who worked in China nearly 1,400 years ago and churches built by the Franciscans during the Yuan dynasty have survived, we can imagine the fate of that left by the Jesuits during the Ming dynasty and by the Protestant missionaries who left China barely some 60 years ago. The Jesuits were late comers; their enterprise did not begin until 1582 when they were allowed into mainland China. Their mission had been to a large extent successful until the 'Rites Controversy', when the Vatican quarrelled with the Qing court over the issue of 'dual worship'. This saw the beginning of the end for the Jesuits in the 1710s as the Kangxi emperor (1662–1722) expelled those who did not follow the Ricci Doctrine, that is to respect Chinese culture and tolerate Confucius and ancestral worship practiced by Chinese converts (Mungello 1994; Brockey 2007; Hsia 2009; Laven 2011; Clark 2011; Mariani 2011). Catholicism continued to be persecuted in the reigns of Yongzheng (1723–1735) and Qianlong (1736–1799), even though more Jesuits came to China to serve the two emperors as painters, musicians, geographers, clock-makers, engineers and translators. If we count from 1582, the Jesuits operated for about 210 years in the Middle Kingdom, more or less at the same length as the Nestorians.

Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) built the first Jesuit Church in Zhaoqing, Guangdong province and went on to Nanjing where he built the (Nanjing) Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception [石鼓路天主教堂]. But Beijing was the target and headquarters of the Jesuit mission; Nantang [南堂 or 宣武门天主堂], the South Cathedral, or the (Beijing) Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, was started by Matteo Ricci and finished by Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688) and 'blessed' by the Shunzhi emperor (reigned 1644–1661), who took an interest in Christianity and visited the place many times. The church was nearly destroyed by two earthquakes and a fire in the eighteenth century and it was closed down by the Daoguang emperor in 1838 on the eve of the Opium War; another testimony to the fact the Qing court did tolerate Christianity despite its anti-Vatican stance but became weary again of its threat to sovereignty and security. Reopened after the Second Opium War in 1860, it was damaged during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. Rebuilt in 1904, it was only to be damaged again during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Rebuilt and reopened in 1979, the church is one of the most popular in the heart of Beijing since it stands next to Tiananmen Square. The history of this church itself is a testimony to the trials that the faith had endured since its construction in the late Ming and early Qing; and it mirrors the changes the Chinese people have lived through in the past 400 years. The church is thriving today with mass everyday and four times on Sunday. It is not just as a place of worship but also as a tourist attraction. I visited the church on a Wednesday afternoon during Easter 2012. It was full of people, although it was hard to tell whether they were tourists or worshippers; they can be both of course.

Even though Protestant missions/missionaries had begun their crusade from their base in Southeast Asia and the enclave of Macao in the late eighteenth century, they could not enter the Middle Kingdom officially until the end of the First Opium War in 1842. They entered China under very different political circumstances; they became part and parcel of the 'century of unequal treaties'. They were much more diverse and scattered as many ventured far into the interior and frontiers of China; this can be seen from well-organised groups such as the China Inland Mission and individual mavericks like the Brethrens (Cohen 1963; Fairbank 1974; Bays 1996; Dunch 2001; Cheung 2004; Austin 2007; Lutz 2010; Keating 2012; Woodbridge 2013). Like their Catholic predecessors, some worked for the late Qing government while others built

schools and hospitals, contributing to reform and modernisation. This ended abruptly after 1949 when the CCP took power. No one lingered on in the People's Republic as the CCP was not about to tolerate the presence of any 'agents of imperialism'. This was radically different from the early Qing court as they allowed those who abided by the Ricci Doctrine to stay on and employed those with technical skills. The Protestants managed to survive a century in China, similar to the Franciscans who operated in the Yuan dynasty (1278–1368).

It is relatively easy to find churches left by the various Protestant missions/missionaries. President Bill Clinton visited China in 1998 and attended Sunday service at Chongwenmen, a Protestant church built by American Methodist missionaries in Beijing in the late nineteenth century. John Keating traced the life of a Protestant church in Shanghai from 1949 to 1989 (Keating 2012). Not only did the church survive the Mao era, it also led a life of its own, which historians have only just begun to study. Keating has fashioned a new way of studying not just religion but also the history of modern China. Many Protestant missions/missionaries chose remote, small and unknown places. Jesu Tang [耶稣堂] or the Hall of Jesus in the city of Sheqian, Jiangsu province is a good example. Built by the American Southern Presbyterian Mission [美南长老会差会] in the early twentieth century, the church fell into decline during the Mao era. Its Western-style architecture attracted the provincial government in its desire to develop tourism in the post-Mao era. The church became a provincial heritage site as the local government put in money to restore it; it even dismantled houses around the church in order to highlight the structure in the midst of a small town. This seems to have paid off, as the church has become a tourist attraction; this may well explain why local governments restored old churches around the country. It allows them to promote local tourism and generate income; it also helps them to keep an eye on the goings-on in the church. The Hall of Jesus is thriving today, accommodating about 600 people at one service.

Not all the churches left by the various Protestant missions/missionaries survived a century of war and revolution. In addition, some did not leave behind institutional churches; but they did leave behind converts and practices. One of the most fascinating is the so-called Little Flock. Founded by the self-made Ni Tuosheng, commonly known as Watchman Nee, who was deeply influenced by the Brethren, the Little Flock survived communist rule. Joseph Lee and Lian Xi have argued that they survived the Mao era precisely because of CCP authoritarian rule (Lee 2005: 68–96; Xi 2010: 165–76 and 194–203; Woodbridge 2013). They have thrived in the post-Mao era; Deng Zhaoming claims that the movement now has at least 800,000 followers, versus 200,000 in the Mao era (Deng 2011: 5–22). The growth of Christian worship is not limited to the private sector if we can use that term to denote churches/congregations left by foreign missions/missionaries, as government-sanctioned official churches are also thriving. Many of them are old facilities left by the various missions/missionaries while others are built or rebuilt by the government. Both Osnos and Gardam visited Haidian Church in Beijing and interviewed many there. Osnos saw that this official church held six services on Sundays to accommodate 4,000 worshippers and each time it was jam-packed (Osnos 2008). This was continued into 2011 when Gardam visited the church. 'On Easter morning, in downtown Beijing, I watched five services, each packed with over 1500 worshippers. Sunday school was spilling on to the street' (Gardam 2011).

The case of Haidian Church seems to echo headlines elsewhere, such as this one on ChinaAid: 'Beijing Shouwang Church Announcement on Outdoor Worship Service'. However what often grabbed international headlines was the so-called house church or underground church as the Chinese government cracked down on what they deemed to be illegal religious activities. Richard Madsen has written expertly on the underground churches during the Mao era and their popularity in the post-Mao decades; so has Lian Xi, whose work focused exclusively on

the growth of indigenous Christian groups. Not only are they diverse and complicated but they are also engaged in what Madsen coined 'quasi-magical practices' (Madsen 1998: 101). What are the differences between official and house churches, other than the fact that official churches are sanctioned by the regime and have to follow government guidelines? Some house church leaders have thus criticised official churches and their brand of Christianity: 'The pastors and ministers are all hand-picked and trained by the government. They are guided by the Communist Party's philosophy ... But they haven't given their hearts to Jesus. They have given their hearts to the country, and the Emperor' (Osno 2008).

This is interesting as house church leaders think they are the true followers of Christianity. While this may or may not be true, the situation is far from straightforward. The evangelical house church service Osno attended looked like a karaoke party as the choir sang and danced ecstatically with microphones in their hands, whilst those in the congregation prayed by reaching their hands into the air and shouting. It was noisy and chaotic but definitely free-spirited. Is this what drew people there as they sang, danced and prayed their hearts out? However, this kind of religious prejudice spells danger. Would this complex makeup cause further division, even animosity, and breed sectarian violence, which can ravage the country as it did and continues to plague some countries in Europe and Middle East, in the years to come?

Four times Christianity came to the Middle Kingdom; four times it seemed to have disappeared. Politics had much to do with its survival. Although we know little about the work of Nestorian and Franciscan missions during the Tang and Yuan dynasties, much has been written about the Jesuits and the Protestants whose visions and methods of conversion were radically different. The Jesuits adopted a top-down approach. Although they managed to seduce Ming-Qing emperors with European curios, they did not convert the Sons of Heaven. They might have been more successful were it not for the Dominicans and Franciscans whose competition brought about the 'rites controversy'. The Protestants began from the bottom and worked their way up the social ladder; they aimed at the poor and the disadvantaged. It seems that the industrial power of their countries made their mission more successful as they were able to provide the 'rice Christians' with not just food and shelter but also medicine. If the Jesuits were intellectuals interested in Chinese culture and philosophy, the Protestants were more like department stores that used sales to garner profits.

Would the Protestant enterprise have been more successful if it was not interrupted by the CCP take over in 1949? This question takes us to the heart of academic debate on Christianity in China: to what extent the Jesuits and the Protestants were successful. The answer from post-Mao China would surprise us. Their expulsion had actually ensured the survival of Christianity after 1949 as repression had given strength to converts and turned many more to the faith. In other words, this is why it is important to study the case of post-Mao China from a historical perspective as it challenges existing views where many use the rate of conversion as a criterion and argue that the paucity of the converts spelt the word failure. The case of post-Mao China has put this into question as 'success' can be measured decades and even centuries later, as we can also see from the case of Nestorians and Franciscans.

A history of Christianity is incomplete without reference to the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: a peasant rebellion based on Christian thought. The Taiping demonstrates that once ordinary Chinese embraced Christianity, the potential is limitless. This potential however is precisely its demise as it can unleash imagination and power that neither the Chinese themselves nor the Christian missionaries could accept. That explains why Protestant missionaries were quick to label the Taiping as blasphemous, shunning the rebels and their religion. Even historians who study the Taiping failed to see that it was an indigenous effort at naturalisation without which it would have been hard for the majority of Chinese to digest the foreign religion. Carl Kilcourse

has recently demonstrated that the Taiping saw the localisation of Christianity (Kilcourse 2013). The Taiping Rebellion led many to believe that it earned a bad name for Christianity in China. This line of thought does not hold water as Protestant missions/missionaries became more active in the decades after the Taiping were suppressed in 1864. In fact, the late Qing and Republican era (1912–1949) saw the golden age of Christianity as a disintegrating China attracted a multitude of missions/missionaries and more Chinese sought comfort in religion in times of war and disaster. Where are the descendants of the Taiping today and what kind of Christianity are they still practicing? This would be an extremely worthy investigation.

The foundation laid by Nestorian, Franciscan, Jesuit and the various Protestant missions/missionaries in the past 1,400 years is crucial in the post-Mao re-emergence of Christianity, as they left behind not only churches and bibles but also congregations and practices. Today's landscape is a mixed legacy from China's four different encounters; this helps us debate about the significance of those missions with new insight unavailable to us before. Historians have a tendency to highlight single events that dictated the turning of the tide in history. Tang emperor Wuzong's edict in 845, the end of the Yuan dynasty in 1368, Kangxi's edict in 1717 and the Communist takeover in 1949 are fitting examples in this case. These regimes might have expelled the various missionaries but they could not destroy the work they had done. Many congregations survived, some would say thrived, despite centuries and decades of isolation and persecution. Their re-emergence in the post-Mao era challenges us. Dynasties did change hands and fundamental changes did take place, but the case of post-Mao China tells us that these changes were not as monumental as some historians have argued. The communist revolution was not as thorough as it seemed; and Christianity is more resilient than we previously thought. This has implications not just for the study of Christianity in China but also for the study of modern China itself, which a new generation of Chinese historians has begun to probe.

From 'rice Christians' to 'cultural Christians'²

Even though the Jesuits started from the top and they did convert a few, they were far more successful with 'rice Christians' – poor Chinese who needed food, shelter, moral support and sympathy. The Protestant missions/missionaries simply targeted these people; they also exposed Christianity to many who lived in the growing list of Treaty-port cities where they operated. Some shunned it as a symbol and instrument of Western aggression; some deemed it a sign of Western superiority and modernity, hence fresh blood for the failing Confucianism, while others saw and used it as a tool of upward social mobility (Bergère 1986; Yeh 2007). A well-known example is Charlie Song, father of the famous Song family/sisters, who not only transformed himself from a poor migrant to a rich businessman but also built a family empire that dictated the fate of the country (Seagrave 1986). Missionaries had one powerful weapon: they had foreign connections, which often translated into social prestige and material benefits. Conversion could help one acquire foreign language/culture/education and connections; this upgraded one's social status at a time when China tried to learn from the West. They enjoyed what Lian Xi has called the 'prestige of the West' (Xi 2010: 231). Missionaries offered help at times of difficulty and disaster; they could even sponsor converts to go abroad at a time when many sought to study abroad or escape from the country.

But the difference is that post-Mao Chinese are not seeking food or shelter; neither are they desperate to go/live abroad as China industrialises and modernises quickly. This makes the case fascinating to study because post-Mao Chinese are no longer what missionaries used to call 'rice Christians'. What drives them to seek God in the post-Mao era? Who are the new Christians that have emerged and go to church en masse and what can they tell us about the social-cultural and spiritual landscape of post-Mao China?

Let me return to Cheng Yang whom I mentioned at the beginning. She is a scholar (associate professor) who lives and works in cosmopolitan Shanghai; she told me that her interest enabled her to better understand Western culture and society. She is only one of many Chinese intellectuals who expressed great interest in Christianity. They have been labelled 'cultural Christians' and Fredrik Fällman among others has studied them (ISCS 1997; Fällman 2008 and 2012: 153–168; Xi 2010: 242–245). They are highly educated and well-established professionals. Some are scholars of Christianity; some are philosophers; while others come from various academic backgrounds such as Culture Studies. Most famous among them are Liu Xiaofeng [刘小枫], He Guanghu [何光沪], Zhuo Xinping [卓新平], Zhao Dunhua [赵敦华] and Gu Weimin [顾卫民]; they have all published extensively on the subject matter. Perhaps this outpouring of intellectual curiosity in Western history and culture is a post-Mao phenomenon where it is freer than before to explore things and ideas Western, which may or may not lead to conversion.

This could not have been more obvious with the congregation at Haidian Church in Beijing. Haidian District is the bastion of higher learning where the country's top universities and research institutions are located and China's best brains are gathered. Began as a small operation funded by the American Congregational Church in 1922, it was expanded into a full church in 1933 and managed by Chinese Christians and graduates of the Peking Christian Seminary.³ Restored in 1985, the church was home to less than a hundred older Christians; this is similar to the situation in Guangzhou where Richard Madsen observed in 1979 (Madsen 1998: 2). In other words, it took time for Christianity to resurface as the real change began in the 1990s, when many university students and faculty members in the area began to attend service. Might this have something to do with the crackdown of the pro-democracy movement in 1989 or was it related to the emergence of the middle class in the 1990s? This clearly demands much more studies than the few sentences here. Haidian Church had to build an extension to accommodate the growing congregation in 1994. The congregation continued to grow and by 2001 they had to increase the number of services. This growth was not just in numbers but also in age. Its official website states that 80 per cent were young people, mostly university students, staff and researchers. This continued until 2005 when Haidian Church decided to build another hall to accommodate the growing number of followers.

Both Evan Osnos and Tim Gardam visited Haidian Church; Osnos interviewed students and intellectuals who attended the service. One of them was the prominent Chinese economist Zhao Xiao who teaches at Beijing University nearby. A Communist Party member, Zhao told Osnos that his research has shown that the secret of America's success was Christian values; he converted and became a missionary himself as he urged others, especially in the Communist Party, to embrace Christianity in a controversial article titled: 'God is My Chairman of the Board' (Osnos 2008). While Professor Zhao's remark seems simplistic for a fully fledged academic, it does echo popular opinion in the West where many believe that the Protestant work ethic enabled Protestant nations to get ahead. His words point to a crucial aspect of God's popularity in China today, that is the case for 'upward social mobility', as I highlighted earlier (Lim 2012: 5). Utility was one of the main reasons many embraced Christianity in the Treaty-port era, as they sought help or a better way of life for themselves. Learning to speak English, acquiring some Western friends and culture would only enhance one's opportunity of success in the era of Westernisation [西化] and modernisation. This has intensified in the post-Mao era and it can help explain why many business leaders have become Christians.

How exactly does this work in post-Mao China? Osnos travelled to Shandong province to find out more about the situation there. He met an influential business leader in the city of Wenzhao who explained to him that: 'Doing business requires trust, and Christian faith places great emphasis on trust and honesty' (Osnos 2008). He belongs to a new generation of business

leaders, some overseas Chinese, who are also Christians; a handful of journalists and academics have noticed and written about this (christiantimes.cn; Chao 2010; Tong 2012: 169–182). His simplistic words remind us of Professor Zhao's comment; they are prejudiced as well. For more than 2,000 years at least, the Chinese way of conducting business was based precisely on trust as merchants were organised into and followed Guild rules. Christian practices/values have become useful in the business pursuits of today's merchants and industrialists. It does not matter whether they believed in Christianity or not, as long as they believe that their conversion benefitted their business and enterprise. This makes us wonder what the real incentive is for business people like him to become Christian; conversion seems to double their wealth as they earn socio-cultural capital as well. In the words of Professor He Guanghu of Renmin University who is more critical of the situation: 'The worship of Mammon ... has become many people's life purpose' (Gardam 2011).

The business case reinforces what I have argued about that the 'downward and outward liquidation' of foreign imports; they depend on a number of complex variables (Zheng 2005, 2007, 2011). The agent/agency of introduction mattered; so did a whole array of other variables such as timing and one's own circumstances. But none is more important than the ways in which Chinese perceived the foreign import: whether it is useful to them and how they could fit it into their own lives. This is the most decisive factor and it applies to Christianity. Can we apply this utility factor to women? The majority of post-Mao churchgoers are female, both young and old. So are the majority of choir singers; some house churches are led by women. This can be seen from official statistics and the reports of both Evan Osnos and Tim Gardam. The visiting scholars whom Cheng Yang managed to persuade were entirely women, even though that year Manchester hosted male visiting scholars as well. What is it about Christianity that is attractive to Chinese women?

Protestant missionaries targeted Chinese women; they were to some extent successful as many did turn to Christianity for emancipation from the philosophies, institutions and practices that limited their freedom. Tao Feiya and Jessie Lutz have written expertly about female social mobility by studying the lives of pioneering Chinese Christian women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Tao 2006; Lutz 2010). Women can be more sensitive to things new and social change; some might well embrace them more quickly once they see the potentials (Xi 2010: 226–229). This sensitivity is not limited to Christianity as many women embraced modernity and Western culture more readily than men during the Treaty-port era (Lai 2007; Finnane 2008; Gerth 2003). This can also be seen from the all-young female choir in the Osnos documentary who sang their heart out while dancing, or performing to be more precise. It looked as if they were having a karaoke party. Is that why they joined the church where they can express themselves in a legitimate fashion? However a careful look at the congregation would reveal that many looked anxious when they prayed. Their animated facial expressions seem to suggest that they are really asking God for something. What are they asking? Tired and sombre, many women turned to God for salvation. Some are middle-aged and others elderly, they looked very different from the choir singers. This echoes the so-called 'three mores': more women, more elderly, and more people of lower educational backgrounds (Yao and Badham 2007).

Perhaps they went to relieve the burden of life on their shoulders, which has become unbearable for some in the post-Mao era. The case of women in other words points to the social and spiritual needs of post-Mao Chinese. Reform has enriched some; but it also deprived and disappointed many, especially women, as many have lost their jobs or even husbands and struggled to make a living and bring up their families. The market economy and the liberty to divorce have contributed to the increase of female Christians. Some put the percentage of female devotees

at 70–80 per cent (Ferguson and Wright 1997: 1203–1205). Problems wrought by reform have sent many to God. This seems natural as Christianity offered wisdom on how to combat life's challenges. The church is filling the vacuum left by communism and the state; this has facilitated the growth of a civil society (Chan 2012: 123–137). Would it lead to social democracy of some kind in the future? Professor He Guanghu believes that those who are not satisfied 'will seek some meaning for their lives so that when Christianity falls into their lives, they will seize it very tightly' (Gardam 2011). In other words, when some sought after God for profit and social prestige in post-Mao economic reform, others sought the Almighty for help as they lost out to it. They are winners and losers of the same battle; their interest or conversion is utility-value based and neither are genuine reasons for faith.

This 'spiritual crisis' (Madsen 1998: 8–15) points us to an important reason as to why Christianity thrives today. The documentary *Dr. Sun: China's Teresa-Style Christian* exemplifies that. The film tells the life of a medical professional who happens to be a Christian. Educated in Beijing, Dr Sun practiced and taught at hospitals/schools in Jiangsu province until the 1990s, when he gave up his deputy directorship and comfortable life in Suzhou, one of the most beautiful cities in China that is often compared to Venice. He went to the countryside and travelled around, offering his service free to anyone who needed it, much like the so-called 'barefoot doctors' of the Mao era or *Médecine San Frontière*. He treated and cared for tens of thousands of people, especially those who could not afford the increasingly expensive healthcare. The story of Dr Sun grabbed national attention because it exposed the dark side of economic reform as the dismantling of state medical care brought a whole array of social problems and the widening gap between the rich and the poor. This left not just a moral but also a medical vacuum, which was filled by characters like Dr Sun. He is a product of the post-Mao era; he is also a highly trained professional. In highlighting the selfless deeds of Dr Sun, the documentary promoted Chinese moral values, which share a common vocabulary with Christianity. Dr Sun has and will continue to inspire those who aim for moral high grounds.

Socio-economic problems and the lack of new moral principles that can help combat the set of new problems have given birth not only to new heroes like *Dr. Sun* but also a new genre: Christian art and literature. They include such works as *The Last Thirty Years* [三十年来], *Temptation* [诱惑], *The Singer* [歌手], *On the Way to Sunday Service* [礼拜路上] and many more (blog.sina.com.cn). They are not mainstream at all; it seems that they are produced by young people. This can be seen from the new vocabularies invented in the post-Mao era and the fact they were published online. Post-Mao economic reform has provided young people with many opportunities. When some were able to travel abroad and study, others embraced Western culture wholeheartedly. Unfortunately very few scholars have studied Christian literature and young Christians in China (Yam 2012: 91–104) – the most important army, as these people will shape the future of Christianity in the decades to come. Christian or not, many would get married in Christian churches, that is wearing Western style wedding gowns/suits and being blessed by what they call Godfathers [神父]. This would generate their interest in or reinforce their bond with the church, where some would return after their divorces. Many churches offer such services at a cost and they use the opportunity to spread the good name of Christianity. The (Nanjing) Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, which I mentioned earlier, advertises their wedding services in grand style.

Official or underground, cultural interest or business incentive, Catholic or 'quasi-magical practices', so many Chinese are now embracing Christianity. How many Christians are there in China today? According to official estimates, of the 25 million Christians in China today, 18 millions are Protestants and 6 millions are Catholics. But Tim Gardam believed that a conservative estimate is 60 million, which is three times more (Gardam 2011). The relative freedom and the general social condition of post-Mao reform and challenges of the new era have turned

many to God. Their interest and conversion is not foreign or missionary imposed; it is what Joseph Lee and Christie Chow have called 'Christian revival from within' (Lee with Chow 2012: 45–58). What would this lead to in the coming decades? As a historian, Christianity in post-Mao China reinforces my conviction that we must approach history from a long-term perspective. Rarely has anything foreign been germinating for so long in Chinese history. It seems that 1400 years of labour has finally paid off as the Chinese people themselves are taking on Christianity.

Can we consider the post-Mao wave of conversion as true indigenisation because it is not foreign or missionary imposed but home grown and self-driven? As one of Osnos' interviewees put it 'Looking back at our history, we've had the age of the republic, the age of intense war, the age of intense politics, and the age of intense economics. The next 30 years will be the age of the gospel' (Osnos 2008). This is not just the opinion of the Chinese Christian themselves (Xi 2010: 233–247); even the leader of the 1989 pro-democracy movement on Tian'anmen Square Chai Ling has become a Christian (Lee with Chow 2012: 45–58). The naturalisation of foreign goods, cultures, ideas and genres depends on many variables as I have consistently argued elsewhere; one of the most important is the utility-value perceived by the Chinese and the ways in which they can redefine it for their own/local use. It is obvious that post-Mao Chinese have seen value in Christianity; God in other words has finally become useful to the extremely pragmatic Chinese.

How do we measure indigenisation and why should we measure it at all? Peter Ng has highlighted the transition from 'Christianity in China' to 'Chinese Christianity' (Ng 2012b: 31–42). This is important because indigenisation means normalisation as the 'foreign' settles down and fits seamlessly with the 'indigenous'. The CCP regime still sees Christianity as something foreign, something imposed by imperialists during the 'century of unequal treaties'. Many Chinese Christians themselves also see it as something Western. The indigenisation of Christianity had in fact begun much earlier during the Taiping Rebellion (Kilcourse 2013). Is this the second or third wave? A more substantial and significant one? Is it possible that Christianity does not need to be indigenised? Can it be used or is it better consumed as a foreign religion/product, although the history of Buddhism in China would challenge that notion?

Would politics and revolution once again step in to dictate the fate of Christianity just as indigenisation gathers steam in the coming decades (Ashiwa and Wank 2009; Kindopp 2004; Brandner 2012: 78–90)? The Protestant enterprise was associated with the Age of Empire. Religious freedom has become entangled with the thorny issue of human rights, which has continued to strain China's relationship with the West. Western involvement is not just rhetoric as charities like ChinaAid continue to catalogue and expose China's human rights abuses. Many Christian organisations have continued to send missionaries to China unofficially.⁴ The more the West lectures China about religious freedom, the more China tightens its grip. This can be seen from raids on house churches and the imprisonment of their leaders. When it is hard to see that today's diverse Christians unite and forge a revolution under one banner, Falun Gong has certainly made the regime extremely vigilant.

Is it possible that this wave of fascination will die down as China becomes more modern and secular? Is the popularity of God, in other words, a transitory phase and phenomenon in the peculiar circumstances of the post-Mao era? No one who has written on the subject has questioned this. As a society becomes more industrialised and modern, it can become more secular even though modernity can also backfire, turning people back to tradition. This has been the case with many countries in the West (Chadwick 1975; Van der Burg *et al.* 1981; Bruce 2002; Cox 2013). What kind of route would China follow given the superstitious nature of the Chinese people? Can the cases of Buddhism and Islam offer any insight? Might the history of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore offer any wisdom? In many ways, people in these overseas Chinese enclaves/societies are more spiritual as they worship a multitude of gods and goddesses.

This chapter has connected history with the post-Mao era; it has also tried to understand post-Mao Christians. What do we learn from it? We can never underestimate the importance of long-gone historical episodes, no matter how small and how disastrous they might have looked at the time (Hamrin 2008). Sowing the seeds is more important; the Nestorians, Franciscans, Jesuits and Protestants are perfect examples as their work mattered more after they left China. In other words, the case of the post-Mao era should help us re-evaluate the history of Christianity in China. We see the outburst of fascination among ordinary Chinese people today; this is different from history but it does not escape one constant: the utility-value of foreign imports in the eyes of the Chinese. This aspect needs more study in our effort to understand why so many different Chinese are attracted to Christianity today. We have also learned that politics of religion has not changed as the regime still considers Christianity subversive. What does the future hold for Christianity's fate in China? It can grow and indigenise; it can become tangled with politics and revolution; and it can wane with increasing modernisation-secularisation. The post-Mao era is a unique period as it stands between the past and the future; it is an era that has enabled Christianity to strengthen its hold on China, which has made the case more fruitful for us to study.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Dr David Woodbridge and Dr Carl Kilcourse for their comments that helped me improve this chapter.
- 2 'Cultural Christian' here means those who are interested in Christianity as Western culture or part of Western civilisation; this interest may or may not lead to conversion.
- 3 The Congregational Church was represented by American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The church also provided medical care to locals, the elderly and women in particular.
- 4 One of my MA students Kathryn Barnett (2010–2011) was sent to China as a missionary by King's Church Manchester after she finished her studies in Manchester.

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Popular religions

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Shamanism in Eurasia

A Mongolian case study in a comparative light

Morten Axel Pedersen

Many scholars and laymen associate shamans with Mongolia and Siberia. Yet, while the ethnographic literature on Eurasian shamanism is indeed substantial, few attempts have been made to compare and synthesise it with anthropological scholarship of shamanism from elsewhere in the world like the influential studies by Michael Taussig (1987) and Anna Tsing (1993). This is both ironic and unfortunate. It is ironic since the term ‘shaman’ supposedly came from the Tungus-Manchurian term *saman*, which, at least according to Eliade’s controversial thesis (1964), constituted a shamanic *ur-form*. But the relative paucity of modern anthropological studies of Eurasian shamanism is also unfortunate from a more general disciplinary perspective. Not only is the extraordinary ethnographic richness and resilience of these beliefs and practices documented for future generations of scholars; studying them also has the potential for making a theoretical contribution to anthropology as a whole.

My objective in this chapter¹ is not to singlehandedly redress this scholarly lacuna; evidently, that would be far too ambitious a task in the present context (but see recent monographs on Siberian and Mongolian shamanism by Balzer (2012), Buyandelger (2013) and Swancutt (2012), none of which I can discuss in detail here, as well as my own study on Darhad Mongolian shamanism (2011), on which much of what I say is based). Instead, my intention over the following pages is to use a case study from Northern Mongolia to throw some comparative light on issues and dynamics of shamanism in Eurasia more generally. Accordingly, in what follows, I firstly explicate the overarching comparative framework and analytical vocabulary on which most anthropological studies of Eurasian shamanism tend to be based, both at the micro level of differences within particular shamanic contexts, and at the macro level of variations between different shamanic groups and ‘peoples’ in Eurasia. Secondly, I present a case study stemming from my own primary shamanic research setting among Darhads in Northern Mongolia in order to show how some of these comparative agendas are played out in a specific ethnographic context.

Comparing Eurasian shamanism

Two of the most ambitious and influential studies of Eurasian shamanism have been made by Roberta Hamayon (1990) and Caroline Humphrey with Onon (1996). Based on detailed historical and autobiographical sources, Humphrey shows that, among the Daur Mongols – a small

people of hunters and agriculturalists inhabiting the northeast corner of Inner Mongolia in present-day China – the personhood of the old man (*utaachi*) was fundamentally different from the personhood of the shaman (*yadgan*). Whereas the *utaachi* embodied experiences accessible to any male person, and thus would ‘emerge from the ranks of men in general’ (1996: 60), the *yadgan* ‘was someone, male or female, who was differently constituted as a person’ and therefore was able ‘to become at one with a spirit, and consequently ... journey into the cosmos, and come to know what ordinary people could not know’ (1996: 31). Accordingly, the figure of ‘the elder’ and ‘the shaman’ represented two contrasting ‘poles of sensibility’ (1996: 63) in the Daur context. More precisely, argues Humphrey, the contrasting social agency of elders and shamans epitomized two qualitatively different social ontologies in Daur social life, namely, on the one hand, a ‘chiefly’ social ontology of eternal sameness, solidity and rigidity, as expressed in the mountains and in the closely associated ‘bone’ (*yas*) imaginary of the patriline, and, on the other hand, a shamanic ontology of perpetual metamorphosis and fluidity, as expressed in the movements of wild animals and the no-less unpredictable trajectories of the shamanic spirits (*onggor*) (1996: 29–64, 183–193). So, whereas the *utaachi* stood out from other Dairs (was powerful) by virtue of embodying the features of the dominant patriarchal ontology, the shaman – whether male or female – stood out from others (was powerful in another way) by personifying the subversive ontology of shamanism.

Now, Humphrey’s contrast between morally unambiguous and sociologically centred male clan leaders on the one hand, and morally ambiguous and sociologically marginalized (female) shamans *otjer* on the other, can be recognized in many different societal contexts, not only across Asia, but also in the Amazon (see for example Holmberg 1989; Hugh-Jones 1994; Kendall 1985; Mumford 1989; Tsing 1993; Thomas and Humphrey 1996). Nevertheless, shamans are not universally marginal (Atkinson 1989; Thomas and Humphrey 1996), including in Eurasia. Among a range of indigenous groups in Siberia up until the Russian Revolution and also after it in some cases, shamans were pillars of social reproduction, for the ability to engage in kin-like relations with the spirits of the *taiga* was believed to ensure the provision of game to the community (Hamayon 1990; Vitebsky 2005; Willerslev 2004, 2007). Yet, as Rane Willerslev argues, in egalitarian hunting-societies such as these, the capacities to communicate with the spirits, ‘rather than being attributes of shamans alone, are specialized forms of abilities that may be practiced by all members of society to varying degrees ... [in]everyday shamanic practices such as, for example, dream sexuality with spirits and the mimetic seduction of pray’ (2007: 139).

Still, as the French anthropologist Roberta Hamayon argues in her grand synthesis of Eurasian shamanism (1990), this pivotal position of the shaman is (or rather was) largely confined to Siberia’s hunting societies. As one turns from Siberia to Mongolia, goes her sweeping argument, patrilineal takes over from alliance as the dominant mode of relatedness; the breeding of domestic animals gains importance at the expense of the killing of wild ones; and an otherwise ‘horizontal’ spirit cosmos become more ancestralized, and, therefore, ‘verticalized’ (1994; for analogous arguments, see Ingold 1986; Pedersen 2001). The effect, she maintains, is a different logic characterized by ‘a preference for transmission within the world of the self rather than exchange within the world of the other’ (1994: 81). Also, the further one moves towards the hierarchical (and mostly Buddhist) pastoral societies of Inner Asia, the more tangential shamanism becomes, so that, eventually, it ‘is led to fragment into a series of separate practices carried out by the marginal specialists’ (1994: 88).

The above argument is easy to criticize, and has indeed been so by several anthropologists, for being too structuralist (Willerslev 2007: 45), too holistic (Humphrey with Onon 1996: 50), or any combination of both (Hangartner 2011: 29–30; Pedersen 2011: 107), for instance by overlooking the fact that the ‘tribes’ or ‘peoples’ of Eurasia to a large extent have been created by

imperial (Russian and Soviet, as well as Qing and Chinese Communist) technologies of governance (Grant 1995; Sneath 2007; Ssorin-Chaikov 2003). Nonetheless, Hamayon's bold synthesis of North Asian shamanism also illustrates that there are methodological advantages in trying to establish a systematic logic in the shamanic phenomena under investigation. As the work of Humphrey shows, it is perfectly feasible to construct one's analysis around a dual principle such as elders and shamans (or, in Hamayon's case, descent and alliance), as long as this structural logic only is granted a heuristic role, and for the same reason is not understood to represent a local system of shared cultural meanings 'out there'.

In what remains of this chapter, I present an introduction to Darhad Mongolian shamanism based on my own field work in the Darhad homeland in the late 1990s as well as the ethnographic literature on Darhad shamanism.² The aim is to provide a comprehensive exegesis of Darhad shamanic cosmology, not in order to make the anachronistic and quite improbable argument that there is any such 'thing' as 'Darhad shamanism' as a unified, self-contained and bounded entity, but with a view to draw out what does appear to be certain prominent characteristics to how shamanism is done and how it is imagined in this particular corner of contemporary Northern Mongolia. Indeed, as we shall see, there is a specific sense in which Darhad shamans – and possibly Mongolian shamans more generally – differ from their Siberian 'do it yourself-shamans' discussed by Willerslev and other scholars, namely the fact that their personhood is imagined, and thus expected, to be qualitatively different and thus distinct from other persons imbued with extraordinary abilities, like hunters, blacksmiths and diviners.

A brief history of Darhad shamanism

The shamanic beliefs and practices encountered by the Russian and Hungarian ethnographers who visited the Darhad homeland in the first half of the twentieth century resembled those of their Daur and Buriat Mongolian contemporaries, as described by Caroline Humphrey and Roberta Hamayon. Sandwiched between the Russian and the Qing empire, all three groups were characterized by the absence of local nobility (*noyed*), by the central position of male (clan) elders, and by the marginal position of male and female shamans (Hamayon 1990: 613–644; Humphrey 1996). Thus, according at least to the interpretation of Badamhatan (1986) and other scholars belonging to the Soviet ethnological tradition (for a critical review, see Hangartner 2010), 'traditional' Darhad shamanism was closely bound up with local kinship-property arrangements centred around patrilineal and virilocal clans (*ovog*). Accordingly, if we borrow Hamayon's vocabulary, Darhad social life back then was characterized by the 'submission of the shamanic institution to clan law' (1994: 83). Indeed, the shamans back then seemed to have played a key role in the reproduction of different *ovog*, for male shamans (*zaarin*) apparently acted as leaders of the *tailgan* ceremonies (Sandschejew 1930: 50), which, among both Buriat and Darhads, involved members of the clan gathering annually to 'renew its vitality', while also serving as consecration rituals for new shamans (1930: 35; see also Hamayon 1990: 637–643). Yet, whereas Buddhism never gained any proper foothold either in Daur or in (western) Buriat society (Humphrey with Onon 1996: 48), it very much did so in case of the Darhads and their homeland, which for a period of more than 200 years belonged to the personal estate of the head of pre-revolutionary Mongolia's Buddhist ecclesiastical order (for details, see Pedersen 2010 and 2011: 115–147). Among many other things, this meant that the authority and the responsibility for performing annual ceremonies and sacrificial rites on behalf of local nomadic communities and political units were transferred to the Buddhist lamas. In addition to being 'submitted to clan law', Darhad shamanism was thus also subject to the laws and indeed de facto sovereignty of the Mongolian Buddhist state church, giving rise to a double marginalization of shamanism to both patriarchal and Buddhist hegemony.

This did not happen without a fight. Darhad lore is full of narratives about the conflicts between Buddhist lamas and local shamans (*böö*) back then. Indeed, shamanism remained a significant feature in Darhad social life, even during the heyday of Buddhist influence in the last decades of the Ching Empire. Unlike many other areas of Mongolia (Heissig 1980), the Buddhist lamas never managed to eradicate or at least assimilate the Darhad shamanist religion. Rather, shamanism and Buddhism co-existed in an uneasy state of semi-competition, giving rise, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, to the conception that all Darhad are imbued with a ‘black’ (shamanic) side and a ‘yellow’ (Buddhist) side’ (Pedersen 2011: 122–130).

Mongolia’s communist-led revolution in 1921 did not cause any immediate significant change in this politico-religious landscape, but after a couple of decades its aftereffects very much did so. Between autumn 1937 and spring 1939, in what some Darhads today refer to the Holy War (*Shambalyn Dain*), Mongolia’s Buddhist institutional order was fully divested of its still considerable property and its lamas were purged (Bawden 1986; Kaplonski 2004). In 1938, the three main monasteries in the Darhad homeland were burned down to the ground, and the lamas, who up till this point had numbered more than 1,000 (Badamhatan 1986: 36), were killed, imprisoned or forced to build a new secular existence (for details, see Pedersen 2010). While not thriving, the shamans did not suffer the same fatal blow during three generations of communist rule. Their activities, of course, largely took place on a secret basis to avoid political repercussions. Shamanist ceremonies apparently were performed among family members and trusted friends, just as shamans were regularly consulted for divinatory and healing purposes (which do not always require a full-blown possession ritual). Nevertheless, while shamans were thus practising unofficially in the Darhad throughout the state socialist period, under conditions that were difficult, restricted and potentially also personally risky, only very few practicing Darhad shamans were left by the late 1980s.

With Mongolia’s collapse of socialism in 1990–1991 and the ensuing democratic and (neo) liberal reforms, it became possible to practice shamanism (as well as Buddhism and other religions) freely. Yet post-socialist spiritual life was felt to be in a state of turmoil, and particularly so in marginal places with few resources available for rebuilding past institutions. For the Darhads, this spiritual chaos especially involved Buddhism, but also shamanism was a subject of grave concern. Unfortunately, people lamented, many shamanic ‘secrets’ had been ‘forgotten’ during communism, and some now tried to regain these ‘lost traditions’ by for instance finding inspiration from the work of Mongolian and foreign ethnographers. For the same reason, people further complained, there were not enough ‘genuine shamans’ around to pacify the influx of spirits released with the sudden break-up of seemingly stable communist political, economic and cultural forms, and those who were around were not as skilled as shamans used to be ‘in the old days’ or, worse, they were ‘half’ or ‘fake’ shamans with ‘no clue about what they were doing, who were only after our money’ (these semi-shamans are the topic of my monograph on post-socialist transition in rural Mongolia, *Not Quite Shamans*, 2011).

Nevertheless, practising shamans could be found in the Darhad homeland in the first decade after socialism, which is more than one could say about lamas, of whom there were virtually none (Pedersen 2011: 140–142). But unlike what many Mongolians imagined (and feared, the Darhads being universally feared for their, in theory, supposedly superior shamanic powers and sorcerer proclivities), there was only a dozen or so Darhad shamans in northern Mongolia at the time of my fieldwork in the late 1990s. Their number – as goes for the number of shamans in the country more generally – has since increased dramatically, as described in recent anthropological work on present-day Mongolia by Swancutt (2012), Merli (2010) and Buyandelger (2013), among others. In addition to this, the Darhad homeland at around the turn of the millennium was also home to a plethora of other kinds of occult specialist and semi-shamanic practitioners, including blacksmiths (*darhan*), midwives (*eh barigchi*), ‘bone-setters’ (*bariach*) and diviners

(*meregch*), all of whom, like the so-called (*jinhene*) shamans, were understood to be imbued with different degrees and kinds of extraordinary power/ability (*hiich chadal*) or shamanic capacity (*udha*) derived from male or female ancestors.

According to the ethnographers who visited the Darhad homeland during the first half of the twentieth century, both the consecration and worship of shamans to some extent was a clannish affair (Badamhatan 1986: 185–186; Pegg 2001: 130–137; Sandschejew 1930: 35, 56–57). As noted earlier, shamans were of key importance for the wellbeing of clans, and their members incurred the cost of the initiation of new shamans collectively. Two generations later, I got the impression that ‘the Darhad clan system’ had, to all intents and purposes, disappeared. This was reflected in the heterodox composition of audiences at the handful of shamanist séances I attended (who came from all classes and places in Mongolia), and in the fact that the shamans seemed to receive their gowns and other artefacts from atomized, bilateral kin networks or from non-cognate teachers, and not from clan members as in the *tailgan* ritual.

The fact that contemporary Darhad shamanism is no longer linked to the reproduction of patrilineal groupings may partly explain why most Darhad shamans were women – or *udgan*, as female shamans are called – in the mid- and late 1990s. Notwithstanding certain exceptions (Humphrey with Onon 1996), clan-based and non-Buddhist Mongolian groups have tended towards a majority of male shamans (Hamayon 1984). Yet, the fact that there were also many female Darhad shamans in the first half of the twentieth and the fact that many of the ancestral shamanic spirits have female names would seem to suggest that a significant proportion of Darhad shamans were female even further back in history.

Certainly, gender did not seem to play a significant role in people’s evaluation of shamans at the time of my fieldwork, whether in terms of abilities or power. When for instance I asked a Darhad man whether male or female shamans are most powerful, he retorted, impatiently, ‘male or female doesn’t matter! The only important thing is the wisdom (*erdem*) that he or she masters’. And clearly, the female shaman whose possession rites I attended in the 1990s was coveted by locals and outsiders alike, and her ceremonies attracted huge crowds. As a young local woman remarked, ‘When she shamanizes, half the village turns up. It is like a rock concert’.

Indeed, all sorts of clients visit shamans with all sorts of problems. They come because of cattle disease in their herds, because of illness in the family, or because their household is facing debt. Often, solutions for such *ad hoc* problems are sought from other experts as well, ranging from biomedical professionals, Buddhist lamas to Christian missionaries. But there are certain problems that can only be ‘fixed’ (*zasah*) by shamans. Put in crude terms, such problems are usually psychological more than physiological, and are seen to result from suspicious and opaque causes. A man would rarely visit a shaman after breaking an arm in a wrestling match, while he would be more likely do so if he suspects to have fallen victim of malicious gossip (*hel am*), curses (*haraal*), or other forms of black magic (*domyn argaar*).

Shamans and their paraphernalia

In theory, shamans perform on the nights of full moon (c.f. Badamhatan 1986: 165; Dulam 1992: 35–38); but, in practice, this seems open to negotiation and adjustments to various needs (spiritual and otherwise). However, full-scale shamanic possession (*böö böölöh*) is not the only activity of shamans. Shamans also engage in more low-key activities such as divination séances for individuals. Yet, while such activities sometimes involve entering a state of altered consciousness (*hii uhaantai*) and the use of various artefacts (sheep’s shoulder blades, purified money, and so forth), they seldom involve wearing any special outfit. Indeed, possession of a shamanic gown (*böö huwt-sas*, also known as *huyag*, which literally means ‘armour’) was the single most important thing

that set ‘genuine’ Darhad shamans apart from not-so-genuine shamans in the late 1990s, when possession of a gown not only enabled the shaman to fully master the spirits, but also served as physical evidence of the shaman’s acceptance by his or her ritual community (although, as Hangartner rightly notes (2011: 187), flashing a gown may also increase the risk of being accused for being a ‘fake’ shaman who is after peoples’ money).

Shamans’ homes are dominated by the altar in the honourable and sacred north section (*hoimor*), which is also where the gown and other shamanic paraphernalia are kept, including the spirit talismans or ‘vessels’ (*ongod*). A typical spirit talisman consists of cotton pieces (*tsuudir*), ceremonial silk scarves (*hadag*), leather strings, odd metal pieces and wild animals’ fur, teeth, bones, claws and beaks from different wild animals. Some ordinary households are also in possession of ‘lineage talismans’ (*yaşüür ongod*) or ‘household talismans’ (*geriin ongod*), which serve as receptacles or ‘vessels’ for different shamanic spirits. People will pray to them and sometimes present small offerings (for example silk scarves) or food items (milk products) to them when noteworthy events happened or are about to happen (like, say, when someone has fallen gravely ill, or when a member of the household is about to depart on a long journey). Unlike the household vessels, which are in theory passed down through paternal or maternal lines, and which are ideally consecrated by shamans, the hunting vessels (*anchny ongon*), which hunters feed with fat and milk before going hunting, are constructed by the hunters themselves, who, as a man explained, ‘know how to make them from their experience’. Yet other talismans, the so-called ‘wilderness vessels’ (*heeriin ongon*), are kept at secret places in the steppe or in the forest (see also Badamhatan 1986: 88, 186; Even 1988–1989: 387; Humphrey 1998: 427; Sandschejew 1930: 48; and Pedersen 2011: 156–160, 176–178). As a hunter explained, ‘each spirit has its own psychology (*setgel züi*). You need to develop a direct relationship (*shuud har’tsaf*) with it’. Indeed, I was told, the talisman is ‘the most precious thing (*hamgiin hairhan yum*) that a person can be in possession of. It is a container of souls (*sünsnii sav*), which is pulling you towards where it is. If you lose contact with it, then you will die’. Due to the ‘direct relationship’ between talismans and people, these may be used to act upon and influence them in their absence. For instance, hunters’ wives make an effort to remember which offering was most recently added to insure their husband’s hunts, for otherwise they will be unable to call the hunters’ souls back in case of trouble with the spirits of the game.

Like the talismans, the shamanic costume itself, which comprises boots (*böö gutal*), gown (*böö deel*), head gear (*böö malgai*), drum (*hengereg/hets*) and drumstick (*tsohiur/orov*), is usually locked away in drawers beneath the altar, only to be taken out in the final hours before a ceremony (for more detailed descriptions, see Badamhatan 1986: 158–169; Diószegi 1963: 57–69; Pürev 1999: 176–267). It is the costume that enables the shaman to travel to the spirits, or, conversely, the spirits to travel to the shaman (to the peril of many scholars of Eurasian shamanism, the direction of this occult movement often seems to be a moot question), a journey often depicted in songs and prayers as riding (*unah*) an animal (depending on the spirit, this may be a horse, a camel, a goat, and so forth). Various parts of the costume play distinct roles here: the drum is conceived as the mount, the drumstick as the whip, and so on (for further details, see also Diószegi 1961; Dulam and Even 1994; Pürev 1999).

At the same time, the shamanic gown (as well as the shamanic drum) is understood to constitute a cosmos in its own right. It comprises materials, textures and substances that invoke a multitude of dimensions, including the *taiga* and its different wild animals, the 99 shamanic skies (*tenger*), and all the past possessions of the shaman. This last dimension is enacted by means of knots that are tied into several strip-rolled cotton tassels (*manjig*) attached to the inside of the gown. Each knot indexes a particular curing event in the sense that clients (or their relatives) tie new ceremonial scarves and streamers (*mog(oi)*), or ‘snakes’ onto the *manjig* during the *zasal*

(Pürev 1993, 2004: 176–189; see also Badamhatan 1986: 158–171). As with the gown, each component of the possession ritual is thus saturated with significance, not only in terms of what is being said (as well as sung, chanted, and grunted), but also in terms of the shaman's and other person's gestures (for details, see Badamhatan 1986: 163–190; Even 1988–1989: 317–380). Let me now describe three phases of the ritual to give a sense of what happens in the course of the possession ceremonies in which I partook.

A shamanic ceremony

The day before a shamanic séance, some clients arrive early to the shaman's premises to have individual divinations made prior to the evening's ritual. People bring a variety of prestations to the shaman and her spirits (*tahil*): beer and vodka, cigarettes, bricks of tea, candy, cakes and biscuits, and, invariably, *hadag*. The foodstuffs (*idee*) are displayed on the altar, where it remains until the end of the night's possession ceremony, and the rest is carefully wrapped up and packed away. Quite substantial amounts of money may change hands if clients can afford it. Later in the afternoon and evening arrive the onlookers, who, unlike the clients, do not present any money or *idee* to the shaman, and do not expect to be healed or 'fixed' by him or her. At sunset, the shamans as well as his or her kinsfolk start making preparations for the ritual, such as preheating the shamanic drum and arranging the *idee* and the other offerings on the altar. In the ceremonies I partook, two relatives played important auxiliary roles, not just before, but also during the ceremonies. One relative, a son and future shaman to be, was the 'assistant' (*tüshee*), responsible for helping his mother to put on the shamanic gown. The other was an elderly female relative of the shaman who, as her 'interpreter' (*helmerch*), helped relaying messages between the spirits and the audience in the ensuing ritual. Eventually, as the ritual is set to begin, only two areas remain unoccupied: the central *hoimor*, which is where the shamanizing takes place, and the area around the entrance (*üüd*), which is the direction in which the 'poison' (*horlol*) that has entered clients is expelled by the shaman.

During the introductory phase of the ceremony, spirits of all sorts are invited to participate in the gathering, to enjoy the 'precious bits' (*deef*) offered on the altar, and so forth. The shaman sings a variety of praises (*magtaal*), prayers (*daatgal*, *zalbiral*), and invocations (*duudlaga*, *tamlaga*). Some of these are performed only on certain occasions; others are an indispensable element of all ceremonies. During this phase, the shaman makes libations of milk and vodka to the altar, to her spirit vessel, to the fire, and in the direction of the 99 skies. Crucially, she is not considered to be completely without consciousness (*uhaangiüü*) at this stage. Rather, the shaman's normal sense of the world is understood to 'come and go' (*oron garan*) and to slowly 'deteriorate' (*muudah*), implying, in this particular context, that things are becoming increasingly hazy. This idea of gradual possession is also reflected in the way in which the costume is put on, slowly and with great care. The shaman begins by purifying the shamanic boots over the smoke of burning juniper (*arts*), and then addresses some silent prayers to the sacred footwear, after which the assistant puts them on the shaman. After a while, the shamanic gown is subjected to a similar purification, but this time the assistant repeats the prayers, since the shaman's consciousness has already 'deteriorated' further. Finally, the headgear is put on, and the shaman is ready to become possessed. The shaman at this point makes three violent jumps, picks up the drum and the drumstick, is offered a large sip of vodka by the assistant, and the actual shamanizing can begin.

In the middle phase the shaman makes personal invocations to and is possessed by her *ongod*. Each such spirit has its own songs, characterized by intricate symbolism and poetic style (see Even 1988–1989 for a detailed discussion of these songs). The moment of possession is marked by the shaman drumming faster and faster, whilst making vomiting (*böölöh* – 'to shamanize' – also



Figure 12.1 Showing the spirit vessel

Source: Morten Axel Pedersen



Figure 12.2 Visiting the local diviner

Source: Morten Axel Pedersen

means ‘to vomit’) and animal-like sounds (grunts, snorts or squeaks), and, occasionally, laughing in a most eerie manner. Then follows the ‘words uttered’ (*heldeg üg*) or ‘what is sung (by the spirit)’ (*duudag n*). This, together with a variety of requests, ‘spirit-autobiographies’, exclamations and verdicts, is what constitutes the divine message from the spirit to the audience. It is at this point that the interpreter must prove her worth, for there is no obvious sense to this message, let alone any explicit formula for its interpretation. Clearly, this does not constitute just an anthropological problem: most people in the audience are also at a total loss as to what is going on. It is therefore the interpreter who has the final word regarding the identity of the person called by the spirit (this is revealed at the beginning of the ‘words uttered’ when the year (*jil*) in the astrological calendar and the household size (*am bulletin*) of this person are mentioned). Clearly, this leaves room for considerable interpretation on the side of the interpreter. Occasionally, several persons in the audience make claim to being called in, but the converse situation may also happen where no one present is found to fit the bill).

When each individual spirit possession session ends, the spirit leaves (*gargah*) the shaman’s body, something that is marked by her making a single, and very loud, beat on the drum. In this way, several hours pass. One by one, new *ongod* are invoked, so that the shaman may eventually become possessed by all the spirits that he or she masters. Sometimes, the spirits are not keen at arriving; on other occasions, they come in a very quick succession, one after another. During the ritual, the shaman may also take a rest from the spirits, and the drumming, singing and dancing drop to a lower level of intensity (but without completely stopping).

The end phase is marked by the shaman throwing the drumstick violently into the corner of the room. The assistant must now rush to undress the shaman (headgear first, followed by the gown, and finally the boots) for it is very dangerous to wear the shamanic attire while not drumming. Then, as the shaman slowly regains her lost or loose *uhaan*, she begins making prayers, offerings and libations very similar to those made at the ritual’s start. Finally, she grabs a portion of *idee* from the altar, offers it to the fire, sits down and lights a cigarette (smoking is an occupational hazard of shamanism), and is offered tea and food. Relatives distribute the remaining *idee* between everyone present, and tea is served. The vodka is shared, cigarettes are lit, and everyone has a good time. At sunrise, the gathering disperses.

The care with which the assistant helps the shaman put on and takes off the gown points to the central role performed by this artefact in the shamanic possession ritual, if not in Darhad shamanism as a whole. As her indispensable ‘armour’, the gown protects the shaman by ‘absorbing’ (*shingeh*) the ‘souls’ (*süins*) of both people and spirits into its many ‘layers’ (*salbagar*), so that they do not ‘pierce’ (*tsoolnoli*) her body too deeply. At the same time, however, donning the gown also exposes the shaman to the potentially lethal risk of becoming lost in the world of the spirits and never returning to the world of humans, which is exactly what is feared to happen when a shaman suddenly stops drumming at the peak of possession. Unlike the ordinary nomad’s gown (*deel*), which contains its wearer in a protective enclosure with a minimum of openings (Lacaze 2000), the shamanic gown – which is not worn with the otherwise ubiquitous sash (*büs*), and from whose baggy exterior multiple cotton knots, strings and flaps point in all directions – invites for maximum intervention from the surroundings. As we just saw, concurrently with the magical process by which the spirits are understood to become ‘absorbed’ (*shingeh*) into the shaman’s gown and therefore body, the shaman’s *uhaan* ‘dissolves’ (*moodah*) into fragments, not like an expanding haze of gas (indeed, the term for trance – *hii uhaantai* – literally means ‘gassy’ or ‘airy’ mind). That also explains why the direction of the occult journey between the spirits and the shaman is an unresolved issue in discussions of Darhad shamanism (Badamhatan 1986: 167; Diószegi 1963: 63; Sandschejew 1930: 44). Instead of the shaman travelling to an otherworldly realm inhabited by spirits, or the spirits travelling to a this-worldly realm inhabited by humans,

the world of humans and that of the spirits are simultaneously collapsed, from two directions, onto the magical surface of the gown.

I have now provided a reasonably comprehensive overview of Darhad (and more generally Mongolian) shamanism as a social institution and a cultural (ritual) form. Yet, I have not so far discussed peoples' perception of themselves as human persons sharing the cosmos with various nonhuman persons. In order to do that, we first need to take a more detailed look at the shamanic spirit cosmos, including the fluid, labile and ephemeral ontological state in which these *ongod* are believed to exist. For only by asking what a shamanic spirits is, and what sort of agency it has, can we grasp the unique concept of how the self is enacted in shamanic spectacles such as the above.

The spirit cosmos

In broad terms, the Darhad spirit cosmos has two dimensions: on one hand, a fixed and transcendental realm inhabited by god- and devil-like entities 'ontologically different from the human soul' (Hamayon 1994: 87), and, on the other hand, a more fluid and immanent realm inhabited by various quasi-anthropomorphic entities like shamanic spirits (*ongod*), demons (*chötgör*), ghosts/souls (*süms*) and so forth (for two comprehensive overviews, see Humphrey 1996: 76–106 and Even 1988–1989: 381–390). The century-long dominance of Buddhism in most of Mongolia only seems to have enhanced this polarization (see Heissig 1980). The transcendental spiritual entities belonging to the first category have generally been associated with the politico-religious establishment (that is the leading Buddhist monks and the aristocratic landlords), so that only the fluid anthropomorphic (and, in some of the forest regions, zoomorphic) spirits were left for the shamans and other non-Buddhist specialists to deal with.

In that sense, we may conceive of shamanism as a subversive spiritual geography, which challenges the hegemonic version (once) promoted by the Buddhist church and the (male) household masters. The ongon sites demarcate an alternative coordinate system, or landscape, within which people can relate differently to nonhuman agents compared with what the lamas told them to do. The result is two overlapping spiritual landscapes and competing spiritual economies. On the one hand, we have a Buddhist/patriarchal spiritual economy promoting vertical (i.e. unbalanced) sacrifices to quasi-transcendental divinities associated with prominent mountain *ovoos* (sacred stone cairns) situated mostly in the steppe, while on the other hand, we have a shamanic spiritual economy promoting more horizontal (that is, balanced) propitiations to a different domain of spiritual entities – namely the souls of shamanic ancestors – the majority of which are associated with former burial sites that lie scattered across the *taiga*.

As such, the Darhad shamanic cosmos is positioned in the middle of the comparative axis between Siberia (or more generally northern Asia) and Mongolia (or more generally Inner Asia), set up and deployed to different ends by Hamayon (1990), Ingold (1986) and myself (2001), which boils down to a core distinction between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' relations in the sense that whereas people in the indigenous societies of Siberia tend to organize their worlds horizontally (through notions of charismatic leadership, egalitarian ethos, bilateral descent, direct exchange, an orally based shamanist or animist cosmology, and so forth), those of Mongolia and Inner Asia tend to organize it vertically (through notions of inherited leadership, a hierarchical ethos, patrilineal descent, indirect exchange, a script-based Buddhist religion, etc.). Not only can many Darhad shamanic spirits be described as semi-zoomorphic or semi-anthropomorphic (Dulam and Even 1994), but it is also clear that, quoting Hamayon, the Darhad shamans are both 'concerned with relationships within society', and 'with the natural environment' (1994: 87). For, whereas Daur Mongols had 'no name ... for the unknown place[s] ... where [the shamanic] spirits dwell[ed]' (Humphrey 1996: 122), most Darhad shamanic spirits have 'definite

and unchanging abode[s]’ (Diószegi 1963: 72). Upon a shaman’s death, his or her soul (*süns*) thus becomes a shamanic spirit soul (*ongon süns*), which, over the next three years, is absorbed (*shingeh*) into the burial ground. From then on, this place and its vicinity is ‘owned’ by the spirit, which is also known as its ‘owner’ or ‘master’ (*ezen*).

Many mountains in the Darhad homeland are presided over in this sense by prominent shamanic spirits, but *ongod* also ‘own’ trees, lakes, rocks and rivers. Some of these genius loci have been remembered for centuries, and the ethnographic literature suggests that they once played a role in the legitimization of hunting and pasturelands as part of the wider association between shamanic spirits and patrilineal/virilocal clans (Badamhatan 1986: 171–172; Diószegi 1963: 72–75; Dulam 1992: 12; Dulam and Even 1994: 136–138; Sandschejew 1930: 59). Obviously, while all dead shamans turn into *ongod süns* and while all these shamanic souls are ‘absorbed’ into burial sites of the dead shamanic bodies to which they belonged, not all become ‘masters’ of equally prominent places in the landscape (there is, after all, only so much ground available to ‘absorb into’). Accordingly, within a given shamanic line (*udam*), the trend is that the oldest and/or most well-known shamanic spirits are ‘owners’ of the most prominent abodes (big rivers, prominent mountains, and so on). Nevertheless, all shamanic spirits have individual genius loci in the landscape; only the reach and the power of younger ones are not as extensive and intensive as that of older ones (Even 1988–1989: 113–114; Pedersen 2009).

While all *ongod* are thus associated with places in the land, they are also understood to exist in the more transcendental realm of ‘skies’ (*tenger*). Such concepts are widespread in Eurasia, and they formed the ethnographic background for Eliade’s (1964) famous (but as we shall see oversimplified) theory of ‘archaic forms of ecstasy’. At first glance, shamans do seem to imagine their possession by spirit as ‘ascent to the sky’ in Eliade’s sense. Badamhatan writes that ‘with regard to the appearance of the spirits at the moment when the shaman incorporates them ... the majority of them report that spirits arrive as a ray of light’ (1986: 185). Similarly, in her book on Mongolian folk culture (2001), Caroline Pegg cites a Darhad shaman for saying that, when invoking the spirits, she ‘feels that she leaves the earth and travels to the sky’ (2001: 133). What Eliade and subsequent scholars of Eurasian shamanism seem to have overlooked, however, is that, with a few exceptions, shamans do not conceive of their worship as a travelling to one single Heaven (*Tenger*) that is identical to or conflated with the physical sky, up there. Rather, judging from both my data and the literature, a given spirit is thus understood to belong to one of two cosmologies moieties, namely the 55 ‘western skies’ (*baruun tenger*) or ‘white skies’ (*tsagaan tenger*), and the moiety of the 44 ‘eastern skies’ (*zүүн tenger*) or ‘black skies’ (*har tenger*). This division not only appears in the design of the shamanic paraphernalia (see Badamhatan 1986: 1581–61, 190–191), but it also has a prominent role in many shamanic invocations (see Even 1988–1989: 101–175). As such, the concept of *tenger* in Darhad Mongolian shamanism emerges as irreducibly multiple, for it denotes a series of parallel or more precisely hierarchically slated realms (the so-called 99 skies), which the shaman must pass through during a given ritual to be embodied by her spirits.

In this capacity, the concept of the skies effectuates a sort of cosmological outstretching of the shamanic cosmos by interpolating an unfathomable distance and a radical disjuncture into the otherwise radically immanent and horizontal dimension of ‘souls’ and ‘owners’ situated at different places in the Darhad homeland. I say ‘shamans’ since ordinary Darhads do not seem to care much about ‘the skies’. Thus, whereas the concept of *tenger* features very prominently in shamans’ invocations (which the audiences generally find quite boring and sometimes even fall asleep to), the subsequent ‘words uttered’ by the possessed shaman – which are quite clearly the high point of the shamanic ceremony from the point of view of clients and onlookers alike, contain little or no reference to ‘the skies’ (see Even 1988–1989; Hamayon 1994). Indeed, during shamanic rituals like the one I described earlier, one gets the clear sense that the shamanic spirits

are understood to be 'here', absorbed in the bodies and the minds of the possessed shamans, and it would for the same reason be quite odd to speak of (and *to*) these spiritual entities as if they were located somewhere 'up there', within a transcendental and heavenly realm of the skies. Conversely, for the shamans it makes perfect sense to add an additional, vertical dimension to the immanent realm of the spirits so that the occult journey undertaken by them is, so to speak, made sufficiently extraordinary. Somehow, it would not be impressive enough if shamans merely travelled to a forest nearby to be possessed by the souls of dead shamans. Moreover, shamanic spirits are as earlier noted originating from the souls of ancestors, which in accordance with Mongolian custom positions them 'above' the living (a common term for ancestors is *deedes*, or 'the above ones').

In sum, the concept of *tenger* serves a double purpose in the shamanic cosmos. Not only does the sky concept render the shaman's journey much, much longer by installing an irreducible gap between shamans and their spirits, and more generally humans and nonhumans, it also makes the shamanic spirits appropriately 'vertical', like ancestors should be. It is thus necessary to qualify Eliade's old and much-cited idea that shamanic possession involves an ascent to the sky, in the singular. Rather, the Darhad shamans operate with a concept of multiple skies as one among several stops in a series of transformations between dimensions, which shamans must pass through during prayer and possession. Accordingly, the shaman's journey emerges as both horizontal and vertical – or more precisely, as neither horizontal nor vertical – for what happens during possession looks like the enactment of a transversal vector: a shamanic line of flight that takes both verticality and horizontality to its limit (see also Pedersen 2007a, 2011: 166–174; Holbraad and Willerslev 2007).

Darhad shamanic spirits, then, exist simultaneously as owners of places in the landscape, as souls that enter the possessed shaman's body and mind, and as metaphysical 'skies'. And yet this is not all there is to say about the nature of *ongod*. In fact, perhaps the most vital thing about the *ongod* is the fact that they are distinct persons, who are each endowed with unique spirit biographies, if not personalities. A given Daur shamanic spirit (*onggor*), Humphrey explains, 'started with a tragic human event, which was the cause of an emotion ... motivating subsequent attacks on people. Then the *onggor* went on a journey, assimilating itself to other people' (1996: 188). Darhad lore is awash with formational narratives about *ongod*, which share this basic plot. Once upon a time, some dramatic event took place (usually involving the occult intervention of one or more persons with shamanic abilities), and this event then led to the creation of a distinct *ongon*. Following this, the lives of generations of people would be influenced by the particular 'path' (*guidel*) followed by the shamanic spirit in question, notably those descendants of the original persona, who themselves inherited the shamanic ability (*udha*), and who may therefore have become full-blown shamans themselves. In addition to these primordial spirit scenarios, an ever-increasing number of *ongod* come into being when shamans pass away, for, as we have seen, the soul (*süms*) of every deceased shaman is understood to turn into an *ongon* in its own right, and each such *ongon süms* will then (three years after the shaman's burial) also begin to interfere in people's lives.

To fully understand the complex agency of the spirits it is necessary to consider the distinction between spirit guardians and helpers, which is very common in Eurasian shamanic traditions. In the Darhad case, a spirit guardian is a named ancestral shamanic spirit mastered by one or more shamans. Each guardian is associated with a burial place, where the soul of a dead shaman resides. Each is the subject of worship (in the form of invocations, talismans and so forth), for it is the guardians that possess and speak through shamans during rituals. A given shaman masters a limited number of such *ongod*, ranging, during the time of my fieldwork, between 5 and 20. These may be 'clan spirits' (*yazguuryñ ongod*), shamanic sorts associated with other kin groups

acquired from shaman teachers, and there are also a few *ongod* that are not associated with human ancestors (these are known as ‘Things’).

Spirit helpers are the constantly shifting and endlessly variable material guises that spirit guardians can assume. They are known by a range of designations, such as ‘metamorphoses’ (*huvilgaan*), ‘escort’ (*dagnul*), ‘light body’ (*hōngōn biye*) and ‘path’ (*güyeel*). Often, spirit helpers take the zoomorphic form of a wild animal, whose species-specific capacities is then appropriated by shamans according to their particular purposes, like when they undertake journeys to places and people on behalf of a client (as in assault sorcery, for instance). A female shaman listed six animals as her spirit helpers (*zarch*): wolf, bear, fox, raven, lark and magpie. Each of these helpers, she explained, may be identified during séances by the specific animal sounds (grunts, squeaks and so forth) shamans utter when they become possessed by them. However, spirit helpers may also take the form of non-zoomorphic entities in the landscape (like blueberries) or inanimate natural phenomena (such as rainbows or rays of light), or they may manifest social phenomena as ephemeral and omnipresent as the flow of gossip in a community. In her detailed study of Darhad shamanic invocations (1988–1989), Marie-Dominique Even reaches the same conclusion: ‘The multiplicity of *ongon* rests upon the adjunction of the ancestral shamanic *ongon*’s auxiliary spirits, [that is] the different forms it can adopt, which in shamanic terminology are often known as “servants” or “metamorphoses”’ (1988–1989: 115; my translation).

A given guardian, then, is comprised of a potentially infinite number of helpers. Accordingly, a shamanic spirit (guardian plus helpers) may be described as an inherently multiple entity irreducible to any singular form, which moves along an unpredictable path of perpetual and unpredictable metamorphoses, which compels it to absorb ever more forms and substances as it departs from others in its restless journey from one body (spirit helper) to the next. Instead of thinking of *ongod* as single and stable entities, it is therefore more accurate to conceive of them as inherently labile and capricious assemblages of heterogeneous elements. Indeed, there is a sense to which the shamanic spirits *are* movements, as opposed to being entities imbued with the propensity *to* move (Holbraad 2012). Thus understood, the only way to get a glimpse of the shamanic spirit guardians is through their absence – each spirit helper or metamorphosis being like a sort of material shadow cast by the *ongon*’s invisible journey. As swarm-like assemblages of human and nonhuman agency, *ongod* move through time and space, land and skies, and words and things, along transversal lines drawn by their jumping from one body to the next, manifested in unpredictable ‘strikes’ (*tusah*) of misfortune and luck.

Conclusion

We can now return to the overarching question of what concepts of self- and personhood Darhad shamanism allows for, and indeed relies on. Broadly speaking, we may thus conceive of the shamanic possession ritual described earlier as a figure-ground reversal, where the ordinary concepts of personhood and subjectivity are flipped upside down, or rather inside out. Indeed, as a Tsaatang (a northern Mongolian group of reindeer-breeders) shaman explained, ‘I have two bodies’ (*hoyor biyetei*), one being his ordinary human body and the other his shamanic body (Alan Wheeler, personal communication). Through a temporary reversal of what is visible and invisible, inner and outer, the shaman exposes otherwise hidden ‘layers’ (*davhar*) of persons’ minds. Indeed, the fact that the possession is marked by shamans making vomiting sounds indicates that their insides are turned inside out as the spirits enter.

To understand how this works in concrete practice, recall the knotting ritual that takes place during Darhad shamanic ceremonies. As closer consideration will show, the effects of this common practice are that the possessed shaman becomes a ‘knot of knots’ (Humphrey 1996:

270) in the sense that the gown comes to serve as a sort of ‘map’ of the history of misfortunes that have prompted people to solicit help from the shaman in the course of time. It is in this sense that the shaman is like an ordinary Darhad person who has become turned inside out, wearing her clients’ misfortunes (knots) on her skin, the shaman makes visible what cannot normally be gauged from peoples’ appearances, namely their hidden propensity for greediness, envy and violence – a useful thing in a postsocialist context where witchcraft accusations proliferate (Pedersen 2011: 86–90; Højer 2004). Thus the shamanic ritual separates communities into perpetrators and victims of misfortune. While the latter are often present at the ceremony (as clients to be cured), the former may not be, but their hidden agency and effects are still made visible to all in the new knots fastened onto the shaman’s costume.

Much like in the Cuna Indian shamanic ceremonies discussed by Carlo Severi (1993), then, Darhad Mongolian shamanism works because it is unique in setting up ‘a systematic relationship [which is] established between two negatively defined dimensions of the universe, an invisible landscape within the body and an external, though inaccessible, world’ (1993: 176). Accordingly, what makes someone a shaman – and not just, say, a hunter – in northern Mongolia and possibly elsewhere in Mongolia, is the capacity to embody as many disparate subjectivities as possible, both in the exterior sense that the shaman alone has access to multiple nonhuman agents within the shamanic spirit cosmos, and in the interior sense that the shaman alone is capable of making people’s invisible insides visible to themselves and others.

In sum, (Darhad Mongolian) shamanism is all about exploring the blind spots of the immanent more than about going beyond immanence. To be a shaman one must be able to transcend the given, not by going beyond it as in some world religions, but rather by plunging even deeper into reality. This is the sense in which shamanism is potentially subversive, for it provides an avenue for potential resistance against the powers that be by offering a mouthpiece for voices that are not otherwise heard, such as, say, the voices of animals, the voices of women and the voices of the dead. And while I have in this chapter only very briefly touched upon the multifarious imbrications between shamanism and statecraft in Mongolia and elsewhere in Asia (Balzer 2012; Buyandelger 2013; Humphrey 1996; Pedersen 2011; Tsing 1993), it is precisely this capacity for subverting hegemonic versions of social and natural reality that makes shamanism and shamans potentially powerful political forces.

Notes

- 1 The present chapter is an expanded and substantially rewritten version of Pedersen (2007b). I thank the editors for inviting me to contribute to the present volume and for their valuable suggestions.
- 2 Some of the more noteworthy albeit dated studies are: Sandschejew 1930: 41–65; Badamhatan 1986, 157–194; Dulam 1992; Dulam and Even 1994; Even 1988–1989: 110–174; Diószegi 1961, 1963; Pürev 1993, 1999; and Pegg 2001). More recent scholarship on Darhad shamanism includes the work by Gaëlle Lacaze (1996), Judith Hangartner (2010, 2011) and myself (2007a, 2007b, 2011).

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Chinese folk festivals

Thomas David DuBois

It can be very difficult to grasp the big picture of China's religious life. Not only does Chinese belief freely combine elements from the three sacerdotal traditions of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism, but the ideas expressed in scriptures are quite often only tangentially related to the rituals and practices performed in homes and villages.

For decades, scholars have struggled to come up with theories and typologies that would explain how these different levels coexist and interact, and yet create what is undoubtedly a coherent whole that we may call Chinese religion. Half a century ago, C.K. Yang produced one of the most influential explanations of this difference when he divided Chinese religion into institutional and 'diffused' varieties. The former consists of identifiable sects and teachings; the latter is the mix of practices and beliefs that exist outside of formal institutions (Yang 1961). Others have drawn the line at the presence of written texts, with scriptures being the hallmark of elite, institutional religion, from which the oral, performed religion of the masses derived (Granet 1975). Another division comes at the point of legality. Beginning in the late 1300s, the Chinese imperial state formalized a very specific definition of proper (*zheng*) religious practices, texts and cults, with everything else categorized either as illicit (*yin*) or heretical (*xie*). Legal religion was thus largely a product of the state order, while those practices and texts classified as heretical became a haven and gathering point for anti-state activity, particularly when combined with apocalyptic predictions (de Groot 1903; Zhao 2007). Each of these definitions have merit, but they all share a common trait in that they focus on a knowable quality of religion as being institutional, textual or legal, and then define by default everything else, often the religious experience of the great majority of the people, by the *absence* of that quality.

It is much more productive to think of Chinese lived religion not as popular or folk, but as *local* religion; it is the religion of a *place*. Chinese religion has three levels of geography: national, regional and local. Like the Chinese language, religion is based around an evolving core of beliefs and practices that are shared by Chinese communities everywhere. This core evolved out of a variety of sources: the sacerdotal traditions of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism (as well as historical teachings such as medieval Manichaeism), state promotion or suppression, and local beliefs and cults that over time took on a national currency. This common culture lives and evolves, giving rise to regional variation. Like dialect, regional religious cultures are a function of communication: they are shaped by geography and the historical flows of population.

Unlike language, however, religion also has a third level of creative variation at the level of local community. In a way, local variation is also a function of communication. Scholars have envisioned Chinese rural society as of *spheres*, based on how far people travel to buy and sell goods, find a bride, etc. (DuBois 2005: 24–29; Ishida 1979; Lin 1988; Nakamura 1974). By virtue of the intensity of communication inside them, these spheres are like miniature regions, and naturally develop their own slight variations on more general customs and traditions. But local society also has an affective sense of community. Either alone or in conjunction with surrounding communities, villages make prayers, and perform rituals that recreate their unique religious culture. Local ritual also embodies the communities themselves. Ritual that is performed on behalf of a community reflects the boundaries and hierarchies of membership and status within the community. It also reflects local pride, as individual communities vie with their neighbours to organize the largest ritual, along with the best performances, and most lavish banquets. Even as it reflects millennia of national and regional cultural evolution, ritual is always local.¹

Ritual calendar and liturgy

The basic structure of Chinese ritual evolved organically over millennia, taking in influences from ancient agrarian and ancestral traditions, the imperial state and canonical teachings. Chinese and Western scholars have traced this ‘big picture’ of Chinese religious evolution, noting how major intellectual transformations such as the emergence of Daoism and Buddhism as imperial religions, the arrival of Manichean beliefs from Central Asia, and the community rituals promoted by the late imperial state, were all manifested in local religious life.² By the fall of the last dynasty in the early twentieth century, this system had already been evolving for centuries, and its basic elements were quite coherent and consistent on a national level.

Religious life throughout China is built on the same basic calendar of ritual occasions. Local communities might vary this calendar by adding their own rituals, or interpreting existing occasions according to local lore and with local customs, but the skeletal calendar of events is remarkably similar across the country, and over time. In its basic form, the calendar of rituals is

Table 13.1 Table of rituals

Date	Festival or activity
1st month	<i>Yuandan</i> : Spring festival (i.e. Chinese New Year) activities. Send greetings to family and neighbours, worship the multitude of spirits. Lanterns, entertainment (<i>she huo</i>) and theatre.
3rd month	<i>Qingming</i> : Families worship at ancestral graves. Magistrate performs ritual for City God, followed by commoners.
4/8	Merchants organize entertainment and theatre.
5/5	Decorating homes with willow branches. Families eat millet and drink wine.
6/6	Summer sacrifice. Families worship at ancestral graves.
7/15	<i>Zhongyuan</i> : Autumn sacrifice. Families worship at ancestral graves.
8th month	Autumn Festival: Families eat moon cakes and carve melons to look like the moon.
9/1	Families eat date cake and climb to a high place to recite poems.
10/1	Worship in family temples. Burn ‘winter clothes’ for ancestors.
12/8	Prepare <i>zhou</i> to entreat the spirits and scatter ice in fields to pray for smooth new year.

Note: Last entry adapted from *Ganzhou fuzhi* (1779), reproduced in (Ding *et al.* 1991). Dates are given as lunar month/day.

quite easy to uncover: local sources will often discuss their own ritual calendar in detail. This calendar, as described by a late eighteenth-century guide to a county in north-western Shanxi province is typical.

A similar calendar could be found almost anywhere in China. The most important occasions: *yuandan*, *qingming*, *zhongyuan* and the Autumn Festival, would be part of any calendar. Some of the local festivals were variations on more common themes: the one held on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month was most likely a variation of the rain rituals discussed below. In addition, there was likely more happening than this source mentions. Some of the more peculiar rituals might not have made it to the compiler's notice, or might have been considered too unseemly for inclusion.

Any of these rituals would have followed a standard three-part format, consisting of welcoming, entertaining and seeing off the spirits. Welcoming the spirits (*ying shen*) generally consists of a procession, in which the god's presence, embodied in a tablet or physically manifested in a sedan chair, is brought to the site of the ritual. Entertaining the spirits (*gong shen*) consists of various elements: individually or in a group, people make offerings to the deity, including the offering of spoken prayers or written memorials asking for help or protection. Offerings are followed by the performance of a peak ritual, often one that alludes to the expulsion of evil or a making of passage (such as crossing a bridge). Finally, the deities are entertained with scripture chanting, puppet shows or opera. Seeing off the spirits (*song shen*) returns the deities (and often their friends, who are brought in separately) in procession to their own temples (Overmyer 2009).

As with the calendar, this basic structure is less a canon than a platform for local ritual to build on. Within this basic structure, there is wide scope for local variation. The entire ritual sequence may be as short as a single event or as long as a series of rituals spread over a few days. Local rituals will also vary slightly in substance, in the type of scriptures that are read, the music that is played, the order of the procession, or the nature of the sacrifices offered. Despite this diversity, almost all local rituals in the end return to some variation on this basic three-part liturgy, and looking at what makes any one area unique suggests the ways that regions develop different traditions.³

Rituals may be performed by invited professionals, local experts or by members of the community. One important reason behind the variation in how rituals are performed is that different types of specialists will bring different levels of expertise. In his study of local ritual in north China, Stephen Jones shows that even within the single province of Hebei, certain regions are unique because of their historical connection to Quanzhen Daoism. Compared to other parts of the same province, rituals in these areas include more identifiably Daoist elements, such as the recitation of Daoist scriptures (Jones 2010: 88–91; Lagerwey 1987: 74–75; Sutton 2003: 127, 168, 173). It need not be formally ordained Daoist priests who perform these rituals, as the locals themselves will have soaked in a great deal more specialized scriptural and ritual knowledge than their neighbours. Something similar happens when other types of ritual specialists become involved: Buddhist monks, the lay ritual masters known as *lisheng*, diviners known as *yinyang* masters, and spirit mediums each bring a particular type of expertise to local ritual. Other specialists such as musicians, as well as theatrical or operatic troupes, and professional mourners do not perform ritual per se, but are common features of local ritual life.⁴

Within this bigger picture of Chinese religion, there are certain trends that distinguish regional variations on common themes. For example, northern Shanxi province is known for a type of extended ritual known as *sai*. These rituals are performed on the same occasions as most village rituals throughout China, particularly at the Spring Festival. What makes *sai* unique is its scale. While most rituals are organized by a single village, *sai* are organized by clusters of villages, who pool resources to fund days of ritual, theatre and feasting. *Sai* are themselves a relic of a

much older type of temple organization, and their rituals and operas provide a glimpse of a living tradition that is centuries old. The more elaborate scale of organization allows communities to preserve the ritual expertise and traditions that would otherwise have been lost. But the rituals are more than living museums. As generations of *lisheng* masters passed on texts and practices, they developed a tradition of ritual and theatrical performance that was unique to the area (Huang and Wang 1994; Johnson 1994, 2009).⁵

Jiao are large, communal rituals that feature prominently in local religious life in the south and southeast, and occasionally in pockets elsewhere. *Jiao* resemble *sai* in many ways: both are large, elaborate rituals, often organized by networks of villages, and requiring the expertise of specialized professionals who are brought in from the outside. Unlike *sai*, however, *jiao* derive from Daoist offerings, along with elements of state religion and local spirit medium cults. Even if they are not performed exclusively by Daoist priests, *jiao* still contain elements such as possession and ritual travel to the underworld, which reveal strong ties with Daoism and an earlier mediumistic tradition (Davis 2001; Lagerwey 1987).

Family and village rituals

But even taking regional differences into account, the most striking variation happens even closer to the ground, especially at the level of the individual village and even the individual family. Communities will often differ quite substantially in their religious lives, often for practical reasons: for example neighbouring villages might agree to vary the dates of their festivals in order to prevent competition over musicians and ritual specialists, and so that both communities can come and see each other's activities. Smaller villages might learn to cooperate simply out of necessity. But at least as important, the reason for ritual variation is bound up in identity. Families and villages will perform unique activities because these activities are uniquely meaningful.

Traditionally, the four rituals (*si li*) of capping, wedding, funeral and ancestor reverence (*quan*, *hun*, *sang*, *ji*) were the family's core ritual occasions. Of these, the first three are fundamental rites of passage for individuals, but also moments of importance for the family as a whole. The fourth ritual aims to secure the postmortem welfare of deceased ancestors, but is even more closely associated with the welfare of the living clan. Except for the capping ceremony, each of these rituals retains its importance today.

At the same time, the public ritual life of the family is inseparable from that of the community. Occasions that require a formal ceremony, funerals in particular, provide an opportunity for other villagers to come and seek blessings, make offerings and repay vows. The size and content of celebratory rituals ('red occasions', *hong shi*) such as weddings reflect the wealth of the families involved, and almost by necessity they involve as large a banquet as can be afforded. In these cases, entertainment for local deities is also provided for the earthly guests. In contrast, the two occasions involving death ('white occasions', *bai shi*) have both moral and ritual significance. Whereas wedding ceremonies reflect on a family's wealth and status, death and postmortem ritual reflect additionally on its commitment to norms of filial piety. The social pressure on such occasions was so intense that families would bankrupt themselves to pay for the most lavish funeral ceremonies.

