

A Secular Age in South, East, and Southeast Asia?

6-7 March 2017

AS8 Level 4, ARI Seminar Room



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Organized by:



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The study of secularism has mostly focused on the West, in particular, on Northern Europe and North America. The philosopher Charles Taylor has been the most prominent theorist of the secular age and of the nature of post-secular society in the West. He has noticed that terms like secular, secularization, and secularism crop up in many places outside the West, but may not mean the same in very different historical and cultural contexts. In his engagement with the work on India and China of Peter van der Veer he has also pointed out that it is necessary to sort out what travelled and what not in ‘the imperial encounter’ between Western secular modernity and other traditions outside of the west. This workshop will examine these differences and pose alternatives to Taylor’s account of secularism for the East and Southeast Asian context, with particular attention to Catholicism in the Philippines, Vietnam, and Singapore, Protestantism in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, and Hinduism and Chinese religion in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. It will do so by 1) exploring alternative forms of “secular” state relations with religious groups at different points in Chinese and South-East Asian history; 2) examining the nature of Catholicism in the Philippines and in Vietnam and the survival of a complex set of relations between the state and Catholic communities there in order to propose an alternative account of processes of secularization in East Asian Catholicism in conversation with the work of Jose Casanova; 3) analyzing the recent rapid spread of Pentecostal Christianity in China and Southeast Asia and different state responses to these developments in order to develop a deeper understanding of post-secular strategies and relations in these areas.

The first panel will explore Catholicism in the Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore and China. A second panel will explore Protestant Christianity in Southeast Asia, especially the spread of Pentecostal Christianity, and the implications of these developments for secular states in the region. A third panel will explore popular religion and its relation to the state in China, India, and parts of Southeast. This panel seeks to take seriously the role of diverse regional ritual cultures and spirit possession in Chinese religion inspired by Kenneth Dean’s work on ritual self-governance. The current revival of religion under the CCP secular state will also be examined. A final panel will raise general comparative questions on the nature of secularization in Southeast Asia in relation to imperialism, post-imperial state policies, and the rise of global cities.

CONVENORS

Prof Kenneth DEAN

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6 MARCH 2017 (MONDAY)	
09:45 – 10:00	REGISTRATION
10:00 – 10:15	WELCOME REMARKS
10:00	JONATHAN RIGG , <i>National University of Singapore</i> KENNETH DEAN , <i>National University of Singapore</i> PETER VAN DER VEER , <i>Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany</i>
10:15 – 11:30	KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1
Chairperson	R. MICHAEL FEENER , <i>University of Oxford, UK</i>
10:15	Asian Catholicism, Interreligious Colonial Encounters and Dynamics of Secularism in Asia JOSE CASANOVA , <i>Georgetown University, USA</i>
11:00	Questions & Answers
11:30 – 12:00	TEA BREAK
12:00 – 13:20	PANEL 1
Chairperson	GIUSEPPE BOLOTTA , <i>National University of Singapore</i>
12:00	Communist Ideology, Secularity, and Re-Enchantment Challenges for the Catholic Church in Vietnam, 1954-2015 PETER C. PHAN , <i>Georgetown University, USA</i>
12:20	The Uncle Ho Religion in Vietnam TAM T. T. NGO , <i>Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany</i>
12:40	The Nguyễn Văn Liên Case: Secularisation on Paper in Late-Socialist Vietnam PAUL SORRENTINO , <i>Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany</i>
13:00	Questions & Answers
13:20 – 14:20	LUNCH
14:20 – 15:40	PANEL 2
Chairperson	CATHERINE SCHEER , <i>National University of Singapore</i>
14:20	From Secularity to Progressiveness: Popular Religion and the Creation of Telangana Regionalism STEFAN BINDER , <i>University of Göttingen, Germany</i>
14:40	Adjudicating the Sacred: The Fates of “Native” Religious Endowments in India and Hong Kong LEILAH VEVAINA , <i>Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany</i>
15:00	The Portability of Secularism and Religious Modernity in Sri Lanka and Singapore: Trans-regional Revivalism and Synergistic Agonism NEENA MAHADEV , <i>Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany</i>
15:20	Questions & Answers
15:40 – 16:10	TEA BREAK

16:10 – 17:30	PANEL 3
<i>Chairperson</i>	GUSTAV BROWN , <i>National University of Singapore</i>
16:10	Emplacing Religion in Secular Frames: The Story of the Penang Hindu Endowments Board VINEETA SINHA , <i>National University of Singapore</i>
16:30	Exploring the Culture-Religion Nexus: Popular Religion, Culturalism and Korean “Piety Travel” SAM HAN , <i>Nanyang Technological University, Singapore</i>
16:50	Pentecostalism as Enchanted Secularity DANIEL P.S. GOH , <i>National University of Singapore</i>
17:10	Questions & Answers
17:30	END OF DAY 1
17:45 – 20:00	CONFERENCE DINNER (For Speakers, Discussants & Invited Guests)

7 MARCH 2017 (TUESDAY)

09:45 – 10:00	REGISTRATION
10:00 – 11:15	KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2
<i>Chairperson</i>	MAY NGO , <i>National University of Singapore</i>
10:00	The Moral State: Comparing “The Secular” in India and China PETER VAN DER VEER , <i>Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany</i>
10:45	Questions & Answers
11:15 – 11:45	TEA BREAK
11:45 – 13:05	PANEL 4
<i>Chairperson</i>	MOK MEI FENG , <i>National University of Singapore</i>
11:45	The Third Globalization of Catholicism in Greater China RICHARD MADSEN , <i>University of California – San Diego, USA</i>
12:05	Divine Text, Secular Language: Translating the Qur’an in Jakarta WEBB KEANE , <i>University of Michigan, USA</i>
12:25	Remembered and Forgotten Gods: Caste and the Transnational Worship of Ancestral Deities among Malaysian Hindus SUDHEESH BHASI , <i>Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany</i>
12:45	Questions & Answers
13:05 – 14:05	LUNCH
14:05 – 15:25	PANEL 5
<i>Chairperson</i>	LAI LEI KUAN RONGDAO , <i>National University of Singapore</i>
14:05	Regulating Communal Religion as “Folk Belief”: Secularism with Chinese Characters XIAOXUAN WANG , <i>Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany</i>
14:25	The Haicang “Voice”: Modernity, Cultural Continuity and the Spirit World in a 1920s Chinese Church CHRIS WHITE , <i>Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany</i>
14:45	Precepts and Practice in the Current Revival of Chinese Buddhism: A Cross-Straits Perspective TZU-LUNG CHIU , <i>University of California – Berkeley, USA</i>
15:05	Questions & Answers
15:25 – 15:55	TEA BREAK

