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A Historical Overview of Religious Diversity in Modern Japan

Religious diversity comprising of Buddhism, Shinto, Christianity, and others has been a historically given reality in modern Japan. One scholarly reflection about it, however, can be characterized differently from another based on the historical situations surrounding each study. This paper will pick up a couple of representative scholarly reflections about Japanese religions conducted in the past one hundred years or so, and try to give a critical overview about them.

Chongsuh Kim

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Religious Diversity and Inter-religious Issues of Contemporary Korea

This paper presents a comprehensive survey of religious diversity and inter-religious issues in contemporary Korea, including an analysis of current conflicting phases between religions and the logic of religious coexistence that has overcome inter-religious conflicts.

The current issues surrounding Korean religions actually have deep roots in the Korean historical context. Teachings of coexistence and cooperation between religions are first found in the history of Korea itself rather than elsewhere. The current inter-religious efforts and cooperation in Korea are an inheritance of dialogues between particular religions, as well as universal inter-religious dialogues and academic discourse.

It is important to note that cooperation among religious groups is much more successful when there is a clear secular goal. It is easy to recognize the importance of joint efforts among Korean religions in the realms of nationalism, democracy and peace, and social campaign. The significance of religiously diverse and layered culture in the individual lives of Koreans is immense. Indeed, Korean multi-religious culture is deeply reflected in the daily lives and

rituals of Koreans. Of course, the multi-religious situation still brings a lot of troublesome conflicts. Yet, it is through these religious conflicts that Koreans rediscover the creative potentials of their culture.

Teresita Cruz-del Rosario

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A Patchwork of Beliefs: Religious Pluralism and Historical Globalizations in the Philippines

Religious pluralism in the Philippines is oftentimes misconstrued as an oxymoron given the country's predominant Catholic population --- the outcome of nearly 500 centuries of Spanish colonialism in which the motor of colonial administration was the Church and the Spanish friar. However, a historical view of religion in the Philippines yields two interesting patterns: 1) a globalization that preceded the nineteenth century, what Janet Abu-Lughod (1989) terms as a "world system that came into being" long before European hegemony, prompted a migration pattern characterized by the shift of maritime routes from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea and occasioned an outflow of traders and Sufi missionaries originating from the Hadramawt region in the 13th century and brought Islam to Southeast Asia including the Philippines; 2) a current globalization that promotes labor outflow from the Philippines to the Middle East, creating a new phenomenon of religious conversion known as *Balik Islam* (Return to Islam) among migrant Filipinos. This paper attempts to frame Philippine religious pluralism through the lens of "comparative globalizations" starting with the year 1250 through the current period. Through a historical lens that antedates colonial accounts, a richly-textured version of a far more pluralistic Philippine history than has been traditionally portrayed in Philippine historiography emerges. This also serves as effective counterfoils to Eurocentric, elite-centered, "national" histories. The net effect of these efforts is to de-emphasize a portrayal of Philippine society as mono-culturally Christian and Manila-centered.

Kalinga Tudor Silva

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Religious Diversity and Multi-religious Landscape in Sri Lanka: the Case of Galebandara Cult

Sri Lanka is home to four world religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. There are also multiple faiths associated with astrology, ayurveda, healing rituals, black magic, white magic, witchcraft and fertility rituals. During the long history of interaction among various religions with diverse origins and vastly different existential doctrines and soteriologies, inter-religious competition and conflict have occurred side by side with borrowing of practices from each other, assimilation and integration. The concepts used so far for understanding religious diversity and interactions include religious syncretism, religious pluralism, multi-religion, Protestant Buddhism, proselytization and religious revival. Recent emergence of Bodu Bala Sena and a range of Islamic movements such as Sri Lanka Thawheed Jama'ath as antagonistic militant Buddhist and Muslim organizations respectively points to the role of religious entrepreneurs and rabble rousers in this era of globalization and mass movements.