Funerary ritual continues long after the body is buried. Families will mourn their ancestors at different points in the year: the 'grave sweeping' day of Qingming, and the Autumn Sacrifices held on *zhongyuan*. Particularly devoted sons would traditionally go through a three-year period of public mourning during which they would wear coarse clothes, refrain from bathing and publicly lament the loss of their parent. In theory, this type of mourning was legally required of all Chinese subjects during the late imperial period. In reality, since few families could stand to lose the income of their adult males for such an extended period, it was primarily a custom of

the elites. In some cases, however, neighbours might be so moved by the actions of a 'filial son' that they would financially support him during his vigil. (DuBois 2008, 2011: 43–45).

Apart from the family, the village forms the most fundamental community. Like families, villages come in all different types, are shaped by their environment and change over time. Even within the same region, villages will vary greatly in size, composition, internal diversity, and rate of inward and outward migration. Two neighbouring villages – one small and intimate, another large, bustling and fluid – would have very different ritual needs and organizational patterns (DuBois 2005: 15–24; Grootaers 1948, 1951; Grootaers *et al.* 1995).

Village ritual ranges in purpose from the broad to the very specific, and combines the needs of the community as a whole, with those of its individual members. The large, regularly performed rituals, such as the *yuandan* offerings performed at the beginning of the lunar calendar, are occasions for the community as a whole to express gratitude for the peace and blessings of the previous year, and to ask for continued protection for the year to come. But these rituals also serve a second purpose: while the ritual itself is performed in the name of the community, individuals can also take advantage of the occasion to seek benefits for themselves and their families. This duality is seen in how village ritual deals with death. The *zhongyuan* ritual, held on fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month, marks the midpoint of the year, and the transition of the calendar from *yang* to *yin*. This transition is also the beginning of what is commonly known as the ghost month, a time in which spirits return from the underworld. Ghost month rituals address all aspects of death: they welcome friendly spirits, pray for abandoned souls and establish up a defence against harmful ghosts. *Zhongyuan* is more than a symbolic exercise: since vengeful spirits bring sickness and misfortune, they represent a tangible danger to all. While families privately welcome home their own deceased ancestors, the community gathers to appease and protect against vengeful spirits (Jordan 1999).

Between family and village, a wide variety of voluntary associations also gathered for their own rituals. In cities and towns, guilds revolve around every conceivable occupation: merchants, sailors, carpenters, nightsoil carriers, rickshaw pullers and prostitutes. Each was based around a pseudo-familial hierarchy, capped by a patron deity who took the role of the profession's ancestor. Ritual made its way into the daily work of criminals (Ownby 1996; Wang, E. 1985), as well as that of skilled craftsmen such as carpenters and masons.⁶ Such rituals were secrets of the trade, and accompanied moments such as selecting a building site, or calculating auspicious days for construction (Burgess 1928; Rowe 1984; Ruitenbeek 1993).

Other sorts of religious associations were more strictly devotional. Either as individuals or as groups, people expressed special bonds of gratitude by travelling to worship at the festivals, shrines or holy places of a particular deity (Naquin and Yu 1992). Over millennia, China's five holy mountains became sites of imperial and popular pilgrimage, and in doing so accumulated a thick lore of stories and cultural significance. Mount Tai became closely associated with the goddess Bixia Yuanjun, who was known more commonly as Grandmother Taishan (*Taishan niang-niang*) (Pomeranz 1997: 182–204.). Like all of the matron deities, Grandmother Taishan cares particularly for the problems of women, and is most commonly approached by women who wish to or are preparing to bear children (Dott 2004; Ye 2009).

Among the most important forms of religious associations are the lay teachings known collectively as the 'White Lotus'. Since the 1300s, dozens of these teachings sprouted up across China, each with its own scriptures, networks and clergy (Ma 2011b; Seiwert 1992). They shared a core of beliefs that integrated Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism into an apocalyptic tradition that lent itself to militarization.⁷ Beginning with the first Ming emperor, the late imperial state reacted harshly against these groups, demanding death for teachers and exile for followers (Esherick 1987: 42; Zhao 2007). Nevertheless, these teachings proved impossible to eradicate,

in part because for much of the countryside they represented a far more potent and meaningful representation of organized religion than Buddhism or Daoism (DuBois 2005: 152–185; Li 1990; Pu 1996).

Vows and communal values

The basic dynamic of both individual and communal religious life is to request and repay acts of divine favour. On an individual scale, people ask the spirits to protect their families, for safety for an upcoming journey, or success in business or on examinations. The most common requests are for health and healing: anthropologists who collected 500 prayer slips from a Canton temple in 1924 found that all but 16 contained a prayer to heal the writer or a relative (Day 1940: 13). In return, the supplicant promises to make a donation to a temple or ritual, chant a certain number of prayers or scriptures, or to perform some visible act of piety, such as going on a pilgrimage.

Requests are often presented in a written text. This act may be as simple as writing down the wish on a piece of paper, which is sent to the deity by burning it. More formal still is to use a set text, which is composed in formal language, and printed on yellow paper to resemble an imperial petition. In the style of administrative documents, a space is left in the document for the text of the wish, and the name and address of the petitioner (Schipper 1974).

Although the earthly nature of the requests made to deities, and the contingent nature of repayment, may give the impression that Chinese religion is a simple exchange of services between human and divine realms, the content of vows is also a clear and public expression of morals. One cannot ask ordinary spirits (evil spirits are another matter) to perform an act that is evil or unjust, such as inflicting harm on an innocent party. Like individual vows, collective requests express the orthodox needs and values of the community, for protection, good weather and good harvests. As with the household, the most important vow is the one made implicitly in the first lunar month, when the community meets to thank Heaven and Earth for the blessings of the previous year, and to pray for continued protection in the coming one. Like individuals, communities will also gather to make vows as a community during times of special need. In the countryside, the most important reason for doing so are crises related to agriculture, particularly the Prayer for Rain (*qiu yu*), which is still performed regularly each spring across the drier areas of northern China.

Ritual both represents community and creates it. The task of planning, funding and executing ritual activities draws people and groups together in a common project, and binds them with a sense of collective welfare. The banqueting and drinking that usually follow are an opportunity to renew friendships. Inter-village ritual networks are themselves a way of cementing other sorts of cooperation between communities. During the 1930s, Japanese scholars showed how villages that shared an irrigation system also created a network of shared rituals to the Dragon King (*Longwang*). The custom of sending the deity on procession through each of the villages reflected and enhanced the ties that bound them (Duara 1988: 31–35). John Brim observed something similar in the New Territories of Hong Kong, where ritual alliances were organized around any question of common concern, such as irrigation networks, crop watching or defence against pirates or bandits. Practical alliances were cemented by the building of a temple in open country, and holding an annual ‘tour of inspection’ in which the image of the god would be carried in a lavish procession to each of the constituent villages. For Brim, the significance of these processions is that they maintained alliances during periods *between* crises, when there is no immediate need for organization (Brim 1974). By far the most extensive research on this topic has been the massive fieldwork project by Ken Dean and Zheng Zhenman to chart the dense network

of ritual alliances that link villages in the Putian plain of Fujian. Like the Longwang processions, many of these alliances are based on agricultural cooperation, but others are artefacts of more distant realities, such as self-defence networks that had long fallen into disuse. In these cases, the alliances remain simply by virtue of custom and tradition (Dean and Zheng 2010).

The most intimate tie between ritual and social structure is that within individual communities. Anthropologists working in Taiwan during the 1970s demonstrated how neighbourhood shrines were markers of community, an idea that Stephen Sangren later went on to discuss in the case of living rituals (DeGlopper 1974; Sangren 1989; Wang 1995: 33–79). As a point of pride, villages would identify themselves with their own unique ritual performance, and compete to present the best theatre, longest procession, flashiest performance, loudest fireworks and most elaborate banquets. In different ways, Adam Chau and Stephen Jones have each dealt extensively with these aspects of local religious life: the showmanship, spectacle and effervescent euphoria of what Chau calls ‘red-hot sociality’ (Chau 2006).

Ritual also presents a clear visual embodiment of the community itself. The procession that welcomes and sees off the deities might physically trace the boundaries of the community, marking out its composition in ways such as visiting certain houses and passing by others. The order of the procession is itself a clear representation of status, although not always according to the same criteria. Community leaders might carry the palanquin, walk at the head of the procession, or stand at the front as sacrifices and prayers are offered in the community name (as opposed to performing the ritual itself). But these are not hard and fast rules; nor must ritual necessarily stratify the community in order to represent something essential about it. For example, part of a multi-village procession I witnessed in the Guangdong region of Leizhou included a group of sign bearers with the characters Qi, Chu, Yan, Wei, Han, Zhao, corresponding to six of China’s ancient kingdoms. By marching in procession with the signs together, they were metaphorically expressing the message that individual parts together comprise a stronger whole. The place of prominence went to a group of men wearing decorous black robes and straw hats, who walked near the head of the procession, and were the first to bow and offer incense in reverence to the deity. These men were neither the elite of the village, nor representatives of its families or neighbourhoods, but simply the oldest men, some of whom were actually on the poorer edge of the community. In this case, what was being represented was not status as much as a communal expression of respect for old age.

An equally important expression of hierarchy comes not from the performance of the ritual, but in the financial and social considerations that surround it. The most obvious display of stratification within the village is the financing of common welfare projects, of which ritual is one of the most important. Donations for a major construction project, such as repair of a bridge or temple, would often be captured in a stone stele, sometimes listing name and amounts in detail. In the same way, the costs of a ritual will fall to village households, with the different amount contributed by each being a matter of public record. Financial contribution is a vital expression of village solidarity. In close-knit communities (and not all are), contributions to village ritual carry such significance that the record might be altered, such as shadow donations being in the name of the poorest families, to spare them the shame of being left off the list (DuBois 2005: 39–63). The largest donors receive not only prestige, but in some cases also receive the right to a place of prominence either in the ritual itself, or in the drinking and feasting that inevitably follow.

Notes

- 1 Responding to an earlier debate about what holds Chinese religion and what pulls it apart, the anthropologist Maurice Freedman (Freedman 1974: 34) referred to a ‘substrate’ that underlies all local expressions of Chinese religion. John Lagerwey (2010) compared variation to jazz riffs on a common melody.

- 2 On territorial cults (Lagerwey 2010: 19–55), on Manichaeism (Ma 2011a: 3–24), on medieval Buddhism and Daoism (Davis 2001; Katz 1995; Teiser 1988), on Confucian family rituals (Ebrey 1991) and on imperial community rituals (McDermott 1999).
- 3 The *Minsu qiyi congshu* (Journal of Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore) series, which has been published out of Taiwan since 1991, currently includes over 100 monograph-length ethnographic studies of local ritual life.
- 4 On *lisheng* (Liu 2005), on Mulian operas (Guo 2005; Johnson and Grant 1989). In addition, there are a number of outstanding studies by ethnomusicologists (Jones 2007, 2009, 2010; and Szczepanski 2012).
- 5 Johnson (2009: 315) lists many of the major ethnographic studies of *sai* and *nuo* theatre.
- 6 By virtue of their access to the forces that affected *fengshui* in homes, builders easily fell under suspicion of being possessors of evil magic (Kuhn 1990).
- 7 Barend Ter Haar has forcefully argued that even the name ‘White Lotus’ comes to us primarily as a pejorative used by the state (ter Haar 1993). On the tendency of these teachings to violence see Naquin 1976, 1981; Shao 1997; Shek 1980, 1982; Suzuki 1982.

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Popular Buddhism

Monks, magic and amulets

James Taylor

In Thailand, as much of Buddhist Southeast Asia, there are multiple conterminous Buddhism/s (plural intended) within the Greater Theravada tradition. Thailand is known as one of the most intense Buddhist countries in the world, where almost 94 per cent of the country's 69 million people self-identify as Buddhist, some 300,000 monks and novices in 40,000 monasteries. However, in the religious context it is also known for a variety of heterodoxies and superstitious practices, including a thriving and lucrative amulet (*phra-khreung*) market, protective tattoos, rituals and incantations (*sak-yan/saiyasat*), ghost stories and the idiosyncrasies of well-known Buddhist monks, saints and magicians (Baker and Phongpaichit 2013; McDaniel 2011; Nilsen 2011). Given Thai Buddhism's multiplicities, it is not hard to see the various tendencies and practices that constitute popular beliefs including magic.¹ This is what Ishii (1986: 23–24) refers to 'magical Buddhism', satisfying the mass demand for immediate resolution of certain problems while remaining within the logical possibilities latent in Theravada Buddhism. Terwiel (1994) noted how magic and Buddhist monasticism were deeply intermingled in the practices of Thai popular Buddhism, even though they may be contradictory in principle. Magical practices and the plethora of rites associated with dealing with the various spirits constitute one ritual complex among others in the 'total field' of Thai Buddhism (Tambiah 1970: 337). Perhaps not surprisingly because of this intermingling, many monastery libraries for instance may contain a mix of canonical and non-canonical materials and various secular materials (from medicine to astrology), including normative use of protective magic in Pali and vernacular languages (McDaniel 2012).² There is a close interrelationship between normative Buddhist practice and the acquisition of mystical or supernatural power (*ithi/paathi'haan/aphinyaa*); the latter gained through meditation. Tambiah (1984: 272) described the famous forest monk Luang Puu Wen's levitation skills when he was seen by an air force pilot sitting in meditation upon a cloud. Such stories are rife in Thailand, substantiating existing understandings and model of the sacred world and as having a didactic function (Eliade 1998: 2).

The famous magical ethnic Thai-Lao monk named Luang Phor Kuun (Khoon/Khun), born in 1923 in northeast Thailand, is one such monk much talked about in recent times (Jackson 1999a). Luang Phor Kuun's fame spread widely in 1993 after a woman was pulled alive with an amulet of his image after a hotel collapsed in the northeast city of Khorat, killing more than 150 people. His amulets, which generated massive wealth, much of it redistributed as public goods,

became popularly known as '*ruai, ruai, ruai*' (rich, rich, rich). Tambiah (2013: 30) noted in his retrospective on earlier work that the amulet is 'physically, iconically, and indexically' a merger between lay sponsor of the amulet and the monk, and in itself becomes an 'animated object of great anthropological interest'. In the late 1990s Kuun was arguably one of the most sought after magical monks in Thailand and along with his amulets, much valued by the country's rich and powerful elite. This was especially during the social and economic transformation in the metropolis since the late 1980s and Thailand's prosperity boom (Jackson 1999b; Pattana 1999).

The late Pattana Kitiarsa (2005b) described a magical monk he interviewed at Chaiyaphum Province in northeast Thailand with the pseudonym Somsak, a monk widely regarded for his charisma, magical or supernatural agency. In fact any magical monk must have the recognition for his particular supernatural potencies, 'such as his amulets saving lives of disciples or followers, giving winning lottery numbers, or providing healing magic etc.'. It is clear that in recent decades famous magic monks received mass attention through the power of the mass media. In 2004 Somsak explained in an interview:

I was interested in magic (*saiyasat*) even before I was ordained as a monk in 1986. *Saiyasat* can help people if you practised it properly. I basically studied only white magic (*sai khao*), not black magic (*sai dam*), because I want to help people. When they get caught in problems concerning their everyday life, they come to you. *Saiyasat* helps relieve people's stress and tension. Yes, we are Buddhists, but Buddhism and magic are inseparable. The Lord Buddha did not prohibit the beliefs in and practices of magic.

(*Somsak in Pattana 2005b: 211*)

Somsak, born in 1956 at Tha Li District in Loei Province, was a forest monk in the strict, royalist Dhammayut Sect, which enabled him to establish spiritual attainments through seclusion, meditation and physical hardship. He also found forest-dwelling an ideal situation to learn and practise his magical incantations. He is famous because of his tips on winning lottery numbers, while his main magic is known as *wicha duangtham* (Dhammic crystal), which he learned earlier from a lay healer/white magician (*mor-tham*). With this magic, he has no fear of possessed places such as 'village cemeteries, sharp-curve sections of the highway where a large number of people were killed in car accidents, or spots where people have just committed suicide' (Somsak in Pattana 2005b: 212). He uses his magic powers to pacify the spirits, especially requesting winning lottery numbers. Somsak's reputation as a magical monk grew during the country's economic boom in the late 1980s and mid-1990s. His disciples come from local villages, towns and around the country.

Somsak's *wicha duangtham*, like many recognized magical monks, enables him to perform a range of services: eliminating bad omens/strengthening good fate; fortune-telling; bathing or sprinkling of sacralized water to ward off bad luck and provide protection to individuals from bad spirits; enhancing or renewing one's lifespan and well-being; expelling or exorcising bad spirits; setting up a guardian spirit house/altar; blessing a new car or other properties, for example house, office or business establishment; and, as mentioned earlier, in providing tips for winning lottery numbers (Somsak in Pattana 2005b: 212). These activities earned the monk and his temple a vast amount of money, much of which went into welfare and public services. Ajaan Somsak remarked that *wicha duangtham* is a benevolent magic and does not have any conflict with normative Buddhism and orthopraxy. Monks like Somsak are in fact conduits for power bestowed through ritual and the formal recitation of sacred words, if uttered in a special context of *other* action (Tambiah 1968: 176).

In Thailand we should not be surprised as popular or syncretized forms of traditional Thai Buddhism have long intermingled and co-existed in the same continuous stream; a distinctive,

but complementary religious field (Kirsch 1977; Pattana 2005a). The elements that constitute Thai Buddhism are folk Brahmanism, animism and Theravada Buddhism, though Theravada occupies the central belief position. Indeed, the varieties of Thai Buddhism are many, which led one scholar to note Buddhism in Thailand is an 'inclusive syncretism' (Swearer 2010); a compromise in distinctions between normative ideals and the living religion. Interpreters of Thai Buddhism have in fact long struggled with definitions based on text or practice. It is perhaps not surprising that within this religious intermingling, elements of the supernatural, magic and use of amulets emerge as important expressions of everyday religion. This complex intertwined religious system continually undergoes change, arguably (assisted by state sponsorship and persisting royal patronage) 'upgrading' towards greater sophistication and normalization centring the Great Theravada tradition (Kirsch 1977: 265; Muecke 1992).

The issue of religion and magic has long preoccupied the work of early anthropologists and sociologists, many at the time seeing magic as distinct and instrumental, while religion involves communal rituals. Durkheim (1961: 60) famously wrote, 'In all history, we do not find a single religion without a church ... There is no church of magic'. However, both religion and magic according to Tambiah (1990: 2) have a quality of 'rationality' influenced by the early religion of Israel and Greek science, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ideas. There is nothing 'irrational' about 'magic', especially if it is seen to actually work! At least we can appreciate Malinowski's (1954) definition of magic as 'performance art' that compels the community to effective pragmatic action. Freud (2001: 84) also noted that over time:

the psychological accent shifts from the *motives* for the magical act on to the *measures* by which it is carried out – that is, on to the act itself ... It thus comes to appear as though it is the magical act itself (the performance) which, owing to its similarity with the desired result, alone determines the occurrence of that result.

In today's world we may argue that Thai people are liable to feel more insecure than at any time in the past, partly because of the dislocating and intensifying implications of modernity and globalization since the late 1980s; indeed, more recently since the eighteenth coup in Thailand on the 19 September 2006,³ leading to the current sense of insecurity among the masses. These combined concerns and anxieties since the 1990s felt at all levels have accounted for a proliferation of religious practices, including mediums (Morris 2000; Muecke 1992; Tanabe 1991, 2002), sectarian cults and the widespread use of thaumaturgy and divination. Although Thai Theravada society has positioned monks at the ritual apex of veneration, often criticizing mediums for lack of learning and literary tradition (Morris 2000: 85, 133), there are inversions whereby some monks are disciples of mediums (Muecke 1992: 98–101). Aside from the multiplicity of life crisis rituals, always a feature of Thai Buddhism (though rarely involving births), it is at times of national crisis that we see a spike in the collective interest in the supernatural and various collective identity myths and what I have termed elsewhere as early salvation cults (Taylor 2001, 2008: 4–7). The Asian financial crisis of 1997 was a turning point in Thai modernity/prosperity as the amoral forces of globalization 'radically pulled culture apart from (its) place' (Inda and Rosaldo 2002: 11); or at least reinscribed residual local culture in a Freudian *uncanny* context of difference and new meaning (Bhabha 1989).

In a postmodern turn we may say 'lost in space'⁴ as another way of describing the insecurities of the postmodern subject/body; a disorientation and dislocation of historical place-based practices and correspondingly between self and surrounding milieu that Celeste Olalquiaga (1992: 1) refers to as psychasthenia, or Frederic Jameson's (1984) Lacanian notion of schizophrenia pertaining to the disjunctive features of postmodernism and late capitalism. Jameson's

(1983: 119) schizophrenia is an 'experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence'. This leads to the search for a here and now relevance and meaning that has been captured so well by the proliferation of new hybridized urban religious cults, mystics and mediums in the past few decades (Taylor 2008, 2007, 2003; Pattana 2002, 2005a).

An example of popular magical practices normalized through Thailand's Buddhist monasteries is Wat Sanam Chan, situated in Chachoengsao Province, 100 kilometres to the east of metropolitan Bangkok, but in the extended stream of metro-urban development bearing similarities with the new consumerist Buddhist feature art of arcades and bourgeois/hedonistic shopping centres. It represents the chaotic, disordered, flamboyant kitsch-like space, a spectacle to a new postmodern urban Buddhism. Buddhist consumers wandering the arcades, 'desublimating' (in the sense of Marcuse 1991 [1964]) and pandering their desires and fantasies in the diversity of products now available, including the varieties of this-worldly Buddhism/s and mystical variants that are readily available in a new religious marketplace.

As I have discussed elsewhere, Wat Sanam Chan (Taylor 2008: 78–85) is a fine example of the intermingling of Tambiah's (1970: 337–340) four ritual complexes identified in popular Buddhism⁵ and shows us how particular social practices remake the sanctity of place and the aura associated with a particular object. It was the contentious casting of the kitsch 'Superman' Buddha image that created so much controversy after the 1997 Asian financial crisis. It displayed a unique primitive aura due to its difference (even Derrida's *différance*) and its radical disruptive functioning. At this monastery, the principal Buddha image appears more as a Nietzschean 'Overman' (*Übermensch*), a creator of new values – even new hopes; one who has overcome the limitations of conventional soteriologies and human weaknesses, gazing down on a world of imperfection while hinting at alternatives. In the popular imagination anything is possible.

Normatively, Buddha images are represented in 1 of the 60 recognized positions as compassionate, all-knowing and reflecting accepted norms and perceptions of the historical Buddha. The consecration of images is taken seriously as the 'eyes are opened' (*poet phranet*) to make it alive in the present and imbue with sacred power (Swearer 2004: 5–6). The abbot of Wat Sanam Chan, the elderly former art student named Phra Khruu Sophit'sutakhun, remarked that he wanted to capture the sentiment of the moment, tapping into the potentially unlimited devotional consumer market. He decided to construct a hyper-modern Buddha image in a standing pose, showing the Buddha's right foot on a globe and his right hand raised high over the head in a victory pose. This was a clear challenge to bourgeois authenticity and cultural values associated with normative sacred images in Thailand. As reported in one newspaper article, 'some curators, academics and Buddhist followers consider the work unorthodox and a deviation in that it symbolises aggression' (*Bangkok Post* 1998).

In considering the transgression of normative values in the reproduction and imitation of the sacra, special consideration may be given to Walter Benjamin's (1969: 221) ruminations on the extended significance of the technique of reproduction as this separates tradition from the object that is reproduced. Indeed, reproduction creates unique conditions that lead not only to a fragmentation of tradition corresponding to the current crisis of modernity, but to a renewal of urban religiosity and magic.⁶ In particular, I am interested here in representations and attenuated contexts of meaning in the Buddha through iconography that helps us to understand how Wat Sanam Chan's 'Superman' Buddha image was so controversial to the conservative establishment.

Non-canonical works give little value to the image as such, except as a reminder of the self-achievements and marks of a 'great' epochal human. However, Theravada Buddhist scholar Donald Swearer (2004) has shown how popular/mystical Buddhism is often diametrically opposed to such views as the image/sacred object takes on purely devotional characteristics,

including offering protection and imparting boons/merit on believers. However, my concerns in relation to these inscribed meanings (as in the reproduction and copying of images and amulets) are also in the aesthetics of modernity and this has generated a surfeit of non-normative Buddhist practices.

This may call to question the nature of the real as original things, images and representations of the lived world. As Ludwig Feuerbach (2008 [1854]: 41) noted, the effect of sacred objects (such as amulets) is not the effect of the object as such, but rather the effect of the representation. Simulation eliminates the objective referent to anything and even where images are similar there can be no claim that one is the model of the others. The real is only a seductive illusion (Baudrillard 1994: 160–164). Here I argue that in much the same way it is possible to talk about specific Thai Buddhist simulacra as the new cultural domain of postmodern Thai religion. This requires another reading or ‘translation’ of representational practices that are part and parcel of the proliferation of ‘alternative Buddhisms’ (Morris 2000: 54).

Griswold (1966) earlier looked at the implications in the copying of images, in this case attempting to locate an original model. He (see also Tambiah 1984: 195 ff.) noted that:

every image of the Buddha had to be a copy of an older one, itself copied from a still older image, and so tracing back through no matter how many intermediaries to one of the perfect likenesses supposed to have been made during his lifetime, or not long after his death.

Indeed, representatively, how else ‘could an acceptable likeness be made?’ (Griswold 1966: 37). But, even the most complete artistic reproduction is not locatable in time and space, as the original model dies in its simulation. Instead, we are left only with a sense of nostalgia, an attempt to preserve the signs of the real as copyists attempted to capture and reproduce an ‘essence’ of the perceived original or real in the object itself, including the first order of supranormal or mystical powers. Amulet dealers and magical monks are both concerned with imbuing religious objects with a sacred ‘essence’, thus accumulating value through circulation.

In present-day urban Thailand, the religiously real is usually invoked with a correspondingly reinscribed intensity of meaning, so as to be made relevant to the changes in everyday life. Imported Buddha images must have played an important role in the formation of the various schools or sects (*Nikaya*) in early Siam. Each new sect produced images according to its own imagining of the original copy, which became emblematic of the perceived real (Griswold 1966: 37–38). But in fact it was impossible to determine the first-order or original image, as in an authentic succession from the non-real or substituted, so the ‘safest course’ in this situation (Benjamin 1969: 220) was to choose a model image shown to possess supranormal powers (Tambiah 1984: 231). In other words, it had to show this through its own unique charisma and historicity, referring only to itself. The reproduction of Buddha images tends to place the copy of the original beyond reach of the original, which is eventually displaced in the expediency of religio-politics and in the establishment of *palladia*/first-order sacra in the traditional polities of Siam and the modern nation-state (Tambiah 1984: 230 ff; Reynolds 1978: 175 ff.).

Wat Sanam Chan’s ‘Superman’ Buddha image contested religious simulacra, challenging the nature and legitimacy of the normatively real, authenticity (and national identity) and original sacred objects. Importantly, as unique copies they have detached themselves from the domain of tradition, even shattered tradition, in their attempts at renewal (Benjamin 1969: 221). This is important, as the uniqueness of the image is quite inseparable from its traditional embeddedness. This has not displaced religiosity, or even the extent of devotion. It may have heightened popular interest in the spectacle of the religious object as the monastery challenged the state over its right to reproduce its own image as sacra. The reproduction of Buddha images, which stand outside

of conventional referents, is not a small problem for the state and its discriminatory, normalizing apparatuses, such as the Department of Fine Arts and the Office of National Buddhism, which control the technologies of mass reproduction.

Tambiah's (1997)⁷ work on charisma and sacred amulets in the mid- to late 1990s incorporated Walter Benjamin's spatial logic noting that, with the secularization of an art object over time, authenticity displaces the cult value and aura (and necessary distance) of the traditional work. The value of the amulet is intrinsically related to tradition, to originality. He argued that in contrast, relative to the efficacy of sacralized amulets and their wide distribution, there is a necessary dialectical connection between the two modalities of aura and distance, and the secularized and readily available closeness of mechanically reproduced copies. There is a tendency, Benjamin (1969: 223) noted, for the masses to get closer to an object through its likeness or reproduction. In the case of amulets, the original features and likeness to the original or first-order object ensure their aura and sanctity. Similarly, since the nineteenth century in Thailand, there was a capacity to reproduce these sacra from first-order materials along with the monk's capacity to sanctify these objects for mass distribution (Tambiah 1997: 557–558). The mass reproduction of amulets in the market place and the unlimited division of relics, along with the potency attached to authentic images and relics, inevitably leads to the processes of copying the original for mass consumption. Also, Tambiah (1997: 558) added, following Benjamin, we may assume that the more attenuated from the source the less the aura and power possessed by these objects.

Heterodox sacred objects and images of the Buddha, such as the 'Superman' at Wat Sanam Chan, clearly transgresses normative boundaries and celebrates surface or allegorical values (Olalquiaga 1992: 41–42). In other words, it is a distinctive feature of new hybrid Buddhism and, more generally, religious postmodernism in Thailand.

At Wat Sanam Chan, as with many other popular temple sites of mass consumption, there is no doubt that financial returns to the monastery were considerable, especially from the many visitors to the spectacle in the late 1990s. It was this reflective period of late modernity in Thailand when people came for the commercial sacra to buy luck, such as the automated sacred-water (*nam-mon*) dispensary system installed at the monastery. Sacred water is used in conventional/orthodox Buddhist rites to confer blessings especially during auspicious Pali chants and also used in popular Buddhism for ritual exorcism, performed often by magical monks or even Brahman priests (Olson 1991).

As spectacle, the monastery consists of various magical features such as the so-called 'Magic Water Park', including many catalogued shelves filled with 'holy water' that are sold to devotees at around 90 cents per bottle. These were supposedly sacralized by various magical (*saksit*) monks. The monastery expresses a kitschness where secular images and objects have invaded the sacred and the sacred has invaded the secular in a spectacular arrangement. These hybridized objects, while distinct in one sense – either inside or outside the monastery – take on the ability to support often-contradictory discourses (Olalquiaga 1992: 38). As a means of compensating for a loss of emotional connectivity to real place/things, in a vicarious identification with the world of mobile signs, bodies attempt to search for the excitement of the unusual. It is through resorting to the emotion that religious imagery and kitsch tend to merge (Olalquiaga 1992: 40).

Wat Sanam Chan, typifying the fusion of popular religious ideas and practices, is indeed a bizarre religious ensemble. It is a residential ritual spectacle involving the participation of both monks and laity that has resonances to alternative, utopian social arrangements (Shields 1991: 91). Most of the laity interviewed at the monastery considered their participation as simply *an-Other* religious site among a repertoire of alternative religious sacra available in contemporary life. The casual observer visiting the monastery will notice a certain visual aesthetics, with generous use of colour and a comic exaggeration of figures. Located here is the Chinese Mahayana Goddess

of Mercy, Kwan Im and her Chinese servants, various Indic-Brahmanic gods, such as Brahma the Indic Creator deity, Indra, and the ever-popular elephant-headed boy named Ganesha (Khanet).

Khanet has a growing following in Thailand since the 1990s as noticed in homes, small businesses and urban public shrines. This is linked in part to the contemporary symbolism of elephants. He is sometimes known as the 'Lord of Categories', comprehending all that can be inferred about the world. He is also the fundamental principle of all the classifications and the relations between different orders of things; between the macrocosm and the microcosm. Although Khanet is the material embodiment of the principle of creation and continuity, he can also readily destroy that which is created.

Khanet is extremely popular in India, a representation of the highest deity Brahman. The introduction of Khanet in Thailand seemingly has its origins in the early Indianization of Southeast Asia in the third century AD. The deity's success was due to the acceptance in early Siam as part of the influx of popular religion and the fact that he was one of the most universally adored of all Hindu gods, taking a special interest in the well-being of children (Jirassa 1996). Khanet was able to give blessings to any new venture, ensure success and remove all obstacles. As Lord of the Arts, Khanet was particularly popular from the time of King Rama VI (Jirassa 1996: 10).⁸ The king was a lover of the arts and considered art to be the essence of communal life (Wyatt 1984: 228). Khanet is considered to be also the deity of success and wisdom. Devotional activities are usually concerned with the request for personal success in various undertakings, before starting any new venture or journey.

The 1997 economic crisis in Thailand brought with it a number of increased risks associated with starting new businesses. Many former salaried employees found themselves out of work and resorted to small business ventures. In many cases these small entrepreneurs turned to Khanet for ensuring success. In a Bangkok housing estate where I lived for two years, a local female medium, a small trader selling inexpensive cosmetics and cooked food, ensured the correct performance of ritual oblations to Khanet and her advice was frequently sought for various reasons.

Aside from Indian gods, at Wat Sanam Chan there are huge fortune-telling wheels and fortune sticks with numbers; bizarre, quixotic and surreal wall murals intended to provoke the senses (inferring both binary opposites denounced by the Buddha of sensuality and asceticism); otherworldly celestial beings (*thewa*) and a three-dimensional history of the ubiquitous Thai locality spirit, San-phra-phuum. It is a total, entrancing cultural maze; a simulacrum, another kind of reality made out of a plurality of signs.

Inside another section of the building there is also a figure of the ubiquitous beckoning female figure of Nang Kwak, a Thai deity of commerce, seen in shops and restaurants inviting customers, and rack upon rack of cassette tapes with various incantations and religious paraphernalia. There are, as to be expected, a number of images of the prominent Thai-Lao magical monk from Northeast Thailand, Luang Phor Kuun mentioned earlier and other assortment of famous local magical monks. Criss-crossing the large enclosed building is sacred unspun white thread (*sai sin*) linking the various images to alters, which in turn drain their potent 'charge' into ritual containers for collection, like some bizarre sacred chemistry laboratory. The sacred 'charge' is usually transmitted by monks' chanting 'protective' *Paritta* verses.

The whole scene at Wat Sanam Chan also has resonances of a country fair; loudspeakers blaring out an incessant mix of Thai music genres, combining popular notions of religion, colour and carnivalesque with the flavour of the marketplace. As in the carnival, visitors to the monastery may encounter a temporary and rather superficial suspension of hierarchies, a sense of freedom intermingling among the utopic images; a timelessness that perpetually regenerates the multiplicities of everyday life and culture (Bakhtin 1968: 33–34). The carnival atmosphere at Wat Sanam Chan clearly 'belongs to the borderline between art and life' (Bakhtin 1968: 7); it is an

expression of life itself, the desire for renewal and revival, rather than a mere detached spectacle. At another level, the monastery appears as a temporary movie prop; a parody of consecrated humour displaying an array of cheap plastic art objects. It is depthless in its appearance, full of humour, an inter-textual lived religious space constituting multiple surfaces (Jameson 1984: 62).

It is the commodification of contemporary Buddhism through the power of consumerism and its link with varieties of superstition that concerns modern, normative activist monks such as Phra Paisan Visalo (Paisan Visalo 1999). He argued that consumerism stimulates desire and the maximization of profit, while its complementary, superstition, provides a 'short-cut' means to achieve worldly desires (Paisan Visalo 1999: 241–242). Consumerism then commodifies everything, while superstition markets religious sacra such as amulets, merit-rituals, talismans, and even among some groups the issuance of '*nibbana* certificates'. Then, when consumerism enters the monastery 'superstition follows'. These monasteries in fact 'not only consume superstition, they actually reproduce it' (Paisan Visalo 1999: 242).

Most of the devotees interviewed attending Wat Sanam Chan, aside from the many curious passing Thai tourists, were *petty bourgeoisie* and new urban working-class consumers of religious sacra. They come to the monastery conjoining pleasure and religious duties. After I asked one man why he came to this monastery, he said simply, reflecting other voices: 'because it is fun/enjoyable (*sanuk*), and I can also make merit (*tham-bun*)'. Many of the devotees were from surrounding semi-industrial zones, housing estates that were former villages and now consumed in the national/global capitalist enterprise. These people wanted to draw on its residual magic and, with luck and ritual devotions, secure a change of personal fortune.

There are always possibilities for those who believe, as we have seen more recently with the so-called Jatukaam Ramathep Hindu/Buddhist talisman/amulet craze. The Jatukaam Ramathep is a multi-million dollar national amulet industry around guardian deity of the sacred Phra That shrine (a place known as a repository of the Buddha's relics) in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, southern Thailand. Jatukaam Ramathep (Pali: *Catugamaramadeva*), believed to bring fortune and prosperity to the wearer, was supposedly a mythic king residing somewhere in the southern Indian Ocean. He then became a Bodhisattva and gained powers over the four basic elements of earth, air, water and fire. Although first produced in the 1980s, it came into wide prominence in recent years with corresponding increase in value. The image was originally depicted as two guardian deities named Khattugama and Ramadeva becoming fused into one.

At Wat Sanam Chan, devotees simply pass through; they stop and gaze and then move on. The monastery is a mediated transitional site for religious urban nomads. The monastery's mass appeal rests on its momentariness, its cultural *mélange* with its contesting bizarre images and experiences. It is a place of readily and immediately accessible commodified sacra and where *feeling* is so important. As a carnival, market and dream-like locale, it draws people together in an economy of reverence, irrespective of social hierarchies. There are resonances here to northern Bangkok's theme park named 'Dream World' where the urban masses can spend time musing over various created fantasies. The template for this simulated commercial space resonating with the eclectic religiosity at Wat Sanam Chan is the Walt Disney version of the theme park, a Magic Kingdom, which John Hannigan (1998) says permanently changed our image of what urban life should be. It is a rarefied, incorruptible and idyllic image of hyper-suburbia, a synthetic non-place. As a 'made place' of the proliferating new middle-classes, similar to Wat Sanam Chan, it is brought to life through self-translation of symbolic resources. To normative elite Buddhism, monasteries such as Sanam Chan are seen as eclectic, populist and weak. But it is precisely the mimicry, seduction and parody that are found at these postmodern religious sites that has its mass appeal and the potential to radically disorder and transform lived space (Soja 1996: 22).

At this monastery religious sanctity is both a site of pleasure and reverence; it is purposely and disruptive of the senses, even somewhat disturbing, as it shakes the foundations of complacency. Having the right attitude, this makes it, as one informant noted, also a meditation site for contemplation and reflection. The monastery, as with many other popular postmodern monasteries, receives critical attention from establishment Buddhism and the media for distorting conventionally accepted modalities of Thai Buddhism. But, in its marginality challenging the norm and its conventions, Wat Sanam Chan has been considered to be problematic, clearly challenging normative cultural sensibilities. It is a mark of new popular Buddhism in today's Thailand.

In summary, while it is not possible to cover the whole spectrum of popular religiosity, the many rites and practices in contemporary Thailand concerning monks, magic and amulets, selected examples have shown how, aside from the contradictions between normative and non-normative practices, Thai Buddhism encapsulates the many in the one and the one in the many. Thus, as we have seen, there are multiple Buddhism/s coexisting as integral parts of a whole within the open-ended context of the Thai Theravada tradition.

Notes

- 1 Melford Spiro (1970) called this modality of Theravada in Burma 'apotropic Buddhism'.
- 2 See also Fumihiko Tsumura (2009) on the use of traditional sacred scripts.
- 3 This was the time when the *ancien régime* tried to desperately pull back the popular forces of democratic change and then, using its 'independent bodies', failed three subsequent democratically elected governments that were not in the interests of the elites (see Taylor 2012).
- 4 For a discussion on the problematic of the current (postmodern) decentring of the subordinated subject, and a growing awareness of spatial dislocation, or the concordant disorganization and loss of spatial boundaries see for instance Jameson (1984); Kirby (1996); Olalquiaga (1992); Rich (1987); and Soja (2000).
- 5 Namely normative Buddhist rituals conducted by monks, *khwan*/spirit or life force rites, cult of the guardian spirits, and rites pertaining to malevolent spirits.
- 6 Note here social theorist Jean Baudrillard's flamboyant notion of 'simulation', akin to a recurring affectation that blurs what we consider to be real and imagined; between the object of exchange and its representation or its sign (1994, 1983; also Schoonmaker 1994). The resemblance to the real (however perceived) is merely a surface effect, an illusion. Thus, it is only the illusion that is considered sacred as today's world favours copies to originals, representation to reality, and appearance to the essence of things.
- 7 This work was in fact completed by Tambiah in his 2013 *festschrift*, 'The charisma of saints and the cult of relics, amulets, and tomb shrines' (in Aulino, Goheen and Tambiah eds, 2013).
- 8 King Wachirawut/Vajiravudh (r.1910–1925); on this king see Vella 1978.

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Spirit worship and possession in Vietnam and beyond

Oscar Salemink

Many other commentators have noticed an upsurge in spirit possession practices in East and Southeast Asia, resulting in a growing scholarship on spirits, ghosts, possession and shamanism over the last two decades.¹ Some scholars distinguish between shamanism – where the shaman’s soul leaves the body to engage with the spirit world (Vitebski 2001) – and spirit possession or spirit mediumship – where the medium’s body acts as a vessel for spirits to enter and engage with this world. In Vietnam spirit mediumship is the most common form, and lately there has been a veritable explosion in mediumship practices and in scholarship about it. This chapter surveys some of that scholarship and pays particular attention to the – simultaneously theological and political – question whether spirit possession constitutes a religion. (Obviously, the fact that this chapter appears in a *Handbook on Asian Religions* partly gives away my answer.)

The mushrooming of spirit worship and spirit possession is part of a wider process of re-enchantment and re-ritualization in Vietnam, as evidenced by: the ubiquity of festivals and pilgrimages; the proliferation and beautification of religious shrines and temples; the ritualization of daily and political practices; and more visibility of religious behavior in public life (DiGregorio and Salemink 2007; Taylor 2007). Most of the scholarly focus – both Vietnamese and foreign – has been on mother goddess worship in the North, known as *lên đồng* (riding the medium), but spirit possession traditions in other parts of Vietnam such as *hầu bóng* (serving/incarnating the spirit), *hầu vui* (cheerful incarnation) and *nhập hồn* (incarnation by souls) largely remains under the radar in other parts of Vietnam as well as in other religious traditions.

Diverse traditions

In December of 2008 I conducted research in the Sri Mariamman temple in Ho Chi Minh City, devoted to the Hindu mother goddess of disease and rain, and founded by Chettiar moneylenders from Tamil Nadu (India) during the colonial period. Most of the people of Indian descent left Vietnam in 1975, but the temple master stayed while his wife – of mixed Chinese-Vietnamese-European descent – went to France with their children. After the temple master passed away, she came back to Vietnam to assume the position of temple mistress, aided by her (adult) sons. At present, the temple is every day chockfull of worshippers, mostly ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese rather than (transnational) Indians. The temple mistress is considered sacred, and food items

and objects that she has touched are in high demand among clients, who consider the goddess Mariamman and her embodied presence in the temple mistress highly efficacious in health, fertility and money matters. When asked why ethnic Việt come to worship in a Hindu temple, one interlocutor said: 'We Vietnamese are very tolerant in religious matters. We can worship whatever god we like. For us that is freedom of religion'.

This vignette conveys the ease with which various religious traditions intermingle in Vietnam, where all the major 'world religions' are present. There are sizable Christian communities – both Catholic and Protestant – and much smaller Muslim and Hindu communities that are partly fenced off along ethnic boundaries and seek to keep distance from other traditions. However, the 'three creeds' (*tam giáo*) of Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism are entangled in people's ritual lives, as well as with ancestor worship, mother goddess worship, the cult of deified National Heroes, and the worship of local or wandering spirits and ghosts. Much of these influences merge in the cult of deified National Heroes like Đức Trần (Trần Hưng Đạo, cf. Pham Quynh Phuong 2009), Saint Hồ Chí Minh (cf. Malarney 1996), but in the more politicized worship of the mythical founders of the nation, the Hùng kings (cf. Salemink 2008). The Cao Đài sect deliberately fuses all possible religions and forms of worship to form one syncretic super-religion.

Many scholars state that these more or less scripturalized and institutionalized religions are based on a substratum of ancestor worship and belief in wandering ghosts and various spirits, predicated on a Daoist conception of dual (or triple) worlds: this world (characterized as *Duong* or *Yang*); the other, *Ám* or *Yin* world; and a betwixt-and-between, liminal space where souls, spirits and ghosts wander who left this world but did not make it to the other world (Cadière 1992; Dror 2006; Nguyễn Hữu Thông 2001; Thien Do 2003). The beings inhabiting this liminal space – which is the cosmological niche for spirit possession – are, first, the almost endless assortment of local spirits linked to particular places and sites. A second category concerns the souls of ancestors (*tổ tiên*), that is kinsfolk within the own (patri)lineage who move on to the other world after a proper death, funeral and rituals (Jellema 2007). Third, the category of ghosts (*ma*) refers to those souls outside the own kin of those dead who suffered an unfortunate death or who died childless, and are wandering between the two worlds (Kwon 2008). A fourth category concerns deified spirits – that is former souls (of ancestors or wandering ghosts) who acquired efficacy and moved up in the hierarchy in the other world through good deeds in this world. These deified spirits are then incorporated into the political theology of Confucianism and validated by the emperor as supreme medium between worlds (cf. Salemink 2007; for China see Zito 1997 and Palmer 2006). Mother goddesses belong to the latter category, but constitute an alternative – more empathetic and efficacious – ritual channel mediating between this world and the other world populated by stern male, Mandarin-like officials (Thien Do 2003), fulfilling a role similar to Quan-Yin, Mary, Sufi saints or Catholic saints in other religious traditions.

In comparison with many scriptural religions, the various – usually individualized – ritualized practices known as spirit possession, mediumship and shamanism often encountered difficulties with (institutional) religious authorities and (state) political authorities. Spirit possession was often considered fraud, heterodox and/or superstitious, and sometimes proactively suppressed. From a modern perspective, spirit worship was not proper religion but magic. The question of science, magic and spirit worship was also debated hotly in anthropological circles (Evans-Pritchard 1965; Frazer 1922; Kitiarsa 2012; Malinowski 1931; Styers 2004), but we will not engage that debate here.

In precolonial Vietnam, mediumship practices were often frowned upon or forbidden by Confucian elites (Nguyễn Hữu Thông 2001).² French colonial scholars often wrote dismissively

of mediums as *sorciers/sorcières* (magicians) (Cadière 1992; Durand 1959; Giran 1912), and the communist authorities of postcolonial Vietnam initially attempted proactively to suppress mediumship and mediums. In the mid-1980s the regime began to loosen its reign economically, socially and culturally, and in the 1990s the practice came out into the open through an active ‘fence-breaking and networking’ campaign waged by a coalition of practitioners, clients, scholars and artists (Ngô Đức Thịnh 2004; Norton 2009; Salemink 2007; Thaveeporn 2003). Since Vietnam embarked on a path toward culturalization of its policies and politics with Nghị Quyết V (Resolution V of the Central Committee on ‘building a progressive culture imbued with national identity’) in 1998, more open campaigning for recognition of spirit mediumship became possible. Some mediums aim for official recognition of *Đạo Mẫu* (mother goddess worship) as legitimate religion by the Bureau of Religious Affairs of the Communist Party. Another movement led by the scholar Ngô Đức Thịnh (1999, 2010) seeks recognition for *Đạo Mẫu* as cultural heritage, via the Ministry of Culture and, ultimately, UNESCO.

Most attention has gone to northern-style *lên đồng*, which is largely organized around individual master mediums and her or his assistants. Historically a largely rural phenomenon, the phenomenon has partly migrated to cities, with charismatic mediums building networks of clients and travelling to temples to perform at temple festivals, or performing in their ‘home’ temple. A typical spirit possession session may take a couple of hours, and begins with the collection of the wishes (written in Chinese characters) and the preparation of the sacrificial gifts and of the altar. Helped by her or his assistants and accompanied by a *chầu văn* music band, the medium dons the clothes of the deity in the mother goddess pantheon that s/he seeks to incarnate. After a series of kowtows the medium sits down, veils the head and touches the sacrificial gifts (fruit, cans of drinks, edibles, fabrics, money) destined for that particular deity. Then the medium stands up and, dressed in clothes and handling props that recognizably refer to that deity, performs ritually prescribed dance moves to music that praises the deity. After concluding the dance, the medium sits down, the sacrificial gifts are distributed among the musicians and assistants, the audience and the larger part to the sponsor, and a new incarnation begins. These incarnations of deities of both genders can number up to 18, and each time the medium puts on new clothes symbolizing the identity of the deity.

In other parts of Vietnam traditions differ, as does the identity of the mother goddess. The most popular mother goddess in northern Vietnam is Princess Liễu Hạnh (Dror 2006), but in the central part, Thiên Y A Na, a Vietnamization of the Cham goddess Pô Nagar, is widely revered. In many rural areas the worship of Thiên Y A Na is a secretive, exclusively male affair (Roszko 2011), but in the former imperial capital Huế, *hầu vui* (merry dancing) on the river involves groups of women (Nguyễn Hữu Thông 2001; Salemink 2007). In the south, a variety of more localized goddesses such as Bà Chúa Xứ (the Lady of the Realm) in An Giang (Taylor 2004), or Bà Đen (the Black Lady) in Tây Ninh are possessive agents. During temple and village festivals, southern *hầu bóng* sometimes becomes *bóng rối* (ritual juggling), involving groups of wandering female and transgender mediums who specialize in balancing and juggling with the sacrificial goods to please the spirits. In some of the institutionalized religions like Cao Đài, spirit possession is common (Jammes 2007), but also in Buddhism people can be possessed by spirits – or by the Holy Spirit in Protestant Christianity – if religious practitioners and leaders receive and relay direct messages from the other world. In the Highlands, the myriad ethnic minority groups engage in a wide range of possession and shamanistic practices (Vargyas 1993), but mountain tops (that are close to heaven, like núi Yên Tử, núi Bà Đen or núi Sam) often are also sacred pilgrimage sites for the majority Kinh. Finally in this list, there are various traditions of possession by souls of dead people (*nhập hồn*) (cf. Salemink and Phan Đăng Nhật 2007), soul calling (Endres 2008) and possession by ghosts (Kwon 2008).



Figure 15.1 Spirit master possessed by a female spirit of the mother goddess cult

Source: Oscar Salemink

Health and well-being

In 2002 I visited the Luru Phái temple complex just south of Hanoi in order to attend the initiation ritual as spirit medium of Ms Hà, a mother of two and a garment and shoe trader in Hanoi's best-known market, *Đông Xuân*, who sought healing for her ailments. For her first, initiative possession (*ra đồng*), Ms Hà was assisted by Mr Hùng, a professional medium based at a temple in the old quarter of Hanoi, and his own assistants; by the temple master, *thầy* Nghĩa; by an old lady; and by the *chầu văn* music band; in the presence of some relatives and friends. Hà had invested considerably in the ritual. As a first-time medium, she did not know the ritually prescribed acts, and her dancing performance was often quite hesitant and clumsy, to the point that the audience even showed the right moves and finger positions to her. When the ritual eventually ended and the heavenly gifts were distributed among the assistants and the audience, Ms Hà asked, 'Is it over now?'. She was exhausted.

I asked Ms Hà why she would want to be possessed by deities and invest so much money and effort to do so. She told me that she had been feeling ill for some time now, but did not get better. Regular doctors could not find the cause of her predicament. During the last half year things had taken a turn for the worse, and she 'lost everything', meaning that now not only her health but her livelihood and her family happiness were at stake. Because the cause was allegedly not biomedical, regular physicians could not diagnose her properly. Instead, she was diagnosed by a soothsayer as having *căn* – the spirit root, which means that she is destined (*có duyên*) to be



Figure 15.2 Spirit mediums in Hue during a pilgrimage on the Perfume River

Source: Oscar Salemink

entered by spirits and deities (*nhập hồn thánh*). There was no choice, for failing to submit one's body as vessel for spirits to ride means bad luck, first and foremost in the form of bad physical or mental health. In other words, Ms Hà wanted to be initiated as medium in order to placate the spirits that tried to enter her body and rid herself of the plagues affecting her. In that sense she engaged in an act of healing, thus creating physical and psychological security for herself and her family (adapted from Salemink 2010a).

All scholars working on spirit possession in Vietnam have encountered stories about clients seeking health, and about spirit mediums who discovered about their talent-cum-need to become medium after a debilitating disease. In fact all mediums that I met have stories about returning from a near-dead state. Nguyễn Thị Hiền in her dissertation (2002) and her article (2008) on 'Yin illness' – illnesses that have their cause in the other, *yin* or *âm* world – is most explicit about the therapeutic function of spirit possession. In terms of therapy or healing, many followers have wishes relating to good fortune and to good health; they hope that their sacrifices and prayers will be rewarded by the mother goddess or the spirits. Similarly, in interviews about their life stories, spirit mediums claimed that they had a physical or psychological need to act as medium, and that the occasion for *ra đồng* (mediumship initiation) often was a serious disease.

Nguyễn Thị Hiền (2002: 80–91) provides a detailed account of such physical and psychological states, and the various strategies of seeking healing. Such strategies usually take patients through the institutional biomedical or psychiatric health services before attempting informal ritual channels, but usually both ways are combined. In practice, this combination is not always easily feasible as spirit possession is often dismissed as quackery by the medical establishment,

political officers and many (!) non-believers (Wahlberg 2012).³ Various Vietnamese regimes, guided by neo-Confucian and Communist ideologies, suppressed mediums as fake, fraudsters and swindlers (Thien Do 2003), but they constantly made a come-back, simultaneously fuelled by and fuelling the circulation of success stories that are considered biomedically impossible. It is precisely this promise of efficacy where biomedical models fail that makes spirit possession attractive to many: the spirit is accessible for mundane requests and amenable to manipulation, which, however, is only effective if the client believes in the goddess and the mercy of the deities in her pantheon.

Condemned by the scientific establishment, mediums are assumed to rely on magical technology that is distinctly not modern, or even anti-modern. Paradoxically, many of their clients' afflictions are distinctly modern, in the sense that they are simultaneously glossed as 'psychological' (which in Foucaultian theory is a modern category) and 'para-psychological' in the sense that they are at a deeper level caused by the agency of spiritual beings that are both not in-and-of this world and – inadvertently – in-and-of this world. These beings are the souls, ghosts or spirits of dead people who continue to bother the living. Small wonder then that are many of the anxieties of the living revolve around the dead, and especially the war dead who suffered an inauspicious violent death, away from home, often-times 'missing in action' – of which there are 300,000 in Vietnam – unburied or buried without proper ritual care. This brings us to the next section, about war and trauma.

War and trauma

The ethnic Dao medium, Ms Thi, is a person who is reputed to be able to help find the remains of people who have been lost, being a spirit medium whose body is completely possessed by spirits during the sessions, and whose mind is 'empty' – without consciousness – and who therefore has no recollection afterwards of what goes on during possession. One ordinary day in 2003, she met clients from all over the country. After some ritual preparations and sitting upright on the chair for 15 minutes, Ms Thi's head and body start to sway in circular motion, and the audience becomes excited, murmurs chants that ask for 'their' spirit to appear. At 11:45 am Thi suddenly speaks with a clear voice and asks for Hạng. Ms Hạng, an elderly lady, comes running in through the main entrance, which is the entrance used by the spirits and hence forbidden for living bodies to use. The spell is broken and Thi opens her eyes, while Ms Hạng is distraught that she cannot meet her dead child now. She apologizes profusely and attempts to mend the relationship with the spirit by renewed praying and offering at the altar. The procedure starts again with chanting to Buddha from the book. Thi begins to sway again but now it is Hạng herself who gets into a trance while seated on the mat. She shakes her head and entire body, stands up, speaks, dances and cries. When Ms Hạng collapses after a few minutes, she does not remember what happened but the commentary offered by the public holds that she was possessed by the spirit of her paternal grandfather (*ông nội*). After Ms Hạng recovers, Thi starts to shake her head quickly now. She spreads her hands with palms up, indicating that the spirit is male. Incarnated in the body of Ms Thi, the low voice of her husband calls Ms Nga, and he mentions the names of family members, criticizing one family member who has two wives. The spirit laments his fate – why was he alone when he died during the war? Why did she come only now for the first time, after 45 years? Why is fate so hard that he has to wander on the ground of his forefathers? Ms Nga and her daughter Liễu come forward and respectfully offer rice wine, which the spirit (through the body of the medium) accepts and drinks. Why did the other family members not come? Nga whispers that the other children and grandchildren could not come for they are in the south. After some time the spirit leaves Ms Thi's body, and Thi opens her eyes and looks around her as if awaking from a deep sleep (adapted from Salemink and Phan Đăng Nhật 2007).

Ms Thi helps clients connect with dead relatives: usually parents, siblings, spouses or children. The occasions for the desire to connect up with the dead vary. It might be a premature or accidental death, dislocation of a grave, problems among the living that are attributed to the agency of the dead, etc.; but it often concerns the search for those Vietnamese who went missing during the consecutive wars, who are presumed dead but cannot make it to the other world, therefore turning into ghosts (*ma*) wandering in between the two worlds. This phenomenon has generated some scholarly interest lately, the most influential book being *Ghosts of War in Vietnam* by Heonik Kwon (2008).⁴ Kwon's book is based on research in Quảng Nam in the early 2000s, portraying various people being possessed by ghosts. Juxtaposing ghosts with the souls of ancestor, Kwon defines ghosts (*ma*) as the souls of dead people outside their own (patri)lineage, who typically experienced a 'grievous death' and therefore wander about. Ghosts can be good or bad, or both, and can rise in the cosmological hierarchy to become deities in the other world, if they perform good deeds and thus earn merit. Oftentimes ghosts are angry, sad and lonely, but they can be adopted into the ancestral lineage of a living family.

None of these publications deal systematically with the enormous upsurge of interest in Vietnam in the (1) search for remains of Vietnamese 'missing in action' (MIAs) before their immediate kin becomes too old to bury them ritually and they irrevocably become ghosts; and in (2) using what the Vietnamese call *ngoại cảm* (extra-sensorial) methods, that is the use of spirit mediums and clairvoyants to locate the remains, often in the deep jungle. Or else there remains the possibility that a person is oneself possessed by a spirit who may lead the person in the right direction. Outside the rather fashionable *lên đồng* world in which people are possessed by deified spirits (*thần thánh*), there are many famous mediums who are reputed to be successful in soul calling (*gọi hồn*) and incarnation (*nhập hồn*). Such practices and stories were frowned upon by the authorities and circulated secretly, until the story went viral of a former minister of Science and Technology and known communist atheist Trần Phương, who promised his mother on her deathbed to look for his dead sister with the help of a medium, and to his own astonishment found her this way.

In the mid-2000s such stories were eagerly circulated and increasingly made it into the mainstream media as well. The folklorist Professor Phan Đăng Nhật was commissioned to do research for the Ministry of Culture about the 'success rate' of the various mediums (which he estimated to be around two thirds of the cases that he investigated).⁵ There is a deep unease in many circles in Vietnam with this utterly 'unscientific' phenomenon – to believe or disbelieve? – and this unease is also brought out in the way that scholars write about the phenomenon, but it has become too important to just remain silent.⁶ But as in other countries (China, Taiwan, Thailand), sometimes people who suffered a grievous death – especially those who died from suicide – can become auspicious spirits for commercial ventures (markets, and especially lotteries), sometimes leading to veritable nocturnal pilgrimages to the sites where the suicide was committed or the body was buried. This commercial exploitation of grievous death brings me to my next section about market concerns and spirit possession.

The spirit–market nexus

From television cook Bobby Chinn's 2007 book *Vietnamese Food*:

One day a friend from the Ford Foundation, Michael, showed up with someone and said: 'This is Oscar. He used to be the Ford Foundation's Arts and Culture Officer. He's just come from a pagoda and he's got a present for you.' It was some money that he'd had blessed by a very well respected monk – 200 dong in notes – the equivalent of 6 pence. He said: 'Here's

some good lucky money. Put it in your cash register.' And that was the first day we hit over \$1000 in sales. From then onwards it just kept going up and we finally became profitable after almost three years of operation.

(Chinn 2007: 101)

Bobby Chinn got some details wrong: it was 'lucky money', but not from a Buddhist monk. It had been handled by a spirit medium and hence had made the metaphorical journey to the other world, to come back as *lộc* (auspicious) objects and to be distributed among ritual client, agents and wider constituency – which included myself as researcher. And the interesting aspect of *lộc* is that you have to be generous with it, for giving away implies that it rubs off on you. But what Bobby Chinn's quote above tells us above all is that there is a connection between the spirit world and the market.

A number of scholars have written about the spirit–market nexus in Vietnam in a variety of contexts and from different perspectives (see Endres 2010; Kendall 2008a; Lê Hồng Lý 2007; Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2006; Salemink 2008; Taylor 2004; and others). The two sites that are explicitly geared towards that are the mother goddess temples of Bà Chúa Xứ (the Lady of the Realm) in the south and Bà Chúa Kho (the Lady of the Granary/Treasury) in the north. In his analysis of the sudden popularity of Bà Chúa Kho, Lê Hồng Lý (2007: 512) writes that:

The cult of the Lady of the Treasury emerged during the initial stage of the transition from the socialist procurement system to a market-driven economy – a period marked by confusion, dislocation and chaos. Unlike the once-familiar situation of steady if meagre incomes derived from agricultural production or from fixed state salaries, fortunes were now being made and lost with dizzying rapidity through both legal and illegal business transactions. Those who acquired their fortune suddenly tended to attribute it to good luck and, ultimately, to divine generosity. This belief inspired them to rush to the temple to apply for symbolic loans to use in their growing businesses and to pray for continued protection and prosperity. Thus was an old and local cult transformed into a national phenomenon. In the process, a figure long associated with the fertility of the soil, the Lady of the Granary, has been transformed into an emblem of the new market economy: she has become the Lady of the Treasury, keeper of a vast if entirely symbolic banking system.

Similarly, in his book *Goddess on the Rise* (2004) about Bà Chúa Xứ in the south, Taylor claims that: 'Exposure to the market has transformed [people's] lives, causing dislocations, a sense of powerlessness, and a feeling of being controlled by invisible, remote and powerful forces' (Taylor 2004: 87). In this context, Taylor offers the quasi-Marxist interpretation that the transactional nature of people's dealings with deities and spirits is a way of 'embodying market relations' (2004: 83–110). I offered a somewhat similar analysis in my 'Spirits of Consumption and the Capitalist Ethic in Vietnam', but with the caveat that:

The interpretation that spirit mediumship compensates for the vagaries of the market and the risks of life do not tell the whole story, though ... The interesting part of this vignette [above] is not so much that people gamble and take risks but that spirits are thought to help them in such ventures.

(Salemink 2008: 167)

Perhaps the godmother of this Weberian type of analysis is Laurel Kendall with her essay 'Korean Shamans and the Spirits of Capitalism' (1996). In a 2011 essay comparing Vietnamese

and Korean shamanistic traditions, Kendall offers the view that in both countries shamans made a massive come-back in connection with the unfolding of the capitalist market in both countries – albeit at different moments in time – because ‘popular religion intersects with the market not only because the market breeds the aspirations and anxieties that prompt prayers and offerings ... but as the source of religious accoutrements that are used to effect invocations and petitions to the divine’ (Kendall 2011: 106).

This spirit–market nexus, often resembling Asian-style prosperity cults, is covered well in the literature on East and Southeast Asia.⁷ This nexus is brought out in the material aspiration, desires and anxieties of mediums and their clients, thus connecting the spirit world with the market through consumerist desires. But it is also brought out in the transactional nature of the ritual events, as illustrated in the earlier quote from Lê Hồng Lý (2007), as well as in the performative aspect of spirit possession (Endres 2011; Ngô Đức Thịnh 1999; Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2002; Salemink 2007). The ritual efficacy of the mediums is connected with their ability to aesthetically to please the spirits and the audience alike; mediums – male and female alike – have the most beautiful ritual costumes made, wear jewelry and make-up, and seek to make the most pleasant dance moves. The importance of performative aesthetics for both the spiritual and public perception of ritual efficacy leads to competition between mediums, as brought out in the saying ‘*ghen chồng ghen vợ không bằng đồng bóng ghen nhau*’ (spouses are jealous but not as jealous as mediums are of each other) (Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2002: 96). This performative aesthetics of spirit possession is inevitably gendered, and transgendered in the sense that mediums incarnate spirits and deities of both genders. This brings me to my next section – the gendered and sexual aspects of spirit possession.

Gender and sexuality

In 2005 I attended the ritual washing of the statuette of Bà đen (the Black Lady) in its mountain-top temple complex with a Buddhist pagoda and Daoist temple. The elaborate rituals involved Buddhist monks, a female temple mistress, female and transgender mediums and lay people. Chased by a love-struck Buddhist monk, I sought ‘shelter’ with the spirit mediums and shared their food and drinks. The monk in love found me and reproached me for drinking on sacred grounds, then left (but later asked me to buy some vodka in town). Sometime after, another monk came in and was invited to drink. No, he said, he had lived ‘*chay*’ for 12 years now, and left.⁸ Then the prettiest medium said ‘Yeah yeah, living ‘*chay*’ for 12 years, but he knows how to drink *sữa*’ – which means milk, but is slang for sperm (*tinh dịch*) as well.

This vignette brings out the sexualized and transgender nature of spirit mediums in Vietnam, in contrast with the gendered but asexual ethos that monks are supposed to display. Most researchers of spirit possession in Vietnam touch upon the gendered nature of the practice, but few speak about this in terms of transgression. Discussing the putative homosexuality of some male mediums in his article on ‘“Hot-tempered” women and “effeminate” men’, Barley Norton (2006: 71–75) claims that gender traversing only happens within the liminal time-space of the ritual, and that allegations of homosexuality would detract from their ritual efficacy in the eyes of their clients. This claim is not only contradicted by my own observations (see Salemink 2008), but also clearly shown wrong in the documentary film *Ái nam Ái nữ* (Love Man, Love Woman) by Nguyễn Trịnh Thị in 2007, which depicts a network of male, homosexual mediums in Hanoi.

As said already, most research on spirit possession by foreigners and Vietnamese researchers takes place in the north,⁹ and northern traditions tend to be taken as the standard for Vietnam from which other traditions deviate.¹⁰ In Vietnam’s deep south many male mediums are explicitly transgender, to the point of using hormones to grow breasts; and off-stage they remain

transgender persons. Female mediums, by contrast, simply cross-dress and paint moustaches on their faces when they incarnate a male deity. Their ritual performance is called *bóng rỗi* – denoting balancing and juggling as a performative part of the ritual to please the spirits and the audience alike, but please note that *bóng* is also slang for gay in Vietnamese – *vide* the autobiographical book *Bóng* by Hoàng Nguyên and Đoàn Trang (2008). In a recent conference paper I looked at my material from Tây Ninh and An Giang into the explicitly transgressive aspects both in terms of gender performance (Butler 1990) and in terms of sexuality. *Bóng rỗi* transgresses boundaries between ritual and art, market, entertainment and sexuality – that is: the spheres called ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ in the West (for a discussion with reference to China, see Szonyi 2009). More importantly, however, *bóng rỗi* – like other ritualized and performative forms of spirit possession in Vietnam – bridges the *Yang* (male) and *Yin* (female) worlds, hence transgressing the boundary between these two worlds. This transgressive ability is not limited to spirit mediums, with their sometimes explicit and exuberant sexual transgression; through their abstinence Buddhist monks seem to deny having a sexual identity rather than expressing a transgressive sexual identity. In both cases, however, the effect is the same, namely the creation of gender ambiguity which creates a privileged ritual channel between the ‘male’ and ‘female’ worlds, hence denoting ritual efficacy in communicating with the other world. The point to note is that all spirit mediums embody cross-gender spirits, they only do so sexually more explicitly in southern Vietnam.

This makes spirit mediums in Vietnam somewhat similar, or at least comparable, to the Hijra in India, Kathoey in Thailand, Nat in Burma, Boramey in Cambodia, Waria and Bissu in Indonesia – insofar as these categories play a ritual role in life. But does similarity lead to cross-border contact? In 2005 I met a transgender medium-cum-entertainer at a temple festival in An Giang, who had recently returned from a sex change operation in Bangkok, and had come back as the star of the show – the most glamorous entertainer and most efficacious medium of all. Her changed body made her drag queen performance more exciting, and she was visibly influenced by Kathoey ‘ladyboy’ shows – which brings me to the next section, on boundary and border crossing.

Crossing boundaries and crossing borders

My first encounter with *lên đồng* was in Ông Đồng Nam’s temple outside Hanoi in the late 1990s. This temple was reconstructed and refurbished with considerable financial support from two elderly Việt Kiều (overseas Vietnamese) ladies from California – both widows, both commercially successful as real estate brokers and both visibly wealthy. They wished to reconnect to Vietnam and found new meaning in their wealthy but broken/truncated lives as followers of Mr Nam. Already successful in Hanoi, Mr Nam wished to reach out to wealthy potential followers overseas, had been to France already, wanted to come to Germany as well, but his deepest wish was to go to California for some time.

Often interpreted as ‘encompassing simultaneously Buddhist and Taoist deities of the Chinese cosmomythology, and purely Vietnamese deities’ (Krowolski 1976: 174), this sublimely localized spirit worship tradition travels where Vietnamese are going. Already in 1973 a study was published about *Hầu bóng: Un culte vietnamien de possession transplanté en France* (Simon and Simon-Barouh 1973), which – lacking the conceptual vocabulary to analyse this as transnational practice – sought to interpret the practice in Vietnam rather than France. With the emergence of sizable Việt communities in the North America, Europe and Australia, Việt transnationalism entered the vocabulary of social scientists, captured in recent titles such as *Traveling Spirits* (Hüwelmeier and Krause 2010), *Spirited Migrations* (Fjelstad 2010), *Trading in Spirits* (Endres 2010) and *Spirits without Borders* (Fjelstad and Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2011). In other words, the localized spirits of the Mother Goddess

pantheon that are often thought to embody the geo-cosmological binary between water and mountains (Simon and Simon-Barouh 1973; Salemink 2008), emerge in places far from Vietnam where their followers migrate. Moreover, capitalizing on their different research locations, Fjelstad and Nguyễn Thị Hiền (2011) show that Việt people, mediums and spirits keep in touch across borders.

Beyond a transnational ethnic Việt community, the vignette about the Vietnamese 'ladyboy' medium in the Mekong Delta shows that border crossing may imply cross-border flows between putatively 'national' spirit medium traditions, in the form of mutual visits, attending one another's performances, sex change operations and other face-to-face or embodied encounters. However, one does not need to travel across borders in order to meet spirits and mediums in other traditions, as many of the contemporary encounters between co-ethnic mediums, their spirit masters and their clients across borders is mediated. In an article on festival and rituals in Huế, I recorded how scholarly books impacted on the choice and performance of ritual music (Salemink 2007: 573), while both the work by Rosalind Morris (2000) and Pattana Kitiarsa (2012) show how spirit networks are mediated in the sense of using media to connect up with clients, with each other, or even using mass media. More recently, much spiritual exchange takes place online (Fjelstad and Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2011), while the same goes for virtual travel to other spirits and mediums across borders in the region. Surprisingly, Endres and Lauser's *Engaging the Spirit World in Modern Southeast Asia* (2011) does not really capture the regionalizing spirit of this movement, except for the contribution by Laurel Kendall (2011) who situates her analysis in both Korea and Vietnam.

The mediated nature of contemporary mediumship – making border and boundary crossing easier, both in the East and Southeast region, and between diaspora and homeland – means that mediums these days connect worlds both vertically – the *Yin* and *Yang* worlds – and horizontally – the various lifeworlds lived in various countries in the region and around the globe. In that sense, transnational migration, border crossing and online travel make the various spirit possession traditions not unlike the so-called world religions in the past, which – invariably starting from humble beginnings – could become world religions because of travel, mediation and proselytization. Which brings me to the last section, which deals with the dispute whether spirit possession can be considered a religion?

Coda

In October 2010 I was asked to give a presentation on '*Mê tín dị đoan, tôn giáo và khoa học*' (Superstition, religion and science) at a meeting of heritage experts in Hanoi, who were debating whether spirit possession should be admissible in temples and other sacred spaces that were simultaneously officially recognized state heritage. Considered deviant from (legitimate) religion in Vietnam, spirit possession has historically been suppressed as superstitious practice (Kendall 2009: 105; Roszko 2011; Salemink 2009), and the occasion for the meeting was a recent circular by the Ministry of Culture to ban spirit possession rituals from heritage sites. My host (correctly) expected me to critically discuss the distinction between religion and superstition, given a recent upsurge of heritagization of sacred spaces in Vietnam, with the secular gaze of the state wanting to purify its heritage sites of 'superstitious and heterodox' practices, even when allowing for the religious character of these sites. Many – but not all – of the experts disagreed with the Ministry's circular, and sought to allow possession rituals on temple grounds, and some claimed that it constitutes intangible cultural heritage according to UNESCO ideas. Others – mostly prominent mediums and their followers – claimed that *lên đồng* constitutes an authentic Vietnamese religion and should be acknowledged as such.

According to many Vietnamese politicians and scholars, spirit possession is not a religion because it is not formally institutionalized, does not have a formal doctrine, and does not have a priestly hierarchy, and therefore constitutes a heterodox practice.¹¹ The question of whether spirit possession is a religion is politically important in a country where the state decides what constitutes a legitimate and admissible religion. It is equally important in a situation where the stigma of superstition – and its association with quackery and unscientific magical tricks – invites the suspicion that possession is fake and that mediums are frauds. According to Michael Lambek, spirit possession undermines our ‘modern’ comfort zones:

In many of its manifestations possession violates our own cultural distinctions and deeply held assumptions concerning the ‘natural’ differences between such pairs of opposites as self and others, seriousness and comedy, reality and illusion, and perhaps most critically, art and life.

(Lambek 1989: 52–53)

In *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), Bruno Latour argues that the contemporary Western sense of a secular, scientific modernity is based on the purification of the (religious or magical) idea that human subjects and natural objects could exercise agency on each other (see also Styers 2004). This notion of modernity is predicated on a neat distinction between the historical categories of the religious and the secular, which Talal Asad showed to have historically emerged as analytical categories at a certain historical juncture, namely that of the early modern period in Europe (Asad 2003). Since then, this analytical dichotomy has informed much of the social science canon, *vide* the work by Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Mauss and Lévi-Strauss, among many others.

Earlier we observed how spirit possession is predicated on the belief in the co-existence of two *Yin* and *Yang* worlds, where the *Yang* world consists of human agents, and the *Yin* world of non-human agents (deities, spirits) or post-human agents (ancestors, spirits, ghosts).¹² Spirit possession and shamanism cross the boundaries between these worlds, thus simultaneously re-inscribing and undermining this distinction, as the two worlds exercise agency and influence on each other. For mediums and their clients the ultimate question of spirit possession boils down to the question of efficacy; similar to much secular – scientific, medical, economic – practice, it is compelling if it ‘works’. The efficacy of spirit mediums depends on their capacity to connect both worlds – just like much ritual does more generally – and this efficacy is predicated on belief. Asked about efficacy, one of my interlocutors in the Bà Chúa Xứ temple in An Giang answered ‘*minh cần phải tin tưởng thôi*’ (one simply must have faith in it). For this interlocutor, ‘secular’ and ‘spiritual’ concerns overlap because the two worlds are connected. After all, the ways in which the spirit world is imagined, invoked and approached reflect modern concerns of this world and are intimately connected with this world. For, as a Vietnamese saying goes: ‘*Dương sao Âm vậy*’ (however the *Yang* world is, so is the *Yin* world), making the question whether spirit possession is a religion that is politically relevant but culturally (and theologically) less so.

Notes

- 1 See the work by Mary Steedly (1993), Anna Tsing (1993) and Henri Chambert-Loir and Anthony Reid (2002) on Indonesia; by Rosalind Morris (2000) and Pattana Kitiarsa (2005, 2012) on Thailand; by Didier Bertrand (2001, 2004, 2005) on Cambodia; by Patrice Ladwig (2011, 2012) on Laos; by Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière (2011) on Burma; by Emily Chao (1999), Adam Chau (2006), Eric Cline (2010), Robert Weller (1994), Shahar and Weller (1996), Peter Nickerson (2001) on China and Taiwan; and by Laurel Kendall (1985, 1996, 2008a, 2008b, 2009) and Boudewijn Walraven (2009) on Korea.
- 2 For China, see Sutton (2000).

- 3 See also the feature film *Trăng nơi đáy giếng* (Moon at the Bottom of the Well) by Nguyễn Vinh Sơn (2008).
- 4 Shaun Malarney (2002) wrote about ghosts in the frame of his village study in northern Vietnam. Salemink and Phan Đăng Nhật (2007) and Kirsten Endres (2008) wrote about the phenomenon of soul calling in Vietnam. Mai Lan Gustafsson (2009) devoted her entire book *War and Shadows: The Haunting of Vietnam* to a description ghosts of war, but without much theoretical elaboration.
- 5 Personal communication, Phan Đăng Nhật, 2003.
- 6 When doing field research I was often asked whether the phenomena observed ‘were really true’; as a scientist I was assumed to have the will and authority to make this judgement.
- 7 See Note 1.
- 8 ‘Chay’ literally means vegetarian, but living ‘chay’ means living in abstinence of meat, alcohol and sex.
- 9 See Ngô Đức Thịnh (2010); Fjelstad and Nguyễn Thị Hiền (2006); Dror (2006); Kendall (2008a, 2008b); Pham Quỳnh Phương (2009); Endres (2011).
- 10 For spirit worship in other regions of Vietnam, see Nguyễn Hữu Thông (2001); Taylor (2004); Salemink (2007, 2008); and Roszko (2011).
- 11 The Vietnamese term *mê tín dị đoan* has the combined connotation of superstition and heterodoxy.
- 12 These distinctions between non-human and post-human entities are fuzzy and fluid.

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Popular Qigong and transnational Falun Gong inside and outside post-Mao China

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This chapter concerns Qigong and Falun Gong inside and outside post-Mao China. Qigong can be translated most basically as ‘energy exercises’. In most Western societies Qigong is primarily known within the confines of alternative health, martial arts and New-Age spirituality. However, in the People’s Republic of China Qigong was a popular national phenomenon regulated within the confines of health and science by the Chinese communist state. When one particular form of Qigong, called Falun Gong – a term meaning ‘Practice of the Dharma/Buddha Law’,² became a massively popular practice and subversive movement that could not be confined within the Chinese state classificatory and regulatory order it was interpreted as dangerous, violently suppressed and labelled an ‘evil cult’. The movement has now established a new headquarters in New York global city from where Falun Gong is globally contested as an authentic Chinese cultivation practice (or ‘spiritual discipline’) and a persecuted religion and human-rights issue.

The history of Qigong and Falun Gong is not simply a story of religion versus state, democracy versus communism, and the West versus China, but rather a more complicated narrative requiring critical academic reflection. To adequately understand Qigong and Falun Gong in the post-Mao era, this chapter introduces and discusses the already large and insightful academic scholarship on the subject of religion and state relations in China and on Qigong and Falun Gong in particular. Centrally important here is an emphasis on the intervening role of the Chinese state in the question of whether popular Qigong and Falun Gong should be considered as ‘health exercises’, ‘religion’ or indeed examples of backward and dangerous ‘superstitions’. This ‘religious question in China’ (Goossaert and Palmer 2011) must recognize that the category of ‘religion’ derives from a particular Christian and Western history (Asad 1993, 2003), and which, through foreign imperialism, has profoundly shaped the modern Chinese communist state’s regulation and often violent suppression of various groups (Duara 2003; Goossaert 2005; Van der Veer 2007, 2009). This regulation of ‘religion’ and suppression of dangerous groups was and indeed remains a project of making the Chinese nation (Ashiwa and Wank 2009) and civilizing its peoples in the maintenance of hegemony (Feuchtwang 2009; Goossaert and Palmer 2011: 14). It will also become clear however that such processes have been contested by various groups who do not recognize themselves within the limiting confines of the Chinese state’s order and have developed various strategies of resistance and contestation.

The following chapter is divided into four main sections. The first introduces and sketches the historical and political context through which ‘religion’ emerged as an official category in China. It shows that, in a turbulent historical context depicted by imperialism, popular rebellion and the passing of the last Chinese Dynasty, distinctions between state, religion and superstition became more prominent and came to shape the Maoist era. The second section focuses on the post-Mao era in which Qigong flourished and in a social and political context the state sought to dominate. Although initially supported by the Chinese state as popular health exercises, Qigong masters and practitioners making competing claims regarding origin and purpose of the practice were increasingly interpreted as ‘superstitions’ or, when they were practiced by large numbers, potentially dangerous. Building on the first two sections, the third discusses and unpacks Falun Gong’s emergence in 1992, rise to popularity and suppression in 1999. The final section concerns Falun Gong outside of China, especially in New York, and describes how the movement contests the Chinese state’s suppression in the global arena of human rights. It is also described how via a New York-based media empire and the territories of Taiwan and Hong Kong, not only contested representations of Falun Gong but also Chinese history and culture are being (re)organized and (re)distributed into the sovereign territory of mainland China.

First, I argue that Qigong and especially Falun Gong can be understood as having a genealogy in Chinese body-centred cultivation traditions; the imperial and modern Chinese states have always sought to regulate and contain these traditions that are now going global as never before. The story of Falun Gong in particular concerns one expression of this tradition that because of its organization from the US eluded official classifications and regulations and became a massively popular threat to the Chinese communist state. Through focusing on Falun Gong overseas – how it has become framed in a global arena of human rights and how the movement has established a Chinese media empire in New York – it becomes apparent that the Chinese state’s monopoly on defining and containing religion (and Chineseness more generally) is now being contested and compromised from a new centre: New York city – the capital of Falun Gong’s informal Middle Kingdom. ‘Religion in China’ has now, perhaps more than ever before, to be understood within a broad framework beyond the Chinese state’s claimed monopoly on defining religion and beyond the sovereign territory of China.

The history and politics of Chinese ‘religion’

Before the twentieth century ‘religion’ and ‘politics’ were not clearly defined and distinguished but were conflated in the persona of the emperor. The emperor was understood as the Son of Heaven and ruler of the Middle Kingdom.³ Located in the forbidden palace in Peking, a place considered an axis point connecting heaven and earth and hence the centre of the world, the emperor claimed a divine mandate to assimilate and civilize an endless periphery of people across the world (Duara 2003; Yahuda 2000: 25). The emperor’s ritualized movements vertically connected earth and heaven while functioning in the horizontal sense of uniting the people into a social body or body politic (Palmer 2006: 149). The emperor’s body was a more general site of various textual and performative rituals and disciplines enacted by the emperor, his literati and the population at large in the establishing of an imperial hegemony (Zito 1997: 216).

The mandate to rule, and the hegemony formed through ritual and discipline, was not fixed and nor was it invulnerable for it was contested by various actors and groups. As Elizabeth Perry (2001) has highlighted, since the Confucian philosopher Mencius (373–289 BC), ‘the mandate of heaven’ (*Tianming*) bestows sanction and legitimacy on any successful rebellion able to seize the throne in Peking. Such contenders included foreign invaders from the North and Western and Japanese imperialists, and popular uprisings.⁴ This turbulent context arguably informed Qing

state suspicions of various groups who were often interpreted through categories of distinction like orthodox and heterodox doctrines (Munro 1989: 7), and, especially when they were deemed dangerous, classified as ‘White Lotus’ (*bailian she/jiao*) (ter Haar 1999).

Barend ter Haar (1999) has described how the White Lotus category was utilized by the Qing Dynasty state as a label and used to suppress and persecute a diverse assortment of groups, whether they were aggressive or not. Most of these groups practised Chinese folk and popular rituals in rural areas and on a small scale, involving participatory worship of deities through ‘precious scrolls/volumes’ (*pao-chuan*) and obscure and little-known religious leaders who were generally peaceful in nature (Overmyer 1999: 8). For these groups – defined as ‘redemptive societies’ (Duara 2003; Ownby 2008a) – the imperial (and later territorial nation-state) body politic was often irrelevant because they sought to directly access the universal heavenly power for health improvement and individual empowerment (cf. Duara 2003: 11–12). Although not intent on challenging or seizing the throne, such redemptive societies were deemed dangerous and suppressed exactly because in bypassing the emperor they subverted imperial ritual monopoly and hence state hegemony.