15:55 – 17:15	PANEL 6
<i>Chairperson</i>	BERNARDO BROWN , <i>National University of Singapore</i>
15:55	“Neo-Socialist Governmentality” and the Genealogy of Chinese Socialist Spiritual Civilisation DAVID A. PALMER , <i>University of Hong Kong</i> FABIAN WINIGER , <i>University of Hong Kong</i>
16:15	Spirit Mediums and Secular/Religious Divides in Singapore KENNETH DEAN , <i>National University of Singapore</i>
16:35	Modern Avatars of Chinese Eschatologies VINCENT GOOSSAERT , <i>Ecole pratique des hautes études, France</i>
16:55	Questions & Answers
17:15 – 17:30	CLOSING REMARKS
17:15	KENNETH DEAN , <i>National University of Singapore</i> PETER VAN DER VEER , <i>Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany</i>
17:30	END OF CONFERENCE
17:45 – 20:00	CONFERENCE DINNER (For Speakers, Discussants & Invited Guests)

KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1

**Asian Catholicism, Interreligious Colonial Encounters and
Dynamics of Secularism in Asia****Jose Casanova**

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While the dynamics of secularism and secularization in continental Europe have been primarily determined by processes of state confessionalization and de-confessionalization, in Asia the dynamics of secularism have been primarily determined by inter-religious colonial encounters and the responses of anti-colonial and post-colonial states to the challenges of religious pluralism. To substantiate this thesis I will offer illustrations from Catholic encounters in Japan, China, Vietnam and the Philippines, from three different phases of globalization: the early modern phase before Western hegemony, the modern Western hegemonic phase and our contemporary global age.

Jose CASANOVA is Professor of Sociology, Theology and Senior Fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, where he heads the Program on Religion, Globalization and the Secular. He is also a Professorial Fellow at Australian Catholic University in Melbourne, where he directs a project on Asian/Pacific Catholicism and Globalization. Previously he served as Professor of Sociology at the New School for Social Research in New York and has held visiting appointments at numerous American and European universities. He has published widely in the areas of sociological theory, religion and politics, transnational migration, and globalization. His best-known work, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1994) has become a modern classic and has been translated into several non-Western languages. Presently he holds the Kluge Chair for Societies and Cultures of the Northern Hemisphere at the Library of Congress, where he is writing a book on "The Jesuits and Globalization".

KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2

**The Moral State:
Comparing “The Secular” in India and China****Peter van der Veer**

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This paper explores the triad state-nation-religion in India and China. It explores the ways in which states attempt to nationalize religion and in that way turn them into sources for the moral good that the state tries to accomplish. This moral good is mostly defined as ‘national development’ and as such is ‘secular’. Forms of religion that hinder development can be branded as immoral. While this is an abstract conceptualization of the modern state the historical trajectories of state-formation in India and China show interesting divergences in the ways in which people are mobilized as minorities and majorities in relation to national progress. The paper engages some of Charles Taylor’s assumptions about ‘disenchantment’ and ‘disembedding’ as part of such trajectories.

Peter van der VEER is Director at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen and Distinguished University Professor at Utrecht University. He has published widely about religion and nationalism in Asia and Europe. Some of his book publications are: *Religious Nationalism* (University of California Press 1994); *Imperial Encounters* (Princeton University Press 2001); *The Modern Spirit of Asia* (Princeton University Press 2013); and *The Value of Comparison* (Duke University Press 2015).

Communist Ideology, Secularity, and Re-Enchantment Challenges for the Catholic Church in Vietnam, 1954-2015

Peter C. Phan

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Is there a “Secular Age” in the history of Vietnam? Assuming—only for the sake of argument—Charles Taylor’s definition of secularity, the essay attempts to answer this complex question by focusing on the challenges facing the Catholic Church in Vietnam from the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) in 1945 with Ho Chi Minh as President to 2015, 40 years after the fall of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) and the reunification of the two states in one country, officially known as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV), under the single Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) system. Arguably the Catholic Church in Vietnam faced no greater threat to its existence and flourishing than during this slightly-more-than-a-half century since its birth in the seventeenth century and severe persecutions in the nineteenth century. This period can be divided into four phases, each posing a different and specific challenge to Vietnamese Catholicism as part of the worldwide Christian Church.

The first challenge came from the atheistic ideology of the Communist regime and its anti-religious policies. As the result of the Geneva Accords (July 21, 1954), which temporarily partitioned Vietnam into two zones at the 17th parallel, the Church in the north was devastated, with nearly 700,000 lay Catholics, five bishops, 700 priests, and most male and female religious, moving to the south. The second challenge is the continuation of the first, after the victory of the Communist North over the pro-Western South in April 1975. Fearing Communist persecutions, hundreds of thousands of Catholics migrated overseas. In addition to this huge loss of its members, the Church was severely weakened by the anti-religious policies of the Communist government, with its many properties confiscated and its social, educational, health-care, and religious curtailed. The third challenge arose from the VCP’s adoption of the *doi moi* [renovation] policy from the late 1986 to the late 1990s, under the leadership of Nguyen Van Linh and Do Muoi as its General Secretary. Threatened by economic collapse in the aftermaths of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in 1986, the VCP promoted a “socialist-oriented market economy,” moving toward private ownership and a capitalist economy. Concomitantly with economic—albeit not political—liberalization, the VCP loosened its policies regarding religious organizations and activities. The 1992 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, emended in 2011 and again in 2013, acknowledges the right to religious freedom. Regarding the Catholic Church, after the failure to establish a national Vietnamese national “patriotic” church, the Party worked out a *modus operandi* with the Vatican, especially in matters regarding the appointment of bishops. Between 1990 and 2015 there were several official visits either by the Vatican delegation to Vietnam or by the Vietnamese delegation to the Vatican, and relations between the two States improved significantly. In 2011, a non-residential papal representative to Vietnam was accepted by the Vietnamese government. In the last two decades, though there have been occasional attacks against individual priests and lay Catholics, by and large a significant measure of freedom was granted to the operation of seminaries, priestly ordinations, educational and social activities, public devotional manifestations, and pastoral ministry. The fourth challenge is presented by the current socio-political and cultural situation produced by economic liberalization and globalization. With the lifting of the economic embargo in 1994 and Vietnam’s joining the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) in 1995 and the World Trade organization in 2006, features customarily associated with modernity, capitalism and information technologies raised their challenges to religion and religious practices.

The essay describes these four challenges and discusses in detail how the Vietnamese Catholic Church (and incidentally other religions) have been responding to them. In the process, an answer will be provided to the three questions: (1) whether there are secularized public spaces; (2) whether there has been a decline in religious belief and practice; and (3) whether unbelief and no religious practice are a socially, politically, and culturally viable option.

Peter C. PHAN came to Georgetown University in 2003 and currently he holds the Ignacio Ellacuría Chair of Catholic Social Thought and is the founding Director of Graduate Studies of PhD program in Theology and Religious Studies. He has earned three doctorates: STD from the Universitas Pontificia Salesiana, Rome, and PhD and DD from the University of London. He has also received two honorary degrees: Doctor of Theology from Catholic Theological Union and Doctor of Humane Letters from Elms College. His research deals with the theology of icon in Orthodox theology, patristic theology, eschatology, the history of Christian missions in Asia, and liberation, inculturation and interreligious dialogue. He is the author and editor of over 30 books and has published over 300 essays.