Against this background, this paper examines the case of Galbandara cult in northwestern Sri Lanka as a multi-religious cult maintaining the dichotomy and simultaneously facilitating the interaction between Buddhists and Muslims. Buddhists and Muslims are united in worshipping Galebandara deity believed to be half Buddhist and half Islamic. Reflecting a longer tradition of inter-religious confrontation as well as assimilation between the majority Buddhists and minority Muslims, the Galebandara cult belongs to the Sufi tradition in Islam and, at the same time, the genre of Bandara cults in popular Buddhism. Both Sufism and Bandara cults are in some ways marginal to mainstream Islam and Buddhism and yet they signify the interpenetration of these two world religions with vastly different religious doctrines at the level of popular religion. Using ethnographic information collected in ongoing research, this paper will throw light on the workings of a multi-religious landscape in contemporary Sri Lanka.

Martin A. Tsang, PhD.,

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The Cane and the Cowrie: The Development of Afro-Asian Religion in Cuba From Indenture to the Present

Discussions on religious diversity have focused on specific cartographies, reproducing and reflecting macro and micro-social cohesions and tensions, they have also significantly entrenched religion as region. In this manner, the promotion of religious areas as defined by contemporary and Western ontologies means that those areas that are Orientalized in this process are deemed homogenous, non-modern, and impenetrable to change, mixing, and pluralism.

Historically, Asia and the religious and cultural practices that can be ascribed as Asian have been constructed in academic literature as demarcated and isolated from one another. The notion that religion in Asia is discretely bounded and contained is both false and lends further credence to the deep impact of dominant ideological paradigms propelled from the west to the east.

My research concerns Asian and African religious mixing in Cuba, where thousands of predominantly Cantonese men and Afro-Cuban women met and formed consensual relationships from the aftermath of the African Slave Trade and the coolie indenture system established in the 19th Century as a response to sugar industrialization. My research offers a new analytical and critical lens, which I call interdiasporic cross-fertilization to account for religious mixing and pluralism, which can be used for thinking across pre-existing scholarly boundaries to the research of religious contact. This work also assists in unbinding religion to region, taking into account past and modern movements and migrations of people and the ability to explore and model the dynamics of religious heterogeneity in multidimensional representations.

Khyati Y. Joshi

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Pluralism and Privilege: Understanding Asian American Religions

My work lies at the intersection of race and religion in the US. In particular, my research has focused on examining the development of Hinduism and Sikhism (primarily) in the US. Utilizing

ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews with second-generation Indian American Hindus and Sikhs, I have developed a body of research that helps understand how these religions are developing unique forms and manifestations in the US, and the impact that “lived religion” has on second generation Indian Americans across their lifespans to date. In this presentation, I will touch upon the development of these ethnoreligious communities. In most cases, Indian American communities are both racial and religious minorities. Race and racism inform the development of Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam in the US.

To understand the development of Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam in the US, it is important to analyze how the dominant religion, Christianity, impacts the development of US minority religions. Thus, some of my research and writing examines the impact of Christian normativity, Christian privilege and religious oppression on the aforementioned minority faiths. *Christian privilege* refers to the system of advantages bestowed on Christians in US society. Christian privilege is one facet of *religious oppression* of non-Christians in the U.S.; religious oppression is perpetuated by the presence of Christian privilege and the concomitant infliction of discrimination upon non-Christians.

Gideon Elazar

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The Challenge of Diversity: Evangelical Missionaries and Ethno-Christianity in Reform era Yunnan

Since the beginning of the reform era, China has witnessed a resurgence of a large variety of religious practice. Much of the growth of the church can be ascribed to the efforts of indigenous Chinese churches. However, the dissemination of Christianity is also being promoted by a non-Chinese, primarily Western missionary community. Missionary presence is particularly considerable in the peripheral province of Yunnan, in the far southwestern corner of China.