During the Qing Dynasty redemptive societies were distinguished between ‘orthodox’ and ‘heterodox’, but the introduction of a Western category of ‘religion’ from 1901 onwards formed new neologisms – *zongjiao* (‘religion’) and *mixin* (backward superstition); these terms were a new way of distinguishing between ‘acceptable’ and ‘condemned’ teachings and groups (Goossaert 2005: 14–15). While the Republican era (1911–1949) has been referred to as a ‘weak-state period’ in which redemptive societies flourished (Ownby 2008a), it was especially during Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution that expressions of religion and superstition were ruthlessly condemned and eliminated. Despite destruction and iconoclasm, the ‘Mao cult’ arguably had roots itself in imperial Chinese religious (and political) culture that it combined with an emphasis on moral cultivation and the utopia of modernist revolution (Goossaert and Palmer 2011: 167, 168; Kipnis 2001: 34–35; ter Haar 2002); indeed, it was under Mao that such a ‘political religiosity’ spread as never before to the entire population (Goossaert and Palmer 2011: 174).

Following the death of Chairman Mao and the adoption of new policies of economic and political liberalization and reform, there was a sudden revival of temple-based popular religions and folk culture (Chau 2006) and ‘syncretic sects’ and ‘secret societies’ (Munro 1989: 8). Although some scholars have interpreted this revival as a response to the ideological vacuum and crisis caused by Mao’s death (Munro 1989; Xu 1999) others have been critical of such mono-causal explanations and emphasized instead the complex role of diverse actors, desires and actions, institutions and social forces (Chau 2006: 2). All the same, religious revivals often occurred in rural areas and were discounted as potentially reactionary and dangerous ‘feudal superstition’ (*fengjian mixin*) (cf. Munro 1989: 8). Post-Mao political elites have continued to distinguish between ‘official religion’ and ‘superstition’; the former is understood as confined to the institutionalized, scriptural traditions of Buddhism, Taoism, Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam that were required to contribute to the morality of the state, and the latter as everything outside the official five religions and detrimental to modern progress (Van der Veer 2009: 95). In reflecting on China’s comparative difference to most Western societies, Goossaert and Palmer have pointed out that in China ‘no single religious institution or tradition has ever claimed the explicit and exclusive adherence of a majority of the population’ (2011: 2); instead, this space has always been claimed by the more encompassing politico-religious state.

Exercising nationhood in the post-Mao Qigong fever

In this section focus is given to the popular Qigong movement, which was defined and regulated by the Chinese state in the 1980s and 1990s as a popular health practice for ‘exercising

nationhood'. *Qi* means 'vital energy/breath' and *Gong* means 'practices, exercises and/or skills'. Qigong can be translated as 'exercises of energy and breath' and involves an assortment of bodily postures, movements and breathing techniques for utilizing *qi* (cf. Penny 2012a: 4–5). As David Palmer (2007) has described, Qigong has a genealogy in ancient shamanism, in texts as far back as the Tang, the Warring States and the Song dynasties. Later, *Qigong* was adopted by Confucian literati and used as invincibility rituals by Boxer rebels. However, although similar 'body techniques' (Mauss 1979 [1935]) or 'traditional Chinese body technologies' (Palmer 2007) are identifiable throughout Chinese history, Qigong only emerged as an official and distinct category through the Chinese Communist Party. Indeed, Qigong was part of the early Communist Party's institutionalization of Chinese medicine, a process that required removing and purifying Qigong from its 'superstitious' history. Despite being temporarily abandoned during the height of the Cultural Revolution, it was especially following Mao's death in 1976 that Qigong became translated into modern, rationalized and secular technologies of the nation (Palmer 2007: 12).

The popularization of Qigong – the 'Qigong Boom' (Zhu and Penny 1994) or 'Qigong Fever' (Palmer 2007) – was both a popular grassroots movement and a politicized project controlled by the post-Mao Chinese state. Some scholars have pointed out how, similar to the above mentioned flourishing of rural syncretic sects and societies, post-Mao Qigong was a grassroots cultural response to the vacuum caused by Mao's death and China's (re)opening to external influences and markets (Xu 1999) and was a reaction to changing state policies on health (Chen 2003a; Ots 1994). Whether practised in parks, at work units or mass gatherings in stadiums, ordinary Chinese people experienced and trained their bodies in 'breathing spaces' away from the chaotic demands of urban life and the controls of the Chinese government (Chen 2003a); in some cases Qigong facilitated the spontaneous experience and expression of suppressed emotions and memories from Mao's Cultural Revolution (Ots 1994).

Most scholars have adopted a historical and sociological approach to Qigong so as to highlight how it was regulated by the Chinese state as part of a construction of Chinese nationalism and civilization (Ownby 2008a; Palmer 2007; Van der Veer 2007). David Palmer (2007) and David Ownby (2008a) note that the Chinese state envisioned and regulated Qigong as a project for improving the nation's health and in the pursuit of national science. Although having a 'superstitious' history, through official health, medical, legal and law enforcement institutions, the Chinese state sought to promote and simultaneously contain Qigong as a health practice having nothing to do with 'religion'.

Backed and controlled by the Chinese state, Qigong specialists were able to emerge and become popular charismatic mediums of the nation also. David Palmer (2007: 86–101) describes how various Qigong masters (*Qigongshifu*),⁵ connected to state scientific, sport and medical institutions, created networks within the Chinese Communist Party and more widespread followings in society. Qigong masters were often referred to as saving China from the post-Mao turmoil and void (Xu 1999: 985), and thought to compensate for a loss of national identity and providing spiritual and moral hope for the nation (Zhu and Penny 1994: 43, 47). Qigong masters became celebrities and public figures, and were said to have exceptional and miraculous abilities and powers to become 'supermen' (Palmer 2007: 97–98, 100–101). Because of their charismatic power, Qigong masters were monitored and sometimes arrested and discredited by the Chinese state; they also became central in controversial experiments organized by influential scientists to settle intellectual and political divisions concerning Qigong's ambiguous position between 'science' and 'superstition'.

There were, then, tensions between Qigong and the Communist Party that did not go away. Such tensions were evident in divisions in intellectual and government circles on whether to support Qigong or criticize it on the basis of being superstitious and heterodox (Ownby 2008a;

Palmer 2007). From the late 1980s some of the most popular Qigong masters were tested in universities on their claims of healing and extraordinary abilities, often leading to failed performances (cf. Ownby 2008a: 165–166; Palmer 2007: 161–162). In the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square protest and massacre in 1989, Qigong was increasingly regulated and state medical authorities shifted from promoters to ‘skeptical regulators’ (Palmer 2007: 162–163). Between 1995 and 1996, well-known scientists in China published articles in newspapers comparing contemporary forms of Qigong to the doomsday Aum Shinrikyo sect in Japan (Ownby 2008a: 166); in response, more and more calls were made for government intervention leading to policy regulations and arrests (Palmer 2007: 177–179). It was around this time that many Qigong masters, including Falun Gong’s Qigong master (Li Hongzhi), left China and started to establish themselves overseas.

Despite having a genealogy in historic practices that intellectuals and the state defined as ‘superstitious’, Qigong was promoted as a popular health practice (not religion) for exercising the nation. Building on the previous section’s historical and political discussion, it could be argued that not so dissimilar to the emperor and Mao, the post-Mao Chinese state envisioned itself as a hegemonic spirit(ual) medium of Qigong and the nation.⁶ As we shall see in the next section, Falun Gong emerged in a context the Chinese state sought to control and dominate, and continued to grow significantly in popularity. After being increasingly criticized as ‘superstitious’ by science and Buddhist authorities and after directly contesting such representations in the centre of Beijing in April 1999, the Chinese state criminalized Falun Gong and defined it as an ‘evil cult’.

Falun Gong as popular religion inside post-Mao China

The word ‘*Falun*’ is derived from Buddhism and means ‘wheel of the Buddha Law,’ and/or Dharma Wheel. Composed alongside the word *Gong*, Falun Gong can be translated as ‘the Practice of the Wheel of the Dharma/Law’ (cf. Penny 2012a: 5). Officially founded by Master Li in 1992, Falun Gong was popularized as a superior form of Qigong on a national scale. Beginning in his hometown in Changchun, Master Li moved to Beijing and founded the Falun Dafa Research Centre. From Beijing, he began a nationwide tour of major cities around China where he gave nine-day lecture tours. In these lectures, Falun Gong’s Qigong exercises were complemented with increasingly sophisticated teachings emphasizing Falun Gong’s superiority to other Qigong, an emphasis on ‘cultivation’ (*xiulian*), and the process of assimilating to the Buddha Law (*Fofa* or *Fa*).

Falun Gong was distinguished from other Qigong with claims by Master Li that it was a superior practice. Other Qigong were said to be at the low level of health improvement and healing while Falun Gong concerned the accumulation of a new and higher-level energy called ‘*Gong*’, something Master Li claimed he, and only he, controlled and rewarded to practitioners partaking in the practice.⁷ In this way, Master Li conceived of himself as the sole medium of Falun Gong, bypassing the Chinese state and rendering himself as quasi-emperor of Qigong. In his lectures, cultivation was conceived as involving the individual’s active engagement in an arduous process of forbearing hardships and ‘giving up attachments’⁸ so as to accumulate *Gong* but most importantly to raise one’s character level (*xinxing*)⁹ towards the moral standard of the Buddha Law. The Buddha Law is understood as a universal and unchanging Law comprising three moral principles: truthfulness, compassion and forbearance; it is a moral and material reality by which people are measured and suffer hardships and by which they would ultimately be judged at the end of this cycle of time.¹⁰ As guiding and material manifestations of this Buddha Law, Master Li’s teachings were claimed to be philosophical and scientific facts able to explain human existence and the supernatural; it was said that practitioners were sentient beings whose

true reason and purpose for being reincarnated as human beings on the earth was to cultivate themselves, enlighten and return to where they came from. Through the exercises, Master Li and cultivation, resolute practitioners are understood as actually becoming step-by-step assimilated with the Buddha Law, the *telos* of which is enlightenment.¹¹

At the beginning of 1995 Master Li published the *Zhuan Falun*, a book containing his core message, and then at the same time left China to spread the practice overseas. Master Li emphasized the necessity of studying his book as teachings and scriptures (*faxue* or law study). This emphasis has been described as enabling Master Li's continuing charismatic connection to his followers in China (Ownby 2008b; Palmer 2008) and transforming Falun Gong into a textual tradition with a capacity to go global similar to scriptural ('world') religions like Christianity (cf. Weller 2003: 322–333). With Master Li overseas, various organizational changes took place back in China. The Beijing headquarters was left under the management of a small group of elite practitioners. While entrusting others to organize Falun Gong in China, Master Li stayed in regular contact (Tong 2002a) and sought to centralize his authority (Palmer 2007). By March 1996, the Falun Dafa Research Centre officially filed to have Falun Gong removed from the Chinese Qigong Research Society – the official Chinese state body governing Qigong. Because all attempts to register under a number of other official institutions connected to the state were denied, Falun Gong became an unofficial organization whose main authority resided overseas.

It was following these changes between 1995 and 1996 that the first public criticisms of Falun Gong began to be voiced. Falun Gong was repeatedly criticized by religious and scientific authorities who claimed that the practice was bad for people's health or that it was a superstition comparable to the Boxer Uprising. Following these criticisms official state investigations into Falun Gong were carried out but were seemingly ignored or dismissed. It was around this time of criticism and investigation that Master Li successfully applied for a visa in the US.

In April 1998 Falun Gong practitioners began responding to the ongoing criticisms with public protests outside state media institutions with the claim that critical media representations were not truthful and should be corrected or retracted, and in some cases even censored by the government (Palmer 2007: 255; Zhao 2003: 220). Over a one-year period, Falun Gong protested over 300 times, which seemed to be tolerated because high-level political figures came to the defence of Falun Gong (Ownby 2008a: 169, 171) and because practitioners did not directly criticize the central state (cf. Perry 2001). However, it was following a series of comments made by a high-ranking scientist – He Zuoxiu (a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing) – that the situation escalated and culminated in the protest of 10,000 practitioners outside the Chinese Communist Party compound in Beijing on 25 April 1999. Scholars have discussed the controversial event in relation to the role of Master Li in terms of authorization and in terms of whether the large-scale assembly should be called an appeal or protest, an attempt to seize political power or an example of millenarian militancy. While much of this debate clearly hinges on questions of authority, intention and cultural interpretation, the movement has sought to emphasize the non-political intention and spontaneity of the 25 April event. Following 25 April, an investigation was requested by the senior leaders of the Central Party in Beijing. Nearly three months later, on 22 July 1999, a centrally authorized campaign of suppression was launched and very soon after the Chinese state labelled Falun Gong an 'evil cult'.

To explain why Falun Gong was suppressed, David Palmer (2007) has emphasized Master Li's apocalyptic ideology and the increasingly radical protests and militancy of practitioners. This emphasis, however, is not shared by all; for example Ownby (2008a) and Penny (2012a) have downplayed the contents of the teachings and pointed out that the millenarian emphasis only became particularly apparent following the Chinese state's suppression campaign. Elizabeth Perry suggests that Falun Gong's 25 April protest was interpreted as a direct challenge because

of its timing, scale and composition (2001). In terms of timing, it took place on an auspicious day, around the fiftieth anniversary of Mao's founding of the People's Republic of China and very close to the 10-year anniversary of the Tiananmen prodemocracy movement. Falun Gong was also a large-scale and flexible organization, with a collective membership numbering into the millions and of mixed composition, which included senior party and military officials (Chen 2003b: 520; Perry 2001: 170–171; Tong 2002a).¹²

Falun Gong's transnational connections to the US also contributed to the Chinese Party-State's suspicions and reactions (Chen 2003b: 520; Duara 2003, Ownby 2008a; Perry 2001: 170–171). It is clear that overseas Chinese and media like the Internet are also significant here (Bell and Boas 2003; Ownby 2008a: 164). Bell and Boas (2005) have pointed out that Falun Gong's growth nationally and internationally coincides with the Internet's popularization on the mainland. In May 1999 the Falun Gong 'clearwisdom' website (<http://en.minghui.org/>) was established and on 20 July urgent messages were sent alerting practitioners in various cities of the looming ban (cf. Tong 2002a: 647). The transnational connections made possible by Master Li's move to the US and the implementation of new media like the Internet made the Falun Gong movement especially dynamic and difficult for the Chinese state to monitor and control.

In this section we have seen how Falun Gong was not identifiable within the state's official definitions of either 'religion' or Qigong. Master Li defined Falun Gong in ways different from the state classification system and, as the practice became massively popular and transnational, sought autonomy from official state institutions. Falun Gong was interpreted as dangerous because it was so popular and posed problems of ambiguity, autonomy and trans-territoriality. Falun Gong was suppressed, exactly because it could not be confined within the classificatory and institutional order monopolized by the Chinese Party-State; Falun Gong was becoming a massively popular religion – a 'people's religion' – in a territorial and political context dominated by the Communist Party-State that monopolized the authority to define 'proper religion'.

I now conclude this section by describing how Falun Gong was suppressed and how the movement initially responded inside China. The strategy and severity of the Chinese state's campaign has been described in detail by various scholars (Chen 2003b; Ownby 2008a; Palmer 2007; Perry 2001; ter Haar 1996, 1999) and human right organizations and NGOs.¹³ Falun Gong was suppressed through a combination of legal measures and punishment in the form of new laws, arrests, imprisonments and torture that has resulted in an estimated 3500 deaths.¹⁴ Iconoclasm also figured prominently through the removal and destruction of Falun Gong books and the shutdown of Internet websites. Also prominent were de-legitimization campaigns organized on national and international scales in the form of propaganda through newspaper articles and television broadcasts claiming that Falun Gong was dangerous to health and engaged in disruptions of the social order. The state's de-legitimization campaign also targeted Master Li, who was described as a charlatan and fraud. In short, the state's campaign was extensive and not so different from other historic examples of imperial and Maoist suppression campaigns waged against groups interpreted as dangerous. The campaign ensured that Falun Gong was no longer publicly available in China. Falun Gong became an exiled overseas transnational movement, classified as an 'evil cult' by the Chinese Party-State.

The Falun Gong movement responded to the state's campaign in both disparate and organized ways. Initially, for example, scores of practitioners reacted with even more protests in Beijing, i.e. in Tiananmen Square and in other cities across China. Some protests became more radical, for example on 26 January 2000 attempts were made to replace Mao's image in Tiananmen Square with Master Li's (cf. Kipnis 2001: 39) and practitioners hacked into government broadcasts with their own Falun Gong messages. On 21 January 2001, just one day before the Chinese New Year, a controversial self-immolation incident took place in Tiananmen Square. Although

attributed to Falun Gong by the Chinese state, the incident is officially denied by the movement from overseas with claims that it was staged by the Chinese state to legitimize the suppression campaign and de-legitimize Falun Gong.¹⁵ Therefore the Chinese state's suppression campaign and Falun Gong's responses to it have also taken place internationally and on a new global stage of contestation and legitimacy.

The overseas Falun Gong movement connecting to China

This section focuses on how the Chinese state's campaign was extended overseas and particularly how the campaign has been contested from the US. It shows how, especially from the global city of New York, Falun Gong practitioners have initiated various projects that globalize and universalize Falun Gong as a practice and human-rights issue while simultaneously reconnecting to the Chinese nation and territory.

The Chinese state's suppression campaign against Falun Gong (and the movement's response to it) must be understood in a transnational context. This is clear from the fact that the Chinese state is itself actively engaged in transnational projects of connecting overseas ethnic Chinese to the Chinese nation and the Party (Ong and Nonini 1997) but also because Falun Gong's spiritual leader was living and continues to live in the US. The Chinese state's de-legitimization campaign in particular was extended overseas to the US and globally. This is evident in overseas newspapers owned by the Chinese state, which targeted overseas Chinese students in US universities. In the beginning of the crackdown, the US government criticized and condemned China's 'heavy-handed' tactics and the violation of international human rights and freedoms.¹⁶ In the international human rights context, the Chinese government's suppression campaign against Falun Gong had to be carefully executed to make it seem legitimate. The Chinese state sought to justify the violent suppression campaign with the claim that Falun Gong posed a dangerous threat to national order and security and the 'evil cult' label denied Falun Gong the categorical place of 'religion' (with all its human rights implications) in China and internationally (Bejesky 2005; Thomas 2001).¹⁷

Shortly after the Chinese state's de-legitimization campaign and giving some brief interviews with journalists in New York, Master Li disappeared completely. He reappeared six months later on official Falun Gong websites and then in person at a Falun Gong conference in North America. Since this time Master Li has spent most of his time in New York State at a place often referred to by practitioners as 'The Mountain'. He also appears in person at New York Experience Sharing Conferences: annual events and pilgrimages where Master Li teaches the Buddha Law and answers practitioners' questions, the contents of which are placed on official websites. In his post-1999 teachings, Master Li has emphasized Falun Gong's core moral principles and interpreted the state's campaign of suppression within a broad millenarian cosmology. Master Li has emphasized the necessity of forbearing the Chinese state's campaign as part of a practitioner's individual goal of self-improvement, an emphasis through which practitioners continue to resist the Chinese state and are said to attain salvation (Fisher 2005). Master Li has also called on practitioners to engage in 'clarifying the truth' about Falun Gong and its persecution as a means of 'validating the Buddha Law' to the world so as to save sentient beings before the coming apocalypse. Such an emphasis has been interpreted as revealing the movement's continuing orientation towards a universal religious and moral message (Weller 2003) combining Buddhist-Taoist, Christian and millenarian elements (Penny 2012a, 2012b).¹⁸ Master Li's teachings and practices do not conceive of clear-cut divisions between religion and politics; rather Falun Gong is now conceived as a physical, mental and moral practice of self-transformation and salvation inseparable from the suppression in China.

In New York, Falun Gong is now practised by an ethnically diverse group of overseas Chinese and non-Chinese people, with many of the most influential being highly educated and skilled in media and science, technology and politics. While organizing exercise and *Fa* study practices, Falun Gong practitioners have initiated various human-rights campaigns in the form of political lobbying and public demonstrations in diverse neighbourhoods and urban spaces across New York. Falun Gong has contested its definition as an ‘evil cult’ and violent suppression through a human-rights frame as a persecuted religion in China. Centrally important, here, has been the collection, organization and distribution of images of beaten and tortured bodies, carried out by the Falun Dafa Information Centre website. Founded in New York in 2000–2001, this website provides up to date coverage, information and statistics about the persecution in China and is operated and run by mainly non-Chinese practitioners. This emphasis on human rights and religious freedom has also been evident in various parades, events and legal cases initiated in the US and Hong Kong. This emphasis on human rights is also apparent in ‘the Human Rights Olympic Torch Relay’ organized by Falun Gong practitioners and traversing the world in the lead up to the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008.¹⁹ Although some scholars have pointed out the tension between public claims of human rights violations and Master Li’s emphasis on forbearance and salvation before the apocalypse (cf. Fisher 2005; Palmer 2007), it is more interesting to emphasize how – much like comparable groups inside and outside of Asia (McLagen 2002, 2006; Salemink 2011)²⁰ – Falun Gong frames itself with reference to human rights so as to be understood and accepted as a legitimate presence in the US and globally. My own field research experiences show how human-rights campaigns have tended to be organized by non-Chinese practitioners for communicating with non-Chinese people about the persecution and for legitimizing Falun Gong.

In addition to human-rights campaigns, the media has been a very important focus of the Falun Gong movement, both in terms of production and distribution. Initially, media used were low-tech in the form of flyers, signs and banners, but the movement has become more sophisticated in producing and circulating its own newspapers, books, CDs and DVDs, Internet websites and other media. The New Tang Dynasty Television station was first established by ‘Chinese Americans’ in 2001. Focusing on providing uncensored news coverage as an alternative to Chinese state-run television, the station now claims to potentially connect to over 100 million viewers in over a dozen languages.²¹ Appearing on the Internet from 2003, *The Epoch Times* newspaper was established in August 2004 and is now available in over 19 different languages but with the highest circulation to Chinese reading people.²² Outside of China and Taiwan, *The Epoch Times* now claims to be the world’s largest Chinese language newspaper. It is also through *The Epoch Times* newspaper headquarters in New York that the controversial *Nine Commentaries on the Chinese Communist Party* was published.²³ The *Nine Commentaries* is a historical narrative describing and connecting Mao’s Cultural Revolution, the Tiananmen massacre and the persecution of Falun Gong in one narrative. The book suggests that these atrocities were caused by the Communist Party but are officially denied in China. Connected to the *Nine Commentaries*, the Falun Gong movement has initiated a global campaign known as ‘Quit the Party’ (*tuidang*). The campaign appeals to Chinese people to quit their membership of the Chinese Communist Party, sometimes along with slogans like ‘Heaven Destroys Chinese Communism’ or with suggestions that those who quit will be saved. On its website, the New York-based Divine Performing Arts group is described as a group of musicians, artists and performers from the Chinese Diaspora on a mission to revive traditional and authentic Chinese culture, much of which is claimed to have been destroyed by the Chinese Communist Party.²⁴ In New York, practitioners now operate a media and entertainment empire producing and distributing ‘uncensored’ news on issues in China and ‘authentic’ Chinese culture (destroyed by Chinese Communism) from a new centre outside of China.

Prasenjit Duara argues that the Chinese state can no longer exercise hegemonic control within its territory over narratives of Chinese nationalism and nationhood, and points out that Falun Gong is now an overseas contender (Duara 2003: 17–18). In pointing out how the imperial and modern politico-religious state attempted yet failed to regulate religion so as to be an ordering centre for the Chinese world, Goossaert and Palmer claim that China is now decentred – a Middle Kingdom with no middle; they raise the question ‘will there ever be, once again, a spiritual centre of gravity for the Chinese spiritual world?’ (Goossaert and Palmer 2011: 2–3). New York – heralded as the world’s number one global city²⁵ – has become an important centre from where Master Li disseminates the Buddha Law teachings and from where the overseas Falun Gong movement produces contested versions of Chineseness. New York is the capital of Falun Gong’s informal Middle Kingdom, led by a charismatic Qigong master as its ‘Buddha-emperor’.

From the politically secure sovereign territory of the US, Master Li and a diverse movement of followers are transnationally (re)connecting to China. Although initiated in New York, the above mentioned media organizations and campaigns have also been founded and organized in locations around the globe; most have tended to target Chinese-speaking people, especially those from mainland China, such as overseas Chinese migrants, students and tourists, who form important transnational connections to, and enable flows of information and media into, the national territory of the People’s Republic of China. I conclude this section by reflecting on the role of Taiwan and Hong Kong in distributing these New York-authorized definitions and representations of Falun Gong and Chineseness into the sovereign territory of China. Taiwan and Hong Kong are sensitive territories in that they are officially claimed as integral parts of the national territory of the People’s Republic of China while simultaneously continuing to operate with varying degrees of democratic autonomy in their own right. Although politicized and heavily contested, Falun Gong is legally and publicly practised in both locations. Now we see how the movement has strategically used these locations as a means of reconnecting to the mainland.

Taiwan is a country well known for the diversity and flourishing of Chinese religious traditions and boasts the largest number of Falun Gong practitioners in the world (outside of the mainland).²⁶ Taiwan remains very important for the New York-based movement in terms of human labour and financial capital but also for the printing and global distribution of books (Master Li’s and *Nine Commentaries*) that are written, published and authorized from New York. Hong Kong is a former British colony and, since 1997, a Special Administrative Region under the sovereign governance of the Chinese Party-State of the People’s Republic of China. In Hong Kong, Falun Gong has remained politically very sensitive; the movement has consistently been publicly criticized by Hong Kong newspapers and the Legislative Council while facing various restrictions on organizing large-scale events. Hong Kong is an important global city and frontier for the movement. In Hong Kong, Falun Gong has become a publicly visible addition to the controversial Chinese democracy scene that is frequently in the global spotlight. At the same time the movement remains focused on ‘Quit the Party’ campaigns organized at busy public transport hubs and popular tourist sites, places where large numbers of Chinese migrants and tourists visit. Practitioners set up banners reading ‘Quit the Party’, distribute *The Epoch Times* newspapers and *Nine Commentaries* book, and they mount televisions screening high-quality video recorded performances made by the New York-based New Tang Dynasty Television Station. Developed in and authorized from New York, through the Hong Kong frontier these campaigns and media are distributed across the border into the mainland territory via tourists and migrants.

I have ended this section by giving some indication of how media campaigns authorized by Master Li and produced by the movement in New York are being distributed in Taiwan and



Figure 16.1 Signs and banners used by Falun Gong practitioners in a busy urban space in Hong Kong

Source: Scott Dalby

Hong Kong. From these territories, ‘truthful’, ‘uncensored’ and ‘authentic’ versions of Falun Gong and Chineseness are being distributed into the People’s Republic of China. Although the Chinese state is attempting to prevent this process, it seems unlikely that it will be able to do so in an age of increasing border crossings and media interconnectivity.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced a history of Qigong and Falun Gong, moving from China to the US, and via Taiwan and Hong Kong back to China again. We saw how Falun Gong was criminalized and labelled an ‘evil cult’ because it was a popular anomaly that could not be regulated within the Chinese state’s classificatory order. Falun Gong was denied legitimate space in China because it threatened the monopoly of definition and popularity claimed by the politico-religious Communist Party-State as part of its own project of nation formation and hegemony. While drawing attention to the central role of the Chinese Party-State, I have also highlighted an important transnational dimension that shapes and facilitates groups like Falun Gong; groups who are able to define and understand their practice and themselves through new imaginaries and means deviating from official Chinese state definitions and regulations and as connected to but not limited to China. From the global city of New York, Master Li is able to become a quasi-emperor of a Falun Gong ‘Middle Kingdom’; connecting New York and mainland China, loyal practitioners now engage in various public, human rights and media campaigns to distribute and contest Falun Gong on a global and universal scale as a part of incorporating and saving the world’s people and cultivating themselves in relation to the Buddha Law moral principles.

As a way of ending this chapter I briefly reflect on the process of defining Falun Gong as a religion. Most scholars seem to suggest that Falun Gong is a religion or at least should be approached analytically as one (Kipnis 2001; Ownby 2008a; Palmer 2007; Penny 2012a; Weller 2003). In Benjamin Penny's recent book entitled *The Religion of Falun Gong* (2012a) it is clearly asserted that Falun Gong can be understood as a religion (6–7). Andrew Kipnis has also argued that Falun Gong can be understood through anthropological categories of religion (2001: 40). Although referring to the way 'religion' is defined and regulated historically and contemporarily in China, David Ownby argues that Falun Gong (and indeed the entire Qigong fever) can be understood as 'popular religion', which the Chinese state and Master Li engaged in without realizing (2008a: 6–9).

This scholarly equation with religion has arguably been important for demonstrating that Falun Gong is a comparatively modern expression of practices and groups that have always been regulated and suppressed in China; this disarms Chinese state claims that Falun Gong is fake and a dangerous 'evil cult'. However, in his teachings, Master Li claims that Falun Gong is not identifiable with what is understood as religion or Buddhism today. At no time has the movement ever defined or described itself under the official category of '*zongjiao*' and the English language and Western category of religion is often dismissed with claims that practitioners do not attend church or worship god, and do not have rituals and members. It is clear that Master Li and practitioners do not conceive of Falun Gong as a 'religion' in the Chinese sense (*zongjiao*) or the Western sense of the category, as Kipnis (2001: 38–39) and Penny (2012a: 5–6) have also noted. Instead, Falun Gong is understood as a uniquely different and superordinary cultivation practice or spiritual discipline.

This raises important questions concerning how to effectively conceptualize practices and movements going global, like Falun Gong, who seem to be emerging within and yet also bypassing different categorical histories of religion. In fact, Falun Gong traverses all sorts of distinctions – between *zongjiao* and religion; between the religious, political and scientific, and between the national and universal. Another question raised also concerns why so much seems to be at stake in terms of being defined on their own terms and understood by others 'correctly'. Much of the Falun Gong movement's practices and campaigns relate to the very question of correct definition, in the sense that practitioners seek to contest and appropriate the categories, media and authority over how the practice is being distributed and becoming known to the world. It is this ongoing effort of distributing Falun Gong, in ways authorized by the New York-based Master Li, that the movement seems to cherish most, not so much as political or human rights campaigns but as a central ethical and sacred aspect of the cultivation practice. We must surely seek to understand how this ethical commitment to definition, media and publicity is related to the continued formation and prevalence of Falun Gong as a particular Chinese cultivation tradition going global. Also significant here would be the interesting question of how exactly this engagement in definition, media and publicity functions as an important means through which practitioners continue to cultivate themselves so as to become selfless emulations of truthfulness, compassion and forbearance in the continued formation of a Falun Gong movement coming into being.

Notes

- 1 I wish to thank Barend ter Haar for his suggestions at an early stage of formulating the chapter. Also thanks must be paid to an anonymous reviewer on the first draft and Bryan Turner on a later draft. In particular I want to thank Oscar Salemink for his guidance and editing suggestions on various drafts.
- 2 See Barend ter Haar: <http://faculty.orinst.ox.ac.uk/terhaar/falun.htm> and Benjamin Penny (2012a, 2012b) for comments on definition and terminology.

- 3 'Middle Kingdom' is literally the meaning of the Mandarin word for 'China' (*zhongguo*).
- 4 The two most well-known and devastating examples of popular rebellion are the Taiping Uprising (1850–1864), an anti-Manchu Qing messianic movement led by Hong Xiuqian, and the anti-imperialist and nationalist Boxer Rebellion (1898–1901).
- 5 *Shifu* is a Chinese term meaning both teacher (*shi*) and father (*fu*). The concept *shifu* has been used throughout Chinese history to refer to teachers of a range of traditional Chinese techniques to a disciple or group of people.
- 6 In this way, Qigong and the Chinese state appear similar to what Oscar Salemink (2007) has described in relation to the Vietnamese state as a supreme spirit medium for the nation. I also draw on Stephen Feuchtwang's conception of spiritual nations here (2009).
- 7 *Gong* can be defined as 'cultivation energy'. It is usually described as superior to *Qi* – something said to be limited to health improvement and not carried over into the next life through reincarnation. Also different from *Qi*, *Gong* is conceived as moral in nature. Master Li makes it clear that he is the only person able to convert virtue into *Gong* so as to reward practitioners in their self-cultivation. As one is rewarded with *Gong*, it is said to form an invisible *Gong* column above a practitioner's head, the height of one's *Gong* column representing one's cultivation level.
- 8 Giving up attachments is a Buddhist conception in which one seeks to give up habits, actions and relations, which are understood as limiting or immoral and as part of the process of improvement and transformation.
- 9 *Xinxing* can be most directly translated as 'heart/mind nature' or 'character'.
- 10 Master Li seems to adopt a Chinese Buddhist-Taoist eschatology in relation to the ending of this cycle of time (the end of this *kalpa*) that ends in apocalypse and when all beings will be judged. It is said that because the end is near, the teaching of Falun Gong is special and a practitioner's time is limited. Master Li does not name a particular date for the end of this time.
- 11 For a more detailed understanding, I refer the reader to the *Zhuan Falun* <http://falundafa.org/book/eng/zflus.html> (accessed 25 July 2013). Benjamin Penny's (2012a) book has described Falun Gong's teachings and concepts in relation to Chinese Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity and (pseudo)science in more detail than any other scholar has done to date.
- 12 For more information about the possible numbers of people practising Falun Gong in 1999 see David Palmer's (2007: 256–261) discussion in which he estimates that Falun Gong likely had a membership of around 10 million.
- 13 For example see Amnesty International report 21 October 1999: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA17/054/1999/en/22848687-e00d-11dd-be0f-b562ab8ac90b/asa170541999en.pdf> (accessed 11 August 2013).
- 14 This number is according to Falun Gong estimates. See: http://en.minghui.org/emh/special_column/death_cases/ (accessed 11 August 2013).
- 15 See Falun Gong's 'False fire' website <http://falsefire.com/> (accessed 27 February 2013).
- 16 'US condemns Chinese sect ban', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/401545>. (accessed 28 June 2013).
- 17 See also 'UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Highlights Challenges at end of Visit to China' (2005): <http://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=3463&LangID=E> (accessed 28 June 2013).
- 18 For example 'clarifying the truth' (*jiangqing zhenxiang*) and 'validating the Buddha Law' (*Zhengshi fa*) are said to enable disillusioned and suffering people to have the chance to enlighten to the truth both about and of Falun Gong and potentially save the sentient being behind each person before the looming apocalypse.
- 19 <http://humanrightstorchusa.org/hrtrnewengland/> (accessed 4 April 2013).
- 20 See, then, research on the Campaign for Free Tibet in the US (McLagen 2002, 2006) and transnational protestant Christianity in Vietnam (Salemink 2011).
- 21 http://english.ntdtv.com/ntdtv_en/aboutus.html (accessed 9 March 2011).
- 22 <http://theepochtimes.com/n2/about-us.html> (accessed 9 March 2011).
- 23 The *Nine Commentaries on the Chinese Communist Party* was first published in special editions of the *Epoch Times* newspaper and later converted into book format. It is currently published by the *Epoch Times* in New York.
- 24 <http://shenyunperformingarts.org/company/about-the-company> (accessed 9 March 2011).
- 25 See the Global City Index (2012): <http://atkearney.com/documents/10192/dfedfc4c-8a62-4162-90e5-2a3f14f0da3a> (accessed 3 April 2013).
- 26 Official Falun Gong websites estimate a number of 600,000: <http://faluninfo.net/gallery/8/> (accessed 4 April 2013).

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Shrines, religious healing, and pilgrimage in South Asia

Carla Bellamy

Pilgrimage and healing traditions in South Asia

In August of 2011, pilgrims arriving at the Himalayan pilgrimage site of Amarnath were in for a surprise. Amarnath, or “immortal lord,” is a title of the Hindu god Siva, who is often worshiped in the form of an aniconic shaft known as a lingam. In this case, Siva was understood to be manifest in a naturally occurring column of ice located in a cave high in the mountains of Kashmir. That summer, the body heat of the estimated 400,000 pilgrims making the journey, when combined with heat generated by open gas cooking stoves and helicopter lifts had the effect of melting the lingam completely (Byerly 2012; Nelson 2012). In journalistic accounts of this event, however, there is little to suggest that the melting of the lingam in any way diminished Amarnath’s appeal as a pilgrimage destination, and while the site’s enduring popularity can in part be attributed to its location in Kashmir – thus making pilgrimage to it a means of asserting Hindu presence in a state torn by ongoing armed conflict between India and Pakistan – Siva’s untimely disappearance still raises questions about places of pilgrimage in South Asia: what makes a site authoritative if not the physical presence of a deity or saint? How is divine or saintly presence mediated and experienced? How do pilgrims conceptualize supernatural efficacy? How do larger social, political, and economic networks and conflicts inform the culture and the popularity of particular places of pilgrimage? How do pilgrimage centers’ cultures and efficacy change in response to the mounting pressure of environmental degradation and population growth?

Of course, pilgrimage, often for the purpose of addressing physical, psychological, or social difficulties, is a form of human expression that extends far beyond the boundaries of South Asia. These journeys may be taken alone, with strangers, or with friends and family, and pilgrims may embark upon them for the benefit of friends and family or as a means of – albeit temporarily – escaping them. The time of a pilgrimage may be set in relation to a liturgical or festival calendar or it may be undertaken at an individual’s discretion. A place of pilgrimage may be chosen as a destination for reasons having to do with individual pilgrims’ personal, regional, or familial ties, or its appeal may lie in its essentially foreign and distant nature. Pilgrimage sites are often important parts of local and regional economies, and as such, they are simultaneously set apart from and deeply integrated with the social structures of everyday life.

The types of people who seek out religious healers, as well as the practices of these healers, are similarly diverse. On the one hand, healers may be associated with pilgrimage centers and places

of pilgrimage themselves may be understood to harbor healing properties; on the other hand, as with pilgrimage itself, in South Asia and beyond, religious healers and sites associated with healing may attract a mainly local clientele. Healers' power and authority to heal draw upon a mixture of affiliation with larger religious networks and personal charisma and skill, and as with the reasons a pilgrim makes a journey to a particular pilgrimage site, a patron may choose a healer who is deeply embedded in the patron's social and religious world or quite removed from it. As with pilgrimage, the recent pressures of rapid population growth, environmental crisis, and the liberalization of the Indian economy have impacted not only how pilgrims conceptualize and partake of healing qualities understood to be inherent in natural elements like land and water, but also the types of problems for which individuals visit religious healers.

Pilgrimage: theory and practice

The ubiquity of pilgrimage and religious healing across time and space has inevitably led to attempts to theorize their social, economic, and psychological utility. Victor Turner's classic and contested theory of pilgrimage held that pilgrimage's psychological and social value came from the temporary feeling of dislocation it provided: *communitas*, or the experience of being part of an unstructured community of equals, together with liminality – an intermediate state in which the condition of *communitas* has softened notions of individual identity – cleared the way for potential self-transformation (Turner 1969). In the context of South Asian religion, Turner's discussion of the transformative and otherworldly nature of pilgrimage easily maps onto the classical Hindu theological concept of *moksa*, or liberation, wherein a pilgrimage is seen as a means to facilitate release from an otherwise endless cycle of death and rebirth. Thus, early studies of pilgrimage in South Asia tended to focus on the ways in which the various religious traditions of South Asia articulated the otherworldly or "spiritual" benefit of pilgrimage practices.

Ann Grodzins Gold's influential study of the contemporary pilgrimage practices of villagers in the western Indian state of Rajasthan offered a significant corrective to both Turner's theory and to the dominance of the focus on otherworldly benefit in the study of pilgrimage in Hindu traditions, demonstrating that pilgrims' experiences while on pilgrimage – even to distant pilgrimage centers central to orthodox, Brahminical Hinduism – remained connected to temporal needs and obligations and local rituals and social structures (Gold 1988). Similarly, recent and ongoing work on healing practices in South Asia has shown that while healing rituals may in part work because they entail a liminal phase, their impact and efficacy are linked to everyday networks, social relations (including systemic oppression and discrimination), and shared histories (Sax 2009). Along these lines, subsequent work on the study of religious healing in South Asia has also shown that like places of pilgrimage, the charisma of religious healers themselves often derives from a complex mixture of individual personality, location, and placement in larger social and economic networks (Flueckiger 2006).

The topics of religious healing and pilgrimage in South Asia, therefore, present a challenge: on the one hand, they seem in some ways to participate in larger patterns of human behavior and to conform to theories of pilgrimage, ritual, and healing that are not specific to South Asia. On the other hand, ethnographic study of pilgrimage and healing practices in South Asia shows that the meaning, effects, and efficacy of these phenomena are not only deeply embedded in South Asia-specific social, historical, and economic structures, but also contingent upon the beliefs and personal situations of pilgrims and healers. It is also difficult to generalize about the nature of their authority because the authority of each site or healer is rooted in a complex, multivalent, and dynamic mixture of individual charisma, local culture, and larger social and economic networks. In short, because notions of benefit, profit, and healing are shaped by so many variables, perhaps the

most interesting and instructive way to begin to understand pilgrimage and religious healing in South Asia is, appropriately enough, to ground our investigation not so much in the textual, literary, or theological traditions that elucidate and surround these practices, but rather, in what pilgrims themselves make of specific practices, journeys, and places. In particular, how have particular Indian pilgrimage centers, places of healing, and healers been affected by the contemporary challenges of rapid population growth, environmental crisis, and the liberalization of the Indian economy?

Making the land sacred

The category of Hindu scripture known as *purana* (literally, “old,” meaning a story from earlier times) came into existence in part to consolidate regional pilgrimage traditions related to particular gods or goddesses and to associate them with specific locations and geographical formations. Thus, for example, in the Kalika Purana and the Devi Bhagavata Purana we find the tradition of the Shakti Pithas – wherein local sites of goddess worship were incorporated into a story in which pieces of the goddess’s dismembered body are scattered throughout the South Asian landscape (Eck 2012: 287). Each piece of her body becomes a site of pilgrimage. Similarly, the Ganges river is described in many epic and puranic sources as a heavenly river forced to come down to earth as a result of the efforts of a Hindu ascetic; she is universally recognized by Hindus as a goddess and many popular places of pilgrimage are located along her banks (Eck 2012: 18–19).

In the context of the greater Islamic tradition, the practice of making a pilgrimage to a site associated with a Sufi saint was well established before Sufi lineages and practices arrived in South Asia. While the most common means by which a site is rendered sacred by a Sufi saint derives from the simple fact of the presence of the saint’s grave, as with the Hindu, Jain, and Sikh traditions, the land associated with a saint’s charisma may also be marked as a result of an act of heroism, protection, or asceticism. Thus, for example, the celebrated and revered Sufi saint popularly known as Baba Farid is buried in Pakpattan, a Panjabi city in Pakistan, and the site attracts pilgrims because it houses his grave. Across the border, however, the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh is home to modest, locally patronized site associated with Baba Farid’s asceticism. Located on the side of the road connecting the cities of Jaora and Nagda, it marks the place where the saint is understood to have hung upside down in a well, slowly turning around and around over a 40-day period of time. The intensity of his meditation was such that all the trees in the vicinity of the well became twisted; today these trees stand as testament to his presence at the site.

In sum, sacrality that is understood to be inherent in the land itself is central to notions of pilgrimage in Hinduism and Islam, as well as other major South Asian traditions such as Sikhism and Jainism. The power of the place of healing or pilgrimage center may inhabit the land itself either as a result of the presence of a saint or deity *in* the land or *as* the land or because of something he or she did at that place. In the following section, a case study of a popular Indian pilgrimage center known as Husain Tekri will offer insight into the ways in which overpopulation and environmental changes similar to those that have reshaped Amarnath’s sacred landscape have not destroyed pilgrims’ experiences of divine presence and religious healing so much as profoundly changed them.

Sacred land, healing practices: Husain Tekri Sharif as a case study of contemporary changes and challenges

The pilgrimage center of Husain Tekri, literally “Husain Hill,” is situated just outside the small Indian city of Jaora. Located in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, Jaora was a Muslim princely state during the colonial period, and Husain Tekri’s administration has been closely linked to members of Jaora’s royal family since its inception. While the royal family of Jaora is Sunni, Husain



Figure 17.1 The Rauza of Maula 'Ali, Husain Tekri Sharif'

Tekri's earliest shrines were gifts from a wealthy family of Mumbai-based Khoja Shi'i Muslims and relatives of these original donors continue to stage many Shi'i-specific rituals of mourning at Husain Tekri over the eighth, ninth, and tenth days of the Islamic month of Muharram. This history, combined with the fact that the current site is under the jurisdiction of the Sunni *waqf* board of Madhya Pradesh, make it a site that has deep historical and ongoing administrative connections to the greater Islamic world. As such, in some ways, it is an Islamic pilgrimage center.

However, like most Indian shrines built in memory of notable Muslim teachers and historical figures, Husain Tekri attracts many non-Muslim pilgrims and petitioners in part because of its reputation as an effective place of healing. In fact, on any given day Husain Tekri's Hindu pilgrim population generally outnumbers its Muslim one. Because of the religious diversity of its pilgrim population, it is an excellent resource for exploring what – if anything – can be said about the ways in which *South Asian* – as opposed to exclusively Hindu, Islamic, Sikh, Christian, or Jain – places of pilgrimage function both as pilgrimage destinations and as places of healing.

In the larger context of pilgrimage centers in South Asia, Husain Tekri is quite new – it came into existence in 1886 CE following a concurrence of the Hindu festival of Dasherā and the Muslim observation of the eighth day of Muharram (Government of Madras Staff 1942: 272). Because the way in which the Islamic lunar calendar is linked to the phases of the moon, its holidays move back approximately 12 days each Gregorian calendar year, making the concurrence of Dasherā and the Eighth of Muharram a relatively rare event. Dasherā is a pan-Hindu festival associated with the goddess Durga as well as the anniversary of the Hindu god-king Rama's victory over his enemy, Ravana, ruler of the kingdom of Lanka. Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar, and as with Muslim populations throughout the world, Indian Muslims

participate in a series of region-specific rituals during which they remember and mourn the suffering and martyrdom of Husain (the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad) and members of his family near the Middle Eastern city of Karbala over a period of three days – the Eighth through Tenth of Muharram – in 680 CE.

In India, processions are a common aspect of both holidays' ritual cycles, and according to the oldest version of Husain Tekri's origin story – taken from a history commissioned by the royal family of Jaora in 1889 – the miracle that resulted in the founding of Husain Tekri was a supernatural response to concern over potential conflict between Hindu and Muslim processions; this tension was compounded by actions by British troops that were perceived as disrespectful. In Jaora, as in much of India, the martyrdom of Husain on the Tenth of Muharram is ritually commemorated in part through a *ta'ziya* procession. *Ta'ziya*, an Urdu word deriving from the Arabic for comfort, is a model of the tomb of Husain. They are built by Muslim communities each year, often over a reusable frame, and it is common for each caste- or neighborhood-based Muslim community to construct its own *ta'ziya* to carry in a larger city-wide procession. As such, South Asian *ta'ziya* function as symbols not only of Husain's martyrdom, but also of caste and neighborhood identity. In this case, it is clear that the *ta'ziya* is a symbol not only of the nawab's authority as a Muslim ruler, but also the Muslim community of Jaora state.

Beginning with the potential conflict between Hindu and Muslim processions, the 1889 royal history of Jaora thus relates the following story (cf. Bellamy 2011: 221–222):

In 1304 hijri [1886], it happened that there was a rare concurrence of the Hindu festival of Daśahrā and the eighth day of Muharram. The keepers of the *ta'ziyas* said, “we will not allow Rāmlīlā processions to pass in front of the *ta'ziyas* on the day of Daśahra.” In response, the government issued a warning, stating “do not interfere in the traditions of the Hindus, and Hindu rites ought not to disturb Muslims.” But the Muslims didn't heed this warning. Two days earlier, from the time that the image of Ravana had been erected, [and] a regiment of Central India English mounted troops from the cantonment at Agra had arrived to keep an eye on the commotion. After gathering their collaborators, they went and stood directly in front of the *ta'ziyas*, for all to see. The *ta'ziya* bearers were very unhappy at this turn of events, and so later in the evening they went and immersed their *ta'ziya* in the river. And so, there was a huge uproar, with weeping and wailing, and all the shops in the city were closed. But because of the presence of the English mounted troops, there was no possible way for riots to start. But the next day, on the ninth of Muharram, the *nawab*, out of the kindness of his merciful heart, commanded that the *ta'ziya* bearers be brought into his care, and he himself gave the instructions that gratified the *ta'ziya* bearers, and he distributed around 200 rupees among them, so that by the ninth day of Muharram, after a full day [of work] the *ta'ziyas* were once again properly prepared.

While at this point it seems that the situation has been resolved, a miraculous series of events soon follows:

But at this very moment, people from the village of Rozana were on their way from Jaora. About two miles north [of Jaora] these people truly saw, with their own eyes, that the *ta'ziya* of the city of Jaora, accompanied by people on horses and people on foot, was moving steadily towards the north. And in absolute truth, in between the city [of Jaora] and the village of Rozana, the *ta'ziya* was placed on a small hill that sits on the edge of the border of the Brahmin village [of Rozana]. After a few minutes, they moved from that place towards the east, in the direction of the river Maleni. In no time at all, everyone in the city had heard about this

series of events, and a huge crowd of people had gone and gathered on this small hill. And acknowledging that this place was blessed and the abode of blessed Imām Husain, the lord of this life and the life to come, they introduced the custom of offering *fatīha* and *nazr* and *niyaz* and giving hundreds of rupees in alms in the name of the departed souls of the imāms. On this hill, a well that had been dry for a long time spontaneously filled with water, even though it wasn't the rainy season, and after this happened, people had even more faith in the place.

(Bellamy 2011: 221–222)

Here we see the typical South Asian pattern wherein land is marked in part as a result of a supernatural event – in this case, a miraculous *ta'ziya* procession performed by an unknown community – and this event prompts both human response (here, several common South Asian Muslim rituals of commemoration of the dead) and response from the land itself (the miraculous filling of the well). At Husain Tekri, the miraculous well water develops a reputation for healing:

Often, it happens that patients find healing in the water of that well, and so followers of Allah began to spread out into every district and quarter. Thousands and thousands of people came from far and wide – from Lucknow, Azimabad, Surat, Bombay, Hyderabad, the Deccan, and many other places and countries, and their wishes and prayers began to be granted and fulfilled. Because of this miraculous and singularly rare event, this city of Jaora became exalted throughout India, and among every sort of community in the vicinity, these places became known as Blessed Jaora and the Blessed Hill of Husain [*Jaora sarif o Husain Tekri sarif*]. Because of the great faith that he himself had in this rare event, praise be to God, with a feeling of deep loyalty, the *nawab* took it upon himself to maintain this wonderful and blessed place.

(Bellamy 2011: 221–222)

As with the far older puranic literature, this story imparts a local sacred site with a trans-local reputation in part by associating a miraculous change in the land (the well water) with a trans-local figure (Husain). In this way, its sacrality mirrors that of Amarnath (a local manifestation of the trans-local god Siva) and of thousands of other pilgrimage places (both Muslim and non-Muslim) throughout South Asia.

Beyond the case of Amarnath, which, like Husain Tekri, seems to have achieved pan-Indian popularity only recently, similar notions of the sacrality of land pervade some of the earliest strata of Hindu scripture and Indian literature. The great epics of South Asia, parts of which date to several centuries before the common era, are replete with examples of land that has acquired particular geographical or supernatural qualities as a result of the actions of gods and powerful ascetics. Thus, in a popular retelling of the *Ramayana*, the protagonist Rama, rightful king of Ayodhya, and his brother Lakshmana:

reach a pleasant grove over which hung, like a canopy, fragrant smoke from numerous sacrificial fires. Viswamithra [their teacher and mentor] explained to Rama, “This is where God Shiva meditated once upon a time and reduced to ashes the god of love when he attempted to spoil his meditation. From time immemorial saints praying to Shiva come here to perform their sacrifices, and the pall of smoke you notice is from their sacrificial fires.”

(Narayan 2006: 10)

This passage shows that not only are certain places regarded as pilgrimage-worthy because of divine acts, but their sacredness continues to be marked by the ritual activities of individuals who journey to them. Similarly, according to the earliest written source, Husain Tekri's sacrality, while

initially the result of supernatural intervention, is maintained in part by human ritual activity (the three acts of *fatīha*, *nazr*, and *nyaz*). In the face of pilgrimage landscapes increasingly marked not by pristine natural beauty and ritual activity but instead by the devastating effects of over-population and global warming, how have South Asian pilgrims' relationships with sacred sites changed in recent years?

Changing land, changing notions of the sacred

In part, the challenge in tracing changes in pilgrims' perceptions of a site's authority and healing power lies in the transient nature of pilgrim populations in general. Thus, understanding how pilgrims conceptualize the changes in Amarnath's landscape – particularly because it is a seasonal pilgrimage – remains elusive. However, in the case of Husain Tekri, three communities have longstanding relationships with the site: the residents of Jaora, the Muslim Khoja community of Mumbai, and some of Husain Tekri's shopkeepers. The multi-generational and geographically stable character of the relationships between these communities and Husain Tekri makes them easier to document, and in conversations and interviews conducted with members of all three groups some interesting continuities emerge.

The Khoja connection with Husain Tekri extends back to the decades following the 1886 miracle. At that time, a Mumbai-based Khoja named Ismail Muhammad donated funds for the construction of a shrine built in memory of Husain as well as a lodge near the shrine. In interviews with me, descendants of Ismail Muhammad living in Mumbai explained that in addition to his dedication to Husain, part of their forbearer's interest in spending time at Husain Tekri derived from the fact that he operated a prosperous shoemaking business and that he would often come from Mumbai (then Bombay) to Jaora in order to oversee the collection of animal hides from Jaora and surrounding towns and villages (Bellamy 2011: 37).

In addition to this business-based connection between some of Mumbai's Khojas and Husain Tekri, it is worth noting that the late nineteenth century was a turbulent time in the life of the Khoja community owing in part to controversy over the authority of the Aga Khan (Purohit 2012). "Aga Khan" is the title given to the spiritual leader of a Shi'i minority community known as Ismaili, and among the Khojas of Mumbai – many of whom identified as Ismaili – not all of them were willing to recognize his spiritual authority. The situation was complex and was in part instigated by a question of whether or not the Aga Khan was entitled to collect a tithe from Indian Ismailis. In the midst of this turmoil in Mumbai, Jaora – and Husain Tekri in particular – became a place where some members of Mumbai's Khoja community could observe Muharram unencumbered by the situation in Mumbai.

Thus, for some members of the Khoja community, Husain Tekri functioned (and continues to function) as a place of refuge. For elderly and middle-aged members of the Khoja community who recall childhood visits there, it also seems that Husain Tekri's location in the middle of Madhya Pradesh's gently rolling hills and beautiful farmland makes it an appealing escape from the dirt and noise of the city. Despite the recent explosive growth of both the city of Jaora and Husain Tekri itself, for Mumbai's Khojas, the place continues to possess a certain mystique – a timeless and otherworldly refuge from the transient culture of the city.

While the beauty of the land around Jaora continues to make the site attractive to visiting Khojas, some also hold that recent drought is indicative of a decline in the sacrality and, therefore, the efficacy of the site. For Khojas and other Shi'i pilgrims, it is generally understood – though infrequently explicitly stated – that this drought has happened because Husain Tekri is not being properly maintained by its Sunni overseers. Over the years of my research at Husain Tekri, when expressing opinions about the efficacy of Husain Tekri as a healing center, Khoja pilgrims would

often claim that the miraculous water source at Husain Tekri had dried up completely, and that this was because the administrators of the shrine – members of Jaora’s Sunni Muslim royal family – had started selling the water. They also spoke nostalgically of a time when the simple process of pouring a few buckets of fresh water from the miraculous well over one’s head was enough to impart physical and psychological benefits. Thus, for many of Mumbai’s Khojas, while visits to Husain Tekri remain meaningful in part because of the site’s natural beauty and timelessness, there is also a widely held sense that ongoing environmental degradation indexes a lack of miraculous therapeutic power. This opinion, though by no means universally held, extends well beyond members of the Khoja community: thus, Sunni and Hindu shopkeepers who have observed many generations of pilgrims and residents of Jaora are also inclined to associate the deterioration of Husain Tekri’s natural resources – and particularly the dry (or significantly depleted) status of its miraculous well – as a sign of its decreased efficacy.

Whether or not the original well at Husain Tekri has gone completely dry remains a mystery; the shrine administrators have enclosed the well in a locked building, drilled it to make it deeper, and installed an electric pump to bring water to the surface. In any case, shrine administrators are understandably disinclined to believe that the dry – or nearly dry – well is a sign of anything other than regional drought. They are also quick to note that access to Husain Tekri’s miraculous water is maintained through two processes: the sale of plastic bottles of water labeled “*ab-e-shifa*” or “healing water” and offering pilgrims the opportunity to pay a nominal amount to enter a shrine-operated bathing complex. In both cases, the shrine administrators say that a small amount of water from the miraculous well is mixed with water brought in by tanker trucks.

For the bathhouse, shrine administrators’ logic seems to be that the small amount of well water is enough to impart healing properties to the bathhouse water. In the case of the bottled water, the process is a bit more complex – small pieces of paper are imprinted with a saffron-based ink chart containing numerically coded Arabic letters; these charts, or *taviz*, are a common part of a larger tradition of popular Sufi and Islamic practices (Flueckiger 2006). At Husain Tekri, these small papers are immersed in large vats containing a mixture of tanker truck and well water; the healing and protective qualities understood to be inherent in the papers infuse the water as the saffron-based ink dissolves. The resulting product is then sold to pilgrims.

While some pilgrims are aware of the bathhouse water’s purported healing properties, many use it for more mundane reasons: either because they are only visiting for the day and wish to be ritually clean before entering the shrines or because they need to bathe but are too poor to pay for lodge rooms and are therefore either camping on the site or paying a small amount of money to sleep on the floor of one of Husain Tekri’s shops. However, use of the bathhouse – itself the product of increased pilgrim traffic and the drought – has given pilgrims the opportunity to innovate a completely new way of relating to water at Husain Tekri. Dirty bath water flows from the bathhouse to a brackish pond that has been dug directly behind it. This water is practically and ritually impure: it is muddy and it has been used to clean the bodies of others. However, on any given day at Husain Tekri, some pilgrims will bathe in this water, drink it, or lie for hours in mud-filled shallow grave-like ditches that they have dug in the soft banks of the runoff pond. Pilgrims who engage in these practices generally conceptualize them as part of a larger category of ritual activity known as *haziri*, from the Urdu word for “presence.”

Haziri is a practice common at some Muslim saint shrines in India; a similar practice is prevalent at some Hindu temples. Historically, the word was used to describe the presence of a petitioner in a royal (and, most commonly, Muslim) court. Other words for this practice include *peshi* (a Hindi word with the same meaning and resonances as *haziri*) and *tawaf* (from the Arabic term used to describe the circumambulation of a revered edifice known as the Kaaba in the

major Islamic pilgrimage center of Mecca) (Bellamy 2006: 129–171, 2007: 31–43; Assayag 1999; Dwyer 2002; Pfleiderer 1984; Pakaslahti 1998; Rollier 1999). The basic premise of *haziri* is that a malevolent or needy spirit has taken up residence in the body of an unwilling and unaware victim; most commonly the spirit is understood to be that of a deceased individual that has been trapped by a magician and sent into the body of the victim at the behest of a close friend or relative of the victim. *Haziri* is the process by which the saints understood to be present in the shrines interrogate, punish, and ultimately expel the malevolent presence. Alternatively, in some cases, the malevolent spiritual presence is reformed and becomes a source of power that allows the healed individual to become a healer him or herself.

In any case, the means for expulsion or reform involves the saint (or, in the case of a Hindu temple, deity) interrogating and physically disciplining the malevolent spirit until the spirit confesses who sent it, at which point it is understood to be ready for reform or removal. The process of interrogation and physical punishment is only observable through of the body of the person practicing *haziri* – movements are typically violent and/or repetitive (for example rolling, jumping, slamming against walls, falling down, rocking back and forth, circling the head repeatedly); similarly, the victim's voice becomes the medium for the malevolent spirit to express its anger, defiance, pain, and, ultimately, submission to the saint or deity. From the perspective of pilgrims at Husain Tekri who bathe in the dirty bathhouse runoff, the most commonly held belief is that the impurity of the water will function much in the same way as other forms of physical abuse that constitute *haziri* – the malevolent possessing spirit will find itself unable to bear the water's impurity, and will quickly confess and agree to leave the victim's body.

There are, however, other opinions regarding the practice of bathing in dirty water. Both Mumbai-based Khojas with a long (and often multi-generational) history of visiting Husain Tekri and shopkeepers who have observed the actions of many generations of pilgrims commonly contrast bathing in dirty bath water and bathing in clean well water as evidence of the decline in the site's efficacy and, possibly sacrality. Similarly, some residents of the town of Jaora itself view this practice with skepticism; in once case, a resident from Jaora openly speculated that the bathing in dirty water was only happening because the shrine administrators were paying poor residents of Jaora to engage in the sensational practice to attract tourist traffic. However, for contemporary pilgrims, many of whom lack a multi-generational or community-based connection with Husain Tekri, bathing in dirty water easily fits under the larger rubric of *haziri*, which is itself the dominant healing practice at Husain Tekri and similar Muslim saint shrines throughout India.

While no significant ethnographic account of pilgrims' perceptions of Amarnath's post-meltdown sacrality exist – and it is therefore difficult to know how pilgrims re-imagine its sacrality and efficacy – the case of Husain Tekri's dry or nearly dry sacred well unambiguously demonstrates that significant environmental pressures and the resulting degradation of the natural world *may*, when combined with other factors (including, in this case, sectarian affiliation or multi-generational patronage or observation of pilgrims), lead to a belief that the site's power has decreased. By contrast, the case of Husain Tekri also demonstrates that environmental degradation may just as easily lead to the creation of new practices that are, ironically, contingent upon or result from the destruction of the natural elements that originally imparted fame and healing properties to a pilgrimage center. Further examination of Husain Tekri's ritual life reveals other examples of this phenomenon.

From water to air: the changing medium of healing at Husain Tekri

The basic and longstanding South Asian pattern of pilgrimage places marked by divine activity and ongoing human ritual activity is evident in another, far more recent version of the origin

story of Husain Tekri. This account, composed by a Delhi-based journalist in the late 1990s and published in a guidebook widely available for purchase on site, also holds that Husain Tekri's land is in part marked by the appearance of a miraculous water source, though it describes this source as a natural spring that miraculously emerges from the ground rather than from a miraculously replenished well.

Additionally, in this version of the story the marking of the land – as well as its maintenance – takes on an olfactory dimension:

The nawab sent the people to this place with his servants and he himself arrived there soon thereafter. When the people arrived, the jungle was filled with a wonderful smell. It was revealed in a dream that an enclosure should be created up to the point where the good smell has spread.

When the nawab came to this hill with the people, there was an unearthly sweet smell in the air – better than aloe wood and ambergris. The nawab gave the order to enclose the entire area. Since this miracle happened on the Tenth of Muharram and that day is the day of Imām Husain's martyrdom, the hill was associated with Husain and named Husain Hill. The nawab appointed a man to take care of the place and to administer loban in the morning and evening.

(Rizvi 1998)

Loban is a type of incense commonly sold by shops near Muslim saint shrines; typical offerings made at these shrines may also include agarbatti, pink rose petals, small bottles of perfume, packets of sugar pellets or other sweet hard candies, and sheets – usually green and ornamented – to drape over the presiding saint's grave. While loban burned at Indian Muslim saint shrines may now be synthetic or even adulterated, the Urdu term – a loan word from Arabic – originally designated the type of incense commonly known in English as frankincense, which is produced from the sap of a tree native to northeastern Africa.

On the one hand, because the association between divine or saintly presence and sweet smells has deep roots in Islamic literary culture, this new detail is not necessarily a significant innovation. Further, it is also true that, in the context of South Asian culture and religion, the burning of incense is quite common, though the type of incense burned and the theological and popular explanations for the practice of burning it vary across regions and traditions. Thus, for example, in contemporary Hindu temple worship, small sticks of incense – agarbatti – are commonly burned as part of a series of offerings designed to please the presiding deity; in contrast to this, the burning of loban is primarily associated with Muslim saint shrines and has other ritual uses including, for example, the ritual purification of domestic spaces and vehicles. On the other hand, if the current ritual life and local context of Husain Tekri are taken into account, the changes evident in this most recent origin story are indicative of the ways in which the sacrality of Husain Tekri – and particularly its healing power – has been re-conceptualized in response to the strain caused by increased pilgrim traffic and the ongoing drought in north-western India.

The process of burning loban varies from region to region and from dargah to dargah. At Muslim saint shrines in India, loban is typically burned in a metal dish with an attached handle; this dish is filled with live coals, and pieces of loban burn and produce billowing clouds of white, fragrant smoke the moment they are placed on the coals. At Husain Tekri, loban is first offered inside the shrines; as it burns, blessings upon the saint, selections from the Qur'an, and prayers for the afflicted are recited over it. This process is repeated eight times a day – four times in the morning and four times in the afternoon at half hour intervals – at each of the site's four major

shrines. After being offered inside the shrines, the shrine attendant and an assistant move to the shrines' courtyards, where pilgrims awaiting loban have formed two parallel lines. The shrine attendant and his assistant move slowly along the path of pilgrims, adding loban to the hot coals and producing thick clouds of sweetly scented white smoke.

The general understanding of this process is that the sweet smell of the loban and the words from the Qur'an constitute a pleasing offering to the saint; secondarily, at Husain Tekri and similar Muslim saint shrines, the smoke is commonly understood to absorb and transmit the beneficial properties of the prayers spoken in Arabic not just to the saint, but also to those who have come to the shrine seeking healing. In this way, the smoke of loban functions in a manner similar to the "healing water" currently manufactured and sold by shrine administrators: both are mediums that allow afflicted bodies to absorb the curative power understood to be inherent not only in Islamic scripture, but also the Arabic language itself. It is this smoke that instigates the violent yet ultimately therapeutic actions associated with haziri.

The larger issue of how and why pilgrims regard the smoke of loban as powerful – and particularly why it is effective in prompting haziri – is complicated by both the diversity of pilgrims' regional and religious backgrounds and the multivalent nature of the smoke itself. As noted above, shrine administrators and some of the pilgrims regard loban as effective primarily because of its ability to absorb and transmit Arabic-language prayers and scripture. Additionally, while the pan-Islamic association between sweet smell and saintly or divine presence informs pilgrims' understandings of loban, previous research has shown that pilgrims regard loban as effective for a host of reasons.

As the product of fire, loban is regarded by many pilgrims as ritually pure and, just as importantly, impossible to corrupt through magical processes. In contrast to this purity, many pilgrims' understandings of the magic used to place a malevolent spirit in their bodies involves the introduction of ritually impure substances (for example, ashes from a Hindu cremation ground or menstrual blood) into their food. The whiteness and abundant nature of loban's smoke resonates particularly (though not exclusively) with dairy products in the Hindu tradition: both their use as offerings to deities and contemporary understandings of the sacrality of cows in general. Some pilgrims believe that angels, Muslim saints, or benevolent jinn live in or exhale healing breath on the loban smoke. Pilgrims also exhibit a wide range of descriptions of the emotional and physical effect of loban's smoke: it may provoke anger or a sense of peace; it may burn or it may offer cooling comfort (Bellamy 2006: 207–224).

Whether or not the smoke of loban possesses any inherent or biologically beneficial properties is difficult to say. Owing to cost, some loban sold in South Asia is synthetic; Husain Tekri's shopkeepers sell several "grades" of loban and they generally say that their stock of loban comes from Ajmer, a nearby city in northwestern India that is home to the dargah of Khwaja Mui'in-ud-din Chishti (d. 1236 CE), one of the most popular and famous dargahs in South Asia. Several studies have indicated that natural, unadulterated frankincense has a therapeutic effect on anxiety, depression, arthritis, and inflammation, but synthetic or adulterated forms do not have similar properties. Here again it is clear that the efficacy of particular healing practices and processes at Husain Tekri may, at an earlier point in its history, have been linked to elements from the natural world and also linked to trade relationships with northern Africa and the Middle East. This linkage, however, has weakened in the face of the introduction of synthetic and adulterated forms of loban.

Changes in trade networks and increasing engagement with the global economy have also affected other aspects of pilgrims' conceptualization of Husain Tekri's land as powerful. Khoja pilgrims occasionally describe the decline in Husain Tekri's sacrality in terms of sweetness or sugar that was once produced by the land itself but which has also disappeared in recent years. It is possible that these pilgrims are recalling a time when the main crop grown on the farmland around Husain Tekri was sorghum, a hearty and drought-resistant relative of wheat. Indeed, popular

etymologies of Jaora's name hold that it derives from *jowar*, the Hindi word meaning "sorghum." Sorghum produces a sweet, sticky white sap that very well may be the "sweetness" or "sugar" that long-term pilgrims fondly recall. In fact, in a conversation with me, a lifelong resident of Jaora once related how, as a boy, he would occasionally skip school in order to gather this white sap and sell it to wealthy Khoja pilgrims from Mumbai.

Sorghum is no longer grown regularly on the land around Husain Tekri; it has been largely abandoned in favor of crops that fetch higher prices on the Indian and global markets. Ironically sorghum, with its sweetness, has given way to water-hungry cash crops (in particular, soybeans) that have, along with increased population pressure, created the drought conditions affecting wells throughout the region and, of course, at Husain Tekri itself.

Thus, the contemporary ritual life of Husain Tekri is structured around the ritual burning and inhalation of loban rather than the consumption or use of the water from its original – and now largely depleted – miraculous water source. Similarly, the sweetness produced by the land itself has also been lost as crops have changed in response to the global market. Of course, because of the longstanding use of loban and other forms of incense in Islamic and South Asian rituals, it is possible that the shift from water to loban as Husain Tekri's primary curative substance might have happened regardless of the status of its miraculous well. Certainly the logistics of directing billowing smoke at a crowd of pilgrims are less complex than any water distribution system capable of servicing hundreds of pilgrims simultaneously, and in any case, the days when a far smaller pilgrim population could simply draw water from the well are long gone. At the same time, it is unlikely that the dominance of loban is unrelated to the decline in the popularity of water from Husain Tekri's wells.

The loss of awe: the enduring – yet changing – power of contemporary South Asian pilgrimage centers

As the cases of Amarnath and Husain Tekri demonstrate, climate change, industrialization, and the pressures of population growth present challenges, both conceptual and physical, to contemporary pilgrims. While a lack of ethnographic sources on Amarnath makes it difficult to know how pilgrims have reacted to the periodic disappearance of Shiva's lingam, David Haberman's (2006) work on the Yamuna river provides some insight into specifically Hindu responses to the effects of environmental decline on a major Hindu pilgrimage center. The Yamuna river is worshiped by Hindus as a goddess, and until very recently, bathing in her water and offering her water to temple-based images of the Hindu god Krishna has been a key element of pilgrimage to the region of Braj, 100 miles south of Delhi. However, by the time the Yamuna flows through Delhi and reaches the city of Vrindaban – the center of Krishna veneration in Braj – its waters have become so polluted by industrial contaminants and raw sewage that it is essentially devoid of aquatic life and potentially dangerous to bathe in.

Haberman (2006) records a range of response from Braj's pilgrims that is somewhat reminiscent of the range of response exhibited by Husain Tekri's pilgrims: some hold that while the water itself is undeniably dirty, the goddess herself is incorruptible and undiminished by human activity. Others regard the destruction of the river as something that compromises the presence and vitality of the goddess herself. As one pilgrim from a family with multi-generational connections to Braj states, "When mother is sick ... one cannot throw her out of the house. We must help her. Therefore, I do Yamuna *seva*." (Haberman 2006: 144). *Seva*, a term connoting loving service, is a common means of relating to a deity or saint; in contemporary South Asian practices, the loving service may be directed towards the deity or needy communities. In contrast to this response, while there may indeed be widespread Hindu concern with ongoing environmental

crisis, there is little evidence of widespread or effective social movements addressing the impact of population growth and global warming. As Diana Eck writes in her extensive historical and ethnographic survey of major Hindu places of pilgrimage, “reverence for the ways in which the divine saturates the world of material nature has not yet led to a widespread cultural and religious resistance to environmental degradation.” (Eck 2012: 444).

Similarly, at Husain Tekri, the effects of drought and population pressure have not inspired the same reaction from all pilgrims: while some see these changes as indicative of decreased divine presence, others create and embrace new healing practices that are largely the result of environmental degradation. However, while pilgrims’ reactions to the decline in the natural beauty and vitality of Husain Tekri certainly vary, it is worth noting that even those pilgrims who accept the curative potential of bathing in dirty bathhouse runoff may – and often do – subscribe to the widespread sense that Husain Tekri, while still a powerful place, has become less effective as people have become less “afraid” of it. When pressed to explain, the most common response offered by pilgrims is that increased pilgrim population and, importantly, the surrounding landscape’s shift from the “jungle” of the early origin stories to today’s beautiful but tame farmland has made people less “afraid.” With a decline in fear, the logic goes, comes a potential decline in efficacy. Thus, even those pilgrims who do not associate environmental degradation with a decline in sacrality nevertheless hold that the natural world is imbued with divine presence.

The idea that fear – or perhaps awe – is a vital aspect of divine presence and healing efficacy is commonplace in much anthropological writing on religious healing; it also resonates with Turner’s notion of liminality insofar as it is a state marked by feelings of alienation and displacement. It is therefore not surprising that, even though tradition-specific reasons for this association vary, pilgrims from a wide range of religious backgrounds share this perspective on divine presence in nature: Hindu scriptures and epics may commonly ascribe divine identity to natural elements, Islamic traditions are full of references to notions of divine immanence and the idea that the natural world is enlivened by divine presence: *ayat*, Arabic for “signs” – is used to designate a wide range of things – miracles performed by prophets, verses in the Qur’an, and elements in the natural world.

It has been rightly and repeatedly observed that a hallmark of problematic scholarship on South Asia – and particularly India – is its overly narrow focus on “religious” problems and “religious” solutions (Gottschalk 2000: 4). Even in the context of an explicit focus on pilgrimage centers, it is therefore important to acknowledge that while formal theological concepts and popular rituals can certainly be harnessed by concerned citizens as part of larger social movements, it would be naïve to forget the modern systemic forces that make any truly effective social reform difficult: unregulated private enterprise driven by a globalized economy; the effects of explosive population growth; the tendency of neoliberal economic policies to reward short-term gain over long-term sustainability; poverty; lack of education; lack of political will; and corruption.

This is not to say, of course, that narratives, symbols, and ideas do not matter. The question is whether they are malleable and powerful enough to inform South Asian responses to environmental devastation in the face of such strong and systemic material opposition. While Hindu and Islamic traditions certainly contain theological concepts that might aid in inspiring social movements geared towards halting spiraling environmental decline – the Hindu notion of *seva*, for example, or the Islamic notion of humans as caretakers of the natural world on the model of Adam, the first man and charged to care for the Garden of Eden – such human-driven efforts are incompatible with the feelings of fear and awe that are integral to earlier conceptualizations of sacred land and healing potential at pilgrimage centers in South Asia. The feelings of fear and awe that may be inspired by being alone in high mountains or dense jungles are simply not

compatible with – and therefore cannot be restored by – compassion, stewardship, or charity. If nature is vulnerable and dependent upon human caretakers, it cannot be fearsome and awe-inspiring. This loss of awe, when combined with notions of invincible or transcendent divinity impervious to mere material degradation, may contribute to pilgrims' complacency in the face of the ongoing destruction of the natural world; it may also prompt them to create new ritual practices that draw upon older traditions and concepts but are also shaped by the world as it is now.

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Revitalised Sufism and the new piety movements in Islamic Southeast Asia

Julia Day Howell

This chapter focuses on Sufi currents within the contemporary Islamic revival movement in Southeast Asia. While popular today, Sufi Islam was heavily criticised by many twentieth-century scripturalist reformers drawing on the Wahhabi and Muslim Brotherhood movements, which favoured narrowly law-oriented and anti-Sufi forms of piety. Scripturalist Islamic renewal movements succeeded for a time in marginalising the Sufi-inspired Islam dominant in the region and elsewhere before the twentieth century (Laffan 2011; Wormser, this volume). Nonetheless, throughout the twentieth century, traditional, mostly rural Islamic schools (*pondok* or *pesantren*), fostering knowledge of classic Islamic texts and linked together within organisations such as the Nahdlatul Ulama, have continued to foster Sufi study and practice. And over the last several decades, even as new waves of scripturalist revivalism have gained momentum in the region, so also have new forms of Sufi piety emerged and inspired many Muslims, in cities as well as in the countryside.

This chapter surveys the variety of Sufi-inflected renewal initiatives launched within the broader Islamic revival movement across Southeast Asia in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It shows how, despite their derivation from a tradition concerned with mystical awareness, the latter-day Sufi renewal movements can be read as modern piety movements: like contemporaneous scripturalist renewal movements they promote active engagement in the world of getting and spending, and craft religious disciplines that can be helpful in doing so effectively in late modern consumerist society.

The new Islamic piety movements and innerworldly Sufism

Contemporary Islamic revivalism is an assemblage of projects of recommitment to newly appreciated standards of religiously correct behaviour that, although inspired by the past golden age of the Prophet and his companions, are in the main actually supportive of participation for both men and women in the public spheres of modern society (Gole 2000; Mahmood 2005; Rinaldo 2008; Smith-Hefner 2007). Developing this perspective on contemporary Islamic revivalism, Turner (2008) construes it as a piety movement comparable to the Protestant Reformation, which Max Weber famously interpreted as an engine of modernisation. Extending Weber's analysis, Turner sees in both the contemporary scripturalist Islamic reform movements and the earlier

Christian reform movements a rejection of ritual and charismatic intercession as ways to salvation in favour of placing faith in self-imposed moral discipline. Striving for moral excellence in both Christian and Islamic idioms readily synchronises with the kind of rational evaluation that is the basis of scientific enquiry, profit calculation in business firms, and the meritocratic staffing of that prototypically modern social form: bureaucracy.

In Weber's classic analysis (2002), as Turner (2008) reminds us, the moral striving undertaken by the early Protestant reformers was socially transformative because effort was directed towards conduct in the world. It required personal discipline, and even a kind of abstinence, but not from marital sexuality or the work of provisioning a family (like earlier monastic asceticism); rather, what was required was abstinence from ostentatious and frivolous expenditures. In Weber's terms, it was the piety of 'innerworldly asceticism'. To this he contrasted 'otherworldly mysticism', the religious ideal realised by Catholic contemplatives from which Protestants, following Luther and Calvin, turned away, just as they did from the excused moral and financial indiscipline of the manor and medieval towns. It was that rejection, in Weber's analysis, that cleared the way for modern capitalism in Europe.

Reading contemporary (implicitly scripturalist) Islamic revival as a piety movement fostering a similar, if more frankly and positively acquisitive, innerworldly asceticism enables Turner to propose a useful frame for analysing the interaction of the numerous competing revivalist programmes, each striving to represent 'true Islam' most faithfully and to defend its own standards for defining religious 'excellence'. But this formulation of Islamic revival as a vehicle for promoting moral virtue in an idiom adaptive to the opportunity structures of modern societies makes problematic our understanding of the recent efflorescence of Sufism, which in Southeast Asia is clearly a wing of the Islamic revival movement.

Sufism is generally understood as Islamic mysticism. Certainly the Sufi orders (A.pl. *turuq*, s. *tariqa*; I. *tarekat*) teach the possibility of lifting the veils of ordinary perception and experiencing gnosis, and Sufi masters (*syekh*, *murshid*) and their deputies over the centuries have provided guidance in spiritual practices that may assist the seeker to achieve that realisation. Also, in times past, undertaking long periods of retreat under the direction of a Sufi master to achieve spiritual realisation (and perhaps also the powers associated with that) was not uncommon, particularly for unattached young men and those past their years of heavy social responsibility. So it is not wholly unreasonable to regard Sufism as 'otherworldly mysticism' along with the mysticism of medieval Catholic monasteries, Buddhist *sangha* and the Jain ascetics that drew Weber's attention. One might even concede that there is some justice in applying to Sufism Weber's characterisation of the fields of 'excellence' in which Buddhist and Jain spiritual virtuosi have excelled, namely, 'contemplative-orgiastic'. That fits insofar as litanies used by Sufis, ideally to achieve mystical absorption, not infrequently have been orchestrated in folk practice as intensely emotive trance dances. If this is all we know of Sufism, it would seem that contemporary Sufi revival movements could only be nativist rejections of modern life and certainly would not figure as propagators of the kinds of 'activist-ascetic' virtues for which the early Protestant reformers strove, or to which the ideals of Islamist and other scripturalist advocates of a return to 'true Islam' might be approximated.

This chapter shows how such a characterisation of Sufism as ineluctably otherworldly and mystical is overdrawn. That characterisation also fails to recognise the reformist creativity that has been repeatedly exercised, as much in the Sufi tradition as in the fields of Qur'anic exegesis and religious law. Further, descriptions of contemporary Sufism in the following sections demonstrate that of late Southeast Asian Sufi ritual and ethical practices have undergone numerous re-workings, important instances of which actually inculcate religious forms of innerworldly asceticism. Finally, and perhaps curiously, highly emotive and sometimes spectacular stagings of

Sufi ritual for mass audiences have also been put into the service of motivating commitment to moral reform programmes intended to better equip Southeast Asian Muslims for success in their modern societies.

The apparent contradiction of a new enthusiasm for Sufism emerging precisely in urban areas among educated elites (just as Islamist and more broadly scripturalist Islamic renewal have arisen across the globe in the same kinds of social locations) is resolved when we examine how elements of the Sufi heritage have been selectively appropriated to enhance what many scripturalist-revival-weary Muslims have seen as emotionally dry ritual obligations. Sufi regimes of ethical reflection have also been put into service as ways of promoting personal disciplines explicitly linked to modern educational and professional success. Other new Sufi-tinged piety movements use Sufi ritual to engage less privileged Muslims in their own urban neighbourhoods and fit easily into patterns of city work and family care. It will be evident that there is not one Sufism rehabilitated for modern life, but many carryovers and partial appropriations, each of which seeks to shape a distinctive way of being properly, and richly, Islamic in the midst of modern life. Thus each, in Bourdieu's (1997) terminology, seeks to shape a particular modern, Sufi-coloured Islamic habitus.

However distinct, the various Sufistic programmes for spiritual renewal share two key features: a strong emphasis on respect for religious law (broadly, *syariah*; narrowly, *fiqh*); and the importance of remaining fully engaged in the work of the world by providing for oneself and one's family and by contributing to the betterment of society. In those respects the diverse movements for Sufi-inspired spiritual renewal in Southeast Asia's modernising settings can with some justice be regarded as heirs of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Sufi reform movements dubbed by historians 'Neo-Sufi' (Levtzion and Voll 1987; Rahman 1968; Voll 2008). As documented in the sections that follow, some members of Indonesia's Muslim intelligentsia have actually promoted their programmes for a modern, Sufi-inflected Islam as *Neo-Sufisme*. However their *Neo-Sufisme* is but part of the spectrum of revitalised Sufism in Southeast Asia today, and one that, in the main, discourages participation in Sufi orders (which were the carriers of the late pre-modern Sufi reform movement dubbed 'Neo-Sufi').

In any case, the accommodations to life in today's work-a-day world that we find in so many contemporary forms of Sufism (in their values, cultural repertoires and institutional frameworks), and the religiously founded moral discipline they seek to motivate, are grounds for considering at least some of them varieties of innerworldly asceticism. Those accommodations also help us to understand the appeal of revivalist Sufism to Southeast Asian Muslims today.