The Uncle Ho Religion in Vietnam

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Twenty years ago, a poor peasant who lives about 30 kilometers west of Hanoi, survived a strange illness that almost killed her. Since then, she claimed that every night in her dreams she met Uncle Ho, who taught her 'the way of Ho Chi Minh'. When she woke up, she wrote down these teachings, using a popular Vietnamese traditional poem form. Very soon, a growing crowd began to gather around her, honoring her as the Master (Thay), and seeking healing and moral teaching. Such was the birth of Ho Chi Minh religion. With tens of thousands of followers in sixteen provinces of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh cult is one of the most dynamic religious movements in Vietnam today. This paper follows the development of the cult of Ho Chi Minh and analyzes the complex relationship between religion, communism, and gender in post-revolutionary Vietnam.

Tam T. NGO is a Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Gottingen, Germany. She is the author of the monograph *The New Way: Protestantism and the Hmong in Vietnam* (University of Washington Press, 2016) and co-editor of *Atheist Secularism and its Discontents: A Comparative Study of Religion and Communism in Eastern Europe and Asia* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2015).

The Nguyễn Văn Liên Case: Secularisation on Paper in Late-socialist Vietnam

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In 1997, the Vietnamese Prime minister's office approved a scientific research project on a spirit medium's supposed capacity to locate the lost remains of soldiers fallen during the Indochina wars. This decision can be seen as the official birth of what would soon be called "spiritual sciences" (*khoa học tâm linh*) in Vietnam, as it has since then been referred to by numerous scientists and ritual specialists in order to legitimise practices still legally threatened by regulations banishing "superstition" (*mê tín*). I recently accessed the file that this seminal 1997 project has left in the national archives of Vietnam, and I would like to take it as an object *per se* in the study of Vietnamese secularism and its relation to bureaucracy. The state's recent interest for practices of communication with the dead has to be understood as one of the latest developments of this issue. In the archive I intend to study, several kinds of documents coexist, with their own aesthetics, pragmatics, and modes of reference, and I would like to question the contribution of such objects to this ongoing process of secularisation. This paper's bet is that the hybridations that these documents entail (and operate) should less be seen as a blurring of lines between so-called separate spheres such as the religious, the political, or the scientific, but that they contribute to the mutual constitution of the limits that are said to delineate them in today's Vietnam.

Paul SORRENTINO is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. His research aims at developing a pragmatic approach of religious practices based on a fine grained ethnography taking into account individuals' capacities of critique and judgement, in the context of contemporary Vietnam's religious re-compositions. His previous work has focused on spirit possession and the relations between the living and the dead in Vietnam. His doctoral dissertation (and forthcoming book) described the invention of a new ritual form in the aftermath of the war and the revolution. His current project broadens the scope to the diverse negotiations surrounding rituals in Vietnam, where different forms of authority come into play at the crossroads of science, spirituality, and nationalism.

From Secularity to Progressiveness: Popular Religion and the Creation of Telangana Regionalism

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Taking the recent movement for a separate federal state of Telangana in South India as a case study, this paper explores how different stakeholders within and around that movement have mobilised popular religion and folklore in order to reclaim an autochthonous and popular form of “progressiveness” and “rationalism” for the regional culture of Telangana. The paper focuses in particular on contested interpretations of the local Bathukamma festival, which is celebrated primarily by women at the time of the Hindu festival of Durga Navaratri. The Bathukamma festival has become a major symbol for a progressive culture specific to Telangana, yet the transformation of a popular women’s festival into a major political symbol, and moreover an official state festival, has not been without consequences for the nature of the festival and its discursive framing. Certain sections of the Telangana movement have begun to see the new state government’s political investment in and certain ritual modifications of the Bathukamma festival as a corruption of its supposedly inherent “progressive” nature; in other words, it has been claimed that the elevation of Bathukamma to a state festival has not only made it *less* progressive but also *more* religious. In this paper, I argue that an analysis of the relationships between religion, state, and culture as manifesting in this debate allows us to retrace a “formation of the secular” (Asad 2003) which is certainly informed by, but by no means reducible to, an adaptation or vernacularisation of a supposedly original European template of secularism.

Stefan BINDER is currently a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS) at Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (Germany), working on audiovisual media practices and perceptions of time among Shi’ites in Hyderabad. From 2012 to 2016, he pursued his PhD at the Research Institute for Philosophy and Religious Studies (OFR) at Utrecht University (Netherlands) where he will defend his dissertation on atheism and irreligion in South India in April 2017. In 2011 he graduated from Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München (Germany) in Religious Studies, Cultural Anthropology, and Indology. In his master thesis, he analyzed processes of subject formation in meditation practices and discourses of the self among ‘western Buddhists’ in Germany.

Adjudicating the Sacred: The Fates of “Native” Religious Endowments in India and Hong Kong

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Stokes (1959), van der Veer (2001) and Birla (2009) among others have shown how colonial legal interventions sought to delegitimize certain native practices in order to create ‘proper’ subjects. Laws governing religious endowments went straight to the heart of the matter: not simply how endowments would be governed and taxed, but what actually constituted religion and legitimate religious practice (Birla 2009; Chung 2003; 2010). My research aims to further this scholarship by tracing the legal and religious entanglements of public charitable trusts in Bombay-Mumbai and Hong Kong.

All ‘native’ endowments were not universally recognized and supported by British colonial law. For example, while the Hindu endowment and Muslim *waqf* were recognized by colonial law, the *tong*, the Chinese endowment, in British Malaya and Hong Kong, was not, as it was seen to go against the British rule against perpetuities (Chung 2003). Although exceptions were made for charitable trusts, which I show had huge consequences for minorities like Parsis in India (Vevaina 2014), colonials in Hong Kong did not deem the *tong* as charitable or religious. Relegating the *tong* to the world of family inheritance (private) or business and corporate law had critical implications to the way communal groups could accumulate and utilize religious wealth. Using both ethnographic and historical evidence, this paper will show how endowments are at once shaped by secular law but also serve to contest and constitute the religious.

Leilah VEVAINA is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Goettingen, Germany. She received her PhD in Social Anthropology from the New School for Social Research in 2014. She has an MA in Anthropology from The New School (2007) as well as an MA in Social Thought from New York University (2005). Her research lies on the form of the trust, within the intersection of urban property and religious life. Her book manuscript entitled, “Trust Matters: Parsi Religious Endowments in Bombay-Mumbai” focuses on religious endowments and the trust as a mechanism of property (both kinship and real estate) management in Mumbai. Her current research seeks to examine the intra-communal modes of wealth transfer through the networks of religious endowments between Bombay-Mumbai and Hong Kong. The project will trace the itineraries of religious giving across the economic and social worlds of these two cities.