Missionaries were active in Yunnan before the 1949 revolution, where they had some considerable success with a number of minority peoples. Despite the illegality of proselytizing in today's China, foreign Christian workers are largely tolerated in Yunnan province. Both foreign and Chinese Missionaries working among minority people in Yunnan are faced with the challenge of dealing



with a wide variety of religious and cultural and ethnic traditions among potential converts. In this paper I wish to discuss the ways both missionaries and converts deal with the issue of religious diversity and syncretism, both on the theological and on the practical level. Through a discussion of a number of points of contention, such as burial rites and participation in ethnic festivals I attempt to demonstrate the way contemporary Christians struggle to reconcile local religious traditions with their new found faith. The observations made here are based on 15 months of anthropological fieldwork conducted in Yunnan in 2009-10 and interviews made during a follow up visit in 2012.

Surinder S. Jodhka

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Religious Diversities and the Indian Middle Classes

I begin my presentation by identifying three different aspects of diversity, or more specifically the question of religious diversity in India. The first and the most obvious one is the demographics of diversity in terms of diverse religious communities and their numbers; the second important aspect of diversity is discursive. This includes the presence of the question of diversity in popular public and academic discourses in the given national society as its constitutive reality. It also includes its institutionalization in the political, policy and legal regimes, i.e. in the formal political system of the country. The third aspect of diversity is processual and historical. Frames of diversities, as we understand them today, are constructed and they evolve only with the emergence of modern nation states. The framing of religious diversity also presupposes framing of religious communities, not merely as categories of demographic classifications, which is important, but also as constitutive categories, which are given priority over other possible frames of identification and classification. It is in this context that I will attempt a discussion on the relationship between the specific history, or histories, of the making of the contemporary Indian middle classes during the colonial and post-colonial periods and the simultaneous construction of religious communities as primary constitutive identities in South Asia.



V. Sujatha

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'The immortal body'. The intricacies of mysticism, medicine and pharmacology in the Siddha tradition of south India

Mystical traditions are generally associated with abstract, magical or metaphysical knowledge and the division between religion and science is often sharply drawn as polar opposites. This paper presents the metaphysics of the material world contained in the experiments carried out by the mendicants of the Siddha tradition of Tamil Nadu and the rich pharmacological knowledge that this tradition yielded. By showing how the siddha tradition sought to achieve an immortal body free of disease, ageing and death through a self conscious engagement with the body, the paper calls for a reworking of the understanding of religion in terms of binaries.

Mikael Aktor

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Tradition as Solution to Present Challenges among Smārta Brahmins in Chennai

I take “religious diversity” to encompass not only the diversity of different religious traditions within a given area but also to include different more or less stereotyped world views against which religious groups define themselves, such as “humanism”, “secularism” or “westernization”. During field work in South India I have studied a ritual, the *pañcāyatanapūjā*, that was almost extinct until August 2014, when it was reintroduced and revitalized among a group of *smārta* Brahmins in Chennai. This revitalization is part of a broader prevalent “traditionalism” that also promotes traditional clothing, traditional food habits and traditional religious knowledge in general. It is explicitly articulated as a move against increasing “westernization” and addressed both to the young generation and the nation. The national appeal also places such tendencies in a discourse against globalization and modernization and in general against Western “neo-colonialism”. This kind of critical traditionalism is widespread in many Asian countries. If, indeed, it is a reaction to

globalization it is an open question how far and in which ways it contributes to meeting the challenges that obviously are parts of modern life in Asia in any helpful way.

Uwe Skoda

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Dasara and Durga Puja- diverse forms of worshipping Goddess Durga in Odisha, India

The presentation looks at religious diversity in north-western Odisha through the lens of diverging, yet largely simultaneous forms of worshipping Goddess Durga – herself appearing in multiple manifestations and being associated with various goddesses. It analyses first of all the older royal Dasara tradition located primarily in the fort of a former princely state as well as the sacrificial polity surrounding it and (re-)created through it. Dasara is then related to and compared with a more recent and increasingly popular form of worshipping goddess Durga, Durga Puja as it is commonly referred to, in the market – a ritual, which, in contrast to Dasara, is tacitly supported by the state, at least logistically, and funded by industrialists. By doing so the presentation argues that the transforming state institutions, the role of migration as well as the more recent industrialization are all crucial factors shaping the to some extent competing performances and religious diversity more broadly.

Organizers

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