Despite those common features, Sufi programmes for spiritual renewal in cities and the rapidly modernising hinterlands of Southeast Asia differ in the kinds of practices they draw from the Sufi heritage. Some focus on practices of ethical reflection to properly direct moral discipline, while others bring to the fore supererogatory rituals like the *zikir* litanies or *shalawat* prayers. Likewise, some use those rituals primarily meditatively, while others use them to build emotional fervour. Contemporary forms of revitalised Sufism also differ in the ways they are institutionalised. Some are minimally institutionalised. For example, people may just browse through bookshops and purchase books or DVDs to guide their study and practice, or follow a favourite preacher on television and attend those of his lecture circuit appearances that are convenient for them. Others are more structured. Structured environments for exploring Sufism include programmes run for a fee by certain of the major urban mosques or private foundations; associations (*majelis*) drawn together around charismatic preachers; and Sufi orders partially adapted through bureaucratisation and the addition of popular culture programmes to accommodate city-folk and young people not wholly satisfied by the culture of old-time *tarekat*.

Sufistic piety renewal programmes also differ in the approaches they take to interpreting Islam's canonical texts and deriving guidance for everyday conduct. Thus the neo-modernist intellectuals who have championed *Neo-Sufisme* have advanced strategies to make historically informed interpretations of the Qur'an and Haddith, which justify many liberal adjustments (Barton 1991, 1995; Kull 2005). But other programmes of Sufistic religious renewal, such as that of the celebrity televangelist Arifin Ilham, have a distinctly literalist and exclusivist tone (Howell 2010; Syadzily 2005).

Differences in approach to the interpretation of religious law affect more than disputations over how far particular religious laws codified in pre-modern agrarian empires can be revised to undergird a just, religiously plural modern society where the state is based on popular sovereignty. The intellectual ground of reform movements, approaches to exegesis and to the derivation of religious law also motivate different modes of piety.

Asef Bayat's (2007) studies of what he calls 'post-Islamism' (following on from Roy [1994] and others) characterise differences in modes of piety in a way that can readily be related to underlying understandings of religious exegesis and ways of deriving religious law. Thus he recognises in Islamic revivalism generally (including Islamist movements seeking to capture the instruments of the state) an 'active piety'. The new piety or '*dakwah*' movements, in their own words, 'call' their fellow Muslims to make a conscious recommitment to what they construe as 'true Islam'. They are inspired to leave behind the conventional Islamic practices of their surrounding communities that can now be seen to be sullied by local non-Islamic culture and ignorantly misconstrued. 'Callers' (A. *du'at*; I. *da'i*), that is, self-appointed lay preachers (cf. Hirschkind 2001; Howell 2013), commonly rehearse their own conversion story and urge their fellows to watch for a similar turning point in their own lives that will energise their recommitment to Islam as it should be practiced. Their 'true Islam' is presented as a package. There will be an ongoing process of learning to understand it more fully, but critical assessment and promotion of alternate approaches are discouraged. The virtuous attitude in the new setting is submission to what is now understood as God's law. In Bayat's terms, this is a 'semi-autonomous' form of active piety.

Islamist and post-Islamist revival, founded on neo-Salafi scripts for the good society and understood to be unproblematically evident in Qur'anic passages and Haddith, promote such semi-autonomous active piety. Since the 1970s, neo-Salafi movements have been important drivers of Islamic renewal in Southeast Asia. But the ongoing educational activities of long established mainstream voluntary organisations, such as the Nahdlatul Ulama, the Muhammadiyah and the neo-modernist (or '*Pembaruan*' [Renewal]) movement in Indonesia, and Sisters in Islam in Malaysia, have also been important contributors to Islamic revival. And since these various scholarly and ideological colourations of renewal affect also how Islam's Sufi heritage is understood and adapted, an important dimension of contrast in the following overview of Sufism in modern Southeast Asia will be the degree of religious autonomy fostered in the different Sufi piety movements.

The following sections examine more closely several contemporary approaches to infusing Sufi inspiration into Islamic renewal: first the *Neo-Sufisme* promoted by Indonesia's neo-modernist intellectuals, mostly associated with the Islamic tertiary institutes; then, as it were, their opposite number, that is, revitalised Sufi orders (I. *tarekat*); and finally, the production of spectacular versions of Sufi devotional rituals (*zikir* and *shalawat*) by a new generation of Muslim televangelists and by popular open-air rally preachers who use the drama of the rituals and their personal charisma to inspire ongoing participation in revival activities. The cases will be drawn from Indonesia, where there has been far more scope for new Sufi piety movements than in neighbouring Malaysia, Thailand or Brunei.

Neo-Sufism and the efflorescence of elite urban Sufism

The term 'Neo-Sufism' would seem useful for categorising the whole range of Sufi-inspired Islamic revitalisation movements and programmes in Indonesia insofar as it signals people doing something new with the Sufi tradition. However, this section focuses on just one segment of Indonesian Sufi revival that has adopted the term 'Neo-Sufism' (in Indonesian, *Neo-Sufisme*) or closely allied names like *Tasawuf Modern* (Modern Sufism) and *Tasawuf Positif* (Positive, that is, engaged Sufism) to identify a particular ideal of Sufi-infused Islamic religiosity. This vision of Sufi Islam, advocated specifically for today's Muslims, contrasts with many other ways Indonesian Muslims concerned with modern social conditions have been drawing on Sufism in their proselytisation. Framed by intellectual piety movement activists, it is also different in certain respects from the late pre-modern reform movements for which historians first used the term.

In Indonesia the term *Neo-Sufisme* is most strongly associated with the distinguished and highly influential neo-modernist Muslim intellectual Nurcholish Madjid, who began popularising the term in the 1990s. By then he was well known for his progressive contextual scholarship. His studies at one of Indonesia's leading state Islamic institutes, IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, and then his doctoral studies at the University of Chicago with the renowned historian Fazlur Rahman, laid the groundwork for his later intellectual contributions to progressive Islamic reform in Indonesia.

The establishment in 1986 of Yayasan Paramadina (the Paramadina Foundation) in the exclusive Jakarta suburb of Pondok Indah provided Madjid and his circle a firm platform for outreach to the country's rapidly expanding Muslim middle class and elites (Hefner 2000). The foundation ran a publication programme, held talks on the Pondok Indah premises and ran a programme of short courses on Islam on a commercial basis for adults wanting to deepen their understanding of their faith. The courses consisted of university-style lectures, with question-and-discussion periods following. That format suited the market sector that Madjid and colleagues wanted to cater for, and also served a particular religious purpose: to expose their highly educated clientele to the variety of well-founded opinion in religious scholarship and to encourage confidence in those learners in applying to that scholarship the kind of critical reason they exercised in their professions and daily lives. Paramadina then pioneered the use of public spaces favoured by elites, like luxury hotels, major convention centres and up-market malls, for Islamic evening talks and weekend workshops. The first initiative of this type, a long-running success, was the Klub Kajian Agama (KKA, or Religion Study Club), run monthly as a seminar in a large banquet room in the Regent Hotel (now the Four Seasons Hotel) (Hasan 2009; Howell 2001, 2007; Kull 2005).

While Madjid had devoted a good deal of his life as a public intellectual to reassessing the place of Islam in modern, democratic states, and extending the scope of interpretation of texts to deal with a wide range of social issues, he had from early on written about the need to balance these worldly concerns with attention to the quality of one's felt sense of personal connection with God. And when Paramadina began running its four 'packet' course on Islam, Sufism studies were included as one of the packets (Howell 2001, 2007).

Madjid's enduring concern for Islamic spirituality came strongly to the fore in his public talks in the 1990s, evidently prompted in part by an awareness of the rising appeal to movements of Muslim urbanites he considered dangerous. He spoke of these concerns in the landmark speech he gave at the Taman Ismail Marzuki in 1990. There he warned of the danger to Muslims not just of 'fundamentalism' but of 'New Age cults' (Kull 2005). Islamic fundamentalism (the Salafi renewal movements) deprived Muslims of spiritual inspiration from their Sufi heritage by

condemning Sufism outright; the ‘cults’, manifest in Indonesia at the time through increasingly cosmopolitan book selections, citizens’ experiences of international travel, and a number of transnational spiritual movements, could siphon off spiritual enthusiasm into non-Islamic environments. Both fundamentalism and New Age cults, Madjid argued, robbed Muslims of their own critical judgement and made them prey to misguided gurus.

Then in 1993, in one of his regular Religion Study Club (KKA) seminar presentations, Madjid set out the kind of Sufism that he thought modern Muslims should try to cultivate, and linked his construct with a term his doctoral dissertation supervisor, Fazlur Rahman, had coined to characterise a pre-modern era of global Sufi reform begun in North Africa in the eighteenth century: ‘Neo-Sufism’.¹ In that KKA talk, later published under the title ‘*Sufism Baru dan Sufism Lama: Masalah Kontinuitas dan Perkembangan dalam Esoterisme Islam*’ (New Sufism and Old Sufism: The Issue of Continuity and Development in Esoteric Islam) (Madjid 1993), he urged modern Muslims to concern themselves with the quality of their inner spiritual lives, just as they were busying themselves to learn more about religious doctrine and law. Sufism, he said, had a legitimate and important place in Islam as long as it was rightly balanced with observance of religious law (*syariah*). This affirmation of the central importance of the law to Sufi spirituality echoes one of the main thrusts of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reform movements dubbed ‘Neo-Sufi’ by Rahman.

Madjid (1993) acknowledged in his ‘*Sufisme Baru dan Sufisme Lama*’ that he was purposely linking his concept of Sufism for modern Indonesians to Rahman’s earlier characterisation of pre-modern movements. By adopting the term *Neo-Sufisme* he was able to underscore the importance of, and historical precedents for, a Sufism firmly established on the foundation of *syariah*. He even followed Rahman in harking back to the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century reformer Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) whom Salafists count as a trusted source of guidance (and on whom Madjid had written his doctoral dissertation). Madjid admiringly underscored Ibn Taymiyyah’s condemnation of the excesses of ecstatic folk Sufism and the magic-working demagoguery associated with it, but pointed out that Ibn Taymiyyah himself drew on the teachings of the great Sufi *syekh* Abdul Qadir al Jilani (d. 1166), the founder of the Qadiriyyah order.

While Madjid found valuable precedents in the pre-modern Sufi reform movements that he, Rahman and others (notably Nehemia Levtzion and John O. Voll) had classed as Neo-Sufi, in ‘*Sufisme Baru dan Sufisme Lama*’ he called on modern Indonesian Muslims to go further than those earlier reformers and borrow judiciously, if at all, from the Sufi orders. He particularly criticised Sufi withdrawal from the world. The Sufi practice of retreat (*khalwat*), for example, while it could well offer spiritual refreshment, was best practiced, he urged, only briefly as a short period of respite after which one returned to one’s everyday responsibilities.

The emphasis on ongoing social engagement in *Neo-Sufisme* and other similar reconstructions of Sufism² does faintly echo a characteristic of pre-modern ‘Neo-Sufi’ orders as understood by Fazlur Rahman and other historians: their ‘activism’ (O’Fahey and Radtke 1993). A distinctive feature of those Neo-Sufi orders was the obligation they placed on mystic seekers after their own spiritual realisation to carry out into the wider community the *syariah*’s teachings on morality. Those Neo-Sufis hoped thereby to strengthen their societies in the face of advancing European colonialism. However, Madjid’s *Neo-Sufisme* called for an activism that was much broader; it was to be a whole of life engagement in contributing to society using all of a person’s skills and knowledge, not just missionising for moral rectitude.

In ‘*Sufisme Baru dan Sufisme Lama*’ (1993) Madjid also criticised another practice common in Sufi orders: initiation (*baiat*) that requires an oath of obedience to the master (*mursyid*, *syekh*) of the order and effectively relieves seekers of individual responsibility for their spiritual lives. Nor did he condone relying on a *syekh* for intercession (*tawassul*) with God for well-being ‘here and in the here-after’, or for assistance with one’s spiritual unfolding.

In short, in launching the concept of *Neo-Sufisme* for modern Muslims, Madjid called for a proper appreciation of the value of Sufi-inspired spiritual intimacy with God, so long as it was cultivated within the bounds of the *syariah*, and as long as Sufi spirituality underpinned an active life in society. Moreover, modern *Neo-Sufisme* must be made compatible with the confident exercise of independent judgement.

Despite Madjid's several criticisms of practices common to Sufi orders, he did not altogether condemn them. Nonetheless, he did acknowledge that the *Neo-Sufisme* he envisioned closely resembled a model of highly autonomous Sufi piety sketched out decades previously by the eminent Islamic Modernist scholar Hamka in his famous book *Tasauf Moderen* ('Modern Sufism'). First published in 1939, *Tasauf Moderen* has been a perennial favourite and is still in print (1990). Originally written as a series of popular magazine articles, *Tasauf Moderen* models a modern mode of Sufi-inspired piety cultivated through exercises in ethical reflection. Hamka takes the reader through a series of hypothetical moral dilemmas in which the putative everyman finds himself challenged to decide what is the right thing to do. The character's reflections reveal how easy it is to reach for a legal principle to justify indulging in one's own narrow, or even base, self-interests, while further reflection can uncover some deep ethical principle that will direct one towards a point of religious law, and inspire understanding of how best to apply it.

Tasauf Moderen has served generations of Indonesian Muslims (particularly, but not exclusively, of Muhammadiyah-style modernist inclinations) as a kind of spiritual how-to book (one of the first of a now highly popular genre). It supports the self-directed seeker who, guided by reason and spiritual insight, selectively draws on his or her knowledge of *syariah* and expert religious advice to chart a productively engaged godly life. Hamka intended that *Tasauf Moderen*, along with his other writing on *tasawuf*, should enable modern Muslims to cultivate a sense of closeness to God, and possibly even experience a lifting of the veils of earthly perception, without, however, getting involved in a Sufi order or using the Sufis' meditative rituals such as collective *zikir* (repetitive recitations of litanies) (Howell 2010). Thus *Tasauf Moderen* famously charts a path for, in Hamka's phrase, '*tasawuf tanpa tarekat*' ('Sufism without the Sufi orders').³

Nurcholish Madjid did not distance himself so strictly from the Sufi orders, but he did personally favour the kind of self-directed seeking that Hamka supported in *Tasauf Moderen*. The Paramadina Foundation can be seen as an institutional support for such self-directed spiritual improvement. It offers a variety of tools for that purpose: the books it publishes, and its talks, courses and seminars. Paramadina past students, while staying involved with the foundation's activities, have organised their own study groups, located and formed chapters of spiritual movements attractive to them, and patronised talks and workshops offered by other institutions. Some have investigated numbers of Sufi orders and then joined one. And the Islamic university professors and other guest lecturers at Paramadina who have discovered a talent for a more popular style of lecturing have been able to launch side-careers as guest lecturers on radio and television, at firms that sponsor Islamic education for their staff and at private functions (Howell 2001, 2008).⁴

That network of programmes and loosely structured activities, as well as others inspired by the Paramadina model,⁵ support engagement with Sufism in the manner suggested by Madjid's concept of *Neo-Sufisme*. Those networks, along with the veritable banquet of books, cassettes, DVDs and such materials in bookstores across the country and online, provide the means with which more independent-minded seekers can deepen their knowledge of the Sufi tradition and find guides and companions with whom to use Sufi reflective practices and meditative rituals. Just how autonomous seekers are within the particular circles they gravitate towards clearly varies from person to person, but the ideal of a *syariah*-based, engaged Sufism lived through individual

practice of ethical reflection, and perhaps quietistic use of meditative Sufi ritual (whether it be called *Neo-Sufisme* or *Tasawuf Moderen* or *Tasawuf Positif*), resonates with many better-educated Indonesians.

Adaptation in the Sufi orders

Although neo-modernists and other progressive Muslim intellectuals who promoted concepts like *Neo-Sufisme*, *Tasawuf Moderen* and *Tasawuf Positif* have been critical of the Sufi orders, some patrons of their courses and lectures, along with other secularly well-educated Muslim urbanites, have looked to Sufi orders for expert and ongoing guidance and used Sufi rituals to develop a rigorous meditation practice. Before the mid-1980s this seems to have been relatively uncommon, as modernist Muslim organisations like the Muhammadiyah, whose memberships were predominantly urban and middle class, were highly critical of ‘superstitious’ practices they associated with Sufism, and were rivals of the association of traditional scholars, the Nahdlatul Ulama, which had carried *tasawuf* along with other classical fields of Islamic studies into the twentieth century. Nonetheless, popular media and researchers both noted a decided shift in the attitudes of privileged urbanites to Sufism in the last two decades of the twentieth century (Aziz 1996; Burhani 2001, 2002a, 2002b; Darmadi 2001; Effendi 1985; Howell 2001, 2007; Sila 2000; Syafi’i 1996). The magazine *Amanah* in a 1987 cover story flagged this trend, calling it ‘a rush to the *tarekat*’.

A definite shift in demand (notably, expansion of the range of interests in religious matters to include experiential religiosity) contributed to this upsurge of urbanite involvement in Sufi orders. But there had also been changes, as it were, in the ‘supply side’ (cf. Stark and Bainbridge 1985),⁶ that is, in Sufi orders and traditional Islamic boarding schools (the *pondok* or *pesantren*) in which, for centuries, the Sufi orders have been lodged. In some Sufi orders these changes arose as sympathetic adaptations to the new urban demand. Other orders instituted changes as protective responses to competition for influence over young *pesantren* students, who have not been isolated from the upsurge in talk about *spiritualitas* (spirituality) and the popularity of *Sufisme* activities outside the *pesantren*.

Sympathetic adaptations by *tarekat* to cater to new interest in Sufism shown by urban sophisticates are well exemplified by the Qadiriyyah Naqsyabandiyah *tarekat* (TQN) Pesantren Suryalaya under the direction of KH Ahmad Shohibulwafa Tajul Arifin (affectionately known as Abah Anom, d. 2011) (cf. Mulyati 2002; Mulyati and Bakhtiar 2004; Yahya 1990). Abah Anom, like directors (*kyai*) of any traditional *pesantren* of note, particularly those who head a *tarekat*, served the communities surrounding his school not only by providing the children religious education but by dispensing blessings (*barokah*) that could affect healing and bring other practical benefits. However, TQN Suryalaya’s Abah Anom also instituted other innovative forms of help for the wider community. These included agricultural assistance services and a drug rehabilitation clinic (Praja and Anwar 1990). The residential drug rehabilitation clinic, Inabah, used a strict regime of Sufi ritual (including lengthy repetitions of Sufi *zikir* litanies after the obligatory daily prayers and *tahajjud* (night vigils)) to ‘cleanse the heart’, refocus the mostly young addicts’ lives and establish them in a firm, socially constructive discipline. In the 1980s, Inabah was discovered and patronised by Jakarta elites, many of whose children, in their newly affluent circumstances, had gone astray. Elsewhere across the country, young, mostly university-based followers of Abah Anom began to establish other treatment centres modelled on Inabah (Praja and Anwar 1990).

TQN Suryalaya’s community outreach programmes attracted media attention and helped to draw support from provincial and national government elites. Through these and other networks (including that of Paramadina, where several TQN *wakil talqin* (deputy initiators) gave occasional

lectures) increasing numbers of well-educated urbanities came to visit the order's headquarters in Tasik Malaya (West Java). Once there, they found Abah Anom to be culturally accommodating (for example, he did not demand exceptional deference as a holy man) and the order's initiation to be free of the mystifying secret procedures sometimes used in other orders. The initiation was also relatively short and the litany easy to learn. Many visitors who arrived on tourist buses from Jakarta joined in the initiation services held during their visits. Abah did not impose strict requirements for obedience or for exclusive commitment on initiates. By the end of the twentieth century there were several TQN Suryalaya branches in Jakarta and others in major and minor cities across Indonesia and in Singapore (Darmadi 2001; Howell 2001; Howell *et al.* 2001; Mulyati 2002; Praja and Anwar 1990).

A Syadziliyah *tarekat* under the guidance of Habib Muhamad Luthfi bin Yahya (Habib Luthfi) provides another example of adaptations in Sufi orders, in this case adaptations aimed both at accommodating Muslim spiritual seekers from a variety of social backgrounds and preserving the influence of the *pesantren* over their own young students. Habib Luthfi presently serves as the *rais am* (national chairman) of the Jam'iyah Ahlith Thoriqoh Al-Mu'tabarah An-Nahdliyyah (Association of Recognised Sufi Orders, or JATMAN) within the nation's largest association of traditional scholars and *pesantren* heads, the Nahdlatul Ulama. He holds authorisations to conduct initiations in most of the Sufi orders in Indonesia. With such credentials, he has considerable powers of persuasion, which he evidently has used to innovate in the interests of preserving what he sees as the essentials of the Sufi and *pesantren* traditions in Indonesia.

Habib Luthfi's *pesantren* in Pekalongan serves as the base for the branch of the Syadziliyah order that he heads. It is visited regularly by urban sophisticates who appreciate both his spiritual stature and his inclusivist vision of Islam as part of modern, religiously plural Indonesia (Rifai *et al.* 2013). While his official roles in the Nahdlatul Ulama put him in a position to receive considerable media exposure, he has also attracted wide public attention for his somewhat idiosyncratic tutelary style, and particularly for his openness to cultural forms that have not been part of the *pesantren* world. He is a keen organist and gathers his *pesantren* students together to play Western musical instruments. As Arifin (2012) has shown, Habib Luthfi uses such music to demonstrate how Islam can be receptive to uplifting aspects of other cultural traditions. He even resorts to comical gestures, like showing up at a voting booth dressed in jeans and a cowboy hat, to invite young people to feel that they can selectively participate in the wider youth culture while yet remaining attached to their *pesantren*.

But Habib Luthfi is concerned on behalf of his young *pesantren* students about the distractions of secular youth culture and about what he considers to be the dangerous allure of popular spirituality (Arifin 2012). Particularly in *pesantren* that do not have a *tarekat*, students are picking up on the contemporary interest in Sufism in the wider society and turning to internet material and books on the subject not authored by *ulama* to learn more about it. Habib Luthfi and other *pesantren*-educated specialists in *tasawuf* worry that young people who join in spiritual practices that have not been authenticated by a recognised Sufi order, and who continue using those practices without the ongoing guidance of an authorised Sufi master, will come to harm. So to draw young people back into the *pesantren* environment, where they can study Sufism with teachers learned in the classical *tasawuf* literature, Habib Luthfi has worked on using simpler language to introduce otherwise arcane Sufi metaphysics. He also tries to make the subject of *tasawuf* more appealing by explaining its relevance to social problems, such as fostering tolerant Islam in the face of outbreaks of *jihadi* violence. Then, if the students are interested in starting a serious practice using the meditative Sufi litanies, they can take initiation from a spiritual director who is himself already initiated into an unbroken line of spiritual transmission reaching back to the Prophet Muhammad.

Highly produced Sufism for mass audiences

Over the last two decades highly produced and emotive Sufi rituals inviting mass participation and linked to Sufi-tinged programmes of Islamic renewal have become the most visible form of Sufi piety in Indonesia. Unlike either the highly autonomous Sufism of the *Neo-Sufisme* movement or the more institutionally disciplined Sufism of the conventional *tarekat*, these Sufistic mass-mobilisation renewal programmes call on the Muslim public to make a definite move towards more active piety but then seek to encompass that piety within the frame of their own programmes. In other words, they inspire a less autonomous, more limited form of active piety sometimes reminiscent of the Salafi (anti-Sufi) renewal movements. Such programmes include the television-adapted ministries of figures like Abdullah Gymnastiar and Arifin Ilham with their high entertainment component and distinctive discursive renditions of Sufi *zikir*, and (mostly) non-televised ministries, the focal points of which are spectacular outdoor rallies where Sufi praise songs and prayers for the Prophet Muhammad (*shalawat*) are the emotional high-points.

Televised zikir and Sufistic piety renewal programmes

From the turn of the twenty-first century, the conjunction of considerably expanded private television transmission, a recovering economy firmly integrated into global markets, and Islamic revival supercharged by the proliferation of new Islamic parties after the fall of the authoritarian Suharto regime in 1998, opened opportunities for a new style of televised proselytisation (*dakwah*). Whereas in previous decades producers of religious television programming had turned to credentialed authorities (notably *pesantren*-trained and tertiary-educated professors), at the start of the new century they began programming preachers who styled themselves as *orang awam* (lay people) and who developed preaching styles that were both highly emotive and entertaining (Howell 2008). Significantly, the two highest-rating preachers of that time, Abdullah Gymnastiar (Aa Gym) and Arifin Ilham, elicited that high emotional impact by leading televised prayer services featuring Sufi *zikir* litanies scripted in innovative ways. Whereas in traditionalist (Nahdlatul Ulama) gatherings, *zikir* litanies are used to focus on remembrance of God simply by reciting the Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God (the *Asmaul Husna*) or repeating short Qur'anic phrases affirming the faith, expressing gratitude and praise, or the like, Aa Gym and Arifin Ilham interspersed into the *zikir* litanies they led discursive, guided meditations inspiring doleful regret for past sins and then happy relief in the recollection of God's great mercy and loving kindness. Both these preachers were appreciated for their rich sonorous voices (*suara merdu*) and for the way they modulated their voices in prayer to suggest such remorse that audiences, sharing in the emotion, would break into tears (Hoesterey 2008; Howell 2008, 2010; Syadzily 2005).

In other respects the emotional tone of Aa Gym's and Arifin Ilham's religious services differed. Aa Gym is a skilful entertainer who wrote and performed religious songs like '*Jagalah Hati*' ('Tend to Your Heart') to carry his Sufi-nuanced message about the need to 'purify the heart' through ethical reflection and remembrance of God (*zikir*). He also often made the guided reflections he inserted into the *zikir* litanies humorously rueful recollections of his own shortcomings. His personal style of dress and self-dramatisation was also colourful and an entertainment in itself. In contrast, Arifin Ilham made his religious services entertainments of a more serious sort. He dressed and comported himself quietly and projected a grave piety. The drama of his televised performances was achieved through the awesome scale of the events (which he branded *Zikir Akbar* (Great Zikir)) and the inspiring beauty of the great mosques from which his services were broadcast.

Both Aa Gym's and Arifin Ilham's renditions of *zikir* departed from traditional practice in being used neither as straightforward formulas for fulfilling religious obligations nor as engines for moving people into meditative states. Rather, the *zikir* litanies were scripted to elicit high religious emotion – emotion that was itself gratifying, but which was then enlisted to motivate more diligent observance of the *syariah*.

In both ministries the religious emotion aroused in their often-spectacular religious services was not meant simply to be dissipated. Rather, both preachers linked religious emotion to the work of personal moral reform presented in their sermons and in their books. Both worked out branded concepts to capture the distinctive approaches of their programmes. Aa Gym developed a programme of self-improvement that amalgamated Sufi understanding of the way to spiritual perfection with popular psychology schemas for getting along and getting ahead in competitive educational and business environments. He marketed his programme and allied products under the brand name *Manajemen Qolbu* (Heart Management), referencing the esoteric centre near the heart (*qolbu*) that, when purified of base drives, gives spiritual inspiration to shape the exercise of reason). Aa Gym presented his spiritualised path for moral self-improvement in step-by-step guides, sold in bookstores and used in the residential workshops he delivered on a for-profit basis at his new-style '*pesantren*' Darut Tauhid in Bandung.

Arifin Ilham's books, which are argumentative rather than formulaic, seek to demonstrate how direct experience of God through *zikir* will be electrifyingly transformative. Correct practice will automatically motivate strict adherence to religious law. Although he has a board of advisors as different as Quraish Shihab and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir,⁷ representing vastly differing understandings of *syariah*, in Ilham's promotions of *syariah* what constitutes correct practice is not problematised. In his *Indonesia Berzikir* ('Indonesia Remembers God') he anticipates a golden future for the entire nation when all Muslim citizens, inspired through the universal use of *zikir*, know and follow the *syariah* (Howell 2010).

Neither Aa Gym nor Arifin Ilham include in their programmes for spiritual development critical reflection on the interpretation of religious law or on its problematic application in Muslim life today. Aa Gym's training programme motto is '*Zikir, Pikir, Ikhthiar*' ('Remember God, Think, Take Initiative'), but the 'thinking' is mostly about checking to see how one is going in applying one's regime of personal improvement, not critically evaluating how various religious authorities justify the way they interpret Islam's canonical texts or derive religious law from them (cf. Ridwan 2002). Ilham wields his university education debating skills in his books to attack 'secular' scholarship that undermines religion. But he assumes an unproblematic consensus on the nature of the Islam that he defends.

Thus both these spectacular renditions of Sufi ritual, and the programmes for Islamic recommitment attached to them, can be said to inspire only limited personal autonomy. But both these *dakwah* ministries are vigorously innerworldly, insofar as the intensely emotive *zikir* ritual, when performed collectively in mass gatherings, is meant to buttress a well-ordered Muslim society and help individual Muslims achieve personal success.

Sufism for mass audiences: Majelis shalawat and zikir

Backing Arifin Ilham's ministry and his televised *Zikir Akbar* extravaganzas is a coordinating organisation called Majelis Zikir Az Zikra. It takes care of the management of his appearances on television and in person at mosques around the country, and has also helped establish a residential community on the periphery of Jakarta where his programme of piety can be lived with like-minded Muslims. '*Majelis*' (meaning 'association' or 'assembly') is a name now commonly used for religious associations that spring up in communities around a particular common interest.

For example, *majelis taklim* are religion study groups often formed spontaneously by people frequenting the same neighbourhood mosque to work on memorising the Qur'an together (Gade 2004; Winn 2012). A preacher looking to develop his ministry may also gather people around him in a number of neighbourhoods and build up a reputation that justifies naming his own *majelis*. As Arifin Ilham's *Majelis Zikir Az Zikra* shows, there are *majelis* formed to conduct religious meetings featuring the recitation of *zikir* litanies, and the *majelis zikir* has become a recognisable type (Zamhari and Howell 2012). Arifin Ilham's television ministry had its start in such an urban neighbourhood setting.

A closely related type of *majelis*, a *majelis shalawat dan zikir* (association for *shalawat* and *zikir* recitations) has of late become particularly visible in the urban landscape, especially in Jakarta, but also elsewhere across the country (Woodward *et al.* 2012; Zamhari 2010; Zamhari and Howell 2012). These *majelis*, as their name suggests, use both the *zikir* litanies and *shalawat* prayers, but generally devote most of their meeting time to the rousing *shalawat* prayers. *Shalawat* are instrumentally accompanied praise songs and prayers for the Prophet Muhammad and his family. They have long been used as popular discretionary rituals in the *pesantren* and also in religious gatherings of the Hadhrami Arab community. But in the *majelis shalawat* and *zikir* the *shalawat* prayers are orchestrated as the main activity, along with rousing sermons, and because of their spectacular renditions in open settings they draw in much wider sections of the Muslim population. In fact, in Jakarta these *majelis* appeal primarily to less-privileged people who walk to local meetings and ride motorbikes or take public transport to city-wide events.

Nearly all of the *majelis shalawat* and *zikir* in Jakarta with large followings have formed around preachers of Hadhrami descent referred to as *habaib* (A.s., *habib*; lit. 'beloved') who claim (and can demonstrate) their descent from the Prophet Muhammad. Particularly among Jakarta's large Betawi ethnic group, these *habaib* are greatly revered if they are known to be religiously knowledgeable. A prayer meeting featuring *shalawat* conducted by a Hadhrami *habib* has a special tone because the *habib*, as a 'grandchild' of the Prophet, as it were, invites his fellow Muslims into the intimate family circle of the Prophet. At the large evening gatherings that stretch over several hours, there are numerous addresses by the *habib* who heads the *majelis*, by other preachers in his family and by guests. The *habaib* use their sermons to picture how all who join with them in songs of praise for the Prophet (the *shalawat*) come into the presence of the Prophet as part of one great family gathering (Zamhari and Howell 2012).

So, rather than reaching spiritual intimacy through a meditative turn inward in meetings of the *majelis*, participants are drawn out on a wave of song, along with the enormous crowds around them, and into a closeness with God worked through the emotions and the imagination. *Zikir* recitations are not used in the *majelis* so as to encourage inward mystical absorption or dissociative states. The *zikir* interludes in the meeting programmes are typically relatively short, though sober and reflective.

Many of the larger *majelis shalawat* and *zikir*, which in Jakarta now are numerous, draw to their monthly meetings thousands, even tens of thousands of participants who otherwise meet on a weekly basis in neighbourhood groups all over the city. So large are the numbers attending the monthly rallies of the more famous *habaib*, like those of Al-Habib Hasan Bin Ja'far Assegaf (Habib Hasan) and Habib Munzir Al-Musawa (Habib Munzir), that most mosques are not big enough to accommodate the crowds, which spill out on to the streets. When anticipating especially large crowds, the *majelis* arrange with local authorities to use a playing field or half a dozen city streets on a Saturday night.

The histories of Habib Hasan's and Habib Munzir's *majelis* reveal the nature of the links between such ministries that use evocative ritual and the piety renewal movement. Both Habib Hasan and Habib Munzir started their ministries with what might be called a scripturalist notion

of *dakwah*. Both *habaib* were highly knowledgeable in Islamic law and wanted to help upgrade the level of religious knowledge and practice in their communities by teaching the religious rules needed for a pious life. Both directed their *dakwah* to less-privileged city people in Jakarta. Neither preacher, however, met much enthusiasm for that rule-oriented kind of religious learning. But they did notice that there was something in their repertoires that really engaged people: the musical *shalawat* prayers and the easy-to-remember *zikir* litanies, which they had sprinkled through their weekly neighbourhood meetings. Both then changed the balance of activities in their meetings, devoting much more of the meeting time to the emotive *shalawat* prayers.

The massive monthly gatherings of Habib Hasan's and Habib Munzir's *majelis* are now carefully programmed events requiring elaborate management. It takes a band of helpers to advertise (on hoardings, on large banners across roads, on the Internet and in neighbourhood mosques); to arrange permissions to use public spaces and give concessions to night market retailers; to set up the stage, giant screens and speakers to carry images and sound across the crowd; to monitor parking; to set off fireworks; and to clean up afterwards. All this, however, is handled on an informal basis, with the *habib*'s relatives helping with executive functions and paid staff doing practical tasks. This creates a loose but flexible hierarchy. There is no membership status for participants in the *majelis*; only links of personal interest and affection bind participants to their *habib*. The *habaib* of both *majelis* see themselves as spiritual directors for those who seek their guidance, but they offer no initiations. Here we have a kind of spectral *tarekat* in which a charismatic figure conducts his followers into the company of the Prophet's family, as it were, to stand before the apex of the lines of spiritual transmission of every 'real' *tarekat*: the Prophet Muhammad himself. However, this spectral *tarekat* is a *tarekat* turned inside-out: having no initiations and no membership, it has no secrets.

Conclusions

Sufi Islam, once the predominant form of Islam in Southeast Asia, has not only survived its twentieth century marginalisation by scripturalist reformists, but has found a place among the contemporary Islamic revival movements of the region. This chapter has surveyed the variety of new articulations of Sufi Islam crafted to meet contemporary needs, focusing on the *Neo Sufisme* movement inspired by progressive Muslim intellectuals; innovative Sufi orders (*tarekat*); Muslim televangelists drawing on Sufi concepts and rituals to popularise branded programmes of personal spiritual development; and mass-rally preachers of Hadhrami descent with followings that gather in thousands to perform deeply moving prayer songs and litanies (the *majelis shawalat dan zikir*). All these Sufi renewal movements offer Muslims ways to cultivate an experientially rich religious practice, a matter slighted in Wahhabi and Muslim modernist circles, where conformity to religious law has been promoted to the exclusion of many Sufi devotional practices branded as heterodox. In contrast, the diverse Sufi-inspired Islamic renewal movements draw selectively, and variously, on the Sufi tradition to reinject emotional richness into the regimen of required religious observances (now followed rigorously by so many more people), and to frame ways people may try to satisfy the now much-voiced desire to 'get closer to God'. Some of the Sufi movements foreground ethical reflection, some emphasise particular ritual practices (but disapprove of others), and yet others insist that whatever practices are used, the key is a traditional tutelary relationship, albeit a more open one than advocated in the past.

While all the Sufi-inspired Islamic renewal movements give special emphasis to particular ways to cultivate heightened religious emotion and possibly even to lift the veils of ordinary consciousness, they also all strenuously affirm the importance of adherence to Islamic law. In doing so, they pointedly distance themselves from well-known Sufi ecstasies of the past who regarded *syariah* as

a mere first step towards gnosis, and also from eclectic mystical groups (*golongan kebatinan*), popular in the middle of the last century, that offered new revelations infused with Christian, Hindu or Buddhist teachings and images. All also affirm the importance of remaining fully engaged with the work-a-day world while using practices recommended for spiritual growth. The new Sufi organisations and businesses make that possible by offering their teachings through the mass media, so the materials can be used when convenient for the purchaser, or through activities of relatively short duration scheduled, for example, as evening meetings or weekend excursions.

Emphasis on adherence to Islamic law and on remaining engaged in the modern world of work and family while cultivating one's spiritual life means that the Sufi-inflected Islamic revival movements, like scripturalist revival movements, can be viewed as piety movements in the Weberian sense. Despite their derivation from Islam's mystical tradition, they do inspire moral excellence by prioritising personal disciplines in everyday life. In this sense they teach 'inner-worldly asceticism' rather than the 'otherworldly mysticism' of times past. Whatever time practitioners may spend in private contemplation or meditative group rituals is meant to complement moral striving in everyday life. In this modern-day innerworldly asceticism, however, what is restrained are desires that run counter to Islamic dietary, family and business law, not indulgent consumption or display of wealth. The Sufi virtue of *zuhud* (regular exercise of restraint in satisfying one's material wants) is little discussed. More often, the Prophet, who is to be emulated by all Muslims, is figured by Sufi and scripturalist renewalists alike as a successful businessman. In this way Sufi-inflected piety, like the new articulations of scripturalist piety, is made compatible with late-modern capitalism, and its ethos partially contrasts with that of early modern capitalism, which was shaped by habits conducive to more reliable capital accumulation without particular concern for increasing market demand.

This survey of contemporary Sufi-inspired revival initiatives in Southeast Asia has also called attention to the differing ways the piety movements, concerned as they are with moral excellence, have encouraged their participants to relate to the movements' disciplining frameworks. Thus *Neo-Sufisme*, developed by intellectual reformers, has been promoted through university-style courses and self-organised study circles in such a way as to encourage learners to cultivate critical judgement and so to exercise considerable personal autonomy in religious matters. Participants in such Neo-Sufi courses and groups commonly see themselves as self-directed spiritual 'seekers' (borrowing the English term, or using its Indonesian equivalent, *pencari*). In contrast, Sufistic spiritual development programmes offered by celebrity televangelists like Aa Gym and Arifin Ilham have a different disciplining character. They attract people shopping around for religious advice, but then offer a single, branded programme that is to be used as a complete package. Commonly people try out the 'training' packages of one popular preacher after another, but the programmes themselves are meant to be straightforwardly correct, complete and efficacious. They thus encourage only a limited personal autonomy.

The survey has also shown how the degree of religious autonomy the new Sufi-inspired Islamic revival groups encourage is related to the stances that formative authorities in those groups have held on how Qur'anic exegesis ought to be done and how one ought to derive religious norms. Thus the autonomous-seeker style common in Neo-Sufi circles mirrors the broad scope for religious interpretation claimed by neo-modernist exegetes through their innovative scholarship. More prescriptive Sufi renewal circles draw on more conservative Islamic scholarship. These connections in the new Sufi movements between conceptual openness in the practice of Qur'anic interpretation and encouragement for religious autonomy mirror those in the broader Islamic piety movement.

Finally, it should be noted that while there is much justification for treating Sufi forms of Islamic revival in Southeast Asia as modern piety movements, some of them nonetheless have

features that contrast markedly both with contemporary scripturalist Islamic revival movements and with the earlier Protestant movement in which Weber found a work ethic favourable to modern capitalism. The heads of Sufi orders and the *habaib* who lead mass rally ministries, unlike Calvinist ministers of old or today's scripturalist Muslim preachers, present themselves as specially charged with divine grace, which they dispense to their followers. Whereas such miracle-working and intercession is strictly disapproved of in modernist Islamic and also in contemporary Southeast Asian Neo-Sufi circles, its possibility is tacitly understood in the *pesantren* world and strongly implied in the sermons given by the mass rally *habaib*. Members of Sufi orders hope to receive help from their initiating *syekh* in their spiritual ascent to gnosis or, if they are not so spiritually ambitious, at least to have a call on his blessings in times of need. And, as we have seen, followers of a learned *habib* commonly believe that his family relationship with the Prophet enables him to draw devout followers with him into the presence of the Prophet. These spiritually un-meritocratic practices, however, do not necessarily dilute followers' motivation to lead more religiously correct, pious lives. Quite to the contrary, attributions of such charisma prove to be powerful forces of attraction that bring people, sometimes in their thousands, to meetings where the feeling of being in proximity with the miraculous, in the person of a charismatic *syekh* or *habib*, may well recharge followers' motivation to persist in their spiritual disciplines. Nor do beliefs in such powers necessarily undermine commitment to rational calculation in the scientific, technical or business world, as evidenced by the numbers of university students and professors who have joined the 'rush to the *tarekat*' over the years and now may be found in the rallies of the big-name charismatic *habaib* – possibly not just because they enjoy the music.

Notes

- 1 On the usage of the term 'Neo-Sufism' to characterise late pre-modern Islamic reform movements that spanned the globe from Africa to Southeast Asia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Levtzion and Voll (1987) and Voll (2008).
- 2 See Burhani (2002b) and Howell (2012).
- 3 '*Tasauf*', '*tasawuf*' or '*tasawwuf*' are alternative transliterations, commonly used in Indonesian, of the same Arabic word for Sufism.
- 4 Leading news magazines have twice in the last half-decade carried feature stories on new urban forms of Sufism that include activities centred on Paramadina such as have been described as 'Neo-Sufisme' here: TEMPO (30 September–6 October 2008) and DETIK (12–18 August 2013). Both give coverage of Paramadina courses and lectures on Sufism. Featured in the 2013 DETIK cover story 'Sufisme Metropolitan' (Rifai, Utami, Ami and Habib 2013) was regular Paramadina lecturer Muhamad Baqir. Baqir also has other regular engagements to talk on Sufism, including at KH Rachmat Hidayat's Padepokan Thoha in Senopati, Jakarta.
- 5 Note, for example, ICNIS, IIMaN and mosque-based adult religious education programmes such as those offered by Nasaruddin Umar through the Sunda Kelapa Mosque in the elite Menteng district of Jakarta in the early 2000s.
- 6 The reference here is to the 'supply side' emphasis in the rational choice theory of religious vitality in twentieth-century North America developed by Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge (1985). These authors call for greater attention to the provision of attractive religious 'products' (supply) rather than solely to 'demand', that is, public interest in religion. The reference to 'supply side' here, however, does not imply endorsement of rational choice theory.
- 7 Professor Dr Quraish Shihab is one of Indonesia's best-known religious scholars, widely respected for his moderate positions and promotion of contextual approaches to interpretation of the Qur'an. He has served as rector of the State Islamic Institute, Jakarta, as state minister of religious affairs, and as head of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI). A gifted communicator, he has regularly delivered religious guidance to the public on television and through his books for the educated lay-person. Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, founder of the religious school Pesantren Islam Al Mu'min in Ngruki, Central Java, is widely held (despite his denials) to be the spiritual head of the radical Islamic group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). JI has been linked to the 2002 Bali bombing. Ba'asyir has twice served jail terms for activities related to terrorism.

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Religion and globalization: social dimensions

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Reading gender and religion in East Asia

Family formations and cultural transformations

Fang-Long Shih

This chapter explores how gender, family and religion are articulated in the contexts of Confucian Northeast Asia and Islamic Southeast Asia. The study of 'Women and/in Religions' (Sharma 1987; Holm with Bowker 1994) has been dominated by a phenomenological approach to religious texts, which present Confucianism (Kelleher 1987; McFarlane 1994) and Islam (Smith 1987; Badawi 1994) as separate realms of beliefs and practice, but with the 'common feature of being patriarchal' (Young 1987: 3). This phenomenological method, however, failed to capture the complexity of formulations and transformations of gender and/in religion. The current chapter takes a different approach. My framework is macro- and micro-social: a macro examination of religious ideology relating to the formations of the family institution and gender relationalities is complemented with a micro exploration of embodied religious practices as crucial sites for the political, economic and social negotiation and transformation of family structure and gender roles. It addresses intersections that define the axes for understanding the change or resilience of gender norms in complex and shifting contexts: of women and men, religion and culture, doctrines and practices, the past and the present, the rural and the urban, and the local and the global.

Religion in Northeast Asia is not, as in the West, a separate and distinct entity. Rather it is essentially social and deeply involved in shifting structures of family life, which in turn are mutually implicated in gender norms, values and relationalities. Northeast Asia includes China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Taiwan, where societies are conditioned to various degrees by Confucian ideas and practices fundamental to the formation and operation of family 'systems' (Lang 1946: 12–23). However, within these societies, Confucianism exists alongside Daoism and Buddhism, and these three traditions have influenced each other about 2,000 years (for further details, see Lopez 1996). Indeed, although there have been instances of conflict, a combined religious culture is a distinctive feature of Northeast Asian societies. Further, there are also revisionist or purifying movements: neo-Confucianism developed in medieval China, while in the contemporary period a renaissance movement called 'Buddhism in the Human Realm' (*Renjian Fojiao* 人間佛教) has emerged in urban areas of Taiwan.

In Southeast Asia, we see an even more complex meeting ground of religions. The region is characterized by extraordinary cultural and linguistic variety, with hundreds of ethnic groups, a similar variety of languages, and numerous indigenous and localized traditions, while interaction with the wider world over 1,500 years has left a religious legacy that includes Buddhism, Hinduism (in Indonesia it is adapted together as Hindu-Buddhism), Christianity, Confucianism and Islam (for further details, see SarDesai 2006). Again, these religious traditions should not necessarily be apprehended, as in the West, as distinct and discrete entities. Describing the religion of the region's complex civilizations in any one simple unitary view is certain to be inadequate, and it would be problematic to characterize such cultural complexity under a dominant religious theme (Geertz 1960: 7).

However, although bearing this in mind, Islam is the most widely practiced religion in Southeast Asia, with majorities in Brunei, Indonesia (which has the largest Muslim population in the world) and Malaysia, as well as significant minorities in Burma, Thailand and the Philippines. Islam arrived in the region in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from the Middle East, mainly via traders and Sufi missionaries, and from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries it spread rapidly as resource extraction driven by colonialism drew the region increasingly into complex relations of trade (for further details, see Reid 1988). Islam in Southeast Asia may not sacralize family structures in the way that we find with Confucianism in Northeast Asia, but it remains deeply implicated in plural cultures and is interwoven with other religious traditions. However, Islam has also been a vehicle for revitalizing and/or purifying tendencies within its own traditions. In the late eighteenth century there was the neo-Wahhabi Padri movement, and from the 1970s the Islamic resurgence represented by the *Dawah* movement has been particularly influential among the urban middle-class.

Western scholars, privileging literature and law, for a long time placed Southeast Asia at the intellectual periphery of Islamic civilization and the study of Islam. There was no systematic understanding of Islam in the region among Western scholars until the 1960s, when Clifford Geertz (1960) explored 'everyday' or 'practical Islam' in Java, namely the activities and meanings through which ordinary Muslims experienced their religion. With the benefit of hindsight, Geertz's work has accumulated considerable criticism. It failed to capture the complexity and diversity of Islam, as Geertz lacked familiarity with historical and literary scholarship on the religion, and his perspective was reinforced by that of his urban informants. Thus, in identifying particular practices as 'invariably "animist" or, "Hindu-Buddhist", Geertz may have conveyed a view of Islam consistent with that of his reform-minded informants' (Hefner 1997: 16). Nevertheless, Geertz's insight into religio-cultural blending was an original contribution that continues to be a pertinent point of departure for the study of religion more broadly in Southeast Asia and that is also applicable to Northeast Asia.

Indeed, Geertz's work has inspired a recent turn in religious studies and the sociology of religion known as *lived religion* (Orsi 2002; McGuire 2008). Religious practices-as-lived is an approach that emphasizes both the creative character of religious engagement and the mutual porosity of religions and cultures. Hereafter, it is adopted to explore how religion is involved or implicated in family structures and gendered practices in cultural transformation. Across the case studies, a key meta-theoretical point plays out: namely that religion in East Asia is 'an ever-changing, multifaceted, often messy – even contradictory – amalgam of beliefs and practices' (McGuire 2008: 4), that cannot be reduced to patriarchy, or any other single explanatory code.

Confucian Northeast Asia

In Northeast Asia, the family was ideologically articulated through Confucianism as the principal institution in the constitution of society and the state. However, Confucianism was not regarded

as a 'religion' as the word is understood in the West. Northeast Asia did not have a word for religion until 'zongjiao' (宗教) was coined in Japan around the late nineteenth century. In Chinese, the first character '宗' refers to a house in which an ancestral tablet is enshrined, while the second character '教' means 'teaching'. Indeed, the worship of dead ancestors is indicative of a Chinese conception of the cosmos that stands in sharp contrast to the other-worldly religions of the West (Shih 2009: 16–17). This conception envisions the dead and the living existing in an ordered continuum of obligation and reciprocity, and is expressed through what has been understood as the three Northeast-Asian religions of Confucianism, Daoism and Mahayana Buddhism.

Daoism never made the family as central as did Confucianism, but it complements Confucian family morality, and the involvement of Daoist specialists in death rituals and spirit mediation makes their ritual expertise an integral part of local religious activities (for further details see Ching 1993: 102–118; Fowler and Fowler 2008: 140–66). Mahayana Buddhism, meanwhile, refers to the 'Great Vehicle' through which anyone can embark on the *bodhisattva* path for the benefit of sentient beings. Although the tradition, which was introduced from India, retains a core belief in nirvana and ending the wheel of birth–death–rebirth, it has accommodated itself to the Northeast Asian context and provides complementary services that relate to the worship and care of the dead (for further details see Ching 1993: 121–152; Thompson 1996: 101–114).

Given this background, reading gender in Confucian Northeast Asia requires: first, a sketch of the Confucian family order in terms of gender norms; second, an understanding of ancestor worship and gendered death practices performed by Daoist specialists; and finally, an appreciation of practices corrective to maiden death at the local level in a maiden goddess temple and in relation to a Buddhist reformist death business.

Confucian family order and gender norms

The teachings of Confucius (c. 551–479 BCE) have their origins in China, and emphasize *shuerbuzuo* (述而不作); rather than creating a new order, Confucius formulated a framework that transformed the older Shang dynasty (c. 1766–1123 BCE) shamanic ritual order into a moral structure of human relations and socio-politics. Shang oracle texts recorded communications between this world and the spirit world as mediated by diviners (*wu* 巫) (Eno 1996: 41–45). This cosmological order was extended into the social order by Confucius in a way that transformed the rituals into doctrinal prescriptions for 'proper behaviour' in family, society and the state. Confucianism has been understood as *Li Jiao* (禮教) (*li* refers to a sacrificial vessel denoting ritual and propriety; *jiao* means 'teaching'), also known as 'Ritual Religion' or 'Religious Humanism' (Ching 1993: 51–67).

According to Confucianism, the human order parallels and reflects the cosmic order, with its root in the family and its fullest expression in the state. Human relationships were established as a moral structure in terms of the Five Moral Relationships (*wulun* 五倫, formulated by Mencius in the fourth century BCE): ruler–subject, father–son, husband–wife, elder brother–younger brother and friend–friend. Filial piety was the root of all virtues. It was believed that if one was brought up to respect authority within the family, one would accordingly respect authority in society and the state: 'If everybody is filial and brotherly', according to Confucian logic, 'nobody will oppose the law' (Lang 1946: 18).

Confucian society indeed regarded itself as a large family, within which domination and subordination defined all relationships in a moral structure of filial piety founded on the twin principles of obligation and reciprocity. Within this hierarchy, husbands were defined as superior to their wives. Accordingly, some Confucian texts express discriminatory views about women, and one from the *Lun Yu* (論語 *Analects*, compiled in the fifth century BCE from sayings attributed to

Confucius) in particular has been a focus of disapproval: ‘The Master [Confucius] said, Women and little people are hard to handle. If you let them get close, they presume; if you keep them at a distance, they resent it’ (trans. Brooks and Brooks 1998: 166). However, such patriarchal attitudes predate Confucius. An example of ancient Chinese misogyny from the *Shi Ching* (詩經 *Book of Songs*, 800 BCE) states: ‘A clever man completes a city; a clever woman overturns a city ... Women have long tongues. They are the foundation of cruelty. Disorder does not descend from Heaven. It is born of woman’ (translated by Goldin 2000: 133).

Women were defined in terms of their subordinate position in human relationships, which reflected the cosmic order. According to the *I Ching* (易經 *Book of Changes*, c. 1000 BCE), the feminine is identified as the *yin* force in the cosmic order, associated with earth, darkness, passivity and inferiority, while the masculine *yang* force is associated with heaven, light, action and superiority (Wilhelm 1967: 386–388). In the human order, women were regarded as inferior and yielding and to be confined within the family, while men were seen as superior and active in the wider socio-political order. However, being complementary opposites, they also need each other. As such, most moral teachings in Confucianism were directed to those in inferior positions, while those in superior positions were obliged to use their power and resources to ensure the well-being of the other.

This is evident in many Confucian texts that teach women how to behave properly to ensure the smooth running of their lives; according to the *Li Ji* (禮記 *Book of Rites*, c. 200 BCE): ‘The woman follows (and obeys) the man: in her youth, she follows her father and elder brother; when married, she follows her husband; when her husband is dead, she follows her son’ (trans. Legge 1967: [I] 441). The Chinese character for wife, ‘*fu*’ (婦), presents a woman with a broom, signifying the domestic sphere as her proper place. Marriage was the crucial stage of a woman’s life; one instruction from the *Li Ji* is as follows:

The ceremony of marriage was intended to be a bond of love between two (families of different) surnames, with a view, in its retrospective character, to secure the services in the ancestral temple, and in its prospective character, to secure the continuance of the family line.

(trans. Legge 1967: [III] 428)

Marriage was indeed seen as a sacred event, registered not only in the human order but also in the cosmic order with the ancestors. The verb for ‘a woman to marry’ is ‘*gui*’ (歸), implying ‘to return home’, meaning that her ‘rightful’ place is wherever her husband’s family is. The verb for ‘a man to marry’ is ‘*qu*’ (娶), meaning ‘to go out to fetch’ a woman. The meaning of marriage was for the good of the family, in relation to the past, the present and the future. As regards the past, the couple would ensure the worship of the ancestors; as regards the present, the couple would serve their parents (–in-laws); and as regards the future, the couple would provide male heirs to continue the family line.

If a wife committed ‘wrong’ behaviour, her husband could divorce her, in accordance with *qichu* (七出 ‘seven grounds for sending her out of the house’). The ‘wrong’ behaviors were: failure to bear a male child; neglect of his parents; adultery; jealousy and ill-will (against concubines); having an incurable disease; talking too much; or stealing. A wife was protected from divorce only by three conditions: if she had already kept the three years of mourning for either of her parents-in-law; or if her husband was poor but upon achieving wealth intended to get rid of her; or if her parents were dead and she had no home to return to (Baker 1979: 45–47). By contrast, a wife had no right to seek divorce. The *Li Ji* says: ‘Once mated with her husband, all her life she will not change (her feeling of duty to him), and hence, when the husband dies she will not marry again’ (trans. Legge 1967: [I] 439). Faithfulness was regarded as the virtue of all wives.

There were also formal rules for concubines, who were regarded as married to some extent, and whose sons were regarded as legitimate, particularly when the wife did not produce any (for further details see Jaschok and Miers 1994; Ebrey 2003: 39–61).

Confucianism was revitalized during the Song (960–1279) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties; a group of intellectuals sought to return to what they saw as the roots of Confucian inspiration, through a movement known as neo-Confucianism. Neo-Confucianism further elaborated the codes of womanly morality by re-emphasizing the seclusion of women. This included the reinvented cult of widow chastity, and the newly invented practice of foot-binding (for further details see Fowler and Fowler 2008: 167–194). One writer, Cheng Yi (程頤 1033–1107), said that ‘To starve to death is a small matter, but to lose one’s chastity is a great matter’, while another, Sima Guang (司馬光 1019–1086), stated: ‘Loyal subjects do not serve two masters, and chaste women do not serve two husbands’. Foot-binding was promoted by Zhu Xi (朱熹 1130–1200) as a way to foster sexual segregation, and enhance chastity by making it difficult for women to move around. Later, during the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), widows who committed suicide to avoid rape or remarriage were enshrined and honoured with the establishment of *zhenjie paifang* (貞潔牌坊 chastity arches) (for further details see Ebrey 2003: 10–38). Examples of such arches in Taiwan include the Lin-Shi Chastity Memorial Archway in Taichung.

It is common to charge neo-Confucianism with bringing about a decline in the position of women, and passages such as those discussed above are the most cited. However, constraints on women must be seen in context, as a response to social, economic and political changes that had created a perception of disordered relationships between women, money, class and sexuality. In an attempt to reconcile the tension between the new demands and the older patrilineal order, these neo-Confucian scholars insisted that marriage should not be treated as a commercial transaction, and they re-emphasized a widow’s faithfulness to her dead husband. There was also a huge gap between scholarly advocates and ordinary people’s lives; most women who were disciplined by these constraints were daughters, wives or widows of the political, economic or social elite (for further details see Du and Mann 2003).

Ancestor worship and gendered death practices

Northeast Asian family ritual is distinguished by practices focused on the spirits of the dead, expressed through worship of ancestors in historical China and in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Korea, and in their veneration in Japan. Hereafter, I look at the practice of ancestor worship in contemporary Taiwan, which, unlike China, did not experience the Cultural Revolution (Shih 2009: 19). I focus on these practices in a Taiwanese locale, as this has been the focus of much of my own research since the mid-1990s.

The character for ‘ancestor’ used in Chinese and Japanese is ‘祖’. As originally found on oracle bones from the Shang dynasty, it was written as ‘且’, representing a phallus and symbolizing fertility. According to Confucianism, it is a ‘sacred’ thing that humans have the capacity to give life, and human life is able to be passed on from generation to generation in an unbroken chain. As Kelleher notes ‘The family, as the nexus of this life-giving activity and the custodian of the chain of life, thus came to be enshrined as a sacred community ... the roles of husband and wife took on a sacerdotal character’ (Kelleher 1987: 137). It was this notion of ‘sacredness’ that formed the very concept of the family, and the shrine was identical to the ancestral altar in each household. The ritual emphasis was on paternal fertility, in which the family was traditionally defined as an extended group of males descended from a common male ancestor in terms of *zongzu* (宗族 kinship group).

Chinese kinship formations are not static, and at various times have been redefined or re-emphasized. For example, neo-Confucianism extended kinship practices of genealogy-compiling

from the upper class to the ordinary family as the means to restore order at all levels of society. From the mid-fourteenth century, many families reorganized and redefined themselves as a *zongzu* by compiling a genealogy. These ‘invented’ genealogies included a record of the first (migrant) ancestor, transfers of residence and burial grounds, naming patterns for generational identification, locations of ancestors’ graves, and birth and death dates. This innovation in genealogies not only created, documented or linked kinship groups, but it also purified them. As public documents, they served both internal and external needs such as maintaining generational stability and representing the group to outsiders (for further details see Ebrey 2003: 107–143).

Neo-Confucianism also ensured that the worship of ancestors was at the centre of the new kinship formation. Ancestral rites were promoted not just at family altars, but also at grave sites: the *Qingming* Festival (清明節 Tomb Sweeping Festival) was established to make a distinction from Buddhist rites for the dead at the *Yulanpen* Festival (盂蘭盆會 Festival of Departed Spirits) (Orzech 1996: 278–283). Ancestral worship remains an essential dimension of family life in contemporary Taiwan. Ancestors are understood as ‘the senior members of one’s own [paternal] line of descendants, the people to whom one is indebted ... for the gift of life, for a surname, for social status, and for property’ (Wolf 1974: 8). Ancestral death rituals transform the discontinuity of biological death into social continuity as an ancestor. Ancestral spirits are accommodated on a wooden tablet on which their names are inscribed (for further details see Ahern 1973; Watson and Rawski 1988). Traditionally, every household in Taiwan had its ancestral altar in the main hall, on which ancestral tablets are enshrined and offerings presented. As such, ancestors live in the same house and consume the same food as their living descendants. The family burns spirit money, spirit clothes and spirit equipment (e.g. computers, mobile phones, typically made out of paper) to their ancestors for their well-being in the world of the dead.

Incorporation into a family line and becoming an ancestor are thus essential to identity formation in Chinese religious culture. However, it is not enough simply to have issue within the patriline: ancestor status is accorded only to those who produce legitimate sons. A man is incorporated into the patriline at birth or through adoption, while a woman’s incorporation is through marriage into her husband’s family. Here we see gender differences in death practices (for further details see Martin 1988): although a deceased bachelor is excluded from immediate incorporation into his family ancestral line, he will be ritually provided with a male heir, usually a son of his brother or paternal cousin. The ritual for this is usually performed by a Daoist specialist, and is known in Taiwanese as *gue-bhang* (過房) (*Gue* means ‘transaction’; *bhang* refers to a lineage sub-division). During the *gue-bhang* ritual, an adoption contract is presented via burning to the ancestors for acknowledgement, and from this time the adoptee worships the deceased bachelor as his ‘father’. However, this ritual adoption only changes the son–father relationship at the level of lineage and genealogy and does not affect ‘real’ family life (Shih 2010: 126–127).

A daughter, by contrast, is only a temporary member of the family and lineage into which she is born, and she is supposed to die in her husband’s house. In the past, this also applied to a deceased concubine, who would receive offerings from her sons (Ebrey 2003: 42). If a woman dies unmarried in her father’s house and thus dies without connection to a male line, her death has occurred at the wrong time and in the wrong place, and is deemed to be a ‘bad’ death, which I have termed as ‘maiden death’ (Shih 2007: 90). Maiden death loses the social continuity that ancestral death alternatively ensures, and the dead maiden also ceases to be part of the chain of obligation and reciprocity that ancestral worship enshrines. A Taiwanese saying expresses this exclusion: ‘It is forbidden to worship the spirits of father’s sisters on the family altar’ (*cu lai bhor bai go* 厝內無拜姑). A further saying states: ‘Graves are built only for those deceased who have descendants who can be responsible for the care of the grave’ (*u zu zia u zor bhong* 有主乍有作墓). Since a deceased maiden has no descendants and since nobody is obligated to take care

of her grave, there is no need to build a grave for her. Traditionally, girls who died young normally had no funeral ceremony, and they were buried furtively in an unmarked spot (Shih 2010: 127–128).

Maiden spirits and corrective practices

The exclusion of deceased maidens from the patriline leaves relations between dead maidens and the living disordered. Because they have died bad deaths, maiden spirits are thought to be polluting, dangerous and liable to bring misfortune. Different cultures in Confucian Northeast Asia deal with the problem in slightly different ways. In Taiwan, there are various practices that constitute means to correct the exclusion/homelessness/pollution of deceased maidens, which I have termed as ‘corrective practices’ (Shih 2007: 90). These corrective practices usually involve the adoption of various after-life ideas from other religious traditions. Hereafter, I look at two case studies in northern Taiwan. The first is a corrective practice at a maiden temple in the former village (now suburb) of Samgiap, drawing mainly on my work between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s (Shih 2007), and again most recently in 2012–2013 (Shih 2013). The second is a shift in death practices represented by the Zhongtaishan Association, which is a Buddhist renaissance movement, drawing mainly on my work between the late-1990s and late-2000s (Shih 2010).

Case study one: the Samgiap maiden temple

The Samgiap maiden temple, as a place for unwanted maiden spirits, has always been a marginalized location and tinged with shame. It has no official address, but there is a bus stop indicating its existence. A maiden belonging to the Ng family, named Bhan-niu, died aged 17 in a fire in

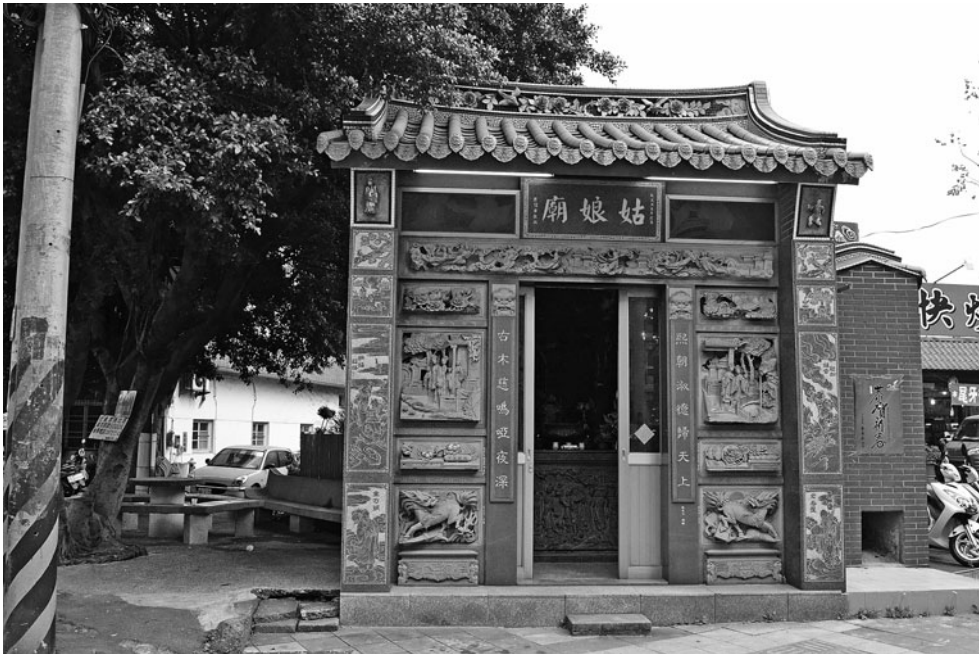


Figure 19.1 Samgiap maiden temple

Source: Fang-Long Shih

1829. After her death, her spirit returned to family members in dreams, demanding to remain a maiden. The Ng family granted her 'a piece of land' as her 'dowry', and a stone shrine was built to house her spirit-tablet. Here the demand and response are contradictory: the spirit demanded that she should keep her maiden status, while the response concerned a 'dowry' for her wedding. This contradiction meets the needs of both sides. For the family, the giving of 'dowry' land implied that they had arranged for Bhan-niu to be married out of the family; while for the maiden, the receiving of the dowry 'land' ensured her a space in which her spirit could remain unmarried, thus keeping her maiden status in the world of the living. However, the Samgiap case is unusual, as most maiden spirits demand a 'husband' and are provided with a ghost marriage (for further details see Martin 1991). Ghost marriage was popular in Taiwan before the 1970s: a living man married a deceased maiden as the means by which her restless spirit was incorporated into a male line on an ancestral altar.

Bhan-niu's spirit is said to be efficacious in responding to requests from local people, both females and males, and is now addressed as Goddess Siann-ma 聖媽 (the Efficacious Grandmother). The Samgiap maiden temple has also become a home for many other maiden spirits suffering from the same problem of exclusion from an ancestral line. When misfortune occurs (such as illness or accident), the explanation given by a Daoist specialist is invariably the agency of a restless spirit; specifically, that of a female family member who died unmarried (for further details see Jordan 1972: 138–171). The Daoist specialist is then hired to perform the *huan-zu* (返主 calling-spirit-home) ritual. It is believed that the ash from burning incense offered to a deceased maiden represents her spirit, and this ash is normally placed in a sachet and deposited at the maiden temple.

On the anniversary of the temple's construction, this ash is then poured into the temple's incense-burner by the community head, in what is known as the *gap-lo* (合爐) ritual. Ordinarily, this is the ritual by which a newly deceased family member is integrated into a family lineage, by placing incense-ash into the burner of the ancestors and inscribing the deceased's name on the family ancestral tablet. From this time, the deceased is provided with a new status as a fully-fledged ancestor with a 'home' on an ancestral altar, and a 'connection' with a family lineage in the world of the living. At the maiden temple, the same practice and idea has been reemployed to correct or reorder relations between deceased maidens and the living. However, this connection with the living is not a kinship tie through a patriline, but exists because of what they share with the maiden goddess Siann-ma, the Efficacious Grandmother. The fact that the incense-ashes of the accommodated maiden spirits are mixed with the temple goddess's incense-ash implies that the accommodated maiden spirits have some share of the incense offered to the temple goddess by the living. Whenever the temple goddess is worshipped, the accommodated maidens are worshipped as well. Here we witness the dissolution of the hierarchical institution of patriarchy, and the generation of a horizontal matrilineal relationship (for further details see Shih 2007).

Since the 2000s, Samgiap has changed from being a village into being a university city, and there has been a new development in the maiden temple. The exterior walls now display advertisements for private detectives who specialize in searching for evidence of extra-marital affairs. The problem of such affairs has in recent years become an urgent issue, with husbands working abroad, particularly in China. Along with accommodating the spirits of women excluded from the patriline, the temple now also shows concern for women at the heart of a patrilineal family order that is now threatened by male infidelity. Marital infidelity disrupts the cycle of nourishment and reciprocity that sustains family life. The advertisements are here because the temple has now also become a space where wives come to ask the maiden goddess to monitor their husbands; men at the centre of the patriline are now watched and judged by the maiden goddess (for further details see Shih 2013).

Case study two: Buddhist renaissance and the care of the dead

Since the 1980s, rapid economic liberalization, urbanization and globalization in Taiwan have driven changes in life-patterns and gender relationalities. People in Taiwan are now less reliant on the legacies of their ancestors and more dependent upon educational achievement and income derived from professional employment for property, social networks and social status (for further details see Thornton and Lin 1994). At the same time, the ‘Buddhism in the Human Realm’ movement has developed, involving innovative ways of increasing Buddhist engagement with the modern world. The four major Buddhist organizations in Taiwan are: Foguangshan (佛光山 Buddha’s Light Mountain), Tzu Chi (慈濟 Compassion Relief Association), Fagushan (法鼓山 Dharma Drum Mountain) and Zongtaishan (中臺山 Middle Platform Mountain).

The new Buddhism has initiatives for educating the youth and recruiting young members as ordained clergy, and for providing spiritual guidance for the newly emergent middle class in the context of a global consumer society (Madsen 2007: 1–4; Yao 2012: 29–36). Membership has increased dramatically in recent years, in the 1990s particularly among female university students. Many of these well-educated women undertook intensive courses and were subsequently ordained as *bhikkhuni*, also addressed as *fashi* (法師 Dharma masters). Traditionally, *fashi* refers to a class of scholar-monks (*bhikkhu*) who were the elite among the Sangha; however, in the new Buddhism the term *fashi* has lost its gender distinction and is now also widely applied to ordained nuns. This contrasts with the Theravada tradition in Southeast Asia, where nuns can only reach the status of *samaneri* (female novice); there is no *bhikkhuni* order, and nuns can never achieve equal status as *bhikkhu* and take full part in the monastic order. In 1998, Taiwan’s Foguangshan held a *bhikkhuni* ordination for nuns in Southeast Asia; it was emphasized that this was not a ‘Mahayana’ but rather an ‘international’ ordination, but these new *bhikkhuni* were not recognized by Theravada groups (Cheng 2007: 166–186).

The new Buddhism has also expanded the concept and practices of helping the uncared-for, both among the living and the dead. Well-to-do families have traditionally tended to pay nuns to take care of their deceased maidens, who were normally cremated and their bone-ash placed in an urn kept in a Buddhist reliquary pagoda; such services for the uncared-for dead have served as a key factor in the expansion of Buddhism into Chinese religious culture, both historically and in the present. The Zhongtaishan Buddhist Association has succeeded in transforming the provision of such death services into a modern business, and its Tianxiang Reliquary Pagoda and Chan Temple (天祥寶塔禪寺) combine Dharma Assemblies for the living with merit-accumulation for the dead. For a standard price a family can purchase a locker for a bone-ash urn that is kept in the reliquary hall, as well as a place for a spirit-tablet on the case-shelf in the merit hall. Dharma Assemblies are held every day and family members are encouraged to take part in practising sutra-recitation, following a female Dharma master’s instructions, for their own dead but in a place where other dead are also accommodated. The religious ideology behind this emphasizes that performing these practices benefits not only the dead but also the living; of the seven merits, six are granted to the living. This is the reverse of the traditional Buddhist discourse, which says that only the dead benefit. Also, cases where senior family members provide these services to their junior dead are highly regarded as merciful; this reverses the Confucian hierarchical order, in which only a junior gives an offering, which is made to a senior. Once a Dharma Assembly has finished, the family members are expected to donate money in a red envelope to cultivate the ‘Three Precious Jewels’. These are: to offer flowers and fruits to the Buddhas, to help print copies of Buddhist sutras and to feed monks and nuns.

Urban expansion has resulted in a short supply of land for burial grounds (Tremlett 2009), and this new business of caring for the dead also caters for the needs of modern Taiwanese society.

Well-educated and financially independent women are now able to use their new resources to purchase a resting place for themselves if they think they may die unmarried. Also, urban middle-class families, who find it increasingly difficult to fit the traditional practices of ancestor worship into their lifestyles, are now able to use their new wealth to outsource the care of their ancestors to 'professional' Buddhist masters. Here we see a change in death practices: responsibility for the dead has shifted from a private matter of the family into a public and business concern, in which wealth rather than gender is the key (for further details see Shih 2010).

Islamic Southeast Asia

In Islamic Southeast Asia, the family is the basic unit of a larger principal institution, the Muslim community (*ummah*), which operates under divinely instituted law (*Shari'a*). *Shari'a* is applied to and for all; it is central to individual and collective Muslim identity, and the family lies at the core of its social instructions. Although the law is preserved by the community, it is subject to elaboration by the *ulama*, a class who are the guardians of religious knowledge. The interpretation of the principles of *Shari'a* is called *fiqh*, meaning jurisprudence. However, there is no ultimate interpretive authority. Interpretations, evaluations and applications actually vary according to different schools within different sects at different places and in different times (for further details see Waines 1995).

Most Muslims in Southeast Asia are Sunni followers of the Shafi'i school of religious law, which originated in Cairo. The Shafi'i school considers four sources and principles for the interpretation of the law: first, the Qur'an, which is believed to be the revealed Word of Allah; second, the Prophetic *sunnah*, which are examples from Muhammad's life as recorded in accounts known as the *hadiths*; third, the method of reasoning by analogy (*qiyas*); and finally, consensus (*ijma'*) among the *ulama* and the community. The former two are regarded as the primary sources of religious truth and guidance, while the latter two ensure that the law reflects the human confrontation with the divine; in other words, the basis upon which the community is formed (for further details see Stange 1999).

However, Southeast Asian Islam lacks original traditions in legal scholarship; this means that Islam has been less legalistic and *Shari'a*-centred, and more an embodiment of local culture and of ways of living. This cultural dimension also reflects the manner and process by which Islam spread through the region from the twelfth century (for further details see De Casparis and Mabbett 1999). The first centuries of the Islamic expansion along trade routes into Southeast Asia coincided with an era of great Sufi influence, in which reflecting upon the order of the physical world unravelled the mysteries of a metaphysical reality (for further details see Waines 1995: 133–154). It was this aspect of *tariqa* (mystic orders, meaning Sufi spirituality as a way of life, also referring to institutionalized Sufi brotherhoods) that was first appropriated into local religio-culture in Southeast Asia. The Sufi role 'was facilitated by the religious traditions already established in the region, which had an elective affinity with certain aspects of Sufism' (Hefner 1997: 10).

As a result, Islamic religious life in Southeast Asia has historically been syncretic, blending Islamic practices with pre-existing traditions of animism, Hindu-Buddhism and *adat* (local systems of customs, beliefs and laws). Reading gender in Islamic Southeast Asia as such requires: first, an outline of Islamic law regulating marriage and family matters and gender roles; and second, an appreciation of the accommodation of Islamic legal practices within local cultures.

Islamic family law and gender relations

The scope of the law in Islam encompasses two fundamental relationships: that between the Creator and created beings, and that between human beings. The primary axis of a Muslim's life,

the vertical God–human relationship, is accompanied by a second, horizontal axis, which is one’s relationship with one’s fellows. It is believed that if one has established a proper relationship with Allah in the first sense, one’s day-to-day conduct will realize the ideal for family (and social) life in the second sense. Both relationships therefore have gender implications.

In the God–man relationship, the word ‘Allah’ takes a grammatically feminine form but is treated as grammatically masculine, implying a vision of God that transcends the masculine and the feminine (Badawi 1994: 84). It is believed that the will of the One Creator is one for all, so that the same law provides the surest way for all women and men to conduct their lives. Moreover, all believers are equally competent to perform all Muslim rites, and all Muslims are equal before God and in a direct and personal relationship with God. One passage in the Qur’an in particular emphasizes the symmetry of believers, mentioning ‘men and women who have surrendered, believing men and believing women’ (33:35; trans. Arberry 1964), and is said to have been revealed when the Prophet was challenged by a woman to explain why it appeared that Allah addressed only the men of the community.

As regards interpersonal relationships, Islamic personal and family law mainly deals with matters such as marriage, inheritance and ownership of property, divorce, the rights of children and relatives, and financial arrangements. Marriage (*nikah*) in Islam is the principal arena in which humans are supposed to grow in faith and closeness to God, and marital duties are seen as reciprocal: in return for the wife’s companionship, the husband acquires the responsibilities of protecting her and maintaining the family; and in return for her husband’s support, the wife acquires the responsibilities of providing food, clothing and care (Badawi 1994: 100–104; Jones 1994: 48–51).

However, within the family, the man is said to be the ruler of the people of his house and the woman the ruler of the house of her husband. *Surah 2:228* of the Qur’an says that: ‘Women have such honourable rights as obligations, but their men have a degree above them’, while 4:34 indicates that ‘Men are the managers of the affairs of women for that God has preferred in bounty one of them over another, and for that they have expended their property’. A man can have up to four wives (4:3), but a woman can have only one husband. Further, a Muslim man may marry a Jew or a Christian, as Jews and Christians are Peoples of the Book and possess a revelation (5:5), but a Muslim woman may marry only a Muslim man (Smith 1987: 236–237). As regards inheritance, the Qur’an (4:7–11) indicates that wives, daughters, sisters and grandmothers of the deceased are entitled to a share of the property before the inheritance is transferred to the nearest male kin. However, in most cases sons are granted twice the share of daughters, as the portions inherited are assigned according to an ‘assumed’ need.

Nevertheless, the patriarchal nature of Muslim societies is not a characteristic created by Islamic scripture; patriarchies were widespread in the Middle East prior to the rise of Islam, and some of those values were integrated into the religious norms of Islamic faith. One example is polygamy: it was allowed in Islam not in order to encourage the practice, but rather to restrict the prevailing Arabian custom of unlimited polygamy. A Qur’anic verse on polygamy (5:6) indicates that if each wife cannot be treated equally well, then only one wife is permitted (Esposito 1998: xii).

All such asymmetry or unequal treatment before the law is said to be for the sake of the preservation of social order and the protection of women. For example, the Qur’an and the *hadiths* have instructions on women’s appearance in public. According to one Qur’anic verse: ‘And say to the believing women, that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts, and reveal not their adornment [in public] save such as is outward; and let them cast their veils over their bosoms’ (24:31). A *hadith* explains further: ‘The woman, all of her, is unseemly/unprotected [*‘aura*]; if she goes out from the house, the devil will oversee her [actions]’ (quoted in Mahmood 2005: 106). The term ‘*aura*’, as used to describe women, is complex and has variety of meanings, including ‘weakness’, ‘faultiness’, ‘unseemliness’, ‘imperfection’ and ‘genitalia’. ‘*Aura*’ is related to the term ‘*awir*’, translated

as having ‘no keeper or guardian ... literally having a gap, or an opening, or a breach, exposing it to thieves and the like’ (Lane 1984: 2194). A woman is ‘*aura* because ‘her exit from the house exposes her to dangers, requiring protection’ and because ‘just as one is ashamed to expose one’s genitalia, one is ashamed to have a woman appear in public’ (Mahmood 2005: 107). All those parts of a woman’s body that may cause embarrassment and shame should therefore be covered, which, in the view of some Muslim jurists, includes everything except a woman’s hands, feet and face.

Islamic scripture and Islamic personal and family law are also clear that women have rights. Although marriage is traditionally arranged by families or guardians, it is widely agreed that a woman or a man cannot be forced against their wishes, although the degree to which women are free to contract marriages independently of any legal guardian, including their fathers, varies according to circumstances. However, she can prescribe as a condition that her husband should take no other wife, and she can take the initiative in divorce. If her husband initiates divorce, before it becomes effective there must first be a three-month period (*iddah*) for a chance of reconciliation, and also to make sure that the wife is not pregnant (Badawi 1994: 104–106). Further, the wife is permitted to maintain her dowry (*mahr*), paid to her by her husband, as a source of personal comfort (65:4).

Islam and local culture in Southeast Asia

Islam, when introduced into Southeast Asia, was confronted with local cultures in many respects very different from those of the Middle East. Ever since, the relationship between Islamic gender practices and local cultures has been subject to negotiation (White 2006: 333–335). Also, the application of Islamic legal practices has varied according to differing local cultures in particular areas. Comparatively speaking, women in Southeast Asia have enjoyed a relatively high degree of autonomy and economic importance, and according to traditional social organization, married couples frequently reside in the wife’s village (Reid 1988: 147). Southeast Asian family structures include minority groups that are distinctively matriarchal, in which matrilineal residence and matrilineal descent and inheritance are upheld. These traditions can be found among the historical Negeri Sembilan in Malaysia, the Minangkabau in Indonesia and in other parts of Southeast Asia (Dube 1997: 26–29).

The Minangkabau, the world’s largest matrilineal Muslim culture, will here serve as a case study. Minangkabau people experienced pressure to convert to Islam from the seventeenth century, mainly due to Sufi brotherhoods; they also experienced a Wahabi-influenced Padri Islamic reformist movement during the same period as the arrival of Dutch state colonialism, and more recently the rise of the *Dawah* purist revival along with post-colonial Indonesian nation-building and development. However, the Minangkabau response to Islam has not been passive or derivative, but, rather, complex and creative. Hereafter, I first examine how Islam had been accommodated with matrilineal *adat* in rural Minangkabau during the historical neo-Wahhabi Padri period. Second, I explore how discourses of gender vary according to context, and interpenetrate among the recent ideologies of the Indonesian state, Islamic devotionism and Minangkabau matriliney.

Case study one: Minangkabau matriliney and Islamization

The Minangkabau heartland is on the west side of Sumatra, the westernmost island of Indonesia. Minangkabau *adat* establishes that members of the group are attached to a matriline, usually an extended family of three to four generations that together form a sublineage (*kuam*) and who are all related to a living ancestress (*Bundo Kanduang*, womb mother). The sublineage forms the

basic building block of the village, and is organized in relation to a hierarchy of lineages (*payung*) and exogamous clans (*suku*). Villages are in turn organized into confederations of matrilineages (*nagari*) for the regulation of socio-familial relations (Blackwood 1995: 130; Krier 1995: 53–54). Members of a sublineage live in a lineage longhouse (*roemahgedang*) and hold land in common; although the form of the house has varied, during the early stage of Dutch colonialism this longhouse and matrilineal residence became perceived to be, and were represented as, icons of Minangkabau culture. The ideal form of longhouse and family structure has been reconstructed by Hadler (2008), primarily based on colonial *schoolschriften* (school writings) recorded by native teachers and students during the Dutch-organized schooling of the 1870s–1890s.