The Portability of Secularism and Religious Modernity in Sri Lanka and Singapore: Trans-regional Revivalism and Synergistic Agonism

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Christians and Buddhists differently figure Singapore and Sri Lanka as sites of religious transmission and receptivity. During a famed mission in the late 1970s, Billy Graham prophesied that Singapore would become the “Antioch of Asia” — connoting a hub for evangelical expansion (Goh 2005, Debernardi 2008). Yet, since the turn of the millennium, a remarkable trans-regional and trans-sectarian convergence has also been taking place within Singaporean Buddhism, wherein some Anglophone Chinese-Singaporeans self-reflexively characterize themselves as “Born-again Buddhists”. Having once been “nominal Buddhists”, they now see themselves as “disciples” of the Dhamma as a result of revelations of English-speaking Theravadin teachers. How is, and isn’t, this a political convergence? Anglophone Chinese-Singaporeans express that the Buddhism of their birth buries the Dhamma in a complex of Mahayana-Daoist rituals that renders the Dhamma opaque. While Singaporean cemeteries are being exhumed due to land scarcity, and knowledge of domestic ancestral rites is being lost, anxieties about proper care for the dead are arguably left unmitigated by Daoist-Mahayana Buddhism. Yet Sri Lankan monks concertedly offer a simplified rebirth cosmology and merit-transfer rituals. Moreover, fraternity with Lankan monks offers Singaporean Buddhists opportunities to produce merit through *Dhammadutta* (service work and Dhamma propagation), locally and in overseas missions. I explore the implications of Dhammic revelations and their propagation in Singapore, with its strict anti-proselytization policies aimed to maintain inter-religious harmony; and in Sri Lanka, a predominantly Buddhist country which recently saw a rise of “anti-conversion” activism through which Buddhists sought to curb the growth of Christianity.

Neena MAHADEV is a Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious & Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen. From 2013-2015, she was a Post-doctoral Fellow in the Trans-regional Research Network, for a collaboration on “The Politics of Secularism and the Emergence of New Religiosities” at the University of Göttingen. Neena received her PhD in Anthropology at Johns Hopkins University in 2013. Her research examines nationalistic and evangelistic antipathies over conversion, competing political theologies, and rivalrous efforts to carve out sovereign religious domains in Sri Lanka. Her published work appears in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (“The Maverick Dialogics of Religious Rivalry: Inspiration and Contestation in a New Messianic Buddhist Movement”, March 2016), and in *Proselytizing and the Limits of Religious Pluralism in Contemporary Asia* (Finucane & Feener, eds, ARI-NUS, 2014). Her monograph, *Christian Arrival and Buddhist Revival: Cosmology, Conflict, and Belonging in Millennial Sri Lanka*, is under preparation. Neena has been a recipient of fellowships from the National Science Foundation (US), the William J. Fulbright Foundation, and the Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. She presently serves as an Associate Editor for *HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory*.

Emplacing Religion in Secular Frames: The Story of the Penang Hindu Endowments Board

Vineeta Sinha

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The 'Mohamedan Hindu Endowments Ordinance' of 1905 was the first piece of legislation passed in the British Parliament to administer religious endowments of non-Christian communities in the Straits Settlements. This law allowed for the institution of a permanent board, the Mohamadan and Hindu Endowment Board, in each of the three settlements of Singapore (in 1905), Penang (in 1905) and Malacca (in 1908). After independence, the Penang Hindu Endowment Board (PHEB) and the Singapore Hindu Endowment Board (SHEB) have continued to exist and function. Focussing on Penang, relying on archival and ethnographic material, this paper narrates the story of its HEB and the controversial calls and concrete efforts made in the 1980s to disband it. During this decade, members of the Penang Hindu community argued that the PHEB was redundant, should be dismantled and the various endowments it held be handed over to private trustees. The argument was that the Board was unnecessary as the historical conditions which required its institution in the colonial period no longer prevailed. Furthermore, critics argue that the Hindu Endowments Act (and the PHEB) was unconstitutional in violating the principle of 'non-interference' by the state in religious matters and its guarantee of religious freedom to citizenry. Questions were also raised about the autonomy of the PHEB from government influence and it was viewed as part of the state machinery.

Concretely several lawsuits were brought against the PHEB with a view to demonstrating its 'illegality' within the ambit of a secular constitution. All of these cases were ultimately unsuccessful in the legal arena and 'thrown out on a technicality.' Yet these 'failed' attempts merit scrutiny as they carry insights for theorising complex relations *in practice* between religion, law and bureaucracy in secular contexts. The persistence of this 'government' body (which functions as a statutory board guided by an act of Parliament, the Hindu Endowments Act) and its management of Hindu domains alongside the constitutional claims of secularism have been contested in Penang but interestingly not in Singapore. In Singapore the SHEB persists as a statutory board and a government body and 'unofficially' an institution representing the interests of the Hindu community and managing its affairs although its remit is given the much more circumscribed brief of the HEA. Even though the SHEB has been embroiled in controversies and much criticised by segments of the Hindu community over various issues, no calls or efforts have been made in Singapore to repeal the HEA or do away with the SHEB. Penang and Singapore have had a shared history as part of the Straits Settlements, and so the fate of religions here was clearly conditioned by the same set of administrative principles and legal apparatus. Yet and unsurprisingly, in comparison to Penang, the Hindu scene in post-colonial Singapore scene has been far more depoliticized. Taking a comparative perspective, the paper seeks to theorise the different community responses in Penang and Singapore to the persistence of an institutional, bureaucratic entity—with similar historical origins in the colonial period—to manage contemporary Hindu domains within the secular frames of Singapore and Malaysia.

Vineeta SINHA is Professor and concurrently Head of the South Asian Studies Programme and the Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore. She holds a Masters in Social Science from the National University of Singapore, a Masters of Arts degree and a PhD from the Johns Hopkins University. Her research has explored forms of Hindu religiosity in the Diaspora, intersections of religion, commodification and consumption processes, interface of religion and materiality, religion-state encounters in colonial and post-colonial contexts. At NUS she teaches courses about the sociology of everyday life, sociology and anthropology of religion, sociology of food, reading and writing ethnography, classical sociological theory and Bollywood. Her publications include the following books: *A New God in the Diaspora? Muneeswaran Worship in Contemporary Singapore* (2005m published by the Singapore University Press and the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies), *Religion and Commodification: Merchandising Diasporic Hinduism* (2010, London: Routledge); *Religion-State Encounters in Hindu Domains: From the Straits Settlements to Singapore* (2011 Dordrecht: Springer) and *Indians* (2015, Singapore: SPH, Institute of Policy Studies). She has recently co-edited (with Lily Kong) a volume on food in Singapore, *Food, Foodways and Foodscapes; Culture, Community and Consumption in Post-colonial Singapore* (2015, Singapore: World Scientific). She was elected Vice-President (Publications) of the International Sociological Association for 2014-2018.