According to the traditions of Minangkabau society, young men are encouraged to leave their village and travel into the wider world, the *rantau*, to seek education, wealth, or whatever might make them of value before they return home to appeal to the family of a potential bride. Minangkabau women traditionally engage in transplanting and harvesting rice, weaving, pottery making and trading. Minangkabau men marry into their wives' families, but remain attached to their own mothers' house. They return to that house daily to work on the fields, and after death may be buried in the maternal family graveyard (Hadler 2008: 2, 6; Sanday 2002: 102). Although men are part of the lives of their wives and children, in Minangkabau culture it is the mother who grounds the family, the house and the inheritance.

Minangkabau families are incorporated into the longhouse through the passage of life and by rituals. Women born to the house consummate their marriages and give birth to their children in a row of separated sleeping chambers (*biliak*), while older grandmothers, unmarried girls and prepubescent boys sleep in an open space at the front of the house. Each time a marriage takes place, the women move along to the *biliak* to the right of the one they were previously in. The woman in the right-most *biliak* leaves her chamber and rejoins the main floor. If she is still sexually active, then the house can be extended by adding one more *biliak*. The house is thus maintained through the reproduction of women with the same ancestress, and is strikingly marked by birth blood and umbilical cords. The blood of the mother and her child that stained the floorboards during childbirth is buried in the yard; the umbilical cord and afterbirth are cleaned and placed inside a cooking pot along with salt and other preservatives, and then buried beneath the house (Hadler 2008: 58–67; Sanday 2002: 253).

Thus the preserved umbilical cord and the bloodstains are forever attached to the birthplace, and in this way the longhouse links past, present and future family members in an unbreakable chain. The longhouse is symbolically never lost, both as a residence and as a bond with a common ancestress; according to Minangkabau *adat*, 'The central pillar is the house and whoever owns the central pillar then they own the house; and although it was the men who felled the tree or bought the wood, they are just helping; meaning it is all done for the woman too' (an informant quoted by Hadler 2008: 170). The lineage longhouse is defined by its central pillar, metaphorically representing the most senior woman, and by other pillars representing her sisters and maternal cousins. The most senior woman controls the use and disposition of the lineage house and rice land. Only daughters are given sleeping chambers and are entitled to inherit lineage property. A son may be granted the right to cultivate the fields for his lifetime, but at his death, the land returns to his mother or sisters (Blackwood 1995: 128–135).

However, Minangkabau matriliney is different from the Western conception of matriarchy. Although women dominate household and lineage lands, they do not rule, nor do men. All lineage and village affairs require the consensus of both female and male elders. Men who hold the family title, *penghulu* (titled men), act in the interests of their matrilineage. By building up his and his sisters' matrilineage he also strengthens his own powerbase. The *penghulu*, usually the mother's uncle or brother, is granted one piece of land that could be used to compensate the expenses of

his position, but should the title not be passed on at his death, this land will revert to his sisters. The function of *penghulu* is to settle disputes in accordance with the body of law codified in *adat*. The body of *adat* law establishes a procedure for the resolution of disputes according to *mupakat* (consensus decision-making in search of the truth), as elaborated in a saying: 'Loosen that which is tight, so that the sound is like a tinkle rather than a crash' (Sanday 2002: 174). Along with senior women, *penghulu* also engage with outsiders and incorporate anyone who wants to live among the Minangkabau under the umbrella of a ceremony in which a stranger is 'adopted' into a particular lineage (Blackwood 1995: 131–135; Sanday 2002: 173–176).

Islam was introduced to the Minangkabau matrilineal societies from the west coast of Sumatra to the *darek* (three central provinces), but it was not regarded as the sole authority in religious matters until the rise of the neo-Wahhabi Padri movement in the late eighteenth century. The Padri movement arose in a context of rapid social change in western Sumatra, where new cash crops (for example coffee) demanded by North American and European markets created an economic boom that disrupted traditional rice farming. The Minangkabau world was faced with a crisis of intruding European powers, and the Padri movement used Wahhabist Islam as an alternative way to unify the Minangkabau among the different *nagari*, and also as an opportunity to strengthen the relatively newly Islamized people in the *darek*. Wahhabi followers across Arabia rejected textual interpretation as 'innovation', and demanded adherence to a way of life that followed the Qur'an and the *hadiths*. In western Sumatra, neo-Wahhabi Padri started as a moderate Islamic reform, teaching people to be proper Muslims, and not to gamble, chew betel nut or smoke opium. However, the movement became radicalized after three pilgrims returned from Mecca in 1803: from this time the movement opposed the system of matrilineal inheritance, which was regarded as incompatible with pure or true Islam. The movement instead insisted on adherence to what it considered to be the essential way of Islamic life: Muslims ought to pray in mosques and live in walled villages composed of single-patrilineal families. The most radical reformers burnt longhouses, murdered clan matriarchs and killed *adat* leaders during events known as the Padri Wars (1821–1837) (for further details see Kato 1982: 94–117; Hadler 2008: 17–33).

The Dutch, allied with *adat* traditionalists, entered into fighting against the Padri reformists, and the wars ended with an ideological shift away from Wahhabism. *Adat* remained largely unaltered, but there was one lasting impact in that Islam and *adat* became more clearly related. This is reflected in a change to a Minangkabau aphorism: before the Padri Wars it was said that '*adat* is based on Islam, Islam is based on *adat*', thus emphasizing the interdependence of *adat* and Islam; this was itself a revision of an older saying from before the arrival of Islam, that '*adat* is based on appropriateness and propriety'. During the Padri Wars, the aphorism was reformulated as follows: '*Adat* is based on Islam, Islam is based on the Holy Text', which implies the supremacy of Islam over *adat* (Kato 1982: 100–101). A paradoxical relationship has since then developed between matrilineal *adat* and patrilineally oriented Islam: the centrality of women in matrilineal *adat* is seen to be supported by the teachings of Islam because much that appears in *adat* is said also to be in the Qur'an. Indeed, it is because Minangkabau women and men are willing to accommodate Islam with *adat* and to synthesize contradictions in a creative and harmonious way that the matrilineal tradition has been sustained (Abdullah 1985: 141).

Case study two: *Dawah* devotionism and multiple gender discourses

The Minangkabau domain was incorporated into the Republic of Indonesia in 1950, initially as part of the province Central Sumatra and from 1957 as West Sumatra. Islam in West Sumatra today is part of the everyday life of the Minangkabau. The male Minangkabau *ulama* accept matrilineal *adat* and *Shari'a* as complementary paths in an inseparable unity, just as Minangkabau

women accept Islam; if there is a question relating to *adat*, it is brought to *adat* leaders, and if there is a question relating to Islamic law, it is brought before Islamic authorities. This culture of consensus has prevailed between matrilineal *adat* and patrilineally oriented Islam (for further details see Elfira 2009).

From 1965, President Suharto sought to monopolize political power within the state bureaucracy, in an attempt to integrate Indonesia into the world capitalist economy. In 1973 his New Order forced all Islamic organizations, both traditional and reformist, to be merged into a single Islamic party, the Party of Unity and Development (PPP); this included Nahdlatul Ulama, one of the country's largest Islamic organizations, which had played an important role in politics from its founding in 1926 in reaction against Islamic reformists. However, in 1984 Nahdlatul Ulama withdrew from party politics to concentrate on religious, social and educational activities (King 2011: 272). This broke the PPP's monopoly on Islamic support, and was meant to signal a rebranding of traditionalist Islam as the 'people of moderation'. In an effort to revive its national influence, Nahdlatul Ulama faced critical challenges, particularly from governmental policies on education and also from increasing influence on Islam in Indonesia from the Middle East (Feillard 1997: 129–138).

The New Order also sought to homogenize diverse ethnic groups into national citizens, and from the 1980s all socio-political (including Islamic) organizations had to acknowledge the national ideology of *Pancasila* (the Five Principles) as their sole foundation. In an attempt to create a citizenry in step with the 'modern' world, the New Order prioritized modern schooling, and provided infrastructural support to Islamic education and to *dawah* Islamic piety. This linked Islam in Indonesia with a worldwide movement to enhance religious duty and to promote religious sensibility: *dawah*, meaning God's call to humanity to believe in the true religion, requires all members of the Islamic community to urge fellow Muslims to greater piety, and engages with the problem of how Muslims can render all aspects of their lives in the modern world into a means of realizing God's will. The movement has attracted considerable attention from an emergent middle class of Muslims in the booming metropolitan regions, with universities at the forefront. In an effort to Islamize the secular university, students adopted relaxed, democratic forms of consumption, dress and communication while encouraging strict adherence to Muslim devotional acts (for further details see Hefner 1997: 86–94; Mahmood 2005: 40–78).

Post-colonial nationalism and *dawah* devotionism in Southeast Asia have also brought revised understandings of gender roles. In Malaysia, a stricter application of Islam has confined women's agency and space in ways that are seen to coincide with the perceived needs of nation-building and modern development. Women are thus defined as upholders of Islamic piety, racial purity and national belonging (Ong 1995). However, the *Dawah* movement has also given young and well-educated urban women new ways to engage with religious obligations, doctrinal principles and acts of worship. For some women, it has provided the opportunity to enter the field of religious pedagogy, while the practice of veiling, reinvented as a gesture of Islamic piety, is a way to assert religious distinctiveness both as a Muslim in relation to other groups and as a Muslim woman in relation to Muslim men. Veiling is seen to liberate Muslim women from 'Islamic male tyranny', and thus has 'tremendous emotional appeal and longevity' (Morey and Yaqin 2011: 10). Also, veiling is seen to create a sense of physical enclosure that brings about an effect of looking inwards, concentrating 'more fully on issues of self-discipline, self-restraint, self-mastery, devotion and prayer' (Tarlo 2010: 15). Unlike certain parts of the Middle East, women in Islamic Southeast Asia are not forced to veil themselves; those who choose to adopt the veil tend to see it as a way to observe notions of modesty without having to confine themselves within the household. Veiling can therefore open up opportunities for women to facilitate access to public space, education and work (for further details see White 2006).

However, the relative absence of women's power in the public sphere in Indonesia continues to reflect the model of womanhood promoted by the Indonesian state and Islamic piety. In an attempt to reformulate the family in a way compatible with the needs of a unified modern state and capitalist economy, the government has adopted a Western paradigm of a split between the domestic sphere and the public sphere, while also accommodating Islamic resurgence. While articulating men as producers and protectors, ideal womanhood is redefined as associated with the domesticity of home and family, which is a private and non-economic domain. For instance, in line with the Qur'an, the Marriage Law implemented by the New Order in 1974 states that 'the husband is the head of the family and the wife is the mother of the household' (Salyo 1985: 20). Moreover, the state has appropriated the Minangkabau term for mother, *Bundo Kanduang*, in its campaign for educating women as child-rearers and home-makers. This campaign successfully brought about a slippage of *Bundo Kanduang* from 'lineage elder' to 'model housewife' (Blackwood 1995: 140). At one level, the ideal of womanhood promoted by the state and Islamic piety resonated with the Minangkabau conception of women as mothers, but at a deeper level they both contradict women's roles substantiated through *adat* as dominating public and economic affairs.

Further, the ideology of the Indonesian state continues to maintain the Dutch colonial notion of 'universal' values of progress and modernity, which see the Minangkabau as an anachronistic, less-evolved society from the past. For the purpose of control, the Dutch implemented a new legal system: the *panghulu*, the headmen discussed in the previous section, were reinvented as a local male bureaucratic class who adhered to a system of patrilineal succession and who would administer taxes and oversee corvée labour for the colonial government. As a result, only a male lineage head represented a lineage in disputes in the court, and *Bundo Kanduang* was excluded from the sphere identified by the West as political or civic. These historical processes continue under Indonesian rule and further validate the male authority of *adat* experts. Male *adat* experts reinterpret knowledge about *adat*, emphasizing the priority of men in decision-making while remaining silent about women's power. Even though urban male intellectuals are proud of their Minangkabau matrilineal culture, they tend to ignore women's authority in their discourses (Blackwood 2000: 139–146).

Minangkabau women and men have confronted the problem of being good elders, good Muslims and good citizens; one saying states that the Minangkabau are as loyal to the national government as they are to *adat* and Islam. However, the Minangkabau have thus generated new discourses adapted to the state's strategies of unification and modernization alongside Islamic piety. The tensions between these three domains produce disparities in the representation of gender related to social background.

The shift and tension may have driven women toward the domestic model created for them by the state, particularly in the case of the urban middle class. These women speak of themselves as housewives and represent their husbands as decision-makers. They may also downplay their traditional position of power in relation to domains legitimated by *adat*. However, this may have more to do with their new wealth and desire to be thought of as modern women than with their actual belief in the ideology of domesticity. Nevertheless, the state gender ideology is not all-pervasive in villages, where life is still centred around ceremonial and kinship relations in which women's power is most evident. Minangkabau Muslim women today continue to wield power over lineage and economic affairs: they own houses and rice lands and control rice production; they run mill businesses and sell rice on the market. Women's income is used to sustain the households and also to finance ceremonial activities associated with kinship affairs, while their husbands' salaries are used to pay for the children's schooling. As regards ceremonies, titled men lead discussions, while senior women make decisions; men exchange ritual speeches

while women exchange ritual food. The speeches assert the importance of the lineage, while food consolidates the connection by sharing among lineage members. Women's power is already naturalized and taken for granted, even though it is absent in the discourses of governmental media (for further details see Blackwood 2000; Sanday 2002).

Here we see multiple interpretations of gender; the differences between them lie in core circumstances of wealth, rank and power, and each discourse needs to be contextualized. Within this multiplicity, there are no neat dividing lines by which women can articulate one identity over another; instead, the ideologies of the Indonesian state, Islamic devotionism and the Minangkabau interpenetrate.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined issues of family, gender and religion in Confucian Northeast Asia and Islamic Southeast Asia. There are four basic conclusions to draw.

First, as regards 'Women and/in Religion', preconceptions about religions as separate areas of belief and practice are inaccurate when studying religion in relation to Northeast and Southeast Asia. This chapter has shown that in Northeast Asia, Confucianism, Daoism and Mahayana Buddhism form a complex religio-cultural matrix, and that religion is social and this-worldly. Similarly, Islam in Southeast Asia co-exists, albeit to some extent in tension, with other religious traditions, and in the case studies presented here with *adat* systems of customs, beliefs and laws that pre-date the arrival of Islam from the Middle East. I have attempted to remain sensitive to all these factors by applying the religious practices-as-lived approach, demonstrating that religious lives in Northeast and Southeast Asia are a lived blend of religious and cultural traditions, and that religious traditions are constantly combined, integrated, declining, revitalized, reinvented or purified.

Second, preconceptions about world religions having a common feature of being patriarchal are inadequate when studying gender issues in Northeast and Southeast Asia. I have attempted to broaden the view to that of actual practices within contexts; apart from religious texts, I have also drawn on socio-historical and ethnographic sources relating to various areas: family formations; gender relationalities; marriage, concubinage and polygamy; divorce and inheritance; and historical transitions and socio-cultural transformations. This chapter has demonstrated that patriarchy in East Asian societies is a complex issue that cannot be reduced merely to Confucian or Islamic teachings. In the main body of discussion, we have noted that Confucianism and Islam are certainly patriarchal traditions if we focus on certain textual sources in isolation, but that historical evidence shows that gendered practices in Confucianism and Islam both emerged from, rather than created, patriarchal societies. Patriarchy was neither an essential feature nor the ultimate concern of either Confucianism or Islam, but a wider socio-political moral order accommodated within existing human conditions.

Third, through the four case studies examined, we understand that family structures and gender relationalities are not solely determined by Confucian or Islamic ideologies and practices, but that contexts of colonialism, capitalism, modernity, nationalism, urbanization and 'glocalization' (the complex interaction of the global and local) must be taken into account. Among the Minangkabau, a matrilineal and matrilocal culture has managed to maintain its traditions, while an Islamic *dawah* movement that promotes a stricter view of Islam has nevertheless adapted to modernization, nation-building and urbanization by formulating rules that define women as housekeepers but that also allow women to participate in *dawah* activities. Meanwhile, Confucian and Buddhist rituals in Taiwan have adapted to the reality of a modernized world in which neither a woman's identity nor the meaning of 'maiden death' is defined by patriliney, but rather by her own choices and resources, fabricated from education and career. The family and gender

(re-)formations are indeed fluid, contingent processes characterized by contestation, ambivalence and transformation within interlocking ideological and material contexts; not only religious traditions and/or religious resurgences, but also in the midst of various political, economic and social projects and processes.

Fourth, focusing on the two examples – the maiden temple in Samgiap and matriarchy among the Minangkabau – we have deepened our perspective on patriarchy as neither simply a structure exploited by religion nor merely as the embodiment of doctrines. The web of female-oriented relationships in the Minangkabau domain and at Samgiap, both tied to house/temple and land, produces an aura of accommodation and space that are not defined by patriarchal relationships but that open out alternative horizons of the family and gender relationalities. Indeed, we see how the matrilineal foundation accommodates patrilineal fluencies and vice versa. These facts all demonstrate the flexibility and variability of these religio-cultural forms; ‘patriarchal’ global religions are not static, but rather dynamic; while matriarchal local cultures are not fragile, but actually resilient.

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Confucian values and East Asian capitalism

A variable Weberian trajectory

Jack Barbalet

An inquiry concerning the direct causal significance of religious values for the advent and development of capitalism makes no sense in itself. As an economic system capitalism is better understood in terms of market opportunities, technological developments, labour supplies, entrepreneurial capacities, ownership structures, and so on. It was Max Weber, writing in the first decade of the twentieth century, who saw the historical advent of modern capitalism in terms of a shift in religious initiative from Catholic Southern Europe to the Protestant principalities of Northern Europe, with a parallel move of commercial concentration from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. Whereas the vast majority of economic historians saw capitalism emerge incrementally from the traditional economies that preceded them, Weber took the rupture of the Christian Reformation against Catholicism as the harbinger of a new personality type, realized in the spirit of the capitalist entrepreneur. This latter contrasts with the historically earlier economic actors who focused either on servicing only their existing needs or who sought luxurious riches, neither of which involved profit for its own sake that enriched the organization of enterprise itself.

Before embarking on a discussion of Confucian values and East Asian capitalism it is necessary to first be clear about Weber's argument. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is concerned with 'the influence of certain religious ideas', as Weber (1991: 27) says, 'on the development of an economic spirit, or the *ethos* of an economic system'. He is concerned, then, not with capitalism as a socio-economic system but one possible source of the historically novel ethic of earning money 'purely as an end in itself' conjoined with 'the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life' (Weber 1991: 53). Indeed, this ethic may be 'present before the capitalistic order' (Weber 1991: 55). While Weber sees the advent of this ethic as an unintended consequence of the Protestant Reformation (Weber 1991: 90), he at the same time insists that he has 'no intention whatever of maintaining such a foolish and doctrinaire thesis as that the spirit of capitalism ... could only have arisen as the result of certain effects of the Reformation, or even that capitalism as a system is a creation of the Reformation' (Weber 1991: 91).

Weber's argument, then, is that a motivating entrepreneurial force of modern capitalism arose in Western Europe as a consequence of certain beliefs of Reformation Christianity. This accidental religious link, according to Weber, has no continuing role in the development and operation of capitalist economies. He says that in a society dominated by ongoing capitalist activities any

'relationship between religious beliefs and conduct is generally absent, and where it exists ... it tends to be of the negative sort' (Weber 1991: 70). Weber goes on to add that the 'devotion to the calling of money making' that underpins the spirit of capitalism 'no longer needs the support of any religious forces' and that any 'attempts of religion to influence economic life' are experienced as 'unjustified interference' (Weber 1991: 72). Weber's understanding is that 'the capitalism of to-day, which has come to dominate economic life, educates and selects the economic subjects which it needs' and in doing so it draws 'on a way of life common to whole groups of men [and women]' (Weber 1991: 55). This is an entirely appropriate sociological approach insofar as it directs investigation to the ways in which the requirements of economic activities and organizations draw upon and possibly lead to modification in the values and institutions of societies in which market-led engagements become increasingly important. We shall see that this aspect of Weber's argument is confirmed in the East Asian state-sponsored Confucian revivals that are consequent on the capitalist development of their economies.

There are two additional caveats concerning Weber's approach that warrant mention in the present context. First, Weber's characterization of religion, no matter how usefully it served his purposes, is unnecessarily narrow. For Weber religion operates almost wholly in terms of beliefs, which he holds have a 'permanent intrinsic character' (Weber 1991: 40). The organizational dimension of religion is simply brushed out of his ideal-type characterization of Calvinism (Weber 1991: 97, 108), even though it is arguably not their religious values but the social networks generated in devotional congregations and the geographically expansive organization of Christian fellowship that is responsible for the commercial and business success of members of Protestant communities. Weber also emphasizes religious belief at the expense of religious emotions (Weber 1991: 115) even though it is the latter that encourage and bond religious organization.

The narrowness of Weber's understanding of modern capitalism also deserves mention. His ideal-type characterization of modern capitalism fails to represent the reality of capitalism's operation not only in present-day East Asian but in late-modern Western economies. In *General Economic History* Weber indicates six conditions necessary for modern capitalism (Weber 1981: 276–278). The first two, 'rational capital accounting as the norm for all large industrial undertakings which are concerned with provision for everyday wants' and, 'freedom of the market, that is, the absence of irrational limitations on trading in the market', may seem uncontested and yet the experience of the last decade has shown how a 'method of rational accounting' that avoids the distortions effectively serving the partial and even criminal interests of major corporations in the US and also Europe has been difficult to achieve. Indeed, rational accounting may not be an independent factor but an artifact of governmental regulation. In any event, the relative absence of 'rational capital accounting' that arguably generated the global financial crisis peaking in 2008 is not an absence of capitalism. The experience of the global financial crisis has led many analysts to restate, in effect, the need to also qualify Weber's second characteristic of modern capitalism, namely unqualified 'freedom of the market'. All markets are necessarily subject to regulation and there cannot be an 'absence of irrational limitations on trading in the market'.

If markets are social institutions, it follows that they are necessarily norm governed and the social practices that constitute property rights, transaction forms and individual autonomy operate as not simply legal but moral constraints (Schultz 2001). Not only are markets in newborn babies curtailed everywhere, but, as Schumpeter (1966: 417–418) put it: 'no social system can work which is based exclusively upon a network of free contracts between (legally) equal contracting parties and in which everyone is supposed to be guided by nothing except his own (short-run) utilitarian ends'.

These considerations apart, Weber's understanding of capitalism is largely based on the historical experience of West European and American capitalism (Weber 1991: 52), especially as it emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: individualistic, competitive and globally dominant. We shall return to Weber's ideal-type characterization of capitalism below, in the context of China's capitalist development.

In addition to Weber's argument concerning the religious source of the capitalist ethos in Europe, which has informed much discussion of both religion and capitalism, any account of East Asian capitalism and especially the supposition of its cultural backdrop in Confucian thought and practices, must acknowledge the presence in the critical firmament of Weber's (1964) *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*. This work was the first of Weber's comparative historical sociologies in which he considered China's civilizational development in terms of its political and economic institutions and its systems of values. Weber's purpose in this work is primarily to demonstrate that the conditions for the development of modern industrial capitalism simply did not arise in China, as they had in Protestant Europe. He finds sufficient grounds for the absence of the development of capitalism in Chinese economic, political, administrative and social institutions:

from a purely economic point of view ... bourgeois industrial capitalism might have developed [in China] from the petty capitalist beginnings ... [but a] number of reasons – mostly related to the structure of the state – can be seen for the fact that capitalism failed to develop.

(Weber 1964: 100)

Weber goes on to argue that the necessary condition for modern capitalism, in appropriate religious traditions, were historically absent in China. Weber recognizes a rational element in Confucianism, but 'Confucian rationalism meant rational adjustment to the world' (Weber 1964: 248). What is necessary for the development of capitalism, in Weber's estimation, however, is 'Puritan rationalism [which] meant rational mastery of the world' (Weber 1964: 248).

Confucianism and capitalism

Weber's *Protestant Ethic* argument has received much acclaim among sociologists. His account of the negative relationship between Confucianism and capitalism, however, has met with extensive criticism, especially since the 1980s. This criticism is largely a result of the rapid growth and industrialization of the export-oriented economies of Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, referred to as the four little dragons of Confucian East Asia. The economic rise of the big dragon, the People's Republic of China, has only served to add to the counter-Weber arguments concerning the positive contribution of Confucianism to East Asian capitalism. Before discussing capitalism and Confucianism in East Asia it is necessary to consider the criticisms of Weber's argument concerning Confucianism.

The question of Confucianism is difficult on a number of levels. It may seem obvious to say that Confucianism is a body of thought that comes out of the work of Confucius (551–479 BC), a teacher, thinker and itinerant advisor to various rulers of rival states during the so-called Spring and Autumn period of Chinese history. The principal work associated with Confucius is the *Analects*, a compilation of his sayings, traditionally held to have been originally written during the Warring States period although it probably acquired its present form during the Han dynasty (202 BC–AD 220). During this time the politically dominant elite selected a number of texts they designated as 'classics' (*jing*) that became the curriculum for the Imperial Academy

from which the state bureaucracy was recruited. Originally there were five classic texts, which did not include the *Analects* but traditionally were held to have benefited from Confucius' editorial influence. From 124 BC the Five Classics (*wujing*) were incrementally augmented until by the early Song dynasty, from 960, there were thirteen classics, which now included the *Analects* and also a work known as the *Mencius*. This latter text is an account of meetings and conversations between Confucius' follower, Mencius, and various feudal rulers and ministers, as well as conversations between Mencius and his own followers or students. The importance of the *Mencius* is in its interpretation of Confucius' leading ideas and its elaboration of a number of ethical and political principles drawn from Confucius. By the late-Song, the canon of classics was revised again to comprise only Four Books (*Si Shu*), the *Analects* (*Lunyu*), the *Mencius* (*Mengzi*) and two brief chapters from one of the original Five Books, the *Book of Rights* (*Liji*), namely the *Great Learning* (*Daxue*) and the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*). For the period from approximately 1200 to 1912, when the imperial examination was discontinued, these Four Books constituted official Confucian teaching.

The names 'Confucius' and 'Mencius' are Latin transliterations of Kongzi and Mengzi respectively, given by members of the sixteenth century Jesuit mission to Beijing, who were also responsible for coining the term 'Confucianism' (Jensen 1997). The missionary interest in China has been not only in converting the Chinese to Christianity but also in interpreting Chinese traditions in such a manner as to make the Chinese amenable to conversion, finding 'equivalent' Chinese terms for Christian notions and personalities or roles (Wong 2005). According to Jensen (1997: 33):

For sixteenth-century Chinese, the native entity, Kongzi ... was the object of an imperial cult, the ancient ancestor of a celebrated rhetorical tradition, and a symbol of an honored scholarly fraternity (the *ru*, or 'Confucians') represented by a phalanx of officials who staffed every level of the imperial bureaucracy. But before the eyes of clerics newly arrived from the West he appeared as prophet, holy man and saint.

The Jesuit invention of the Latinate Confucius and Confucianism, Jensen (1997: 34) goes on to say, 'endure as the principal symbols of China, Chineseness, and tradition'. This homogenizing effect simply ignores the enormous complexity of Chinese thought and culture, sidesteps the variety of teachings that parallel, contest and enrich the ideas of Kongzi and Mengzi and the practices associated with them and reduces the diverse historical, social and doctrinal developments that make up the Confucian legacy to a limited and possibly meaningless label.

The sacralization of Confucius and Confucianism undertaken by missionaries from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries is not entirely accepted by Weber who insists that Confucianism is not a religion (Weber 1964: 146, 156, 226). While the historical Confucius no doubt engaged in ritual practices addressed to spirits (Creel 1932), his principal concerns and the focus of the Four Books are social and political. The values internal to the Confucian 'system' identified by Weber, especially filial piety (*xiao*) and loyalty (*zhong*) to political hierarchy, are characterized by him as traditional and therefore fail to support the rationalizing impetus necessary for modern industrial capitalism. Weber (1964: 248) claims that the rational adjustment to the world found in Confucianism leaves the world unchanged, whereas the capitalist spirit, according to the *Protestant Ethic*, is world changing for it can 'overcome the innumerable obstacles, above all the infinitely more intensive work which is demanded of the modern entrepreneur' (Weber 1991: 69). The source of the capitalist spirit in European history is a Protestant ethic characterized by an inherent tension in first, not knowing whether one is in God's grace, and second through purposeful worldly activity, by developing a calling or vocation, to overcome the ensuing anxiety

(Weber 1991: 111–112). It is this ethic in tension with the world, according to Weber's argument, that informs the entrepreneurial spirit and that is absent in China (Weber 1964: 227, 235–236).

Weber's insistence on this value-tension in the generation of a capitalist spirit is problematic on a number of levels. First, the argument itself is unique to Weber; it does not correspond with reported experiences of early Calvinists nor with the studies Weber drew upon in constructing his argument (Barbalet 2008: 54–56). Second, alternative accounts of the development of an originating capitalistic entrepreneurial spirit do not rely on a value-tension of the type Weber describes but on opportunities for profit-making through investment of time, effort and capital and associated practices of deferred gratification and community affirmation of profit-making as an esteemed activity (Barbalet 2008: 118–124). In this context, a cognitive and affective sensitivity to changing circumstances and how to cope with them, an inclination to find new opportunities for money-making where others see only constraints and declining present fortunes, can be construed as the basis of the entrepreneurial ethos underlying the spirit of capitalism (Harper 2007; Schumpeter 2008). It is of particular interest that Weber reports such inclinations in China (1964: 183, 188, 205) among traders, merchants and the propertied classes (1964: 186, 204, 224). But the drive for gain he notes in these and similar sources is dismissed as efficacious because by hypothesis they have a pedigree irrelevant for entrepreneurship in being 'contemplative' rather than 'asceticist' (1964: 188, 243; 1975: 337). In these complaints Weber confuses the underlying drive for profit with the structure of the economy within which it operates. He had already explained the absence in imperial China of modern industrial capitalism in institutional terms. To dismiss Chinese imperatives to profit-making as devoid of the ethos of capitalism because they were not based on the internal tensions he believed he had located in early modern European Protestantism is unnecessary and illogical. It is particularly ironical therefore that Weber's late-modern Confucian critics deny his factually correct claim concerning the institutional form of the imperial Chinese economy while accepting his flawed suppositions concerning the basis of the spirit of capitalism in ethical tension.

The argument that Confucian rationalism may not be so far removed from the Protestant form was advanced by Yang (1964: xxxvii) when he wrote that in Confucianism 'the given world was at ethical variance with the *tao* [the governing principle of cosmic and social order]' and therefore there is in it 'no acceptance of the world "as given" ... [Thus] Confucian rationalism and asceticism stemmed from this tension or variance between *tao* and worldly realities'. Yang (1964: xxxviii) goes on to acknowledge, however, that this argument 'may be only academic' as the historical reality was 'China's failure to develop capitalism'. Later commentators however demand a more thorough, and for them, consistent critique of Weber. Perhaps the best known is Metzger's (1977) exposition of the extensive sources within neo-Confucianism of moral tensions, often religious-like in their quality, ignored in Weber's discussion. While Metzger is credited with extending appreciation of the complexity of the Confucian legacy, and in particular with articulating its attention to and structure of moral tension, it is doubted by some commentators whether the tensions involved are socially transformative and therefore generative of modernizing imperatives in the manner a Weberian perspective requires (Chang 1980).

This issue is taken up by an account that has been influential in Chinese discussions of Weber and of the development of capitalism in China. Rather than emphasize tensions within neo-Confucianism, the Princeton-based scholar Yu Ying-shih (1987) has highlighted the rationalizing ethical content of neo-Confucianism and its operations, as a functional equivalent of European Protestantism, within the Chinese merchant class from the sixteenth century. The title of Yu's (1987) exposition indicates the inversion of Weber's contention concerning the failure of Chinese values to provide a foundation for capitalism; it translates as 'The Modern Chinese Religious Ethic and the Spirit of Merchants'. Yu constructs an historical genealogy of

Confucian merchant virtue through a number of steps. He argues that the teachings of neo-Confucian philosophy, in which personal morality is the basis of social order and prosperity, encouraged the values of thrift, honesty and effort that are consonant with a positive social evaluation of commercial engagement. Yu also argues that by the sixteenth century, population increases had led to an intensification of competition in the imperial examination system and that large numbers of failed candidates subsequently entered commercial occupations. In this way, he maintains, the merchant class was recruited from individuals thoroughly imbued with Confucian values through rigorous training, and those values – already widely socially diffused – promoted a rationalizing ethic conducive to commercial success.

Yu's arguments fail, however, on a number of important points. First, his characterization of neo-Confucianism is exceedingly narrow, focused almost exclusively on the ideas of Wang Yangming (1472–1528) and it therefore ignores other strands in the rich matrix of neo-Confucian thought. Relatedly, Yu fails to acknowledge the strictures imposed on profit-making in the Confucian conception of economic morality. Brook (1997: 35–38) shows that although some latitude was given to profit-making from the sixteenth century, in Confucian thought it was necessarily confined to accepting profit as reward for risk and also dutifulness, but was necessarily curtailed by the higher values of 'concern for the needs of others and reciprocity in the treatment of others' interests' (Brook 1997: 37). But even more important was the neo-Confucian notion of the state as ultimately responsible for the appropriate distribution of economic goods. This meant that profit-making that led to a redistribution of wealth, necessary for capitalism, must be denied to Confucian merchants (Brook 1997: 33). Yu's argument concerning the high social standing of merchants also requires qualification. The extent to which merchant professions were socially valued reflected the capacity of merchant profit to purchase land and also to finance training of family members for the imperial examination (Elvin 1973: 292–293). This source of esteem detracts from the social standing of merchants principally as profit takers advanced by Yu. Indeed, the Confucian morality of Chinese merchants from the sixteenth century that Yu supposes ignores practices that exceed neo-Confucian niceties and did not lead to high social status. Merchants and traders, seeking antidotes to uncertainty and risk, relied on fortune-tellers and local deities beyond the Confucian pantheon and individual merchants 'might have also been unreliable, slothful, timid, selfish and ostentatious' (Zurndorfer 2004: 11). Petty merchants in particular were attracted to the appeals of 'gambling, whoring and opium smoking' (Lufano 1997: 64). But more telling than anything else against Yu's argument, the Confucian merchant culture and practices he describes did not generate industrial capitalism in imperial China.

Since the 1980s, not the origin or absence of capitalism in East Asia but its late-twentieth century take-up, especially in Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea as well as Japan, has attracted scholarly attention. In this the role of Confucianism as a set of sociocultural attributes has been raised in attempting to understand the success of these late-developers. A number of writers of diverse background – including Anglo-American, Chinese-American and East Asian – have delineated the argument (see Dirlík 2011). In the space available here we shall focus on Berger's (1988) archetypal sociological discussion. The writers discussed earlier attempted to show how Confucian contributions to capitalism more or less followed the path set out by Weber, but by arguing that neo-Confucian ascetic ethics are a functionally equivalent of the Protestant ethic, and without necessarily challenging the conception of capitalism employed by Weber. Berger and associated writers point instead to a divergent form of capitalism, distinct from its individualistic Western form. Berger (1988: 4) asserts that the four little dragons are 'sufficiently distinct, as compared with the West, that one is entitled to speak of them as a "second case" of capitalist modernity'.

The distinctive features of the specifically East Asian form of capitalism identified by Berger and associated writers are not only confined to the four little dragons they explicitly refer to but, since the late 1980s, are frequently attributed also to the economy of mainland China. These are first, a high level of economic growth sustained over an extended period of time, which is achieved, second, with diminished social inequality, or at least ‘an astounding improvement in the material standards of living of virtually the entire population’ (Berger 1988: 5). A third feature of East Asian capitalist modernity is ‘a highly active government role in shaping the development process’ (Berger 1988: 5) and, finally, an economy led by the export sector. The following section of this chapter discusses how the East Asian economies might be characterized, but it is necessary to consider here briefly how meaningful is this description of the features of a distinctive ‘second case’ of capitalist modernity.

None of the elements referred to by Berger are in themselves suggestive of a regionally distinct or a non-individualistic form of capitalism. Beginning with the last two, a state-led export-oriented economy is characteristic of the growth model of early-stage capitalist economies in general. A second general feature of periods of early industrialization includes state provision of subsidies, credits, guaranteed prices and profits, and more direct forms of state investment that encourage private business investment. This was a feature of not only early Japanese development (Lockwood 1954: 246–248, 503–509, 571–592) but American. During the period 1813–1837 the US federal government provided infrastructure to the economy and subsidized private enterprise (Bruchey 1965: 122–123). From the period up to the mid-nineteenth century American state governments created thousands of business corporations and in other ways invested in the economy in order to stimulate private investment (Bruchey 1965: 128–129). Under conditions of capital shortage and market uncertainty government spending encourages private capital formation. Berger’s statement concerning economic inequality is at best optimistic while its empirical basis derives from the fact that aggregate income growth follows movement from an agrarian to an industrial economy. The high and sustained East Asian growth rates Berger refers to are now unequally distributed in the region, with the Japanese economy presently close to static.

As well as a distinctive form of East Asian capitalism Berger (1988: 5) identifies ‘distinctive social and cultural features’ to which it is ‘linked’. These include a ‘strong achievement-oriented work ethic’, a highly developed sense of collective solidarity ‘both within the family and in artificial groupings beyond the family’, and finally ‘the enormous prestige of education’ with which is associated both family commitment to provision of education for offspring and meritocratic norms and institutions which ‘select out elites’. These are distinctive East Asian sociocultural features, according to Berger (1988: 6), because they reflect values of collective solidarity and discipline as opposed to the individualistic values associated with Western capitalism and Weber’s theoretical approach to it. Berger is skeptical that these values can be simply seen as Confucian because other traditions, including Buddhism, may be involved; he therefore prefers to refer to ‘post-Confucian ethics’. Nevertheless, ‘Confucian-derived values’ are essential to the sociocultural basis of East Asian capitalism, according to Berger (1988: 7–8), which include ‘a positive attitude to affairs of this world, a sustained lifestyle of discipline and self-cultivation, respect for authority, frugality, [and] an overriding concern for stable family life’.

The sociocultural gloss on Confucian-derived values indicated by Berger ignores the institutional context in which these values operate and from which they are likely to derive. The three factors of discipline, education and family solidarity can be simply related to each other in terms of the authoritarian state structures that have historically dominated East Asian societies. In summary: the labour forces in each of these societies have been subject to political regimes that exert military and police control over workers and that provide direct support to employers.

No doubt there is widespread self-discipline in those societies in which external discipline is not only pervasive but harsh and forceful. Authoritarian states are typically militarized and in the case of South Korea and Taiwan, since the 1950s, the military 'gave disciplined training and basic literacy to a mass of young people, while rearing officers and managers who later populated state bureaucracies and big corporations' (Cumins 1984: 26). State investment in education in East Asian economies is low and the financial burden of educating children falls on families. Family investment in education and therefore employability reflects on the absence of public expenditure on aged-care, leading parents to invest in their own future needs by acquiring education and therefore employment opportunities for their children. Low state expenditure on social services is the institutional basis of continuing family solidarity in East Asia. These and related issues are amplified in the following section in which the economies of East Asian nation-states are more fully described.

Capitalism produces Confucianism

The economies of Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore are clearly capitalist, broadly understood. The economy of the People's Republic of China is not so easily classified. What these economies have in common is that they each can be shown to not so much rely on as 'lead to' Confucianism. It is not possible here to deal with all cases but discussion of Singapore, South Korea and China shall indicate the course from capitalist development to state-sponsored Confucianism.

Before 1959, when Singapore achieved self-government from Britain, its economy was based on entrepôt trade dominated by ethnic Chinese merchants, compradors and financiers. This situation fundamentally changed with the election in 1959 of a People's Action Party (PAP) government led by Lee Kuan Yew, which embarked on economic restructuring based on state-enterprise generated industrialization (Ramírez and Tan 2003: 4–6; Shome 2009). The newly created government-linked corporations (GLCs) operated across the economy and dominated shipbuilding, defence industries, banking and oil refining. As well as functioning as state-capitalist profit-generating enterprises in their own right the GLCs also served to attract foreign direct investment in the form of joint-partnerships with multinational corporations. In this development strategy the existing ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs, castigated as mere shopkeepers, petty traders and merchants by Lee and the PAP, were sidelined and excluded from the national economic development strategy. Indeed, the ethnic Chinese business community was explicitly denied access to the new Singaporean economy by the PAP; in parallel, ethnic Chinese social and cultural associations were undermined by government-sponsored alternative organizations designed to dilute, divert and render irrelevant Chinese clan and cultural forces. The government orientation of denying the presence of Chinese cultural beliefs and practices operated through a number of policies, including a broad spectrum of multi-racial initiatives in education, cultural affairs and housing designed to challenge the numerical dominance of the ethnic Chinese by giving equal cultural participation to the Malay and Indian minorities, enforcing English-language education and housing allocation designed to prevent the formation of single-ethnic enclaves.

While the racial and ethnic policies of the PAP have continued to the present day the economic recession of 1985 forced the government to reconsider its attitude to ethnic Chinese business. The predominantly Chinese small and medium enterprises (SMEs) at this time were labour intensive and generated low-productivity outputs. As they employed just over 40 per cent of the workforce they were seen to be responsible for locking up scarce economic resources that could potentially be deployed in more productive enterprises and, in addition, the government

realized that a modernization of the SMEs would not only release labour into the economy where it could be better employed but reorganized SMEs could operate as suppliers and subcontractors for foreign multinational corporations operating in Singapore, thus effecting technology transfer and attracting foreign investment (Chan and Ng 2006: 43–44). A large number of government schemes followed to modernize the SMEs and integrate them into the economic development of Singapore. Needless to say, by subjecting the SMEs to a modernization and integration strategy the cultural forms that may have operated in the ethnic Chinese family firms up to 1985 have been undermined and replaced with state-monitored economic rationalizing practices that brought them into line with the dynamics of the state-capitalist economy the PAP has envisioned and realized since 1959.

While the post-colonial Singaporean government began as a promoter of state capitalism and has continued to operate with a modernizing set of practices for the economy, it formed the view in the late 1970s that a market-based consumer-oriented society generated an ethos that could not legitimate the bureaucratic authoritarianism promulgated and promoted by the PAP. From this time it began to develop a ‘survival ideology’ emphasizing discipline and organization (Khong 1995: 124). This ideology was presented through a state-elite sponsored debate concerning the negative influence on Singaporeans of ideas ‘from abroad’ – difficult to monitor and control – in which ‘Asian values’ were advanced as a positive antidote to the ‘Western values’ that encouraged bad behaviour and mentality; the Asian values most desirable for Singaporeans were encapsulated in Confucianism (Khong 1995: 125–126). At the beginning of 1982 the government announced that Confucianism would be introduced into the school system, to be taught as moral education. In order to prepare and implement this programme the minister of education ‘invited to Singapore eight foreign specialists on Confucianism (all but one from the United States) to advise the Singaporean government on the design of a Confucian curriculum’, even though Singaporean businessmen ‘were concerned that it might undermine the development of that city-state’ (Dirlik 2011: 110, 123).

Confucianism has a long history in Korea, from the establishment of the Chosŏn dynasty in 1392. When it ended in 1897, the Chosŏn had occupied the longest ever period of Confucian rule in East Asia. The Confucian tradition continued after the collapse of the Chosŏn state through the continuing social dominance of the traditional landed families (*yangban*), which ended in 1949 when the newly established Syngman Rhee government enacted land reform in South Korea, effectively abolishing the landlord class that was the basis of traditional Korean society. Although the South Korean state would later indirectly use what it described as Confucian values as instruments of social control and legitimation, there was after 1949 no endorsement of the Confucian tradition, to which there was ‘tremendous antipathy’ as it was seen as an ‘obstacle to economic development’ (Robinson 1991: 218–219). Economic development eluded the corrupt Rhee regime that was deposed amid massive student protests in 1960. With a military coup in 1961, led by Park Chung-hee, rapid and significant economic growth began through the policies and practices of the Korean developmental state.

The Park regime succeeded in promoting strong capitalist development by supporting and assisting select national corporations, *chaebol*, through careful economic planning and professional state administration, and by the imposition of political stability through a state political machine. General Park personally oversaw and which penetrated all levels of South Korean society. When Park assumed political power in 1961 he acquired the levers of economic control. First, the banks were nationalized thus enabling the government to set interest rates and determine the allocation of capital; second, the government initiated an attack on corruption and profiteering, leading to the arrest of the heads of South Korea’s ten leading companies (Jung 1988; Kim 1971; Kim 1997). Having subordinated big businesses to the state, the government brought the leading

corporations into a developmental partnership in which the state provided both cheap capital through the nationalized banks and a low-wage workforce through the suppression of unions. In return the *chaebol* 'contributed' a portion of their profits to pay for and maintain the political alliances and party machine Park had put in place. The *chaebol* were also to comply with the state investment priorities engineered and administered by the state bureaucracy. The rapid growth and industrialization that South Korea experienced under Park, which served both business and the government party, operated in terms of economic incentives and disincentives. Traditional values, though, legitimated the managerial style of the *chaebol*.

South Korean companies made much of the Confucian background of their management practices. Many writers note the ambiguity with which corporations draw upon what they describe as 'traditional' values 'informed' by Confucian ideas 'evoked rather than invoked' (Janelli and Yim 1997: 111) and which made use 'not of Confucianism but of a system of traditional values ... formed under the strong influence of Confucianism' (Park 1997: 135). These circumspect statements reflect the partial, distorted and opportunistic application of Confucian-derived values by *chaebol* management. For instance, commercial transactions were held by management to include a moral dimension in which the 'more privileged party to a transaction had an obligation to consider the plight of the other' (Janelli and Yim 1997: 111–112). This sense of obligation (*injŏng*) featured in South Korean corporate functionaries' critiques of Western and especially American business practices. It was 'not the result of an unreflective Confucian compulsion but rather a choice of a cultural concept that was informed by Confucian understandings of how social relationships ought to be conducted and was simultaneously serviceable as a political-economic resource' (Janelli and Yim 1997: 114). It might be added that *injŏng* was never applied to the corporation's relations with its workforce.

South Korean managers' appeals to Confucianism functioned to legitimize their control of subordinates in which unquestioning obedience was expected in labour relations characterized by intense work practices and low pay. The Confucian gloss of the corporation as a family, propagated by management, was not only misleading but typically not accepted by the workforce. Confucian filial piety is not primarily focused on a son's obedience to parents but role compliance in which initiative is exercised in caring for and supporting parents (Janelli and Yim 1997: 119). The analogy of the corporation as a family was not accepted by the majority of workers, who preferred a military analogy of top-down command, discipline and unrewarded obedience (Janelli and Yim 1997: 121–122). Indeed, one commentator observes that 'Confucian authoritarian discipline' in South Korean work organization is an artifact of 'reinforcement from the successive militaristic cultures of Japanese colonialism, the war and the rise of the military [through the 1961 coup] in the political arena' (Kim 1988: 211). The promotion of Confucianism by the South Korean state in the 1980s was similarly a largely rhetorical attempt to legitimate the strong-state development model rather than recognition of any Confucian contribution to that development (Dirlik 2011: 112–113).

Mainland Chinese businesses were, for the first time since 1949, able to set their own market-led goals, retain profits and provide their workforces with material incentives such as performance bonuses as a result of the economic reforms initiated at the Eleventh Party Congress in 1978. These reforms were not officially fashioned as an introduction of capitalism to China but, as formulated at the Twelfth National Party Congress in 1982, as 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'. Certainly the operations of the profit motive and personal gain leading to capital accumulation and the monetization and commercialization of an expanding range of social relations indicate a capitalist society. The continuing domination of the Communist Party, however, and the political generation and control of the market economy in which the state's regulatory, monitoring, economic enterprises and planning roles have expanded as the private sector has

grown (Francis 2001) means that there is no differentiation from the political sphere (Szelényi 2010: 205–207). This has led some commentators to note that while China is no longer socialist, it is not clearly capitalist (Faure 2006: 68–70; Mann 2011: 22–23). Nevertheless, the international nature of market relations, production and surplus extraction, theorized in various ways (including dependency theory, world systems theory, economic globalization theory), and the integral links between China's marketization and its entry into global capitalist networks from the early 1980s, encourages acknowledgement of the underlying capitalist dynamic of a highly distinctive Chinese form of party-state capitalism or centrally managed capitalism (Lin 2010).

From the point of view of Weber's model of capitalism, China is a deviant case indeed. Considering the six conditions necessary for modern capitalism Weber set out in *General Economic History* (Weber 1981: 276–278) none are clearly satisfied in China. The persistence of state enterprises in key sectors and the continuing party control of the economy means that the first, 'rational capital accounting as the norm for all large industrial undertakings', cannot be properly met even though there is limited satisfaction of the second condition 'freedom of the market', especially in the consumer sector. With massive transfer of Western technology to China the third condition, 'rational technology', is satisfied, although the fourth, 'calculable law', is at best a work in progress and, given the dominant role of the party, quite compromised. Weber's fifth condition, 'free labour', is arguably met in China although the suppression of independent collective action and organization by workers (Chen 2007) is a counter indicator. Weber's final condition, 'the commercialization of economic life ... the general use of commercial instruments to represent share rights in enterprise, and also in property ownerships', is both satisfied and not satisfied. The commercialization of economic life has progressed enormously since the early 1980s but the continuing mix of commercial and political instruments tends to nullify the second part of this condition. But these limitations on Chinese satisfaction of Weber's necessary conditions for modern capitalism reflect more on Weber than on Chinese party-state capitalism. Historically, capital accumulation may generate marketization and also de-marketization at different times and in different locations (Hung 2012). Similarly, labour may be free or less-than-free, depending on the form and stage of capital development. The participation in entrepreneurial activity of state institutions, including the military, the police and universities (Bickford 1994; Ding 1996), is not confined to China but now common in Western capitalism (Sandel 2000: 91–93).

The success of Chinese capitalism, 'embedded in the authoritarian structure of Chinese politics' (Ku 2010: 38), is a confirmation of Weber's account of Confucianism, according to Ku (2010: 26–29). The Chinese Communist Party's dislodgement of the traditional landowning and propertied classes and their concerted campaigns against Confucian thought and practices during the 1950s and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) paved the way for present-day capitalism in China. The People's Commune movement, begun in 1958, 'successfully transformed village communities into factory-like production units' so that 'the functions of traditional family, lineage, and clan were more or less eliminated' (Ku 2010: 38). Also, 'the political transformation from "patrimonial bureaucracy" to "party bureaucracy" ... has freed [China] from the mode of the "pre-modern state" that is characterized by inefficiency and the inability to utilize organizational strength' (Ku 2010: 29). In this way 'all of the institutional characteristics that Weber identifies as impeding capitalist development ... have been overcome in the process of policy implementation' (Ku 2010: 29). It is true that family obligation (*xiao*) and network obligation (*guanxi*) persist in present-day China. These are not Confucian echoes, however, but consequences of the absence of state aged- and child-care (Whyte 2005) and of a robust law and rights framework (Qi 2013).

It is of particular interest in this context that since the mid-1980s there has been an official rehabilitation of Confucius and promotion of New Confucianism (Song 2003; Tan 2008). The

appeal of New Confucianism in China has a number of sources (Link 1986: 83–86), but two in particular are relevant to the present discussion. New Confucianism unites ‘cultural China’ in a way that acknowledges a common heritage that brings mainland China together with Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore and thereby facilitates the participation of overseas Chinese in the Mainland economy: up to the mid-1990s investors from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore contributed 75 per cent of foreign capital to China, and if other ‘overseas-Chinese’ are included the figure goes up to 85 per cent. Officially, New Confucianism is thought to provide moral guidance when Marxist certainties have eclipsed. This is to say that Confucianism is introduced by the party to provide legitimation to its post-Mao capitalist development (Chan 1969: 32–35).

Conclusion

The discussion of Confucian thought and its possible connections with the development of capitalism in East Asia is refracted in the literature through consideration of Weber’s account of both. This chapter points to the quite different appraisals of Weber’s treatment of Confucianism, and also to the different meanings Confucianism itself has acquired in the development of East Asian capitalism. In briefly describing the development of capitalism in Singapore, South Korea and China different state strategies toward Confucian values have been indicated. Within these differences a common pattern emerges of the mobilization of Confucian values to legitimate extraneous economic and political arrangements. This conforms to the original state apprehension of Confucianism during the Han dynasty. In an insightful polemic the Chinese dissident writer Liu Xiaobo argues that while the historical Confucius may have been a ‘stray dog’, unable to find a ‘master’ who would employ him in state service, the sage Confucius, venerated by those in political power and their intellectual servants, becomes a ‘guard dog’ in defending state legitimacy (Liu 2012). But the perennial challenge of Confucian values to profit-making, as undermining family coherence and lineage, makes the support of Confucianism for capitalist activity at best ambiguous. This too returns us to Weber and his concern with the possibly ‘irreconcilable conflict’ between the different value spheres of ethical codes and economic practices (Weber 1970: 147).

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Religion and Asia's middle classes

Daromir Rudnyckyj

Since the oil shocks of the 1970s, Asia has been the site of the world's most impressive economic growth. The "tiger economies" of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea followed Japan's model of export-driven development to become some of the world's fastest growing economies. These four were joined by the so-called "tiger cub economies" of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines. More recently, countries such as China, India, and Vietnam have attracted attention as sites for economic investment and growth. Tales of the spectacular economic achievements across this region are common in magazines, newspapers, television shows, and blog posts. An often-remarked feature of rapid economic development in many of these countries has been the corresponding expansion of the middle classes across the region. For example, the *Economist* noted that the number of middle-class Indonesian citizens (defined as those earning US\$3,000 per year in disposable income) was forecast to grow from 50 million members in 2009 to 150 million by 2014 (*Economist* 2011).

The social and cultural context and effects of economic development have been a focus of inquiry in the human sciences. Earlier investigations were often framed by the tenets of modernization theory, which often presumed that secularization would accompany democratization, nationalism, and capitalist economic growth (Rostow 1960). The growth of the middle classes has precipitated new political orientations, projects of subjectification, and practices of consumption and commodification. However, one of the most striking dimensions of economic development and the new middle classes in Asia has been its religious dimensions. The rapid expansion of the middle classes has strengthened and transformed existing religious traditions and, in other cases, facilitated the introduction of new religious movements and practices. This is particularly notable given that modernization theory predicted a declining significance for religion (or at the very least its consignment to the private, domestic sphere) and raises the question: why has the expansion of the middle classes resulted in enhanced religious piety? Moreover, how has the expansion of the middle classes created new techniques of religious practice?

Drawing on research on Asia and my own fieldwork on moderate Islamic spiritual reform movements active in Southeast Asia, this chapter argues that the popularity of new religious movements stems from their ability to appeal to the concerns of new middle-class subjects. Emergent religious movements tailor their messages to appeal to the anxieties and difficulties

faced by people with disposable incomes. Furthermore, the form through which new religious movements articulate their messages of piety, often utilizing sophisticated technological and multimedia presentations, appeals to the middle class.

I argue that the spiritual reform effort I studied in Southeast Asia appealed to members of the middle class for three main reasons. First, it made middle-class work more than simply a means of earning a living and turned it into what Max Weber (2001) famously referred to as a “calling.” Second, it offered a compelling alternative to traditional religious authority, as new spiritual experts developed forms of instruction that appealed to members of the middle class. Finally, these spiritual reform efforts skillfully reconciled religion with scientific and professional fields, as those who found such reform efforts convincing were largely schooled in modern educational systems that placed a high premium on scientific and technical (as opposed to spiritual) explanations for worldly phenomena. I conclude that these spiritual reform efforts represent efforts to create a form of Islam commensurate with the needs of new middle-class subjects.

Middle-class piety in Asia

The historically unprecedented economic growth that is occurring across Asia today has facilitated the massive emergence of new middle classes. Scholars initially presumed that modernization would lead to a separation of the public and the private in which religion would be confined to the latter sphere (Rostow 1960). Such a perspective endorsed an implicit Protestant religiosity, premised on a split between exterior and interior lives (Keane 2002). Indeed, across Asia, where Protestantism has been a minority religion whose forms often embraced ecstatic and mystical forms of religiosity that contrasted with the ascetic Protestantism most famously analyzed by Max Weber (2001), the presumed split between public and private did not hold. Indeed, one of the central themes in scholars who have analyzed religion in contemporary Asia has been widespread evidence of public religious practice (Berger 1999; Hefner 2001; Juergensmeyer 2005; Roy 2004; Wiegele 2005; Willford and George 2005; Yang 2004).

A further presumption of modernization theory was that the expansion of middle classes possessing increased incomes and education levels would also reduce the influence of religious authority and religious practice. However, today it appears that the opposite has occurred, as religious practices are in fact more pronounced among members of Asia's middle classes. Indeed, scholars have identified three key dimensions that characterize Asia's emergent middle classes and the increasing visibility of religion across the region. First, scholars have focused on the politics of middle-class religious piety, examining both how religion has served as a medium of new political action and how states have deployed religion as a means of subject-making. Another set of writings has looked at how religion acts in the formation of both selves and classes. Third, scholars have examined how the consumption and commodification of religion serves to mark class distinctions and demonstrates the emergence of new agents of religious authority.

Religion has been closely tied both to sustaining authoritarian rule as well as recent movements for democratization. In Indonesia, Asia's second largest democracy, mobilization through religious networks played a key role in efforts by the authoritarian Suharto state to maintain power (Boellstorff 2005). Most notable in this respect was the establishment of the ICMI (Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals), which was established with the involvement of the regime to cultivate the allegiance of urban middle classes, many of whom exhibited increasingly pious behavior and inclinations toward Islamic devotion (Hefner 1993). These efforts were in part a response to other middle-class movements that mobilized through Islam for democratic reform during the 1990s (Hefner 2000). Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, renewed interest in religion was seen as the effect of the rise of authoritarian regimes that facilitated the

middle classes in the first place. Thus, in places like Thailand and the Philippines the upsurge of middle-class religiosity represented a concern for individual well-being (Mulder 1993). More recently, scholars have shown how middle-class religious groups in Indonesia have effectively mobilized to advance Islamist agendas in the space created by democratization (Brenner 2011; Ibrahim 2011; Sidel 2006).

Other scholars have shown how developmentalist states have deployed religion to cultivate a middle class commensurate with developmental ambitions. Thus, in Malaysia the Mahathir-led state used media, religious education, and development initiatives like mosque building to foster a form of Islam commensurate with capitalism. State development strategies sought to create so-called "New Malays" equipped with qualities commensurate with the demands of transnational corporations (such as diligence, accountability, and education) (Fischer 2008; Nagata 1999; Ong 1999). Thus, "government policies seek to bring Islam in line with capitalism" by promoting a form of Islam that is fully compatible with the state's development objectives (Ong 1999: 204). The New Malay is represented as "self-disciplined, able, and wealth accumulating, but in a way that is cast within the precepts of Islam rather than of capitalism" (Ong 1999: 204). Thus, the state has promoted a style of Islamic practice that is fully commensurate with capitalism and has sought to reconcile Islamic piety and action with modernization (Sloane 1999).

State efforts to cultivate productive middle classes through defining appropriate religious practices have taken place under the rubric of so-called "Asian values." Thus, Prime Minister Mahathir in Malaysia and Lee Kuan Yew, his Singaporean contemporary, argued that Asians are more concerned with economic development than political freedom and that Asian nations are culturally incompatible with democracy (Nevins and Peluso 2008: 10). In so doing, they argued that Asian religions like Islam and Confucianism emphasize paternalism and patriarchy, and that Western concerns with equality and democratic freedom are foreign to Asia (Heng and Devan 1995). In South Korea, the deployment of Confucianism to promote rapid economic growth similarly resonated with these assertions of Asian values. The Korean state openly drew on Confucian principles to foster respect for the bureaucracy and to facilitate the state's role in economic development. Furthermore, the state promoted education to facilitate human resources and invoked patriarchal kinship patterns to create a docile labor force (Park 1999). In contrast, some countries have avoided such generalizations regarding Asian values, by achieving economic growth and the expansion of the middle class in tandem with democratization. The expansion of the middle class in Taiwan was contemporaneous with widespread revivals of Buddhism and Daoism, both heavily intermingled with Confucian moral discourse, as well as forms of ancestor worship (Weller 2000). Thus, Madsen (2009) argues that Taiwan shows that globalization can help lead to a "religious renaissance" among the middle class that is conducive to democracy. In some cases, Asian states have deployed religion to cultivate middle-class subjects in diasporic contexts beyond national boundaries (Fischer 2011).

Analysts have also addressed how religion has facilitated the efforts of middle-class subjects in their own projects of self-making. Thus, changing funerary practices at Thai temples are interpreted as indicative of the spread of middle-class sensibilities. As the Thai economy has grown, wakes and cremations are increasingly institutionalized and performed in Buddhist temples instead of open, forest spaces (Fishel 2005). In India, castes act as interest associations in the country's democracy and serve as the basis for the formation of firms that enable economic improvement and class mobility (Adams 2001).

The networks formed through new religious movements and organizations serve as key means that Asians use to develop commercial opportunities and ultimately class mobility (Osella and Osella 2009). In Indonesia, new Islamic movements create networks that enable citizens from different social backgrounds to share and make contacts. These networks facilitate upward

mobility and create new markets for commercial products, while simultaneously disseminating the messages of the Islamic revival (Hasan 2009). Similarly, lower caste families in India use religious networks to mark themselves as middle class. Although low-caste members of the middle class share the cultural conceptions characteristic of India more broadly, they interpret Hinduism in a non-hegemonic frame. Thus, they seek to create a “middle-class Hinduism” devoid of caste, and focused on auspiciousness, rather than purity and pollution (Säävälä 2001). Middle-class business networks in East Asia can be characterized by paternalistic organization drawing on Confucian values in which entrepreneurs rely on a small circle of family and friends creating a social network based on trust (Koon 1999). Indeed, these forms have been common in Southeast Asia, where Chinese entrepreneurial networks were shaped both by religious character and historical repression. Thus, an entrepreneurial class was created based on personal networks of trust (Harianto 1999).

Religion has also played a strong role in gendered middle-class identification. Thus, beginning in the 1990s young, middle-class Indonesian women adopted increasingly pious Muslim identities as critique of both their parents and the corrupt Suharto state. They viewed Islam as a means of averting moral decline and social disintegration that is brought on by modernization and development (Brenner 1996). Drawing on colonial legacies (Stoler 1995), Indonesian housewives fashion themselves as gendered experts responsible for the moral probity of their families (Jones 2004, 2010a). The religious practices of female members of Islamist political parties exhibit the creation of a particular kind of middle-class subjectivity. Patterns of dress and marriage show how these pious Islamic practices enact class and gender difference and simultaneously produce “modern” selves (Rinaldo 2008).

Another major theme in middle-class religious practice in Asia is the commodification of religion. A number of scholars have examined how various religious practices are mediated through the market and consumed by those with increasing disposable incomes (Kitiarsa 2008b). The emergence of large-scale middle classes has been accompanied by a rise in new practices of conspicuous consumption in Asia (Mazzarella 2003; Vann 2006; Watson 1997; Zhang 2012). In Indonesia, women have been seen as both the signs and solutions of national progress and thus anxieties over social status have made Islamic consumption an especially appealing route to achieving the discipline and virtue appropriate to class position (Jones 2012). In Thailand, diminished state influence in Buddhism has led to the proliferation of new forms of religious practice that speak to the concerns of an expanding middle class (Kitiarsa 2008a). New practices of piety popular among the middle class have all been interpreted as indications of the commodification of religion (Klima 2004). Thus the country has seen an increase in the veneration of the royal family, the integration of Chinese gods (especially Kuan Im, the goddess of mercy) into Theravada practice, and monks who become the object of widespread public veneration (Jackson 1999).

Examples of the commodification of religion appealing to an emergent middle class have been common across Asia. In Vietnam, spirit mediumship has emerged as a critical site of middle-class religious practice, with surprising results as late capitalist commercialization and commodification is mirrored in the spiritual realm (Salemink 2008). Amid state efforts to designate appropriate religious practices, the performance of spiritual mediumship reinforces the sharp social differentiation that accompanies capitalist market reforms. Widespread examples of the commodification of religion are evident in Malaysia (Fischer 2008), Indonesia (Howell 2008), Singapore (Chin 2008; Sinha 2008), and in various sites that link East and Southeast Asia (Askew 2008; DeBernardi 2008).

The new dynamics of religious consumption and the expanding middle classes in Asia have also opened up spaces for new religious authorities. In Indonesia, the growth of a Muslim middle

class has created new markets for contextualized Islamic knowledge, portending greater demand for university-educated preachers rather than those educated in more traditional *madrassah* (*pesantren*) settings (Muzakki 2008). In many cases, these new religious figures often eschew traditional forms of proselytization and oration for spaces and media that appeal to middle-class sensibilities, such as megachurches, Microsoft, and mass media (Lim 2009). From Taiwan to Singapore and from the Philippines to India, celebrity preachers seek to combine traditional religious discourses with science, pop psychology, and modern management techniques (Cruz 2009; Fuller 2009; Hoesterey 2012; Pazderic 2004; Rudnyckyj 2009).

Spiritual reform in Indonesia

Many of the dynamics evident in Asia at large are also evident in Indonesia, which contains both one of the world's fastest growing middle classes and the world's largest Muslim population. Although Islam in Indonesia has long been viewed as syncretic, characterized by the integration of Hindu, Buddhist, and animist elements (Geertz 1960), for more than a century the archipelago has been home to groups that have sought to promote a "purified" version of Islamic practice (Peacock 1978). Indeed, one of Indonesia's pioneering nationalist movements, Sarekat Islam, was founded in 1912 and mobilized under the rubric of Islam to advocate for self-government and to oppose to colonial rule. The organization was composed primarily of bourgeois entrepreneurs who simultaneously sought to empower local traders (Mansur 2004).

Since the late 1970s and 1980s, scholars have observed a marked increase in Islamic piety among middle-class Indonesians and vigorous debates over what constitutes proper Islamic practice are common across the archipelago (Bowen 2003; Brenner 1996; Hefner 1993, 2000). In addition, scholars have noted that middle-class Indonesians are deeply involved in creating new avenues for and forms of Islamic practice and piety. Among the manifestations of efforts to enhance and demonstrate increased Islamic piety has been the increased visibility of domains explicitly demarcated as Islamic, such as fashion (Jones 2010b), art (George 2009), and media (Howell 2008).

One expression of the increased visibility of Islamic practice has been popular movements aimed at enhancing individual piety and practice. These movements often draw on American self-help, personal success, and popular psychology literatures to show how Islamic practice is conducive to modern, middle-class work and family life (Jones 2010a; Rudnyckyj 2010). Perhaps the most popular of these programs is called the Emotional and Spiritual Quotient (ESQ) program, which advocates Islamic piety as a key to commercial success. ESQ is the brainchild of Ary Ginanjar, a charismatic former business executive who experienced a religious renaissance in middle age after launching successful health insurance and telecommunications companies. While developing strategies to manage his employees, he read human resources management primers and attended a number of leadership training programs. At the same time, he was studying with an Islamic religious scholar (*kyai*) and began to make connections between the principles for business success advocated in management manuals and Islamic practice, history, and doctrine.

Ginanjar's ESQ training program is premised on the notion that Indonesia's leaders had for too long privileged technical knowledge (IQ) over emotional and spiritual knowledge. In so doing, Ginanjar sees his intervention as merging the "discoveries" of Daniel Goleman, the psychologist and management trainer who conceived of emotional intelligence (EQ), and Danah Zohar, a New Age writer and motivational speaker, who concocted the concept of spiritual intelligence (SQ) (Goleman 1995; Zohar and Marshall 2000). The program draws as much on scientific achievements and secular business management knowledge as it does on Islamic

practice and doctrine. Thus, Ginanjar combines the measured prudence of the management guru Stephen Covey's (1989) *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* with an Islamic version of the fire-and-brimstone oratory characteristic of American televangelists.

After Ginanjar initially wrote a book about ESQ and began giving small seminars to influential leaders in and around Jakarta in 2001, his program quickly spread across Indonesia. He developed fully fledged multiday training programs for employees at Indonesian companies and then a range of other "products" including programs for teens, children, and parents. The elaborate "spiritual training" programs mix the latest human resources management theory with collective prayers and lessons in Islamic history.

In his books, seminars, and training programs, Ginanjar instructs participants that the five pillars of Islam contain a formula for commercial success. Thus, he asserts that a work ethic conducive to business and life success is present in the five pillars of Islam. For example, the fourth pillar, the duty to fast during Ramadan, is recast as a directive for self-control and individual accountability. In terms startlingly evocative of Covey's, the third pillar, the obligation to give alms, is taken as a divine endorsement of "strategic collaboration," "synergy," and exercising "win-win" approaches in both business transactions and relations with co-workers. Ginanjar describes the prophet Muhammad as the model for a successful corporate executive and participants are encouraged to emulate his example in business and trade.

The highly engaging, interactive ESQ sessions have attracted over one million participants. Ginanjar uses the latest high-tech media centered on a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. His presentations feature graphs, charts, tables, and ubiquitous bullet points, as well as entertaining film clips, vivid photographs, and popular music with a driving bass line and catchy lyrics. Ginanjar uses a diverse array of popular media, websites, and academic journals, drawing as much on Hollywood blockbusters as the sage scholarship of Harvard Business School.

Ginanjar and his acolytes seek to inculcate the notions that hard work, productivity, and individual initiative are morally good qualities both through appeals to Islam and through short presentations on scientific management. For example, the "leadership principle" draws on the second pillar of the Islamic faith (*aqidah*), commanding conviction in the prophets of monotheism. This principle was illustrated with a graph drawn from an article published in the *Harvard Business Review* by J. Sterling Livingston (Livingston 1988). The graph depicted the relation of employee motivation to business success. The y-axis was labeled "strength of motivation" and the x-axis was labeled "probability of success." The x-axis had three equidistantly spaced numbers: 0.0 at the y-axis, 0.5 in the middle, and 1.0 at the far right. Above the numbers was a smooth bell curve that peaked above 0.5. To those who attended these training programs, many of whom had degrees in engineering and other technical fields and were familiar with this genre of presenting information, the graph demonstrated that employee motivation and labor output were optimized when employees were led to believe that any undertaking had only a 50 percent chance of success. If they felt there was little chance of reaching a goal, or a too easy possibility of success, their motivation would decline. Thus, managers had to consistently convey to their subordinates that corporate goals had only a 50:50 possibility of realization.

ESQ was especially popular at sites such as Krakatau Steel, a massive state-owned steel company in western Java, where I conducted ethnographic research in three separate visits between 2002 and 2008. Krakatau Steel was founded in the 1970s as a centerpiece of national development under the import substitution industrialization prong of Indonesia's New Order development strategy (Hill 2000). The company became central to the project of modernization that was a preoccupation of Indonesia's long-time strongman president, Suharto, and was the backbone of a sprawling industrial region located adjacent to the town of Cilegon.¹

It is crucial to note the critical place that Krakatau Steel played in the Indonesian national imaginary. The company produced a material that was viewed as absolutely critical to the state's nationalist project of modernization. It occupied an iconic position in the nation receiving frequent visits from the Indonesian president and other official dignitaries.² The 1998 Asian financial crisis, the end of the Suharto regime, and the increasing integration of Indonesia into a wider global economy have called state-led developmentalism and sites like Krakatau Steel into question. From the 1970s until the mid-1990s, Krakatau Steel had been the recipient of billions of dollars in state development funds. For years state investment guaranteed the company's viability, as it was able to keep up with advances in steel production technology. However, such investment was brought to an end in 1998 after the near bankruptcy of the Indonesian government. Tariffs on imported steel that had long protected the company from international competition were fully eliminated in April 2004. Further, China emerged as a threat to the Indonesian steel industry and employees feared that once the Chinese economy began to slow down, China would flood the Indonesian market with cheap, imported steel. Furthermore, new legal protections for workers offered unprecedented possibilities for political mobilization by factory employees, including the formation of a new labor union. Finally, and perhaps most ominously for some employees, the Indonesian government has proposed privatizing Krakatau Steel, which could trigger sweeping job losses for members of a workforce that previously were able to count on lifetime employment.

Movements like ESQ appealed to the Indonesian middle classes that came of age during the Suharto years and continued to grow during Indonesia's new economic boom that began in the early 2000s. State-owned enterprises like Krakatau Steel mark pivotal sites for understanding the formation of this sector. Efforts to define Islamic practice as conducive to modern work hinged on efforts to turn work into a form of worship or a calling. Further, movements like ESQ offered an alternative to traditional forms and expressions of religious authority. Finally, these spiritual reform efforts skillfully reconciled Islamic practice with principles drawn from modern, secular education and scientific fields. It is for these reasons that these movements have been embraced by Indonesia's expanding middle classes.

Worshipping work: making labor a calling

Efforts in ESQ to reconfigure work as a religious calling were visible throughout the three-day training program, but perhaps most visible on the final day. The culmination of ESQ training involved eight hours working on five physical activities based on the five pillars of Islam. These five steps were a "mission statement" based on the *syahadat* or Muslim confession of the faith, "character building" founded on the requirement to pray five times a day, "developing self-control" derived from the requirement to fast from sunup to sundown during Ramadan, "strategic collaboration" developed out of the requirement of each Muslim to pay alms (*zakat*), and "total action" based on the requirement that each Muslim make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during their lifetime, if they are financially able. Interactive exercises were devised to illustrate each of the principles. Thus, for "strategic collaboration" each participant paired up with another, shined his or her shoes, and then reciprocally paid the other for the service. The funds were usually then collected to be donated to charity. A common criticism of employees of state-owned enterprises was their poor customer service. The exercise was intended to illustrate the importance of working collaboratively with one's co-workers.

The concluding exercise of ESQ was introduced under the rubric of total action and included a simulation of three of the most important aspects of the *hajj*, pilgrimage: *tawaf*, the circumambulation of the *kabbah*; the *sa'i*, a ritual that consists of running seven times back and

forth between the hills of Safa and Marwah in Mecca; and the stoning of *jamrat al-aqabah*, in which pilgrims hurl rocks at three representations of the devil. The chairs at the edges of the room were stacked neatly to maximize the usable space in the hall and the women and men were divided into two groups on opposite sides of the room. Three successive representations of the devil drawn on big flip charts were displayed. The participants were given little balls of paper that were vehemently hurled at the pictures. The *sa'i* was enacted by running back and forth across the room and each participant completed seven cycles, while a dramatic historical video glorifying Krakatau Steel was projected on the screens. Finally, a replica of the *kabbah* was introduced into the center of the room itself. Participants walked around it singing “there is no God but Allah” (*la illaha illallah*), while two different videos were juxtaposed behind them on the projection screens. The first showed pilgrims circling the actual *kabbah* in the Al Haram mosque in Mecca, while the second was a live feed of the simulated circumambulation taking place in the room. After this was completed the trainers saluted the participants with chants of “hey *haji*, *haji*, *haji*.” Immediately after the event a number of past participants stood on chairs at the front of the room to give motivational speeches encouraging participants to treat their work at Krakatau Steel with the same devotion with which they had “just completed the *hajj*” and to carry back the feeling of inspiration and motivation from the simulated pilgrimage to their work stations the next day. Thus, the individual reform that was sought through spiritual training was thus likened to the transformation that one is said to experience during the actual *hajj*.

This final session most directly sought to equate religious activity with work and other daily obligations. Total action referred to taking responsibility for one’s actions at work. Just as one had to take accountability for their Islamic practice, they must also be accountable for their performance at work and the overall performance of the company. This was an important lesson for employees of institutions that under the Suharto era were hierarchically governed and in which responsibility was usually the provenance of only a few at the top. Workers had become accustomed to waiting for orders from superiors prior to taking any on the job action themselves. However, this submissive disposition, while a central part of New Order governing strategy, was taken to be no longer commensurable with the new economic norms in which the company found itself enmeshed. Spiritual reform sought to transform passive objects of the hierarchical system characteristic of the New Order, into “pro-active” entrepreneurial subjects who will make decisions based on their own judgments rather than waiting for orders to come down from above.

Many of the ESQ activities sought to reconfigure work as a calling and thus create a workforce that would be commensurable with the changing norms of an increasingly global steel market. At the precise moment in which state guarantees for protecting the domestic production of key industrial commodities was taking place, the company had introduced a program that sought to enhance the Islamic piety and productivity of company employees. The training is a carefully calibrated series of exercises that argues that being a good Muslim is equivalent to being a good worker.

New figures of authority

A second key feature of ESQ was that it made visible the emergence of a new type of religious leader and entailed a new form of conveying religious truth. In Indonesia, the most influential Islamic authorities are known as *kyai* (sometimes also called *ulama*). In many cases these religious leaders acquired Islamic knowledge by studying overseas in places like Baghdad or Cairo, after which they returned to the archipelago to establish Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*).³ Teaching methods typically involved rote memorization of the Qur’an Arabic (Gade 2004). In

most cases, students under the tutelage of such *kyai* would learn how to recite the Qur'an without having any knowledge of the meaning of the Arabic words they articulated.

Krakatau Steel employees who had completed ESQ training all affirmed that it was the form of the training that marked its difference from traditional forms of religious instruction under *kyai* at Islamic boarding schools. They remarked that what they found distinctive was the ability of ESQ trainers to convey Islamic knowledge through sensory experiences in a way that made it more accessible and less abstract than others through which they had experienced the religion (Hirschkind 2001). The dramatic graphics and images conveyed during Ary Ginanjar's PowerPoint presentation were repeatedly invoked when employees favorably contrasted ESQ to other forms of Islamic instruction, most significantly those utilized at Islamic boarding schools.

Further distinctive about ESQ was its use of elaborate visual material to convey religious messages. At Islamic boarding schools, the mode of instruction is almost exclusively aural and students typically learn to sing their recitations of the Qur'an as music. While they learn the sounds that Arabic letters make, they have no comprehension of the significance of the words they recite. For example, the wife of one Krakatau Steel manager, Yuliana, contrasted the use of visual material in ESQ to other methods of Islamic study and training to which she had been exposed. She professed a profound transformation of piety for both herself and her husband after they had completed the training. She said that ESQ was far superior to:

traditional methods, in which there is no technology. ESQ has a drastic impact. People realize their sins instantly ... there is a visual display about how God made the universe ... Ary Ginanjar is much more effective because he uses visuals. The visuals show how small we are in the universe; there are so many unseen galaxies. This is proof of the greatness of God.

For Yuliana, then, the technology used by ESQ makes it immediately transparent which forms of religious practice are sanctioned and which are not. One's sins are immediately apparent because of the effectiveness of the visual images.

Another company employee, Dodot, who worked in the training center and was responsible for organizing various training programs at the company, also referred to the innovations in the form of religious instruction in ESQ. He claimed to have experienced a profound transformation because, like Yuliana, ESQ had shown him "the greatness of God," which he had never fully comprehended even though he had spent quite a bit of time involved in Islamic instruction from the time he was a child. He told me that as a child, his family had hired a religious teacher to instruct him and his siblings in Islam every week. However, these lessons involved reading and reciting the Qur'an in Arabic and, for him, had never had the same impact of ESQ. Dodot said that ESQ was a more effective means of instruction than traditional forms of Islamic education because of the "visual methods" that it used. He told me, "It is difficult to imagine (*bayangkan susah*) the greatness of God. It is more effective with visual methods." He said it was more successful because "being able to see" the message of the Qur'an and *hadiths* enhances one's "conviction" (*keyakinan*). Again, religious form is what is at issue: visual cues were considered far superior to conventional forms of transmitting religious knowledge orally. Dodot also noted that the content of the training was the same as that which he had experienced in courses in Islam as a youth.

Dodot contrasted ESQ with Islamic instruction in religious schools, which he said "was just talking and memorization." He told me that although the material conveyed in both was the same, it was much more difficult to "absorb" teachings through traditional methods because there were no images. As we sat in the small office he shared with another company employee,

Dodot emphasized the difference visualization made by comparing one's reaction to a car accident based on whether one witnessed it in person or merely heard about it. He said:

When we see something visual, it makes it clearer, makes us more certain. Look, if someone tells us that there is an accident (*tabrakan*) out on the road there [gestured toward the highway], we will be more impressed (*lebih kesan*) if we see a picture of it or if we go out and see it ourselves.

Participants in spiritual reform exhorted the efficacy of visual images to make an impact as central to the ability of ESQ to successfully reform Indonesian Muslims by enhancing their piety. Although Islam prohibits the visual representation of certain images, most notably Allah, Ary Ginanjar successfully conveyed “the greatness of Allah” through other images, most notably astronomical depictions of the solar system, other galaxies, and the universe. Traditional religious scholars, unfamiliar with PowerPoint and other representational technologies, were not nearly so well equipped.

Thus, in each of these examples the participants invoked the form of ESQ training as evidence of its appeal. They all maintained that the content of ESQ training was the same as the content of other forms of Islamic instruction in Indonesia, whether in the form of study groups, Islamic boarding schools, or mosque lectures. The tremendous appeal of ESQ was the fact that it deployed visual materials in a way that made Islam appealing to members of the middle class well acquainted with contemporary technology. Rather than the dry, rote memorization of the Islamic boarding school, ESQ offered vivid animated graphics, dramatic scenes from popular films, and lively PowerPoint slides. For members of a middle class who frequently engaged with popular media, from Hollywood films to Latin American soap operas, this made for a much more compelling introduction to Islam. The effectiveness of ESQ, then, lay in the use of modern technology to introduce and reacquaint individuals with Islam, in a way that was largely unprecedented in Indonesia. Illustrating Islamic texts and history with images and sound made the religion accessible in an entirely new way to educated, middle-class practitioners.

Scientific Islamism

The aspect of ESQ that resonated most persuasively with employees of Krakatau Steel was that it configured a mode of Islamic practice that was commensurable with modern science. Most participants in ESQ were educated in scientific and technical fields such as engineering, medicine, architecture, plant and fisheries science, and business. Thus, many employees attributed their enthusiasm for ESQ to the fact that it demonstrated certain scientific achievements that were anticipated in the Qur'an. This was a particularly compelling means of affirming the truth of the Qur'an and representing Islam in such a way that it appeared compatible with the scientific knowledge practices in which the employees had been inculcated. When I asked employees why they found ESQ convincing, they most often invoked the example that knowledge of the Big Bang was manifest in the Qur'an, 1,300 years before it was theorized by Edwin Hubbell and “proven” by the Hubble telescope. This realization had reconciled their religious practice and their vocations.

There was further evidence to support the contention that recent astronomical discoveries were prefigured in the Qur'an as a means of “proving” the truth of its revelations. Immediately after asserting that the Qur'an anticipates Big Bang theory, an image recorded by the Hubble telescope of a scarlet-colored nebula that resembled the form of a rose was projected.⁴ This image was overlaid with a Qur'anic citation that read “When the heavens shall be cleft asunder,

and become rose red, like stained leather. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will ye twain deny?" (Qur'an 55:37–38). The fact that the Hubble telescope recorded an image that resembled something suggested in the Qur'an was invoked as further proof that the revealed knowledge of Islam anticipated modern science. Further, the Big Bang was frequently invoked as evidence of the truth of Islam. In conversations with employees outside the training, this was expressed in variations of the question, "did you know that the Qur'an actually revealed the Big Bang before science?" The question revealed a strong desire of employees schooled in modernization (insofar as the technical fields in which they were educated are ensconced in secular reason) to reconcile their vocational identities with the Islamic practice to which many had been exposed in their youth.

Another employee, Ibnu, argued that ESQ showed that "the discoveries of Westerners (*orang barat*) are concordant (*sesuai*) with the Islamic religion." Echoing the astronomy lectures during the training, he said that ESQ demonstrated that the truth of the Qur'an was "proven" by modern science: "All the verses of the Qur'an can be uncovered using technology, such as medicine or astronomy." He had come to this conclusion through his personal experience studying metallurgy. He told me that as a student he had used a microscope to examine crystal structures and told me that the intricate designs showed "the great creative power of Allah." He then invoked the furnace in the adjacent hot strip mill that scorched steel slabs to over 1,000 degrees to further illustrate this power. "Imagine," he said with a smile while leaning closer to me, "if humans can make something that hot, how about the power of Allah? Hell must certainly be far hotter!" According to this tautological circle of reasoning, the technical achievements of human beings were offered as proof that one must hold faith in God because God had made humans and endowed them with the knowledge to produce steel out of iron, carbon, and heat.

Conclusion: making middle-class Muslims

This chapter shows how changing class dynamics in contemporary Asia create the conditions of possibility for the emergence of new religious practices. At the same time, middle-class subjectivities are conducive to different ways of practicing religion and different forms of religious authority and knowledge. Ways of life associated with the growth of middle classes, including changes in education, labor, communication, and settlement patterns, are conducive to different types of religious practice and affiliation. The problems experienced by members of Asia's emergent middle classes demand new modes of religious practice, and new movements such as ESQ address these challenges by resolving differences between religion and modern life.

In Indonesia since the 1970s, the Indonesian state sought to foster a middle class at sites like Krakatau Steel through providing relatively well-paid salary positions. Many of those who came for careers at Krakatau Steel were from elsewhere in Indonesia and thus had little connection to the city and region in which it was located. Traditional forms of religious authority based on the mystical and esoteric knowledge of charismatic religious leaders (*ulama*) did not appeal to this educated population. Furthermore, older methods of oral learning and rote memorization that had characterized religious instruction in traditional religious schools (*pesantren*) were not appealing to a population familiar with modern forms of instruction.

Given the shortcomings of traditional forms of religious practice and organization, ESQ offered a version of Islam that was far more commensurable with the demands of modern middle-class existence. It purported to resolve some of the apparent oppositions between a world-view ultimately based on faith and one based on reason. The founder and key figures in ESQ adopted the guise of modern businessmen wearing dark business suits and ties, rather than the flowing white robes and head wrap of a *kyai*. The dramatic PowerPoint presentation used

in ESQ with graphs, images, videos, and popular music offered a marked counterpoint to the monologue of traditional forms of Islamic learning, which relied on lectures and memorization.

Notes

- 1 Susanne Naafs (2012) provides a useful illustration of the social dynamics of this region of Java in the wake of the end of the Suharto regime.
- 2 The historical significance of Krakatau Steel for Indonesian nationalism is well illustrated by Suzanne Moon (2009).
- 3 See Geertz 1960 (134–136, 177–198) for another description of the position of *kyai* in Indonesian Islam. A more recent account is Dhofier 1999.
- 4 This nebula was featured by NASA as the Astronomy Picture of the Day and can be viewed at <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap991031.html> (accessed 18 July 2013).

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Buddhism

Modernization or globalization?

Lionel Obadia

In spring 2013, in Lyon, France, a group of Chinese Buddhists in yellow robes took part in a conference at a local university of social sciences and humanities. The group was led by the head monk of the Beijing Longquan Monastery, who was touring France and Europe, after having sent out proposals to give talks on Buddhism. The conference was nothing more than a classical presentation of Buddha's teachings and an attempt to present the official doctrine of this Buddhist school. After Lyon, the group left for Paris, before continuing their tour of other large European cities. In the almost empty amphitheater, nobody, except the members of the delegation, was of Asian origin. The rest of the audience was composed of a handful of students, one or two persons "interested in Buddhism" after having reading books on the subject, and a French monk wearing a purple robe. The French monk headed a group of Western converts and practitioners in a Tibetan-oriented community affiliated to the New Kadampa Tradition. He was of French origin and has been trained in France, under the supervision of Tibetan monks. The content of the conference was a recurrent topic of the last three decades: the "relevance of Buddhism for modern times."

Not far from here, a large community of Vietnamese migrants is practicing their religion in a large Mahayana temple located in the suburbs of Lyon. No members of this community attended the conference—each form of Buddhism, each tradition and each corresponding audience has its own space, time, and experience of practice, even if they happen to dwell in the same city.

There is nothing new and specific to the French context in the scene described above, in which evidence of different forms of Buddhism (converts, migrants—by default—and sympathizers) and different modes of expansion: mission, transportation, importation (after Nattier 1998) coexist. More than a century ago, the first session of the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago (1893), paved the way for masters of religion "touring" countries in the West and elsewhere for decades, attempting to demonstrate that the 2,600-year-old Asian tradition echoed the malaise of modern Western societies. In the nineteenth century, Buddhist ideas, men, and institutions began to flow from Asia, towards the West, and to the rest of the world in the twentieth century. This chapter attempts to outline the salient processes and effects of what can be labeled as the "Globalization of Buddhism," and questions, in parallel, the deepness of changes (regarded as "modernization") in the antique Asian tradition.

Buddhism in the modern world

Buddhism is currently practiced on the five continents. Buddhist *themes* and *symbols* have infused with expressions of popular culture in Western countries, especially in North America: TV shows, soap operas, popular literature, fashion, clothes, pop and rock music are all affected by the increasing presence of these more or less explicit references to Buddhism (Lopez 1998). Bertolucci's movie *Little Buddha*, the US soap opera *Dharma and Greg*, or the Beastie Boys' song *Bodhisattva Vows* are among the many examples illustrating the penetration of Buddhist ideas and symbols in American popular culture, and by extension, national popular cultures worldwide. Buddhist symbols also infuse fashion, food, literature, arts, and of course religion. Buddhist techniques have turned into a fashionable item among the modern concepts of well-being and alternative therapies, especially therapies of the mind—mindfulness—aimed at the modern man stressed by the excessive pressure of modern societies. But for the most part these themes, aesthetic figures and symbols have been “rearranged” to fit the settings of new host countries. In parallel, Buddhism in Asia has also been transformed by models of Western modernity: Buddhist ideas have turned into a culture industry in Adorno's sense of the term, and with media, books, press and new technologies, Buddhism's society of simulacra, in Baudrillard's view, is on the whole a culture of consumerism that is infusing Buddhism. In the West, and in Asia as well, Buddhist followers display a very modern sense of individualism, and even the aesthetics of temples has turned towards a kind of Disneyization (Taylor 2008). More than themes and symbols, Buddhist *practices* have, in the last decades, spread throughout the world and been absorbed in very different repertoires. This is mostly (but not only) the case with quiet and seated meditation: it has literally turned into a fashionable technology of well-being, a new approach to psychological troubles (Obadia 2008).

Nowadays, Buddhism is one of the fastest-spreading religions in the world (along with Islam and Christianity). Originating in the region of the Ganges (north of India) in the sixth century BC, it started to spread throughout Asia as early as the third century BC. Two and a half millennia later, it has settled in all five continents. However, while it took almost two millennia to establish itself in all the countries of geographic Asia (including today's Russia and Afghanistan), Buddhism has turned global in less than one century (the twentieth). From its early beginnings up to now, Buddhism has demonstrated its ability to spread beyond geographic, political, and cultural boundaries and for these two reasons can be seen as a “globalizing” religion. According to recent censuses, however, the statistics on Buddhists adherents amount to only 6 or 7 percent worldwide. Far from being a uniform religion, quite the reverse, Buddhism assumes the form of a mosaic of traditions and movements, ranging from traditional monasticism (Tibetan and Zen) to modern sectarian movements (such as the new Japanese Soka Gakkai religion). In contrast to monotheisms, Buddhism resembles a “modern”-friendly religion, open to contemporary political ideologies, culture patterns and current technological and informational environments. But its relationships to the modern and the global are more complex and ambiguous.

Buddhism “and” modernization “and” globalization: a brief state of the art

Globalization studies have only recently become interested in religion, likewise religious studies have only recently taken the so-called “global turn” in social sciences (Obadia 2011b). Surprisingly, the “foundation” of globalization studies has been attributed to the famous sociologist Roland Roberston, who was interested in the late 1980s in the adaptations of Japanese spiritual traditions in a globalizing world. But studies in “religion and globalization” were initially

much more interested in Western monotheisms and cults or new religious movements (NRM). Buddhism has only lately captured the attention of scholars of global studies, whereas topics of globalization penetrated Buddhist studies even more recently still.

A discussion on “modernization” and “globalization” requires before all if not a concise definition, at least a circumscription of the meanings of the terms. This is a difficult issue and an intellectual trap, leading to an avoidable naturalization of the two concepts and the overlooking of their colonial roots. Both terms have indeed been framed in the allegedly “universal” context of Western and Christian history. Both have been applied to non-Western history of non-Western religions. Here is not the place to examine in detail the long genealogy and the wide-ranging aspects of definitions of “modernization” and “globalization.” More interesting is the alternative option that consists of investigating how both concepts have been meaningful for the recent history of Buddhism. Obviously, the terms epitomize the best and the worst for Buddhism, which has developed a rather ambivalent relationship to them. As for modernity, the term has been widely used as synonymous with “Western influences” since it alludes to an evolutionist model in which Western societies are considered as the yardstick by which non-Western societies evaluate their “development.” Scholars like Lewis (1999) or Ivy (2005) have demonstrated that postcolonial thought has reshaped this simple conception and that, for Buddhist societies or organizations, modernity was also all an imaginary and ideological framework by which Asian realities could be thought not as a mimesis of the West, but in a deliberate counter-mimesis, i.e., a mirror through which Asian societies reinvent themselves.

In the academic milieu, Martha Van der Bly (2005) has accurately underscored the various semantic regimes by which globalization is seized (imagination, realism, ideology), while Mauro Guillén has demonstrated that half of the scholars who study globalization do not believe in the existence of globalization (Guillén 2002). “Globalization,” like “modernity” is much more a *problem* than a *fact*: it is a certain representation of social, cultural or religious developments. The two terms are sometimes difficult to distinguish but we will nevertheless maintain that modernization refers to *historical* processes and globalization to *geographic* processes of change. Theories of modernization have infused the study of Asia and of Asian religions and are far more voluminous and diverse than theories of globalization. In classical Asian studies, the idea that Buddhism, like other religions, was supposedly altered by processes of modernization is nothing new. But Buddhism and Asian religions nowadays embody what scholars call “modern,” “globalized” or “global” religions, since the worldwide spread of Japanese religions when the *Empire of the Rising Sun* opened to a modern and transnational market economy (Robertson 1987). According to Robertson, the very idea of “glocalization” (the local establishment of global processes) has been framed after the experience of Japanese religions on the move (Robertson 1992). The comprehensive accounts on globalization only and barely mention *en passant* the role of Buddhism (alongside other universal religions—Christianity and Islam for Beyer (1994), Hinduism and Confucianism adding to the list for Waters (2001)) in the global reshaping of the world, or, in Csordas’ words, “re-enchantment on a planetary scale” (Csordas 2009).

For the sociologist Max Weber, and later, Ernst Gellner, modernity was born in the West, under certain ideological, technical, and economic conditions (MacFarlane 1992). As such, modernity is culturally marked by the destiny of the West, and it also expanded as a self-defined “civilisational program” (Eisenstadt 2001). Modernity is however shaped by the historical experience of two cultural blocs: Europe, where *secularization* (of the state *and* society) and the privatization of beliefs were perceived as tantamount to modernity, and North America where, somewhat differently, modernity was synonymous with the rise of a free and public “market” of religions (Warner 1993). The Western experience is however not universal. Asian societies and cultures

have undertaken somewhat dissimilar historical and sociological paths: Japan, China, and India have, for instance, adopted modern economies and secular political constitutions while remaining socially and culturally attached to their religious traditions that are still vibrantly installed in the heart of *a certain kind* of modernity.

The French sociologist Raphael Liogier (2004) has written the very first comprehensive sociological study of the globalization of Buddhism, emphasizing processes of globalization and the adjustment of Buddhist themes to global ideas. For Martin Baumann (2001) the “globalization of Buddhism” aligns on “developmental periods,” which starts from the historical landmark of the encounter with Western modernity (late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries) and ends with the worldwide spread of Buddhist traditions (late twentieth century), and favors a short historical scale for the globalization of Buddhism, including both missionary and migration processes. As an indirect response, a decade later, in a 2012 encyclopedia dedicated to the situation of Buddhism (*2600 Years of Sambuddhatva: Global Journey of Awakening*), Olcott Gunasekera proposed an all-embracing model, based on a series of historical sequences, framed according to a theological landmark, the birth of Buddhism and the Buddha’s Enlightenment (*Sambuddhatva*) (Gunasekera 2012). In opposition to Baumann’s views on Buddhist globalization, Gunasekera’s “Global Journey” of Buddhism is neither recent nor “modern” but is as ancient as Buddhism itself. He insists on a deeper scale, organized alongside the yardstick of *Sambuddhatva*, not on the emergence of Western modernity. In the same volume Asanga Tilakaratne proposes a series of paths that Buddhism will apparently take in a near future (Tilakaratne 2012). The *2600 Years of Sambuddhatva* includes 38 chapters, almost half devoted to the developments of Buddhism in non-Asian countries or regions (Europe, North America, Australia, South America, and even Africa). Buddhism was first studied in Asia, then in the West and now in global settings.

Buddhist: from Asia to the West ... and beyond

According to the 2010 census on the “Global Religious Landscape” by the online source *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, Buddhists now amount to 488 million people (7 percent of the worldwide population) with more than 481 million in the Asian-Pacific region, including Westernized parts like Australia and New Zealand. What is interesting is the late but significant account on the relocation of Buddhists beyond Asia—especially in the West. The same source suggests that Buddhists (migrants and converts) in Western countries number up to 1.3 million in Europe and 3.8 million in North America (with hundreds of thousands more scattered throughout Latin America and Africa). Like all religious statistics, these figures are not entirely reliable and other previously published figures tend to demonstrate that numbers of Buddhists might be lower in Europe (Baumann 2002) and higher in the US (Seager 1999). The demographics of Buddhists outside Asia are all but commonly accepted, since scholars lack official census in most countries, except in Australia. Accurate or not, these figures exemplify the flowing of Buddhism beyond Asia, globally.

The presence of Buddhism, in the form of communities of adherents, temples, or meditation centers, is ostensible on the five continents. Asia nevertheless remains the heart of Buddhism, but the tradition has moved into the rather distinctive context of Catholic and Protestant regions, the secularized and multi-confessional Europe (Baumann 2002), the Christian North and South America (Seager 1999), the “Christian white” regions but also traditional and animistic Oceania (Spuler 2000), and, more surprisingly, Africa—south and east (Kruger and Clasquin 1999), and Israel (Obadia 2002). At the same time, Buddhism is regaining influence in some parts of Asia where it had been somewhat threatened by the advances of secular political anti-religious ideologies (Marxism, Maoism) and political disorders (Southeast Asian wars). Micklethwait and

Wooldridge's *God is Back* (2009), among the many books published in the 2000s, stresses the impact of globalization on religions. Among the different religions affected by global forces and processes (standardization of economic systems, interconnection between societies, political supranational organizations, among other parameters), Buddhism should only be concerned by marginal institutional transformations in the context of Southeast Asia, whereas globalization affects Christianity and Islam more intensely. But Buddhism has been through a profound structural, doctrinal, and practical reshaping, yet it still exhibits the face of an ancient and immutable wisdom.

Buddhism has now become a “global religion,” i.e. a religion that has spread at a global scale. Buddhist communities have flourished in the five continents. Buddhism settled in Western countries as early as the nineteenth century by means of three identified processes. The first one is the *migration* of Asian Buddhists from China and Japan in toward Europe, the Americas, and Australia, for economic reasons. In the same period, in these Western regions, Buddhism was discovered and discussed by intellectuals (writers, scholars, poets, and above all philosophers—Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud) who were either unequivocal opponents of Buddhism or quite the reverse: inspired promoters of it. For the first category, Buddhism appeared as a dangerous archaic nihilism; for the second, a promising new spirituality all the more fascinating since it did not present the face of a religion in the Western sense of the term. All through the nineteenth century, and later the twentieth century, Buddhist ideas circulated in the West through different ideological and imaginary matrixes, while Asian societies, colonized by Western countries, were also affected by the same repertoires: secularism, humanism, scientism, esotericism, orientalism, feminism, pacifism, counterculture aesthetics, postmodernism, consumerism, and ecologism—all modern. In parallel, occult societies, such as the Theosophists, and other spiritual circles played a crucial role in connecting secularizing Western modern societies fascinated by Buddhism, and Asian societies searching for modernity with, but against, the colonial power of the West. A few Westerners started to adopt Buddhism as a faith in the late nineteenth century, while Buddhist masters started to “tour” Western countries and establish communities in Europe in the early twentieth century. Since then, Buddhism has undertaken a quick and massive development, especially in the two “booms” of the 1960s (Zen boom) and 1970s (Tibetan boom) in the West, following the “beat” movement and the promotion of Buddhism by American writers in the 1950s. As early as the 1960s, however, Buddhism also flooded beyond Asia by means of substantial economic migration waves (from continental Asia) and the diasporas of expatriates and “boat people” fleeing from Southeast Asian wars. Migration and the relocation of Asian overseas communities still remain the main sources of Buddhism's globalization, since they actively participate in the establishment of transnational religious networks. *Mediatization* (technological diffusion without social contact) of ideas and symbols is another decisive process in the globalization of Buddhism: “night-stands” (i.e. Buddhists who are only in contact with Buddhism through the books they read before sleeping and leave on their bedside table; see Tweed 1999) and later “online” sympathizers and adherents probably add millions to officially charted Buddhists. The third and main impetus came from a sense of *mission*, amplified by the “resonance” of Buddhism with modern ideologies and the global social and technological circuits (the Internet).

Buddhist missionaries and the modernization of Buddhism

Peter Berger's 1997 article “Four faces of global culture” emphasizes the “evangelical” expansion of religions. If the North American and Christian organizations—evangelical, in the strict sense of the term—epitomize, for the American sociologist, the place of religion in globalization, one

can define evangelism in a broad sense of the term, i.e. a missionary activism. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, I suggested that the presence of Buddhism in Europe and in other countries of Western societies had to do with the sense of mission of Buddhists masters and converts (Obadia 1999), and that this is one reason for the blooming not only of Buddhist ideas, but also of institutions (Obadia 2000). But “mission” evokes an organized and swelling religion, strategically and intentionally looking for new converts—a representation antagonistic with the modernized image of a personal, peaceful, and contemplative wisdom, and this theory has had negligible influence on academic studies of Buddhism. A few years later, Linda Learman’s edited volume *Buddhist Missionaries in the Era of Globalization* (Learman 2005) offered one of the first significant comparisons of national case studies of Buddhists’ missionary activity worldwide: it establishes that in the East like in the West, from the ancient tradition of old school Theravada to late Japanese reformed organizations, missionary activity is a crucial process in the diffusion of Buddhism on the Asian continent and beyond. She accurately highlights the issue for Buddhist studies, opposing Stephen Temper and Jonathan Walters: to what extent missionary activity is “modern” and where did Buddhism exactly start to act accordingly? Was Buddhism *per se* a missionary religion given the fact that it belongs to the category of universal religions—in Max Müller’s and Max Weber’s terminology? Or did it become a missionary religion following its encounter with Christianity and secular modernity? The role of missionary activity in the modernization and globalization of Buddhism has long been overlooked due to ideological reasons in Western countries (Obadia 1999). The Western imagination of Asian cultures and religions—a variant of Orientalism—has made Buddhism “passive and contemplative wisdom,” and the idea of “missionary” religion is hence contrary to this image promoted by apologists of Buddhism.

If traditional institutions (Zen Rinzai or Soto meditative traditions, Tibetan monasticism or Sinhalese Theravada asceticism) have been active in the missionary expansion of Buddhism, they remained particularly prudent, rejecting all intentions to proselytize or to convert people. The fourteenth Dalai Lama, among other Buddhist leaders, has repeatedly asserted that the aim of Buddhism was “not to convert people” in the West and outside Asia, and that adherents of Buddhism can follow as many traditions as they want, prolonging here the image of Buddhism as a non-aggressive, non-invasive tradition, respectful of an individual’s liberty and aligned on the cultural ideals of modernity, built by generations of Western admirers of Buddhism. Proselytizing processes nevertheless exist and can be intentionally unveiled (like the *Shakubuku* action in the Japanese Soka Gakkai movement) or not (like in most of the other groups).

Buddhist modernization in question

In most of the cases, the changes observed in Buddhism have been labeled as “modernization” processes. But *modernization* is above all a Western concept, applying to the history of the West. The problem with the modernization of Buddhism concerns origin and location. In the views of Henri de Lubac, who was the very first to trace the Westward path of Buddhism in the early 1950s (Lubac 1952), Buddhist modernization starts with the contacts Asian traditions had with the West, as early as antiquity, but has been accelerated by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ gradual settlement of Buddhism in the West. Modernization processes have been conceived as adjustment of Buddhist practices, values, and institutions, to the exported standards of Western societies. Several matrixes of changes, labeled “modernization,” have already been depicted by authors such as Snelling (1987), Prebish and Tanaka (1998), Williams and Queen (1999), Baumann and Prebish (2002), Obadia (2007), or more recently Tilakaratne (2012), who all agree (with subtle differences between them) on a series of changes:

- *Secularisation and rationalization*: Stephen Batchelor's *Buddhism Without Beliefs* (1997) exemplifies the first movement, attempting to convert Buddhism to a sort of philosophical and ethical atheism, as it was allegedly in early times. Buddhism is turning "secular" in doctrine, focusing more on the inner *rationalism* of Buddha's teachings rather than the dimension of faith after Henry Olcott (1970) asserted in 1881 that Buddhism was scientific in its outlook.
- *Secularization and democratization*: Buddhist soteriological practices were previously the reserve of an elite of educated monks (*sangha*, or 1 percent of the population of Buddhism) but have, in Asia and in the West, flooded whole societies and new generations of Buddhist lay practitioners (*upasaka*, up to the remaining 99 percent), who now have access to ascetic techniques rather than popular and devotional ones (that have been hardly globalized, except in the case of migration).
- *Feminization*: considered as a crucial, if not the most important, dimension of change in Buddhism carried by the forces of modernity. The contestation of "male" or "macho" domination in religious affairs has not only emerged in Asian diasporic Buddhist communities (Cage 2004) but above all in the milieu of converts (especially in the West; see Sponberg 1992). The rise of generations of women accessing the status of Buddhist masters profoundly changes the face of gender positions.
- *Psychologization and therapization*: among the last processes by which Buddhism has been absorbed and reinterpreted in modern settings or modernized. Since the mid-nineteenth century, from the founders of the discipline to the late developments of subfields in the study of the mind, psychology has been a major framework for Western interpretations. Beyond academic psychologies—psychoanalytical, clinical, psychiatric, experimental, cognitive, and neurological—non-academic (humanistic) and spiritual psychologies contributed to install Buddhism on the side of acceptable alternative therapies of the mind in Asia and beyond—though discussions on the "therapeutic" nature of Buddhism are still critical.
- *Social and political engagement*: since the 1960s, Asian (and later Western) Buddhist masters and adherents have attempted to make Buddhism a political and social force with the aim of opposing the people's resistance against the most severe social, ecological, or economic impacts of modernization and globalization.

All these developments, arising in Asia and in the West, address one main question for scholars and Buddhists alike: do processes of modernization precede and facilitate the globalization of Buddhism? Robertson suggests that the openness of Japan to Western modernity since the Meiji era (late nineteenth century) enabled Japanese religions to reach new territories and new audiences (Robertson 1987). Following Bechert (1984), Baumann (2001) is also convinced that Buddhism was first nourished by Western modernity in Asia, *before* reaching the West. But the extension of Buddhism on all continents otherwise started *after* the settlement of Asian traditions in Western countries. Western modern countries have indeed been particularly "hospitable" to Buddhist ideas and traditions in the twentieth century, but the twenty-first century has seen a more widespread expansion of Buddhism in non-Western regions and in Asia itself. New globalized Buddhist traditions like the (Tibetan) New Kadampa Tradition, the (Theravada) Vipassana meditation, the (Japanese) Diamond Sangha, or the (Vietnamese) Order of InterBeing illustrate the dynamics of religious innovation, halfway between the continuity of traditions and the changes of modernity.

While, in the West, "modernity" means "future," "progress," a new and peaceful ideological and cultural horizon to adapt to, it otherwise stands for antagonism and violence in Asian Buddhist countries. Secular political ideologies, like Marxism, have been offensive to Buddhism from the south to the north of Asia. In China, the Maoist regime put permanent pressure on Buddhist

(monastic) institutions, especially those of the “national minorities” (*shaoshuminzu*) and among them, the Tibetans, who have been the target of aggressive strategies of political and cultural weakening from 1959 onwards. Since the 1978 law on religious freedom, China’s authorities have consented to the recognition of Buddhism as one of the “five official religions” of China, and the tempering of political pressure on “minority” religions – especially in Tibet (Goldstein and Kapstein 1998). In other countries, like Laos, Vietnam, Burma, or Cambodia, Buddhist monastic institutions have suffered from political instability and civil wars in Southeast Asia in the recent and hence “modern” history of Asia (1970s) (Pardue 1968; Harvey 1990). Secular “modern” political ideologies can consequently reveal the Janus face of violence *and* concord in more “stable” countries.

Global issues, religions, and Buddhism

At the *Symposium on Consequences of Economic Globalization in Asia* (held in Bangkok in November 1999), Pracha Hutanuwatr, a Siamese Buddhist monk, presented a violent critique against globalization in the name of religion, which is worth quoting here, not as the voice of Buddhism as a whole about globalization, but as an example of the paradoxical posture of Buddhism, a globalizing religion opposed to globalization, when the latter is seen as the imperialist imposition of Western modernity:

When we talk about globalization we must remember such aspects as the globalization of the dominating consumer monoculture and the accompanying devastating environmental effects. On a more positive note, all around the world we can witness evidence of the rising consciousness of the interconnection of ecological systems and the emergence of global networking among civil society. From a Buddhist perspective, however, the very core of the globalization process is the globalization of *tanah*, or craving. According to Buddhist analysis, *tanah* is the root cause of all suffering.

(Pracha Hutanuwatr and Jane Rasbash, no date)

The Internet is replete with essays written by Buddhist adherents (native Asian or Western converts) or leaders. Most of the times, and rather unsurprisingly, the rhetoric of such discourses is a critique of the negative impacts of globalization on mankind, societies, cultures, and beliefs. Not only do the underlying values of globalization seem contradictory with those of Buddhism, as were those of modernity several decades ago, but Buddhist contemporary modernism is also anti-modernism. Buddhism is indeed critically posited as a response to the “dark sides” of global modernity: violence, inequality, intolerance, greed, discrimination. This is why the economy and politics are two privileged targets of Buddhist critical views, despite the obvious adaptations of Buddhism in the hypermodern worldwide economy, especially in the context of industrial Japan (Davis 1989).

In Asia and in the West, Buddhist resistance against the negative force of globalization and modernization is embodied in the Socially Engaged Buddhism movement, a *political* resistance for the promotion of new models of society inspired by Buddhist teachings, struggling for ethnic solidarity, gender equity, and an economic balance between North and South. Bernard Glassman is the most famous leader in the US, while Buddhist masters in Burma, Thailand, or Sri Lanka have in parallel launched similar organizations. A global movement, then, resisting against global processes, even if it echoes differently depending on context—the political and social issues are for instance more acute in Southeast Asian poor societies than Western wealthy ones (Williams and Queen 1999).

Similarly the rapidity and sheer volume of capitalism’s progress, the spread of consumer culture and the integration of Asian nations in the market economy, have led Buddhists to promote

a religious resistance against the hegemony of this “unfriendly” economic system accused of destroying local societies and cultures. The initiative came from a Western economist, Ernst Schumacher who wrote a revolutionary booklet in 1973 in which he suggested that Buddhist teachings should nourish a more “humanistic” project for humanity. Four decades later, the “revolution” Buddhism was supposed to engage in the economy has hardly succeeded in globally modifying industrial production, employment and the organization of enterprises, and above all, consumerism. Buddhism has rather prospered in the modern (opened) religious economy, as a fashionable “product” adapted to market-styled religious landscapes (under the form of “supply and demand”) designed for new religious consumerist attitudes (Obadia 2011a).

Buddhist traditions have consented to “morphological” adjustments to global processes. “Touring” masters, nomad followers, flowing themes, diffusing practices, migrant practitioners: Buddhism has aligned with the “fluid” quality of globalization, the spreading of ideas, practices, institutions with new channels of diffusion, accommodated with global worldviews (by underscoring its universalist aspects) and “cosmopolitan virtues” (Turner 2001). It has rooted in highly developed countries (the West) and been re-established in urban/upper middle-class areas/strata of Asian societies. It has turned transnational, ideologically speaking (by developing a “global consciousness”) and functionally (as transnational networks and interconnections or associations or organizations). However, Buddhism has explicitly adopted a stance of resistance against globalization: in Southeast and East Asia (in Burma and Sri Lanka in the nineteenth century, in China and Japan in the twentieth century, and Thailand in the twenty-first century) Buddhism provided resources for religious and cultural nationalism. Flows of migration are responsible for the transportation of “ethnic” Buddhism, different from “convert” Buddhism that targets a Western audience by means of “evangelical” activism (Nattier 1998). While “convert” Buddhism partakes in a hybridization of religions and culture in the West, ethnic Buddhism assumed the form of poetics of “Asianess” and nationalism in Asia as early as the 1960s (Pardue 1968).

Last but not least, one has to mention the technological transformations of information and communication technologies. Like most contemporary religions, Buddhism has been massively spread on the Internet. Academic interest first directed Western libraries to develop themselves in “virtual space” of the Internet (Prebish 1999) before the digitalization of sacred scriptures in Asia (Mynak Tulku Rinpoche 2001). Both have made available teachings and knowledge that were previously reserved for the educated elite of monastic personnel. The effortless accessibility of Buddhist texts by means of digital media has occasioned a democratization of knowledge about Buddhism and has raised interest in the Asian tradition far beyond the boundaries of an academic milieu. More interesting are the rise of new forms of religious transmission, textuality, and authority in the context of virtual networks. Scholars and Buddhist followers skeptical about the effects of technological modernization and globalization (Hayes 1999) have pinpointed the dematerialization of the sacred texts and teachings (*dharma*), “Hyperdharma,” the dilution of traditional community bonds because of the highly technologized and mediatized religious transmission, and finally the soaking of “traditional” Buddhism in a world of superficiality and simulacra (Hershock 1999). Others have quite differently seen in the massive mediatization of Buddhism a chance for Buddhism to explore new cultural and mental territories—and to the question “should the monk surf the Internet?,” which was addressed to Buddhism in the late 1990s, the response is nowadays clearly positive: the Internet has facilitated the missionary activity of Buddhist organizations; monks now head virtual communities or “Cybersanghas” and can even provide long-distance religious training (Spuler 2000). Like John Snelling predicted in the late 1980s, new generations of Buddhist masters and practitioners are mastering both traditional and modern technologies.

The transformations of Buddhism in modern and global settings: traditionalism and modernism revisited

Processes of modernization in Asian societies and in the traditions of Buddhism (in its historical Asian homelands and in diasporic contexts), differing from Christianity and Islam, which have been in direct and (often) brutal opposition with a positivistic and secular modernity, have faced and aligned with some of the most salient and allegedly distinguishing features of modernity—science, individualism, rationalism, feminism, ecology, and economic culture—to the point that the very nature of Buddhism has been confounded with an hypothetic *ethos* of the modern. Buddhist apologists have underscored alleged homologies between (Asian) Buddhist and (Western) modern ideas or models, like *pluralism* (of traditions) and *hybridity* (of beliefs) (Baumann 1995; Faure 1998; Lenoir 1999).

In the rather complex context of globalization and modernity, it sounds somewhat difficult to trace the exact contours of the changes in a religious tradition, given the fact that what is labeled “new” can be ancient, or vice-versa: what is “ancient” can be labeled “new.” In the same vein, scholars of globalization studies and of modernity hesitate between a long and a short scale for these subject matters. Modernity and globalization might thus be distorting the reflection on their nature. All salient contemporary forms and expressions of Buddhism are not necessary *changes* of the tradition. Todd T. Lewis (1999) has put emphasis on the reshaping of Buddhist traditions in modern settings: changes in the political (state formation), intellectual (choice), or socioeconomic spheres (industrialization) have challenged the traditional monastic formations and their relationships to global society. But things are not as simple as that. Because for Buddhism (as for other religions), modernity has also produced “traditionalisms,” i.e. Buddhist organizations highly modern in form and anti-modern in content, blurring the lines between “the modern” and “the traditional.” The relationships between Buddhism and ecology range assuredly among the most illustrative logical paradoxes of the ascription of “modern” and “global” to Buddhism.

In the West, ecological concerns have imposed themselves in half a century as a crucial issue for humanity as a whole. Not only have ecological disasters (pollution, deforestation, and destruction of soils, species, of natural spaces, atmospheric contamination, and greenhouse effects) been widely broadcast, but they have been addressed through religious responses. Much more than Western monotheisms, Asian traditions and Buddhism have been regarded as reliable resources for a religious response to excessive industrialization, the degradation of the environment, and the unequal distribution of wealth, as they propose frugal ways of life, and a sense of connectedness between humans and respect for nature. But if ecological themes have only recently passionately surfaced in Buddhism, the historicity of such themes has been harshly discussed and still opposes supporters of traditionalism (Buddhism is *per se* and since the beginning an eco-friendly religion) with those of modernism (the “ecologization” of Buddhism is a modern phenomenon) (Johnston 2006). Moreover, what is known now as “green Buddhism” assumes rather different meanings depending on the location: if Westerners are paying much attention to issues such as health and diet, South Asian Buddhists are more sensitive to the challenges of pollution or deforestation (Obadia 2011b).

The new expansion of Buddhism: global trends

While modernization processes have made Buddhist ideas and practice more universal, and more acceptable in non-Asian cultural settings, internationalization processes are responsible for the geographic redistribution of Buddhist practices and institutions. According to Lewis (1999) the connection between Asian and Western Buddhist masters played a key role in this process.

Martin Baumann was among the first scholars to provide a historic model of the “globalization of Buddhism” (2001). This globalization starts with early contacts and transculturation processes in history, the making of Buddhism as a “modern-friendly” religion in the nineteenth century, the encounter between Western admirers of Buddhism and new “modernized” styled monks and masters in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the internationalization of Buddhism throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Among the modern or global transformations, the project of a new “Buddhist vehicle” or *Navayana*, aiming at a more universal Buddhism was first outlined in the nineteenth century (Snelling 1987). One century later, the same idea resurfaced under a category of a “United Vehicle” or *Samagriyana* as a unification process for the different traditions and schools of Buddhism whose proximity and understanding have been enhanced by global communication networks and sophisticated technologies of transportation (Tilakaratne 2012).

Globalization is being itself torn between the opposite dynamics of standardization and unification, on the one side, and fragmentation/diversification, on the other. Tension between the local and the global are particularly discernible in the case of Buddhism. Buddhist networks have reached a transnational scale but they do not constitute a single network or “system.” Indeed, nationwide federations (“Buddhist unions,” founded everywhere in Europe in the 1980s and 1900s) and so on are institutionally multi-confessional. But in the same countries, Buddhist organizations, communities, and temples belong to transnational networks that are under the authority of one school only, like large transnational organizations such as the Federation of Western Buddhist Order (FWBO, Theravada-oriented), the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT, Tibetan-oriented), the Zen International Association (AZI, Zen Japanese-styled), the Soka Gakkai International (SGI, non-aligned Japanese NRM), or the International Meditation Centre (of the Burmese master U Ba Khin). A tension exists then between national and global levels, between ecumenism, coexistence and orthodox alignments, and tradition-based preferences.

Despite the efforts of the World Buddhist Sangha Council (WBSC, founded 1966 and based in Colombo, Sri Lanka) to federate, no worldwide umbrella organization exists apart from a series of networks and sites of ecumenical dialogue between Buddhist schools, and with other religions. Buddhism has aligned itself with a complex polycentric network of networks—an important feature of globalization. Reflections on networks invariably lead to the kind of systemic analysis that has prospered in globalization studies, and especially in the sociology of global religion as it has been developed by Peter Beyer over the last two decades. Systemic analysis raises crucial questions for the globalization of Buddhism, the forms it assumes, and the effects it is subjected to.

Global Buddhism: a Buddhization of globalization?

On many occasions the Canadian sociologist Peter Beyer has affirmed (and attempted to demonstrate) that the impact of globalization on religion gave rise to the creation of a “global religious system.” The global religious system is *not* a religious tradition that has succeeded in expanding throughout the world: it is not a globalized religion like Christianity or Islam, and therefore not Buddhism (even if these three traditions have persuasively reshaped the face of religion in global times). In Beyer’s (1998) view, the system of interconnected religions by which they interact and communicate, or the “global religious system,” has been molded in the model of Christianity, i.e. with a firm sense of identity, the insistence upon belief, belonging to a unique religious system, are among the features adopted by globalized religions or new religious movements, inherited from this monotheistic background (Beyer 1994, 1998). To a certain extent, and in certain

conditions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' counter-acculturation of Asia societies to the West, this sounds true. Chinese religion, for instance (and especially Buddhism) has been reframed according to the religious standards of the colonial powers—the very concept of “religion” has, for instance, been created as a neologism in Chinese language (*zongjiao*) to align with the Christian model of religion (Goossaert and Palmer 2011).

However, Christian and secularized (i.e. “modern”) societies are turning more and more “spiritual,” they are more interested by immanence, rationalist, inner and individualized expressions of religiosity—and one can recognize here the commonly identified features of modern religiosity. Pluralism (the coexistence of different religions in the same landscape) and syncretism (the mixing of different religious repertoires in a single individual or collective cultic practice) have become hallmarks of “the modern” in religion: but while Western societies assign religious diversity to modernity, in Max Weber's views, the “Character of Asiatic Religion” (the conclusive chapter of his *Religion of India*, 1958) is to be able to mix alternatively, successively, or cumulatively different forms of beliefs. Consequently, *traditional* Asian religions and Buddhism personify what is *modern* for the West: religious nomadism, individualism, syncretism, fluidity, and openness. One can therefore wonder to what extent global and modern forms of religion are not aligned on a Buddhist-inspired ideal of global religiosity (as suggested by Kruger and Clasquin 1999), and, considering the progress of this model in contemporary societies, scholars can legitimately oppose a Buddhist-centered patterning of the global religious system, rather than the monotheistic and even Christian-centered template (Obadia 2010).

While, for Micklethwait and Wooldridge (2009) religious globalization stands for the exportation of the American model of religion (missionary activism and pluralism in an open economy of religious preferences), the European model of secularism has otherwise also actively been diffused worldwide. Between American and European models, between disenchantment and re-enchantment, between secularization and de-secularization, Buddhism (in particular), but also other Asian religions (in general) offer an alternative option for reflection: countries such as Japan, China, or India, contrary to the projective images of Asian societies as “religious nations” framed by the Western secular imagination (Feuchtwang 2009), have adopted secular political regimes, borrowed technological and economic models of development from Western countries, but by no means their whole cultural frames and ideologies. Asian (Buddhist) countries (Japan in the nineteenth century, and China one century later) invented models of “modernization without Westernization,” where religion instills cultural life but does not play any crucial role in the political or economic sectors of society. Subsequently, whereas globalization was suspected of spreading the forces of North American imperialism (global Americanization), some voices currently allude to an Asianization of the world. The twenty-first century shift of the axis of the global economy from the West to the East has been accompanied by extraterritorial engagements between Asian political forces. After decades of political repression of religious beliefs, challenged by the appeal of Tibetan Buddhism in the West and the continuous efforts of the Dalai Lama to make the world aware of the terrible situation in Tibet, China has recently revised its strategy and is currently looking for a hegemonic position as the “patron of global Buddhism” (as cited by a 2012 article of the *World Policy Blog* by Elizabeth Pond).

Is religious globalization a Buddhization of the world, then, after turning in an economic Sinization or political and cultural Asianization of the world? Indeed Buddhist organizations currently espouse the contours of cosmopolitanism and transnational networks. An ecumenical Global Buddhist Congregation was founded in late 2010, yet, international Buddhism existed beforehand, but never on a global scale. Scholars of globalization studies must remain cautious with conceptual slogans, especially because “Buddhization processes,” especially when they are supposed to describe wide-scale realities, are difficult to assess theoretically and to circumscribe empirically.

Indeed, is the mediatized infusion of Buddhist ideas, symbols, and practice in Western (and non-Western) popular cultures sufficient to be designated as “Buddhization”? To what extent do these global networks and congregations frame the practice of Buddhism? Outside Asia, Buddhism has massively increased: 2,000 temples exist in North America, 300 to 400 in the main countries of Western Europe, a few dozen in the countries of Eastern Europe. These are places where Buddhist traditional monastic structures reproduce themselves. Buddhist ideas infuse modern societies by means of modern technologies *outside* these allegedly “traditionalist” areas. Besides, Buddhization processes are dissimilar and depend on national settings: the progress of Buddhism in North America has little to do with the reinstallation of Buddhism in the cultural and political landscapes of South and North Asia. As a final point, and following a dispute between A. Dawson and C. Campbell in the 1990s to 2000s, one can talk about an Easternization of Western religions (Buddhism imprints Christianity and Judaism) or Westernization of these Eastern traditions (since they have been translated into modern prominent Western ideologies before being adopted). Is the modernization of Buddhism therefore a precondition for its globalization? Or, are modernization and globalization totally independent, yet interrelated processes? Some sociology-based models, such as Baumann (2001) or Liogier (2004), suggest that the cultural absorption of Western modernity by Asian societies has been a major impetus—if not the prerequisite—for the globalization of Buddhism, which was accordingly able to promote and supply values echoing in very different contexts (humanism, altruism, individual rights, social equality, protection of the environment, and spiritual goals), capable of coping with new modes and circuits of transmission (mediatized, electronic), and new institutional profiles (less hierarchical and more open to gender equality).

Conclusion

Modernization and globalization are timely yet complex topics. Buddhism has undoubtedly become a globalized religion, like other religions; it currently features transnational flows and interconnected networks. The expansion of Buddhism has reached transnational scales and the Asian religion has logically undertaken subsequent transformations in the realm of beliefs, practices, and organizations. It has adapted to global network technologies, standards of global culture, political modernity, and ecological global consciousness. Undoubtedly, universalism—an ancient symbolic and praxeological potential—played a key role in this apparently successful globalization. In parallel, and to a certain extent, as a previous precondition for globalization, modernization processes (on technological, political, or economic levels) are more complicated to deal with. Modernization of Buddhism partakes in a broader context, in the background of the modernization of Asian societies after their contact with Western cultures. Asian modernities and Asian *religious* modernities specifically, are multifaceted and ambivalent repertoires of modernism, wavering between explicit acceptance of models of modernity (modernism) and more unequivocal rejections of other aspects of modernity (anti-modernism). This Janus-like relationship to the *modern* also illustrates the conceptual difficulties to circumscribe continuities and rupture in Buddhism, since the frontier between the modern and the traditional is blurred by the pragmatics and poetics of modernism/anti-modernism (tradition is modern and the modern is traditional), and the shifting physical and moral geographies of the East and the West. Buddhism is a globally expanding yet polycentric religion, able to settle in “modern” societies (of the West), and, more unexpectedly, in non-modern ones (for instance African countries), carrying global values, but acculturating in local contexts (“Americanizing” in America). As a final, but very brief conclusion, one might say that, like other religions, Buddhism has been a *part of* globalization: pressured by global forces and engaged in transnational circuits, it has turned global—ideology speaking and on a morphological level. Buddhist organizations, ordinary individuals, and leaders

have otherwise attempted to resist certain aspects of globalization: as such, Buddhism is also posited *apart from* globalization. Like modernity, globalization therefore is another realm of ambivalence for Buddhism.

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Hinduism and globalization

Gurus, yoga and migration in northern Europe

Knut A. Jacobsen

In the study of contemporary Hinduism, it has become increasingly difficult to treat India and the West apart. Not only has Hinduism become a ‘Western religion’, with millions of Hindus living in Europe and North America and the establishment of hundreds or perhaps thousands of Hindu temples, but influences from India and the West have been going back and forth for centuries in circular movements to create transcultural religious ideas and practices. Hindu gurus (see Jacobsen 2011a)¹ already more than 100 years ago adapted Hinduism to Western context (de Michelis 2004; Saha 2007: 489); Vivekananda promoted ‘a “Hindu spirituality” largely created by Orientalism and adopted in the anticlerical and anticolonial rhetorics of Theosophy’ (Van der Veer 2001: 73); European philological scholarship influenced the creations of written texts of oral Hindu traditions and critical editions of Hindu written textual traditions and innovative Hindu teachers adopted Western traditions of gymnastics and blended it with yoga philosophy. Already in the 1840s in Sri Lanka the Hindu intellectual Arumuga Navalar created a Hindu public by utilizing the methods of Western philology and Christian missionary teaching (Jacobsen 2013a). In India the incorporation into Hinduism of Western religious traditions had been important already under the leadership of Rammohun Roy (1772–1833). Such transcultural ideas and practices have been developed by both Indian and European actors and by movements of people and ideas, probably for centuries, but intensified during the last 300 years with the British presence in India (Van der Veer 2001). During that same period Hinduism expanded beyond South Asia and attained a global presence and today Hindus live in most countries in the world.

Globalization of Hinduism

The globalization of Hinduism has been part of several different processes. First, the transfer of religious traditions from India to most countries in the world was the work of Hindus who migrated from South Asia and established a global presence of Hindu traditions and transferred especially the traditions of temple worship and festivals and rituals of the home of Hinduism to a number of countries. The largest Hindu populations living in countries outside of South Asia are found in the US, the UK, Netherlands, France, Australia, South Africa, Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, Malaysia, and Trinidad and Tobago. The first large-scale migration of Hindus from

India happened as part of the economic needs of the British colonial empire. Prohibition of slavery in 1833 (Slavery Abolition Act 1833 in the UK parliament, with some exceptions eliminated in 1843) created a need for cheap labour that was solved by the 'indentured labour system', and transportation of Indians as indentured labour to colonies worldwide started. This created a large Indian diaspora. Mauritius was the first country to receive a significant number of Indians, more than 25,000 by around 1840, but Indians had lived in Mauritius already for 100 years as domestic workers, craftsmen and traders. The Indian diaspora was from the beginning far from a uniform phenomenon. By the time the British took over Mauritius in 1810, some Tamil traders had joined the French elite and were owners of some of the grandest of the early estates (Younger 2013). About 1.5 million indentured labourers left India between 1834 and 1917, when the system ended. The largest number went to Mauritius, British Guyana, Natal and Trinidad (Brown 2006: 30), but many also to Surinam (around 94,000), Fiji and East Africa. The beginning of the next large-scale migration of Indians is usually dated to 1965 with new immigration laws in the US. Indians had continued to migrate to the UK, but there was a change in scale during the same decade. In 1961 106,300 South Asians lived in the UK. In 1971 it had almost quadrupled, to 413,155, in 1981 it was 1,215,048 and by 2001 had risen to 2,083,759 (3.6 per cent of the population; Brown, 2006: 40). In 2011, according to the UK census, there were 4,214,000 South Asians in England and Wales (7.5 per cent of the population), of which 56 per cent were Hindus. From 1970 a large number of South Asians have worked in the Middle East. In the US there are around 1.5 million Hindus. The worldwide Indian diaspora is thought to number between 30 and 40 million people (Rai and Reeves 2008). V. Sinha (2011) suggests that 69 million Hindus live outside of India.²

A second important element in the process of globalization of Hinduism is Hindu gurus with international success who have attracted followers worldwide. The international success of the Hindu gurus and the worldwide Hindu diaspora are two different processes, but they are both connected to the intensification of the intercontinental integration called globalization. The gurus were motivated by a missionary impulse, while most migrants had economic and educational motives. Hindu gurus contribute to the process of dissemination and integration of knowledge and in fact, many decades before the large-scale migration to Europe and North America happened, Hindu gurus had brought knowledge of what they believed to be a superior religious tradition to the West, influenced by persons and movements mobilizing against the forces of colonial power and Christian missionary activities (Van der Veer 2001). The first gurus came to the West at the time when India was suppressed by colonial rule, a colonial rule that was legitimized by the belief of the West being a superior civilization. Hinduism was a barbaric religion that needed the intervention of the colonial power to be reformed, according to this view. The so called 'Hindu renaissance' in Bengal represented responses to this situation, assisted by Western education, Orientalist scholarship and new religious movements that originated in the West such as spiritism and theosophy, and many of the early gurus who travelled to the West were products of this renewal in Bengal. Vivekananda³ (1864–1902) was the first Hindu guru to have a global impact and he gained enormous status in India because of the positive response he received abroad, and because he was himself a guru and the leading disciple of his own guru of great fame, Ramakrishna. Vivekananda returned to India as an international hero after lecture tours abroad. The success of Vivekananda motivated other teachers and gurus from Bengal who tried their luck abroad hoping for similar results. Some were quite successful and gained world fame. These Hindu gurus soon attracted a global audience and initiated many disciples, also from the West. Gurus have traditionally wanted to attract disciples and they have used the new opportunity of globalization to build a worldwide following. Other gurus travel abroad to cater to the diaspora community, but it is significant that many of those who have gained fame beyond their

followers are those that have also attracted Western devotees. One reason for the success is probably that they or their disciples have promoted their teaching in the English language in sermons and publications. Other reasons are ‘their ability to adapt Hinduism to a Western context’ (Saha 2007: 489), the attractiveness of their teaching and perhaps their supposed possession of extraordinary powers (Jacobsen 2012). Many of the mega-gurus with international success promoted traditions of yoga and the necessity for the guidance of a guru.

A third element in the globalization of Hinduism was the success of the term ‘Hinduism’. This was important for the idea that the Hindu traditions constituted a religion, although one that is a collection of a mosaic of religious traditions, and the term prompted a number of Hindu leading figures to attempt to identify certain Hindu traditions as hegemonic or to attempt to give a coherent definition of the religion, and to foster unification of Hinduism and Hindu unity as well. However, the term Hinduism is an umbrella term that includes a number of separate Hindu traditions that represent different theologies and philosophies. The earliest use of the term Hinduism is documented from the 1770s (Oddie 2006), but the term gained increasing acceptance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the term itself produced a number of intellectual projects among Hindus. The term ‘Hinduism’ and the idea of Hinduism as a coherent teaching and ‘world’ religion were important for the Hindu missionary impulse and the creation of a new type of guru who would promote Hinduism in the West, but also missionize in India to the Hindu middle class who had been educated in English schools and who, the gurus argued, had little knowledge of Hindu textual traditions. Good examples of religious figures and movements who attempted to promote Hindu unity and functioned as Hindu missionaries both in India and abroad are Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Mission, Chinmayananda and Chinmaya Mission (Jacobsen 2013c), and Sivaya Subrahmuniaswami and the Himalaya Academy (with its centre in Hawai’i), which publishes *Hinduism Today* (see Neubert 2013). The idea of Hindu unity has also been an important element in the political Hindu nationalist organizations.⁴ The ease of global communication has further strengthened the global presence of both the plurality of Hindu traditions as well as the idea of a coherent, homogeneous and organized Hinduism.

A fourth factor in the globalization of Hinduism is the adoption of Hindu practices by persons with a non-Hindu background. Converts have expanded Hinduism beyond South Asia and the South Asian diasporas. Contacts with gurus and their devotees have probably continued to be the most important source for conversions to Hinduism of persons not born of Hindu parents. However, some gurus have argued that their truth transcends religion or is the same as is found in all religions and that conversion to another religion is meaningless, but this view was perhaps developed as a response to Christian mission. An increasing number of persons from a non-Hindu background have adopted Hindu practices. Hinduism does not have a simple conversion ritual.⁵ Some Hindus do object to the idea of conversion to Hinduism, but many Hindus feel good about non-Hindus adopting Hindu practices. They may adopt vegetarianism, belief in *karma*, take the view that in the different religions it is the same one god that is worshipped by different names, adopt the practice of yoga and may be attracted to or try to follow the teaching of a Hindu guru. Some change their names. Conversion may anyway be a slow process. Indian newspapers report regularly on people from the West who are initiated as Hindu *saṃnyāsins* or in other ways convert to Hinduism. An important aspect of the news coverage of the large recent (in 2013) Kumbha Melā in Allahabad was the initiation of Western disciples into the ascetic orders (*akḥarās*). Newspapers reported that around 10,000 people of European or American origin were present at the festival, and most of them performed the ritual of sacred bath.

A fifth aspect of the globalization of Hinduism is the popularity of yoga. Yoga as a way to improved health became in the twentieth century an important tradition related to Hinduism, although often associated with Western practitioners, and with obvious historical connections

to Western forms of gymnastics and body building. As is well known, yoga in India did not have health as its main purpose until new traditions were invented in the 1920s and 1930s (Alter 2004; Singleton 2010) when yoga became integrated into the global movement of sports and nationalism. An especially important influence on modern yoga was European traditions of medical gymnastics, gymnastics that could be done on the floor without any equipment (see Alter 2004; Jacobsen 2006b; Singleton 2010). Modern yoga illustrates in a paradigmatic form how influences have been going back and forth for centuries in circular movements to create a transcultural practice. The overwhelming positive acceptance of modern postural yoga in the West in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries may not be unrelated to modern postural yoga having already in India blended with Western traditions of gymnastics. The creation of modern postural yoga in India was influenced by several Western traditions of gymnastics, especially Swedish gymnastics that were invented in the early nineteenth century by Peter Henrik Ling (1776–1839). Ling founded the Central Gymnastic Institute (Kungliga Gymnastiska Central Institute or GCI), a school for medical gymnastics, in the Swedish city of Stockholm in 1813. Ling divided his gymnastics in pedagogical gymnastics, military gymnastics and medical gymnastics. The intention of the GCI was to give training to teachers and members of the military. The gymnastics were used in large parts of Europe, as well as in India. A Danish version of this tradition, called Primitive Gymnastics, also had a great impact (see Bonde undated). Ling gymnastics was a static and rigid position gymnastics, while Primitive Gymnastics added rhythm and movement. Systems based on the Scandinavian model sprang up throughout Europe and became the basis for physical training in armies, navies and many schools, and these systems also entered India (Singleton 2010). Traditions of Scandinavian gymnastics that were part of the global sports movement were transferred to India and became part of programmes at the YMCA. Swedish and Danish gymnastics were major cultural exports. According to a survey taken by the Indian YMCA in the 1920s, Danish Primitive Gymnastics was one of the most popular forms of exercise in India, second only to the Swedish gymnastics (Singleton 2010: 84–88). These traditions had also been adopted by the British military for the physical training of soldiers, such as in their morning exercises. Modern postural yoga therefore may be as much Scandinavian as Indian; that is, it may be more dependent on Swedish and Danish gymnastics than on any other source. Western traditions of gymnastics, and other traditions of physical culture such as body building, were integrated into yoga by some innovative yoga teachers in India from the 1920s, such as Sri Yogendra (1897–1989), Kuvalayananda (1883–1968) and Krishnamacharya (1888–1989), who blended Indian traditions of physical culture with Scandinavian gymnastics and exercises used by the British military for physical training. Krishnamacharya studied with Kuvalayananda in the early 1930s and became the teacher of B.K.S. Iyengar, K. Pattabhi Jois and T.K.V. Desikachar who became global yoga teachers. The phenomenon of yoga illustrates circular movements of influences.⁶ The spread of Indian yoga to the rest of the world in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries may be understood in the context of the gymnastics movement in Europe of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century and its impact on India, the international sport movement and Indian nationalism.

Many global mega gurus promoted yoga as a practice of meditation. The idea of yoga as the essence or core of Hinduism had been promoted by Vivekananda, who understood yoga as a philosophy of meditation and control of the mind. He was also the first modern Hindu guru who went on missionary tours to Europe and North America and presented Hinduism in English. Vivekananda's promotion of 'spirituality' and yoga as the peak and essence of Hinduism was important for the modern upliftment of yoga, which led others to look for additional possible applications of it, such as developing it into gymnastics by blending it with Western traditions of sports. Vivekananda promotion of Hinduism as a 'spirituality' that was superior to Western

religion and that the West was in need of, inspired other Hindu gurus to travel to the West to present Hinduism with a global message for everyone.

Hindu gurus and diaspora in northern Europe

Hinduism in the European countries can be divided between, on the one hand, the large Hindu diaspora groups and, on the other, converts from the European countries to Hinduism and others who have adopted elements from Hindu spirituality, especially the practice of yoga. Many of these converts and yoga practitioners have no contact with the Hindu diaspora population whose religion often is temple based, while the converts have been attracted to yoga or Hindu forms of meditation. Religion for the diaspora groups often fulfils different functions and is oriented around family traditions and the preservation of languages and cultures of the countries of origin. However, the Hindu diaspora communities do also have contacts with Hindu gurus who pay frequent visits to the communities and yoga lessons are organized by the temples. Hinduism and globalization, diaspora and the growth of guru and yoga traditions in the geographical area of northern Europe are exemplified by Hinduism in Norway.⁷ Hinduism as a living tradition always exists in local contexts and these local expressions often display Hinduism in all its dimension. Hinduism in Norway displays devotional Hinduism in the temple, in the home and in public processions; different regional traditions such as Tamil, Gujarati, Punjabi and Bengali, different theological traditions such as Śaiva Siddhānta, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, Tamil Śāktism, and so on. In addition, Hinduism in each country in northern Europe has a unique history.

The first Hindu guru to settle for good in northern Europe and one of the first Hindu gurus to settle in the West,⁸ Swami Sri Ananda Acharya (1881–1945) from Bengal, made Norway his permanent home in 1917. He was inspired by Vivekananda, although he was not connected to his movement. Ananda Acharya arrived at the Norwegian capital Kristiania (Oslo became the official name of the city in 1925) in December 1914 and settled permanently in the mountainous area of eastern Norway in 1917. He lived outside the village of Alvdal until his death in 1945. Ananda Acharya was born in Hooghly-Chinsura, 40 km north of Kolkata and his name was Surendra Nath Baral (also spelled Boral). He apparently became a *saṃnyāsīn* in early youth. Later he studied philosophy at the University of Calcutta and obtained in 1908 a Master's degree in philosophy, and in 1910 he became a teacher in philosophy at Maharaja's College in Burdwan. Soon after he withdrew from the post on the suggestion of his guru Swami Sivanarayan Paramahansa and instead choose to spread the teaching of Indian philosophy to the West (Sarma 1971: xviii). He arrived in Europe in 1912. For a couple of years he gave lectures on Indian philosophy in England, Sweden and Norway. In 1914 he went from London to Norway for the first time to give lectures and in 1916 he lectured in Sweden. His first book was *The Samhitās* (Acharya 1913), and thereafter a number of books were published. The lectures in Oslo were published in *Brahmadarsanam or Intuition of the Absolute: Being an Introduction to the Study of Hindu Philosophy* (Acharya 1917) by an American publisher, with the dedication 'to my friends and pupils in Norway'. Ananda Acharya spent the summer of 1916 in Gudbrandsdalen in Norway and the summer of 1917 at Tyin in Jotunheimen, and he also travelled extensively in Norway to see the country. Ananda Acharya was fond of the beauty of nature and especially of mountains and he admired the solitude of life in the mountains, which perhaps may explain his choice to settle in Norway:

The man who has not lived alone in the mountains has not yet discovered his soul. Solitude gives new birth to life. To be alone on the summit of a high mountain is an exalting experience worth all the scriptures in the world ... Man is destined to find his

salvation in the vision of Brahman, and the solitude of the naked hills is the witness to this mystery-play.

(Acharya 1971 [1924]: 35)

The value of solitude expressed here had meeting points with Norwegian culture at the time, and if the word Brahman were replaced by the word nature, many Norwegians would probably have agreed with the statement. Ananda Acharya's philosophy was close to the teaching of Vivekananda. Ananda Acharya wrote 'All religion teaches the truth of the same Brahman, who reveals Himself not in the pages of books, in temples, churches, mosques, creeds and dogmas, but in the heart of His loving worshippers' (Acharya 1971 [1924]: 146).

Ananda Acharya's missionary efforts in Norway did create a few converts. When a disciple of him, the Norwegian engineer Einar Beer (1887–1982), was informed that he wanted to settle down permanently somewhere in the mountains of Norway he found a permanent place for him at Tronsvangen close to Mount Tron and the village of Alvdal. Ananda Acharya lived there for almost 30 years until his death in 1945. Two British women lived with him, Amy L. Edwards (1878–1947) and Ellen Margareth Jewson (1879–1954), in addition to Einar Beer. In the 15 years between 1913 and 1928, Ananda Acharya published 35 works, but that came to an end when in 1928 he informed his devotees that he was the Maitreya Buddha (the Buddha to be) and that he in the future would be known as Tathagata Amoghasiddhi Maitreya Buddha (Beer 1970: 9). His Norwegian disciple Einar Beer then took the name Acharya Sariputra and he was known as Norway's only Buddhist and as 'the Buddhist monk on Mt Tron'. Ananda Acharya published not only in English, but also in Swedish and Norwegian. Some of his books were collections of poetry. He cooperated with the renowned author Arne Garborg (1851–1924) to translate parts of *Rāmāyaṇa* into Norwegian (Vālmīki 1922, 1924). Institutions were founded based on his heritage by his disciple Einar Beer and by Bjørn Pettersen (1955–) who is currently (2014) in charge of Swami Sri Ananda Acharya Stiftelse (founded in 1975). Einar Beer established the current centre Shantibu in 1946 on the slopes of Mt Tron and sought contact with Paramananda Mission that was founded by Swami Paramananda Maharaj (1954–1999) in Bengal in 1978. In 1989–1990 Paramananda stayed for a full year in Norway, and he visited Norway four times between 1989 and 1998. A nun from the Mission came to Norway settled at Shantibu in 1990 and in 2000 she became a Norwegian citizen. Peace was a main focus of the teaching of Ananda Acharya and his few disciples in Norway have for years attempted to establish an institution of peace studies close to his *samādhi* (see Figure 23.1) To promote this idea, the Mt Tron University of Peace Foundation was established in 1993. Hindu migrants from South Asia and their descendants who started arriving in the 1960s have travelled on pilgrimage to the *samādhi* of Acharya and have established a connection between old and new Hindu migrants.

Ananda Acharya was only the first of many Hindu gurus who have visited Norway, although the only one to settle permanently. The gurus have been of two types: those with Norwegian disciples and those who serve the Hindu diaspora. From the 1960s a growing number of Norwegians have been members of Hindu religious movements or followers of Hindu gurus during some period of their lives. Popular gurus and movements have been Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Transcendental Meditation, Bhaktivedanta Prabhupad and ISKCON, Shri Praghat Ranjan Sarkar and Ananda Marga, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and the Art of Living Foundation, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (Osho), Sri Chinmoy and Sathya Sai Baba. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi paid many visits to Norway (first time in 1960), and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and Sri Chinmoy have come on regular visits. Interestingly, operation not of temples but of restaurants is the main activity of the Norwegian members of ISKCON⁹ and the devotees of Chinmoy.¹⁰ Sri Chinmoy has been allowed to establish peace monuments at central places in the largest cities in Norway. An interesting example of circular



Figure 23.1 Samadhithana of Ananda Achary at Tronfjell, Norway

Source: Knut A. Jacobsen

movements between India and Norway to create transcultural religious ideas and practices is a Norwegian reform movement of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's TM Acem School of Meditation, originated as part of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's movement, but it broke the connection and invented a Norwegian variant of Hindu meditation and has since expanded internationally, also to India, in order to do missionary work for its Norwegian interpretation of Hindu meditation traditions. Acem School of Meditation organizes annual meditation retreats in India and also other countries. The organization originated as the Academic Meditation Society and was part of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's Spiritual Regeneration Movement, but in 1972 it broke the connection with Maharishi's organization and took its current name. However, like TM, Acem School of Meditation is based on mental repetition of a meditation sound and has sought a close relationship with science. A large number of Norwegians participate in various forms of yoga classes, but the participants range from persons who consider yoga as just a form of exercise for staying healthy to persons who are followers of some particular Hindu gurus or schools of yoga. Several of the main schools of modern yoga gymnastics are represented such as Iyengar Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, Sivananda Yoga, Bihar School of Yoga and Bikram Yoga. A small but growing number of teachers have been trained in India. One of the oldest yoga schools in Norway is Skandinavisk Yoga- og meditasjonsskole, founded by the Danish Jørgen Dreiager who lived two years (from 1968) in Bihar with Swami Satyanananda Saraswati, the founder in 1964 of Bihar school of Yoga.

He took the name Swami Janakananda and when he returned to Scandinavia he promoted Swami Satyanananda Saraswati's yoga. Yoga has increasingly entered the gyms, making full circle from the gymnastics invented by Per Henrik Ling in Sweden, blended with Indian traditions of gymnastics and yoked to yoga philosophy.

Gurus who have travelled to visit the Hindu diaspora in Norway have addressed a limited part of the Hindu diaspora, most often only the group to which they themselves belong. The Hindu immigrants who started to arrive in Norway from the late 1960s and early 1970s were mainly from two areas, from Punjab, Haryana and Delhi, and from Sri Lanka. They belonged to different Hindu regional traditions.¹¹ The Punjab and Haryana Hindu traditions and the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu traditions constitute different linguistic, ritual and theological traditions. A consequence of these differences is that the north Indian Hindus and the Tamil Hindus have established separate temples and ritual traditions and mainly do not visit each other's ritual events. They are also part of two different diasporas, the Indian and the Sri Lankan Tamil. Most aspects of the north Indian temples appear foreign to the Tamils and vice versa. Also, most of the north Indian Hindus in Norway are Vaiṣṇavas, especially worshippers of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, and the Sri Lankan Tamils are Śaivas, mostly following the Śaiva Siddhānta theology and temple rituals. In the Hindu diaspora in Norway therefore there are two clearly segregated forms of Hinduism: the north Indian Vaiṣṇava traditions and the Sri Lankan Tamil Śaiva traditions. Shandip Saha has correctly noted that the gurus who travel overseas tend to focus their efforts on a limited group who belong to or are at least sympathetic to the tradition to which the gurus belong and that 'the central concern for these gurus is to address the spiritual needs of their devotees who live overseas' (Saha 2007: 491). This is the case also in Norway. Gurus tend to attend to only one ethnic group of Hindus: ethnic Norwegians, north Indian Hindus or Tamil Hindus from Sri Lanka. One reason for this is language, another reason is the religious tradition, and a third reason is organizational. Those who organize the events have their own ethnic group in mind.

The largest group of Hindus in Norway, as is the case with many other European countries as well, is the Tamil Hindus from Sri Lanka. The Hindu diaspora population has established a large number of temples and temple organizations.¹² These Hindu temples are first and foremost the homes of the gods but they also function as cultural centres and on the main festival days the temples bring together a large part of the Hindu population that belong to the same regional tradition as the temple. The diaspora situation often leads to an increased focus on the temple as a place for the preservation and generational transfer of culture and as a place to confirm identity, and the temple often becomes the single most important cultural institution of the group. The largest temple organization is Norges Hindu kultur senter, Oslo, with the temple Sivasubramaniyar Alayam, a temple dedicated to the god Murugaṅ. The Sri Lankan guru Yogi Ram Sunthar has visited the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus in Norway several times and has addressed the Sri Lankan Tamil community, to which he himself belongs. Yogi Ram Sunthar is a disciple of Yogi S.A.A. Ramiah and teaches Kriya Yoga (in Tamil also called Vasiyogam) in the tradition of Babaji, or Babaji's Science of Kriya Hatha Yoga, which is connected here to the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta tradition. This particular tradition of Babaji traces itself to 203 CE, when a boy called Nagarajan was born in Parangippertai (now Porto Novo) near Chidambaram in south India. Babaji, as a six-year-old child was kidnapped by a slave trader, but he was later released and travelled to Varanasi where he is supposed to have become a renowned Sanskrit scholar already as a teenager. He then travelled to Sri Lanka, where after a long period of meditation, he met one of the 18 Siddhars, called Boganathar or Bhogar. He then gained knowledge of Siddhānta and yoga and attempted to attain *samādhi*. He travelled in south India and was initiated into *kuṇḍalinī* yoga by another of the Siddhars, Agastyar. He told Babaji to retire to a Himalayan cave, and he practised yoga in a cave in Badrinath for years, finally attaining immortality. Babaji gave the name Kriya yoga to his teaching

and throughout the centuries taught it to some and gave *darśan* to others. He was, according to this tradition, the inspiration of Kriya teachers such as Śaṅkara, Kabīr, Lahiri Mahasaya, and many others. Babaji in other words follows the teaching of the 18 Tamil Siddhars but added to this Kriya Yoga.¹³ Yogi Ram Sunthar presents himself in the following way on the webpage of ‘Vaasiyogam: Universal Kriya Babaji Yoga Foundation’:

Yogi Ram Sunthar is the disciple of Yogi S.A.A. Ramiah who was a disciple of the Mahavatar Babaji. The Universal Kriya Babaji Yoga Foundation was founded by Yogi Ram Sunthar with the aim to promoting Kriya Yoga and Siddha Medicine. Towards this end, Yogi Ram Sunthar has initiated many sincere seekers into Kriya Yoga. Around 200 acres of land has been identified in South India to create a Siddha University.¹⁴

The purpose of the mission is:

the advancement of the Hindu religion according to the teachings of the Vedic Rishi’s and to enrich the human spirit by actively serving humankind’s educational, social, cultural, and spiritual needs. The Bhagavad-Gita and Karma Yoga are two important corner stones of the mission.¹⁵

The high value given to the Bhagavadgītā and karmayoga is common to many modern gurus. In his speech in the temple Sivasubramaniyar Alayam in Oslo, Yogi Ram Sunthar talked about the 18 Siddhas, Babaji’s Kriya Yoga, famous yogis from India and Sri Lanka, and many aspects of yoga.¹⁶ In a rented locality, he gave daily instructions in yoga during his stay and the local newspaper covered this event in June 2010, and published photographs and an interview with one of the participants, Uma Navaratnam, a Sri Lankan Tamil residing in Norway. She explained to the journalist that she had gone to the gym for the last 15 years and therefore wanted to participate in Ram Sunthar’s yoga.¹⁷ Interestingly, this reason for participating in Yogi Ram Sunthar’s yoga class was very similar to many Norwegians who join yoga classes at the gyms. The participation of Sri Lankan Tamils in Norway in Ram Sunthar’s yoga classes reflects both the recent boom in the Western-style fitness industry and ‘a transnational nostalgia for “tradition”’ (Chakraborty 2007: 1174). That Yogi Ram Sunthar represented a Tamil regional tradition and that the instruction was in Tamil were important for her joining his class. Ram Sunthar seemed to have been perceived both as a yogi fitness instructor and a religious esoteric teacher. He also offered to initiate disciples into an esoteric part of the teaching, kuṇḍalinī yoga, which includes a special breathing technique (*prāṇāyāma*), ‘Kundalini Pranayam’, created by Babaji:

Here in a lofty cave which is big enough to accommodate St. Peter’s Cathedral – Yogi Shiva taught Kundalini Pranayama to His Shakti, Uma Devi. This is the beginning of Siva-Yoga-Siddhantham. A crow listened to this Kriya yoga initiation and became immortal as the famous Crow-Siddha, Kakkapushendeswar. A fish listened to this great initiation and became Macchindra Nath (Maccha Muni), the fish Siddha who is one of the nine Nath Sadhus to develop the Fish Pose. That is the age of Tamil Yoga Saiva Siddhantham is millions of years! Modern scientific research work is heading towards it.¹⁸

But when Ram Sunthar visited Norway, he did not live in Sri Lanka or south India any longer but he lived permanently in Britain and was married to a British woman. He had relatives in Norway, which was one reason he visited. The relatives, who were also disciples, organized his

visit. Ram Sunthar's British wife Melanie is also a disciple of Yogi S.A.A. Ramaiah, and she has presented herself in this way on her webpage:

Melanie, Yogi Ram Sunthar's wife, is a direct disciple of yogi S.A.A. Ramaiah (yogiar). She lived in India for over six years with yogiar and in Sri Lanka for over four years and practised Babaji's kriya yoga under the guidance of yogiar. She travelled with yogiar to India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka many times. She was first initiated into Babaji's kriya Kundalini yoga by Yogi S.A.A. Ramaiah in 1979 in the UK. After graduating from University of North London (BA. (Hons) Philosophy), she completed her post graduate diploma PGCE at the University of London (Whiteland's College) and then went to India and lived in Yogi's ashrams in Chennai, Kanadukathan and Babaji's Holistic Hospital for five years.¹⁹

Yogi Ram Sunthar and his yoga illustrate the global connections and transcultural religious ideas and practices that have become typical of contemporary global Hinduism. His and his wife's guru, Yogi S.A.A. Ramaiah, moved to the US in 1968 and a small community of followers formed around him called 'American Babaji Yoga Sangam'. Yogi Ramaiah lived in the US for many years but moved to India late in his life.²⁰ Thus, not only has the guru of Yogi Ram Sunthar moved back and forth between India and the West, but he was based in the US a large part of his life, and Yogi Ram Sunthar is married to a British woman who is also a disciple of his own guru.

A different type of guru is Sri Sadguru Murali Krishna Swamikal who visited the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus in Norway in 2012. He claims to be a divine *avatāra* and thus a god, and he therefore gives *darśan* and is supposed to perform miracles. One reason he targets the Tamils is that he claims to be an *avatāra* of the god Murukan, a main god of the Tamils. He has established the Om Sharavanabhava Seva Trust and the Sri Sharavana Baba Matham. The mission combines the claim of *avatāra* and the ability to perform miracles with the ideology of *sevā*,²¹ and claims four main pillars:

- (a) feeding the poor and needy, (b) providing medicines to those who cannot afford them, (c) making available clothes to those who do not have them, and (d) distributing notebooks and textbooks to children coming from under-privileged families.²²

Other *sevā* projects include healthcare programmes for tribals, distribution of sewing machines for women, crutches, wheelchairs and artificial limbs for the physically challenged, uniforms for visually challenged school children and spectacles and learning aids for old-age homes and orphanages.²³ The mission is fast expanding and has established centres in Kozhikode and Palakkad and retreats in Bangalore, Pollachi, Coonoor, Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Palani, Coimbatore, Kanchipuram, Sharjah and one abroad, in London. It aims at a global presence. His mission is to 'counteract the demonic forces' that have caused the arising of the 'godly activities' of Sadguru Murali Krishna Swamikal.²⁴ Most notable is the promotion of Sadguru Murali Krishna Swamikal as a divine *avatār*:

In this Dark Age, (Kali Yuga), he has become the sole refuge to innumerable devotees who seek His guidance, protection and counsel. He is widely believed to be the avatar (living incarnation) of Lord Murugan, the second son of Lord Shiva. He is also associated with Aadi Dakshinamurthy, the jnana-avatar (wisdom incarnation) of Lord Shiva. We speak of Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, we speak of Sri Basavaveshwara [sic], Sri Madhava and other saints like Sri Tukaram, Sri Mirabai and Sri Jnaneshwar, but little do we realize that we have a living personification of the eternal truth of Vedanta in Sri Sadguru

Murali Krishna. Born of the essence of Lord Shiva and His consort, Goddess Parvati, Lord Muruga was nurtured by six mothers (the krithikaas); it is said that to please them, He developed six faces. He is also the son of Agni, the God of Fire, and Ganga Devi, mother of the holy Ganges. Intensely revered by His devotees, Lord Muruga symbolizes jnana or transcendental wisdom. He is that.²⁵

That god takes birth when there is unrighteousness and that Sadguru Murali Krishna Swamika is the *avatār* of our age is a main doctrine. Newspaper articles have been both favourable and unfavourable.²⁶ One unfavourable Sri Lankan newspaper claimed that Swamikal, with the death of Sathya Sai Baba, is attempting to take the role as the dominant Hindu *avatāra* and miracle worker and that he was exploiting the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, an interpretation coloured by the politics of ethnicity and religion in Sri Lanka.²⁷

The largest and oldest north India Hindu temple Sanatan Mandir outside of Oslo has been regularly visited by Brahmarishi Vishvatma Bawra ji Maharaj, the guru of Brahmarishi Mission. Brahmarishi had strong connections to Punjab and Haryana, the Indian states from which the Indian Hindus in Norway originate. He was based in Chandigarh and he established his first education centre in 1968 in Ludhiana in Punjab; since 1972 the head office of this mission has been situated at Virat Nagar, Pinjore, Haryana and the main ashram, called BrahmRishi Ashram, was established there in 1974. This is the global centre of the mission, and Hindus come from abroad to visit the Brahma Rishi Mission in Haryana. Brahmarishi's guru was Bhagwan Chandra Mauli Ji, who also taught him yoga. Some Hindus in Norway knew the Brahma Rishi Mission from before they arrived in Norway, or had made contact while on visits to India. Brahmarishi travelled abroad and visited many countries where the diaspora from Punjab and Haryana was found but he also had followers beyond the Indian diaspora. On the webpage of his mission the global nature of his mission is presented:

H.H. BrahmRishi Swami Vishvatma Bawraji Maharaj from Chandigarh, India, is the Chief founder and Spiritual Director of the internationally acclaimed BrahmRishi Mission. This Mission whose roots are firmly entwined in Indian soil has its branches in different parts of the world like Europe, North America, South America and Caribbean countries. This Mission can only be fully comprehended after understanding its Source: Gurudev Shri Vishvatma Bawra ji Maharaj.²⁸

Brahmarishi provided instructions in yoga and gave *darśan* when he visited the temple. His teaching is called 'Brahmvidya, the science of the absolute knowledge' and is said to be a combination of Sāṃkhya and yoga. The *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* were his favourite texts, but he taught on the basis of his experience. His teaching of yoga and meditation was called Maha Yoga, which was said to be a combination of Hatha Yoga, Mantra Yoga, Laya Yoga and Raja Yoga. The goal was to realize the ultimate truth, which is a state of consciousness that causes freedom from sufferings and eternal peace.²⁹ The mission is global and has branches in Europe, North America, South America and in Caribbean countries. Brahmarishi communicated in Hindi and he visited the temple in Norway because members of the temple belonged to or were sympathetic to his mission, and his teaching was part of the Indian heritage of some of them.

Conclusion

The presence of gurus and yoga traditions in the Hindu diaspora communities is a prominent part of global Hinduism but is a neglected aspect of the study of diaspora Hinduism. Migration of

South Asians, gurus who travel the world and have attracted devotees and converts to Hinduism globally, and the popularity of the traditions of yoga, have spread Hinduism to all parts of the world. Hindu gurus competing for influence have long been a global phenomenon. They are products of traditions that have been shaped by ideas and practices that have been going back and forth between East and West for a long time in circular movements. Their messages are transcultural, products of cultural interchange and adapted to the audiences, who themselves belong to several local contexts, East and West. Hinduism as a living tradition exists only in these local contexts, it is these local contexts that display Hinduism, and in each of these local contexts Hinduism has a unique history.

Notes

- 1 The figure of the Hindu guru may seem to be inconsistent with twentieth and twenty-first century ideas of autonomy and individuality but worship of exceptional persons is very much part of all contemporary societies, East and West, and the need for spiritual guidance seems to be a permanent feature of human culture.
- 2 The strong growth in the number of Hindus over the last 100 years is mainly due to rapid population growth in South Asia and not to conversions. India's population of 1.3 billion (2013) (of which around 80 per cent are counted as Hindus) constitutes around 20 per cent of the world population. Adding the 1 billion Hindus living in India to the around 100 million Hindus living in the rest of South Asia and in the diaspora makes the total world population of Hindus around 1.1 billion.
- 3 In this article I use diacritics for concepts and texts from Indian languages and Hindu gods and goddesses but not for modern figures and movements and place names. I write Vivekananda and not Vivekānanda, but Bhagavadgītā and not Bhagavadgita, and kuṇḍalinī and not kundalini.
- 4 The growth of Indian nationalism led in 1947 to an Indian nation state with a majority of Hindus. The processes of Hinduism becoming a world religion and Indian nationalism have strengthened the Hindu traditions, but secularization in India has also reduced the influence of Hinduism on Indian society. India is a secular state and a religious pluralistic society.
- 5 However, Sivaya Subrahmuniyaswami promoted a simple conversion ritual that mainly involved changing name (see Neubert 2013).
- 6 It is not impossible that the Swede Per Henrik Ling had knowledge of East Asian traditions of martial arts.
- 7 For Hinduism in Norway see Jacobsen 2013b and d, 2011b, 2010a, 2009, 2008, 2006a, 2004, 2003 and 2000.
- 8 One of the earliest gurus to settle in the US, Paramahansa Yogananda, arrived there in 1920.
- 9 <http://www.krishnas-cuisine.no/>, accessed 15.7.2013.
- 10 <http://www.fragrance.no/index.html>, accessed 15.7.2013.
- 11 Hinduism is the religion of the majority of the around 25,000 immigrants from Sri Lanka and India and their descendants in Norway.
- 12 In 2011 there were 13 official Hindu religious organizations and 8 temples (Jacobsen 2011b, 2013d).
- 13 For the 18 Tamil Yoga Siddhas in the tradition of Yogi Ram Sunthar, see <http://archive.is/r3Aj>.
- 14 <http://www.vaasiyogam.org/>, accessed 15.7.2013.
- 15 http://www.indiawijzer.nl/index.htm?deeplink=/personal_development/den_haag/den_haag_brahmarishi.htm, accessed 15.7.2013.
- 16 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7eraljFcPY>, accessed 15.7.2013.
- 17 <http://www.lokalavisen.no/nyheter/yoga-for-alle-1.5342223>.
- 18 <http://archive.is/r3Aj>.
- 19 <http://www.flickr.com/photos/vaasiyogam/4091386162/>, accessed 15.7.2013.
- 20 <http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/articles/art25-yogi-ssa-ramaiah.htm>, accessed 15.7.2013.
- 21 For *sevā* see Jacobsen 2010b.
- 22 http://www.omsharavanabhavamatham.org/Sharavanababa_Sri_Sharavana_Baba_Matham-6.aspx, accessed 15.7.2013.
- 23 http://www.omsharavanabhavamatham.org/Sharavanababa_Sri_Sharavana_Baba_Matham-6.aspx, accessed 15.7.2013.
- 24 http://www.omsharavanabhavamatham.org/Sharavanababa_Sri_Sharavana_Baba_Matham-6.aspx, accessed 15.7.2013.

- 25 http://www.omsharavanabhavamatham.org/Sharavanababa_The_Divine_Avatar-20.aspx, accessed 15.7.2013.
- 26 'We must learn to love everyone equally', Indian Express, 12 July 2013, accessed 15.7.2013; <http://newindianexpress.com/cities/bangalore/article1420205.ece>, accessed 15.07.2013; 'Understanding a Sadguru', *Deccan Herald*, 12 July 2013, <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/31724/understanding-sadguru.html>, accessed 15.07.2013; 'Scandal Ridden "Iss-Puss" Jibe Murali Swamy Exploiting The Vulnerable Diaspora Tamils', *The Sri Lanka Guardian*, 13 August 2012, <http://www.brahmrishimission.org/pages/About-Gurudev.htm>, accessed 15.7.2013.
- 27 'Scandal Ridden "Iss-Puss" Jibe Murali Swamy Exploiting The Vulnerable Diaspora Tamils', *The Sri Lanka Guardian*, 13 August 2012, <http://www.brahmrishimission.org/pages/About-Gurudev.htm>, accessed 15.7.2013.
- 28 <http://www.jaivirat.com/gurudev-bawra-ji>, accessed 20.6.2013. See also <http://www.brahmrishimission.org/pages/About-Gurudev.htm>.
- 29 <http://www.brahmrishimission.org/pages/About-Gurudev.htm>, accessed 20.6.2013.

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Internet and religion in Asia

Sam Han

The return of religion as a topic of theoretical inquiry in the humanities and social sciences has been well documented (Derrida and Vattimo 1998; Hervieu-Leger 1990). The scholarly contributions to this resurgence could be accused of myopia on two counts. First, the overwhelming majority of them focus on the issue of secularism, with “Asia” making an occasional appearance as an added variable in the overarching “metanarrative of social modernization” (Stolow 2005: 122). Relatedly, and this is the other aspect of the myopia, there is the issue of religion’s seeming incommensurability with technology. While scholars of all stripes have acknowledged the importance of new media technologies and digitization on social, economic and cultural life, their impact on religious life has not necessarily been the focus in the “return of religion” discourse.