Exploring the Culture-Religion Nexus: Popular Religion, Culturalism and Korean “Piety Travel”

Sam Han

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This paper aims to investigate culture and religion from a perspective that understands culture not as a thing but a relationship. In particular, it will examine the concept of “popular religion,” which has taken on a culturalist bent, which is equated to some sort of “authentic” antithesis of “official” or “high” religion. Slightly differently, this paper views popular religiosity today as operating in a fluid, mediatized culture, thus appending the culturalist definition of religion as a system of symbols toward a sharper definition as a symbolic structure that individuals respond to, interpret and decode in multivariate ways all in the service of crafting moralities or styles of life. To support these claims, it examines the influence of Durkheim in this theoretical perspective and the tendency for the term to entail a socially integrative function. Treating one of the most famous sociological instances of Durkheimian study of religion—Robert Bellah’s “civil religion”, it goes on to draw connections between this reading of civil religion to relevant work done on morality and meaning. In doing so, I suggest that religion and culture, both, operate within conditions whereby individuals do not passively receive doctrine but rather interpret and craft styles of life, leaving open the possibility of “secular rituals” and the like while occasioning a less top-down understanding of the work of symbols and representations. By way of illustration, I provide a media analysis of the recent trend of “piety travel” in South Korean television programming and its relationship to Confucian values.

Sam HAN is an interdisciplinary social scientist, working in the areas of social/cultural/critical theory, new media, religion, and East Asia. He is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore and Affiliate Research Fellow at the Hawke Research Institute of the University of South Australia. His recent books include *Technologies of Religion: Spheres of the Sacred in a Post-Secular Modernity* (Routledge, 2016), *Digital Culture and Religion in Asia* (Routledge, 2015) (with Kamaludeen Mohamed Nasir) and *Web 2.0* (Routledge, 2011).

Pentecostalism as Enchanted Secularity

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Pentecostal Christianity is one of the fastest growing religious groups in the world. Much scholarly attention has been given to studying its global features. Much has been said about the theology of wealth and health it espouses and its offering of an alternate modernity that aligns with traditional spiritualisms in the developing Global South. Explanations of its mass attraction have focused on Pentecostalism's capacity to empower believers with practices to grapple with the challenges of the modern economy. It is also used as evidence that the secularization thesis does not hold, at least for the large majority of the world's population living in societies that are modernizing. Drawing on the history of the Christianization of the Chinese in Singapore, from conversions in the pre-War colonial period to the rise of Pentecostal megachurches today, I locate Pentecostalism as the latest phase of the longstanding engagement of local Asian communities with the secularization of society. I show that while the previous period was marked by both economic and cultural differentiation, and saw the local Chinese elites seeking to invent new forms of Chinese Christianity with specific disciplinary practices, the current period is seeing the dedifferentiation of economy and culture and thus the Pentecostal obsession with the pop culture industry and mass media platforms. I argue that Pentecostalism is neither an expression of the 'Asian modern' nor the case disproving secularization, but is the *embodiment* of enchanted secularity. In this vein, Pentecostalism transposes the commoditization and fetishization of the body in secular pop culture into an enchanted secularity, where magical effects are framed by religious meanings and disciplinary rituals.

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The Third Globalization of Catholicism in Greater China

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The fundamental aspects of Catholic theology and ecclesiastical structure may be the same throughout “Greater China”—a mix of Roman doctrine and some Chinese cultural adaptations—but the forms of life engendered by the church have differed dramatically in different socio-political contexts. For illustration, we will compare the development of Catholicism in Mainland China and Hong Kong. In Mainland China, under Mao Zedong’s Communist Party, the church was cut off from contact with the outside. Ties with the Vatican were severed, missionaries expelled, the church stripped of its education and social service institutions, and subjected to constant state repression. In the Reform era after the death of Mao, the severity of repression has lessened and limited contacts with the global church have become possible. But the church continues to adopt a defensive posture vis a vis the state and maintains a conservative theology focused on personal salvation rather than social transformation. In Hong Kong, in the first decade after 1949, the Church espoused a strongly anti-communist stance, in explicit contrast with Mainland China, and became deeply engaged in responding to the educational and social needs of the refugees who were fleeing from the Mainland. It relied for this on networks of foreign missionaries, many of whom had been expelled by the Communists. But in the 1960s, Hong Kong clergy and laity began to reach out through regional networks to promote social structural change. A younger generation of foreign missionaries, influenced by the Second Vatican Council, played a key role in this. Important organizations were the Asian Association of Federated Students and the Hong Kong Justice and Peace Commission. Often incurring the wrath of local governments, such organizations criticized the exploitation of unfettered capitalism. In doing so, they often relied on a quasi-Marxist analysis through the “theology of liberation”. The legacy of this continues to the present day, such that many activist church members are more Marxist and more critical of neo-liberalism than the Chinese Communist Party.

Richard MADSEN is a distinguished Professor of Sociology the University of California, San Diego and was a co-director of a Ford Foundation project to help revive the academic discipline of sociology in China. Professor Madsen is the author, or co-author of thirteen books on Chinese culture, American culture, and international relations. His books on China include *Democracy's Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007), *Chen Village under Mao and Deng* (co-authored with Anita Chan and Jonathan Unger) (Berkeley, UC Press, 1992), *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (UC Press, 1984) [winner of the C. Wright Mills Award], *Unofficial China* (co-edited with Perry Link and Paul Pickowicz) (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), *China and the American Dream* (UC Press, 1994), *China's Catholics: Tragedy and Hope in an Emerging Civil Society* (UC Press, 1998), and *Popular China: Unofficial Culture in a Globalizing Society*, co-edited with Perry Link and Paul Pickowicz (Boulder, CO: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

Divine Text, Secular Language: Translating the Qur'an in Jakarta

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The entry of a universal revelation into the mundane world of language threatens to be paradoxical: it must take a specific and local form. As such, becomes implicated in nationalist, ethnic, linguistic, and other sources of identity. This paper centers on a small melodrama that played out among a mostly elite circle of religious and literary figures in Indonesia—far from Mecca, to be sure, but at present, home to the largest number of Muslims of any country in the world. The occasion was a project by a powerful modernist literary critic and editor, H.B. Jassin. After undergoing something of a spiritual awakening in mid-life, he set out to translate the Qur'an into Indonesian. The project was intended to convey the aesthetic power of the scripture to a non-Arabic speaking public. The idiom, *bahasa Indonesia* (literally “the language of Indonesia”), after a half century of standardization efforts, was identified with the secularist side of the nationalist movement. Moreover, Jassin’s own career had been instrumental in forging a national idiom that would serve as a vehicle for a literature whose European models were widely expected to supplant religion’s place at the heart of contemporary values. Examining the furor that resulted, this talk explores an array of conflicting assumptions about language, community, nationhood, and divine truth current in the late twentieth century.