In spite of this there have been a number of scholars from the social sciences, humanities and theology who can be collected under the banner of “digital religion” and who have begun to address the limitations of this recent religious turn. They do so on both counts. Not only have they started to investigate the effect of digital technologies on religious practice and thought but also they have turned the favored referent of these discussions away from North America and Europe.

However, they were neither the first nor the only ones that reached beyond the West and indeed the analytic of secularism or secularization. There is also the group of scholars working in what could be called “global religions,” exemplified by the recent work of Mark Juergensmeyer (2003). One need not use his or her imagination too much to see why “global religions” and “digital religion” are intellectually simpatico. They both share a critical attitude toward viewing religion *qua* religion as essentially a closed system. For global religions, the spread of religious ideas and practices across ethnic, linguistic and territorial boundaries since the dawn of the Axial Age reflects the always already global *nature* of religion. But as recent work in this vein also takes pain to note, the distribution of religion relies upon technologies, whether it be a stirrup, which allowed for the riding of horses for longer distances, or the Gutenberg printing press (White 1966). The spread of religion, the global religions approach suggests, is linked to the movement of peoples and cultures (Assmann 2008; Juergensmeyer 2006). Axiality, as much as Jaspers and others who have used his language would like, may not simply be a matter of similar ideas in parallel development but also has to do with inter-cultural (and thus inter-religious) contact. This

is undoubtedly the case in East Asia, where the *sprachbund* of Chinese scripts served as a kind of infrastructure for the spread of Buddhism from China throughout modern-day Korea and Japan. The same can be said about Buddhism and Hinduism vis-à-vis Sanskrit from India throughout Southeast Asia. Though I am not interested in assessing the merits of the relationship of language and religion, it is the case that the geographical spread of religion and language is reliant upon inter-cultural contact.

For contemporary digital technologies, *contact* is *raison d'être*. In the age of “ubiquitous media,” the differentiation of on- and off-line life is not only increasingly difficult to observe but it is analytically moot. In these times, especially in Asia, which boasts of some of the highest rates of Internet penetration and mobile phone use, to talk about specifically *digital* or *online* religion seems to be speaking to realities of decades past. For instance, as the *Wall Street Journal* blog in India reports, online puja is fast becoming a growing industry. Puja, the Hindu practice of giving offerings to deities and ancestors, takes place at personal shrines and temples. There are now websites, such as blessingsonthenet.com, that allow “you to select from a list of Hindu temples, pay some money and have a puja performed on your behalf by a representative of the website, at a temple of your choice.” Websites such as these receive close to 200,000 page views per day. This is not a marginal phenomena but one that many members of the Indian diaspora living overseas participate in. At one such site, 70 percent of the donations are from Indians living abroad (Sudgen 2012).

How are we to evaluate this sort of phenomena? Is this a debasement of ancient tradition? Or is it merely, as the proprietor of a puja website suggests, a matter of convenience. “Most of the people,” he says, “are completely tired after work and constraints of time and travel make it difficult to reach the temple.” Or is there something else happening? Does the “remediation,” in the parlance of new media theory, of religious ritual to digital spaces do something to the nature of the ritual itself?

It is on this very issue—of the implications of technology on religious ritual—that the first wave of scholarship on religion and Internet made a lasting analytic contribution: online religion as opposed to religion online. The difference between the two is somewhat obvious. The latter—religion online—is simply the transfer of “brick and mortar” religion onto the virtual space of the World Wide Web. The former—online religion—entails that religion, by its very being on the Web, is reconstituted (Helland 2000). While Helland first proposed it, and others have modified this dichotomy, this distinction was, and perhaps still is, important for analytic reasons.

First, Helland brings to light a point made by philosophers of technology, especially those of a broadly phenomenological (read: Heideggerian) bent (Feenberg 1991; Ihde 1983, 1990). Media technologies, in particular the digital kind such as the Web, are ontological. They are not merely instruments of broadcast. They are, in the words of Feenberg, “non-neutral” (Feenberg 2002: 63). What this means is that Helland understands “religion” to be fundamentally altered in its interaction with the Internet. For him, the change to the conceptualization of religion can be seen in religious websites “where people could act with unrestricted freedom and a high level of interactivity, a feature facilitated by the fact of being on the Internet” (Helland 2005: no page nos). Online religion refers to religious websites, which seemed to provide only religious information and not interaction. Glenn Young put it nicely: the difference between the two turns on “information provision” and “religious participation” (Young 2004).

The separating out of online religion and religion online also highlights an important feature of religion—its relative instability. While there are numerous influential attempts at defining religion—for instance, as a “cultural system”—there is, in the case of Helland, the acknowledgement that the dynamics internal to religion—its practices, its theology—could be influenced as a result

of contact with new media technologies. Thus, along with the ontological power of technology, Helland's distinction offers a dynamic view of religion. Religion is not simply, then, a set of ideas that have a singular origin and a linear trajectory. It is a collection of practices and ideas that are adjusting in concert with other systems, including technological ones.

Helland's typology has since been reconsidered and also added to by many religion and Internet scholars, including Helland himself. Now, there is somewhat general agreement that "religion online" and "online religion" can no longer be considered separately. However, I would hesitate to suggest that this is wholly due to the limitations of Helland's original theoretical contribution. In fact, I would suggest that more significant are the changes that occurred in the landscape of media technologies, especially the ways in which the Internet moved from "Web 1.0" to "Web 2.0" in such a brief span of time (for a fuller discussion on this transformation, see Han 2011).

The aim of this chapter is to explore, elucidate and evaluate these sorts of questions that arise out of the increasingly technologized (and in particular digital) nature of religious practice. In line with the aims of this volume, it does so with a particular focus on Asia. First, the chapter summarizes and assesses the dominant approaches to religion and the Internet, as well as religion and technology more broadly. It then pivots toward a discussion problematizing the notion of "Asian religion." Here, the chapter spends some time unpacking the theory of "diaspora" that has become a popular analytics for many scholars of religion in recent years. In the age of global migration, as well as the sort of intra-regional contact that has existed in Asia for centuries, it is increasingly more difficult to label anything as particularly bound by territory. Hence, diaspora and mobility are becoming tropes in recent scholarship. Finally, the chapter concludes with a sampling of various instances of religious Internet practices that speak to some of the conceptual discussion had in previous sections.

Approaches to the study of religion and the Internet

In the era of social media, it is the work of Heidi Campbell that has most frequently been cited and heralded as the marquis theoretical framework for studies of religion on the Internet. In several books and a series of articles, Campbell has offered what she calls the "religious-social shaping of technology" approach. The merit of this approach is that it is able to take into consideration not only the "innate qualities of the technology, but also on the ability of users to socially construct the technology in line with the moral economy of the user community of context" (Campbell 2010: 59). What this allows for, according to Campbell, is the exploration of "how spiritual, moral and theological codes of practice guide technological negotiation"; in other words, it allows us to study "patterns of use, adoption and adaptation" (Campbell 2010: 59).

Use, adoption and adaptation function as shorthand for Campbell's theoretical approach to religion and the Internet, which, in the last analysis, centers on what she calls "negotiation." Religious communities, she wants to emphasize, do not simply adopt technologies whole but make decisions to incorporate or reject certain aspects. They also produce a discourse of technology in order to justify its value. All of this is to say that people "use technologies in ways that are *active, creative* and socially situated" (Campbell 2010: 132).

For her, the key insights from the religious-social shaping of news media are as follows: (1) new media used for proselytization are easily adopted by religious communities; (2) new media, which can be used for networking members of religious communities so as to "solidify their membership, identity and beliefs" are viewed as valuable by religious communities; and (3) new media are leveraged when they can be used to set community agendas that publicize beliefs (Campbell 2010: 185).

Alongside this particular literature, there is yet another parallel, though sometimes intersecting, line of scholarly writing called the “media anthropology.” Exemplified in the writings of scholars such as Birgit Meyer and Charles Hirschkind, among others, media anthropology approaches the study of religion and technology in some ways analogous to Campbell but in others rather differently. While Campbell focuses rather narrowly on the Internet, specifically the Web, Hirschkind, for instance, studies the ethics of listening to cassette sermons in Egypt. The definition of media in this particular literature is much broader. Birgit Meyer writes:

Modern audiovisual media offer not only possibilities to spread out that may resonate remarkably well with religious ideas of reaching out into the world, but also reconfigure religious ideas and practices by situating them in the context of the era of mechanical and electronic reproducibility.

(Meyer 2006: 432)

Though Meyer and Hirschkind may not have been doing so on purpose, their approach reflects the contemporary media landscape more accurately. They do not isolate particular technologies or technological spaces. They begin from the premise that media are interoperable, ubiquitous and convergent. In turn, to speak of specific platforms as if they are bound and isolated is to misrepresent not only the media-technological infrastructure but also the way in which media practice looks in today’s world. With the advent of cloud computing to use but one example, users access the same material on various devices with very little effort. Synchronization is no novelty; it is an expectation.

One could venture to say that media anthropologists approach religion and media technologies in a more holistic manner. This includes not only a broader view of technology but also sensitivity to matters theological and bodily. For instance, Meyer argues that the concept of mediation is an *intrinsic* resonant link between religion and contemporary technologies. She illustrates this by pointing out the altering of “belief” with the “overwhelming presence of visual technologies.” As she describes it, “far from paving the way for a secularized, rational society,” they have “produced a new symbiosis of vision and belief, in which both are mutually constitutive, leading to a situation in which there are ‘too many things to believe and not enough credibility to go around’” (Meyer 2006: 433).

By contrast, Hirschkind famously tackles what he calls the “ethics of listening.” In his study of cassette-sermon listening in Egypt, he uses the terms “senses” and “sensibilities.” He argues that the cassette sermon, as a technology of self-improvement, contributes to the “[honing] an ethically responsive sensorium.” “Emotions, capacities of aesthetic appreciation, and states of moral attunement or being (i.e., sensibilities) come to structure fundamental sensory experiences” (Hirschkind 2001: 624). Specifically, Hirschkind demonstrates that the sermon is a “technique for the training of the body’s gestures and affects, its physiological textures and colorations, its rhythms and styles of expression.” Thus sermons are not simply there as content but function, via cassette technology, as form. “The stories,” Hirschkind writes, “impart ethical habits, and the organization of sensory and motor skills necessary for inhabiting the world in a manner considered to be appropriate for Muslims” (Hirschkind 2001: 638). Thus sermon listening trains the body.

As we can see from this brief foray into the media-anthropological approach to religion and technology, there is an abiding concern with the effect of technology on the “religious sensorium.” Indeed, this is something that I believe to be missing in the work of those such as Campbell and even Helland. While both camps share a broad interest in the convergent dynamics of religion and technologies, the religion and Internet approach is somewhat open to the

criticism of being intellectualist. In other words, the Internet, and technology more generally, are conceptualized in a limited manner, focusing on how religion *qua* ideology or religion *qua* belief is affected in its encounter with technology.

Online religions *in/of* Asia

As mentioned earlier, any discussion of the religious practice on the Internet necessarily brings up a crucial issue—that of religion online and online religion. But when specifically dealing with digital religion in Asia, we have an added layer of complexity. Are we talking about Asian religions or religion in Asia? While seemingly semantic, the difference is quite significant. This is because, in a global era, the line distinguishing Asian religions and religions in Asia is rather shaky. For instance, is the type of Christianity practiced in Korea, across denominational lines, an Asian religion? Or is it a religion practiced in Asia? What about Buddhism that is practiced in Canada? When discussing these matters, it is difficult to know where the parameters lay in describing not only what counts as “Asian” but also what counts as “religion.”

This potential confusion, however, can serve a clarifying purpose. Religion, and religious practice specifically, is increasingly indistinguishable from everyday life. The idea that pervaded the sociology of religion most especially may have been due to the undue influence of the secularization thesis. The idea that beginning in the 1960s, the hold of religion was lessening led to the idea of increased “differentiation,” to use the language of Luhmann, turned out to not necessarily be so right (Luhmann 2013). Secularization would mean that religious life would continue to be relegated to the realm of “private life.” This was to occur in Europe especially.

But more than a decade into the new century, it is clear that religion remains not only extant (especially in parts of the world not in Europe) but has pervaded everyday life (Ammerman 2007). The increasingly quotidian nature of religious life also coincides with a certain technological condition that defines the contemporary moment. With the onset of digitization and the growing permeation of Internet access, technologies are now, to use the illustration of *New York Times* media critic David Carr, “like plumbing” (Carr 2010). That is, it is now part of the infrastructure of sociality in the contemporary world. It is not an “opt-in” but rather “opt-out.” This “convergence,” as Henry Jenkins would describe it, of everyday life, technological and religious practice along with the realities of the global migration of peoples complicates how the study of religion and the Internet in Asia must be approached. One way to address this thorny matter is to follow Christopher Helland’s recent pivot toward the analytic of “diaspora” (Helland 2007).

Since the 1980s, diaspora has been an important topic in contemporary social theory. It could even be said to be a parallel or sub-discourse of globalization. But the concept of diaspora is *resurgent* not *insurgent*. As Tölölyan (1996) in particular reminds us, “diaspora” discourse had existed arguably as the bedrock for a certain kind of ethnic identity, especially for Jews and Armenians. For these two groups, diaspora cuts to the heart of a collectivity rooted in the experience of exile. This dynamic usually involves a peoples feeling cut off from an actually existing or historical homeland. Diaspora in this mode, as Robin Cohen describes it, “[signifies] a collective trauma, a banishment, where one dreamed of home but lived in exile” (Cohen 1997: ix). Implicit, as the Boyarins point out, in the concept of diaspora is the two-pronged commonality of either *genealogical* origin or *geographical* origin (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993). But more recently, with certain aspects of globalization—namely, international migration, the rise of global cities, cosmopolitanism—“diaspora” could also, “in the age of cyberspace ... to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artifacts and through a shared imagination” (Cohen 1997: 26). Hence, diaspora and new media technologies, especially the Internet, are *simpatico* in that they share a mode of collective belonging.

Here, I must make clear that I rely on a particular definition of this “diasporic mode” of belonging, drawing largely from the work of the Boyarins. For them, a diaspora is a disaggregated form of collectivity; it “disrupts the very categories of identity.” Neither national nor genealogical nor religious singularly, diaspora would encompass all of these in “a dialectical tension with one another” (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 721). The Boyarins argue from a rather interesting position. As religious Jews, they hold that Zionism is a “subversion of Jewish culture” (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 712). At the same time, they are not willing to simply cede the importance of maintaining a cultural identity that still celebrates the uniqueness of “Jewish difference.” Diaspora, then, is the model that allows a conceptual opening, clearing some space for both community and a universalism. As they write:

it would be an appropriate goal to articulate a theory and practice of identity that would simultaneously respect irreducibility and the positive value of cultural differences, address the harmfulness, not of abolishing frontiers but of dissolution of uniqueness, and encourage the mutual fructification of different life-styles and traditions.

(Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 711)

This is undoubtedly a difficult task. The political history of the twentieth century alone would cast doubt on the feasibility of such a project. Articulations of community are usually hard, demanding in-group and out-group dynamics that are conformist, strict and autochthonous. When politicized, these articulations become ethnocentric and, in the worst of cases, ethnonationalist. In such instances, the Boyarins are quick to note, Paul’s challenge¹ embodied in the famous phrase “neither Jew nor Gentile” must be accepted—that is, “to develop an equally passionate concern for all human beings” (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 720). However, to fall into the trap of universalism at the cost of difference would be to fall prey to univocalization, that is, an aggregation of identity.

Hence, the difficulty of thinking about forms of collective identity in a world where traditional sources of identity are either, at certain times, being rewritten or, at others, completely obliterated by the changing nature of global capitalism, geopolitics, technology and climate change. Displaced are terms such as “community, culture, region, center, periphery” (Clifford 1994: 305). To think about “diaspora,” then, is to think about, following anthropologist James Clifford, the construction of a home away from home under a condition of dislocation. Diaspora becomes a trope at this particular juncture because of the historical entailment of a collective identity rooted in “decentered, lateral connections around a teleology of origin/return” (Clifford 1994: 306). Diasporic links, according to Clifford, are traditionally located in cultural forms, kinship ties, business circuits *and*, importantly for the present purposes, “religious centers” (Clifford 1994: 306).

In “Diaspora on the Electronic Frontier: Developing Virtual Connections with Sacred Homelands,” Christopher Helland (2007) follows not only Clifford but also Campbell, mentioned earlier, in his conceptual linking of diaspora to online religion in that he believes the primary analytics to be “community.” Certain aspects of the Web provide points of resonance with religious diasporas. For one, it allows religious communities to publicize their “religious beliefs, practices, and ethics to the communities in which they were located and also to the world at large” (Helland 2007: 996). It is also a social space, wherein “people [can] come together from across the globe to network based on their diaspora religious tradition” (Helland 2007: 996). The most important aspect of this coming-together is a relationship with a *place* as well as with others who have a relationship with that place but are in different locales.

Specifically, the example that Helland provides is that of the Hindu practice of puja, which we covered earlier. Even as early as 1998, 20,000 people went online daily from outside India to witness Durga puja in Calcutta. There are advantages and disadvantages, as Helland notes. The

advantages are rather obvious. Not having to travel is a major one. However, the disadvantages are also obvious as well, which is the “disconnect” between the “individual and event,” when watched on a computer. Those who watch do not really feel the same level of participation, as they are mere witnesses.

But beyond these matters, the differences between “virtual pilgrimages” and physical ones have mostly to do with the perceived “purpose” of a pilgrimage. Pilgrimage most often involves sacrifice. As Helland notes:

In the spiritual world of give and take, nothing is free. The sacrifice could be the costs and time incurred in undertaking the trip (to be a pilgrim literally means to be “far afield”), or it could be something as small as lighting a candle and making a donation to the organization that maintains the pilgrimage site.

(Helland 2007: 969)

The participant of puja, in this instance, leaves a mark on the site itself. There is, as Helland puts it, “tangible proof of their connection.”

With the changing nature of the Web and the greater media-technological landscape, there are examples of religious forms that traverse this divide of virtual/physical. We can continue with another example having to do with puja. There are now services such as those found on *saranam.com*, among other places, that allow for paying customers to request specific rituals, which are then conducted especially for the virtual traveler, allowing Hindus from around the world to have access to temples in India. The puja receipt from the temple is then mailed to the customer to confirm the ritual was done. Sometimes there is a video CD that is sent along to the customer, depending on the type of ritual and whether the temple allows for video recording.

The religiosity of online puja, according to Helland, is different from that of other examples of online religion—for instance, *net.nlang.India*. The latter, at its height, was one of the top 25 most active news groups on USENET. Much of the action in this group was from Indians living abroad, who wished to maintain ties not only to their homeland but also to a religious “community.” But the “community” here is rather complicated as “there was really no unified set of beliefs and practices available to provide the foundation for the establishment any form of online religious community” (Helland 2007: 960). Nevertheless, groups such as this one became spaces for diaspora religious traditions, particularly for those who are: “geographically dispersed [to utilize] the Internet medium so that they could come together and engage in discussion and debates about their faith, creating a sense of community and identity via computer-mediated communication.” (Helland 2007: 964).

The key difference between a discussion group and online puja is the ability for the user to “act at a distance” but still retain a sense of ritual participation. Sending the customer the *prasad*, flowers, certificate, ash and video recording of the event acts as the connector between online religion and religion online. As Helland says, “the Internet acts as a powerful tool to connect individuals with the sacred temple and also the ritual.” He goes so far as to suggest that while the practitioner is not there in person, they are nevertheless “conducting an authentic religious activity and receiving the benefits of that activity.” The indicator of the “authenticity” of this experience, for Helland, is that this service is widely used. “Thousands of people would not use this service on a regular basis if they did not feel that it was genuinely meeting their religious or spiritual needs,” he says (Helland 2007: 971).

Across the Indian diaspora, the Hindu temple, Helland argues, serves as a centering space with many instances of entire buildings or at least building materials being flown in from India to Europe or North America.

The statues of the deities are from India, the priests are from India, and because of this, the environment becomes a manifestation of the sacredness of the homeland within the diaspora. Even if someone has never been to India, the temple brings India to them.

(Helland 2007: 972)

This sort of analysis of puja, while couched in diaspora discourse, also actually hinges upon a theory of space reminiscent of Mircea Eliade's *hierophanies* (Eliade 1959). Here, we can see that "India" sits on top of the "Hindu temple" conceptually. For Eliade, the appearance of the sacred in the (profane) world happens through models. The founding of the sacred is actually the "founding of the world." It is at once a consecration of a particular space but rather a cosmo-ontologically significant moment. The world is not only created in this way but it is also, through the process of sacralization, orientating for the humans within it. As Eliade describes it, what is established through the sacralization is a "homology" between the body, the house and the cosmos. All of these, in the analysis of religious experience and myth by Eliade, are similarly modeled, resulting in the "sanctification of life" itself. All of these entities, thusly, maintain "contact with the transcendent" (Eliade 1959: 34).

The alignment of the temple with India is precisely this in Helland's analysis. As he notes, the temple is of utmost importance for Hindu identity outside of India. Thus, we have an alignment, as in Eliade. The space of the "nation" sits conceptually on top of the space of religion, which of course all sits within the virtual space of the Web.

General trends in digital religions *in/of* Asia

The particularities presented to us by the example of online puja highlight the tension that exists between "community" and "space" found in diaspora studies. This, I suggest, is pertinent in the study of digital religions in Asia more broadly. Digital religious practice of/in Asia tends to be diasporic in that it relies on a "disaggregated identity" that nevertheless portends an "imaginary" (that is, both of the imagination and the image) connection to a "homeland," as Benedict Anderson (2006) argues. This is the basis for a kind of collective identity that exceeds the traditional definitions of "community." What is key here is that the bond between members of diaspora is neither necessarily institutionalized nor lateral. As for Anderson, there is a media-technological infrastructure that facilitates such a spatial communality. In the case of *Imagined Communities*, this was "print capitalism." Thus, the Internet acts as this infrastructure for not only members of a diaspora but it also acts diasporically.

Take, for instance, another South Asian religion—Sikhism. According to the *Topeka Capital-Journal*, Sikhs in Kansas have been using technology to connect to their India-based religious traditions, especially as the Sikh population in Kansas is rather small. While this is undoubtedly so in Kansas, "Sikhs in the United States increasingly are turning to wireless devices, such as smartphones, and the Internet to learn more about their faith and to find support for their practices" (Anderson 2011: no page nos). As for diasporic Hindus, Sikhs also stream "broadcasts [taking] place from Sikh places of worship—called Gurdwaras—in India, including the Harmandir Sahib, also known as the Golden Temple, in Amritsar; Bangla Sahib; in Delhi; and Hazoor Sahib; in Nanderr" (Anderson 2011: no page nos). But additionally, Sikhs also access sacred texts through digital means. As detailed in the article, Sikhs can access these things through smartphone applications in a variety of Indian languages as well as transliterated versions. Further, they can attain PowerPoint presentations that allow for them to get together for worship in the home or Gurdwara. These slides let them follow along with what is being said or sung much in the way that PowerPoint slides have been utilized in contemporary Christian settings.

Of course, this example is similar to that of online puja in that it is another instance of people practicing religion diasporically. It is a case of technology acting as a supplement, helping to alleviate the difficulties of maintaining religious identity and ritual tied to space. But this is not necessarily a defining feature of digital religions of/in Asia. These have to do perhaps with more “space-based,” or localized religions in Asia, of which Sikhism and Hinduism are examples. Both are “local” in the sense of institutional authority. While there are houses of worship, the practice of having personal shrines in homes is rather commonplace among Sikhs and Hindus. Therefore, the way in which Sikhs and Hindus engage with new media religiously share characteristics. One could easily conclude that this exemplifies Campbell’s “religious-social shaping of technology” thesis mentioned earlier.

But, there are some interesting variations, especially when looking at Shintoism in Japan. Along with Hinduism and Sikhism, online Shintoism also features sites that represent shrines. The content of these shrines are mostly unremarkable—a history of the shrine and information about the history, deities, festivals, grounds and buildings (Kawabata and Tamura 2007). According to Kawabata and Tamura, looking at the websites of Shinto shrines is not where the dynamism of online religion lies in Japan. To the contrary, it is in the realm of meditation. This is especially the case in Konkoyo, an offshoot of Shintoism, which today has loose ties, theologically and institutionally, with Shinto.

Konkoyo practice is rooted in “Toritsugi mediation,” which involves imparting the will of God to those who may be currently suffering. For the sufferers, this gives them a sense of direction. This is also thought of as a way for God to communicate with human beings. Toritsugi mediation is essentially communicative. Because of this, there have been recent developments towards email mediation. Usually, practitioners go to a Konkoyo church to meet with a mediator, a priest. This, Kawabata and Tamura argue, is “conducive to an email environment” more so than “rituals employed by other religions, such as cold water ablutions under a waterfall or the chanting of Buddhist scriptures in a group setting” (Kawabata and Tamura 2007: 1010).

According to Kawabata and Tamura (2007), the conduciveness of email and Toritsugi mediation has to do with the “exchange of language between a mediator and a believer” (Kawabata and Tamura 2007). It is rather unclear what they mean by language, for indeed, one could argue that the group reading of scriptures has certainly something to do with language. Moreover, rituals of all kinds could be framed within a metaphor of language, including the language of the body. But it is clear that this is not necessarily what the authors mean. They are suggesting that it is an exchange of words. And because speech has been represented in text in email, the practice of mediation, in their judgment, is rather easily transposable. Therefore, Shinto and neo-Shinto religions such as Konkoyo, which are shrine oriented, do not necessarily follow the same spatial logic of engagement with the Internet as Hinduism and Sikhism.

There are also other examples wherein the Internet is not a “supplement.” We can look at another example from Japan, specifically the online Gohonzon of certain Nichiren Buddhist websites. Nichiren Buddhism is a line of Japanese Buddhism that traces back to Nichiren, the thirteenth-century Buddhist reformer. What distinguishes Nichiren from other forms of Japanese Buddhism (Zen being one of these) is, among other things, the centrality of the Gohonzon, an object of devotion. The term “gohonzon” can be used generically to refer to any object that is venerated but in the Nichiren tradition, there is an immediate, initial meaning that “gohonzon” has. It refers to Nichiren’s *moji-Mandala Gohonzon*, a hanging paper scroll with Buddhist phrases written in ink in both kanji and Sanskrit, and usually with the *Nam(u) Myōhō Renge Kyō*, the central mantra of Nichiren Buddhism. It translates to “To devote oneself to the Wonderful Law of the Lotus Sutra.”

Recently, there have been websites that hold “online Gohonzons,” effectively challenging the authority Nichiren Buddhist sects to “disseminate Gohonzon.” Websites such as Nichiren’s

Coffeehouse, an American independent organization, offers a downloadable Prayer Gohonzon. These sites not only give you access to the *gohonzon* but also writings, practically paving the way for a circumvention of the institutional power of Nichiren sects. The Nichiren Shosu, the orthodox Nichiren sect, as well as the Soka Gakkai International, a large umbrella organization for Nichiren consisting of lay members, have taken positions against the availability of online Gohonzon. These sites' mode of distribution operates "outside of the group's legitimate line of transmission." The assumed "correct" lineage is for the "member [to receive] the Gohonzon from the designated religious authority ... temple priest or ... lay organizational leadership" (MacWilliams 2006: 99).

However, according to Mark MacWilliams, the critique of the online Gohonzon goes deeper. As he argues, it has to do with an implicit view of the Internet as a *profane* space. Thus, having it in the same "space" as "hotels.com or pornography" diminishes its sacrosanct nature. But further, the Gohonzon also, as MacWilliams states, "should never be enshrined in the *no-place* of cyberspace where fit can be accessed by anyone at anytime under any condition" (MacWilliams 2006: 99). The spatial theory is tied to physicality. As MacWilliams further notes, "the sacred aura of the Gohonzon ... is tied to its physical presence with the home and the family who worships it ... [The] Internet is a cold, impersonal, public space that objectifies the Gohonzon, making it distant from the viewer" (MacWilliams 2006: 99).

Here we see the matter of religious spatiality return. The Eliadian superimposition of various sacred spaces has somewhat reappeared in the technological discourse of the Nichiren Buddhists who are skeptical of the proliferation of Gohonzon on the Internet. Because the Internet (or "cyberspace") does not have onto-cosmological bearing, it is a "no-place."

In characterizing the orthodox Nichiren view toward the Internet in this way, MacWilliams has stumbled upon a key point regarding the nature of "communality" in what Marc Auge calls "supermodernity." Today, "empirical non-places," such as freeways, airways, department stores, supermarkets, electronic networks of various kinds, are "spaces where people coexist or cohabit without living together" (Auge 1999: 110). The "inhabitant" of the non-place "is not at home, yet she is not in the others' homes either" (Auge 1999: 115).

The thematic of "homelessness" brings us back to diaspora. Although neither MacWilliams nor Auge directly refer to migration and exile, they nevertheless speak to the redrawing of, specifically, the extant spatial categories and metaphors of religious life. Homelessness is perhaps the correct image to describe not only digital religions in/of Asia but the contemporary moment, whether it be labeled post-, super- or hyper-modern.

Conclusion

As I have suggested throughout this chapter, the conceptual thread running through recent studies on digital religion in/of Asia is the reconfiguration of religious space and communality with the convergence of religion, new media technologies and globalization. In this all too brief overview of the various ways in which religions of/in Asia encounter the new digital milieu in which the world now finds itself, the lines of religious identity, practice and community are redrawn. Diaspora, I suggest, is one way of organizing these various empirical developments.

Surely, to place the vicissitudes of religions in/of Asia under a single theoretical umbrella is undoubtedly problematic. Nevertheless, there is, as I have tried to suggest, reason to, albeit cautiously, draw from diaspora studies in the study of digital religions in/of Asia, especially in light of the shifting contours of "religion," "technology" and "Asia." Indeed, the interimplication of these three conceptual assemblages hints to a larger point regarding the increasing impossibility of studying any of these independently. If there is any certainty left in today's world, this is perhaps it.

Note

- 1 The Boyarins understand Paul's universalism as a challenge to conceptions of religious identity rooted in either common genealogical or geographical origin. Paul begs the question: 'How could the God of all the world have such a disproportionate care and concern for only a small part of His world?' (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 720).

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Globalising the Asian Muslim Umma

Alternating movements East–West of spirituality, reform and militant *jihad*

Prina Werbner

The movement of Islam eastwards, to South and Southeast Asia, is commonly believed to have begun with the conquest of Sindh and Punjab by Muhammad bin Qasim, a young Umayyad general, in the later part of the seventh century AD. But, as Asghar Ali Engineer tells us:

this is not true. Islam entered India peacefully, through Kerala on the west coast via Arab traders. The region called Malabar in Kerala is an Indianized form of *ma'bar*, which in Arabic means 'passage' ... The Arabs had, in fact, been trading since pre-Islamic days and then embraced Islam after the Prophet began preaching. They married local women in Kerala and their offspring spread to different parts of that region. They were later also accompanied by Sufi saints who converted many local people to Islam, mainly from the lower classes. This was therefore the real entry point of Islam into India.

(Engineer 2002: 239)

Despite popular belief, Engineer contends, the various Muslim conquerors who invaded the subcontinent were often invited by Hindu rulers warring with one another. Very often, too, rulers of the two religions formed cross-caste and cross-religious alliances, since 'upper caste (Hindus) and upper class Muslims even hated their coreligionists in the lower castes and classes. There was greater harmony between Hindus and Muslims of the lower castes than between lower and upper castes of the same community' (Engineer 2002: 240). This comment hints at the complex way that South Asian Islam came to be defined historically in the Indian context, away from the Islamic heartlands in the Near East and North Africa.

But can we speak of Islam as a discrete 'religion' in this early period? The question has been the subject of a major debate among South Asian scholars, linked to the wider debate about the boundaries of religious communities before the modern age. Beginning with this debate, this chapter charts the development of South Asian Islam, and secondarily of Islam in Southeast Asia, in terms of three consecutive movements eastwards from the Near East: first, the movement of Sufis eastwards, from the eleventh century onwards; second, the movement of reformists eastwards, from the late eighteenth century to the present; and finally, the movement of Salafis eastwards in the late-twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Each of these movements, I argue,

parallels the counter-movement of South Asian Islam in the other direction, to the far west, associated with the movement of South Asian labour migrant-settlers, that took place after World War II to Britain and North America. These new settlers brought with them to their countries of settlement the full array of South Asian sectarian tendencies. Despite contact with Muslim migrants from the Middle East and Africa, the South Asian Islamic sectarian divisions have been reproduced and institutionalised, and they continue to dominate the Muslim landscape in the West, and especially in Britain.

Religious identities in South Asia

Drawing on Foucauldian notions of discourse, Talal Asad has argued that 'there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product' (1993: 29). Terms like 'religion' are always specific to particular discursive formations at particular moments in history, he contends. Even more, the boundedness of religions is a product of the modern age. In line with this view, communal religious violence between Muslims and Hindus in South Asia has often been attributed to the rise of the modern state under British colonial rule in India. The argument is that it was the modernist-inspired classifying and ordering activities of the British Raj that produced the discursive category of religion in South Asia as a closed, bounded and homogeneous order, whereas the reality on the ground was of fuzzy borders and identities, and undefined, syncretic, peaceful co-existence. Some go further and argue, more controversially, following Asad, that 'the category of religion has quite a specific history embedded deeply in the development of modern European public culture and the increasingly intense interactions between Europe and the wider world ... over the past 500 years or so' (Hirst and Zavos 2005: 4; see also Green and Searle-Chatterjee 2008: 2).

Against that, it has been proposed that in South Asia religious encounters generated discourses of religious identity from early on. In 'frontier settings', Cynthia Talbot proposes, 'prolonged confrontation between different groups intensifies self-identity' (2003: 52). In his excellent account of the evolution of religious identities in South Asia, Peter van de Veer sets out clearly the terms of the scholarly debate (van der Veer 1994a). On the one side are aligned those who view the modernising, secularising forces of the colonial state as the motor that ultimately led to the reification of religious identities in South Asia and thence to religious communalism – first, the codification of Hindu and Muslim law and religious identities in law; second, the Indian census, which established for the first time the demographic distribution of religions (as well, of course, of the languages and castes that cut across them) and hence also the minoritarian status of Islam; third, public polemical religious debates in the emergent public sphere; and finally, the reformist impetus arising from European orientalist assumptions about what constitutes a proper religion. Before British colonialism, Muslim and Hindu elites, this rupture view presupposes, had shared interests, while the masses participated in a shared syncretistic culture (van de Veer 1994a: 29). The argument has been therefore that 'Communal violence was itself a British construct', and the consensus is 'that it is questionable whether Hindu or Muslim identity existed prior to the nineteenth century in any meaningful sense' (Talbot 2003: 84).

The evidence for a prior dialogical co-existence and blurred religious boundaries between Hindus and Muslims draws on ethnographic studies of sites of shared religious participation in shrines and religious processions, and the lengthy process of conversion. Against these, British constructions, bureaucratic state enumeration and legislation, and above all electoral politics coupled with modernising religious reformism, are viewed as leading inexorably to the new phenomenon of religious boundary definition and communal violence.

Arguing against the colonial rupture paradigm, however, other scholars reject the alleged sharp break between traditional fuzziness and modern religious boundedness in South Asia. They highlight the historical continuity of religious identities on the subcontinent, produced in the *longue duree* through periods of intense religious antagonism alternating with relatively peaceful co-existence. The most salient defence of this position has come from historians of Islam in South Asia such as Richard Eaton (1978, 1993), Yohanan Friedmann (e.g. 2003), Cynthia Talbot (2003), Sandria Freitag (1989) and Peter van der Veer (1994a). In an outstanding contribution to the debate, Talbot (2003) acknowledges the trend towards the expansion and sharper articulation of 'imagined' and 'invented' religious identities during the colonial era but argues nevertheless that 'modern identities do not spring fully fashioned out of nowhere. They commonly employ the myths and symbols of earlier forms of identity' (2003: 84–85). Even beyond that, she insists that 'supra-local identities (of Islam and Hinduism) did indeed exist in pre-colonial India and that these identities themselves were historically constructed and hence constantly in flux' (85) and: 'Hindu and Muslim identities were not formed in isolation. The reflexive impact of the other's presence moulded the self-definition of both groups'. In Andhra Pradesh in 1323–1650, for example, beleaguered Indian kings drew on the demonic image of Ravana in the Ramayana to construct Muslim conquerors as the evil barbarian other (Talbot 2003: 86–89). Talbot argues that this reflects a clear sense of identity, at least among Brahmans, and their self-designation as 'Hindus'. Later, as the balance of power shifted, inscriptional sources display tolerance of Muslim warriors and political power (Talbot 2003: 95) during a lengthy period in which many aspects of Muslim culture were assimilated, while Telugu as the vernacular regional collective identity was established and differentiated. The alternation between co-existence and tension has marked Hindu–Muslim relations on the Subcontinent over the *longue duree*. Moreover, the rupture view fails to understand how religious identities are enacted and experienced above all in collective ritual and symbolic performance. This was particularly so in South Asia where Islam was mostly brought to the Subcontinent by itinerant Sufi saints willing to tolerate Hindu customs during lengthy periods of conversion to Islam.

Sufism and popular Islam: the first major Islamic movement eastwards

According to Annemarie Schimmel (1975), the Ghaznawid conquest around the year 1000, 'brought into the Subcontinent not only scholars like al-Biruni (d. 1048), who made a careful study of Hindu philosophy and life, but theologians and poets as well. Lahore became the first centre of Persian-inspired Muslim culture in the Subcontinent' (1975: 345). Among the most renowned was the eleventh-century Persian Sufi and scholar 'Ali ibn 'Uthman Hujwiri, who composed his monumental Persian treatise on Sufism in Lahore. Known as *Data Ganj Baksh*, Hujwiri's tomb is still the most important shrine in Pakistan, a site of mass pilgrimage and of an annual *'urs* festival.

Schimmel suggests, however, that the full impact of Sufism only began to be felt in South Asia in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries after the consolidation of the main Sufi orders in the central provinces of Islam. Among these, Mu'innudin Chishti, who settled in Ajmer, was the founder of the Chishti order that spread rapidly throughout India, attracting Hindus as well as Muslims with its egalitarian ethos and *sama* music. Among the outstanding Chishti *khalifas* who founded their own shrines were Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi (see Pinto 1995) and Baba Farid in Pakpattan (Eaton 1984). Other major Sufi orders that entered the Subcontinent from the East and North East were Naqshbandi (see Werbner 2003 on a present-day Naqshbandi saint), Suhawardi and Qadiri and they too have extended their reach throughout the Subcontinent. Many of the early Sufis' shrines have been maintained and even revived in twenty-first century

India and Pakistan. The annual festival at Sehwan Sharif, the shrine of the thirteenth century 'Red Sufi' Lal Shabaz Qalandar in Sindh, for example, draws thousands of new followers initiated in the late twentieth century (Frembgen 2011). Like many other shrines on the Subcontinent this one too is religiously inclusive, attended by Hindus and Sikhs as well as Shi'a and Sunni Muslims (on other such shrines see Basu 1998; Saheb 1998).

Sufi itinerancy, an early form of migration, is a key trope in Sufi studies. South Asian Sufi mystics and holy men arriving from the Near East and Central Asia were thought to bring fertility to the land as they colonised it for Islam (Eaton 1993; Werbner 2003). Beyond South Asia, itinerant Sufi saints also settled in Southeast Asia, in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. The Sufi saints studied by Engseng Ho (2006), travelled from Hadramawt on the Red Sea, in today's Yemen, across the Indian ocean, settling on the west coast of India, in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, China and the Malay world, including most famously in Java in Indonesia. Unlike most Sufi saints, however, they and their descendants continue to this day to return home, to perform pilgrimage to the graves of their ancestors, the 'graves of Tarim'. This, despite the fact that many early Hadrami Sufis are buried in the distant locations where they settled and where their graves have become the centres of local pilgrimage cults. They married local women and their descendants made fortunes in mercantile trade, while continuing to maintain vast networks connecting them to one another and back to Hadramawt.

One such saint, Shaykh (III) al-'Aydarus, arrived in Surat, a port in Gujarat, in 1616, having visited Mecca and Medina and affiliated himself to several Sufi orders. From Surat he travelled to Bijapur, on the Konkan coast, where he became a prominent Sufi Shaikh (Ho 2006: 110–111; Eaton 1978). Basu (1998) has studied a pilgrimage cult of drummer saints whose ancestors arrived in India from East Africa as black slaves. A recent study by Sedgwick (2005) describes in detail the movement across the Indian Ocean from Egypt and the Sudan to Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Cambodia of Sufi saints of the reformist Ahmadi order in the nineteenth century. They established a significant order in Seremban, Malaysia, with strong links to the established rulers, and later expanded with a major following to Singapore.

In many respects, I have argued (Werbner 2003), Sufi cults in South Asia resemble such orders in the Middle East and North Africa as described by Trimmingham (1971) and this is true, despite superficial differences, even in Indonesia (Werbner 2008). Sufi cults are focused, central-place organisations. The *shaykh*, a living saint or his descendant, heads the regional cult by virtue of his powers of blessing. Under the *shaykh* are a number of *khalifa* appointed by him directly to take charge of branches of the order. The sacred centres and subcentres of the cult, known as *zawiya* in North Africa, and *darbars* or *dargahs* (royal courts) in Pakistan and India, are places of pilgrimage and annual ritual celebrations known as *mawlid* in North Africa and *'urs* in Pakistan, with the tomb of the founder being the 'focal point of the organization, a centre of veneration to which visitations (*ziyarat*) are made' (Trimingham 1971: 179). The cult centre is often regarded as sacred and protected, *haram*, a place of sanctuary and tranquility.

In South Asia, central Sufi lodges are, however, distinctive in drawing to them Hindus as well as Muslims. More generally, shared shrines, processions and religious festivals in South Asia are sites in which different ethnic and religious groups have historically participated side by side. This raises the question of whether – as seen from the perspective of orientalists and religious reformers – contemporary Sufi shrines in South Asia are 'degradations' of classical Sufism, marked by 'decadence', superstition and magical practices? Others suggest that the apparent syncretism of saint worship or popular Islam is evidence of a process of 'indigenisation' of Islam in South Asia, rendering saint worship a basically Hindu institution.

The theory of saint cults being, in effect, incompletely veiled Hindu institutions has been most vigorously proposed by the sociologist Imtiaz Ahmad (1981). Ahmad distinguishes three distinct

levels of Muslim practice: (a) 'the beliefs and practices that are traditionally described as belonging to formal or scriptural Islam'; (b) customs glossed as being Islamic; and (c) 'practical religion, containing 'a large number of non-philosophical elements such as supernatural theories of disease causation, propitiation of Muslim saints and, occasionally at least, deities of the Hindu pantheon, or other crude phenomenon such as spirit possession, evil eye, etc.' (Ahmad 1981: 12–13). These different levels of Indian Islam co-exist, he argues, and are integrated at the local level.

In a key respect Ahmad's view meshes with Geertz's theorisation of global Islam as plural and embedded in commonsense, taken-for-granted, historically and culturally specific locales (Geertz 1968). But this raises the further question: in what respect do travelling theories like Islam, which change, also stay the same? In what respect is Sufi Islam one rather than many?

This debate, about Islam, one or many, is a perennial one and has parallels in other world religions like Christianity that 'indigenise' themselves in a variety of ways worldwide. Arguing against the pluralist interpretation of South Asian Islam, Francis Robinson has proposed that the exemplary life of the Prophet constitutes a unifying template of practice and belief, progressively adopted by Muslims in India and worldwide (Robinson 1983).

For both Ahmad and Robinson, however, Islamisation refers exclusively to Islamic orthodoxy at the cost of plurality, thus overlooking the diversity of views represented by Islamic scholars, theologians, Sufis and holy men, as well as the historically contingent and shifting nature of internal Muslim debates over questions of correct practice. As Richard Eaton has shown, there never was a uniform agreement upon the definition of 'orthodoxy'. Sufism in medieval Bijapur was represented by different 'types': warrior Sufis, literati, reformers and rebels (called 'majzub') who accepted, challenged and disputed each others' religious positions (Eaton 1978: 243ff). Various interacting both with Muslim authorities and the local population, they mediated Islamic concepts of power, value and knowledge. Moreover, nowhere was conversion a sudden event. Rather than forceful conversion, it evolved over many centuries (Eaton 1978; cf. also Eaton 1984). In later work, Eaton not only rejects the interpretation of the shrine cult of Satya Pir as syncretic, but the general notion of Bengali folk-religion as constituting a synthesis of Islam and Hinduism (1993: 280).

The mere presence of Hindus at Muslim shrines, therefore, cannot be taken as a sign of a common, syncretic practice of folk-religion. Rather, the different meanings and values associated with visits to Muslim shrines must be carefully delineated even if such studies seem to confirm that the encounter of Hindus and Muslims at shrines of saints exemplifies what Dumont long ago wrote about Hindu-Muslim relationships in general: 'we are faced with a *reunion* of men *divided* into two groups, who devalorize each other's values and who are nevertheless associated' (1972: 211; emphasis in the original). The association has created, Dumont argued, 'a Muslim society of a quite special type, a hybrid type which we are scarcely in a position to characterize, except by saying that beneath the ultimate or Islamic values are other values [of hierarchy] presupposed by actual behaviour' (Dumont 1972: 257–258).

Against van der Veer's view that divisions and hierarchies dominate shared shrines (1994a: 207; 1994b), we have argued that Hindus and Muslims do, in fact, still join together at shrines in amity (Werbner and Basu 1998). This inclusive aspect of local Islam is stressed by Saheb (1998) as the 'universalist' dimension of the cult of Nagor-e-Sharif in Tamil Nadu: the various communities participate as equals in the processions to the shrine centre, but Hindus construct the saint as a diety, while for Muslims he was/is an extraordinary man. Clearly, the charismatic power embodied by a Sufi shrine is crucially dependent on the cosmological ideas actors bring to bear on his image. Rather than 'religious synthesis', then, we need perhaps to borrow Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia (1981: 368): shrines, like urban processions and carnivals, are open to multiple interpretations by different cohorts of participants who nevertheless share a joint project of

shared communication and devotional performance. Religious identity is anchored in these moments of *communitas* and dialogism without negating diversity.

Evidently, Muslims do not perceive of the presence of Hindus at shrines as indicative of non-Islamic practices. On the contrary, the symbolic repertoires of regional saints' cults in South Asia reinforce beliefs in the universalism of Islam. The Sufi fable of world renunciation is shared by shrines throughout India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (see Werbner 2003). Although each specific cult is deeply embedded in and shapes a local environment, all address similar ontological themes related to death, place and embodiment through which sanctity and sainthood are constructed. To argue that these practices are marginal to the 'true' Islam represented by the mosque and the *'ulama* is to misrecognise the centrality of eschatological ideas about death, redemption and salvation to Islam in general.

Sufi shrines were not the only sites of shared celebration in South Asia: popular public arena celebrations in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century north India included colourful Hindu processions like Ramnaumi, in which the god Ram and effigies of other gods were paraded through the streets, and Muharram processions displaying flags and tazias, replicas of the tombs of the martyred grandsons of the Prophet, Ali and Hussein. Celebrated in carnivalesque style, with folk music, food, dance and drink available in abundance, most years these public events were open to the whole population irrespective of religion living in the town or neighbourhood. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, under colonial rule, Muslims felt increasingly beleaguered as the majority Hindu population's sheer numbers influenced administrative decisions.

Violent divisions emerged in the twentieth century not only between Muslims and Hindus but among Muslims themselves, due to rising sectarianism and the growing influence of reform movements in British India (Metcalf 1982). Muharram processions, which symbolically glorified the rejection of state authority, had historically created a shared ceremonial culture that drew together Hindus, Sunnis and Shi'as, with Hindus even regarding Imam Husayn as a divinity and attributing magical qualities to the taziya buried or cast into the sea (Abou Zahab 2008: 106; Freitag 1989: 250–262; Korom 2003: 53–96). Early twentieth-century reforms included the introduction of recitations by Shi'a abusing of the three first Caliphs sacred to Sunni, and the prohibiting of games, entertainments, smoking, swearing and jesting in the *karbala* compound (Freitag 1989: 263). Yet despite this, joint processions continued to be held in Pakistan in the 1970s, and were witnessed in the 1990s in India by Pinault. Nevertheless, reformist debates about proper conduct of self-flagellation during Muharram were part of the growing sectarian violence in postcolonial Pakistan (Abou Zahab 2008). Reform Islam impacted on Sufi practice throughout South Asia and, later, Southeast Asia.

Reform Islam: the second movement eastwards

The start of the reform movement in India is widely associated with the figure of Shah Wali'ullah (1703–1762), a scholar whose period of study in the Hijaz brought him into contact with current thought in the Muslim world.¹ He returned to Delhi in 1733 to preach for Islamic renewal and purification through a return to the sources, the *shari'a* and particularly the *hadith*, alongside the use of *ijtihad* (interpretative reasoning) in legal decision-making, or *fiqh*. With the Mughal Empire now in terminal decline, the Muslims of India were faced with the need to accommodate to their minority status under British colonial rule. Although Shah Wali'ullah was both a Sufi and a much-published *'alim*, he, like the reformists who followed in his footsteps, rejected Sufi practices at shrines. This included the veneration of saints and saintly intercession, defined as *shirk*, making a 'partner' with God and thus denying God's unity, *tauhid*; rejected too were all

other customs regarded as *bida*, unlawful accretion. At the same time the most important of all the reform movements in India, the Deobandis, established the autonomy of Islamic law and self-governance in British India by creating their own institutions of learning, judicial reasoning and the issuing of *fatwa* on contemporary issues.

In building their independent Deobandi colleges, Metcalf (1982) tells us, the early Deobandi founders drew on a Western British model rather than following the usual *madrasah* teaching arrangements. Students studied in classes with set curricula, examinations and a clear path of educational progression over a period of six years. The central Darul Uloom college in Deoband, a town located 90 miles from Delhi, and the many college branches it later founded throughout the Subcontinent, became prestigious centres for the training of qualified *'ulema* – not only in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh but throughout the Muslim world. In its centenary celebrations in 1967, the Darululoom's list of overseas graduates included 144 graduates from Burma, 28 from Malaysia, 44 from China, 70 from Russia and 109 from Afghanistan. Many of the most distinguished *'ulema* I met in the UK had been trained at Deoband. Clearly, the Deobandi reformists had succeeded in establishing South Asia as a centre of Islamic learning, knowledge and law in its own right. They were distinguished also as writers and debaters in the emergent public sphere in British India (Metcalf 1982: 198–234; Reetz 2006).

As Metcalf tells us in her exemplary study (1982: 157–197), the Deobandis were unusual among the reformists in still fostering a belief in Sufi spirituality and some ritual practices, including the (silent) recitation of *zikr* and the special connection between disciple and preceptor, the latter often a teacher in the school. As among Sufis more generally, this relationship was marked by extreme love and devotion. Deobandis rejected, however, the making of offerings at saints' tombs, death commemorations such as the *'urs* ritual at saints' shrines, ritual processions on the Prophet's birthday and the very possibility of saintly intercession, as well as ostentatious weddings, the prohibition of widow remarriage, and other such 'innovations'.

Other reform movements in South Asia were more extreme in their rejection of Sufism. Of these, the Ahl-i Hadis, a cohesive elitist group that emerged in Delhi in the nineteenth century, were closest to the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia, whom they first encountered on pilgrimage in Mecca. Like modern-day Middle Eastern Salafis, they practised the emulation of the Prophet and his character (Metcalf 1982: 272), and were influenced by the Hijazi writings of Ibn 'Abdu'l-Wahhab and Ibn Taimiyya, and particularly by a Hijazi émigré *'ulama* at the court of Bhopal (Metcalf 1982: 277–278). Despite these influences, they denied being Wahhabis and claimed intellectual descent from Shah Wali'ullah (ibid.).

A successor to the nineteenth century reformist movements, the Jamaat-i Islami, was founded in Lahore in 1941 by Muslim theologian and socio-political philosopher, Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, who began his career as a journalist. More explicitly political than the other reform movements, Mawdudi's writings were said to be inspired by Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and are widely recognised as highly influential in the thinking of al-Banna's successor, Sayyid Qutb. Mawdudi coined the notion of the 'new jahiliyya' to describe the current state of Westernised Muslims, a term which became the cornerstone of modern-day Salafi thinking. Rejecting Western ideologies of nationalism, secularism, democracy and modernity, Mawdudi preached *jihad* for the sake of building an Islamic, *shari'a*-based state, since he conceived of Islam as a 'whole way of life' (Schied 2011: 82–85, 89–90). Although the Jamaat-i Islami with its elitist, cadre-like structure moved to Pakistan after Partition and participated there regularly in elections, it also instigated sectarian violence against Ahmadiyyas and Shi'as in West Pakistan, and was responsible for massacres of Hindus during the civil war in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

These Islamic movements eastwards over more than a millennium – initially of Sufis saints and later of reformist trends – prove the continuous links and influence of the Islamic heartlands

on the formation and periodic revitalisation of South Asian Islam, but also the distinctiveness of the religious landscape that emerged with its stress on anti-Sufism, anti-Shi'ism and, above all, anti-'Hinduism'. Two other late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century South Asian Islamic movements, both endogenous to the Subcontinent, were highly significant in the counter-movement to the far West in the twentieth century. These were, first, the Barelvis, whose *'ulama* defend saintly veneration and intercession, and second, the Tabligh-i Jamaat, an offshoot of the Deobandi movement, started in 1926 by Muhammad Ilyas to propagate Islamic observance and daily rituals. Both movements are hugely influential among South Asian Muslims who settled in the West. All five Islamic movements, alongside a myriad of Sufi orders, established themselves over time as a distinctive, dominant presence in Britain.

South Asian Islam: the counter-movement Westwards

In the case of Pakistanis, Indian Muslims and Bangladeshis who migrated to Britain, and who are, simultaneously, South Asians *and* Muslims, the historical migratory process of incorporation into British society as Muslims has been marked by internal diversification and a shift towards increasing religiosity, which can be traced through a series of stages:

- Proliferation (of religious spaces);
- Replication (of all the South Asian Islam's sectarian and ideological diversity);
- Diasporic encounter (with Muslims from the Middle East);
- Confrontation and dissent (following the Rushdie affair);
- Identity-led religiosity;
- Adoption of Muslim diacritical ritual practices and attire in public;
- Voluntary 'self-segregation';
- The politicisation and racialisation of Islam in Britain;
- Confrontation and dissent (following the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq).

As *South Asians*, however, migrants from the Subcontinent have followed an entirely different trajectory, and this has led to the emergence of two distinct diasporic public spheres in Britain that actors perform situationally – one, of 'hybridity', fun and mass popular South Asian culture, the other 'pure' and Islamic. Both, in a sense, are politicised but their politics differ and are expressed in different media. The South Asian popular cultural sphere is expressed publicly through diasporic novels, films, Bollywood, television, newspapers, and classical and popular song and dance groups; its politics are focused above all on the familial antagonisms of gender, class, consumption and intergenerational relations, and secondarily, on racism within British society.

The *Muslim* public sphere, by contrast, has been characterised in Britain by intensified religiosity and, increasingly, by reformist, puritanical preaching, part of a worldwide discourse generated partly in response to intractable international political conflicts in the Middle East, Iran, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya and Iraq. The Muslim South Asian diaspora has not been immune to this pervasive global radicalisation of political Islam, popularised and vernacularised in theological texts and in increasingly restrictive lifestyle options, and encouraged perhaps also by increased levels of literacy among young Muslims worldwide, alongside the rise of an extra-terrestrial Islamic media, the extensive use of the Internet by radical Islamic groups, and – in Pakistan – the huge expansion of radicalised Islamist *madrasas* and *jihadi* training camps, often Saudi-funded. Deobandis in particular, who in the founding days of the movement were apolitical,² have been radicalised in Pakistan, engaging in violent anti-Shi'a sectarian conflict, fostering armed militia and *jihadi* training camps. The numerous Deobandi

madrassa in Pakistan, particularly around Peshawar, have become the training ground not for learned *'ulama* but for militant Taliban *jihadis* fighting in Afghanistan and increasingly, in Pakistan itself (see Nasr 2000; Zaman 1998).

Despite such trends, in Britain Islam has remained mainly relatively moderate and peaceful. After the Rushdie affair, with its public protests and marches during 1989, Muslims' visibility in Britain died down temporarily. It resurfaced once again in protest against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in the aftermath of 9/11. The emergence of an established Muslim national press at about the same time did not, of course, mean the disappearance of local-level arenas of diasporic debate and factional conflict such as the one I recorded in Manchester (Werbner 2002). But as local organisations joined together in national umbrella organisations, so too they began to form a more unified national leadership and a 'mediatised' national Muslim diasporic public sphere. At the same time, there came to be a sense of the existence of hidden, conspiratorial Muslim spaces.

Barelvis versus reformists

Virtually all mosques in Britain are both 'ethnic' (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, 'Arab') and sectarian. The majority of Pakistani migrants who settled in Britain were Sufi Barelvi followers who defined themselves as *Ahl-e-Sunnat wa Jamaat*, people of the Sunna. The special features of the Barelvi movement in Britain need to be seen in relation to its emergence in South Asia where Deobandis and other reformists met with powerful organised opposition in defence of Sufi saints and the cultic practices surrounding saints' tombs (see Metcalf 1982: 296–314). Distinctively, the Barelvi movement unites saints and scholars, *pirs* and *maulwis*, the charismatic elect and the knowledgeable doctors, within – and this is the key point – a single, very loose organisation. The scholars have their own Islamic seminaries, networks and mosques; their own religious establishment and their political party. The saints manage relations with their disciples, often across vast distances.

This means, in effect, that in South Asia, at least two classes of 'learned doctors' emerged historically. The organisations of reformist jurists and saintly jurists (including mosques, religious seminaries and Qur'an schools) share many formal properties and are locked in continuous religious controversy (Sherani 1991). In my observation, 'living' saints who are practising mystics rarely partake in these scholarly disputations (Werbner 2003). They use the *'ulama* to provide religious services, deliver sermons and organise religious institutions, while they themselves concentrate on their orders, the recruitment of disciples and the dispensing of divine blessing and healing to their devotees. Sometimes *pirs* are also learned men, while doctors sometimes become saints (see Malik 1990). On the whole, however, the saints disdain the *'ulama* while relying heavily upon their services.

Thus, in contrast to the Maghreb, in Pakistan the battle for spiritual love and mystical ecstasy was never lost, despite the institutionalisation of religious scholarship. It is a battle conducted on both sides by Sunni, *shari'a*-trained, learned doctors. It is a battle between the 'heart' and the mind, 'love' and pedantic scholarship, mystical devotion and mere religious observance. Seen from a Sufi perspective, a poetics of divine love has been displaced by the reformists by a lifeless literalism in a semiotic struggle that is, importantly, a modern, contemporary battle. In the course of this apparently purely religious dialogue, broader political issues are debated. This is apparent in the British context as well.

A key difference between Sufis and reformers relates to their notions of salvation. World renouncing charismatic saints are believed to mediate for their followers on the Day of Judgement. By contrast, South Asian reform movements reject intercession and preach, as in Calvinism, worldly asceticism, anti-hedonistic lifestyles, moral and sexual puritanism, the role of the elect,

a rational, total life project, direct individual worship of God, individual responsibility and a 'disenchantment of the world'. Absent however in South Asian Islamic reform movements is the final compromise with capitalism, which for Protestants entailed an endorsement of individual accumulation as a sign of divine election. Instead, the movements retain the fundamental Islamic focus on the 'community of believers', united in the figure of an exemplary leader, on mutual aid, on helping the needy, and on mutual support and trust. These go with a strong rejection of monetary interest and usury, a continual emphasis on the family (rather than the individual) as the fundamental unit of society, and recognition of the role of the elect in governing the community. There is no rejection of private property or commerce (the Prophet was a successful trader), but if wealth and worldly success are seen fundamentally as trials to be overcome, as they were for the Puritans, they are not perceived simultaneously as signs of divine election. Members of the reform movement are expected to give away a good deal of their income to consensually determined communal works. There is no evidence that their frugality leads to spectacular personal accumulation. They are, above all, political activists concerned, as individuals, with a communal project. In South Asia, and particularly Pakistan and Bangladesh, much of the movements' agenda has been to Islamicise the state. In Britain the agenda has been one of founding modern Muslim institutions and particularly schools, and of forming associations for young Muslims, thereby drawing them away from a 'sinful' Western popular culture.

While initiated by the UK Islamic Mission, the international arm of the Jamaat-i Islami, this agenda has now been adopted by Sufi followers and Deobandis in Britain as well. The present popular Islamic radicalism in Britain thus draws on discourses formulated by Islamist groups such as the Jamaat-i Islami, but fused with an eclectic range of Western liberal discourses as well as values grounded in Sufi popular Islam. Evidently, as discourses 'travel' across the sectarian divide, they come to be imbued with new meanings (see Said 1983: 226–247).

This requires further explication. Although Sufi followers recognise allegiance to a saint or his descendants in Pakistan and to their local *khalifas* in Britain (Werbner 2003), followers in Britain also rely on the services of Barelvi 'ulama versed in Islamic law to perform rites of passage, lead the prayers in Arabic, deliver the *khutba* at Barelvi mosques and interpret the *shari'a*. The 'ulama display their oratorical skills and scholarship at local urban mosques, built with local funds usually mobilised by lay members of local communities. Lay leaders – trustees and members of management committees and their circles – are often invited to deliver sermons. In Manchester, in compliance with conditions attached to charitable foundations, the formal constitution of the Central Mosque's Management Committee makes the role of these lay leaders even more critical, as I argue below.

In Manchester during the 1980s it was some of the Barelvi preachers focused around the *maulvi* of the Central Mosque who adopted the most radicalised, anti-Western public discourses. In its processions on the Prophet's birthday, this group asserted the legitimacy of the movement in general, while also attesting to the ascendancy of its particular Sufi regional cult in the city. The radical rhetoric of its *maulvi* and lay preachers represented an attempt to mobilise support by evoking powerfully emotive images of a beleaguered Muslim world and asserting the determination of its leaders to confront this external persecution fearlessly and directly. On the whole, however, this radicalism involved no personal costs. None of the speakers were active in mainstream politics, where the votes of the wider English community or other ethnic minorities were essential for electoral success. The political battle for power in which they were involved was purely internal, within the local Pakistani community.

This radicalism could also be explained in terms of specific sectarian beliefs held by Barelvis, as Modood argues (1990). In the Rushdie affair, Barelvi followers were enraged by the attack on the prophet Muhammad, who is the subject of supreme adoration for them as for all Sufis; in

the Gulf crisis, support for Saddam Hussein stemmed from their continuous opposition to the Wahhabi movement and its Saudi rulers, regarded as the desecrators of saints' shrines throughout Arabia, including that of the Prophet himself. Indeed, in both instances the radical position of the Barelvi encompassed followers in Pakistan as well as diasporic Pakistanis in Britain.

Yet this political radicalisation of saintly followers, taken for granted by South Asian scholars, assumes renewed significance when seen comparatively in a more global context. In the Middle East, Sufi saints and their cults have been regarded as politically dead for some time, and their very existence as a contemporary political force is denied. The accepted historical view on the Maghreb, for example, is that while anticolonial resistance was initially spearheaded by saintly tribal leaders, these were displaced by urban Islamic reform scholars whose hegemony has been irrevocably established (Colonna 1984). The cyclical process of oscillation between tribe and city, described by Ibn Khaldun in his seminal historical analysis, ceased: 'Contrary to this "classical" [Ibn Khaldunian oscillation] structure, the historic process observed in Algeria towards 1920 is *irreversible*. The pendulum comes to a halt on the left: Reformism acquires religious legitimacy for itself and outlaws ecstatic religion' (Colonna 1984: 116, emphasis added).

Colonna here follows Gellner and others in relegating to an obsolete past the opposition between tribe and city, saint and doctor, syncretism and reform, power/kinship and civilisation/decadence, purity and literacy, pluralism and monism, hierarchy/intercession and egalitarianism (see Gellner 1981: 1–84; Geertz 1968). Although there is evidence in the Maghreb of continued Sufi urban and rural Sufi activity, and even renewal of it (see Crapanzano 1973; Eickelman 1976; Gellner 1969; Gilsenan 1973, 1982; Lings 1961), the tendency has been to emphasise the decline and disempowerment of Sufism as a political force in the face of reform Islam. Since postcolonial independence Islam has been state controlled in most Middle Eastern countries. There is little evidence of Sufi notions of love, tolerance, and accommodation tempering the radical activism of the Islamists.

The intercalary position of Sufi-oriented Barelvi *'ulama*, caught between the democratic populism of ordinary lay Muslim preachers and the hierarchical superiority of saints – and often despised by both laypersons and saints – parallels the disdain for the *'ulama* and their special domains of knowledge and discursive practices fostered by fundamentalist movements composed mostly of lay members, such as the Jamaat-i Islami and, indeed, by modernists and secularists (see Alavi 1988: 80–81). It is only where *'ulama* have historically instituted autonomous power structures entirely under their control, like the Deobandis, that their status is more fully assured and their religious rhetoric more consistent. Not surprisingly, it is these *'ulama* to whom state authorities usually turn for expert religious advice on legal matters (see Malik 1989).

Hence, the Deobandi movement established the autonomy of the *'ulama* as rational experts with a domain of knowledge based on scholarship. By demarcating an area of expert knowledge and dissociating themselves from secular politics, these *'ulama* were able to institutionalise their independence from 'external' saints, beyond the school itself. Yet matters are not quite so simple. The Deobandis straddle the boundary between otherworldly and worldly asceticism. Their rejection of mystical practices remains highly ambiguous since they recognise the supremacy of gnostic knowledge over expert knowledge. The relationship between teacher and pupil in Deobandi seminaries parallels that between a living Sufi saint and his disciples, and many of the Sufi practices associated with sainthood and the achievement of esoteric knowledge are embraced as individual modes of asceticism by teachers and students. By rejecting attendance at the annual *'urs* at saints' tombs, however, the movement denies the symbolic subordination of the *'ulama*, experts in this-worldly knowledge, to the saints as controllers of divine, mystical knowledge. Instead, *'ilm* and *ma'rifat* are conflated in the figure of the *pir-murshid-mufti* (saint-teacher-jural expert), who

possesses all three forms of knowledge simultaneously. Although otherworldly knowledge is still privileged over mere scholarship, this goes with a rejection of world renunciation in favour of this-worldly asceticism (Metcalf 1982: 138–197). This is also true for the Tabligh-i Jamaat, where good works are combined with the practice of *zikr*, the repetitive chanting of the name of God by Sufi adherents known as the ‘remembrance’ of God (see King 1997).

The emphasis on frugality and self-denial within the Tabligh-i appears to lead to communal economic accumulation. The corporate financial resources of the movement are vast. In Britain, the two main Islamic seminary colleges (in Dewsbury and Bury) are both owned and run by the movement. The role of laypersons is formally limited to preaching the simple verities of Islam: daily prayer, fasting, abstinence from alcohol, mosque attendance, female modesty. Nevertheless, in acknowledging the role of laypersons in preaching, the movement, although Deobandi, does somewhat challenge the monopoly and total authority of the *‘ulama*. Lay members are involved in charitable work, but the major focus is on inner reform and the avoidance of political confrontation. In Britain, however, a measure of political activism has apparently been unavoidable (see Samad 1992 on Bradford). The sanctioning of individual accumulation is thus absent in principle from any of the Muslim approaches, but is legitimised in practice for the followers of Sufi orders. For Sufi disciples, I have argued, personal wealth can be construed as a saintly blessing for good deeds, and thus as a justified objective. Second, unlike the Puritan sects, none of the reform groups call for the disestablishment of religion. On the contrary, they are struggling for its institutionalisation. Here it should perhaps be remarked that none of the reform groups contend with a powerful, centralised organisation analogous to the Catholic Church. Islam has never had an established priestly order, and Sufi cults, like the reform movements, tend to be fragmented, rising and falling periodically.

The common core of beliefs shared by Sufi and reform movements means that disagreements between them, while crucial, are not consistent enough to create a clear opposition between two internally coherent positions, only one of which posits the universal transcendentalism of individual moral and religious rationality. Despite a tendency in the literature, then, to regard the rise of reform Islam as paralleling the shift from Catholicism to Protestantism, such a construction falsifies the unique features of Islamic sectarian divisions in South Asia. Instead, the ambiguity at the heart of all South Asian traditions of Islam creates fertile ground for the ‘romantic’ radicalisation of lay participants in response to political events in the modern world (see Binder 1961: 70 on Gibb’s distinction between ‘romantics’ and ‘legalists’). These different approaches are divided by their different practical agendas; sometimes, as in Britain, apparent opposites come together when two or more adopt a single agenda for a while.

Radicalisation: the third counter-movement East

The fall of the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001 had little to do with South Asian Islam or Muslims. Indeed, none of the bombers came from the Subcontinent. Osama bin Laden and Al Qaida had, however, created a base in Afghanistan where they formed an alliance with both the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. This movement east was significant: unlike 11 September, the suicide bombings of the London underground on 7 July 2005 were the work of young men of Pakistani origin born in Britain, carried out in the name of Islam and Al Qaida as retribution for the sufferings of Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East. In the following years the number of Islamic seditious plots uncovered in Britain has grown. Most plotters were British-born South Asians connected to Al Qaida in Pakistan, groomed to be suicide bombers. The plotters are not members of the deprived classes; many are students from solid working or middle-class backgrounds.

Media and think-tank investigative reports have highlighted the connection of apparently respectable Muslim organisations with extremist anti-Western sects, or their secret links with fundamentalist organisations in Pakistan. Hence, according to a *Guardian* report (Lewis 2006) Tabligh-i Jamaat (the 'Fellowship of Preaching/Proselytising') was being monitored 'after it emerged that seven of the 23 suspects under arrest for allegedly plotting to blow up transatlantic airliners were affiliated to this movement' (Bajwa 2006: 3). In their responses in the ethnic press, the organisation's leaders denied the allegations and reaffirmed the non-political nature of their movement, including its rejection of Wahhabism (supposedly a sign of their extremism). A Tablighi leader, Emdad Rahman (2006), claimed in *The Muslim Weekly* that the organisation is 'one of the most avant-garde Islamic movements in the world, a non-political group, shunning violence and engrossed in nothing more than proselytising and calling Muslims to return to Islam'. In an article that protested the transparency and openness of this now-global organisation, one member is cited as asking: 'People who go to Church carry out atrocities. Does this mean that the Church is a terrorist body?' (Rahman 2006: 13). Nevertheless, the lengthy trips that Tablighis engage in, with young people often spending more than a month on the road in Pakistan, and the movement's strong links to the Deobandi, a religious tendency that created the Taliban, has made such protestations less than convincing to the growing cohort of expert 'Islam watchers'.

A second media exposé concerned the roots of the Muslim Council of Britain's leadership in Jamaat-i Islami (the 'Muslim Fellowship'). Despite its mixed history of incitement against groups such as the Ahmadiyya, Jamaat-i Islami, somewhat like Hamas, has a reputation for sobriety and honesty, and is remembered for delivering services to the needy and aid to refugees at the time of the Partition of British India. Nevertheless, the movement is also associated with the Pakistani army's violent massacres in Bangladesh during the civil war in 1971, and the extreme violence on campuses of its militant student wing, Islami Jamiat-i-Tulabah ('students') during the Zia years (President Zia was a member of Jamaat-i Islami) (Nasr 1994: 69). According to various websites, the Jamaat-i Islami, like other Islamic Pakistani movements such as the JUI, indirectly sponsors camps training young men to fight in Kashmir through its militant wing, Hizb-ul-Muhajideen, though its camps have not been the main training grounds for young British Pakistani *jihadists*. The British organisation created by the movement, UK Islamic Mission (UKIM), which is centred in Leicester, along with its various youth wings and offshoots (see Andrews 1993; Hussain 2007), claims to be a separate organisation, distancing itself from the parent movement and aiming to integrate into all walks of British society (ur-Rahman 2007). The success of some of its members in founding the UK umbrella organisation, the Muslim Council of Britain (henceforth MCB), may be related more to their organisational capacity than their political views.

Nevertheless, leaders are accused of dividing humanity into believers and unbelievers (*kaffir*) (Bright 2005) and their puritanical ideology is also manifested in their public attack on homosexuality in Britain and their attempts to censure Muslim cultural festival celebrations allegedly transgressing strict Islamic codes of conduct. Clearly, the diasporan Muslim public sphere in the UK includes a wide range of nominally non-violent groups that are nevertheless violently opposed, at least rhetorically, to any Muslims they regard as transgressive or deviant.

Such media exposés have added to a growing sense of Muslim alienation. In tracing the history of the emergence of the MCB and its relations with government, Jonathan Birt (2005: 96) reports that as early as October 2001, 'Number 10 stopped returning MCB's calls', following the organisation's failure to endorse the war in Afghanistan, and by 2002 its links with extremist organisations were publicly recognised by the Foreign Office. Against that, Sean McLoughlin, who also traces the process of the organisation's emergence partly on the basis of its own

magazine, *The Common Good*, views the MCB and its affiliates as more positive, constructive organisations, less beholden to their Subcontinental roots (McLoughlin 2002).

A third British media exposé, this time by Channel 4, reported on another Pakistani movement, Ahl-e-Hadith ('People of the Prophet's Sayings'), a Pakistani group close to Wahhabism espousing a Saudi brand of Islam. The programme reported that the organisation allegedly hosted travelling clerics preaching hatred of the West at various UK mosques, including the Birmingham mosque headquarters of the movement (Bajwa 2007). Most shocking about the sermons broadcast on Channel 4 were preachers' constant references to '*kaffir*', '*kuffar*' and '*kufaristan*' – unbeliever or infidel, the land of unbelief – as defining features of Britain and its citizens. Some preachers seemed to be preaching the ultimate Islamic takeover of the British state. In defence, Muslims organisations said they rent their premises out without necessarily endorsing the opinions of visiting preachers, and that, in any case, sentences were taken out of context (Bajwa 2007). Nevertheless, the unbridgeable chasm between 'us' and 'them' exposed by the infidel rhetoric shocked British observers and was seen as a clear signal of Muslims' refusal to integrate.

Young peoples' organisations have also become increasingly suspect. Two splinter groups of Al-Muhajiroun, Al-Ghurabaa (The 'Strangers') and the Saved Sect, were banned by the Home Office in July 2006 on the grounds that they openly promoted violent *jihād* aimed at creating a worldwide Islamic state. Most protesters outside the Danish embassy in London, as reported in court trial proceedings, were members of Al-Muhajiroun or its offshoots. Despite pressure from the government of Pakistan to ban it, the claims of another UK splinter organisation, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT or 'Party of Liberation') to be non-violent were provisionally accepted by the UK government. Young men and women are increasingly seeking to join a global Islamic *umma* 'purified' of their parents' 'culture', not only in Britain but in Pakistan as well, with women adopting the scarf or *burqa* and men growing beards (Ahmad 2009; Bhimji 2012; Shain 2010; Werbner 2007).

Muslim theological concepts have become, post 9/11, matters of public debate in Britain. Muslims are compelled in their defence against accusation to spell out more liberal interpretations of commonly used Koranic and Arabic concepts, terms and ideas, in order to prove to a sceptical English public and media how these concepts may be construed as acceptable and tolerant.

Conclusion

This chapter has charted the movement of Islam from its heartlands in the Middle East to South and Southeast Asia, carried first by Sufi saints even before the eleventh century, and its ultimate 'return' to the far West, particularly Britain. Over time Islam in Asia developed its own distinctive traditions, particularly because it was compelled to co-exist with Hindus and other religions. At the same time, Muslims' links with the Hijaz were constantly renewed and revitalised in each generation, making South Asian Islam responsive to new trends in the wider Muslim world. The latest of these, Islamism or Salafism, appears to have radicalised some South Asian Muslims, but this trend presents an incomplete picture, even in Pakistan and Bangladesh. In Britain, South Asian Islam has remained on the whole peaceful and non-violent, despite internal arguments of identity and open public mobilisations to protest the wars in the Middle East or in support of Palestinians. Muslims have established a vast array of institutions and created a lasting – mostly moderate – presence in the UK. In being bold and outspoken, they have spearheaded the struggle for equality and multiculturalism throughout Europe.

Notes

- 1 Islamic reform in South Asia had its antecedents in Sufi reformers such as Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1625) and the Farangi Mahall 'ulama of Lucknow (Metcalf 1982: 29–34; Robinson 1983, 1987). For a broad history of the period, see Ahmad (1969).
- 2 Though later, factional differences on this issue emerged (see Nasr 2000).

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Asian Pentecostalism

Revivals, mega-churches, and social engagement

Terence Chong and Daniel P.S. Goh

Emulating the early apostles, a cancer-stricken John Sung (Song Shangjie) convalescing on the Western Hills of Beijing in 1941 wrote 19 letters to the evangelical bands that he set up all over China and among the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. Sung had visited Singapore seven times and travelled through the region. His first visit to Singapore in 1935 fired up the Chinese Christians in the colonial metropolis. Sung preached 40 times in 14 days at the Telok Ayer Methodist Church in the heart of the Chinese section of town. He preached in Mandarin, dramatized Biblical sayings and stories with the help of chalk and blackboard, and broke into songs spontaneously. His farewell rally saw a packed 1,300-strong congregation inside the church, with many more listening to him through loudspeakers outside the church. Sung's trip led to thousands of conversions and a hundred evangelical bands (Levi 2008: 316–317; Lyall 2004 [1954]: 186–188).

The son of a Methodist pastor from Fujian, Sung was pursuing religious studies at the Union Theological Seminary in New York in the 1920s when he was struck by a crisis of faith stemming from liberal theological explorations. A confused Sung translated the Daodejing into English and chanted Buddhist scriptures. He turned to solitudes of intense prayer and finally experienced a “born-again” epiphany. Transforming into a prophetic figure overnight, he denounced his teachers as devils and was detained in an asylum for seven months. Upon his release, the salvation of Chinese souls became Sung's singular obsession. He joined the Bethel Mission in Shanghai, an independent Holiness mission formed by two women, a Chinese and an American, who had left the Methodist mission. After three years, Sung departed from Bethel in acrimonious circumstances.

Bays (1996: 315–316) describes Sung as having developed “a unique, abrasive style of forceful or ‘rude’ evangelism” that was “ruthlessly direct,” denunciative of mainstream and “liberal” pastors, spectacularly emotional and exuding “an antiforeign edge”. Sung, however, was not simply an itinerant revivalist preacher. He was an organizer who introduced radical new social practices and self-reliant grassroots evangelical bands into a landscape dominated by Western missionary patrons and their Chinese pastoral clients. The care of the self was at once communitarian and democratic. The Christian subject was torn from the oversight of pastors and placed into pastoral bands of self-regulating spiritual nomads. His revivalism threatened established missionary churches by being charismatic, evangelistic and indigenizing, especially when these churches were settling into middle-class respectability.

Among other things, Sung's revivalist foray into Southeast Asia suggests that it is crucial to understand Asian Pentecostalism as *sui generis* instead of an offshoot of Western Pentecostalism. While the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles from 1906 to 1909 is often seen as the departure point for the global spread of Pentecostalism, the Asian history of Pentecostalism is woven into the complex fabric of colonialism, nationalism, industrialization, rapid economic growth and material affluence. According to conventional scholarship, American Pentecostalism has three different eras from 'Classical Pentecostalism', which began in 1910, followed by 'mainline Protestant and Catholic Charismatic Movements' in the 1960s and, most recently, the 'Third Wave renewal Pentecostals' of the 1980s (Synan 1997). However, a survey of the historical trajectories of Asian Pentecostalism will reveal different timelines, rhythms and tensions, which we aim to highlight in this chapter. For example, Sung's impact on Malaysian and Singaporean Christianity is palpable in fostering a strong evangelical orientation and independent streak, setting the stage for the widely felt charismatic renewal among mainline churches in the 1970s and the explosion of independent and neo-Pentecostal mega-churches in the 1990s.

We argue that Asian Pentecostalism is characterized by enigmatic attributes in three dimensions that distinguish it from Western Pentecostalism on the one hand and Pentecostalism in the Global South on the other hand. First, Asian Pentecostalism is indigenizing and transnationalizing and this simultaneous movement is spearheaded by prophetic preachers and the crafting of contextual theologies grappling with specific social and cultural conditions. Second, organizationally, Asian Pentecostalism tends towards the building of mega-churches and, at the same time, promotes close discipling and disciplining in small groups. Third, while socially and oftentimes politically conservative, Asian Pentecostalism invents new modes of social engagements with developmental states and democratizing public spheres that may have surprisingly progressive outcomes. This chapter is organized into three sections – transnationalizing and indigenizing Asian Pentecostalism; rise of the mega-churches; and finally, Asian Pentecostalism and Christian social engagement – in order to explicate the attributes in a sweeping historical survey of Pentecostal movements in South, Southeast and East Asia.

Transnationalizing and indigenizing Asian Pentecostalism

A definition of Pentecostalism and *Asian* Pentecostalism is warranted before we proceed. In taking the conventional definition of 'Pentecostalism' to be an emphasis on the religious-spiritual experience, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the speaking of tongues or *glossolalia* (see Anderson 2004b), we are cognisant of the fact that any attempt at defining an evolving religious movement is going to be fraught with theoretical and political hazards. Indeed, the difficulty is historiographical. It has been shown that the early narrative of Pentecostalism has been infused with the "ritualisation of Pentecostal history" that suffers from the erasure of "native missionaries," "white racial bias," as well as a "persistent gender bias" (Wacker 1986: 95). The reason for this was the imperialist worldviews of missionaries that fuelled the "belief in the superiority of forms of Christianity 'made-in-America'" (Anderson 2004a: 4). As we depend on the accounts and archives of early Pentecostal missionaries who encountered Asian precedents and familiars, it is important that we do not also adopt their rejection of Asian counterparts and privilege Western origins.

In another vein, Ma (2005: 74) warns his fellow Asian Pentecostals that the "polite nature of Asians" had prevented their adopting critical roles in defining and refining their identity through dialogue in the global community. Ma's (2005: 74) definition of Pentecostalism is:

a Christian movement where vitality of the Spirit in the life of believers and the church receives a special emphasis resulting in the manifest operation spiritual gifts, the presence of

miracles, lively worship, renewal in the body of Christ, and committed zeal for the winning of souls through the empowerment of the Spirit.

While there is nothing overtly *Asian* about this definition, it is evidently self-referential and well thought through. It is broad enough to open up the movement to include what Anderson (2013: 6) calls “older independent churches” in China and India that may not have links with classical Pentecostalism, clearly delineated theology or even see themselves as Pentecostals.

Early revivals

It is also broad enough to include instances that would otherwise be known as “revivalist precedents” or “precursors of Pentecostalism” (Anderson 2013: 11, 33). As documented by Anderson (2013: 11–36), there were at least four Pentecostal-Charismatic movements taking place in Asia before the Azusa Street Revival. By ‘charismatic’ we refer to the belief that the gifts of the Holy Spirit as described in the New Testament are offered to Christians including the gift of tongues, the gift of interpretation, the gift of healing, the gift of apostleship, the gift of prophecy, as well as the belief in signs, miracles and wonders (see Menzies and Menzies 2000). The earliest known revival with charismatic gifts was associated with Indian evangelist John Christian Arulappan in 1860–1965. Born into a Christian family, Arulappan studied at a Church Missionary Society (CMS) seminary. He left the Society and became an independent preacher teaching radical Evangelicalism and priesthood for all. In 1842, he started a self-supporting agricultural village named Christian Pettah (“Christian village”). By 1860, there were over 30 villages in the area, which became the epicentre of a charismatic revival movement that year. CMS missionaries eventually suppressed the revival and absorbed the churches, except for Christian Pettah, which remained an independent church.

A separate revival took place in North India in 1905–1907 led by Pandita Sarasvati Ramabai at her Mukti (“salvation”) mission in a farm near Pune that provided shelter to destitute girls and young women, particularly victims of child marriages. Ramabai was a nationalist, reformer, feminist, evangelist and a formidable organizer who believed that Hindu women would only achieve complete freedom converting to an independent and indigenous evangelical Christianity organized into self-supporting, inclusive communities. She experienced the blessing of the Holy Spirit in 1894 and in 1905, after sending her daughter and a Western missionary who was volunteering at the mission to make contact with an Australian revival movement, the revival at Mukti mission broke out in earnest.

In East Asia, the earliest Chinese revival was led by pastor Xi Shengmo in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Though ordained by the China Inland Mission in 1886, Xi operated independently and was criticized by foreign missionaries for indigenizing aspects of Christian practice. Xi ran opium refuges in Shanxi province and used his own Chinese medicines for treatment. Xi was also famous for the use of the gifts of exorcism and divine healing with dreams and visions. The other revival in East Asia was the Korean Pentecost of 1907–1908 led by Presbyterian elder Sun Ju Kil in Pyongyang, which followed a revival among foreign Methodist missionaries in Wonsan in 1903. The Pyongyang revival spread throughout the country and Sun became a national evangelist teaching pre-millennial dispensationalism and miracle healing.

The point is not that these revivals began before the Azusa Street Revival and should therefore be considered as equivalent origins of global Pentecostalism. Rather, a history of global Pentecostalism should take into account the contribution of these revivals and, more pertinent to this chapter, that these revivals were already giving expression to an Asian Pentecostalism that is simultaneously indigenizing and transnationalizing. By indigenizing, we mean the ability to

emphasize and adapt certain practices to local political, economic, social and cultural conditions, often critically, in ways that might transform the conditions. By transnationalizing, we refer to the ability to cross cultural boundaries, be it ethnic, regional, national or civilizational, thus allowing a revival in one place to inspire and influence revivals in other alien places, often forging routes and linkages that otherwise did not exist between cultures.

In addition to the transnational association with Western missions and missionaries suggested above, Anderson documents many direct influences and impacts on global Pentecostalism. Both the Christian Pettah, through the followers of Arulappan, and the Mukti revival were key influences on T.B. Barratt, the pioneer of European Pentecostalism when he visited India (Anderson 2013: 25, 31). In the case of the Mukti revival, Anderson (2013: 32) notes that the Azusa Street Revival leaders saw it as a prototype and suggests that it directly influenced the beginnings of Latin American Pentecostalism. While the term 'Asian Pentecostalism' may appear 'local' or unproblematically ecumenical, we need to be mindful that the arc from South Asia to East Asia covers a large area with many ancient civilisations and massive populations. Revivals in south India in the 1860s paved the way for revivals in north India at turn of the century (Burgess 2001; McGee and Burgess 2003). Other than foreign missionaries, the Korean revival was also inspired by news of the Mukti revival arriving in Korea. The revival spread quickly to Japanese occupied areas in Manchuria and North China, and soon, through the work of Western and Chinese missionaries who experienced the revival firsthand, to the rest of China (Lee 2001).

As the revivals crossed cultural boundaries, they adapted to diverse local cultures and conditions. In fact, the indigenization went beyond just making Christianity and charismatic practices relevant and aligned with local cultures. The Indian revivals exemplify the progressive challenges posed by indigenizing Pentecostalism to entrenched dominant social structures and cultures. The self-supporting ethos of the Christian Pettah and Mukti Mission was prescient in their times and contributed in no small part to the emergent Indian nationalist movement. Indigenization also expresses the *zeitgeist*, often of suffering, brought on by the tides of history. Jeong (2005) observes that the Korean revival's emphasis on divine healing resonates very strongly with the Korean worldview on the wounding of the *han*, loosely translated as the ethnic essence, of the people caused by wars, colonialism, poverty and sickness. There is no contradiction here that the transnationalizing spread of Asian Pentecostalism should be coupled with indigenization, as it is precisely the indigenization, with its progressive cutting edge, that permits the rapid spread.

Later revivals

The twin driving forces of transnationalization and indigenization continued through the twentieth century as Asia experienced more tumultuous twists of history. Before the rise of the mega-church in the final decades of the century, and after the turn-of-the-century revivals, there were two waves of revivals. The first wave was roughly bounded by the world wars. These interwar years were marked by rising nationalist movements and anti-colonial unrest in Asia. Pentecostal movements in this period sought institutional and ideological independence from Western Pentecostal missions and missionaries, with some exclusivist movements seeking withdrawal from the world.

The independent Ceylon Pentecostal Mission (CPM) was founded in Sri Lanka in the 1920s and later spread to India and Malaya. CPM was a strict, exclusivist sect that encouraged celibacy, use of Indian music, wearing of white traditional dress and commune living (Anderson 2013: 191), thus seemingly rejecting the reformist colonial modernity being forged in British Ceylon and India in the period. In Kerala, K.E. Abraham, a Syrian Orthodox schoolteacher, who became Pentecostal in the 1920s, joined the CPM in 1930 and then broke away to found

the independent Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) that proliferated throughout south India to become one of the largest churches in the region. Strongly nationalist, Abraham insisted the arrival of the Holy Spirit and Pentecostalism in south India predated Western missionaries and refused Western missionary cooptation and patronage (Pulikottil 2009). This rejection of Eurocentrism was, however, neither nativist nor insular, for Abraham embraced cosmopolitan linkages with Swedish Pentecostals, who saw the IPC as a familiar counterpart emphasizing local autonomy and provided it with generous financial support (Anderson 2013: 192).

Nationalism and independence took on a different vein in East Asia, but we see the tensions between engagement and withdrawal from the modern world here too. John Sung's missionary trips sparking revivals throughout China and Southeast Asia, as mentioned in the introduction, took place at the tail end of the wave. Working in one of the most tumultuous periods in modern China's history, Sung advocated a withdrawal from the world of civil wars, warlordism and political ideological conflict to a nomadic life of evangelical bands that would save China through prayer and healing. This appealed to the overseas Chinese in colonial Southeast Asia and independent Siam, who had longstanding political links with nationalist and reform movements oriented towards the modernization and salvation of the motherland.

Earlier, in British Hong Kong, a former schoolteacher, Mok Lai Chi, believing that only the Chinese could and should evangelize China, broke away from the patronage of American Pentecostals and founded the independent Hong Kong Pentecostal Mission in 1913. Working fervently among peri-urban slums and villages in Hong Kong, Mok actively advocated the uplifting of the poor and their political empowerment against powerful Chinese landlords (Anderson 2013: 196). Mok planted Pentecostal missions in the Guangdong region. Up north, Wei Enbo, a member of the London Missionary Society, turned Pentecostal and founded the True Jesus Church in Beijing in 1917. Like the CPM, the True Jesus Church was an exclusivist sect. But the Church did not withdraw from the world. Instead, it was radically anti-foreign and adopted practices associated with Korean and Chinese revivals—exorcism, divine healing, deliverance from opium addiction—that engaged the wounded nation and people. The Church spread throughout China and the overseas Chinese in Taiwan, Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong in the 1920s (Anderson 2013: 198).

The second wave spanned the beginning of post-War decolonization to the spread of the Charismatic Renewal in Asia in the 1970s. Institutional independence from the West continued to be emphasized in this period, but nationalism retreated somewhat as most Asian countries became independent nation-states. The geopolitics of the Cold War and the ideological conflict between left and right that emerged became prominent. Pentecostal revivals in this period tended to be conservative and emphasized evangelism, and developed in different trajectories along the geopolitical lines of the Cold War.

In 1959, Hong Kong actress Kong Duen Yee became Pentecostal. Popularly known as 'Mui Yee', she formed the Christian Charismatic Evangelistic Team and led revivals in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan, treading Sung's old stomping grounds and, like him, integrating emotional prayerfulness and healing with charismatic practices. Her outfit subsequently became the exclusivist New Testament Church, which promulgated a radical millenarianism, adopting and setting up a farming commune on a mountain in southern Taiwan believed to be the new Mount Zion on which Jesus would arrive on his second coming (Rubinstein 1994). After the Korean War, inspired by the Assemblies of God, Jashil Choi started a tent church in Seoul, which her son-in-law David Yonggi Cho took over as pastor in 1958 to build the world's largest mega-church. In Japan, independent Pentecostal churches founded in the immediate post-War period, one influenced by the True Jesus Church in Taiwan, grew rapidly with its conservative, sectarian and nationalistic outlook in this period, while Cho's Yoido Full Gospel Church made headways among Korean Japanese in Tokyo.

In communist China, Pentecostalism took a different turn with overt state suppression. Conservative in orientation, many refused to join the government-linked Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches and went underground, splintering into house churches. In Indonesia, after the fall of Sukarno's left-wing government in 1965, an indigenous revival erupted from West Timor and the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia established by Dutch American missionaries and other Pentecostal churches in Java that broke away from it with indigenous leadership grew exponentially to become mega-churches with hundreds of thousands of members (Anderson 2004b: 130–131). Similarly, in South India, after foreign missions were taken over by indigenous leaders, Pentecostal churches experienced phenomenal growth (Bergunder 2008: 58–85). In 1978, a former Marxist activist Eddie Villanueva founded the independent charismatic Jesus is Lord Church in the Philippines, which grew quickly into a million-member church, and continued to advocate social justice for the poor. By then, the Charismatic Renewal had swept the region and was especially strong where Catholicism had a strong social presence, in the Philippines, India, Malaysia and Singapore.

Rise of the mega-churches

The Charismatic Renewal also touched mainline Protestant denominations including the Anglican, Baptist and Methodist churches. Church attendances and conversions in Asia, and indeed in the Global South, saw an increase at a time when congregations across Europe were on the decline. By the 1980s and early 1990s, the rapid growth of Pentecostalism had become visible in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea. Against the backdrop of economic growth in much of Asia, the rapid expansion of these Pentecostal congregations, noticeable for their younger upwardly mobile well-educated Chinese members, led to the breakaway of independent churches, from which came the rise of the 'mega-church'.

The growth of the mega-church in Asia has been one of the most important developments in Pentecostalism in the past two decades. While the worship styles, organizational strategies and use of technologies by mega-churches in the US have shaped the general character of the mega-church, its non-denominational nature has allowed indigenous features to define those found in Asia. The global spread of mega-churches not only attests to the transnationalizing and indigenizing effects of Pentecostalism but also helps us further refine secularization theory to account for religiosity in modernizing societies outside Europe. Indeed, mega-churches have been most visible in highly urban settings in South Korea, Southeast Asia and South India, exhibiting a youthful dynamism and cultural relevance that often distinguishes them from more established mainline denominations. And while the Asian mega-church traverses varying trajectories, themselves shaped by the different histories and politics in different countries, there are several shared characteristics that offer a springboard for further discussion.

Definition and characteristics

A mega-church is conventionally defined as a church that draws weekly attendances of at least 2,000 or more (Thumma and Bird 2008). Beyond size, they may be non-denominational or loosely tied to a mainline denomination, and identify themselves as Pentecostal, evangelical or charismatic (Ellingson 2007). Typical mega-churches in the US see weekly attendances of 20,000 or more, and they have grown from approximately 50 in 1970 to over 1,200 in 2005 (Thumma and Bird 2008). One of the key features of mega-churches, and one that has certainly shaped their popular portrayal, is their effective deployment of marketing strategies, technologies and the consumerist ethos to advance their brand of Christianity through rock concert-like worship

sessions or televised sermons (Elisha 2004; Sargeant 2000). Some may even facilitate the weekly donation of tithes by providing credit cards services. The utilization of the technologies and styles of pop culture has been argued to produce a uniquely and highly intense personal religious experience (Miller 1997).

In short, megachurches are not only very large churches that experiment with tradition, liturgy and doctrine, but also draw on popular culture and a consumerist logic in order to attract an audience more familiar with rock and roll, shopping malls, and self-help culture than with traditional church liturgies, hymns, or symbols.

(Ellingson 2010: 247)

Beyond objective characteristics are also doctrinal distinctions. Along with *glossolalia* and gifts of the spirit, the “prosperity gospels” are often associated with mega-churches. The prosperity gospels have become increasingly global through Charismatic Christianity, especially in urban and city areas with strong middle-class representation, and have been described as a blending of “Pentecostal revivalism with elements of positive thinking” (Coleman 1993: 355; see also Coleman 2000). While often caricatured by both conservative Christians and non-Christians as the thinly veiled pursuit of material or financial goals, the prosperity gospels need to be contextualized as the broader desire to claim the ‘good life’ as promised by God in the here and now. It dovetails with the belief that God desires followers to enjoy life and its earthly bounties to the fullest, including financial prosperity, good health and the fulfilling of individual potential. Often brought up in relation to the prosperity gospels is the notion of “cultural mandate” in which Christians are commanded to be good stewards of the earth and its resources. Drawing from Genesis 1:28 – “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (New King James Version) – the cultural mandate imbues a sense of ownership and agency in Christians. Believers are encouraged to make ‘positive confessions’ where they lay claim to God’s provisions and promises in the present (see Hollinger 1991).

Another popular distinction between conservative churches and mega-churches is the latter’s close proximity to the marketplace and popular culture. Not only have images of young and trendy congregations gyrating to fast-paced worship music vividly animated this distinction, so too have Christian seminars on how to conduct business, chart one’s career path, manage personal relationships and organize lifestyle matters. The boundaries between the private, public, civic, market and the sacred have become increasing porous. This may be explained by the mega-church’s “seeker church” orientation where the distance between the church and the outside world is minimized to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of Christianity (Sargeant 2000; Thumma and Travis 2007). According to Ellingson (2010: 250):

Seeker churches have a strong, explicit mission to evangelize or reach the “unchurched” and are willing to experiment with worship styles, architecture, and religious ideas in order to make Christianity more appealing and authentic to a boomer and post-boomer population alienated or indifferent to organized religion.

As such these mega-churches make it a point to extend their reach and perhaps establish a presence in the spheres of contemporary culture such that the conventional lines between church and society are blurred. In practice, mega-church Christians may be compelled to excel in the marketplace and in their various professional and secular roles in order to be positive examples of Christianity for the world.

Sociologically speaking, new entrants into the middle class enter a virtuous cycle that begins with obedience and faithfulness, boldly claiming God's promises and finally enjoying the fruits of His rewards. Scholars assert that the prosperity gospels appeal to the aspiring middle class because they offer hope for upward mobility (Cox 2001), and to the well-off because they serve as divine legitimacy of their social status (Bruce 1990). Echoing capitalist logic, the time, energy and, indeed, finances, that mega-church Christians invest in doing God's work or that of the church, may be multiplied, in turn, as blessings for the self or church. This is reinforced by the myth of meritocracy which promises reward for hard work, thus offering a twist to the Calvinist asceticism that Weber believed was crucial to the rise of capitalism (see also Coleman 1993, 2000).

South Korea

Korean mega-churches stand out in the region for their numerical size and global outreach. The Yoido Full Gospel Church, for instance, is touted to be the biggest church in the world with an estimated membership of one million. The country's industrialization phase saw rural-urban migration, resulting in the establishment of mega-churches in Seoul, Incheon and Anyang. This came on the wave of Protestant growth from 623,000 individuals in 1960 to 8,760,000 in 1995 (Hong 2000). In 1995 there were about 15 mega-churches in Korea (Hong 2000), growing to approximately 25 in 2006 (Han 2011). However, congregations in Protestant churches and mega-churches saw a decline from 1995 to 2005 with "suburbanisation" in which the metropolitan population was dispersed to the suburbs (Han 2011).

According to Hong (2000) there are three types of Korean mega-churches. The 'traditional type' such as the Youngnak Church, founded in 1945 upon independence from Japanese rule and the Chunghyun Church, founded in 1953 after the Korean War, were conservative Presbyterian churches with strong adherence to orthodox doctrines. Such churches offered rural-urban migrants, many of them poor and still partial to animistic beliefs, a sense of belonging and security with their structures like home-cell fellowship. The 'middle class' mega-church appeared in the 1970s in affluent areas such as Kangnam in Seoul, and displayed clear class homogeneity. In response, these mega-churches privileged Bible study and textual learning in light of their higher-educated congregation.

Finally, the 'charismatic type' includes Pentecostal mega-churches that emphasize the religious experience, prayer and evangelism. These mega-churches, with Myungsung Church and Ju-an Church among their number, are closer to popular notions of mega-churches with their livelier and more dynamic services as well as the emphasis on speaking in tongues, divine healing, baptism of the Holy Spirit and the central role of the charismatic head pastor. There have been several explanations for the growth of Christianity in Korea from its adoption as resistance to Japanese colonialism, its shared traits with Shamanism and Confucianism, revivalist movements, charismatic leadership and, most popular of all, modernization and urbanization (Hong 2000; Lee 2004; Han 2011). In offering a cultural explanation for the popularity of mega-churches, Hong (2000) asserts that Koreans see big as beautiful, even prefixing *dae* (big or large) to anything they are partial to; a preference that has been encouraged by materialism and the influence of American culture.

Singapore

Christianity is one of the fastest growing religions in Singapore. Singaporeans aged 15 years and over who professed to be Christians have grown from 14.6 per cent in 2000 to 18.3 per cent in

2010 (Singapore Census 2010). The mega-church landscape in Singapore is dominated by the 'big four' of City Harvest Church (estimated 33,000 members), New Creation Church (estimated 24,000 members), Lighthouse Evangelism (estimated 12,000 members) and Faith Community Baptist Church (estimated 10,000 members). To put the growth of these mega-churches in context, City Harvest's 33,000 members alone outstrips the entire Anglican denomination of 20,500 who attend 27 parishes across the island, the 21,800 Assemblies of God followers who go to 49 different churches and the 32,500 Methodists who are found in 44 churches (Lee and Long 2010). Historically, the mega-churches were formed when charismatic preachers broke off from mainline churches during the Charismatic Renewal to establish independent churches that filled in the gap left behind by the decline of liberal and socially activist Christianity due to state suppression and restrictions (Goh 2010).

Chong and Hui (2013), in surveying over 2,600 Protestant mainline and mega-church Christians, tease out distinctions in attitudes towards public and social issues such as money and finance, politics, sex and sexuality, proselytising and perceptions of other faith and ethnic communities. It was found that although the level of education among those attending mainline churches and mega-churches are comparable, they do have different socio-economic backgrounds. Broadly speaking, those who attend mainline churches have largely inherited their middle-class status, while those who attend mega-churches tend to be part of the "new" or aspiring middle-class with whom the mega-church shares "elective affinity" (Weber 1991 [1948]).

The study also found that mega-church Christians were more sensitive than mainline Christians to negative reactions from other faiths when proselytizing. A possible explanation for this is that mega-church Christians are more likely to have come from non-Christian backgrounds. This, together with their greater proficiency in Mandarin, may help sensitize them to how other faiths view Christian proselytization. In this sense, the class transitional nature of mega-church Christians may have endowed them with a broader sensitivity, as opposed to those who have inherited their class status.

Indonesia

The arrival of Suharto's New Order regime in 1968 paved the way for a spike in Pentecostalism in Indonesia. With the spectre of communism vanquished, an estimated two million Javanese and Timorese converted to Christianity with Pentecostal Evangelical churches benefitting the most, especially after Reformed churches rejected healing and miracles (Anderson 2004b; Robinson 2005). By 1998 the Pentecostal movement was approximated to be in the region of 7 to 10 million, with about 60 Pentecostal denominations (Robinson 2005). The Gereja Bethel Indonesia (GBI), for example, with 5,200 congregations, has an estimated membership of over 2 million (Andaya 2009). Charismatic mega-churches began to emerge in major cities like Jakarta and Surabaya during the early 1990s with the GBI Bethany Jakarta and GBI Bethany Surabaya seeing 40,000 and 70,000 members, respectively (Wiyono 2005). Unlike their early Korean counterparts that catered to the poor who made the rural-urban transition, these Indonesian mega-churches were in predominantly middle and upper-middle class areas.

The relationship between the Indonesian mega-church and media is also worth noting. Until the late 1980s when television stations were under the government's tight control, mainline churches only enjoyed a weekly hour of programming but upon privatization many Charismatic mega-churches, understanding the power of the medium, began to buy up airtime with stations only too eager to tap this lucrative market (Budijanto 2009). The growth of the mega-church in Indonesia is down to a complex mix of identity politics, economic growth and cultural networks

or what Koning (2011) characterizes as ‘business, belief and belonging’. According to Koning (2011) the religious experience is just as important as the legitimization of wealth accumulation, the minority ethnic politics and cultural networking for Chinese Indonesians, especially businessmen and young professionals.

Transnationalizing networks, indigenizing cells

From its indigenous roots and earlier Western links, the mega-church’s establishment in parts of Asia has resulted in an increasingly symmetrical relationship with Western mega-churches. The Asian mega-churches’ youthful dynamism, their religious fervency, quick adoption of mass and social media, not to mention the rising disposal incomes of the middle classes have collectively aided the global exchange of Christian literature, music and entertainment, and guest preachers. There are, normatively, three types of neo-Pentecostal global networks that mega-churches are plugged into. These different types of networks help to characterize the transnational reach and influence of mega-churches.

Administrative networks allow individuals from different churches to occupy a position in a local church’s organizational hierarchy. Respected or celebrity pastors from abroad, for example, may be invited to be a board member or spearhead specific programmes in local mega-churches. This allows for a cross-fertilization of executive norms and practices thus ensuring that while local culture and histories anchor these mega-churches, they are also relatively homogeneous in terms of administrative and organizational make-up.

Consumption networks are the way in which Christian paraphernalia like music CDs, books, stationery and sermon subscriptions are globally consumed. For many mega-churches the sale of these items make up a sizeable portion of their revenue and helps establish their brand overseas. These consumption patterns are invariably transnational since members from mega-churches in the same country may not be willing to buy Christian goods from each other.

Finally, mentorship networks are interpersonal relationships between younger and older pastors, especially those who are in leadership positions. It was not uncommon for many young Christian leaders who broke away from their parent churches in the late 1980s and early 1990s to have sought advice and guidance from pastors from established mega-churches overseas. Such networks also encompass more recent ones as mega-churches from Singapore set up affiliate churches in Malaysia and Indonesia.

One of the key ways in which the mega-church has been able to indigenize itself in different cultures and locations is through the ‘cell group’. Typically comprising 8 to 12 people led by a cell group leader, the cell group gathers in private settings such as homes or church premises to conduct bible study, propagate specific exegesis, prayer, worship and cultivate fellowship amongst church members and potential members. As the name suggests, the cell group takes up the biological metaphor to signify the building blocks of the larger church, without which the latter could not function. The cell group phenomenon, however, is not new and may be found in the DNA of early apostolic churches prior to institutional structures, and echoes in the ‘home church’ concept, although the latter constitutes a single congregation, while cell groups are part of a bigger one. And though the cell group phenomenon has become increasingly commonplace among a variety of mainline denominations, it has been the mega-church that has been able to apply it for maximum results. A good example of this is Willow Creek Community Church’s use of small groups to accelerate growth and incorporate people into the church’s communal life (Hybels and Hybels 1995).

Beyond its religious function, the cell group serves three primary purposes. As a private and intimate space for sharing and fellowship, cell groups help to cultivate *communal bonds* among

individuals who may belong to different social class and cultural milieu. It complements the main services that may be large impersonal events in light of big congregations to offer a more indulgent space where the self may be the subject of attention, thus heightening the individual's sense of self-worth and esteem. Personalized prayers and the sharing of personal testimonies and life histories with a ready attentive audience not only builds communal bonds across class and culture, but also helps keep the church strongly rooted to the locale.

Cell groups also *personalize discipline and affirmation*. With charismatic senior pastors often out of reach for ordinary members of mega-churches, the cell group leader is often the de facto church leader for many. It is in the cell group where administrative instructions, worship styles and socialization methods are imparted through the cell group leader who is thus able to personalize disciplinary techniques and offer affirmation to members. From educating newcomers on how much to tithe, how to worship, singling out individuals who stray for rebuke or obedient members for praise, to keeping in touch with them through the week to monitor their spiritual progress, cell group leaders are vital to the personalization and indigenization of the mega-church.

Numerical growth is another function of cell groups. With mega-church Christians more likely to see a stronger nexus between the material and the spiritual, quantifiable criteria such as numerical and financial growth are more likely to be interpreted as signs of divine blessing and personal faithfulness (Chong and Hui 2013). It is through the cell group that strong congregational growth may be seen. Cell group members are often encouraged, even exhorted, to invite non-Christian friends and colleagues to these groups or Sunday service (see also Tong 2008). It is not unusual for mega-churches to, akin to corporations, set growth targets to challenge members. Such growth targets are often framed with a self-improvement discourse where members are challenged to step out of their comfort zones and fulfil the potential that God has endowed upon them and the church. Very often the millennial impulse behind the souls-for-Christ drive lends an urgency to such challenges that, in turn, allow mega-churches to grow and indigenize at a rapid pace.

Asian Pentecostalism and Christian social engagement

Pentecostalism's exact socio-political position in society is difficult to pinpoint for several reasons. For example, it has been observed that, although Pentecostalism was born from social discontent and protest, it gradually withdrew from the struggle with its increasing institutionalization (Anderson 1979). It has also been noted that the Pentecostal emphasis on personal piety has "become a sop for a lack of social conscience" (Anderson 2004b: 263). Arguably, the importance placed on the personal religious-spiritual experience has led to an inward perspective that accentuates the private-public line more clearly with regards to politics, except for issues which touch on public morality, as we will see later. However, new contextual theological explorations suggest the emergence of "progressive Pentecostals" who are poised to move beyond inward purity towards action for social transformation (Miller and Yamamori 2007: 39).

Pentecostal-state relations

Asia differs from the rest of the Global South when it comes to Christianity's relationship with the state. Constitutional and legal restrictions on Protestant churches in Latin America have all but disappeared in the 1990s while systematic repression of Christians in sub-Saharan Africa is the exception, not the norm (Lumsdaine 2009). The Asian experience, however, is more varied with different levels of state opposition and societal opposition to Christianity and its believers. For example, there is a more careful negotiation with the state in China. In public, because China

is “still an authoritarian and a hierarchal society ruled by a single party that does not tolerate opposition voices or views,” Christian communities continue to “act like a domesticated group subservient to the wishes of the government and in full support of the government’s policy” (Chan 2009: 79). However, because the state’s economic reform policies are yielding great social transformations, “Some Christian communities, although registered and often reported by the Western press as under direct government control, are in fact fighting for space and importance within the government’s established structure” (Chan 2009: 79).

In the case of Indonesia during the early 1990s, the eroding support enjoyed by the army prompted Soeharto to court modernist and political Muslims who had been at the fringes of power. The cooptation of these modernist Muslims and their rapid penetration into Soeharto’s inner circle meant that “Christian politicians were left with very little space and limited choices. Meanwhile, hostility toward the church and Christianity escalated very rapidly” (Budijanto 2009: 163–164). At the other end of the spectrum, Pentecostal Christianity played an active role in the democratization process in South Korea. Unlike many Asian countries, the introduction of Christianity to Korea was not via colonialism, and it has been a powerful force in the country’s drive towards modernity and democracy. The country’s transition from authoritarian regime towards a more democratic society in 1987, for example, was accompanied by demonstrations and protests that included Pentecostal and evangelical Christians (Hong 2009).

Furthermore, unlike Latin America or parts of Africa, Christians in Asia, Pentecostals in particular, are in the minority. Except for the Philippines and East Timor, which have Roman Catholic majorities, and South Korea and Singapore with approximately 25 and 18 per cent of the population respectively, Christians in China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the rest of Asia continue to make up only a sliver of the population. According to some estimates, Christians make up 9 per cent of Asia’s population, or nearly 351 million people, while the figure dips to approximately 230 million if only Protestants are considered (World Christian Database 2005). These estimates, however, have been considered to be on the high side in light of the tendency to over-report in China, India and Indonesia (Jenkins 2001). Nevertheless, Pentecostal Christians, with the exception of Korea, and in the Philippines with regards to Catholicism, comprise the minority in multi-ethnic and multi-religious Asian societies.

This has resulted in less coherent Pentecostal-driven political activism compared to Latin America and Africa. In terms of percentages, Christians just do not match up to other religious blocks for sustained political movements. And it is precisely because of their location multi-religious settings that controversies over Christian proselytization in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore have erupted from time to time. According to Kessler and Rüländ (2008) Charismatic Catholicism and Pentecostal Protestantism have contributed to populist politics in the Philippines by emphasizing conservative morality and personal transformation as preceding political and socioeconomic change. Yet, Eddie Villanueva of Jesus is Lord Church, because of persistent Catholic bias and his more radical brand of social justice activism, has not been able to make headway in electoral politics in the 2000s.

Public morality

It has been asserted that the combination of American Pentecostalism’s concern for spiritual warfare, or ‘demonology’, with personal piety and right wing politics might lead to the denomination losing touch with its humble origins and, instead, becoming a righteous ideology of an affluent middle class (Cox 1996). Hot-button issues like abortion, pre-marital sex, homosexuality and intelligent design blur the boundaries between private and public morality, and raise debates over the nature of the secular state. In much of Asia, especially its multi-ethnic constituents, the

definition of the secular state is not the absence or marginalization of religion from the civil or public sphere but, rather, the ensuring of religious pluralism as a foundational component of contemporary society with the state in a privileged position of arbiter of civic-religious exchange and debate, always deemed to be neutral and objective.

It is under this secular state where Pentecostalism can make claims over hot-button issues in the public sphere. In Singapore, the Christian takeover of a women's rights group in 2009 in order to curtail the latter's perceived championing of lesbianism is one such example. The highly educated and middle-class profile of Pentecostals in Singapore has seen civic and legalistic expressions of public morality (see Thio 2007), and has been explained broadly as a result of the way in which the challenges of globalization have forced the Singapore state to be less morally conservative, opening up a perceived moral vacuum that certain segments of Pentecostals have felt compelled to fill (Chong, T. 2011).

Another possibility is that Asian Pentecostalism has cultivated a new type of Asian woman, who is called to fulfil feminine virtues such as self-sacrifice and endurance, especially for the family, as Kelly Chong (2011) observes among Korean Pentecostal cell groups. The case of Singapore shows that, otherwise sequestered to endure in the family, when society liberalizes and the traditional family form is perceived to be under threat, these Pentecostal women could quickly become social activists of conservative bent.

Conclusion: contextual theologies

In recent years, Asian Pentecostalism has been throwing up new theological explorations that offer political possibilities beyond its historical emphasis on nationalistic independence, conservative morality and the ethos of personal transformation. Theologians have been digging into the rich archive of Asian Pentecostalism to discover social justice and progressive political strands as well as threads of deep engagements with the religious and cultural pluralism of Asian societies. Importantly, these serious theological engagements stem from the contextual theology movement of the 1960s and 1970s, when indigenous Asian church leaders began to adapt their teachings to the realities of nationalist development and rapid social change in order to influence them. This was given its most profound articulation in Korean *minjung* theology, which identified the people of God as those who are oppressed, alienated and marginalized. It differs from the Liberation Theology of Latin American origins for its indigenous articulation in the Asian context of suffering under colonialism, imperialism and authoritarian capitalism and its strongly communitarian ethos.

Reading Asian Pentecostalism back into *minjung* theology, Korean theologian Koo Dong Yun (2009) argues that the idea of *minjung* was already present during the Pyongyang revival of 1907 in the identification of the colonized Korean nation as the subject of healing. As Yun points out, Pentecostalism's contribution to *minjung* theology is in emphasizing affective and physical transformation of the wounded *minjung* through acts of the Holy Spirit. In an interesting association of Pentecostalism with secular politics, Yun writes of public demonstrations and riots in the 1970s against the authoritarian state as cathartic release of the *minjung*'s negative emotions, while Pentecostal revival meetings promoted emotional healing and cultivation of positive affect. Korean theologian Wonsuk Ma (2005) lists the contextual challenges and issues that Asian Pentecostalism would have to face in the new century: suffering, social responsibility, theology beyond blessing, ecumenism, the works of the Holy Spirit outside the church and racial conflict.

The last two issues listed by Ma recall the early revivalists' concern with the pluralistic religious, ethnic and cultural contexts of indigenization. In this respect, Malaysian-born theologian Amos Yong (2005a) has focused on the demonic in both the Pentecostal and non-Christian

religious consciousness of Asian peoples as an important overlapping topic of theological exchange between Buddhism and Christianity. In a full-length book, Yong (2005b: 235–266) also argues for a more open and yet biblically grounded approach to interreligious ecumenical dialogue, even countenancing the possibility that the Spirit works through other faiths and that God saves through other religions. The late Singaporean theologian Tan-Chow May Ling (2007) calls for a similar ethic of negotiation of multicultural and multi-religious relationships that is historically reflexive and self-critical and criticizes the cultural idolatry of searching for technocratic solutions and methods to harness the power of the Holy Spirit to break down barriers to evangelism.

In many ways, there is nothing new in the contextual theologies seeking to open up Asian Pentecostalism to the world of differences. It has long thrived amidst the pluralistic differences that defined Asia, easily spreading across cultural boundaries while indigenizing to make charismatic practices relevant to local contexts. Anderson (2013: 225) argues that Pentecostalism is inherently contextualizing because of the vibrancy and spontaneity of charismatic practices. We would add that the charismatic practices provide a shared language, a “revolutionary aesthetic” of revelation and critique of history (Smith 2010: 688), which have enabled diverse indigenizing revivals in Asia to speak to each other across time and space. Travelling along ethnic routes and colonial and Cold War geopolitical lines, charismatic revivals have shot out in two arcs from India and from Korea and China to Southeast Asia and back. The interactions and histories have created a transnational archive that theologians are now mining to define a specifically *Asian* Pentecostalism seeking to participate fully to foster a *catholic* Pentecostalism, which Smith (2010) hopes, would be truly critical and prophetic.

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Conclusion

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Religion, religions and modernization

Bryan S. Turner

Every chapter in this *Handbook* has either explicitly or implicitly confronted the problem: what is religion? More specifically it has examined the idea of ‘Asian religions’. Because religious studies have until recent times been dominated by Western conceptions of religion, inevitably scholars have worked with the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) as providing a model of religion in general. Scholars in the nineteenth century often wrote confidently about the ‘world religions’ as a category for studying Christianity and Hinduism or Judaism and Daoism as ‘religions’, but contemporary scholarship has become far more hesitant and uncertain about such generalization. This reluctance to make unquestioned assumptions about religion in general was reinforced with the criticisms of the Western scholarly traditions that emerged from the critical analysis of Orientalism. This movement was, especially in the humanities, associated with the work of Edward Said (1978). The argument has been that, while making claims about the universality of such categories as the sacred, Western scholars inevitably saw the world through the particular framework of their local traditions. One example might be taken from the work of the famous Romanian scholar Mircea Eliade (1911–1986) whose magisterial publications on the sacred in such works as *The Sacred and the Profane* (1961) and *Shamanism* (2004) captured both an academic and lay audience. His style of writing with expressions such as ‘total existence’, ‘innate plenitude’, and ‘mystery of totality’ had a wide appeal, but his vocabulary and approach are now widely questioned. It is now claimed that his universal categories were in fact constructed through the lens of Eastern Orthodox Christian theology (Rennie 2010). In addition, his interpretation of religion was deeply influenced by his political and theoretical opposition to Communism, and hence contemporary scholarship wants to question the apparent neutrality and generality of the classical religious studies tradition (Mocko 2010). The critical trend of modern scholarship is well illustrated in the chapter by Jason Ānanda Josephson on the invention of religion, the discussion of Shinto by Aike P. Rots and also in the account by Andrea Pinker of how ‘Hinduism’ was created by the classificatory schemes employed by British colonial administrators in the construction of a population census in the late nineteenth century. There is general agreement that the growth of comparative religion was slow to emerge because of the absence of substantial empirical evidence and this gap was only filled after the growth of European imperialism had created opportunities for gathering relevant data. In short we can

only understand the rise of comparative religious studies in the context of Western imperial power (Jordan 1905).

However the criticism of Orientalism is not confined to religious studies alone. Throughout this *Handbook*, we have seen objections raised against the sociology of religion and especially with respect to the legacy of Max Weber. The sociology of religion has been deeply indebted to both Émile Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (2001 [1912]) and Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (2002 [1905]) and *The Sociology of Religion* (1965 [1922]). We can compare Weber's treatment of China with the legacy of Marcel Granet (1884–1940) whose *The Religion of the Chinese People* (1975 [1922]) and *Chinese Civilization* (1930 [1929]) were influential in French historiography in the 1930s. Granet was intellectually part of the Durkheim school, and was influenced by Edouard Chavannes, Marcel Mauss, and Henri Hubert. Granet produced several major works on China and minor works on song, dance and legends – *Fêtes et chansons anciennes de la Chine* (1919) and *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne* (1926) – that illustrate his interest in rituals and customs within a framework derived from Durkheim and Mauss. Weber was influential in the study of religious institutions and roles (magician, priest, and monk) and, in terms of religious change, through the study of asceticism in the Protestant sects. As we have seen in Kwang-kuo Hwang's chapter, Weber had a lasting impact on the study of religions in China. Similarly Daromir Rudnycki's study of the growth of urban piety in contemporary Indonesia can be interpreted as an application of Weber's study of the asceticism of the Protestant sects to a very different cultural environment. Jack Barbalet's chapter on the rise of capitalism also reflects this widespread impact of Weber's sociology of religion. However, while Weber remains influential, much of the legacy of classical sociology is now regarded as problematic.

While Hinduism may be regarded as an artificial classification from colonial times, Buddhism also presented something of a conundrum for classical sociology of religion – was it a godless philosophy or a religion centred around a sacred person with its own distinctive rituals and beliefs? For Durkheim the problem of defining religion was famously solved through the binary distinction between the sacred and the profane. The elementary or generic forms of the world religions were not unlike those of the Australian Arunta tribe, which he had analysed in *The Elementary Forms* (Durkheim 2001 [1912]). Durkheim had been influenced by ethnographic findings of Baldwin Spencer and Francis James Gillen who published *Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899) and *Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (1904). From these publications, Durkheim developed the theory that social solidarity in human societies was produced by collective rituals and by the shared emotions that their celebration evoked. He went on to argue that any rational inquiry by sociologists into the meaning of religion was less relevant than understanding the social functions of religion. In particular all religions involve a classification of the world into the sacred and the profane. This classification was also a basic framework for Eliade's scholarship, which he applied in such works as *Australian Religions* (Eliade 1973). It was through this assumption about 'primitive classification' (Durkheim and Mauss 1963) that he was able to understand Buddhism as a religion alongside Christianity. Marcel Granet's research into the ritual life of Chinese religions was one illustration of this legacy of Durkheim, and the contemporary emphasis on 'material religion' and 'religious practice' can be understood as another aspect of this Durkheimian tradition. Durkheim's attempts to understand all religious phenomena in terms of a simple binary between sacred and profane dimensions have been subject to considerable criticism. Anthropologists have objected to his generalization from the Australian ethnographic material, claiming in any case that Australian totemic beliefs and practices are somewhat specific (Evans-Pritchard 1965). In defence of Durkheim (and against E.E. Evans-Pritchard), his theory of collective emotions and their consequences for social identity and membership cannot be easily dismissed as a misguided version of crowd psychology (Richman 2002: 205).

What were the ‘world religions’ in this scholarship that emerged out of the civilizational struggles between East and West? We can turn again to Weber for an answer. In the famous essay on ‘The Social Psychology of the World Religions’, Weber (1948: 67) wrote that ‘By “world religions” we understand the five religions or religiously determined systems of life-regulation which have known how to gather multitudes and confessors around them’. These regulatory systems included Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, but he also recognized Judaism ‘because it contains historical preconditions decisive for understanding Christianity and Islam, and because of its historic and autonomous significance for the development of the modern economic ethic of the Occident’. There is inevitably much debate about this list. Apart from Judaism, these religions are included because of their size, but this is not in itself a very satisfactory criterion. Other scholars have suggested that three criteria are important: rationalization, transcendentalism and universalism (Sharot 2001: 6). Rationalization refers to whether the religion has been transformed into a systematic and organized system by religious intellectuals such as monks and priests. In Weber’s scheme, rationalization means simply that religion has cut itself off from magic, which is defined as a technique to achieve narrow aims, often of a utilitarian character. While Weber did not focus on magic as such, he distinguished between prophets, priests, and magicians. For Weber (1965: 82), magic was associated with the everyday world of the peasantry, because ‘As a general rule the peasantry remained primarily involved with weather magic and animistic magic or ritualism’. Durkheim (2001: 60) saw magic as an individualistic relationship between a client and a magician or simply noted that ‘The magician has a clientele and not a church’.

Transcendentalism means that there is some tension between the world, which is seen as a place of suffering and evil, and another world that is free from pain and sinfulness. This concept has strong associations with Western philosophy, often being connected to Plato’s metaphor of the cave where its inhabitants live with an illusion about a reality that lies elsewhere. This impression that transcendence is culturally specific is reinforced by recent attempts to define transcendence in association with the Western mysticism of Meister Eckhart and Nicolas of Cusa (Dalferth 2012). Robert Bellah (2011: 475) sought to establish a theme of transcendence in Confucianism by reference to the work of Benjamin Schwartz (1975) who argued that there was a ‘transcendental breakthrough’ in Confucianism and in other Warring States schools of thought. With Schwartz, we can grasp the idea of transcendence from its etymological roots, signifying the act of standing back and looking beyond. This notion complements Arnaldo Momigliano’s proposal in *Alien Wisdom* (1975) that the religions of the Axial Age involved a critical reflection on the world.

Finally universalism means that the religion does not refer to a specific community, but interprets itself as having relevance to humanity as a whole. On these grounds, it is not clear why Jainism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism would be excluded. Perhaps an even stronger case could be made for the inclusion of the Baha’i faith, which, although a relatively small religious movement, has a distinct and inclusive notion of its universalism. By contrast Hinduism – a numerically large religion – may not meet the universalism standard insofar as it is inescapably tied to caste. Is Confucianism – another large religious community and one that has been tied to Chinese communities – in this sense a universal religion? To the extent that Confucianism spread to Japan and Vietnam, we cannot describe it simply as a ‘Chinese religion’. It may be possible therefore to make a distinction between ‘societal-bound religions’ (such as orthodox Judaism) and world religions in which their carriers claim that they embrace a tradition that is available to people who are not members of the primary carrier group (Fitzgerald 1990).

Let us turn briefly to Weber’s view of Buddhism to extend this discussion of the notion of a ‘world religion’. In Weber’s comparative sociology, Buddhism played a large role in *The Religion*

of India in which it appears alongside Jainism as 'the heterodox soteriology of cultured professional monks'. Weber to his credit did not treat Buddhism as a static or fixed tradition arguing on the contrary that, because Buddhism was 'the doctrine of genteel intellectuals' (Weber 1958 [1921]: 246), it had to adjust constantly to the demands of an illiterate rural laity embedded in the everyday need simply to survive. Hence Mahayana Buddhism evolved in such a way as to replace the refined and cultured quest for 'self-salvation' to a system of *bodhisattvas* offering help through a redeemer ideal and typically through magical means. One important example for Weber was the emergence of the female *bodhisattva* Guanyin or Kuan-yin the Goddess of Mercy who became a major figure in popular culture as a compassionate mother figure. She is the embodiment of kindness and provider of male children to childless women (Thompson 1996: 56). For Weber, this goddess directly addressed the needs of the laity in a system of Chinese Buddhism, which he argued was 'a purely monastic church of wandering monks' (Weber 1958: 266). The demands of the laity were eventually filled by 'folk hagiolatry' and the 'primarily Chinese element in all this is the appearance of a feminine *bodhisattva*, *kwanyin*, the protectress of charity ... The form is the counter-image of the occidental mother of god as helper-in-need and represents the single concession which was made to Sakti piety in China' (Weber 1958: 266). Much of Weber's discussion of religion rests on a distinction between the religion of the virtuosi and the mass of lay followers. The former are the elite who can follow all of the precepts of a religious tradition and its members are consequently seen to be filled with charismatic power. The mass is composed of the ordinary lay followers who are neither trained in the doctrines of the religion nor fulfil its requirements. The laity, who toil in the world, offer gifts (such as rice) to the elite in return for their blessing. This separation between charismatic virtuosi and the mass was thought to be most pronounced in Buddhism where the monks are adept and the laity remain immersed in folk practices and magic.

Weber's observations on this distinction, specifically in reference to Buddhism, have been open to criticism from specialists such as Ilana Silber in *Virtuosity Charisma and Social Order* (1995), where she argues that the exchange relationship between monk and laity is not simply a utilitarian exchange but a multidimensional gift relationship. Of course not all Buddhist scholars have rejected Weber's ideas. So, for example, Gananath Obeyesekere (1972: 58) argued that Weber had correctly seen that the exacting principles of Theravada Buddhism could never be fully followed by the masses and hence in order for that version of Buddhism to survive and prosper much of its behavioural assumptions and demands it had to be modified.

We might therefore interpret Weber in the following way. For Weber Buddhism might be defined in its origin as a philosophical criticism of Hindu traditions in that Buddhism denied the existence of the soul or, as Weber says, a unified self. By contrast, it offered a severe and demanding ascetical practice of self-obliteration. The contrast with Hinduism was decisive, since 'Hindu philosophy and all that one can designate as "religion" of the Hindu beyond pure ritualism depends on the belief in the soul' (Weber 1958: 118). Without a belief in the soul, the key doctrines of *samsara* (the transmigration of souls) and *karma* (the doctrine of compensation) would make no sense. In this Weberian scheme, one might plausibly conclude that Buddhism as a critical philosophy became over time a religion of salvation for the masses through the growth in particular of Mahayana (the so-called greater wheel or the capacious vehicle), precisely because it was socially more inclusive. In passing we might note that there were folk practices in Theravada Buddhism in Laos, Cambodia, Burma, and Thailand, and hence the differences between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism can be exaggerated. Rupert Gettin (1998: 130) argues that the idea of Theravada as the 'pure' form of Buddhism 'is something of a theoretical and scholarly abstraction'. Various aspects of popular Buddhism were discussed in the chapters by James Taylor, Lionel Obadia, and Judith Snodgrass.

If Buddhism was a conundrum for nineteenth- and twentieth-century students of religion, it was equally something of a puzzle for Western missionaries and in the famous debates that took place between Protestant missionaries and Buddhist monks in what used to be Ceylon it is germane to my argument that they came to regard the Buddha as the Luther of Asian religions. In turn, a Buddhist monk in 1835 wrote a religious tract arguing that Jesus Christ, like the Buddha, was incarnate on this earth after a heavenly existence (Gombrich 2006: 178).

Soteriology and salvation religions

One defining characteristic of world religions might be understood by reference to soteriology. World religions are concerned with the transformation of the self in relation to everyday life. Because this world is fallen, corrupted or sinful, the religiously motivated person seeks salvation through a process of personal renewal or rebirth. This way of thinking about salvation immediately brings into view the problem of conversion, because what I have just described is an essentially Protestant view of salvation through an emotional and transformative experience that missionaries recognize as individual conversion. It may have little relevance to other religions and within Christianity it has less prominence in Roman Catholicism than it does to evangelical Protestant denominations. In many Catholic societies, membership of the Church has depended historically on the sacraments such as baptism.

The modern study of conversion has been influenced by the pragmatist psychology of William James (1929) whose *Varieties of Religious Experience* continues to shape modern research. James sought a rational interpretation of conversion experiences without denying the possibility that such experiences could have beneficial psychological consequences for the individuals involved. James's approach influenced Durkheim who also wanted to avoid negative criticism of religion from a rational standpoint. For James, conversion involved a sudden, often dramatic, and occasionally traumatic, experience that could resolve deep-seated contradictions and conflicts in a person's life. It is for this reason, according to James, that conversion is typical of adolescence in the difficult transition from childhood to adult status. Conversion often created a new identity and hence a rupture with the past resulting in a resolution of the internal conflicts confronting the 'divided self' (James 1929: 175). From a pragmatic standpoint, conversion could therefore be beneficial in securing therapeutic benefit for the afflicted individual.

James divided conversions into two types, namely those resulting from a voluntary choice on the part of the individual and those arising from 'the subliminal regions of the mind' (James 1929: 235). Generally speaking Protestant missionaries have recognized conversions that are voluntary and disinterested, because there is the suspicion that conversions that occur in order to benefit an individual in secular terms such as improving their status or giving them access to material benefits cannot be authentic. For example many conversions to Christianity in modern Indonesia occur in order for the individuals to marry in accordance with the law (Seo 2013). However, in taking disinterest as a criterion of authentic conversion, does this position involve the sociologist in a normative judgement and in particular a normative judgement from a specific Protestant theological position? For example these issues are raised by Yangwen Zheng in her chapter on the debate about authenticity surrounding the idea of 'rice Christians'.

The Protestant account of conversion no doubt rests on an interpretation of the life of St Paul in the New Testament when he (as Saul) on the road to Damascus is struck from his horse by God and embraces Jesus as his personal saviour. Paul's famous conversion was, at least in the Christian tradition, instantaneous, short, not premeditated and in this instance involuntary. Paul's conversion is supremely the example in Protestant theology of the disinterested conversion in a social and political context where Christianity was a marginal social movement on the

periphery of Roman imperial power. Weber was no doubt influenced by this tradition when, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he describes in almost poetic terms the fate of the individual soul before God. The doctrines of the Reformation 'had one consequence for the mood of a generation which yielded to its magnificent logic: it engendered, for each individual, a feeling of tremendous inner loneliness' (Weber 2002: 73). The Lutheran soul was naked before God in the sense that he or she had to face their own life responsibly without the aid of priests or rituals or sacred texts. Perhaps influenced by Weber, Georg Simmel (2010: 87) took up the same theme in *The View of Life* when he wrote that 'In the absolute self-responsibility of the soul as it stands naked before God, and in the fact at every hour of life, I see the deepest metaethical core of Christianity'. But both men immediately recognized that this loneliness in search of personal salvation was psychologically speaking intolerable, namely 'an unbearable burden for the majority of souls' (Simmel 2010: 87). For Weber this burden could be borne only by the virtuosi. This view also coincides with James's approach, since he was primarily concerned not with the religious experiences of ordinary people, but rather with exceptional characters. His theory of religion was based on the study of the documentation of the subconscious of these 'talented' religious characters (Taves 2004).

The issue of conversion has been especially contentious in the study of missionary activity in the developing world and anthropological criticism of evangelical Christianity has been influenced by post-colonial theories. For the majority of anthropologists, the Protestant model of conversion has no privileged status. Thus Talal Asad rejects the idea that human agency or voluntary conversion can automatically be taken as a guarantee of authenticity. More importantly he notes that 'Too often the assumptions we bring with us when talking about the conversion of people in another epoch or society are the ideological assumptions in and about our own condition' (Asad 1999: 272). In the context of colonialism, conversion cannot be understood outside the context of competition and control between social groups with very different cultures and access to power and wealth, and hence conversion typically takes place within a problematic political environment. It often involved the conversion of whole communities rather than individuals in the political struggle for recognition (Keane 2007; Van der Veer 1996).

The Axial Age religions

Weber's large-scale and at times sweeping observations in his comparative and historical sociology of religion became distinctly unfashionable in both religious studies and sociology, especially in the US, in the second half of the twentieth century. However, many scholars believe that there is still a place for comparative work and the quest for a macro-sociology of civilizations still draws inspiration from the Weberian tradition. One example is Stephen Sharot's *A Comparative Sociology of World Religions* (2001), but perhaps the most wide-ranging and challenging contribution to the sociology of religion is Robert Bellah's *Religion in Human Evolution* (2011) and the companion collection of essays with Hans Joas, namely *The Axial Age and its Consequences* (2012). Needless to say, Weber's view of the world religions occupies an important place in both volumes. These publications contributed significantly to the revival of the debate about the religions of the Axial Age, that is to the thesis that there was a major historical breakthrough in human cultures in the period 800 to 200 BCE, and that in the Axial Age many of the critical features of the 'world religions' were forged, especially the idea of transcendence.

As with Weber, Buddhism played a large part in Bellah's understanding of religion as such. We might say that for Bellah, Buddhism represented 'axiality' par excellence. He accepted Richard Gombrich's (2006) view that Buddhism, in turning the world of the Brahmins and caste upside down, brought about a profound 'ethicization of the world'. For Bellah, the Buddha radicalized

the renouncer legacy of Brahminical religion and expunged the themes of fire, passion, hatred, and delusion to create a new soteriological pathway for all humanity. Buddhism thus created a new religio-ethical system organized around Buddha, *dharma*, and *sangha*. Many of these issues about religious consciousness are explored in this volume by Andrea Pinkney in the chapter on Vedic spirituality before the invention of ‘Hinduism’, and other contributions (by Judith Snodgrass, James Taylor and Lionel Obadia) to the study of Buddhism explore related issues about the religious character of Buddhist traditions.

The idea of historical breakthroughs driven by religious ideas and religious charisma was at the core of Weber’s sociology and hence he thought that the ‘Asian religions’ such as Hinduism lacked universalism, an ascetic this-worldly orientation and a sense of transcendence. In addition he regarded Confucianism as a moral code or state ideology rather than a religion. Having noted that the Chinese language has no word for ‘religion’, Weber (1951 [1920]: 152) summed up his argument with unusual brevity: ‘Confucianism, like Buddhism, consisted only of ethics and in this *Tao* corresponds to the Indian *dharma*’. Bellah departed from Weber in arguing that there was a sense of transcendence in Confucianism and therefore Confucian ideas cannot be interpreted as merely a secular ideology. In this regard, Bellah followed an argument already developed by another close scholar of Weber, namely Shmuel N. Eisenstadt. In his *Japanese Civilization* (1996: 413) he identified the ‘principal error in Weber’s interpretation of Chinese civilization – namely the denial of the existence, within Confucian China, of any transcendental tension’. However, Eisenstadt went on to note that the tension in Confucianism between this world and a transcendental realm was couched in secular rather than religious terms as a problem in metaphysics and ethics. Hence the rationalization of this metaphysical problem involved mobilizing the various levels of society and culture to maintain a cosmic harmony.

Both Eisenstadt and Bellah referred to the seminal work of Herbert Fingarette (1972) on *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*. In his study of the commentary on rituals or rites in *The Analects of Confucius* (Waley 1938), Fingarette put great emphasis on the fact that one cannot easily translate Western notions about personality, self, or soul in the language of Confucian ethics. Thus, rather than thinking of Confucianism as involving self-realization or self-integrity, ‘we would be better to think of Confucius as concerned with the nature of “humanity” rather than the polar terms “individual” and “society”’. The formulation in terms of individual and society reflect Western preoccupations and categories’ (Fingarette 1972: 72–73). He went on to reject the idea that in Confucian culture, and in particular in the *Analects*, there is any notion of a subjective, private, inner life. Thus ‘The metaphor of an inner psychic life, in all its ramifications, so familiar to us, simply isn’t in the *Analects*, not even as a rejected possibility’ (Fingarette 1972: 45). However, while Weber had treated Confucian ceremony as merely an ornamental or decorative exterior of Confucian ethics, Fingarette wanted to demonstrate that in fact the ‘holy rites’ in the Confucian tradition were not simply a collection of dry, life-less customs but rather the living core of Confucian motions of transcendence. Hence the subtitle of his book – *The Secular as Sacred* – was meant to convey the idea that the ceremonial system was the vehicle of the Confucian understanding of sacred life. Indeed:

Instead of being the diversion of attention from the human realm to another transcendent realm, the overtly holy ceremony is to be seen as the central symbol, both expressive of and participating in the holy as a dimension of all truly human existence.

(Fingarette 1972: 17)

We can recall that ultimately Weber believed that Confucianism was not a religion but simply a set of ethical prescriptions, especially for the behaviour of officials or literati. Here Fingarette

offered a way in which we can properly understand Confucian rituals, but also understand Confucianism as having a valid claim to universalism. These issues were also raised in the chapter by Kwang-Kuo Hwang on the nature of Confucianism.

We can now turn more specifically to the issue of the Axial Age religions that underpins this entire scholarly tradition. In 1949 in *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (*The Origin and Goal of History*) Karl Jaspers (1953), writing in the context of the post-war German crisis, turned to the vexed problem of the relationship between violence and religion. This inquiry into religion brought him up against the problem of the origins of human civilizations, indeed of humanity. The social and political situation in Germany had been described by historians like Friedrich Meinecke (1950: 92–93) as catastrophic. In 1946 in *The German Catastrophe*, he speculated that Hitlerism ‘at present struck down to the ground, may not after all, by the demagogic superiority of its methods of ruling the masses, become the prevailing way of life in the Occident’. In his *The Question of German Guilt* Jaspers (2001) had argued, among other things, that Germans, indeed Europeans, had to confront ‘war guilt’ in order to begin to rebuild European civilization. It was in these circumstances that Jaspers turned to prophetic religions for guidance. I have dwelt at some length in this chapter on the historical context of these debates, because it is clear to me that the analysis of ‘the world religions’ was not purely academic. We cannot understand this legacy in religious studies simply as an issue arising from European colonial expansion. It was also as a response to a civilizational crisis emerging out the industrialization of warfare and its catastrophic human consequences. Durkheim in France and Weber in Germany developed their respective sociologies of religion against the backdrop of a European, if not world, catastrophe.

The key issue therefore in the so-called Axial-Age religions is the deep sense that the world is a place of suffering. Regarding the empirical everyday world to be humanly unsatisfactory, the Axial-Age prophets and philosophers conceived of a transcendental and universal world as an alternative to the grim reality of the profane world. In Bellah’s analysis of the evolution of religion, he drew attention in particular to the Buddhist notion of *dukkha* namely that life in this world is profoundly unsatisfactory. The Axial-Age prophets and philosophers conceptualized a world in which humans could develop an enlarged potentiality to flourish both physically and morally once freed from the crushing limitations of a profane reality. More importantly, this interpretation of the world-to-come was not confined to any local village or city, but in principle was available to all human beings. The goal of history, the title of Jaspers’ book, is to make this moral vision a shared reality. The origin of religion – in Weber’s terms a break-out from magic – is also the origin of humanity.

We might ask therefore for what reasons is the Axial-Age thesis important or rather why does it continue to be important? There are several possible answers. Firstly the sociology of Weber and the philosophy of Jaspers, while obviously subject to criticism, demonstrate that Western thought about ‘world religions’ was not invariably Orientalist in its underlying assumptions. Their research did not deny the value of the religions and philosophical systems of Asia. In making this point, we have to recognize certain serious limitations in Jaspers’ interpretation of world history, namely that it did not engage with either the Americas or Africa. Perhaps more problematic is the fact that Jaspers’ thesis is odd in regarding Christianity and Islam as merely late variations on themes established in the first millennium BCE. Despite these problems, Jaspers’ legacy represents an alternative to the contemporary notion of an inevitable clash of civilizations in the work of Samuel Huntington (1993). The historical foundations of human civilizations were laid down in the period of the Axial-Age religions (800–200 BCE) and involved a common response to the human dilemmas of suffering. Consequently, this debate has an unambiguous and important moral dimension. Despite this moral thrust, for Jaspers and Bellah the religions of the Axial Age, with their theme, to use a Weberian terminology, of world-rejecting love were failures

in the sense that they ultimately offered no complete or satisfactory solution to the place and function of violence in human societies. The thread that connects Weber, Jaspers and Bellah is a moral vision of the shared dilemma of humankind faced with the failure of the Axial-Age religions to resolve the contradictions between the ethic of brotherly love and the political necessity of violence. In particular, the growth and consolidation of the nation-state in the second half of the nineteenth century involved a centralization and consolidation of the means of violence. We may conveniently date this industrialization of violence from the American Civil War in which it was estimated that between 1861 and 1865 some 600,000 soldiers lost their lives (Faust 2008). In his *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, Josephson (2012) dates the opening of the debate about religion in Japan from the entry of American ships into Japanese waters in July 1853. The emergence, or at least the academic construction, of the 'world religions' in the second half of the nineteenth century ran parallel to this intensification of violence.

Bellah, like Weber, turned to Leo Tolstoy as the ultimate example of this struggle between a doctrine of ultimate ends and the political necessity for violence. The religious and the political stand in a close but corrosive relationship to each other (Tambiah 1992; Turner 2013). Two consequences of this argument stand out. First, Christianity and Islam as so-called world religions are post-axial; they are variations on themes created by religio-philosophical movements in the Axial-Age period that saw the remarkable conjunction of prophets and philosophers. This period defined *homo sapiens* as 'humanity'. These Axial-Age figures included a diverse group of prophets, thinkers, and religious leaders: the Hebrew prophets, the Buddha, Socrates, Plato, Zoroaster, Confucius, Lao-Tse, and others. Jesus and Muhammad belonged to a second Axial Age providing an elaboration of these foundational themes in which the world is a problem that has to be endured or, if possible, changed. Second, because the axial traditions cannot ultimately solve the inevitable necessity of politics and violence in social organization, the religions of the Axial Age underwent processes of periodic revision, reconstruction or reformation. These traditions need constant critique and renewal. Indeed in the words of Arnaldo Momigliano in *Alien Wisdom* the axial age was 'the age of criticism' and in more elaborate terms 'New models of reality, either mystically or prophetically, or rationally apprehended, are propounded as a criticism of, and alternative to, the prevailing models. We are in the age of criticism' (Momigliano 1975: 9).

Churches, synagogues, mosques, and monasteries as repositories of our ultimate values are subject to decay and corruption. This theme of world-conqueror and world-renouncer in which a righteous king conquers the land and then revives the *sangha* was especially pronounced in the Buddhist tradition. The conclusion must be that the Axial-Age religions are unstable cultural processes rather than unchanging traditions and institutions. Consequently they are subject to endless debate about what constitutes the authenticity and authority of tradition. This debate is particularly intense as religions both are subject to modernization and also contribute to modernity. Of course at the centre of this modernization process sits the Reformation of Christianity undertaken by the Protestant sects as celebrated in Weber's sociology of religion.

Public religions in post-secular society

In recent years there has been much discussion regarding the modernization of religions. We are familiar, perhaps too familiar, with notions about 'reformed Islam', 'political Islam', and so forth. Other writers have noticed similar developments in the unlikely case of Hinduism (Waghorne 2004). Reformed religions appear to be more engaged with public issues and at the same time they are evangelical, not only in attempting actively to convert people, but also concerned to draw the laity more fully into religious institutions and activities. They are also engaged in the internal reform of their beliefs, practices, and institutions, and they involve a reform of individual

religious behaviour, which we can broadly refer to as an increase in attention to piety. In the case of Islam, this development has involved a long and occasionally violent attack on folk religion, which in this case is broadly labelled Sufism. These movements in world religions remind us inevitably of Weber's sociology of Protestantism.

We do not need to rehearse Weber's argument at this stage. Suffice it to say in his perspective, Protestantism was more individualistic than Catholicism and gave more emphasis to lay participation in terms of bible study, lay meetings for prayer and study, and was antagonistic to rituals, hierarchy, and religious privilege. In short Protestantism modernized Western Christianity. As we know Weber never completed a study of Roman Catholicism and in addition his own sociology of religion was in one sense 'Protestant' insofar as it was heavily dependent on Kant. Consequently his view of Catholicism was hardly flattering. For example he interpreted the Eucharist and other sacraments as magical practices. In his terms, the reform of Catholic liturgy would mean the redefinition of the Eucharist as simply a commemorative ritual.

Many of these current ideas about reformism have been stimulated by José Casanova's *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994) and through various publications from Jürgen Habermas on post-secular society such as 'Religion in the Public Sphere' (2006). Both authors have challenged the traditional notion of secularization defined as the slow but inevitable decline of religion in the West as measured by church attendance, belief in God, frequency of prayer, recruitment to the ministry and priesthood, and so forth. Casanova's publication drew attention to the obvious fact that around the world religion appeared not to be simply a matter of private belief and practice, but a vital part of public life. His examples were taken from the Iranian Revolution, Liberation Theology in Latin America, Solidarity in Poland, and the Moral Majority in the United States. In his more recent 'Public Religion Revisited', Casanova (2008: 111) reflects on the fact that 'By my hermeneutic Catholic perspective I mean the fact that my theory of 'modern public religion' was very much informed by the experience of the official Catholic *aggiornamento* of the 1960s'. He goes on to claim that the *aggiornamento* allowed the Catholic Church to shift from a state-oriented to a civil society-oriented institution, and as a result it broke with the authoritarian states of Latin America and embraced human rights as a basis for its actions. As a result 'Catholicism has been reconstructed as a new transnational and de-territorialized global religious regime' (Casanova 2008: 133). This interpretation is no doubt correct, but can I ask the provocative question: is this in the long run the Protestantization of Catholicism in which the Roman Catholic Church, at least in the US, would become simply another denomination? I interpret the debate between Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo in *The Future of Religion* (Zabala 2005) to imply this possibility in a period in its history when Catholicism struggles with changes in sexual mores, women priests, papal authority, and lay participation. One answer is obviously negative. Clearly Pope Benedict embraced a conservative strategy to resist change and we can predict Pope Francis will attempt to retain the loyalty of the laity without conceding too much on abortion, homosexuality, women in the priesthood, or same sex marriage.

While these debates are overtly about religion in the West, they apply equally to religion and religions in Asia. There is ample evidence in most Asian societies that religion plays a controversial role in the public domain. These include conflicts in China over the Uyghurs in its western province of Xinjiang, Buddhist opposition to Han migrants in Tibet, conflicts between Muslims and Buddhists in Myanmar, legal disputes of the use of 'Allah' to describe the Christian God in Malaysia, tensions between Sunni Islam and what Julia Howell refers to as neo-Sufism in Indonesia, the spread of Pentecostalism throughout the region, and the rituals to respect the dead at the Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo. These could be taken as contemporary examples of what Casanova regards as 'public religions'. Religions in Asia are as much subject to the state's management as are religions in the West (Barbalet *et al.* 2011).

Habermas, to some extent following the political philosophy of John Rawls on religion and liberalism, argued that we have to take religion seriously and that any Rawlsian consensus in the public domain would require a determined dialogue between secular and religious citizens. Rawls (1989: 234) wrote that 'the idea of an overlapping consensus is introduced to explain how, given the plurality of conflicting comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines always found in a democratic society ... free institutions may gain the allegiance needed to endure over time'. Habermas (1996: 61) in *Between Facts and Norms* believes that acceptance of the Rawlsian version of justice can only take place in societies that are in some sense post-metaphysical and post-secular. In other words, open debate in search of some common agreement must take place in a context where there can be no commitment in advance of debate to some prejudgement about one-sided versions of reason or revelation. On the one hand, secular societies can no longer simply ignore religion, assuming that matters of faith are irrelevant to the civil sphere in the modern world, and on the other hand, religious citizens are required to articulate their beliefs and values in a manner that make sense within rational dialogue. Religion has to be intelligible in secular terms; it cannot pre-empt discussion by declaring in advance that certain revealed truths cannot be questioned. Only through open and on-going dialogue can a communicative consensus be achieved in civil society.

This argument among philosophers has evolved against a background of the emergence of 'religious fundamentalism' in which the reform of religions is one cause that propels them into the public sphere. The ideas of reform and Reformation have been criticized by historians in part because there is the implicit assumption that the Roman Catholic Church is somehow unchanging during the eruptions within the reformed churches. We have to take seriously the arguments of John O'Malley (2000) in *Trent and All That*, where he shows convincingly that the history of Catholicism has been distorted through the lens of Protestant reformism, which implied that Catholicism prior to Luther was somehow unchanging and that the subsequent history of Catholicism was bound up exclusively with the challenge of Protestantism. O'Malley thinks that 'Counter Reformation' is too general and instead he recommends 'Early Modern Catholicism' or 'Confessional Catholicism'. With these reservations in mind, contemporary sociologists looking at other world religions have argued that there is a general trend towards modernization. Let us then examine some examples of religious reforms.

Reformed Islam

We can think about Islamic reform as starting in the nineteenth century with famous debates about reason, revelation and the reform of Islam by religious intellectuals such as Rashid Ridda, Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani, Muhammad Iqbal, and Sayyid Maududi. These thinkers, being convinced of the decline of Islam in the face of Western colonialism, sought to revitalize Islamic belief and practices, ridding it of what they saw as merely customary elements and folk religion. These early reformist movements became more intense in the twentieth century, especially with the military victories of Britain and France in the First World War, the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, the termination of the caliphate, and the establishment of British and French mandates in the Middle East. As a result large swathes of Muslim territory came under Western control both politically and culturally. This political and spiritual crisis was influential in the political theology of Sayyid Qutb whose thoughts gave rise to the Muslim Brotherhood, the redefinition of *jihad*, the movement to decolonise the Arab world, the rejection of Russian socialism and atheism, and the attempts to restore pristine Islam. The result was what has broadly been called the rise of 'reformed Islam'. Some aspects of these transformations are considered by Irfan Ahmad in his chapter on South Asia.

There are three obvious religious manifestations of these changes: the veiling of women, the *hajj* or pilgrimage, and the attachment to the *Shari'a* as the defining element in piety. In my own work, I have consequently defined these developments, not as the Protestantization of Islam, but rather as the spread of lay piety as the key component of modern religious reform. The basis of pietization has been first the large-scale urbanization of Muslim lands in the late twentieth century, the widespread increase in literacy, and the growth in women's involvement in higher education. One example is the fact that in contemporary Kuwait, women represent 70 per cent of the undergraduate population (Gonzalez 2013). Similar educational changes have changed the status of women throughout Southeast and East Asia. Turning to the US, there has also been an evolution of Islam involving its reorientation and reformation as something approaching an American denomination in contrast to its more confrontational earlier incarnation as the Nation of Islam.

Buddhist modernization

As with other religious systems, there is a great danger in generalizing about 'Buddhism'. Clearly Buddhism varies by country and by tradition, but some religious studies experts argue that Buddhism is a hybrid set of religious traditions that were to some extent invented as a consequence of the encounter with the West or more specifically with Western modernism itself. As Jason Josephson demonstrated in his chapter, in the case of Japan, 'religion' was an invention emerging out of the encounter with American demands for 'freedom of religion' as a basis for trade. There are in addition important differences for example between Taiwanese Buddhism where there has been a significant increase in religious activity (Clart and Jones 2003) and Thailand where there has been in recent years prominent scandals and some degree of alienation from monastic Buddhism combined with growing religious individualism (Taylor 1990). While recognizing that we cannot think about Buddhism as a fixed or static tradition, there is an emerging literature on so-called 'Buddhist modernity'. Max Weber's description of Buddhism as a 'specifically unpolitical and anti-political status religion, more precisely a religious "technology" of wandering and intellectually-schooled mendicant monks', (Weber 1958: 206) at best refers to the early character of Buddhism. Engaged Buddhism emerged in Sri Lanka becoming the modern model of the politically active *sangha* from the 1950s to the 1970s. More broadly, Buddhism appears to have taken on a more political hue, including the involvement of Buddhist monks in political conflicts in Thailand, Tibet, and Myanmar.

The idea of Buddhist modernization was first voiced famously in the late 1980s by Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere (1988) in *Buddhism Transformed*, in which they referred to 'post-Protestant Sinhalese Buddhism'. Gombrich (2006: 192–193) in his *Theravada Buddhism* claimed that 'Protestant' Buddhism had three dominant characteristics:

It tends to fundamentalism, despising tradition; it claims that Buddhism is 'scientific', 'rational', 'not a religion', etc.: and it depends on English concepts, even when expressed in Sinhala. The fundamentalism comes direct from the Protestant missionaries, the claims of rationalisation from their opponents, the English cast of thought from both.

The notion of the Protestantization of Buddhism has subsequently become widespread in recent scholarship. One influential contemporary work in this regard is David McMahan's *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (2008). His argument can be summarized as follows: (1) Buddhism has been shaped over several centuries by the Reformation and by Western Enlightenment; (2) however that dialogical relationship was always conditioned by inequalities of power arising

from colonial struggles; and (3) there has been a creative tension between Western observers and Buddhist intellectuals. In the process Buddhism has been transformed by its global encounter with the West in terms of 'individualism, egalitarianism, liberalism, democratic ideals and the impulse to social reform' (McMahan 2008: 13). As a result Buddhist intellectual leaders have had to grapple with Christian notions of monotheism, rationalism and science, and Romanticism. The latter is interesting in that according to McMahan Buddhists were able to rethink their relationship to the environment. In contemporary discussion of Buddhism and politics, much has been made of so-called 'engaged Buddhism', especially with respect to environmental politics. However this development spans at least a century insofar as the phrase 'engaged Buddhism' was first used at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. Of course this religious exchange was not unidirectional in that Buddhism has had a significant impact on Western notions of religiosity. As a result, there has emerged a global popular Buddhism in which traditional Buddhist ideas and practices are blended with Western spirituality.

One aspect of religious modernization has been global evangelism. While sociologists have been perhaps primarily focused on the world expansion of Pentecostalism, we should not neglect Buddhist 'evangelism'. One example is the impact of the Venerable Master Xingyun who founded Foguangshan (Buddha's Light Mountain) in Kaohsiung County in southern Taiwan in 1990 and who authorized numerous temple branches around the world. Three of the largest overseas branches are the Nan Tien Temple in Australia, the Nan Hua Temple in South Africa, and Hsai Lai Temple in the US. There are some 150 Foguangshan-related institutions around the globe. This outreach was based on Xingyun's commitment to the globalization (*guojihua*) of a modernized Mahayana Buddhism (Chandler 2004) and Xingyun began to refer to himself as a 'global person' (*guojiren*). Taiwanese Buddhism has subsequently been defined in terms of a 'humanist Buddhism' (Huang 2010) as a version of 'engaged Buddhism', which embraces notions about justice, freedom, equality, and democracy. This development of course raises interesting and complex issues about tradition and innovation in Buddhism.

One issue in modernist thought inevitably concerns issues about gender equality for religious traditions. These issues were analysed in the chapter by Fang-Long Shi on gender and religion. I propose that religious modernization means in general greater lay participation but specifically a rise in the religious status of women. Buddhism shares with other religious traditions, notoriously the Roman Catholic Church, an inherent problem about gender and patriarchy. There has been a long struggle in Buddhism over recognition of the 'ordination' of women as 'nuns' in Buddhist monasteries. In the case of Sri Lanka, there has been a long-standing effort to re-establish the *bhikkhuni* order of women who have demanded the reinstatement of ordination since its disappearance in the tenth century. The *bhikkuni* scholar Kusuma was the first woman to be ordained as a Theravada nun in 1996 (Chandler 2004). There is an important contrast here with Taiwanese Buddhism where nuns constitute some 70 to 75 per cent of the monastic followers of Buddhism.

Social causes

There appears to be evidence of a global trend towards what for convenience I am calling the 'Protestantization of religions', but there is less agreement about the possible causes. While this modernization of religions can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, we should look for more recent causes starting after the Second World War. I shall briefly list these changes. First, there has been a massive increase in urbanization especially in Asia producing mega-cities with distinctively modern cultures. The consequences for religion have been significant. In June 2013 I was privileged to conduct an interview with the head monk of the Woljeongsa Temple

at the Sorak Mountain Cultural Centre in South Korea. I began by noting the long history of Protestant evangelism in Korea from the 1880s onwards and obvious presence of Protestant evangelical churches in Seoul – the capital city, which contains almost half of the South Korean population (Lee 2010). I asked him how Buddhism might compete with the Protestant churches of urban Korea. He gave a somewhat defensive answer saying that Buddhism was a localized religion, organized around independent monasteries with little or no national organization. He suggested that Buddhism unlike Pentecostalism was an agrarian religion and as such it was attracting attention from overworked and stressed-out Koreans who enjoyed retreating to the countryside for meditation. He suggested that Buddhism might survive as a therapeutic retreat from urbanized, commercialized, and individualistic modernity, but the further implication might be that Protestantism is better geared to cope with urban civilizations or in Weber's terminology there is an elective affinity between Protestant denominations and the city. The drift away from the rural context of Buddhism is having a significant impact on rural and forest monasteries, which now suffer from a shortage of monks. In some instances, these forest monasteries are led by Western converts to Buddhism. In response to the perception that Buddhism is declining, the 'evangelical' Thammakaay movement in Thailand is attempting to revitalise Buddhism (Swearer 1991).

Second, where you have urbanization, you have the rise of an urban middle class. This development was especially important in Thailand in the 1960s and 1970s, where there were many new religions including Mahayanic instances from Japan such as Sangkhunkaa (Soka Gakkai), the Yorei (Mahikari) cult, and the revived Chinese Kuan-Yin cult, which has enjoyed a large female following among the Sino-Thai population. As a result of these foreign influences, reformist Buddhist movements sought to redirect mainstream other-worldly Buddhism into a social reform movement around the idea of engaged Buddhism (Taylor 1990). This religious reform went in tandem with calls for greater democratization and devolution of political power, and consequently modernization in Thailand did not lead to secularization but rather to modernized soteriologies for the emergent middle classes (Bellah 1965).

Third, urbanization and the growth of a middle class are also associated with the transformation of education to embrace technical and scientific studies resulting in a decline in the status of traditional (religious) education. These changes are especially evident in the transformation of education in Indonesia where there has been a reform of the old Javanese *pesantren* boarding schools (Hefner 2009). The Indonesian authorities recently created a revitalized higher education system (Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri or PTAIN) to overhaul education after the secondary stage. The struggle between traditional knowledge and the scientific syllabus has involved a gradual displacement of the charismatic religious leaders. The new schools do not necessarily usher in widespread secularization but rather a new reformist Islam. At the same time, there are continuing cultural struggles between urban reformed Islam and the growth of what is often called urban or neo-Sufism. These were explored in Julia Howell's chapter. In addition to these educational changes, we might include the rise of the modern media, which are bringing urban ideas and lifestyles into the countryside. Education also has significant generational effects. Earlier research in Malaysia suggests that reformist Islam, with its emphasis on piety, simplicity, and discipline, is attractive to university students who reject customs and practices that are loosely associated with Sufism. These religious movements to reform Islam also play an important role in shaping Malay identity (Nagata 1974).

Fourth, these developments – urbanization, social mobility, and educational reform – lead also to greater participation of women in both religious and secular institutions with the consequential challenge to more traditional patriarchal forms of religion. I have already commented on the role of Buddhist nuns and their struggle for ordination, but similar developments can be observed in the case of Muslim women in Southeast Asia. Given the strong emphasis in family

and marriage in Confucianism that pervades East Asia, it is perhaps remarkable that Taiwanese Buddhists have been reinterpreting Buddhism to make it at least gender neutral if not gender positive (DeVido 2010). Taiwanese nuns have been insisting that ‘the Buddha – nature has no gender’ and that Buddhism stresses that all humans are equal. These developments in Buddhist attitudes towards gender equality have been reinforced by the idea that engaged Buddhism as a public religion has to become post-patriarchal.

Finally these reformist movements cannot be disconnected from the larger macro developments in the building of state institutions, with post-colonialism and with the integration of Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and now Myanmar into the global capitalist economy. Social and political disruption has spawned new cults alongside the growth of urban reformist and somewhat individualized Buddhism. In a broader discussion of these developments, one would need to discuss the growth of Pentecostalism among the numerous ethnic minorities in the Western mountain regions of Vietnam and in Malaysia. Social and cultural conflicts in post-war Vietnam created the environment in which the engaged Buddhism of Thich Nhat Hanh began, but it was during his exile in France that the global appeal of his spirituality flourished.

Conclusion: globalization as de-territorialization

In this chapter I have considered a wide range of reformist movements in world religions. This picture presents a dynamic history of evolution and change. I conclude with two issues. The first concerns the long-term consequences of Protestantization or pietization. The mainstream view is that it is a vibrant and dynamic form of religious revivalism. However there is also evidence that young people are turning away from organized religion in whatever form it takes. In other words, it is not clear whether we are at the beginning of a process of de-secularization or re-sacralization of the world, as Peter Berger (1999) would have it. There is for example considerable alienation from monastic Buddhism among younger generations especially in Thailand following a spate of scandals in the monastic system. Writing about Japan, Saburo Ienaga (2006: 37) notes that:

it is doubtful how much the younger generation of Japanese people believe in Buddhism. Most of them probably do not believe in religion, but even if they are unbelievers at heart, there are many, who feel no inconsistency in inviting a priest to chant sutras in the traditional way on the occasion of a funeral.

Perhaps the youth of Asia, through the processes of urbanization, education, and family transformation, will follow the trend towards ‘no religion’ that has become prevalent in the West, where in the majority of societies, people reporting no religion (or the ‘nones’) ranges from around 22 per cent in the US to over 30 per cent in New Zealand. Perhaps the most important finding is that ‘no religion’ represents on average around 30 per cent of young people under the age of 30 (Bibby 2011; Lin *et al.* 2010). Can we expect a similar trend in developed Asian societies? Many reports coming out of Asia have documented a rise in Pentecostal Christianity and charismatic Catholicism, but these developments are often taking place among marginalized communities. The growth of Christianity in China is taking place within a society with a long history of state-sponsored secularism. The situation in China has been summarized by Fenggang Yang (2012: 56–57), namely ‘The phenomenon of cultural Christians (*Wenhua Jidutu*) is the most interesting development in this regard ... These cultural Christians have stirred up a Christianity fashion or fad among college-educated urbanites, while underground house churches spread with zeal in the rural areas’. By ‘cultural Christians’ he means a movement among intellectuals from the

1990s who turned away from the atheist criticism of Christianity to express sympathy for it as culture rather than as a religion.

My second issue is about the problem of authenticity. Is the process of interpretation and reinterpretation of religions completely elastic? Because religious studies scholars have argued that 'Buddhism' and 'Hinduism' are modern inventions, there is the implication that reinterpretation has no limit. Modern Buddhism has involved a criticism of many of the ritualistic and metaphysical elements of traditional Buddhism, because these aspects of Buddhist belief and practice are seen to be cultural accretions rather than essential to Buddhism. Many devotional practices around the invocation of *bodhisattvas* have been abandoned, just as reformist Islam rejected Sufi practices and brotherhoods as merely folk additions to the pristine core. In defending Buddhism against Westernization, Buddhist modernists attempted to show that the teaching of the Buddha was not only compatible with rationalism, science, and Western values, but actually transcended them. With the creation of Buddhist monastic institutions in the West as a result of missionary activity by Nichiren Buddhism, Soka Gakkai, the New Kadampa Tradition, and various manifestations of Tibetan Buddhism, Buddhist temples are now a familiar feature of Western cities.

Perhaps answers to both issues may be found in a recent work by Olivier Roy, *Holy Ignorance* (2010), in which he claims that despite all the diversity of religious movements across the globe, there are some common elements that have been summarized by various authors as 'the Protestantization of religions'. He perceives a profound de-territorialization and de-culturalization of religions in which there is a global circulation of religious ideas, personnel, institutions, and materials that become disconnected with their original local cultures. He rejects the idea that this is a return to religion but rather a 'mutation' of religious traditions. By 'de-culturalization' he points to the growth of halal fast-food, cyber-fatwa, halal dating, Christian rock groups, transcendental meditation, or the transformation of Christmas into a consumer celebration (Roy 2010: 29). There is ample evidence of the impact of consumerism in Asian societies and on the commercialization of religious institutions (Kitiarsa 2008). The result is a standardization of global religious products both internal (in the theme of being 'born again') and external (in terms of the forms of religious organization).

In conclusion, religions around Asia are vibrant and influential, and there is widespread evidence of renewal and reformation. Protestant evangelism is having a profound impact in South Korea; there is significant reform of Islam in South and Southeast Asia. The Catholic Church is being revived in China following its path towards deregulation and capitalist growth. Spirit possession has popular audiences in Vietnam and Japanese leaders have been controversially visiting the Yasukuni shrine. Despite these signs of vitality, there is also a more general impact of consumer globalization and urbanization in Asia that may change religious beliefs and practices in unexpected directions. Given changing family patterns, gender divisions, education, and urbanization, the successful translation of culture, including religion, across generations is unlikely. Whether globalization results in secularization, at least of future generations, remains an open question.

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