Webb KEANE is the George Herbert Mead Collegiate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan. His primary fieldwork has been on Sumba (Indonesia), but he has also written on such topics as Indonesian language politics, Neolithic sacrifice, and Orthodox icons. Keane has received fellowships from the Institute for Advanced Study, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Guggenheim Foundation. He has taught at the LSE, Cambridge, Oslo, and the School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell, and has delivered the Westermarck Lecture (Helsinki), the Sharpe Lecture (Chicago), the Weiner Lecture (NYU), the Munro Lecture (Edinburgh), and the Rappaport Lecture (Society for the Anthropology of Religion). His books include *Ethical Life: Its Natural and Social Histories* (2016), *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (2007), and *Signs of Recognition: Powers and Hazards of Representation in an Indonesian Society* (1997).

Remembered and Forgotten Gods: Caste and the Transnational Worship of Ancestral Deities among Malaysian Hindus

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The study of Hindu religious practices in Southeast Asia has often been dominated by a solely diasporic approach, which has ignored transnational linkages that are increasingly part of the Malaysian Hindu experience. Furthermore, the broader literature on transnationalism which has tended to focus on first or second-generation migrants, has been relatively blind to historical inequalities, particularly how these past inequalities going back several decades or multiple generations, may affect the present in a transnational context. This article examines the growing phenomenon of interest in the transnational and local worship of ancestral tutelary deities (*kula devam*) among Malaysian Hindus. In doing so, it will specifically look at the role of caste identity in the emergence of transnational ritual and kinship networks. The paper argues that the performance of ritual worship of ancestral deities among Malaysian Hindus—part of a religious response to specific socio-economic changes that have occurred within the pressures of a capitalist, Islamised modernity—has been shaped by entrenched caste and class divisions in contrasting ways. The historical inequalities at the time of colonial labour migration and the differences between the landed non-Brahmin mid-level castes and the landless Dalits, seep into the present in the form of revitalisation of ritual-kinship links to Tamil Nadu among the former. At the same time, the lack of economic progress and social ills suffered by the dispossessed in Malaysia, is seen (by some) as a consequence of ignoring the requisite ritual worship of their *kula devam* in now often unknown villages of ancestral origin.

Sudheesh BHASI is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute (MPI) for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. Sudheesh's current research examines transnational Hindu networks in Malaysia. His work is focused on exploring the enduring transnational religious connections of the 'old Indian diaspora' and documenting the extent of the economic, affective and symbolic ties that exist within the transnational and translocal social space of Hindu networks. At the heart of this research lies a significant anthropological and sociological concern about the nature of transnationalism in longer-established diasporas – how are transnational religious networks formed, maintained or revitalized in an older diaspora that has been away from the homeland for several generations? In his earlier doctoral research, Sudheesh explored everyday religious practices and the production of social capital within the Hindu diaspora in Sydney. Sudheesh's research interests encompass religion and migration, transnational communities, urban sociality, social inclusion, and neoliberalism.

Regulating Communal Religion as “Folk Belief”: Secularism with Chinese Characters

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Communal religion, the most widely practiced religious tradition in China in the past and present, which had not been legally recognized for a century, is welcoming a momentous change. The Chinese government is implementing “*minjian xinyang*” (folk belief) as a regulatory category for communal religion across the country in the last few years. Though “folk belief” does not mean to fully accept communal religious practices into the rank of legal religions, the advance of “folk belief” for the first time granted certain legality to communal religion as a totality. Such a shift therefore breaks through current classification system in the administration of religion and sets new tone for state-religion relations.

How would legalization of communal religion shape China’s new “secular” age? This article first traces the ascending of the conception: “folk belief”. Rather than isolated local efforts, I argue that the recent nationwide implementation of “folk belief” came as the result of a cumulative process that was centrally planned. My article then attempts to explain why the government needs to enact a new administrative category “folk belief” in both contemporary and comparative settings. Finally, this article discusses the implications of institutional arrangements that complement the administrative category “folk belief”: what the renewed legal status of communal religion potentially would change and what it might not change in terms of state and communal religion relations and interreligious dynamics in local society.

Xiaoxuan WANG is a Social Historian of modern and late imperial China. His research interests include Chinese communal religion, Chinese Christianity, and Chinese diaspora. He received his PhD in East Asian Languages and Civilizations from Harvard University. He is completing a book project examining the transformation of the religious and social landscape in local society during the Mao years (1949-1978) and the Maoist period’s profound impact on religion and society in Wenzhou of southeast China. One of his recent publications is “The Dilemma of Implementation: State and Religion in the People’s Republic of China, 1949-1990”, in Jeremy Brown and Matthew Johnson eds., *Maoism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China’s Era of High Socialism* (Harvard, 2015).

The Haicang “Voice”: Modernity, Cultural Continuity and the Spirit World in a 1920s Chinese Church

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For nearly five years in the 1920s, a strange “voice” claiming to be a deceased Chinese preacher sent from God gave messages and prophecies to the small Christian community of Haicang in Southern Fujian. Word of the “voice” spread and many people, Christians and non-Christians, traveled to Haicang to witness the strange phenomenon. As the influence of the “voice” expanded, so did its controversial messages and when it proclaimed that the local pastor had embezzled money from a church member, a division in the church quickly developed. In 1928, after nearly five years of the “voice” perplexing, inspiring, and dividing the Christians in Haicang and Southern Fujian, an elder of a church in Xiamen, Xu Chuncao, confronted the “voice” and ordered it to leave “in the name of Jesus”. This paper details the story of the “voice,” by analyzing how various groups of people accepted or rejected the phenomenon. This story is presented as a window into the various forms of Christianity and its interaction with modernity in Chinese churches of the 1920s. As seen in this story, supernatural spiritual manifestations were not just the domain of marginal indigenous Christian groups, but were also present in mainstream, mission-connected churches, though such miraculous events increasingly elicited suspicions and scorn from a minority of church members. This article further suggests that categories such as “indigenous” and “mission” churches may be better understood as a spectrum of groups which faded into and influenced each other.

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Precepts and Practice in the Current Revival of Chinese Buddhism: A Cross-Straits Perspective

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Based on a recently completed cross-regional empirical study, this paper examines the impact of secularism on contemporary monastic members' religious practices and their observance of Buddhist precepts following thirty years of so-called revival at various Buddhist monasteries in China, and compares this to their counterparts' experience in Taiwan. Chinese Buddhism suffered serious challenges between the nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. For example, Buddhist scriptures were burned and temples were pillaged during the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864). Monasteries were turned over to other purposes or destroyed at the time of the May Fourth Movement (1919), which was characterised by strong anti-religious ideas. Various warlords perpetrated severe destruction of Buddhist heritage in the Interwar years, and Buddhism itself then suffered official persecution under Mao Zedong's 'aggressively' secular regime. Contemporary Buddhism's revival in China can be dated to 1978, at the end of Mao's era. The People's Republic of China began to relax its laws proscribing religious activities and practices in the 1980s, and even after three decades of recovery, the number of Chinese Han monks and nuns is continuing to grow: with a current estimated population of 100,000. The number of Buddhist monasteries has also experienced extraordinary recent growth. In addition to numerous new temples built in the last two decades, thousands of old monasteries are undergoing reconstruction, and the educational standards of Chinese Buddhist monks and nuns have also risen.

When discussing Buddhism under PRC government supervision, some scholars implicitly or explicitly regard the development of Buddhism in China in a negative light, or are critical of the PRC government's control of religions (e.g., Levering 1993; Chandler 1996; Qin 2000). Against this backdrop, this paper discusses, firstly, the religious life of present-day Chinese Buddhists through multiple-case studies that I conducted at eight monastic institutions in Mainland China, with particular reference to whether and how monastics' religious activities and everyday lives are subject to intervention or influence by past or current PRC government policies. Secondly, it discusses some of the nuanced differences between the religious lifestyles of Taiwanese and Mainland Buddhists: for, even though Taiwan and China both share similar contexts of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism, Buddhism in these two regions has different manifestations, in part because the Taiwanese state—though 'secular' in the narrow sense of not promoting a particular state religion—has never attempted to ban public or private religious observance.

Tzu-Lung CHIU received her PhD at Ghent University, Belgium (2016). In her dissertation, *Contemporary Buddhist Nunneries in Taiwan and Mainland China: A Study of Vinaya Practices*, she explored Chinese Mahāyāna nuns' perceptions of how they interpret and practice *vinaya* rules in the contemporary contexts of Taiwan and Mainland China. The dissertation studies the institutional organisation of Buddhist nunneries in a Chinese and in an international context. The focus lies on the attitude of nunneries towards tradition and present-day reality, as well as on their international role based on this attitude. The main aims of the research are to better understand how original Indian Vinaya monastic rules are applied in the modern *bhikkhunī sangha*, and to explore how Chinese nunneries inherit traditional monastic rules to meet contemporary needs and achieve future goals. Currently, Tzu-Lung is a Postdoctoral Fellow in Buddhist Studies at the University of California, Berkeley (2016-2017). She obtained her MA in Women's Studies at Lancaster University, UK. Her research interests include India Vinaya rules, Chinese Buddhism, gender, Buddhist ethics, the Bodhisattva rules, the *qinggui* (rules of purity), Humanistic Buddhism, monastic sport activities.

“Neo-Socialist Governmentality” and the Genealogy of Chinese Socialist Spiritual Civilisation

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In the early post-Mao years, the reform leadership sought to address the ideological crisis left by the end of Maoism by propagating the narrative of the glory and downfall of a transcendental Chinese “spiritual civilization”. The ensuing campaign, which entered the official vocabulary in 1978, was reaffirmed, expanded, and institutionalized under the successive regimes of Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping. It gave unprecedented freedoms to Chinese intellectuals and encouraged the flourishing of popular movements inspired by the imagined roots of Chinese civilization, while pioneering a model of controlled political mobilization which channeled the new liberties into a productive relationship with the state. More than vacuous sloganeering, it successfully replaced the coercive politics of class struggle with the participatory enterprise of restoring Chinese civilization.

David A. PALMER is an Associate Professor and Head of Department of Sociology at the University of Hong Kong, which he joined in 2008. A native of Toronto, he graduated from McGill University in Anthropology and East Asian Studies. After completing his PhD in the Anthropology of Religion at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, he was the Eileen Barker Fellow in Religion and Contemporary Society at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and, from 2004 to 2008, director of the Hong Kong Centre of the French School of Asian Studies (Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient), located at the Institute for Chinese Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is the author of the award-winning *Qigong Fever: Body, Science and Utopia in China* (Columbia University Press, 2007), co-author with Vincent Goossaert of *The Religious Question in Modern China* (University of Chicago Press, 2011; awarded the Levenson Book Prize of the Association for Asian Studies). His forthcoming books include *Dream Trippers: Global Daoism and the Predicament of Modern Spirituality* (University of Chicago Press, co-authored with Elijah Siegler, 2017) and *Intimate Utopias: Volunteering, Political Ritual and Civil Society in China* (co-authored with Rundong Ning).

Fabian WINIGER is a PhD student at the Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Hong Kong. Born in Switzerland, he completed his BA in Sociology at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and his M.Sc. in Medical Anthropology from the University of Oxford. His research focuses on the transnational transmission of transformations of Chinese qigong.

Spirit Mediums and Secular/Religious Divides in Singapore

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Jose Casanova deconstructs teleological versions of secularization theory by disaggregating the process into different and variable processes: 1) secularization as a differentiation of the secular spheres (the state, capitalism, science) from religious institutions and norms; 2) secularization as a decline of religious beliefs and practices; and 3) secularization as a marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere. He notes that:

The European concept of secularization might not be directly applicable to other world religions with very different modes of structuration of the sacred and profane realms. It could hardly be applicable ... to such “religions” as Confucianism or Taoism, insofar as they are not characterized by high tension with “the world” and have no ecclesiastical organization. In a sense those religions that have always been “worldly” and “lay” do not need to undergo a process of secularization. To secularize – that is, “to make worldly” or “to transfer from the ecclesiastical to civil use” – is a process that does not make much sense in such a civilizational context. But to ask how religions like Confucianism or Taoism, or any other religion for that matter, respond to the imposition of the new global worldly regime of Western modernity becomes a very relevant question. (“Secularization Revisited: A Reply to Talal Asad”, in David Scott and Charles Hirschkind, eds., *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and his Interlocutors*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006: 19-20)

Peter van der Veer points out “that secularism in India and China are a product of the imperial encounter”. He notes that in the case of China, earlier traditions of anti-clericalism and anti-superstition become linked to Western ideas of progress in a violent secular utopian movement that “is strikingly millenarian and magical and thus reintroduces the traditional elements it wants to eradicate but in another configuration”. Secularism ‘attempts to transform religions into moral sources of citizenship and national belonging.’ But he argues religion “can never be entirely contained by the secularist frame.” (Smash Temples, Burn Books: Comparing Secularist Project in India and China”, in C. Calhoun, M. Juergenmeyer and J. Van Anterwepen, eds., *Rethinking Secularism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011:270-82). This paper takes up some of these themes as it explores: 1) unique features of Neo-Confucian thought which provide an alternative model of human flourishing; 2) structural challenges to mainstream Daoist and Confucian traditions in China from the “shamanic substratum”; 3) the comparative freedom of Chinese spirit mediums in Singapore and Malaysia to generate new ritual forms and to evoke new powers from the underworld, thereby posing a continuing challenge to the secular project.

Kenneth DEAN is Raffles Professor of Humanities and Head of the Chinese Studies Department, National University of Singapore, and Professor Emeritus, McGill University. He is the Religion and Globalization Research Cluster Leader, Asia Research Institute, NUS. Dean is the author of several books on Daoism and Chinese popular religion, including *Ritual Alliances of the Putian Plains: Vol. 1: Historical Introduction to the Return of the Gods*, Vol. 2: *A Survey of Village Temples and Ritual Activities*, Leiden: Brill, 2010 (with Zheng Zhenman); *Epigraphical Materials on the History of Religion in Fujian: The Quanzhou Region*, 3 vols., Fuzhou: 2004 (with Zheng Zhenman); *Lord of the Three in One: The Spread of a Cult in Southeast China*, Princeton: 1998; *Epigraphical Materials on the History of Religion in Fujian: The Xinghua Region*; Fuzhou 1995 (with Zheng Zhenman); *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China*, Princeton 1993; and *First and Last Emperors: The Absolute State and the Body of the Despot* (with Brian Massumi), Autonomedia, New York. 1992. He directed *Bored in Heaven: A Film about Ritual Sensation* (2010), an 80 minute documentary film on ritual celebrations around Chinese New Years in Putian, Fujian, China. His current project is the construction of an interactive, multi-media database linked to a historical GIS map of the religious sites and networks of Singapore. His most recent publication (with Hue Guan Thye) is entitled *Chinese Epigraphy in Singapore: 1819-1911* (2 vols.), Singapore: NUS Press, 2017.

Modern Avatars of Chinese Eschatologies

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This paper, based on my previous and ongoing work on eschatological currents in Chinese religious history, looks at the modern and contemporary destinies of apocalyptic ideas. It shows how such ideas (that the world was coming to an end because the highest gods had decided to annihilate a sinful humanity) were particularly prevalent during the Taiping war (1851-1864), but continued to circulate after this major catastrophe. Subsequent events (natural disasters, as well as man-made ones, such as the Boxer Rebellion, the 1911 Revolution, the Sino-Japanese war etc.) were understood in the very same light, and as new episodes of a same dramatic history of collective damnation and salvation. Contrary to an historiography that emphasizes the ruptures of modernity, I will show that religious books composed during the late imperial era (including the eschatological revelations inspired by the Taiping war) continued to enjoy massive reprints and dissemination during the twentieth century (mostly focusing on the Republican period, 1911-1949), thus maintaining the substratum on which new apocalyptic discourse could flourish. This is a much-neglected counter-discourse (but also in some ways a complement to) better-studied modern utopias of progress and linear time;¹ it is obviously very much untouched by disenchantment, but also offer, when compared to secular narratives, alternative visions of the connection between individual and collective destiny.

Vincent GOOSSAERT obtained his PhD at EPHE (Ecole pratique des hautes études, 1997), was a research fellow at CNRS (1998-2012) and is now Professor of Daoism and Chinese religions at EPHE. He has been a Visiting Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Geneva University and Renmin University. His research deals with the social history of Chinese religion in late imperial and modern times. He has published books on the Daoist clergy, anticlericalism, Chinese dietary taboos, the production of moral norms, and, with David Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago, 2011; Levenson Prize 2013). He serves since 2014 as the dean of the EPHE graduate school (600 PhD students).

¹ Luke S.K. Kwong, "The Rise of the Linear Perspective on History and Time in Late Qing China, c.1860-1911", *Past & Present*, 173, 2001, pp. 157-190.

ABOUT THE CHAIRPERSONS & DISCUSSANTS

Bernardo BROWN is a Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute (ARI), National University of Singapore, affiliated with the Religion and Globalization and the Asian Migrations clusters. His work on Sri Lankan Catholic return migration has recently appeared in *Contemporary South Asia* (2014), *Ethnography* (2015) and *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* (2015). His current Research projects focus on Catholic seminaries and priestly vocations in South and Southeast Asia. He received an MA from the New School for Social Research and a PhD in Cultural Anthropology from Cornell University. Before joining ARI, he held a post-doctoral fellowship at the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden.

Catherine SCHEER is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. She received her PhD and MA in Anthropology from Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris. Her previous work focused on Cambodia's "indigenous minorities", specifically the Bunong, and their interactions with Protestant development actors. In her doctoral thesis on the dynamics of Christianisation in a highland commune, she examined the links between local worldviews and ritual practices and missionary teachings that have changed over time, affecting the Bunong's claimed identity and moral logic. She thereby attempts to contribute to the anthropology of Christianity in continental Southeast Asia. Her current research—in the context of the Religion and NGOs in Asia project—concerns the production of knowledge about languages in education by Southeast Asia-based international organisations, including Christian NGOs.

Giuseppe BOLOTTA is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. He is a psychologist and socio-cultural anthropologist. He earned his PhD in Anthropology from University Bicocca of Milan, and his Master's in Psychology from University San Raffaele of Milan. In 2013, while on a PhD exchange program in Bangkok, he also undertook political science training at Chulalongkorn University. His doctoral research is a multi-situated ethnography of religious, humanitarian and state institutional policies for poor children living in the slums of Bangkok (Thailand). He is currently working on a monograph with the working title "Slum Children: Cultural Politics of Marginal Childhood in Bangkok". He co-founded the scholarly network "Sciences de l'Enfance, Enfants des Sciences" (SEES, <http://sciences-enfances.org>) and has worked with Psychologists without Frontiers (PSF).

Gustav BROWN is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Religion and Globalization cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Dr Brown holds a PhD and MA in Sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles, as well as an MA in International Studies from the University of Washington. His doctoral research examines the intersection of democratization, decentralization and Islamisation in Indonesia—at the level of the state, in regional politics and in everyday life. Dr Brown is currently working on examining the partnerships, policies and practices that enable non-proselytizing Christian iNGOs like World Vision to build trust and manage conflicts while operating within majority Muslim communities in Indonesia.

LAI Lei Kuan Rongdao is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Asia Research Institute and Assistant Professor of Religion at the University of Southern California. She received her PhD in Religious Studies from McGill University in 2013. She specializes in modern Chinese Religions, focusing especially on the changing landscape in modern Chinese Buddhism and identity production. She is currently working on a book manuscript, based on her doctoral dissertation, on modern Buddhist education and citizenship in China. Her other on-going project focuses on the networks and transnational movements of Chinese Buddhists in the twentieth century.

May NGO is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Religion and Globalization cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. She earned her PhD in Anthropology at Swinburne University of Technology, Australia. Her doctoral research examined the role of religious actors in the humanitarian field, focusing on a case study of a Christian faith-based organization in Morocco working with Sub-Saharan African irregular migrants. Her research interests include how constructions of both the 'sacred' and the 'secular' are negotiated within the humanitarian and development field, and how an examination of these processes render into question values that are assumed as universal and neutral. During her time at ARI, she will complete a book manuscript based on her doctoral dissertation. She will also be working on a new project examining the politics of migration, religion and development in Cambodia, with a focus on Catholic organizations.

MOK Mei Feng is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Asia Research Institute. She received her PhD in History from the University of Washington in 2016. Her research is on the Chinese diaspora in modern Vietnamese history during the Cold War. She focuses on Chinese diasporic communities negotiating nation-building and transnationalism in everyday life.

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